Issue 8: August 2025

SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY HISTORY JOURNAL



Cover design by Erin Crombie
Edited by Madelaine Watson and Jasmine Kelly

University of Southampton

Contents

Foreword by the Editors 2

Contributors 3

Life Magazine's Portrayal of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: How Victims and Survivors Were Represented

Maia Waterson 4

How Historians Have Used Imperialism to Analyse and Learn From the 2003 American Invasion of Iraq

William Boyce 16

Women, War, and Liberation? A Feminist Critique of the U.S.-Led War on Terror in Iraq

Hannah Lydford 27

Prophetess and Soldier: Understanding how Joan of Arc's supporters perceived her role in the war

Mia Simpson 41

Nira Yuval-Davis's (1997) argument on the position of women in relation to the nation, with reference to wider reading on the topic

Sophia Westcott 52

Pathologizing, Partial, but Positive?: Sexological Interpretations of Homosexual Identity in the Late Nineteenth Century

James Phillips 61

Chivalry and Violence: How Violence Permeated Medieval Europe's Central Secular Ideology

Ben Laughland 72

The relationship between politics, violence and instability in socio-political institutions of the late Roman Republic

Joe Andrews 83

How Can the Overlap between Story-telling and Function on Material Objects Be Displayed?

Emily Haines-Furse 96

The Greeks and their Neighbours: The Influence of Egypt and Persia on Ancient Greek Civilisation

Aerin Lings 107

Foreword by the Editors

Dear readers,

We are delighted to introduce *Issue 8* of the *Southampton Journal of History*, a collection that celebrates the depth, diversity, and originality of student historical research. This is the first issue published under our new name and we are proud to continue the journal's legacy by showcasing a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate work produced by students at the University of Southampton. Rebranding to *Southampton Journal of History* has allowed us to breathe new life into the journal. It has been a privilege to curate this edition, which speaks to the remarkable intellectual curiosity and critical engagement of students working across a wide range of periods, geographies, and methodological approaches.

This issue's articles speak to some of the most enduring and urgent questions historians grapple with: How are identities constructed and contested? How do power, violence, and ideology shape societies? What role do memory, material culture, and narrative play in our understanding of the past? Whether examining gender and nationalism, medieval chivalry, sexology, imperialism, or the legacies of modern warfare, each contribution offers fresh insight into the human experience and the historian's craft.

As editors, we are especially proud of the collaborative effort behind this publication. Not only the commitment and rigour shown by our contributors, but also the dedication of our peer reviewers and editorial team, which has been instrumental in producing work of such high quality. The cover and title pages for each article in this issue have been created by our assistant editor Erin Crombie - you can read more about her creative process overleaf.

We are grateful to the Department of History at the University of Southampton for their continued support in fostering student scholarship. We are also very grateful to Emily Carter for her support in onboarding the Southampton Journal of History to the new University of Southampton Press. It is an exciting project to be part of, and we're even more excited to contribute outstanding student research to this new platform. This is truly a step forward for championing and amplifying student voices in academic research.

To our readers - thank you for engaging with and encouraging emerging voices in the discipline. We hope that these articles not only inform but inspire, and that they remind us all of the power of history to illuminate, challenge, and connect.

Madelaine Watson, Jasmine Kelly
Co-Editors, 2025

Contributors

Reviewers

- Emily Haines-Furse
- Daisy-May Jewell
- Jack Calliss
- Amelie Lacassin

Each of these student-written essays has inspired a unique visual response in the form of mini illustrations. The aim of these sketches is to reflect the core themes of the essays they correspond to, while still leaving room for interpretation. Every illustration began with a watercolour splash, created by blowing paint into shape through a straw. A layer of fineliner sketching was then added over the top, echoing the essence of each essay through abstract symbolism. It has been a joy to interact with such thoughtful student work through art, and I hope these illustrations do justice to the brilliant essays they accompany.

This edition's front cover takes a similar approach: viewing history through an artistic lens. The main elements of the piece were created using gouache paint and grey and black fineliner. At the centre, a reimagined Trajan's Column—a symbol of memory—is decorated with a few key historic themes: Warwick Castle (war and fortifications), the Roman SPQR eagle (politics and power), the Parthenon (religion), and of course, the Titanic (trade and transport), tying in some local iconography. The column is bound by grapevines and protest signs, acting like bunting, and is topped with a student's post-it-note-covered book. This piece represents how history is told and spread: from the tools of the academic littering the bottom of the page, all the way up to the students' work. After all, that's what this journal is all about.

The opportunity to design for this edition has been a meditative and unique way to engage with academic work—focusing less on literal interpretation, and more on capturing tone and energy. As a history student myself, it's refreshing to look at the study of the past from a different perspective, helping to uncover aspects I might never have paid much attention to before.

BA Ancient History & History Student
Erin Crombie

Assistant Editor and Illustrator



Life Magazine's Portrayal of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: How Victims and Survivors Were Represented

Maia Waterson

Life Magazine's Portrayal of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: How Victims and Survivors Were Represented

Maia Waterson

Abstract: *Analysing Life magazine issues from August 1945 to August 1965, this paper examines the shift in attitudes towards the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. First seen solely as a scientific marvel which helped in defeating the alien enemy, Life magazine focused on the technical aspects of the bomb and its impact on the physical landscape, rather than its devastating human impact. As Americans began to worry about the implications of the creation of the atomic bomb, and what it could do to them once other countries harness its power, Life began to release issues focusing on the human impact and long-term effects of radiation exposure. As time passed, they became increasingly sympathetic to the Japanese, and in later editions, emphasised the character of the Japanese to be resilient and peaceful. Though Life magazine helped influence the opinions of its audience, it also reflected and adapted its issues based on the changing public reception of the atomic bomb and its Japanese victims.*

Life magazine played a key role in shaping American attitudes towards the atomic bomb and its use on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with its narrative heavily shaped by founder and editor Henry Luce, whose Christian values and belief in American exceptionalism influenced his work. Initially, *Life*'s focus on the bomb was to portray it as a tool that decisively ended World War II, and, as historian Paul Boyer argues, a technological marvel that heralded a new age of American military power. Initial articles emphasised the power and scientific achievement behind the bomb, with less attention on the Japanese victims or the long-term human suffering the bomb caused. However, *Life* never shared the jubilant tone other articles had, and as fears of the long-term impacts of the atomic bomb settled in, they began to explore the impact it had on the survivors. As Peter Hales highlights, this shift can be attributed to the reciprocal relationship Life had with its audience, one that both shaped and reflected America's anxiety and growing guilt about the bomb. In 1952, *Life* published a photo essay including images of Japanese civilians maimed by the bomb, as well as descriptions of the effects of radiation exposure. Even so, the magazine's tone sometimes oscillated between empathy for the victims and a sense of justification for the bomb's use, reflecting a common dialogue in the American public at the time. *Life* justified the use of the atomic bomb through several key arguments: depicting it as a natural escalation and retaliation of war, framing it as a divine gift, portraying it as an act of moral good, and emphasising the United States' pivotal role in Japan's post-war restoration. By the 1960s and beyond, *Life*'s coverage of the atomic bomb largely diminished. When it was covered, the focus shifted away from the bomb's destructive impact to themes of Japan's restoration and the mourning process. It is clear that this portrayal was driven both by the American public's growing regret over the use

of the atomic bomb and by their desire to forget or absolve themselves of the suffering it inflicted on the Japanese.

Following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *Life* played a crucial role in shaping Americans' perception of this unprecedented new weapon. Henry Luce, founder of *Life*, had a large part in shaping this perception. Luce founded the magazine with the goals of editing pictures to create a coherent story out of fragmented documents, which historians a hundred years from then would be able to rely on.[1] However, the stories Luce crafted were deeply influenced by his nationalistic beliefs. In his famous essay, 'The American Century' he argues for the need for the United States to become the next world power, and to guide the rest of the world with a devotion to the American ideal, which he defined as 'a love of freedom, a feeling for the equality of opportunity, a tradition of self-reliance and independence and also of co-operation.'[2] He believed that establishing the American ideal as the way of life and the standard to which all other societies and cultures should be measured by was for the greater good, which leaked into his work and how he portrayed the atomic bomb.

Although Luce was deeply invested in the idea of American exceptionalism and the need for the United States to exert global influence, he had his own reservations on the bomb, and urged President Truman not to drop the second one. As a Christian, he held some moral reservations, but his primary concern was that he believed that Japan would surrender without it, and was troubled by the idea of Japan being cast as a victim over the aggressor because of it. His relative indifference to the human suffering he was aware it would cause can be attributed to his belief in American exceptionalism and, by extension, Western superiority, which diminished his empathy toward other human lives. According to Alan Brinkley believed his main concern lay in the broader geopolitical consequences: Luce feared that the use of the atomic bomb would lead to the loss of China to the Soviet Union, weakening America's strategic position in Asia.[3] However, his loyalty to the US and its way of life led to him justifying its use in *Life*. He justified the use of the atomic bomb as a necessary step to end the war, enabling the US to exert control over Japan and reshape its future. Moreover, it positioned the US as a liberator of other Asian nations, reflecting a white saviour complex that positioned America as the benevolent force rescuing the region from Japanese aggression and deserving of their gratitude. Luce's hope for the 'American century' also shaped how *Life* assessed the future of the atom and its use, as well as a hope that the atom could create one world nation.

[1] Erika Doss, 'Introduction: Looking at Life: Rethinking America's Favorite Magazine, 1936-1972', in *Looking at Life Magazine* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), pp. 1-24 (p. 2).
[2] Henry R. Luce, 'The American Century', *Life*, 17 February 1941, p. 65.
[3] Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and his American Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2010), pp. 315-317.

This is reflected in how *Life* focused on the technological future of the atom and the positive impact he believed it would have on the world.

Paul Boyer argues that *Life* initially presented the bomb's impact through a scientific and technological lens, rather than properly addressing the human devastation it caused.[4] In its famous 20th August publication, *Life* introduced its perspective on the atomic bomb by shifting attention from the immediate human tragedy to the groundbreaking scientific achievement it represented. Through statements like,'Even the appalling fact that some 100,000 Japanese had died seemed incidental to the fact... that a way had been found to release the forces which killed this 100,000,'[5] the magazine praised the scientists behind the discovery and explained the immense power of the atom, emphasising the bomb as a monumental scientific breakthrough rather than focusing on the devastating loss of life. This prioritisation reveals an early ambivalence in American media about the bomb—acknowledging a staggering loss of life, yet regarding it as secondary to the broader implications of nuclear energy as a powerful weapon.

The magazine also included aerial pictures of the before and after of Hiroshima,[6] but the distance meant that the city looked largely unchanged, emptier and stripped of the remnants of a once-unpleasant enemy, but not much different. By opting for a distant, panoramic perspective, the publication emphasised the bomb's sheer power and scale while sidestepping the immediate, human costs of its devastation. This visual framing keeps readers detached, encouraging them to perceive the bomb as a monumental technological achievement rather than as a cause of human suffering. Technological dominance was a demonstration of military strength. Although the Nuclear Arms Race had yet to unfold, *Life* recognised that it was only a matter of time before other nations acquired similar power. For the moment, however, the bomb served as a powerful display of American dominance. Instead of being a shocking condemnation of war, the images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki found awe and beauty in the vast destruction. The absence of close-up destruction or images of casualties minimises the emotional impact, shielding readers from the ethical discomfort of confronting the bomb's human toll. Peter Hales argues that for the Japanese and much of the world, the atomic age was associated with immense human loss and suffering. In contrast, *Life* shaped the dominant American perception away from suffering and to the visual of the giant atomic cloud, which was published in nearly every article about the bomb.[7]

---

[4] Paul S. Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 7-8.
[5] 'The Atomic Bomb: Its First Explosion Opens a New Era', *Life*, 20 August 1945, p. 878.
[6] 'War's Ending', *Life*, 20 August 1945, pp. 30-31.
[7] Peter B. Hales, 'Imagining the Atomic Age: Life and the Atom', in *Looking at Life Magazine*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), pp. 103-122 (p. 103).

Similarly, in an October 8th publication, *Life* documented a train journey from Tokyo to Hiroshima. Upon arrival, the accompanying images depicted a city that appeared remarkably intact, with relatively undamaged buildings and seemingly unharmed residents.[8] While the text in *Life* often described the bomb's impacts in dramatic and catastrophic terms, the choice of visuals conveyed a more sanitised narrative. By featuring palatable images, *Life* left readers with the impression that post-war life in Hiroshima was not so apocalyptic after all. The most graphic content included two rare photographs of victims with minor injuries. Captions likened these injuries to the burns suffered by American soldiers during Pearl Harbor, implying that what had been done to Hiroshima was in equal proportion to Pearl Harbor. This echoed a broader public narrative that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were acts of justified revenge for Pearl Harbor. Framing the pain this way downplays the suffering of civilians uninvolved in Pearl Harbor and wrongly justifies civilian casualties as retaliation, unfairly placing the burden of war on the least responsible.

In an editorial in the aforementioned 20th August publication, *Life* argues that the use of the atomic bomb was a natural evolution of war, asserting that 'from the very concept of strategic bombing, all the developments...lead straight to Hiroshima.'[9] This perspective dismissed debates about who violated the rules of war and when, downplaying the ethical implications by framing the bomb's use as an unavoidable outcome. However, *Life* does go on to admit to the cruelty of the atomic bomb and describes its use on Hiroshima as 'almost pure schrecklichkeit', a German word English speakers used to describe the brutality of war, particularly in relation to the Imperial German Army's actions in World War I. In a post-World War II context, this choice of language was significant: the use of a German word to describe America's military decisions would have subconsciously aligned their actions to those of the Nazis to the reader, evoking guilt and moral questioning among Americans.

A month after the victory over Japan, uncertainty began to take hold, and *Life* shifted its focus to the unknown side effects of the atomic bomb on the Japanese people. While many newspapers and magazines continued to celebrate the bomb as a symbol of America's triumph, with headlines such as 'Awesome Force of Atom Bomb Loosed to Hasten Jap Surrender: Wonder Weapon Developed in Secret Plants Gives Allies Unprecedented Edge in War,'[10] from *Newsweek*, *Life* offered a more nuanced

[8] 'The Tokyo Express: A Life Photographer Takes a Ride to Hiroshima on Japan's Best Train', *Life*, 8 October 1945, pp. 27-35.
[9] 'The Atomic Age', *Life*, 20 August 1945, p. 32.
[10] 'Awesome Force of Atom Bomb Loosed to Hasten Jap Surrender: Wonder Weapon Developed in Secret Plants Gives Allies Unprecedented Edge in War', *Newsweek*, August 20 1945, p. 30.

perspective. Although the magazine marvelled at the technological breakthrough, credited it with ending the war, and downplayed its human toll, it avoided the overtly triumphant tone seen elsewhere. Once the initial relief following Japan's formal surrender on September 2nd passed, *Life* anxiously explored the implications of such a powerful new weapon. It posed critical questions, such as when other countries might acquire the bomb and what the consequences could be. This growing anxiety led *Life* to explore the bomb's health impacts in a September 17th publication, which detailed harrowing accounts of radiation sickness, including symptoms like failing appetites, hair loss, bleeding gums, high fevers, vomiting blood, and eventual death.[11]

Despite this exploration of human suffering, the magazine's stance continued to justify the use of the bomb, as reflected in the title of the article, 'What Ended the War.' *Life*'s shift in focus seemed to stem less from empathy for Japanese victims and more from growing American anxieties about the long-term implications of radiation. As people began to grasp the terrifying potential of atomic weapons, fears about the future use of such a weapon could mean for the American public began to emerge. This concern was further emphasised in November 19th, where *Life* speculated on the possibility of a nuclear war and painted a grim picture of a world where Americans might be forced to live underground or wear protective suits in an atomic wasteland.[12] Through these portrayals, the magazine began to frame the bomb not only as a symbol of victory but also as a looming threat to humanity's survival.

Although *Life* increasingly acknowledged the human suffering caused by the atomic bomb, it still continued to justify its use—not only by claiming it was essential to end the war but also by implied moral and biblical values. In an article exploring Japan and its culture, *Life* diminishes and otherizes the Japanese by highlighting the differences between Japan and the US. The magazine criticised Japan's rigid caste system, lack of freedom, unfamiliar food, and religion, dismissing it as 'not a true religion at all.'[13] While asserting these differences, *Life* claimed that the Japanese regard themselves as the 'superior race,' provoking defensiveness among white American readers. This framing reinforces the alienation of the Japanese, making it more difficult for the audience to empathise with their suffering, and suggests that the atomic bomb was necessary to protect the American way of life. The October 15 issue featured a 'Picture of the Week' showing a statue of Jesus's head that survived the devastation of Nagasaki, presented as a symbol of divine judgement.[14] This image suggests to readers that the bombing was divinely sanctioned, as

[11] 'What Ended the War', *Life*, 17 September 1945, p. 37.
[12] 'The 36-Hour War', *Life*, 19 November 1945, pp. 27-35.
[13] 'The Japanese Nation: It Has a History of Feudalism, Nationalism, War and Now Defeat', *Life*, 17 September 1945, pp. 109-117.
[14] 'Statue of Christ Lies Intact in Bombed Nagasaki' *Life*, 15 October 1945, p. 37.

symbols of Christianity—and by extension, Western values—endured, while traditional Japanese structures and temples were obliterated. A common perception of the atomic bomb was that it was a divine gift to the US. President Truman reinforced this idea in his radio report to the American public following the Potsdam Conference, stating, 'We thank God that it has come to us, instead of to our enemies; and we pray that He may guide us to use it in His ways and for His purposes'.[15] By linking Christianity to the decision to bomb Japan, the act was presented as morally justified and guided by a higher power. This framing echoed biblical narratives, where individuals are called by God to carry out difficult tasks in service of a greater good. It also reflected a form of American egoism: the belief that such a powerful invention could only have come from divine favour. This mindset was echoed by Life's readers, as shown in a letter to the editors describing Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a 'direct intervention of the Almighty in human affairs,' suggesting that this idea resonated strongly with the American public.[16]

On the two year anniversary of Hiroshima, *Life* published an article called 'Peace City' focusing on the hardship the victims are recovering from and their focus on reconstruction.[17] The article highlights how the Japanese are adopting American influence in their reconstruction efforts, supported by U.S. financial aid. This narrative is communicated to ease American guilt over the bomb's devastation, portraying the Japanese as unresentful and the United States as taking responsibility for rebuilding. They also refer to Kiyosji Kikawa, a survivor of Hiroshima with severe burns, as a 'victim,' marking their first use of this term to describe anyone affected by the bombing. This linguistic shift from calling the victims 'survivors' or 'casualty' to 'victim' signified a change in attitude, moving from a neutral, detached perspective to one of compassion. By employing this term and describing their lives after the bombing, the publication began to humanise the survivors of Hiroshima. This was a deliberate change made to reframe understanding of the bomb's impact and reflect the moral regret among the American public.

Hales argues that although *Life* directed and modified the views of its audience, a large part of its mass-culture success was its ability to speak to and speak for its readers, primarily made up of the white middle-class.[18] This can be applied to *Life*'s shift toward a more empathetic portrayal of the Japanese and its exploration of the human suffering caused by the atomic bomb can be seen as a response to the growing public questioning of the bomb's use that already existed within their audience. This public opinion had been growing over time but especially due to the John Hersey article on Hiroshima in the New Yorker.

---

[15] Harry S. Truman, *Radio Report to the American People on the Potsdam Conference*, (Washington DC: The White House, 2001) in National Archives.
[16] 'Letters to the Editors: Continued' *Life*, 10 September 1945, p. 8.
[17] 'Peace City', *Life*, 1 September 1947, pp. 39-42.
[18] Hales, p. 105.

Hersey's vivid, humanising first-hand account of the experiences of six survivors of the atomic bombing profoundly influenced public perception of the bomb.[19] Many wrote letters to The New Yorker expressing shame for America's actions and their reaction to it, with one college student regretfully writing in 'I had never thought of the people in the bombed cities as individuals'.[20] Luce was Hersey's main employer, and was annoyed that his successful article was not released under any of Luce's publications but instead with the New Yorker. This frustration may have influenced *Life*'s decision to shift its tone regarding Hiroshima, as it sought to recapture the success of Hersey's article and respond to the public's growing empathy for the Japanese.

In September 1952, *Life*'s release of previously suppressed images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims marked a pivotal moment in American public consciousness regarding the atomic bomb's human cost.[21] These photographs, originally withheld by the U.S. military during its occupation of Japan to prevent backlash against the bomb's use, exposed the raw and brutal effects that words alone could not fully convey. These images stood in stark contrast to the previously published pictures of victims who appeared largely unharmed, highlighting a level of suffering far beyond what had been shown before. While the publication undoubtedly provoked guilt and sorrow among the American public, *Life*'s decision to release the images likely reflected both a response to shifting public opinion and a strategic effort to secure readership by being the first to publish such material, over moral reasoning. The pictures focused on children, women, and Christians to evoke an emotional response from the American audience, fostering empathy and rage. The powerful captions accompanying the images, detailing the victims' tragic fates, intensified this response, turning abstract devastation into a personal tragedy. In later publications, *Life* shows the reaction of select readers through letters sent to the editor, expressing sentiments such as 'I almost wept,' 'Terrible and shocking!' and a feeling of 'heartsickness,' revealing how the images struck distraught in Americans.[22]

Twenty years after the Hiroshima bombing, Japan–US relations had improved due to America's strategic need for a stable democratic ally in East Asia during the Cold War and Japan's need for reconstruction and defence. In this context, *Life* commemorated the anniversary by reflecting on the immense destruction inflicted upon the city and its people.[23] The feature included images of solemn ceremonies at the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park, where individuals paid tribute to the lives lost in the tragedy. The accompanying text adopted a regretful tone, acknowledging the devastating use of the atomic

[19] John Hersey, 'Hiroshima', *The New Yorker*, 23 August 1946.
[20] Boyer, p. 208.
[21] 'When Atom Bomb Struck - Uncensored' *Life*, 29 September 1952, pp. 19-25.
[22] 'Letters to Editors: Atom Bomb Pictures' *Life*, 20 October 1952, p. 7.
[23] 'Ground Zero at Hiroshima' *Life*, 20 August 1965, pp.32-33.

bomb and the subsequent global proliferation of nuclear weapons. The spread highlighted the resilience and recovery of Hiroshima and its inhabitants. It showcased a rebuilt city and its people, with photographs of both young and old generations, symbolising survival and the continuity of life. These images of life and repair contrasted with the alternative the magazine could have chosen—gruesome depictions of survivors still bearing the long-term physical and psychological scars of the bomb. A Gallup poll conducted in late August 1945 revealed that 85% of Americans supported the use of the atomic bomb on Japan.[24] However, by 1965, a similar poll carried out by Louis Harris & Associates showed that this approval had decreased to 70%, with 17% expressing regret over the bombings.[25] As the public approval on the use of the atomic bomb had decreased by this time, this spread could be mirroring the public's desire to move on from the atrocities that the victims suffered and instead focus on their bright future.

Life's coverage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims and survivors evolved over time, reflecting and shaping broader societal changes in attitudes toward the bomb. In its immediate aftermath, the bomb was framed as a technological triumph and a decisive means to end World War II. *Life* initially downplayed the human suffering it caused, aligning with dominant narratives of American exceptionalism and wartime justification. However, *Life* was quick to begin warning readers about the potential consequences of future nuclear conflict, a message that gained particular urgency with the onset of the Nuclear Arms Race. These early warnings contributed to a growing sense of fear and anxiety within the American public over nuclear weapons, which in turn deepened moral unease over the use of the bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The most significant factor behind *Life*'s editorial shift was this growing public disapproval, shaped by Cold War anxieties. In response, *Life* began to grapple more openly with the moral and human implications of the bombings, catering to its readership by engaging with their evolving concerns.

This shift was most powerfully illustrated in 1952, when *Life* became the first publication to release previously suppressed images of victims taken shortly after the bombings. These harrowing photographs exposed the horrific suffering of civilians, evoking empathy and guilt among readers and contributing to a broader emotional reckoning. Over time, *Life*'s portrayal of the Japanese people moved away from earlier depictions of them as strange and aggressive wartime enemies. Instead, they came to be represented as peaceful, resilient victims. In later years, *Life*'s coverage increasingly emphasised the post-war relationship between Japan and the US, highlighting American efforts to aid in Japan's reconstruction. This narrative

[24] Lydia Saad, *Gallup Vault: Americans' Mindset After Hiroshima* (2016) <https://news.gallup.com/vault/191897/gallup-vault-americans-mindset-hiroshima.aspx> [Accessed 20 November 2024].
[25] Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, *Public Opinion about Using Nuclear Weapons* (2015) <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/blog/public-opinion-about-using-nuclear-weapons> [Accessed 20 November 2024].

shift subtly worked to justify the bombings by framing the U.S. not only as a military power but also as a benevolent force accepting responsibility and helping rebuild a former enemy. Through these evolving representations, *Life* both responded to and helped shape the American public's shifting understanding of the atomic bomb's legacy.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

'Awesome Force of Atom Bomb Loosed to Hasten Jap Surrender: Wonder Weapon Developed in Secret Plants Gives Allies Unprecedented Edge in War', *Newsweek*, August 20 1945

'Ground Zero at Hiroshima' *Life*, 20 August 1965

'Letters to Editors: Atom Bomb Pictures' *Life*, 20 October 1952

'Letters to the Editors: Continued' *Life*, 10 September 1945

'Peace City', *Life*, 1 September 1947

'Statue of Christ Lies Intact in Bombed Nagasaki' *Life*, 15 October 1945

'The 36-Hour War', *Life*, 19 November 1945

'The Atomic Age', *Life*, 20 August 1945

'The Atomic Bomb: Its First Explosion Opens a New Era', *Life*, 20 August 1945

'The Japanese Nation: It Has a History of Feudalism, Nationalism, War and Now Defeat', *Life*, 17 September 1945

'The Tokyo Express: A Life Photographer Takes a Ride to Hiroshima on Japan's Best Train', *Life*, 8 October 1945

'War's Ending', *Life*, 20 August 1945

'What Ended the War', *Life*, 17 September 1945

'When Atom Bomb Struck - Uncensored' *Life*, 29 September 1952

Hersey, John, 'Hiroshima', *The New Yorker*, 23 August 1946

Luce, Henry R., 'The American Century', *Life*, 17 February 1941

Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, *Public Opinion about Using Nuclear Weapons* (2015) <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/blog/public-opinion-about-using-nuclear-weapons> [Accessed 20 November 2024]

Saad, Lydia, *Gallup Vault: Americans' Mindset After Hiroshima* (2016) <https://news.gallup.com/vault/191897/gallup-vault-americans-mindset-hiroshima.aspx> [Accessed 20 November 2024]

Truman, Harry S., *Radio Report to the American People on the Potsdam Conference*, (Washington DC: The White House, 2001) in National Archives

Secondary Sources

Boyer, Paul S., *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985)

Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and his American Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2010)

Doss, Erika, 'Introduction: Looking at Life: Rethinking America's Favorite Magazine, 1936-1972', in *Looking at Life Magazine* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), pp. 1-24

Hales, Peter B., 'Imagining the Atomic Age: Life and the Atom', in *Looking at Life Magazine*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), pp. 103-122



How Historians Have Used Imperialism to Analyse and Learn From the 2003 American Invasion of Iraq

William Boyce

How Historians Have Used Imperialism to Analyse and Learn from the 2003 American Invasion of Iraq

William Boyce

Abstract: *The terrorist attacks of the 11th of September 2001 led America, under the leadership of Bush, to war with Iraq. Despite Bush's insistence that Iraq posed a threat to global security, this essay will examine how the Bush administration pushed for war more due to imperialist ambitions than genuine concern for American security. Furthermore the war was a failure, leaving both America and Iraq weakened. This essay reveals how historians have used imperialism to explain this failure and suggest improvements for future US foreign policy. Despite the historiographical warnings of the Iraq War, American actions in the Israeli-Iran conflict (as of June 2025) suggest that the US leadership has failed to heed the lessons of Iraq. Thus, it remains critical to reexamine Iraq in the context of imperialism.*

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 has come to be understood as an occupation rather than a mission for liberation. Indeed, a poll conducted during the Iraq war revealed that two-thirds of Iraqis viewed American troops as "occupying powers."[26] This perception of America rose from the belief that US rhetoric of liberation and freedom served primarily to justify the expansion of its political and economic influence in the Middle East. After 9/11 commentators claimed that "imperialism was central to the United States's understanding of itself."[27] Thus, a large number of historians have used ideas of imperialism to explain the Iraq War, and more broadly the war on terror. This essay will demonstrate how imperialism has been used as a tool with which to examine the neoconservative ideology in Bush's cabinet which advised him to go to war in Iraq, the self-serving interests which the US had in Iraq, and the reasons for the Iraq war's failure. This essay will also demonstrate how historians do not believe that the Iraq war is the first instance of American imperialism but argue that awareness of the imperial nature of American engagement can help prevent further disastrous international conflicts such as Iraq. Recognising and critiquing imperialism also gives a greater voice to the victims of US policy in the Middle East, who did not ask for nor support American intervention. Thus, imperialism as a lens through which the Iraq war can be studied allows

[26] Atul Kohli, *Imperialism and the Developing World: how Britain and the United States shaped the Global Periphery*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 384.

[27] Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller, 'Rethinking Imperialism Today', in *Exceptional State: Contemporary U. S. Culture and the New Imperialism,* ed. by Ashley Dawson, Malini Johar Schueller, and John Carlos Rowe (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 1-33 (p. 1).

historians to challenge the dominant narrative of America as the beacon of liberty and freedom across the globe.

The most aggressive advocates for war in Iraq were the neoconservatives in Bush's cabinet, such as Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld. Historians such as Jerry Harris and Itty Abraham have drawn parallels between imperialist policy and neoconservative policy and have therefore used imperialism as a tool to criticise the neoconservative thinking behind the war on terror.[28] The origins of neoconservatism lie in a break from traditional liberalism in favour of greater use of military force and confrontation. The neoconservatives argued that the US, as a beacon of freedom, had an obligation to export its version of liberal capitalist democracy to the rest of the world, using military means if necessary. Historians using imperialism as a lens for analysis, such as Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller, also highlight how capitalism can often encourage domination and exploitation.[29] Thus, US policy which shifts from liberal ideals to neoconservative ideals involves a shift from "hegemony to dominance" and from "consent to coercion," and begins to sound notably more imperialistic.[30] Vassilis Fouskas and Búlent Gókay therefore argue that the neoconservative policy in Iraq was not only aimed at freeing Baghdad of dictatorship, but was the first step in America's attempt to extend its authority into the region to advance its own political and economic interests, as well as those of its allied states, such as Israel.[31] Historians such as Atul Kohli likewise note how ideas of imperialist expansionism and empire ring loud in statements such as Condoleezza Rice's claim that neoliberalism did not have to stop at the "edge of Islam."[32] Consequently, historians such as Rashid Khalidi warn that if the neoconservative ideology prevails, American occupation in states such as Iraq could transform into a quest for global empire, similar to empires of the past. Though the US eventually withdrew from Iraq and Afghanistan, President Donald Trump's rhetoric regarding Canada, Greenland and now Iran once again suggests that the American ideology leans towards expansion and domination, as predicted by historians.

The neoconservative ideology, in its indication that some states are superior to others, therefore draws parallels with beliefs of racial superiority in imperialism. Historians on democracy promotion, Shahram Akbarzadeh and Benjamin MacQueen, describe neoconservative democracy promotion as "vindicationalist," seeing certain states such as Iraq as naturally illiberal and therefore requiring a superior

[28] Jerry Harris, 'US Imperialism after Iraq', *Race and Class*, 50(1), (2008), pp. 37-58; Itty Abraham, 'US Imperialism and the Iraq War', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(52), (2005), pp. 5446-5447.
[29] Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller.
[30] Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller, (p. 17).
[31] Vassilis Fouskas and Búlent Gókay, *The New American Imperialism: Bush's War on Terror and Blood for Oil,* (Westport: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2005).
[32] Atul Kohli, *Imperialism and the Developing World,* p. 375.

guardian state.[33] Globalisation scholars Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky similarly argue that imperial ideas of inferiority can be seen in the neoconservative belief that some states have become delinquent due to activities such as harbouring terrorists and fostering dictators, and have therefore lost their right to liberty.[34] Thus it is the duty of civilised states to curtail the freedom of others. This is clearly not talk of democracy promotion or counterterrorism, it is imperial domination. Another imperial strain in the neoconservative worldview is the belief that American interference will be celebrated in the states they occupy, with neoconservative commentator Max Boot even writing that "Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen."[35] In a similar way, Khalidi notes how the American mindset sees its values as "right and true for every person in every society," and therefore the imposition of these values into states like Iraq is America's duty, with no concern for how the people of other cultures may want to live.[36] Historians have therefore demonstrated how the neoconservative ideology in Iraq looked very similar to imperialist ideologies of the past, which helps to explain why the US was so committed to staying in Iraq after they had defeated Saddam Hussein. It was not just regime change that the neoconservatives were after, it was domination.

Secondly, imperialism has provided historians with a lens through which to analyse the motivations behind America's war in Iraq. Most notably, the Middle East is an important region for America due to its rich supply of oil (and thus wealth). Thus, historians such as Atul Kholi have analysed the American invasion of Iraq as the first step in an imperial mission to secure access to the oil-rich countries and incorporate them "within the American orbit."[37] While 9/11 was certainly a catalyst for retaliation in the Middle East, military historians such as Thomas Ricks note that the US government had been looking to invade Iraq in the 1990s, eager to oust Hussein's dangerous regime but likewise motivated to install a friendly regime which would allow US access to Iraqi oil.[38] This contradicts Bush's claims that war in Iraq was for the purposes of counterterrorism, the neutralisation of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and regime change in favour of democracy. Instead, cynical historians such as Walden Bello argue that America "had no choice in Iraq [because]… the country swims on a sea of oil," access to which was under threat

[33] Shahram Akbarzadeh and Benjamin MacQueen, 'Democracy Promotion: An Unfortunate Legacy' in *American Democracy Promotion in the Changing Middle East: From Bush to Obama,* ed. by Shahram Akbarzadeh et al. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012), pp.1-8 (p. 3).
[34] Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky, 'World Empire – or a World of Empires?' in *The Politics of Empire: Globalisation in Crisis,* ed. by Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky, (London: Pluto Press, 2004), pp. 1-45.
[35] Max Boot, *The Case for American Empire* (2001), *The Weekly Standard* https://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/courses01/rrtw/boot.htm [Accessed 29 December 2024], para. 9.
[36] Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), p. 3.
[37] Atul Kohli, *Imperialism and the Developing World*, p. 365.
[38] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

with Saddam Hussein in power.[39] Indeed, Kohli notes how the only government building protected by American forces during the Iraqi insurgency was the oil ministry - "prime evidence", he suggests, that the US was after oil.[40] Thus, a clear prioritisation of oil over all other motivations for war leads international affairs historian Fraser Cameron to note how war against Iraq, "who posed no immediate threat but whose defeat did offer economic advantages," looked similar to past imperial expeditions for economic gain.[41] Therefore historians have used imperialism to reveal the true American intentions behind war in Iraq. Counterterrorism and the promotion of democracy were useful political tools to win public support, but studying through an imperialistic lens reveals how the real American interest in Iraq was oil, so much so that historians such as Michael T. Klare have labelled the Iraq war as a "resource war."[42]

Marxist historian David Harvey goes further to suggest that the auctioning of Iraqi assets to American corporations gave the perception that America was out to "loot" Iraq.[43] As such, the American mission in Iraq transformed from an attempt to gain access to oil-wealth to outright economic exploitation of Iraq. Fouskas and Gókay argue that such exploitation was a result of America's economic weakness, which encouraged an aggressive rush for military and economic gains.[44] This argument is certainly supported by the growing costs of the war. What was meant to be a short and effective conflict to overturn Hussein's regime turned into an eight-year long invasion which cost the US $727 billion.[45] It was clear even during the conflict that the US needed economic support. Hence, it is all too easy to draw comparisons between the American desire for economic domination and the exploitative imperial policies of Britain and France in the past. Moreover, historian and lecturer Sungar Savran goes further to suggest that it was not just economic domination that America was after in Iraq, but also political domination, arguing that Bush was "waging war for… hegemony".[46] The politics and economics of imperial oppression go hand in hand, as Freeman and Kagarlitsky note, "the purpose of political domination is economic advantage."[47] Historians have therefore not only used imperialism as a tool with which to shed light on the economic motivations

[39] Walden Bello, *Dilemmas of Domination: The Unmaking of the American Empire,* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), p. 54.
[40] Atul Kohli, *Imperialism and the Developing World*, p. 379.
[41] Fraser Cameron, *US Foreign Policy After The Cold War: Global Hegemon Or Reluctant Sheriff?*, (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2005), p. 152.
[42] Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict,* (New York: Metropolitan, 2001).
[43] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 215.
[44] Vassilis Fouskas and Búlent Gókay, *The New American Imperialism*.
[45] Nicholas Anastacio and Mark Murray, 'The Iraq war — by the numbers', *NBC News*, 20 March 2023.
[46] Sungar Savran, 'Globalisation and the New World Order: The New Dynamics of Imperialism and War' in *The Politics of Empire: Globalisation in Crisis,* ed. by Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky, (London: Pluto Press, 2004), pp. 117-153, (p. 118).
[47] Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky, 'World Empire – or a World of Empires?', (p. 28).

behind America's invasion of Iraq, but also as the very reason for war itself. America did not hide its ambition to act as a dominant empire, as the unmistakable exploitation in Iraq demonstrated. Thus, even commentators at the time recognised America's attempt at imperialism in Iraq, with Canadian politician Michael Ignatieff asking in 2003 "what word but 'empire' describes the thing that America is becoming?"[48]

Thirdly, historians have used imperialism to explain why the Iraq war was ultimately a failure for the US. Whilst many recognise that Iraq represents the most obvious attempt at creating an American empire since 1945, they also acknowledge that it signals the end of American hegemony. Where the British faced revolution in America and rebellion in Ireland, the US faced nationalist resistance in Iraq. While this hindered US attempts at creating stability and establishing an Iraqi government, it also meant that Iraq did not turn into the US-friendly state that Bush had hoped it would, therefore threatening American dominance and access to oil in the Middle East. Historians such as David Ryan argue that resistance occurs because not everyone will want to strive towards one system of governance (in America's case liberal capitalism) and consequently conclude that imperialism is destined to fail.[49] As demonstrated by the Iraqi insurgencies, which targeted both US troops and the government that they propped up, resistance to the American attempt to spread their system of government was rife in Iraq. Other historians such as Antony G. Hopkins reach the same conclusion through analysis of the decline and fall of previous empires, and accordingly suggest that the US should "learn from Britain" and other failed empires and approach the Middle East in a less imperialist way.[50] Historians therefore also use lessons from imperialism to advise America on how to act in the future. Nye, for example, recognises Ryan's argument that the American system will not be globally welcomed and therefore instructs the US to "incorporate global interests" into their Middle Eastern policy.[51] In a similar vein, Michael Cox warns America that "hubris can easily lead to its own nemesis."[52] Indeed, Ikenberry also warns of "the oldest trap of powerful imperial states: self-encirclement," arguing that unilateral and unconstrained American imperialism will naturally incur backlash across the Middle East.[53]

---

[48] Michael Ignatieff, *The American Empire: The Burden* (2003), *The New York Times Magazine* https://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/05/magazine/the-american-empire-the-burden.html [accessed 31 December 2024].
[49] David Ryan, *Frustrated empire: US foreign policy, 9/11 to Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2007).
[50] Antony G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 735.
[51] Joseph S. Nye, *The paradox of American power: why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 171.
[52] Michael Cox, 'American power before and after 11 September: dizzy with success?', *International Affairs*, 78(2), (2002), pp. 261-276 (p. 264).
[53] G. John Ikenberry, 'America's Imperial Ambition', *Foreign Affairs*, 81(5), (2002), pp. 44-60 (p. 58).

Thus, historians use imperialism as a way to predict the end of American hegemony, but also as a device with which to warn politicians and guide US policy towards Iraq.

Going further, some historians believe that American imperialism will not only cause the decline of US power, but that the turn to imperialist policy in Iraq is a sign of American weakness itself. Harvey, for example, argues that the Iraq venture proves that the US shows "economic and political weakness" more than strength.[54] This is because, as commentators such as Wallerstein argue, the rise of powers such as China means that the US has lost its global financial supremacy, and it therefore must turn to military power to maintain the perception of American hegemony.[55] Thus, historians have argued that a decline in American hegemony is both the cause for and the consequence of imperialism in Iraq. American economic weakness also led US leaders to do "imperialism on the cheap," relying on technology rather than manpower.[56] Whilst this was effective at defeating Saddam Hussein's regime, historians have argued that it was insufficient for post-conflict reconstruction, and therefore resulted in eight more years of American involvement in Iraq. This struggle was also influenced by the perception that American troops were "despised occupiers" rather than "hero liberators."[57] The weakness of US imperialism has therefore been described as the reason why America failed to stabilise Iraq.

Finally, historians have examined the American war in Iraq in the broader context of American imperialism, which many argue has been a constant feature of US foreign policy since the second world war. For example, Edward Said has claimed that anti-Arab sentiment is "the last legitimate form of prejudice" in a long history of the American vilification of foreigners, from the Germans and the Japanese to the Vietnamese.[58] Stephen Bronner also argues that America's leaders have never had much use for multilateral institutions or law, and therefore areas such as Latin America have been subject to US imperialism since the 1823 Monroe Doctrine.[59] Harvey also sees the American war in Iraq as a continuation of the trend for the Middle Eastern region in general, arguing that "every foreign power" that has sent troops

[54] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism,* p. 221.
[55] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power: The US in a Chaotic World,* (New York: New Press, 2003).
[56] Atul Kohli, *Imperialism and the Developing World*, p. 378.
[57] John Koopman, *McCoy's Marines: Darkside to Baghdad,* (St. Paul, 2009), p. 212.
[58] Stephen E. Bronner, *Blood in the Sand: Imperial Fantasies, Right-Wing Ambitions, and the Erosion of American Democracy*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), p. 2.
[59] Stephen E. Bronner, *Blood in the Sand.*

into the region in the name of liberation has behaved as a "violent occupier."[60] Historians have therefore used imperialism to demonstrate the longevity of ideas of empire in the American, and the Middle Eastern, mindset. Authors such as Savran even discuss the idea that globalisation in general is an imperialist project, spearheaded by the US.[61] From the Cold War onwards America had worked towards creating "an informal empire of economic expansion" through globalisation, to which war in Iraq was the next step but the first to require a large-scale military operation.[62] Indeed, the idea that a state can be formally free but subordinate to a transnational institution has existed in globalisation theory for decades. Iraq demonstrates the same sort of subordination but in relation to another state rather than a transnational institution. Thus, historians can also link American imperialism in Iraq to a wider criticism of globalisation in general.

Here, however, imperialist ideas are not sufficient to analyse the full extent of America's expansionism in the Middle East. The crucial difference between past instances of imperialism and America's quest for worldwide influence, starting with Iraq, is that the empires of Britain, France, Germany and others were never truly "global" and "all-encompassing."[63] Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, America's unipolar position allowed it to impose itself upon the world unchecked, and consequently it could be more expansionist.[64] Furthermore, the current political climate regards occupation, domination and exploitation as negative ideals of the past. As shown, imperialist studies of America's involvement in Iraq have been critical rather than approving of US imperialism. America consequently now must deal with a political climate which will disapprove of imperialistic policies. Whilst there are obvious differences between imperialism of the past and America's imperialism in Iraq, the current understanding nonetheless gives historians the opportunity to check America's unipolar power and educate leaders on the dangers of imperialism. The Iraq war may have been a new kind of expansionist imperialism, but it offers the same lessons as the empires of previous centuries.

To conclude, historians have used ideas of imperialism to examine and criticise the Iraq War, and crucially to warn future administrations of the dangers of imperialism and neoconservatism for American foreign policy. This essay has demonstrated how imperialism has been used to analyse the neoconservative ideology behind the policy makers who pushed for the Iraq war, and how historians have also used

[60] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism,* p. 216.
[61] Sungar Savran, 'Globalisation and the New World Order: The New Dynamics of Imperialism and War'.
[62] Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller, 'Rethinking Imperialism Today', (p. 7).
[63] Vassilis Fouskas and Búlent Gókay, *The New American Imperialism,* p. 229.
[64] David Ryan, *Frustrated Empire.*

imperialism to criticise America's economic exploitation of Iraq. As such, the true motivations for war in Iraq were imperialist domination and exploitation, rather than the promotion of freedom. Furthermore, this essay has shown how historians have used imperialism to explain the failure of the Iraq war, suggesting that imperial states are destined to fail. The Iraq war is therefore homogenous with imperialist projects of the past, despite its modern context. It is important to remember, when studying the Iraq war, that those who argue that America 'lost' Iraq miss the point that Iraq was not America's to win in the first place. This sort of implied ownership enables imperialist policy rather than preventing it. A criticism of imperial ideas can help to prevent this sort of misunderstanding and give a louder voice to the victims of imperial policy. Crucially, therefore, ideas of imperialism allow historians to counter such ideas and encourage policy makers to heed the lessons of the past and the lessons of the Iraq war to prevent future imperialism. So far, the failure of America's imperialist ambitions "does not seem to impede their zealous reapplication."[65] Indeed, Trump's rhetoric regarding regime change and weapons of mass destruction in Iran sounds concerningly similar to Bush's rhetoric in the early 2000s. A greater focus on American imperialism after the Iraq war may be able to break this cycle and prevent another failure like the Iraq War.

[65] Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller, 'Rethinking Imperialism Today', (p. 8).

Bibliography

Abraham, Itty, 'US Imperialism and the Iraq War', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(52), (2005), pp. 5446-5447

Anastacio, Nicholas, and Mark Murray, 'The Iraq war — by the numbers', *NBC News*, 20 March 2023

Akbarzadeh, Shahram, and Benjamin MacQueen, 'Democracy Promotion: An Unfortunate Legacy' in *American Democracy Promotion in the Changing Middle East: From Bush to Obama,* ed. by Shahram Akbarzadeh et al. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012), pp.1-8

Bello, Walden, *Dilemmas of Domination: The Unmaking of the American Empire,* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005)

Boot, Max, *The Case for American Empire* (2001), *The Weekly Standard* https://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/courses01/rrtw/boot.htm [Accessed 29 December 2024]

Bronner, Stephen E., *Blood in the Sand: Imperial Fantasies, Right-Wing Ambitions, and the Erosion of American Democracy*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005)

Cameron, Fraser, *US Foreign Policy After The Cold War: Global Hegemon Or Reluctant Sheriff?*, (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2005)

Cox, Michael, 'American power before and after 11 September: dizzy with success?', *International Affairs*, 78(2), (2002), pp. 261-276

Dawson, Ashley and Malini Johar Schueller, 'Rethinking Imperialism Today', in *Exceptional State: Contemporary U. S. Culture and the New Imperialism,* ed. by Ashley Dawson, Malini Johar Schueller, and John Carlos Rowe, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 1-33

Fouskas, Vassilis, and Búlent Gókay, *The New American Imperialism: Bush's War on Terror and Blood for Oil,* (Westport: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2005)

Freeman, Alan and Boris Kagarlitsky, 'World Empire – or a World of Empires?' in *The Politics of Empire: Globalisation in Crisis,* ed. by Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky, (London: Pluto Press, 2004), pp. 1-45

Harris, Jerry, 'US Imperialism after Iraq', *Race and Class*, 50(1), (2008), pp. 37-58

Harvey, David, *The New Imperialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Hopkins, Antony G., *American Empire: A Global History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018)

Ignatieff, Michael, *The American Empire: The Burden,* (2003), *The New York Times Magazine* https://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/05/magazine/the-american-empire-the-burden.html [accessed 31 December 2024]

Ikenberry, G. John, 'America's Imperial Ambition', *Foreign Affairs*, 81(5), (2002), pp. 44-60

Khalidi, Rashid, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004)

Klare, Michael T., *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict,* (New York: Metropolitan, 2001)

Kohli, Atul, *Imperialism and the Developing World: how Britain and the United States shaped the Global Periphery,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

Koopman, John, *McCoy's Marines: Darkside to Baghdad,* (St. Paul, 2009)

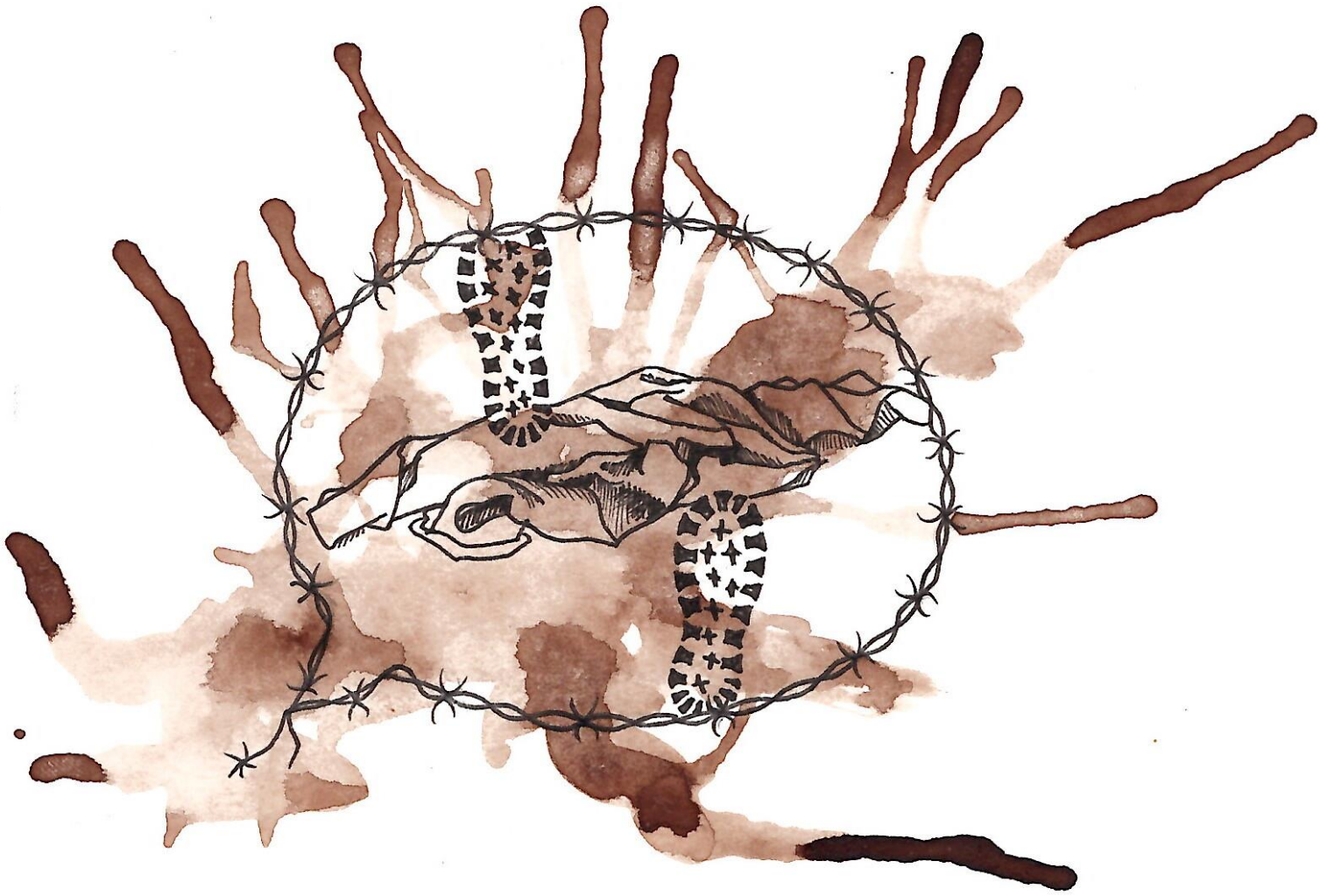
Nye, Joseph S., *The paradox of American power: why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Ricks, Thomas E., *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007)

Ryan, David, *Frustrated empire: US foreign policy, 9/11 to Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2007)

Savran, Sungar, 'Globalisation and the New World Order: The New Dynamics of Imperialism and War' in *The Politics of Empire: Globalisation in Crisis,* ed. by Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky, (London: Pluto Press, 2004), pp. 117-153

Wallerstein, Immanuel, *The Decline of American Power: The US in a Chaotic World,* (New York: New Press, 2003)



Women, War, and Liberation? A Feminist Critique of the U.S.-Led War on Terror in Iraq

Hannah Lydford

Women, War and Liberation? A Feminist Critique of the U.S.-Led War on Terror in Iraq

Hannah Lydford

Abstract: *The 11 September 2001 attacks marked a turning point in U.S. foreign policy, leading to the 'War on Terror' and the invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2003. This essay critically examines how the Bush administration weaponised the rhetoric of women's rights to justify military intervention, perpetuating Western stereotypes of 'oppressed Muslim women' in need of saving. By analysing dominant narratives of 'security,' 'violence,' and 'liberation,' this essay challenges the portrayal of military intervention as a libertarian act and highlights its detrimental impact on Iraqi women. By incorporating testimonies from Iraqi women and case studies from other conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Somalia, this essay argues that the 'War on Terror' not only failed to 'liberate' women but actively worsened their security and socio-political standing. The findings highlight the need for a feminist critique of military interventions that claim to be driven by humanitarian concerns while ultimately perpetuating structural violence and oppression.*

Introduction

The events of 11 September 2001 (9/11) marked a defining moment for US foreign policy, initiating the 'War on Terror', as the decision to invade on 20 March 2003 fundamentally reshaped the socio-political landscape of Iraq. The purpose of this essay is to understand how the Bush administration exploited Iraqi women to justify their foreign policy agenda, capitalising on the Western notion of the 'oppressed Muslim women' in need of 'saving,' to drive the dominant narratives of 'security', 'violence' and 'liberation.' This essay will emphasise how the dominant discourses which framed the military invasion as a path for freedom ultimately worsened Iraqi women's position in society.

First, I will introduce the dominant narrative of 'security,' 'violence,' and 'liberation,' analysing how the media inflamed stereotypes of Muslim women as victims through reductionist views. I will critically engage with these prevailing discourses through the analytical frameworks of transnational and postcolonial feminism, examining how the portrayal of Muslim women as victims served to undermine their identity and agency. The lives of Iraqi women have been devastated by a humanitarian catastrophe, marked by hostile gender-based violence that has stripped them of security and freedom to engage in public life. This challenges the Western 'saving' narrative that claims the war was a liberatory act. Following this, I will examine how the removal of socio-economic freedoms for Iraqi women has caused negative impacts

on their psychological and economic security. I will draw on women's lived experiences in post-invasion Iraq to avoid essentializing their agency and to develop a more nuanced understanding of how the War on Terror has affected their lives. These insights are drawn from a qualitative study conducted by Bidrea Alnasser, a political scholar who explored the social and personal impacts of the conflict on Iraqi women, highlighting their complex identities in the aftermath of war. I will also draw on examples from the attacks on Afghanistan and other conflict areas such as Iran and Somalia, to allow for a deeper understanding of how women's rights are used to serve political agendas.

An Introduction to the Dominant Narratives

The dominant U.S. narratives of 'security', 'violence', and 'liberation underpinned the Bush administration's justification for the military invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2003. Framing itself as the defender of the "civilized world against the forces of evil," the U.S. sought to "disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and free the Iraqi people."[66] Within this rhetoric, 'violence' was portrayed as a necessary tool to dismantle Saddam Hussein's tyranny, restore order through democratisation, and ultimately deliver freedom, particularly for Iraqi women, by dismantling the Ba'ath regime.

The Western media was a central actor in driving these dominant narratives and mobilising political and military hostility towards countries like Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Political Historian Anders Romarheim notes, "'*The Wall Street Journal*' supported war with Iraq before the Bush Administration", as it advocated for the toppling of Saddam Hussein immediately after the 9/11 attacks.[67] Its distinctly right-leaning editorial stance, particularly evident in its online publications, was highly influential—echoed not only by neoconservative outlets such as *Fox News* and *The Weekly Standard*, but also by more liberal-leaning publications like *The New York Times*, illustrating how dominant pro-intervention narratives often transcended traditional political divides in the post-9/11 media landscape. On 21 May 2001, the *Journal's* published the article '*We can Topple Saddam'*, which fervently stated "either Saddam must go, and go quickly or be accommodated."[68] Another on 20 September 2002, '*The case for Toppling Saddam'*, appealed to US policymakers, that "if you take out Saddam, Saddam's regime, I guarantee you that it will have

[66] Steans, Jill, 'Telling Stories about Women and Gender in the War on Terror', *Global Society*, 22.1 (2008) pp.162 and Mohtashamipour, Sara, '"Freedom from What?": Iraqi Women's Narratives from the 2003 U.S.-Led War' (2014) pp.10

[67] Romarheim, Anders G., *War at Home: Strategic Narratives of the War on Terrorism* (2015) pp.7

[68] Chalabi, Ahmed, 'We Can Topple Saddam', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2001 https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB990397591466976021 [accessed 16 December 2024]

enormous positive reverberations on the region."[69] The assertive and overly positive rhetoric served as a powerful tool for political advocacy, strategically leveraging the post-9/11 climate of fear to provide moral justification and urgency for the invasion of Iraq. Additionally, these reductionist views helped construct a narrative in which supporting intervention equated to upholding security and freedom, while opposing it suggested complicity with tyranny. This illustrates how the Bush administration was encouraged by the *Journal's* favourable position to invade Iraq and acted as an agenda setter to drive the dominant narratives.

Other media forms, such as the memoir written by Jean Sasson '*Mayada, Daughter of Iraq: One Woman's Survival Under Saddam* Hussein', 2003, also reinforced reductive stereotypes which underpinned the Bush administration's foreign policy agenda. Sasson presented Muslim women as "uneducated" or "oppressed" and Muslim men as "terrorist" or "violent men", reinforcing '*Orientalist'* attitudes which perpetuate Eastern cultures as inferior and in need of saving.[70] As Adam Hodge, a sociocultural linguist, notes "through language we construct narrative."[71] Sasson adopts Western hegemonic narratives to obscure the agency of Muslim women, by playing into the 'white saviour complex.' This strengthens the narrative that the 'War on Terror' was a moral crusade to liberate women from patriarchal oppression, mirroring the Bush administration's rhetoric, where the 'freedom' of Iraqi women was frequently invoked to justify military intervention. In the world of mass media, Muslim women are exploited as sorrow stories, and as Sherene Razack, a leading scholar in critical race theory and feminist legal studies, states, "steal their pain for profit."[72] These stories of the 'oppressed Muslim woman' are key to the normalisation of political and military hostilities in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, the language of women's rights was weaponised to construct the 'War on Terror' as morally righteous, portraying violence as a necessary means to provide liberation and security in an oppressive society.

Deconstructing the 'saving narrative'

Feminist critiques of the 'War on Terror' reveal how the portrayal of Muslim women as victims overshadows their agency and serves political agendas rather than addressing their needs. The Bush administration often framed Muslim women through gendered and racializing frameworks which essentialised and diminished them, representing a concerted effort to construct a 'saving narrative.' As

[69] Netanyahu, Benjamin, 'The Case for Toppling Saddam', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2002) https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1032480479501791755

[70] Mohtashamipour, Sara, '"Freedom from What?": Iraqi Women's Narratives from the 2003 U.S.-Led War' (2014) pp.29

[71] Hodges, Adam, *The 'War on Terror' Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) pp.4

[72] Quoted in Mohtashamipour, Sara, '"Freedom from What?": Iraqi Women's Narratives from the 2003 U.S.-Led War' (2014) pp.36

Cynthia Enloe, an American political theorist and feminist, asserts, women's victimization in war or political arenas is not inevitable but contingent upon decisions made by those in power—decisions that remain subject to challenge.[73] Through this, Enloe critiques the 'saving narrative', which manipulates the lived realities of Muslim women as oppressed, passive, voiceless victims, and is deliberately constructed by those in power to advance their political goals.

Through the rhetoric of political elites, women's rights became inextricable with the slogan 'War on Terror.' Laura Bush, who served as First Lady of the United States from 2001 to 2009 claimed that "the fight against terrorism is also the fight for the rights and dignity of women", shaping public perceptions that the military invasion was not just politically motivated, but also driven by a humanitarian cause, strategically increasing public support.[74] However, Gayatri Spivak's critique of "white men rescuing brown women from brown men" captures the colonialist attitudes found within the 'saving' narrative and epitomises how reductive representations of Muslim are exploited to justify military interventions.[75] Western portrayals of women in Afghanistan and Iraq frequently positioned Western men as morally superior to Muslim men, thereby casting themselves as the natural saviours of Muslim women from victimisation.

Christina Ho, a postcolonial feminist scholar, challenges these narratives by exposing their political opportunism. She argues that "the sudden concern for women has come from neoconservatives like George W. Bush, who are not known for their support for feminism."[76] Her critique is grounded in a broader postcolonial feminist perspective, which rejects the instrumentalisation of women's rights to serve imperial agendas, and highlights how such discourses erase the agency of Muslim women. In this context, protecting women's rights became a powerful political rationale for U.S. foreign policy in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, the Bush administration demonstrated little genuine concern for the structural issues facing these women, distorting their lived realities to legitimise military action. Abu Lughod echoes Spivak, arguing that Western narratives have adopted patriarchal interpretations of Islamic societies, illustrating how they misunderstand the diversity of their culture. The concept of '*Orientalism*', coined by Edward Said, points towards the ways the West has framed Eastern cultures. The West essentialises women by their race, religion, and nationality, constructing them in negative terms to bolster the West's position as superior. They are viewed as *'Other'* to the Western subject, reducing them to symbols of oppression, which

[73] Ibid.
[74] Steans, Jill, 'Telling Stories about Women and Gender in the War on Terror', *Global Society*, 22.1 (2008) pp.162
[75] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) pp.3
[76] Ho, Christina, 'Responding to Orientalist Feminism', *Australian Feminist Studies*, (2010), pp.1

dehumanises Muslim women, and as Spivak notes, can be interpreted as a form of "epistemological violence."[77] Thus, the 'saving narrative' demonstrates how '*Orientalist'* and marginalised views of women were adopted. Arguably, it was the US foreign policy agenda which created the image of the oppressed Muslim women, undermining their lived experiences through manipulative rhetoric, and instead producing a deterioration in women's circumstances and position.

The generalisation made about the clothing of Muslim women, reinforces how the US fuelled the 'saving narrative.' The veil has been discussed as a tangible sign of oppression and was a convenient symbol which set up the 'saving narrative', much like how it became "common popular knowledge" that Afghan women were forced by the Taliban, to wear the burqa.[78] But many forms of coverings, which have various meanings in different cultures, and as Abu Lughod notes, "should not be confused with a lack of agency," warning against the danger of such essentialising views.[79] For Afghan women in Pashtun regions, the veil was a local form of covering, influenced by Southwest Asian traditions, symbolising modesty, and thus respectability. For Islam, the hijab is rooted in its cultural history since the 1970s, a time of increased religious conservatism, which is seen as a sign of piety, educated sophistication and modernity, as characteristically, this form of modest dress is adopted by women hoping to achieve professional careers. While it is important to recognise that such dress codes can reflect patriarchal structures, wherein women may receive greater respect or protection based on their adherence to modesty standards defined by men, this does not preclude women's agency. It is crucial to understand that such practices are not necessarily imposed, but often consciously embraced as meaningful expressions of historical and cultural identity.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that modest dress can also function as a protective strategy within patriarchal contexts, where women face harassment, social judgement, or even violence if they are perceived as immodest. This reality complicates the binary between oppression and freedom. As post-colonial feminist scholars such as Abu-Lughod and Saba Mahmood argue, agency is not exercised in a vacuum, but within social structures that may constrain, shape, or enable it. Therefore, veiling can simultaneously reflect religious devotion, cultural identity, and a pragmatic response to gendered risks. Abu Lughod points out, "why would women suddenly become immodest…and suddenly throw off markers of respectability?"[80] Her point underscores the need to resist applying a universalist framework of liberation that assumes all women strive for the same future Western feminists might imagine. Women across

[77] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988)
[78] Abu-Lughod, Lila, 'Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others', *American Anthropologist*, (2002) pp.785
[79] Ibid. pp.786
[80] Ibid.pp.785

different cultures envision liberation in multiple, culturally grounded ways. The veil, then, should not be simplistically read as a symbol of unfreedom. In many cases, it has facilitated women's movement into public and professional spaces, allowing them to redefine traditional gender roles on their own terms. Abu-Lughod urges us to view Muslim women within their historical, cultural, and ideological contexts—recognising their agency and the complexity of their choices. Had the Bush administration approached these women with such cultural humility, it may have avoided the reductive and ultimately harmful portrayals that served to justify military intervention under Saddam Hussein's regime.

Whilst many Iraqi women suffered human rights abuses, particularly within sectarianism, with the 1991 Shia uprising being one example, the relatively progressive mobilisation of women was ignored by American politicians. Bidrea Alnasser, a politics scholar specialising in postcolonial feminism and feminist security studies, conducted a study titled *'Iraqi Women's Narratives of Identity and Security,'* which examines how Iraqi refugee women articulate their identities and experiences of security in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq invasion. Drawing on interviews with 19 refugee women, primarily based in Jordan, Alnasser's research highlights a diverse range of perspectives shaped by differences in religiosity, sectarian and ethnic affiliations, and political ideologies. Alnasser explores how many women like Sameera, who lived throughout the pre- and post-invasion period, refer to it in nostalgic terms. Sameera recollects how prior to the invasion, Iraq was a "harmonious society" and remembers regarding Saddam Hussein as a "father" figure she worshipped every day.[81] Another Iraqi woman, Shayma, recalls how "life before 2003 had its drawbacks, but nevertheless was a stable and safe period."[82] The history of women's rights begins in 1952 with the creation of 'The Iraqi Women's League', which had over 40,000 members.[83] It heavily influenced the 1959 constitution, shaping laws governing marriage, divorce, and child custody, providing women with far more rights than their Middle Eastern counterparts. From the 1960s Iraqi women were encouraged to participate in education and join the workforce. They had an increasing importance within the public sphere, and male dominated sectors in engineering, medicine, and law. The economic sanctions imposed as result of the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 inhibited this progress by increasing unemployment and shifted the inclusive attitudes towards more conservative gender norms.[84] However, the degree of liberalisation which had dominated the first half of Saddam Hussein's regime reveals how the US viewed women's rights in selective terms, so they could use their victimisation to constitute a respectable justification for war. Thus, the lived experiences of Iraqi women like Shayma and Sameera contrasts the

[81] Alnasser, Bidrea, *Iraqi Women's Narratives of Identity and Security: Challenging Dominant Knowledge* (2018). pp.184
[82] Ibid. pp.138
[83] Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, and Nicola Pratt, 'Women in Iraq: Beyond the Rhetoric', *Middle East Reports*, (2006), pp.78
[84] Ibid. pp.78

Western misrepresentation of Muslim women as victims of systemic oppression, challenging the dominant narratives which repressed their liberty and security.

Feminist critiques of violence

Violence was framed within dominant Western narratives as a necessary means to dismantle Saddam Hussein's regime and eliminate the alleged threat of 'Weapons of Mass Destruction.' However, the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq not only failed to achieve long-term stability, but directly contributed to the collapse of state institutions and the rule of law. This dismantling of existing structures—particularly the disbanding of the Iraqi army and police—created a severe security vacuum in which armed militias and criminal actors operated unchecked. As Al-Ali and Pratt argue in their analysis of gender dynamics in Iraq, heightened militarisation correlates with increased masculine aggression, fostering a climate in which gender-based violence proliferated.[85] In inviting women to narrate their own experiences of gender-based violence in post-invasion Iraq, Alnasser discovered that "security was a predominant and unifying concern."[86] Heba, who grew up during Iraq's post-invasion period, describes the brutally graphic scenes she was often exposed to. She recalls "we would walk around and find corpses on the streets…" and how parents would often ask "should I send my daughter to school and risk her being kidnapped or wait until they take her virginity away…"[87] High levels of sexual harassment, rape, forced prostitution, kidnapping, and trafficking, have dominated the lives of women which has unsurprisingly created a "climate of fear."[88] Over 400 women have been raped by Iraqi militia and security members, and in some cases, US coalition members, since the war's end. The actual number is likely higher due to underreporting driven by fear of honor killings, which rose by 70% in Basra between 2004 and 2008.[89] Honour killings refer to the practice of murdering a female family member who has been subject to sexual abuse. Virginity is regarded as a sacred and highly prized notion with Iraqi culture. Thus, the violation of a woman's virginity is believed to bring shame onto the family, or community. The extremity of this is reflected in the acts of desperate women who "beg" police to keep them in stations or prison cells to prevent them being killed.[90] A society in which women are compelled to conceal experiences of sexual violence in order to protect their lives cannot

[85] Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, and Nicola Pratt, 'Women in Iraq: Beyond the Rhetoric', *Middle East Reports*, (2006), pp.742
[86] Alnasser, Bidrea, *Iraqi Women's Narratives of Identity and Security: Challenging Dominant Knowledge* (2018). pp.154
[87] Ibid.pp.135
[88] Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, 'Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi Women between Dictatorship, War, Sanctions and Occupation', *Third World Quarterly,* (2005) pp.59
[89] Ibid. pp.756
[90] Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, and Nicola Pratt, 'Positionalities, Intersectionalities, and Transnational Feminism', in *Researching Women in Post-invasion Iraq*, ed. by Annick T. R. Wibben (London: Routledge, 2016) pp.59

meaningfully be described as liberated. The failure of U.S.-led coalition forces to establish public security in post-war Iraq critically undermined women's safety and heightened their exposure to sexual violence. The dismantling of Iraq's state infrastructure, combined with the absence of a functioning legal system, left women with little recourse to justice or protection. The Iraqi police force—understaffed, poorly trained, and largely ineffective—lacked the capacity to maintain law and order or respond to gender-based violence. This failure reflects the broader consequences of the War on Terror, which, rather than delivering security and freedom, exacerbated violence and deepened women's insecurity, forcing them to navigate daily life under the constant threat of fear, repression, and harm.

Under the U.S.-imposed de-Ba'athification policy, enacted on 16 May 2003, Iraq's judicial and institutional frameworks were systematically dismantled, including the dismissal of judges, police, and legal professionals affiliated with the Ba'ath Party. This policy, part of the Coalition Provisional Authority's strategy, effectively destroyed the legal infrastructure that had previously enforced laws—including those that prohibited honour killings. Occupying forces failed to reinforce public security and mitigate these aimed attacks against women. Instead, there was a greater focus on protecting valuable institutions like the Ministry of Oil and Finance, by stationing troops around the government buildings. It claimed that the protection of these institutions was integral for funding the rebuilding of Iraq and sustaining its economy post-invasion.[91] This reveals the true economic priorities of the US foreign policy and challenges the dominant narratives that the Bush administration was determined to bring greater security and liberation to Iraq for women. As Lasky and Sandrasagra argue, during the Hussein regime Iraqi women faced violence but at least there were some strict laws to protect women, such as the Personal Status Law and the ban of honour killings.[92] The post-invasion erosion of these protections—directly linked to the de-Ba'athification strategy—demonstrates how the U.S.-led intervention not only failed to improve women's rights but actively contributed to their heightened insecurity. As Al-Ali and Pratt note, the dismantling of state institutions left Iraq without "properly functioning police forces," exposing women to unchecked violence.[93] Subsequently, women were either forced to confine themselves to the private sphere or leave their homes with a male bodyguard, revoking any sense of agency which they had enjoyed before.

Even the basic right of choosing what to wear became dictated by the fear of being attacked, as the increase in violence forced many women's decision to wear some form of veiling in public to protect their

[91] Macalister, Terry, 'US and Britain Wrangled over Iraq's Oil in Aftermath of War, Chilcot Shows', *The Guardian*, 2016
[92] Quoted in Mohtashamipour, Sara, '"Freedom from What?": Iraqi Women's Narratives from the 2003 U.S.-Led War' (2014) pp.16
[93] Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, and Nicola Pratt, 'Women in Iraq: Beyond the Rhetoric', *Middle East Reports*, (2006)

bodies and reduce the possibility of sexual assault. Transnational feminist Hawkesworth explores a similar phenomenon in Somalia during the civil war of the 1990s, in which women responded to the increasing danger of sexual assault and lack of state police services, by wearing the 'jalaabiib', a long flowing heavy dress, as a form of street protection.[94] In both contexts, these Muslim women had not previously worn forms of conversative dress, but rather emerged as a pragmatic response to insecurity, highlighting the ways women actively navigate and resist threats to their safety. However, the increasing adoption of conservative modes of dress exacerbated violence and social exclusion for those who remain unveiled, further entrenching gendered norms and inhibiting the personal agency of women. Tala, a young Iraqi woman, notes that "freedom, first and foremost is security for women."[95] They should have the freedom to get an education, to work, to build a life, yet post-invasion Iraq stripped women of their freedom through fear of violence and the loss of basic rights, further marginalizing them and forcing survival to take precedence over autonomy. Therefore, the increase in gendered violence and perpetuating cycle of insecurity imposed on Iraqi women, demonstrates how the dominant narratives can be challenged.

Feminist critiques of security

The curtailment of women's agency due to gendered violence led to a profound decline in their socio-economic stability and psychological well-being. Through a feminist lens this highlights how personal security was undermined, further challenging dominant narratives. The escalating violence pushed women back into the private sphere, driven not only by the fear of assault but also by the death of the head of the family. In Iraq's patriarchal culture, men are responsible to support and provide for their family, but women are forced to become the 'head of house', when men are killed during the war. A UNICEF report in October 2003 revealed that 60% of households were female-headed in Basra.[96] Subsequently, many women find themselves on Iraq's streets begging for money or taking any available job to provide for their family.[97] This starkly contrasts with the liberal and progressive opportunities available to women prior to the invasion, marking a dramatic shift towards a life of poverty and economic strain. This underscores the failures of the Bush administration, whose military objectives overlooked the humanitarian consequences of the 'War on Terror' and failed to implement policies which could have provided security and support during a period of crisis.

---

[94] Lee, Janet, and Susan M. Shaw, *Women Worldwide: Transnational Feminist Perspectives on Women* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011) pp.564

[95] Alnasser, Bidrea, *Iraqi Women's Narratives of Identity and Security: Challenging Dominant Knowledge* (2018) pp.137

[96] Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, 'Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi Women between Dictatorship, War, Sanctions and Occupation', *Third World Quarterly*, (2005) pp.749

[97] Mohtashamipour, Sara, '"Freedom from What?": Iraqi Women's Narratives from the 2003 U.S.-Led War' (2014) pp.81

Additionally, UNICEF reports that 55% of women aged 15 to 49 are now illiterate as girls were discouraged from attending school to prevent any possibility of violent attacks, with the dropout rate reaching 35%.[98] This educational disparity leaves women significantly less equipped than men to access job opportunities, placing them at a severe disadvantage. These trends reveal the debilitating long-term impacts of the invasion, underscoring a profound regression in security and liberation. Instead of delivering freedom, the invasion dismantled women's agency, exacerbating inequalities and cycles of poverty. This exposed women to the risk of suffering from psychological harm due to the isolation and vulnerability caused by gendered violence and socio-economic insecurity. As Lasta and Merza note, "women are silent sufferers of war."[99] The trauma of death, gendered violence, and the pressure to become providers left women in constant stress and fear. Lafta and Merza's study on 1000 women in Baghdad city, found that 91.1% of the sampled women had experienced war-related trauma since 2003, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts, and had negative thoughts regarding their future in Iraq.[100] Therefore, the war failed to provide the security and liberation promised by the U.S, instead causing trauma and dramatically decreasing the quality of women's lives. Ishtar notes how the psychological impacts began to manifest itself through physical symptoms, as women who are more exposed to human traumas are three times more at risk of cardiovascular disease, illustrating the long-term physical consequences of sustained psychological insecurity.[101] The framing of the 'War on Terror' as a liberatory force undermines how women were pushed further into private spheres of fear and vulnerability, deprived of agency, and denied the opportunity for real, material security. This intersectional, postcolonial feminist lens thus exposes the contradictions in the U.S. narrative, revealing how the so-called 'saving' of Iraqi women was instead a process of their marginalisation and physical and psychological subjugation. The lack of meaningful support or investment from the U.S. in rebuilding gender-responsive institutions after the invasion, further reveals how the rhetoric of women's liberation functioned as a strategic façade. Rather than aiming to protect or empower Iraqi women, the invocation of their suffering was instrumentalised to justify military intervention and secure U.S. geopolitical and economic interests in the region—particularly access to oil and influence over a key Middle Eastern state. In this context, the liberation narrative collapses, revealing the invasion as a form of neo-imperial control, in which women's rights were not protected but exploited as moral cover for occupation.

---

[98] UNICEF 2004

[99] Lafta, Riyadh K., and Alaa K. Merza, 'Women's Mental Health in Iraq Post-Conflict', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, (2021)

[100] Ibid.pp135

[101] Mohtashamipour, Sara, '"Freedom from What?": Iraqi Women's Narratives from the 2003 U.S.-Led War' (2014) pp.79

Conclusion

The ‘War on Terror’ has had a profound and devastating impact on Iraqi women, exacerbating gendered violence, socio-economic insecurity, and psychological trauma, which ultimately diminished women’s agency. The dominant narratives constructed by the Bush administration, framed the conflict as an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy to justify military intervention. In doing so, women were reduced to symbols of victimhood, with the veil serving as a symbol of the oppressed Muslim woman. Cultural misappropriation enabled the Bush administration to use a racial and gendered rhetoric to frame the invasion as a mission to advance women's rights. Prior to the invasion, Iraqi women had access to liberal social and political policies that afforded them significant opportunities in the public sphere, highlighting how the US overlooked the complex political realities of Iraq and the nuanced conditions in which Iraqi women lived. Far from ‘saving’ women, the violence framed as a necessary evil only heightened their insecurity, creating a climate of fear while propelling socio-economic and psychological consequences that further marginalized them. Through a feminist critique, it becomes clear that the invasion did not foster liberation or security, but rather destabilised and regressed existing frameworks of women’s rights.

Bibliography

Abu-Lughod, Lila, 'Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others', *American Anthropologist*, 104.3 (2002), 783–790 https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3567256.pdf [accessed 15 December 2024]

Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, and Nicola Pratt, 'Women in Iraq: Beyond the Rhetoric', *Middle East Reports*, 239 (2006), 18–23 https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/1090/1/WRAP_Pratt_0873082-150709-al-ali_pratt239final.pdf

Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, 'Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi Women between Dictatorship, War, Sanctions and Occupation', *Third World Quarterly*, 26.4/5 (2005), 739–758 https://www.jstor.org/stable/3993718

Al-Ali, 'A Feminist Perspective on the Iraq War', *Works and Days*, 57–58 (2011) https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/12116/1/Works_%26_Days.pdf [accessed 12 December 2024]

Al-Ali, Nadje Sadig, and Nicola Pratt, 'Positionalities, Intersectionalities, and Transnational Feminism', in *Researching Women in Post-invasion Iraq*, ed. by Annick T. R. Wibben (London: Routledge, 2016)

Alnasser, Bidrea, *Iraqi Women's Narratives of Identity and Security: Challenging Dominant Knowledge* (2018) http://webcat.warwick.ac.uk/record=b3442051~S15 [accessed 12 December 2024]

Chalabi, Ahmed, 'We Can Topple Saddam', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2001 https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB990397591466976021 [accessed 16 December 2024]

Enloe, Cynthia, 'Feminist Thinking about War, Militarism, and Peace', in *Analysing Gender* (London: Sage, 1987), pp. 526–548

Ho, Christina, 'Responding to Orientalist Feminism', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 25.66 (2010), 433–439 https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2010.525211

Hodges, Adam, *The 'War on Terror' Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Lafta, Riyadh K., and Alaa K. Merza, 'Women's Mental Health in Iraq Post-Conflict', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 37.2 (2021), 1–14 https://doi.org/10.1080/13623699.2021.1946903

Lee, Janet, and Susan M. Shaw, *Women Worldwide: Transnational Feminist Perspectives on Women* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011)

Macalister, Terry, 'US and Britain Wrangled over Iraq's Oil in Aftermath of War, Chilcot Shows', *The Guardian*, 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/07/us-and-britain-wrangled-over-iraqs-oil-in-aftermath-of-war-chilcot-shows

Mohtashamipour, Sara, '"Freedom from What?": Iraqi Women's Narratives from the 2003 U.S.-Led War' (2014) https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/graduate_thesis_or_dissertations/kp78gk15b [accessed 12 December 2024]

Netanyahu, Benjamin, 'The Case for Toppling Saddam', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2002 https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1032480479501791755

Razack, Sherene H., *Nothing Has to Make Sense* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022)

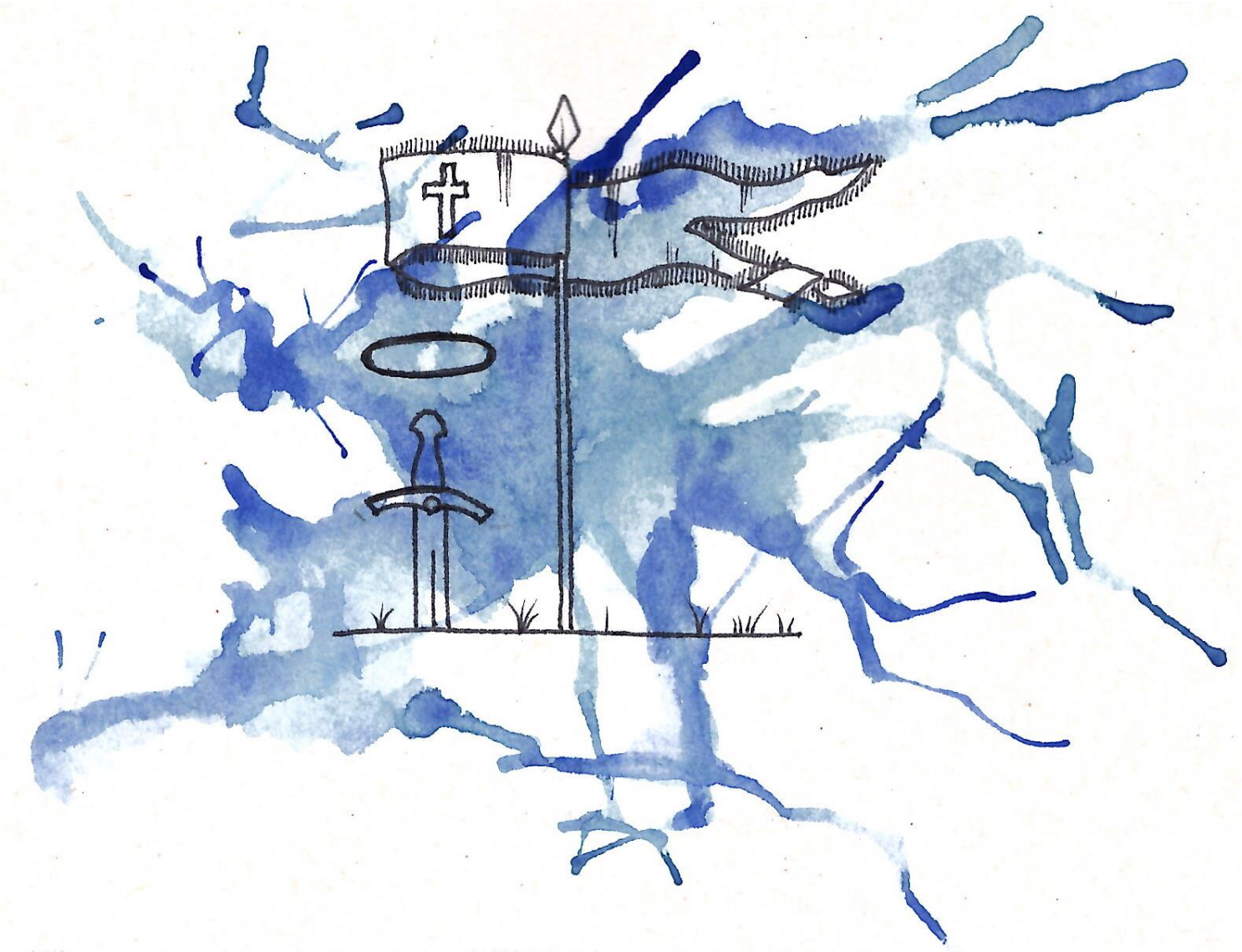
Robben, Antonius C. G. M., *Iraq at a Distance: What Anthropologists Can Teach Us About the War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 57–79

Romarheim, Anders G., *War at Home: Strategic Narratives of the War on Terrorism* (2015)

Schenk, Caetlin G., Banu Gökarıksel, and Nasim E. Behzadi, 'Security, Violence, and Mobility: The Embodied and Everyday Politics of Negotiating Muslim Femininities', *Political Geography*, 94 (2022), 102597 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102597

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988)

Steans, Jill, 'Telling Stories about Women and Gender in the War on Terror', *Global Society*, 22.1 (2008), 159–176 https://doi.org/10.1080/13600820701740795



Prophetess and Soldier: Understanding how Joan of Arc's supporters perceived her role in the war

Mia Simpson

Prophetess and Soldier: Understanding how Joan of Arc's supporters perceived her role in the war

Mia Simpson

Abstract: *Joan of Arc is a significant historical figure due to her influence in changing the tides of the Hundred Years' War in favour of the French. This article examines how her supporters perceived Joan of Arc and how their belief in her divine gift allowed her to defy the patriarchal rules of fourteenth-century France. It questions to what extent Joan of Arc was successfully involved in warfare and why she was considered an exception to society's rules. What distinguished her from other prophets? Why is she granted the right to fight as a soldier? While Joan is portrayed as a singular figure regarding the involvement of women in medieval warfare, this article suggests that other female figures, both before her and during her years of influence, also had their place in war. This is examined by comparing these women and their roles in warfare as high-ranking officials or servants of God. Furthermore, it reflects how Joan's position and support became reliant on her favouring actions that showcased her purity and divine gift, abstaining from the traditionally feminine behaviour of medieval France.*

Joan of Arc's role in the Hundred Years' War was perceived by her supporters as a prophetess and soldier, helping to lead the French in a war against the English as a prophesied saviour of France. Kelly DeVries, a historian, describes Joan in two ways: as a 'mulier sancta, a holy woman' and as 'the nonnoble leader of a "modern" army'.[102] As a female soldier, Joan subverted the typical expectations for a woman in France's patriarchal society during the fifteenth century, for whom a regular woman would have meant exclusion from the martial aspects of military warfare. In March 1429, Charles VII, the French king, organised the Poitiers Investigation, which involved Joan of Arc being questioned by eighteen theologians and churchmen to determine her status as a prophetess. It meant that Joan was granted a position with the army. This was because she was to prove that God had sent her as a prophetess through a sign, which she insisted on showing 'before the city of Orléans, and nowhere else'.[103] Joan's supporters believed that her lifting the Siege of Orléans was the sign of God's favour for her, cementing her position as a prophetess in their minds. This was reflected through a ballad written after the event, claiming the French victory was 'the will of [our] King Jesus and Joan'.[104] It also emphasises how Joan was recognised as a prophetess by her supporters

[102] Kelly DeVries, 'A woman as leader of men: Joan of Arc's military career', in Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, (eds.), *Fresh verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), p. 12.
[103] '3. The Conclusions of the Poitiers investigation (March-April 1429)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 74.
[104] '10. Ballade contre les Anglais (May 1429?)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 85.

and thereby seen as a representative of God's voice on earth. This is significant as it would allow her to defy the typical expectations for women and form the idea that God support the French as the true victors of the Hundred Years' War.

One way in which Joan's supporters perceived her role in the war was as a prophetess, allowing her exceptions due to this holy position. Craig Taylor, historian, argues that Joan was a 'visionary and a holy woman who claimed to be guided by God through the medium of angels and saints', implying that Joan's supporters focused on her as a prophetess and how she could impact the war.[105] However, Joan was seen as unusual for a prophetess. This was because she gave no proof of a divine sign to Charles VII, something that was typically used to establish a prophetess's virtuousness as it would 'confirm God's sanction of person and mission alike'.[106] Instead, those involved in the Poitiers' Investigation in 1429, and therefore Charles VII, supported Joan in her argument that her proof of divine support would occur at Orleans.[107] The conditional support Joan received from the group of at least 'eighteen theologians and churchmen at Poitiers' was a significant factor in her supporters' perception and acceptance of her as a prophetess.[108] This was because the churchmen would have been considered the authorities for God's work. They had questioned Joan with the principles of *disrection spirituum*, a way to identify disguised temptations before sanctioning Joan's actions. Charles T. Wood, a historian, argues that this investigation was 'far from expressing the kind of total support for Joan', suggesting that it negatively impacted the perception of Joan as a prophetess as it provided doubt regarding her divine status.[109] Rather it appears that it was her actions as a soldier that solidified her position as a prophetess, with the Poitiers Investigation determining that she would have to fight in order to prove she was blessed by God. An alternative argument from Craig Taylor, a historian, is that the Poitiers' Investigation verified Joan's claims, due to her successful examination, gaining her some form of acknowledgement from both the Church and Charles VII.[110] However, whilst the Poitiers' Investigation was used during the Nullification Trial as proof of Joan's status as a prophetess, the loss of the records for this questioning casts doubts on its importance in portraying Joan as a prophetess. In contrast, Joan's assistance in lifting the English siege on Orleans is viewed as a miraculous action, meaning her actions as a soldier helped to cement her position as a prophetess, rather than an opinion from the Church.

---

[105] Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 9.
[106] Charles T. Wood, 'Joan of Arc's mission and the lost record of her interrogation at Poitiers', in Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, (eds.), *Fresh verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), p 20.
[107] '3. The Conclusions of the Poitiers investigation (March-April 1429)' in *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, pp. 72-74.
[108] Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 15.
[109] Wood, 'Joan of Arc's mission and the lost record of her interrogation at Poitiers', p. 20.
[110] Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 13.

The exception made for Joan regarding the gender boundaries of the fifteenth century could have been because she was not perceived as a woman but rather a vessel through which God spoke. This perhaps would have helped to make her transgressions against the gender boundaries be seen as more acceptable, as her behaviour could be framed not as her own defiance, but as divinely ordained and therefore beyond conventional judgement. Furthermore, Joan's situation is more unusual than that of other female prophetesses as she accomplished her prophecy to remove the English from France. Other prophetesses, however, claimed to have been granted visions that allowed them to clarify God's teaching, such as the Italian mystic Catherine of Siena, who wrote books filled with the religious knowledge she gained from her visions.[111] The length of the ongoing war and France's frequent losses could have influenced Joan's position as an exception to the rule. This is because such confirmation bias would have boosted French army's morale. Joan was not the first religious woman to be involved in the politics of the war, which meant that there may have been precedence for her position. Colette of Corbie had also performed miracles during the war, supposedly having 'stopped a battle between two groups' with her prayers.[112] Another contribution to the acceptance of Joan as a soldier would have been her success in battle. This is because it would have been viewed as God intervening on behalf of the French. Nadia Margolis, a historian, supports this, arguing that Joan was seen as a unique prophetess since 'she could not only prophesy but was herself prophesied'.[113] This could relate to a prophecy referred to by a witness in Joan's Nullification Trial in 1456. That prophecy was made by a previous prophetess, Marie d'Avignon, who claimed that a destroyed France would be 'restored by a virgin from the marches of Lorraine'.[114] The referencing of this prophecy in Joan's second trial could imply that some of her supporters perceived Joan as a heralded hero sent by God to save France from the English. Her actions in the war were believed to have been foretold by a saint even before her birth, reinforcing this perception of a divine purpose.

The highly unusual circumstances of Joan's situation may have contributed to her successfully subverting the strict gender boundaries in the fourteenth century to become a female soldier. Christine de Pizan, an Italian-born French courtier of Charles VII, explored these differences as a prophetess in her final poem, 'The Tale of Joan of Arc,' which compared Joan's actions to those of different biblical figures, such

---

[111] Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Sienna*, trans. by Algar Thorold (Grand Rapids, Mich: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1994).
[112] Elizabeth Lopez et al., *Colette of Corbie (1381-1477): Learning and Holiness* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Francisan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 2011), p. 98.
[113] Nadia Margolis, 'Joan of Arc', in Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace, Cambridge companion to medieval women's writings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 259.
[114] '79. Deposition of Catherine, wife of Henri Le Royer (31 January 1456)' in Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, (eds.), *Fresh verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), p. 275; and Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 18.

as Moses, by proclaiming that both prophets had led their people 'out of evil.' [115] Pizan, known for her support of women's rights, portrayed Joan's achievements as more significant due to her female gender, as she held fewer physical and social advantages than the male prophets of God. Such a portrayal would have further outlined her uniqueness, particularly through Pizan's proclamation that God had given Joan 'a heart greater than that of any man'.[116] It implies that God gave Joan greater courage than any other prophet, enabling her to achieve more than what would have been typically expected from a woman and symbolising His favour for France. Pizan may also have been suggesting that such an immense divine blessing was needed to end the war in France's favour. This is supported by Pizan having previously written to the French Queen Isabeau in 1405 to argue that she had a responsibility to prevent further war in France due to her position of power.[117] Pizan praises God for Joan's decisions, suggesting she saw Joan as a conduit for God's power and will. John D. McCabe, a historian, supports this argument, claiming that Joan was a saint due to her surrender to God, which she achieved by listening to 'the authority of the counsel that had come to her', composed of the spirits of St. Michael, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret.[118] Craig Taylor, a historian, builds on this by arguing that her supporters perceived her in the depiction of an Old Testament female prophetess, such as Deborah, who was also recorded to have worn men's clothing to fight.[119] Through this perception, her supporters would have been comparing Joan's reclamation of France to Deborah, who helped to lead her people during oppression. However, Christine de Pizan claimed that whilst she had heard of Esther, Judith and Deborah, 'through whom God delivered His people from oppression', she placed Joan of Arc in higher regard due to her military successes.[120] This was because she saw Joan's martial abilities as a miracle from God, stating that 'He has accomplished more through this Maid'.[121] Pizan's belief in Joan could have also been influenced by the general assumption that Joan was the figure promised by 'Merlin, the Sibyl and Bede' more than five hundred years before.[122] Joan would have gained further support through this comparison as her unusual behaviour could have been attributed to her position as God's planned representative on Earth to save the French people. Additionally, Jane Marie Pinzino claims that 'political

[115] Kevin Brownlee, 'Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*' in *The Selected Writings of Christine De Pizan: New Translations, Criticism*, ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, trans. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1997), pp. 371-390; Christine De Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, eds. by Angus J Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1977), p. 44.
[116] De Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, p. 45.
[117] 'Letter to the Queen of France, Isabel of Bavaria' in Christine de Pizan, *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Charity Cannon Willard (New York: Persea Books, 1994), pp. 269-274.
[118] John D. McCabe, 'Joan of Arc: saint or symbol?', in M.E. Tallon, ed., *Joan of Arc at the university* (Milwaukee, 1997), p. 187.
[119] Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 55.
[120] De Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, p. 45.
[121] De Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, p. 45.
[122] De Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, p. 45.

activism, underwritten by a strong devotional life and virginity, emerged as a waxing pattern among holy women and their supporters in the late Middle Ages.'[123] It implies that women were respected as political figures so long as they were portraying their message in a religious manner. This correlation also supported the idea that a woman's virginity was what gave her value, with only those who remained virgins having their opinions and ideas respected. Joan faced many examinations and trials regarding her position as God's prophetess and the preservation of her virginity; if she were to be depicted as a heretic or to have ruined her purity, her actions would have lost their influence. A heretic would have been sent by demons, who opposed the wants of God, whereas the purity of a virgin meant that she was a better vessel for the divine.

One of Joan's largest groups of supporters was the French troops in the army, as they perceived her as a saint. Master Jean Barbin, a lawyer who served Charles VII and met Joan of Arc in Poitiers in 1429, claimed during the Nullification Trial that the men-at-arms 'regarded her as a saint' because Joan 'bore herself so well in the army, in words and in deeds, following God'.[124] This is supported by DeVries, who argues that Joan offered her soldiers 'religious possibilities, even salvation', enticing troops to follow her despite forbidding looting and pillaging of towns.[125] These soldiers may have viewed her as a way to gain salvation from their sins, such as killing men. However, Joan's military miracles, such as 'the winds changed direction as she said' to give provisions to Orléans and her prediction that Troyes would fall in three days, may have been what gained the soldiers' loyalty and belief in her sainthood .[126] These miracles would have increased the French men-at-arms' belief that Joan was a saint sent to rescue France from the English, mainly due to their occurrence against the English army. Portraying Joan's actions as miraculous and divinely gifted made it easier for male soldiers to accept her presence in the military, as divine will was a less threatening idea to masculinity than a strong woman. On the other hand, this description was given during Joan of Arc's Nullification Trial in 1455-6. It was a politically driven event focused on invalidating the English trial and proving Joan's innocence to help stabilise the rule of Charles VII. Joan had been one of the driving factors in Charles's coronation, and her sentence of heresy could have negatively impacted his position as king. Consequently, Barbin's claim that Joan was perceived as a saint and that her actions were readily accepted could have been exaggerated to ensure that the English trial was overthrown, thereby pleasing Charles VII. Despite this, the acceptance of Joan's orders in battle, such as at the Siege of Orleans,

[123] Jane Marie Pinzino, 'But where to draw the line? Colette of Corbie, Joan of Arc and the Expanding Boundaries of Women's Leadership in the Fifteenth Century', in *A Companion to Colette of Corbie*, eds. by Joan Mueller and Nancy Warren (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), p. 69.
[124] '93. Deposition of Master Jean Barbin (30 April 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 303.
[125] DeVries, 'A woman as leader of men: Joan of Arc's military career', p. 3.
[126] DeVries, 'A woman as leader of men: Joan of Arc's military career', p. 11.

strongly suggests that the army did respect her as a leader. Furthermore, the men-at-arms witnessed Joan's devotion to God and the rules of the Catholic Church. She admonished the army 'on its moral laxity', attempted to rid the camp of prostitutes, forbade cursing, and encouraged the confessing of sins and attendance at mass.[127] These actions would have increased the likelihood of the army viewing her as a saint or holy figure, as she strictly adhered to God's will for herself and those around her.

Joan's role in the war was further perceived as unusual due to her position as a soldier; a status supported by her allies. Despite it being considered abnormal for a low-born woman to be actively involved in the martial aspects of war, Joan fought alongside the French troops during the Hundred Years' War. Significantly, Joan fought in male clothes, which Taylor convincingly argues aided her in circumventing tradition, claiming that it gave her 'an air of maleness and masculinity', which meant she was able to 'access the male hegemony and social constructs of gender'. Male clothing may have helped Joan to assimilate with the rest of the male army, as her physical appearance would have been more similar to the knights whilst wearing armour. Furthermore, the Count of Dunois's statement that 'neither he nor any others who were in the company of this Pucelle' felt 'any wish or desire to have commerce with a woman' suggests that Joan's gender was ignored, perhaps due to her position as a holy woman and her atypical role for a woman.[128] Reactions to other women in the army campgrounds support this; Joan advised them 'not to be found again in the company of the men-at-arms' as she would be displeased. It shows how Joan was viewed as the one exception to the all-male army due to her role as a prophetess.[129] Despite her divine communications potentially meaning that she was not perceived as a conventional woman, she did attempt to visually depict herself as a soldier, not a prophetess, by wearing army clothes. However, records from the Nullification Trial suggest that Joan's cross-dressing was a safeguard, as when living among soldiers, 'it was safer and more appropriate for her to be male, rather than female, clothing'.[130] Joan's virginity was seen as precious, as her purity in body was viewed to be one of the reasons for her connection to God. This meant that it was vital that Joan remained pure, which could have led her to try to hide any reminders that she was not just a soldier. Her virginity, being considered such a symbol of her divine connection, was even viewed by the English as a threat to their belief that she was a heretic, to the extent that the continued

[127] Ronald Edward Zupko, 'The many faces of Joan', in M.E. Tallon, (ed.), *Joan of Arc at the university* (Milwaukee, 1997), p. 30.
[128] '81. Deposition of the Count of Dunois (22 February 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 277.
[129] '90. Deposition of Louis de Coutes (3 April 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 294-8.
[130] 'From the deposition given on 10 May 1456 by Jean Moreau (of Rouen)' in *Primary Sources and Context Concerning Joan of Arc's Male Clothing*, ed. by Allen Williamson (Historical Association for Joan of Arc Studies, 2006), <http://primary-sources-series.joan-of-arc-studies.org/PSS021806.pdf>, p. 6.

historical record, the English *Brut* chronicle, fabricated a story to imply that she was not pure when she died.[131]

Her title, the 'Pucelle' or the Virgin, may have been used to remind the soldiers and others of her purity and divine support.[132] James Freeman, a historian, also suggests that Joan believed she needed to maintain 'the persona of a pious, chaste maid, une pucelle' to be safe while surrounded by men, implying that Joan was still viewed as an object of desire to some despite her devotion to God.[133] However, Jean d'Aulon claimed during the Nullification Trial that men did not have 'any carnal desire towards her', suggesting that she was such a holy figure that no sinful desires could be directed towards her. Joan's status as a virgin was crucial in establishing her position as a servant of God, with her virginity having been checked at least twice by the French to ensure she could be devout.[134] This is because her virginity was seen as representing the purity that allowed her to be a prophetess. Taylor argues that the importance placed on her maidenhood staying intact also gave her a reason for her 'defiance of male authority'.[135] She subverted the social and gender hierarchy, as she would have been removed from the traditional placement of women in the social structure due to the influence and power of God. Her actions in reminding others of this purity and her position as a figure of God would have allowed this status as an outsider to society's hierarchy. Despite the subservience of women to men, a person blessed by God would have been perceived as being more politically and socially powerful.

Due to the untraditional perception of a woman as a soldier, Joan's role needed to be defended by her supporters. One way this was done, was by mentioning the precedent of holy women fighting in the Old Testament, where it was claimed that the weak could overcome the strong due to the assistance of God.[136] Jean d'Aulon claimed that the Pucelle had told him that her advisor had told her what to do regarding 'anything to do concerning military matters'.[137] Additionally, the Count of Dunois believed that Joan's 'deeds of arms came from divine inspiration rather than human talent'.[138] In accordance with this, DeVries

[131] '104. The English *Brut* chronicle', in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 353-4.
[132] '101. Deposition at Lyon of Jean d'Aulon (28 May 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 339.
[133] James Freeman, 'Joan of Arc: soldier, saint, symbol – of what?', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 41 (2008), pp. 601-634.
[134]Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 48.
[135] Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 48.
[136] Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 55.
[137] '101. Deposition at Lyon of Jean d'Aulon (28 May 1456)' in *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 347.
[138] '81. Deposition of the Count of Dunois (22 February 1456)' in *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 277.

states that Joan was included in the army's strategy sessions and was sought out for martial advice.[139] It suggests that Joan's position as a prophetess meant that she was seen as blessed rather than talented in military skills. Furthermore, Joan also resembled some traditional characteristics surrounding women in the fourteenth century by claiming that she 'did not wish to use her sword or to kill anyone'.[140] It would have helped to portray the idea that she was solely a voice for God's wishes, as she did not fight in the way an ordinary soldier would be expected to. Furthermore, by Joan not completely adhering to the inherent violence in war and instead abiding by the expectation that women in the fourteenth century would not kill, the soldiers would have found it easier to perceive her as a prophetess.

In conclusion, Joan's role in the war was perceived by her supporters to be that of a prophetess who aided them in defeating the English. Joan was allowed to fight as a soldier due to her fulfilment of God's will and prophecy during the Siege of Orleans. John D. McCabe and Craig Taylor suggest that Joan's position as a leader in the French army hinged on the belief that she was Godsent and advised by previous saints. Traditional gender roles of the fourteenth century vehemently opposed the idea of involving women in military warfare, often portraying those women who did participate as whores. Joan's supporters separated her from these depictions because she demonstrated God's favour during the Siege of Orleans. However, the English believed Joan to be a heretic, potentially due to her success, as they would have had to accept the idea that God did not favour them to win the war.[141] This exemplifies how Joan could not have been perceived as only a soldier, needing her title as a prophetess to have enabled her to enter the male-controlled space of a fourteenth-century French army. In summary, Joan's entrance to this sphere was only possible due to her supporters' perception of her as a holy woman directly guided and blessed by God, allowing her to defy the patriarchal social boundaries and the perceived weakness of the female body.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dr Rémy Ambühl for his teaching and guidance in the module for which this essay was initially written, his initial feedback, and his willingness to advise me on improving this article after viewing the updated draft.

[139] DeVries, 'A woman as leader of men: Joan of Arc's military career', p. 8.
[140] '100. Deposition of Brother Seguin Seguin (14 May 1456)' in *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, p. 338.
[141] Zupko, 'The many faces of Joan', p. 32.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

'3. The Conclusions of the Poitiers investigation (March-April 1429)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 72-74.

'10. Ballade contre les Anglais (May 1429?)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 85.

'79. Deposition of Catherine, wife of Henri Le Royer (31 January 1456)' in Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, (eds.), *Fresh verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), pp. 274-5.

'81. Deposition of the Count of Dunois (22 February 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 277-85.

'90. Deposition of Louis de Coutes (3 April 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 294-8.

'93. Deposition of Master Jean Barbin (30 April 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 302-4.

'100. Deposition of Brother Seguin Seguin (14 May 1456)' in *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, pp. 336-8.

'101. Deposition at Lyon of Jean d'Aulon (28 May 1456)' in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 339-348.

'104. The English *Brut* chronicle', in Craig Taylor, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 353-4.

'Letter to the Queen of France, Isabel of Bavaria' in Christine de Pizan, *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Charity Cannon Willard (New York: Persea Books, 1994), pp. 269-274.

'From the deposition given on 10 May 1456 by Jean Moreau (of Rouen)' in *Primary Sources and Context Concerning Joan of Arc's Male Clothing*, ed. by Allen Williamson (Historical Association for Joan of Arc Studies, 2006), <http://primary-sources-series.joan-of-arc-studies.org/PSS021806.pdf>, p. 6.

Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Sienna*, trans. by Algar Thorold (Grand Rapids, Mich: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1994).

De Pizan, Christine, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, eds. by Angus J Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1977).

Secondary Sources

Brownlee, Kevin, 'Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*' in *The Selected Writings of Christine De Pizan: New Translations, Criticism*, ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, trans. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1997), pp. 371-390.

DeVries, Kelly, 'A woman as leader of men: Joan of Arc's military career', in Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, (eds.), *Fresh verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), pp. 3-18.

Freeman, James, 'Joan of Arc: soldier, saint, symbol – of what?', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 41 (2008), pp. 601-634.

Lopez, Elizabeth, et al., *Colette of Corbie (1381-1477): Learning and Holiness* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Francisan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 2011).

Margolis, Nadia, 'Joan of Arc', in Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace, (eds.), *Cambridge companion to medieval women's writings* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 256-66.

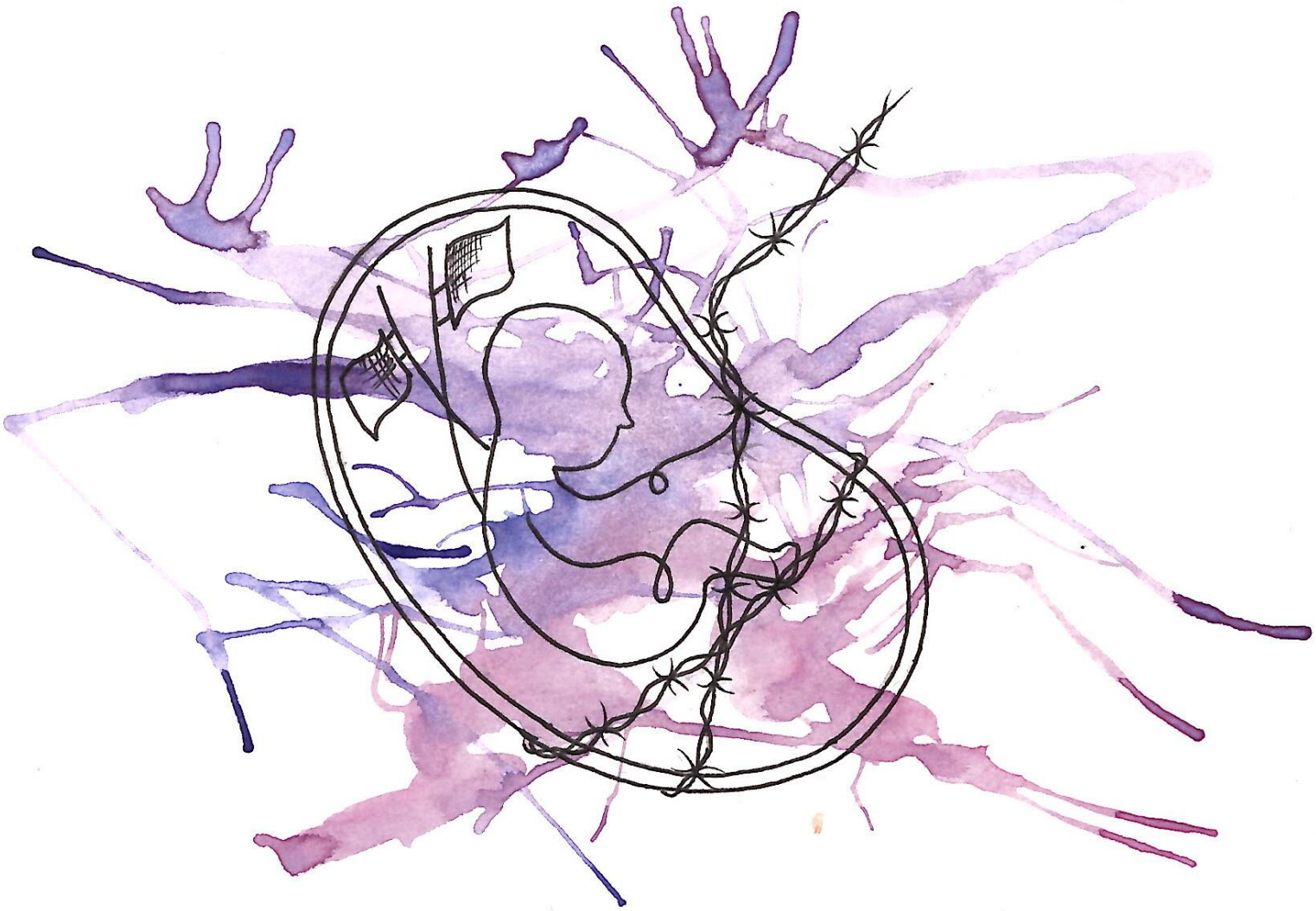
McCabe, J.D., 'Joan of Arc: saint or symbol?', in M.E. Tallon, ed., *Joan of Arc at the university* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), pp. 183-189.

Pinzino, Jane Marie, 'But where to draw the line? Colette of Corbie, Joan of Arc and the Expanding Boundaries of Women's Leadership in the Fifteenth Century', in *A Companion to Colette of Corbie*, eds. by Joan Mueller and Nancy Warren (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 56-75.

Taylor, Craig, (ed.), *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

Wood, Charles T., 'Joan of Arc's mission and the lost record of her interrogation at Poitiers', in Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, (eds.), *Fresh verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), pp. 19-30.

Zupko, Ronald Edward, 'The many faces of Joan', in M.E. Tallon, (ed.), *Joan of Arc at the university* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), pp. 1-33.



Nira Yuval-Davis's (1997) argument on the position of women in relation to the nation, with reference to wider reading on the topic

Sophia Westcott

Nira Yuval-Davis's (1997) argument on the position of women in relation to the nation, with reference to wider reading on the topic

Sophia Westcott

Abstract: *Pioneer in intersectional feminist studies, Nira Yuval-Davis argues that women have a specific place in society when it comes to different nations, often tied to reproduction. With the overarching concept of women being 'bearers of the collective', such places in society can be put into three key discourses: 1) people as power: a collective, female agency 2) Malthusianism: population growth, 3) Eugenics: the controversial control of population growth. This article will address these three key discourses with wider reference to the topic, such as those from academics Patricia Hill Collins and Carole H. Browner. It will also reference works that discuss the concept of a nation - predominantly theories from Benedict Anderson and Michael Skye, who suggest that nations are 'imagined' concepts subject to fluidity - for further understanding of Yuval-Davis' argument.*

Nira Yuval-Davis brings forward the original and intersectional idea of a nation's relationship to women, linking gender, race, and disability together. To understand her argument, the concept of a nation needs to be discussed. Historian Benedict Anderson describes nations as 'imagined communities', arguing that the concept of a nation exists only as a group of people bound by country borders, and that, as historian Thomas Hylland Eriksen states, 'any community beyond face-to-face interaction has to be imagined'.[142] Socialist Stuart Hall also suggests that 'national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation'.[143] Nira Yuval-Davis delves into this concept further, arguing that women are 'bearers of the collective', responsible for the personification of national identity through population regulations.[144] As such, Yuval-Davis concludes that 'there are always specific rules and regulations which relate to women as women'.[145] With the primary rule being women acting as 'bearers of the nation', Yuval-Davis explains how three different regulations relate to a nation. Such discourses include 'people as power', Malthusianism, and eugenics. [146] This essay will analyse each of the three regulations,

[142] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006; orig. pub. 1983); Thomas Hylland Eriksen in John Breilly, 'Benedict Anderson's imagined communities: a symposium.' *Nations and Nationalism,* 22.4 (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016) 625-659.
[143] Stuart Hall, 'The question of cultural identity', in *Modernity and its Futures*, ed. by Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew, (Cambridge: Polity, 1992) 292.
[144] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 26.
[145] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' in *Gender and Nation* (New York: Sage Publications, 1997) 37.
[146] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 29.

interlinking aspects of gender with race and disability, to explain Yuval-Davis' argument on the position of women in relation to the nation.

One cannot explain Yuval-Davis' argument without understanding the concept of a nation. Anderson argues that whilst the concept of nation has always existed, a multitude of factors constituted the creation of the distinct term, 'nation'. These include a shift away from religion and the rise in the industrial revolution, the role of print media, and the fall of Latin.[147] Such shifts propelled nations to form their own land boundaries and circulate a predominant language within such boundaries. From this, comes the idea of a nation being a 'modern invention', as Anderson describes.[148] Anthropologist Ernest Gellner analyses this idea further, stating that standardisation and homogeny are features of modernisation, and that 'the development of a standardised culture promotes and makes plausible notions of national identity'.[149] As historian Joep Leerssen concludes, 'what was imagined into being was not a society but a community […] a large-scale, modern, mediatised society seeing itself, through its imagination'.[150]

Nations, as Yuval-Davis describes, 'are situated in specific historical moments and are constructed by shifting nationalist discourses promoted by different groupings competing for hegemony'.[151] Michael Skye also proposes that 'nations are not, and never have been, stable, solid, coherent, fixed entities, but are subject to 'permanent crisis' that are legitimised and managed (or not) through a process of ongoing struggle'.[152] One such 'crisis' is the continuation, and therefore survival, of a nation. Yuval-Davis claims that 'only by being born into a certain collectivity could one be a full member of it', highlighting both the gendered and racial aspects of this 'permanent crisis'.[153] Explaining his idea of 'imagined communities', Anderson also suggests that 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail […], the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'.[154] Together, Skye and Anderson indirectly create a narrative that supports Yuval-Davis' concept of 'bearers of the collective': that regardless of the inequality placed on women, '[women] are public in the sense that they are subjects of collective concern

[147] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1-47; The fall of Latin sparked a rise in language learning not specific to a country's borders, for more information see the former.
[148] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.
[149] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 34.
[150] Joep Leerssen in John Breilly, 'Benedict Anderson's imagined communities: a symposium.' *Nations and Nationalism,* 22.4 (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016) 625-659.
[151] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 4.
[152] Michael Skye, 'The national in everyday life: A critical engagement with Michael Billig's thesis of Banal Nationalism' *The Sociological Review*, 57.2 (New York: Sage Publications, 2009) 340.
[153] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 22.
[154] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 7.

and interest, subject to regulation in the collective interest', as Ki-Young Shin describes.[155] Furthermore, as Billig notes, the most 'established nations [are] those states that have confidence in their own continuity'.[156]

With this in mind, Yuval-Davis' concept of 'bearers of the collective' can be broken down into what she describes as 'three major discourses [that] tend to dominate nationalist policies of population control'. [157] The first, 'people as power', is that 'the future of the nation is seen to depend on its continuous growth. Sometimes this growth can be based also on immigration.[158] Much of the argument regarding 'people as power' and the nation has already been discussed above, but to further analyse the interlinking aspects of gender and race, one must again look back to Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities'. Anderson describes nations as imagined in the fact that they are limited, 'because even the largest of [nations], encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations'.[159] The combined prospects of 'imagined communities' with 'bearers of the collective' relates to one being born into a nation and thus into a national identity. Women, as 'people as power', must continue the production of the national collective, and that anyone outside of this national identity would therefore be an outcast. In doing so, Yuval-Davis proposes the idea that national identity and a nation's survival or continuity go together, and that it is the responsibility of women to ensure it.

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins also proposes the idea of 'family values', the interlinking of gender and national interest and well-being.[160] For instance, an obvious example is Nazi Germany and the mothers' cross, which rewarded mothers with medals depending on how many children they had. A present-day pronatalist example includes the current President, Donald Trump, proposing giving $5000 to mothers after giving birth. Further to Yuval-Davis and Collin's thesis is the racial aspect: people have the power to continue the nation's survival by producing a population of a standardised community. As Collin suggests,

[155] Ki-Young Shin, 'Governance' in Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 311.
[156] Michael Billig, 'Introduction', in *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995) 8.
[157] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 29.
[158] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 29.
[159] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 7.
[160] Patricia Hill Collins, 'It's all in the family: intersections of gender, race, and nation,' *Hypatia*, 13.3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 62.

> just as crafting a family from individuals from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, or class backgrounds is discouraged, mixing different races with one neighbourhood is frowned upon. As mini-nation states, neighbourhoods allegedly operate best when racial and/or class homogeneity prevails.[161]

As such, Yuval-Davis concludes that 'women's positionings in and obligations to their ethnics and national collectivities, as well as in and to the states they reside in and/or citizens of, also affect and can sometimes override their reproductive rights'.[162] Billig also comments on this, stating that 'it seems as if an aura attends the very idea of nationhood. The rape of a motherland is far worse than the rape of actual mothers; the death of a nation is the ultimate tragedy, beyond the death of flesh and blood'.[163] Women are relied upon to give birth as a means of population security, and therefore national security. Yuval-Davis describes this as a 'national strategy' whilst Carole H. Browner describes it as 'individual women [having] to live with and by the reproductive customs, practices, and policies of the larger groups to which they belong'.[164] In other words, women are part of a national collective with interests focusing on the nation rather than individuals, and thus comes the strong argument that women are 'bearers of the collective'.

On the opposite spectrum of 'people as power', Yuval-Davis proposes the second discourse of Malthusianism; the concept of targeting women to reduce population growth.[165] More specifically, Yuval-Davis' research shows that the idea originates from Thomas Malthus, 'a British clergyman turned economist' who predicted that 'in many developing countries […] unchecked continuous growth ('explosion') of the population might bring a national (or international) disaster'.[166] Many policies advocate for abortions or the use of contraceptives to prevent the nation from descending into such a national disaster. For instance, examples include the recently shut-down one-child policy in China - where families were limited to have one child, as well as the White Supremacist 'great replacement' panic - a conspiracy theory that incorrectly claimed white populations in the Western world were being 'replaced' by non-white immigrants as a result of uncontrollable population growth.

Whilst still one of the three major discourses, Yuval-Davis sees Malthusianism as limited. For example, Yuval-Davis states that, unlike Thomas Malthus' view, 'population growth can be slowed down and eventually stabilised by the voluntary choices of individuals and not just by 'natural' disasters'. She

[161] Collins, 'It's all in the family', 68.
[162] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 26.
[163] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 4.
[164] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 30; Carole H. Browner, 'Reproduction: From Rights to Justice?' in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, 824.
[165] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 32-33.
[166] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 33; 32-33.

also states that one needs to consider that the 'social and cultural systems where the social values of women […and] the number of children that women can bear, can depend on much more thorough and all-encompassing processes of social transformation',[167][168] Yuval-Davis notes that Malthusianism does not include wider context such as social or economic make-up of different nations, and thus is limited as a population regulation.

Not only does Malthusianism go against Anderson's theory of imagined communities, but also concepts that stem from it, including nations being modern inventions, and standardisation. In Yuval-Davis' view, Malthusianism creates 'contradictory pressures on women's fertility' with 'political movements [tightening] control over women [to] increase opposition to any reproductive rights in the name of 'custom and tradition''.[169] Despite this, Yuval-Davis states that 'Malthusian discourse has not just been an ideological discourse but has become a cornerstone of population policies in many Third World countries themselves, as a major strategy to try and solve those countries' economic and social problems'.[170] Malthusianism reinforces ideals of family values and national continuity in respect to ensuring a nation's survival, but deviates from the main thesis of imagined communities and standardisation. As Browner summarises, 'the social organisation of human reproductive processes is political by its very nature' and 'implicitly referenced motherhood, in that men's reproduction was generally not a site for control'.[171]

The final discourse Yuval-Davis proposes is eugenics, whereby the quantity of the population is not the focus, but the 'quality' of such members that constitute a nation. Eugenics, therefore, combines gender with race and disability, and thus encompasses themes like those in 'people as power' and Malthusianism. Starting with the concept of eugenics and disability regarding the nation, Yuval-Davis describes this as attempting to 'predetermine the quality of the nation via 'nature' in the way of selective breeding'.[172] Likewise, Collins notes how 'biology was central to solving social problems'.[173] Eugenics as a population regulation was prominent during Nazi Germany, in which the Nazi party implemented numerous policies to create an able-bodied, Aryan race, including the murder of Jews, twins, and the disabled. Academic Rachel Adams equates the relationship between disability and the nation as 'connotations […] like poverty, ugliness, weakness, sickness, or simply subjection to an unfortunate

[167] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 33.
[168] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 36.
[169] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 36.
[170] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' 33.
[171] Browner, 'Reproduction: From Rights to Justice?' 803.
[172] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 31.
[173] Collins, 'It's all in the family', 75.

experience'.[174] This supports Yuval-Davis' argument that pressure is put onto women by the nation to produce the opposite of such connotations; to produce a standardised imagined community which follows the nation's culture and traditions.

The second aspect of eugenics encompasses gender and race regarding the nation. Yuval-Davis suggests that 'national reproduction concern much more than the physical 'health' of the next generation: they concern notions of 'national stock' and the 'biologisation of cultural traits''.[175] As Collins also explains,

> women's bodies produce the population for the national "family" or nation-state, conceptualised as having some sort of biological oneness. In this sense, family planning becomes important in regulating population groups identified by race, social class, and national status.[176]

Such examples of the biologisation of cultural traits include whitening policies in Brazil, as well as rewarding the sterilisation of black communities in the US.[177] The notion that nations are simply imagined communities is clear here, and unless one is born into a nation, regardless of appearance, 'culture and tradition become essentialised and biologized into notions of genealogical 'difference'', as Yuval-Davis states.[178] Collins analyses this further, giving importance to

> bonds between mothers and children, brothers and sisters, grandmothers and grandchildren, [illustrating] the significance of biology in definitions of family. Representing the genetic links among related individuals, the belief in blood ties naturalises the bonds among members of kinship networks. Blood, family, and kin are so closely connected that the absence of such ties can be cause for concern.[179]

In conclusion, Yuval-Davis argues that women are viewed only as agents of reproduction for a nation. Such tactics include 'control of marriage, procreation, and therefore sexuality' which are 'high on the nationalist agenda'.[180] Of the three main discourses that Yuval-Davis highlights regarding the position of women in relation to the nation, she notes that Malthusianism is the most limited. This discourse

---

[174] Rachel Adams, 'Disability' in Benjamin Reiss and David Serlin (eds), *Keywords for Disability Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2015) 6.
[175] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 32.
[176] Collins, 'It's all in the family', 75.
[177] Thomas E. Skidmore *Brazil : Five Centuries of Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Alexandra Minna Stern, 'Forced sterilization policies in the US targeted minorities and those with disabilities — and lasted into the 21st century', *The Conversation*, 17 Aug. 2020.
[178] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 32.
[179] Collins, 'It's all in the family', 69.
[180] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 22.

sometimes goes against the theories of imagined communities and national identity. Yuval-Davis also demonstrates how Malthusianism is contradictory:

> It is important to note that often there is serious conflict between collective national and individual interests in terms of the number of children one has. When there are no welfare structures to look after the elderly and the ill, it is crucial for people to have enough healthy children to support them. Moreover, when there are no developed public health services and the rate of infant mortality is high, there is a real interest for the women to become pregnant as many times as possible.[181]

Browner also notes this, highlighting that wider 'political dynamics reinforce existing inequalities by targeting some individuals and groups with programs aimed at limiting [women's] fertility, while giving other, possibly infertile individuals, the prospect of becoming parents'.[182]

Eugenics as a population regulation also encompasses Browner's claim. For instance, women are given the choice of aborting foetus' predicted to have disabilities. The notion that disability and race outside of a nation's culture and tradition create pressures on women to have, or not to have, children. Underlying connotations that one born into a national identity does not belong to suggest the demise of a nation. Yuval-Davis highlights especially with the discourse, 'people as power', how women are still presently used as agents of survival for the nation, by the nation. Yuval-Davis' argument can be concluded as such: 'one cannot dichotomise between 'natural' and 'controlled' reproduction: all so-called natural biological reproduction takes place in the specific social, political, and economic contexts which construct it'.[183] Women have a role of being 'bearers of the collective' with means only to ensure a nation's strength in continuity.

[181] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 35.
[182] Browner, 'Reproduction: From Rights to Justice?', 816.
[183] Yuval-Davis, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation', 26.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Books
Yuval-Davis, Nira, 'Women and the Biological Reproduction of the Nation' in *Gender and Nation* (New York: Sage Publications, 1997)

Secondary Sources:

Books
Adams, Rachel, 'Disability' in Benjamin Reiss and David Serlin (eds), *Keywords for Disability Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2015) pp. 5-11

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006; orig. pub. 1983)

Billig, Michael, 'Introduction', in *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995) pp. 1-12

Browner, Carole H., 'Reproduction: From Rights to Justice?' in Disch, Lisa, and Hawkesworth, Mary (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) pp. 803-831 (chapter 39) https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.013.16 [Accessed 28 November 2024]

Collins, Patricia Hill, 'It's all in the family: intersections of gender, race, and nation,' *Hypatia*, 13.3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 62-82

Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)

Hall, Stuart, 'The question of cultural identity', in *Modernity and its Futures*, ed. by Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew, (Cambridge: Polity, 1992) pp. 274-325

Shin, Ki-Young, 'Governance' in Disch, Lisa, and Hawkesworth, Mary (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) pp. 304-325 (chapter 15) https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.013.16 [Accessed 28 November 2024]

Skidmore, Thomas E. *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Articles
Breilly, John, 'Benedict Anderson's imagined communities: a symposium.' *Nations and Nationalism,* 22.4 (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016) 625-659

Skye, Michael, 'The national in everyday life: A critical engagement with Michael Billig's thesis of Banal Nationalism' *The Sociological Review*, 57.2 (New York: Sage Publications, 2009) 331-346

Online Sources

Stern, Alexandra Minna, 'Forced sterilization policies in the US targeted minorities and those with disabilities — and lasted into the 21st century', *The Conversation*, 17 Aug. 2020 https://theconversation.com/forced-sterilization-policies-in-the-us-targeted-minorities-and-those-with-disabilities-and-lasted-into-the-21st-century-143144 [Accessed 22/06/2025]



Pathologizing, Partial, but Positive?: Sexological Interpretations of Homosexual Identity in the Late Nineteenth Century

James Phillips

Pathologizing, Partial, but Positive?: Sexological Interpretations of Homosexual Identity in the Late Nineteenth Century

James Phillips

Abstract: *The notion of sexuality as a defining part of one's 'identity' is taken for granted in today's society, yet such ideas only came into being less than two hundred years ago. It was the emergence of sexology in the latter half of the nineteenth century that offered novel understandings of sexual behaviours and relations, departing from the religious and legal focus on sexual acts. This article harnesses the dynamic intellectual context of the late nineteenth century to explore nascent conceptions of homosexuality, looking particularly at the work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter. Through an analysis of their theories and methodology, the article will contend that whilst sexological interpretations of homosexuality were often deeply pathologizing and only partially accepting, they were ultimately positive within the context of the time.*

The nineteenth century was a period of transformational change in Western Europe, with rapid industrial growth prompting new intellectual interest in areas such as public health, population size, and the classification of social 'types.' It was within this context that the discipline of sexology emerged, which saw medical and psychiatric professionals engage in a systematic process of naming and categorising sexual behaviours and relations. Homosexuality was included in these efforts, with its conceptualisation as an 'identity' marking a departure from the historical focus on sexual acts like sodomy.[184] Whilst many still viewed same-sex desire as an abnormal pathology, it is true that in the context of the time sexological interpretations were largely positive. Indeed, most sexologists were united in a view of homosexuality as 'inborn' or 'congenital,' which distanced it from its religious and legal depiction as an immoral choice. Congenital explanations went hand in hand with the efforts of early homosexual rights activists like Magnus Hirschfeld, who used it as a basis to call for the repeal of repressive laws.[185] Many sexologists also made extensive use of case histories in their work, creating a rare opportunity for honest expression by queer voices. These case histories commonly portrayed homosexual desire as inborn, and as a source of happiness, undoubtedly moving many sexologists and contributing to their progressive views.[186] Despite this, it must

[184] David F. Greenberg, *The construction of homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 397-433; Arnold I. Davidson, 'Sex and the emergence of sexuality,' *Critical Inquiry,* 14.1 (1987), 16-48 (pp. 22-23).
[185] Agnieszka Koscianska, 'Sexology,' in *Companion to sexuality studies*, ed. by Nancy Naples (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 21-39 (p. 22); James D. Steakley, '*Per scientam ad justitiam*: Magnus Hirschfeld and the sexual politics of innate homosexuality,' in *Science and homosexualities*, ed. by Vernon A. Rosario (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 133-154 (p. 148).
[186] Birgit Lang, Joy Damousi and Alison Lewis, *A history of the case study: sexology, psychoanalysis, literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 5-8.

be noted that many employed a narrow definition of homosexuality, only extending their tolerance to those who fulfilled normative gender roles.[187] They also largely neglected lesbianism from their most thorough analyses, showing how these progressive conceptions were only partial. Nevertheless, having noted these limitations, it remains the case that sexologists harnessed the dynamic intellectual context of the time to develop a largely positive interpretation of homosexuality, paving the way for further research and activism in the proceeding decades.

Sexology did not emerge in a vacuum and was closely tied to broader shifts in European society throughout the nineteenth century. For example, rapid urbanization and industrialisation prompted concerns about population growth and public health in countries like Britain, leading to greater state intervention in society to maintain the welfare of the 'social body.'[188] These concerns were mirrored in new strands of intellectual thought, such as those advanced by Thomas Malthus and Charles Darwin. Malthus' 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population* warned about the potentially damaging impact of overpopulation, becoming tied to efforts to promote 'good' sexual practices. As historian Chiara Beccalossi has shown, these efforts could be quite radical, leading in some cases to the advocacy of nonprocreative sex and the use of contraception.[189] By the 1870s, emerging Darwinian ideas meant sexual differentiation began to be seen as a natural part of the evolutionary selection process, and therefore not entirely rooted in personal choice. Linked to this was degeneracy theory, which concerned itself with forms of 'reverse evolution,' seeking to identify common characteristics of social 'types' like criminals and the mentally ill.[190] Noting these developments illuminates a broad intellectual trend which focused on the characteristics of certain groups of people, and how such traits influenced their identities, behaviours, and relationship to wider society. In the case of sexology, specific attention was given to sexual desire and its implications for one's entire personage.

Homosexuality was a central focus for nineteenth century sexologists, who were among the first to conceptualise it as an 'identity' which influenced one's habits and behaviours. This was linked to their largely united view that it was inborn or congenital, as opposed to something that could be chosen or learned. Such thinking was first articulated by German sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in his series of

[187] Edward Carpenter, 'The Intermediate Sex (1896),' in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 48-51 (p. 50).
[188] Chris Waters, 'Sexology,' in *Palgrave advances in the modern history of sexuality,* ed. by Harry Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 41-63 (pp. 43-44).
[189] Chiara Beccalossi, *Female sexual inversion: same-sex desires in Italian and British sexology, c. 1870-1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 100.
[190] Beccalossi, p. 79; Greenberg, pp. 414-416.

twelve writings published from 1864-1879, together forming his 'Third Sex' theory of homosexuality.[191] In particular, it was his view that homosexuality was inborn that took hold among contemporary sexologists, with Havelock Ellis describing it as a 'congenital anomaly,' and Edward Carpenter asserting that same-sex attraction was 'ineradicable.'[192] Richard von Krafft-Ebing also espoused a congenital explanation in his seminal 1886 text *Psychopathia Sexualis*, yet this was done to support his decidedly more negative view of homosexuality as an abnormal pathology. Trained as a psychiatrist, Krafft-Ebing conceptualised homosexuality as a type of 'neuro- (psycho-) pathic state' which was 'in most cases hereditary.'[193] His work was highly influenced by degeneracy theory and claimed that same-sex sexual desire arose from a tainted ancestral lineage.[194]

Whilst such ideas were clearly stigmatising, they also allowed for homosexuality to be conceptualised as an inherent part of the individual, helping to dispel its established associations with crime and sin.[195] As noted by Michel Foucault, prior to the nineteenth century, sexual practices were predominantly regulated by canon and civil law, as well as the Christian pastoral. Such authorities mainly condemned or criminalised the act of sodomy, seeing its perpetrator as either criminal or evil.[196] In contrast, the view of homosexuality as inborn meant it was not viewed as something that individuals should have legal or moral responsibility for: it was seen as a natural part of them that could not be changed. Whilst not a sexologist, homophile writer John Addington Symonds summed up this view well in 1896, describing homosexuals as 'abnormal, but natural, beings.'[197] This paradoxical logic provided a conceptual foundation for explicitly positive views of homosexuality, as well as the more pathological interpretations advanced by the likes of Krafft-Ebing.

---

[191] Hubert Kennedy, 'Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, first theorist of homosexuality,' in *Science and homosexualities*, ed. by Vernon A. Rosario (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 26-46 (pp. 26-27).

[192] Havelock Ellis, 'Studies in the psychology of sex, vol. II: *Sexual Inversion* [1897] (3rd edn, 1915),' in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 52-57 (p. 57); Carpenter, p. 49.

[193] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis: a medico-forensic study,* trans. by F. Enke, 10th edn (London: Rebman, 1899), p. 338.

[194] Harry Oosterhuis, 'Richard von Krafft-Ebing's "step-children of nature": psychiatry and the making of homosexual identity,' in *Science and homosexualities,* ed. by Vernon A. Rosario (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 67-88 (p. 71); Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 1899, pp. 339-340.

[195] Jeffrey Weeks, '"Sins and diseases": some notes on homosexuality in the nineteenth century,' *History Workshop*, 1 (1976), 211-219 (p. 216); Chris Brickell, 'Sexology, the homo-hetero binary, and the complexities of male sexual history,' *Sexualities*, 9.4 (2006), 423-447 (p. 424).

[196] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 37-39; p. 43.

[197] John Addington Symonds, 'From *A Problem with Modern Ethics*, 1896,' in *Nineteenth century writings on homosexuality: a sourcebook*, ed. by Chris White (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 71-89 (p. 75).

Congenital explanations played a key role in contemporary political struggles and were harnessed by activists to agitate for law reform. The nineteenth century legal framework surrounding homosexuality in Europe was largely a repressive one. Perhaps most infamously, Article 175 of the 1871 German legal code saw anal sex between men criminalised in both public and private, with similar laws enacted in Austria.[198] In Britain, anti-buggery laws from the 16th century were still in place (although revised in 1861), whilst new legal restrictions on 'public indecency' and 'homosexual solicitation' were passed in 1885 and 1897 respectively.[199] Within this context, sexologists were foremost among the voices of dissent, which often stemmed from their view of homosexuality as innate. Indeed, as noted by historian Harry Oosterhuis, Krafft-Ebing wrote *Psychopathia* as a manual for lawyers and doctors involved in trials for sexual crimes, aiming to diminish criminal responsibility for what he viewed as an illness.[200] Furthermore, for sexologists like Ulrichs and Carpenter who were homosexuals themselves, theorising same-sex attraction as a way to effect change in the law had personal significance. This was also the case for Magnus Hirschfeld, who was perhaps the most prominent voice in the campaign for law reform. Indeed, Hirschfeld established the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in 1897, which harnessed the view of homosexuality as natural to campaign against legal and social discrimination in the proceeding decades.[201] These groundbreaking efforts clearly demonstrate the purchase that congenital explanations had for making rights claims in the political arena.

Nineteenth century interpretations of homosexuality were also significantly influenced by the methodology used by sexologists. Indeed, case histories, autobiographies, and confessional letters written by homosexuals were frequently harnessed for the formulation of knowledge about the 'sexed subject,' creating a rare opportunity for candid expression by queer voices.[202] These voices commonly asserted the inborn nature of their desire, highlighting how it brought them happiness and joy and did not deserve to be punished by the state. Such themes are evident in the 200 case histories included in *Psychopathia Sexualis*. For example, in 'Case 140,' Krafft-Ebing describes how the subject first noticed his same-sex desire as a schoolchild, making it unlikely that this was something he learned or acquired.[203] He illuminates how the subject was initially 'unconscious of his anomaly,' but later became 'haunted by the fear of detection.'[204] This demonstrates that homosexuals themselves did not view their sexual desire as abnormal or perverse,

[198] Robert A. Nye, 'The history of sexuality in context: national sexological traditions,' *Science in Context*, 4.2 (2008), 387-406 (p. 391).
[199] Nye, p. 391.
[200] Oosterhuis, pp. 70-71.
[201] Steakley, p. 139.
[202] Lang, Damousi and Lewis, p. 1; Oosterhuis, p. 74.
[203] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 1899, p. 369.
[204] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 1899, p. 369.

and it was only through contact with a hostile society that they felt prompted to conceal it out of fear and shame.

In addition to attracting sympathy, the use of case histories allowed for a portrayal of homosexual love in more explicitly positive terms, as something worthy of respect or celebration. For example, in Ellis' *Sexual Inversion*, he included a rare insight into female same-sex desire in the case of 'Miss M.' As well as emphatically asserting the innate nature of her lesbianism, Miss M. attested to being more interested in attaining romantic love with a woman than satisfying purely sexual desires.[205] She described same-sex love and intimate companionship as 'such beautiful and holy things to me,' in turn portraying her homosexuality as sacred and profound.[206] This marks a stark contrast to the religious and legal attitudes of the time, which repulsed at the depravity of same-sex sexual acts. In this sense, Miss M.'s use of the word 'holy' is especially striking, representing a direct challenge to entrenched Christian morals. The idea of homosexuality as beautiful even challenged the pathological views of Krafft-Ebing which, as noted, were still progressive for the time. The fact that sexologists like Ellis were platforming these radical perspectives shows the importance of case histories for the development of positive interpretations, both within the sexological discipline and in society at large.

This methodology also had a marked influence on sexologists themselves, with many personally moved by such honest queer expression. For example, historian Harry Oosterhuis has noted how first-hand stories of social alienation fuelled Krafft-Ebing's efforts to separate the homosexual 'illness' from moral or criminal responsibility.[207] He also suggests that Krafft-Ebing's use of case studies may have led to his more outspoken criticism of prohibitive laws by the end of the century, when he came to support Hirschfeld's activist efforts.[208] A similar change can be seen in Havelock Ellis, who described initially not wanting to write a volume on the 'unpleasant subject' of 'inversion,' yet was converted through his personal acquaintance with many homosexuals.[209] The use of case histories also had positive implications in so far as their effect on the homosexual audience, many of whom wrote to the likes of Krafft-Ebing about feeling less alone after reading his work.[210] It should be noted that the subjects of these case studies were overwhelmingly well-educated, upper-class men, meaning this methodology cannot be said to have

[205] Ellis, p. 55.
[206] Ellis, p. 55.
[207] Oosterhuis, pp. 74-77.
[208] Oosterhuis, pp. 78-79.
[209] Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, 'From *Sexual Inversion*, first British edition, 1897,' in *Nineteenth century writings on homosexuality: a sourcebook*, ed. by Chris White (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 94-104 (pp. 94-95).
[210] Oosterhuis, p. 69; pp. 80-81; Waters, pp. 56-57.

represented a wide range of queer experiences.[211] Nevertheless, its impact on both sexologists themselves and homosexual readers further reinforces the significant role of case histories in shaping early interpretations of same-sex desire.

Despite these progressions in the way homosexuality was conceived, most sexologists only extended such tolerance to a small, narrowly defined 'type' of homosexual. For example, in his 1896 work *The Intermediate Sex*, Edward Carpenter advanced a highly positive view of 'urnings,' envisaging a special role for them in society as 'reconcilers and interpreters' between men and women.[212] However, it is clear that this view relied on the distinction he made between 'normal and perfect' and 'extreme and exaggerated' homosexuals, with the latter type being characterised by a more radical transgression of gender norms.[213] Such men were likely to be effeminate, skilled in 'women's work,' and passive in sexual intercourse, whereas the women of this category were usually aggressive, muscular, and active in sex.[214] This gender-based distinction can also be identified in Krafft-Ebing's work, who saw 'effemination' and 'androgyny' as more extreme manifestations of the same pathological instinct that caused homosexuality.[215] This supports the view of historian Lawrence Birken, who argues that prior to the twentieth century, ideas about homosexuality were bound up with a desire to preserve established gender roles.[216] Whilst the likes of Carpenter can be viewed as trailblazing within the context of a largely hostile culture, it is clear that this relied on the creation of a hierarchy of homosexuality, within which only certain 'respectable types' of homosexuals were vindicated.

The partial nature of sexologists' interpretations can also be seen in their relative neglect of lesbianism. Whilst most sexologists believed that female same-sex desire existed, they argued that it was harder to detect due to women's reticence about their sexual lives, as well as the fact that it was not criminalised.[217] Indeed, in the British context, Beccalossi argues that nineteenth century sexology registered only a 'faint interest' in lesbianism, partly driven by a reluctance to view women as having an 'active sexuality.'[218] Carpenter engaged in perhaps the most thorough analysis of female inversion, yet as noted, this relied on his distinction between 'perfect' and 'exaggerated' types of homosexuals. Similar trends

[211] Oosterhuis, pp. 74-76.
[212] Carpenter, p. 51.
[213] Carpenter, p. 50.
[214] Carpenter, pp. 50-51.
[215] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 1899, pp. 336-337.
[216] Lawrence Birken, *Consuming desire: sexual science and the emergence of a culture of abundance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 102.
[217] Ellis and Symonds, p. 96.
[218] Beccalossi, p. 94; p. 97.

emerged on the continent, with Krafft-Ebing devoting only five pages to the topic of 'antipathic sexuality in the female' in *Psychopathia*.[219] His views largely re-iterated that same-sex attraction between women was harder to detect, whilst also reinforcing its associations with masculinity.[220] Whilst these views are not necessarily negative, they surely cannot be seen to constitute a positive interpretation of same-sex desire. Combined with the hierarchy that was imposed on homosexuality in this period, sexologists' neglect to study lesbianism reinforces the limited scope of their work.

Nevertheless, in noting these limitations, it is useful to re-state the context in which sexologists were working. Indeed, historian Lesley Hall has illuminated how, in Britain, a severe stigmatisation of sex persisted until the end of the nineteenth century, working to marginalise the discipline of sexology.[221] Both Ellis and Carpenter were in no way mainstream thinkers, with the medical establishment viewing their ideas as potentially subversive. This is clearly evident in an 1896 editorial in *The Lancet* on Ellis' *Sexual Inversion*, which expressed a view of homosexuality as 'the lowest depths to which humanity has fallen.'[222] Even within sexology, European thinkers were by no means united in their interpretations of same-sex desire. For example, historian Robert Nye has highlighted how in France, the decline of birth rates since the 1860s meant sexologists developed a largely negative view of nonprocreative sex.[223] In addition to the repressive legal contexts of countries like Germany and Austria, it seems fair to conclude that any positive interpretations of homosexuality in this period could be considered progressive, even if only partial. Whilst not excusing these limitations, this context helps to explain why sexologists might have engaged in this kind of respectability politics in order to convince people of their arguments.

Overall, numerous factors worked to shape sexological interpretations of homosexual identity in the late nineteenth century. The likes of Ulrichs and Carpenter harnessed the dynamic intellectual context of the time to conceptualise homosexuality as an 'innate' or 'congenital' part of the individual. Whilst often deeply pathologizing, this view was positive in so far as it distanced same-sex desire from its established associations with crime and sin. It also became inextricable with political campaigns for law reform, such as those led by Hirschfeld. The use of methodology like case histories was also a key factor in the emergence

[219] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 1899, p. xiii.
[220] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, 'Psychopathia sexualis [1886] (12th edn, 1903),' in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 45-47.
[221] Lesley A. Hall, '"The English have hot water bottles": the Morganatic marriage between sexology and medicine in Britain since William Acton,' in *Sexual knowledge, sexual science: the history of attitudes to sexuality*, ed. by Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 350-366 (pp. 350-351; pp. 355-358).
[222] 'Editorial on the publication of Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1896),' *The Lancet*, in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 51-52 (p. 51).
[223] Nye, pp. 392-393.

of positive sexological interpretations, amplifying queer voices who asserted their normalcy and called for an end to repression. Such perspectives had a profound influence on sexologists like Krafft-Ebing, as well as positive implications for homosexual readers. Whilst it is true that the tolerant views of sexologists only extended to certain 'respectable' types of male homosexual, this can still be seen as a progressive step in light of the wider European culture that was deeply hostile to same-sex love. Together, these factors illuminate why nineteenth century sexological interpretations of homosexuality can be viewed as positive, despite the fact that much of their work was complex, contradictory, and even highly stigmatising.

Bibliography

Primary sources:

'Editorial on the publication of Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1896),' *The Lancet*, in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 51-52.

Carpenter, Edward, 'The Intermediate Sex (1896),' in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 48-51.

Ellis, Havelock, 'Studies in the Psychology of Sex, vol. II: *Sexual Inversion* [1897] (3rd edn, 1915),' in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 52-57.

Ellis, Havelock and Symonds, John Addington, 'From *Sexual Inversion*, first British edition, 1897,' in *Nineteenth century writings on homosexuality: a sourcebook*, ed. by Chris White (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 94-104.

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, *Psychopathia sexualis: a medico-forensic study*, trans. by F. Enke, 10th edn (London, Rebman: 1899).

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, 'Psychopathia Sexualis [1886] (12th edn, 1903),' in *Sexology uncensored: the documents of sexual science*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 45-47.

Symonds, John Addington, 'From *A Problem in Modern Ethics, 1896*,' in *Nineteenth century writings on homosexuality: a sourcebook*, ed. by Chris White (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 71-89.

Secondary sources:

Beccalossi, Chiara, *Female sexual inversion: same-sex desires in Italian and British sexology, c. 1870-1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Birken, Lawrence, *Consuming desire: sexual science and the emergence of a culture of abundance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

Brickell, Chris, 'Sexology, the homo/hetero binary, and the complexities of male sexual history,' *Sexualities*, 9.4 (2006), 423-447, doi: 10.1177/1363460706068043.

Davidson, Arnold I., 'Sex and the emergence of sexuality,' *Critical Inquiry*, 14.1 (1987), 16-48.

Foucault, Michel, *The history of sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990).

Greenberg, David F., *The construction of homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Hall, Lesley A., '"The English have hot water bottles": The Morganatic marriage between sexology and medicine in Britain since William Acton,' in *Sexual knowledge, sexual science: the history of attitudes to sexuality*, ed. by Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 350-366.

Kennedy, Hubert, 'Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, first theorist of homosexuality,' in *Science and homosexualities*, ed. by Vernon A. Rosario (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 26-46.

Koscianska, Agnieszka, 'Sexology,' in *Companion to sexuality studies*, ed. by Nancy A. Naples (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 21-39.

Lang, Birgit, Damousi, Joy, and Lewis, Alison, *A history of the case study: sexology, psychoanalysis, literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

Nye, Robert A., 'The history of sexuality in context: national sexological traditions,' *Science in Context*, 4.2 (2008), 387-406.

Oosterhuis, Harry, 'Richard von Krafft-Ebing's "step children of nature": psychiatry and the making of homosexual identity,' in *Science and homosexualities*, ed. by Vernon A. Rosario (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 67-88.

Steakley, James D., '*Per scientam ad justitiam*: Magnus Hirschfeld and the sexual politics of innate homosexuality,' in S*cience and homosexualities*, ed. by Vernon A. Rosario (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 133-154.

Waters, Chris, 'Sexology,' in *Palgrave advances in the modern history of sexuality*, ed. by Harry G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 41-63.

Weeks, Jeffrey, '"Sins and diseases": some notes on homosexuality in the nineteenth century,' *History Workshop*, 1 (1976), 211-219.



Chivalry and Violence: How Violence Permeated Medieval Europe's Central Secular Ideology

Ben Laughland

Chivalry and Violence: How Violence Permeated Medieval Europe's Central Secular Ideology

Ben Laughland

Abstract: *In the present day, the word 'chivalry' is often used as a synonym for courteousness, conjuring up imagery of a gentlemanly, gallant man politely opening a door or holding out a chair for his graceful lady. This is typically the behaviour that elicits the phrase 'chivalry is not dead', a saying that alludes to the fact that chivalric behaviour was once commonplace and that chivalry as an ideology was preeminent in society. However, as this essay looks to display, the modern association between chivalry and courteousness does not take into account the eminence of violence within the medieval perception of chivalric ideals.*

Through analysing a plethora of prominent chivalric literature such as Arthurian romances, chivalric biographies, and chivalric treatises written during the high and late middle ages, when chivalry as an ideology was most active and adhered to, a robust theoretical basis for the ideals that characterised contemporary perceptions of 'chivalry' can be established. It is through an analysis of these ideals that this essay demonstrates that violence was a central aspect of chivalric ideology during the middle ages, even if some of its tenets sought to reduce the violence involved. As such, the use of chivalry as a synonym for politeness, courteousness or good-manners, ultimately fails to take into account its brutal and bloody historical context.

During the high and late middle ages, the ideals of chivalry, or in other words, the primary qualities and practises prescribed to knighthood, played an integral part in the fabric of society across Latin Christendom. The exact makeup of these ideals is somewhat difficult to decipher however, as there was no official compilation on what the nature of the qualities and practices of knighthood were. Despite this, a robust theoretical basis on the ideals of chivalry can be established by analysing a plethora of contemporary literature that, though not standardised, consistently outlined a certain set of characteristics and practices. Written works such as Arthurian romances, chivalric biographies and chivalric treatises, reflect the chivalric customs and aspirations of not just the knightly class, but the wider literate society as a whole and therefore, provide an insight into the contemporary discourses surrounding chivalric ideals. It is through these discourses that a discernible set of ideals can be identified. With this in mind, this essay looks to analyse the role of violence within chivalric ideals, as presented in contemporary chivalric literature.

The way in which this essay will go about answering this question is by examining the relationship between violence and the core set of chivalric ideals propounded by key chivalric literature. In particular,

the extent to which these ideals precipitated or limited violence. It is important to note that not every piece of chivalric literature and as such, not every ideal presented within said literature, has been included within this analysis. As stated, this essay focuses on a central set of ideals presented in prominent written work. It is also important to note that this essay is solely concerned with the ideals of chivalry, not the realities of knightly conduct. Therefore, the primary sources used within this analysis will exclusively be chivalric literature, not historical accounts.

This essay follows three distinct sections that each establish a significant ideal or practice of chivalry and its relationship with violence. The first section will focus on the core tenet of chivalric ideals, namely the dynamic between prowess and honour and how violence was the principal element of this doctrine. The second section will focus on the presence of mercy within chivalric ideals and how it theoretically reduced the brutality of the violence that occurred from deeds-of-prowess. Whilst the third section will focus on the importance of the tournament to chivalric ideals and how the regulations involved also, in theory, reduced the violence that permeated from the principal ideal of prowess. Nonetheless, as this essay will demonstrate, the ideal of mercy and regulatory nature of tournaments only intended to negate the violence involved in chivalric deeds, not completely put an end to it. Thus, although significant elements of chivalric ideals looked to reduce the brutality involved, violence was ultimately the underpinning theme.

When it comes to identifying the core ideals of chivalry within chivalric literature, the element that consistently stands out is the dynamic between prowess and honour. Honour, as medieval historian Richard Kaeuper states, was the 'veritable currency of chivalric life' that was 'worth more than life itself.'[224] Prowess was regarded as the fundamental quality that a knight could possess in attaining honour- as chivalric chronicler Jean Froissart states, a gentleman cannot 'achieve perfect honour nor worldly renown without prowess.'[225] Prowess, therefore, was crucial to the ideals presented in chivalric literature and in some cases, even stood as a one word characterisation of chivalry as a whole. For instance, in the romance *The death of King Arthur,* acts of prowess are referred to as 'deeds-of-chivalry.'[226] Showcasing prowess, however, invariably involved violence and as a result, within chivalric literature, explicit violence as a means of showcasing prowess and attaining honour, became a central theme. For example, in the Arthurian romance *The Lancelot,* a knight describes Lancelot killing five knights and five men-at-arms as a 'marvellous deed' and in response to this bloody feat-of-arms proclaims him as the 'only worthy man in the whole world.'[227] Likewise, in the chivalric biography *The Bruce,* Robert the Bruce is explicitly honoured

[224] Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 130.
[225] Jean Froissart, *Chroniques,* as cited in, Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence,* p. 130.
[226] *The Death of King Arthur,* trans. and intro. by James Cable (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 36.
[227] *Lancelot,* as cited in, Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence,* p 137.

for 'splitting the head of the English knight Sir Henry de Bohum.'[228] It is in Geoffroi de Charny's *A Knight's own Book of Chivalry* however, where the importance of violence to prowess and honour can be most clearly observed. Charny considers warfare, especially outside of one's locality, as more honourable than tournaments and jousts due to the higher physical dangers involved and the increased violence of them. Charny describes war as 'so grave as to put person, land and resources all at risk.'[229] Clearly then, violence was intrinsically linked to prowess and therefore a crucial requisite to the attainment of honour which within chivalric culture, was the premier virtue a man could possess.

However, although fundamental, prowess was not the only quality of knighthood presented in chivalric literature with many of them not involving violence. For instance, in the romance *Lancelot of the Lake,* when describing the qualities of knighthood, the lady of the lake mentions traits such as compassion and generosity.[230] This nonviolent side to chivalric ideals is perfectly exhibited in chivalric literature with the proverbial figure of the preudomme who is portrayed as an admirable, highly respected man of integrity whose actions were to be emulated.[231] In his essay on the *preudomme,* medieval poet and moralist Baldwin de Conde expounds the qualities of the preudomme to be entirely civil with no reference to violence.[232] Moreover, as medieval historian David Crouch argues, in the biography of William Marshal, these passive qualities are presented as a significant part of the Marshal's life as prowess had become an insufficient way to demonstrate his greatness.[233] Nevertheless, although these qualities were certainly respected and considered important characteristics of knighthood, they were only regarded as secondary to prowess. As Richard Kaueper states, when compared to prowess 'no-one would particularly notice' these passive qualities as 'no-one would particularly care.'[234] Ultimately, it was prowess that would distinguish and immortalise a great man's life.

Overall, although scholar Norman Housley argues that historians have ceased to regard chivalry as a consistent set of values, the dynamic between prowess and honour is repeatedly established in chivalric literature as the core element.[235] This dynamic, however, is unanimously shown to be attained by feat-of-

---

[228] John Barbour, *The Bruce,* as cited in, Nigel Saul, *For Honour and Fame: Chivalry in England, 1066-1500* (London, The Bodley Head, 2011), p. 181.
[229] Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry,* trans. by Elspeth Kennedy and intro. by Richard Kaeuper (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 49.
[230] Chretien de Troyes, *Lancelot of the Lake,* trans. by Corin Corley and intro. by Elspeth Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 52.
[231] David Crouch, 'The Violence of the Preudomme', in *Prowess, Piety and Public Order in Medieval Society: Studies in Honour of Richard W. Kaeuper,* ed. By Craig M. Nakashian and Daniel P. Franke (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 87-101 (p. 89).
[232] Crouch, 'The Violence of the Preudomme', pp. 88-89.
[233] Crouch, 'The Violence of the Preudomme', p. 99.
[234] Kaeper, *Chivalry and Violence,* p. 159.
[235] Norman Housley, 'One man and his wars: the depiction of warfare by Marshal Boucicaut's biographer', *Journal of Medieval History,* 29 (2003), 27-40 (p. 39).

arms involving explicit violence which in turn, as historians Peter Sposato and Samuel Claussen argue, created 'an identity and lifestyle centred on violence.'[236] Consequently, violence was an elemental part of chivalric ideals.

However, although violence was an imperative part of the core ideal of chivalry, there were significant elements within these ideals that despite still involving violence, looked to reduce the extent of the brutality involved. This can no better be illustrated than with the substantial promotion of mercy within chivalric literature, particularly in regards to a beaten or captured opponent.

From the eleventh century, a prominent presence of mercy can be identified in chivalric practices. As medieval historian John Gillingham argues, the introduction of chivalry to England after the Norman conquest marked the start of a pattern that would last two centuries, namely, a newfound custom of the English monarchy showing clemency to aristocratic rebels.[237] This merciful practice later developed into a crucial characteristic of knighthood within Arthurian romances. For instance, in *Lancelot of the Lake*, the Lady of the Lake states that if a knight attacks the 'good people who need only compassion and mercy, then he has lost his soul.'[238] Likewise, in Lancelot*: the Knight of the Cart,* it is stated that there would have been 'no better knight than Maleagant' if it was not for his heart lacking 'all sweetness or mercy.'[239] Similarly in chivalric treatises, mercy is consistently praised. For instance, in medieval writer Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the Body Politic,* mercy is promoted through the conviction that it played a large part in the success of the Romans and, therefore, should be replicated by the contemporary knightly class.[240] Clearly then, within chivalric literature, mercy played an integral part in the way a knight was expected to behave.

However, historian Craig Taylor argues that questions surrounding mercy were ambiguous within chivalric literature and that the 'modern use of the term 'chivalry' as a synonym for mercy in warfare fails to recognise the extent to which this was debated in chivalric culture.'[241] But this is a slightly narrow approach as it does not take into account the increasing efforts of chivalric commentators to regulate the treatment of captured opponents during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that showcases a

[236] Peter Sposato and Samuel Claussen, 'Chivalric Violence', in *A Companion to Chivalry,* ed. by Robert W. Jones and Peter Cross (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2019), pp. 99-118 (p. 100).
[237] John Gillingham, '1066 and the introduction of chivalry into England', in *Law and government in medieval England and Normandy: Essays in honour of Sir James Holt,* ed. by George Garnett and John Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 31-55 (p. 44).
[238] De Troyes, *Lancelot of the Lake,* p. 55.
[239] Chretien de Troyes, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart,* trans. by Deborah Webster Rogers and intro. by W.T.H. Jackson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 53.
[240] Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic,* ed. and trans. by Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 33.
[241] Craig Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 177.

tangible nature to mercy within chivalric ideals. For example, in *The Tree of Battles* written in 1387*,* medieval writer Honore Bovet states, 'mercy is indeed due to a prisoner, and his captor must give it to him.'[242] Moreover, in Christine de Pizan's *Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry,* written in 1410, it is stated that enemies should be treated with honour and respect and that undue severity towards prisoners should be avoided.[243] Although these treatises do not attempt to assert an official set of rules, their purpose was to codify and evaluate contemporary customs surrounding the conduct of soldiers within warfare more generally, and the paradigms around the humane treatment of a defeated opponent.

This regulation of the conduct surrounding the treatment of opponents is further reinforced by the medieval perception of the law-of-arms. Although as medieval historian Maurice Keen argues, the law-of-arms was not an official authority on the conduct of soldiers in warfare,[244] it is repeatedly referred to in contemporary chivalric literature to mean, as historian Nicholas Wright states, 'some sort of obligation on one knight to behave with magnanimity towards another who was at his mercy.'[245] In *Croniques,* Froissart denounces the English for leaving the slayer of John Chandos to die of his wounds, as it went against what the 'law-of-arms requires.'[246] Although, as medieval historian Remy Ambuhl argues, the primary use of the law-of-arms as a legal precedent was about financial matters, in the minds of writers such as Froissart, a significant element of mercy and denouncement of unrestrained violence is clearly present.[247]

Whilst these attempts at codifying the treatment of opponents and law-of-arms are not chivalric ideals themselves, they reinforce the significant and tangible role that mercy played in the conduct of knighthood. Consequently, within chivalric ideals, the extent of the violence that inevitably came from prowess would be reduced as, theoretically, an element of mercy would be shown to a defeated opponent. However, mercy was not portrayed as a contradictory ideal to prowess and was ultimately only expected of a knight once an opponent had been beaten. Thus, when analysing the role that violence played in chivalric ideals overall, the element of mercy only negated the extent of the violence that was inseparable from prowess.

This idea that there were significant elements of chivalric ideals that despite involving violence, theoretically looked to reduce the extent of said violence, is further reinforced by the role and nature of the

---

[242] Honore Bonet, *The Tree of Battles,* ed. and trans. by George William Coopland (Oakland: University of California Press, 1949), pp. 52-53.
[243] Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry,* as cited in, Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood,* p. 199.
[244] Maurice Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1965), p. 7.
[245] N.A.R. Wright, 'The Tree of Battles of Honore Bovet and the Laws of War', in *War, Literature and Politics in the Late Middle Ages,* ed. by C.T. Allmand (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1976), pp. 12-31 (p. 20).
[246] Jean Froissart, *Croniques,* p. 459, as cited in, Wright, 'The Tree of battles', p. 20.
[247] Remy Ambuhl, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 27.

tournament. Within chivalric literature, the tournament is presented as an essential part of chivalric culture and is tirelessly promoted as a crucial practice of knighthood. In the romance *Perceforest* for example, it is stated that no knight who participated in a tournament would fail to be 'bolder, more valiant and more skilled in combat.'[248] As medieval historian Richard Barber argues, romance writers went to great lengths to portray the tournament in 'glowing colours' and as 'decisive' in the lives of romance heroes, thus giving the tournament great prestige.[249] This depiction of the tournament as an integral part of knighthood was not exclusive to romances however, with it also appearing prominently in chivalric treatises. For instance, in the *Book of the Order of Chivalry,* medieval knight and scholar Ramon Lull states that the tournament is a key component in the 'office of a knight,' as it plays a vital role in the 'order of chivalry.'[250] Likewise, in his *Advice on Battle Challenges,* fifteenth century writer Olivier de la Marche, expresses admiration for tournaments as they tested the nobility's prowess and therefore, honour.[251] Notwithstanding, in Charny's *A Knight's own Book of Chivalry,* the tournament is regarded as less admirable in comparison to a genuine battle. However, the tournament was still considered as a means of showcasing prowess by Charny and in turn, was still heavily promoted as a crucial part of knighthood and an integral part of chivalry. According to Charny, the 'truest and most perfect' form of knighthood meant frequently participating in tournaments as well as genuine warfare.[252] Clearly then, the tournament was depicted as an indispensable part of knighthood and it is through its significance that a marked limitation in the violence involved in chivalric ideals can be observed.

Due to the activities involved in a tournament, namely, mock battles and jousts, an element of physical violence was inevitable. Often, explicit displays of brutality were showcased within these tournaments and the chivalric literature made no efforts to conceal this violent reality. As Richard Kauper states, 'Arthurian literature shows elite awareness that tournaments could turn deadly serious.'[253] However, a distinctive theme that differentiated the violence that a tournament entailed and that of genuine warfare, was a recognition that the objective of a tournament was to capture rather than kill an opponent and therefore, a sentiment that unrestrained violence should be discouraged. For instance, in *Perceforest,* in response to the violence of a tournament the character Perceforest states 'it's best to leave the game whilst

---

[248] *Perceforest: The Prehistory of King Arthur's Britain,* ed. and trans. by Nigel Bryant (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2011), p. 40.
[249] Richard Barber, 'Chivalry in the Tournament and Pas d'Armes', in *A Companion to Chivalry,* ed. by Robert W. Jones and Peter Cross (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2019), pp. 119-138 (p. 125).
[250] Ramon Lull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry,* trans. by Noel Fallows (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013), p. 47.
[251] Olivier de la Marche, *The Book of Advice on Battle Challenges,* as cited in, Malcolm Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 78.
[252] Charny, *A Knight's own Book of Chivalry,* p. 55.
[253] Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 222.

it is in good spirit.'[254] Therefore, the nature of the tournament within chivalric literature is one that is more restrained in its violence when compared to genuine warfare.

Furthermore, by the second half of the thirteenth century, the tournament had become safe enough to, as Richard Barber argues, develop into 'a festival of chivalry' and it was during this period that a tangible set of rules dedicated to limiting the violence involved started to come into play.[255] For example, in the statutes of the chivalric *Order of the Sash*, two chapters focus on the tournament, stating that weapons must be checked to see if they are blunted and that blows to the face or on an unhelmeted opponent are prohibited.[256] These rules indicate that a concern for safety had come into play regarding the tournament and that the prowess showcased in a mock battle or joust was decidedly meant to be more restrained than in a real battle.

Consequently, the overall nature of the tournament shows a side to the ideals of chivalry that is distinctively adverse to the unrestrained violence that emanated from the central tenet of prowess. However, similarly to mercy, an element of violence was intrinsic to the tournament and the rules only looked to limit the violence involved. Therefore, violence was the underpinning factor of the tournament even if it was limited..

In conclusion, violence acted as the fundamental element in the core chivalric ideals presented in chivalric literature. In Arthurian romances, chivalric biographies, and chivalric treatises, prowess is unanimously established as the fundamental quality in attaining honour and, therefore, is tirelessly portrayed as the central tenet of chivalric ideals. But, prowess invariably involved violence, and as a result, explicitly violent feat-of-arms being honoured became a predominant theme in chivalric literature, as seen in the romance *Lancelot* and the biography of Robert the Bruce. Although, a noteworthy amount of the characteristics prescribed to knighthood did not involve violence such as the integrity and compassion associated with the idealistic character of the preudomme. Nonetheless, these more civil ideals were decidedly secondary to the core principle of prowess and thus, the violence it entailed was a critical element in chivalric ideals.

However, within these ideals, there were significant elements that looked to restrain the extent of the brutality concomitant with prowess. Most explicitly, this can be seen with the substantial promotion of mercy within chivalric literature. Within romances, such as *Lancelot of the Lake* and *Lancelot, the knight of the cart,* as well as treatises such as *The Book of the Body Politic,* mercy is presented as an imperative quality of knighthood. The significance of mercy with chivalric culture was buttressed by the increasing

[254] Bryant, *Perceforest,* p. 142.
[255] Barber, 'Chivalry in the Tournament', p. 128.
[256] Barber, 'Chivalry in the Tournament', pp. 127-128.

attempts of chivalric commentators to codify existing chivalric customs and precedent of a law-of-arms that, although not ideals themselves, both created a tangible discourse to regulate the treatment of captured opponents and thus reinforced the ideal of mercy as a fundamental quality of knighthood that looked to limit the violence associated with prowess. Furthermore, the nature and significance of the tournament to chivalric culture within the literature, reinforces the theoretical limitation to violence within chivalric ideals. Arturian romances and chivalric treatises present the tournament as an indispensable part of chivalric culture but a part in which violence was expected to be limited. Though the literature did not conceal the violent reality of chivalric tournaments, whenever it was depicted, an overarching sentiment of discouragement is apparent and therefore, a clear differentiation in the attitudes towards the violence of a tournament and in warfare is made. This differentiation manifested itself into a tangible set of rules such as those exhibited in the statutes of the chivalric Order of the Sash, that directly looked to limit the violence of the tournament. Similarly to the presence of mercy, the nature of the tournament showcases a side to the core practices of knighthood that is inimical to the sheer extent of the violence that is portrayed next to deeds-of-prowess.

However, the virtue of mercy and the rules of the tournament were not portrayed to completely neutralise the violence that came from acts-of-prowess but only to curb it. Ultimately, mercy was only expected of a knight once he had beaten his opponent in combat and violence was still presented as an intrinsic part of the tournament, hence why weapons were blunted but not banned. Consequently, violence was an underpinning theme in the core set of chivalric ideals presented in key chivalric literature even if there were significant elements that theoretically looked to limit the extent of the brutality involved. This conclusion is significant as it contravenes with the modern use of the word chivalry when referencing politeness or good manners. This modern association between chivalry and courteousness fails to take into account the prominence of the role of violence within medieval interpretations of chivalric ideals.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Bonet, Honore, *The Tree of Battles*, ed. and trans. by George William Coopland (Oakland: University of California Press, 1949)

Charny, Geoffroi de, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, trans. by Elspeth Kennedy and intro. by Richard Kaeuper (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005)

Lull, Ramon, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, trans. by Noel Fallows (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013)

Perceforest: The Prehistory of King Arthur's Britain, ed. and trans. by Nigel Bryant (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2011)

Pizan, Christine de, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. and trans. by Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

The Death of King Arthur, trans. and intro. by James Cable (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971)

Troyes, Chretien de, *Lancelot of the Lake*, trans. by Corin Corley and intro. by Elspeth Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

—-, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart*, trans. by Deborah Webster Rogers and intro. by W.T.H. Jackson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984)

Secondary Sources:

Ambuhl, Remy, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Crouch, David, 'The Violence of the Preudomme', in *Prowess, Piety and Public Order in Medieval Society: Studies in Honour of Richard W. Kaeuper*, ed. By Craig M. Nakashian and Daniel P. Franke (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 87-101

Gillingham, John, '1066 and the introduction of chivalry into England', in *Law and government in medieval England and Normandy: Essays in honour of Sir James Holt*, ed. by George Garnett and John Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 31-55

Housely, Norman, 'One man and his wars: the depiction of warfare by Marshal Boucicaut's biographer', *Journal of Medieval History*, 29 (2003), pp. 27-40

Kaeuper, Richard, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)

—-, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Keen, Maurice, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1965)

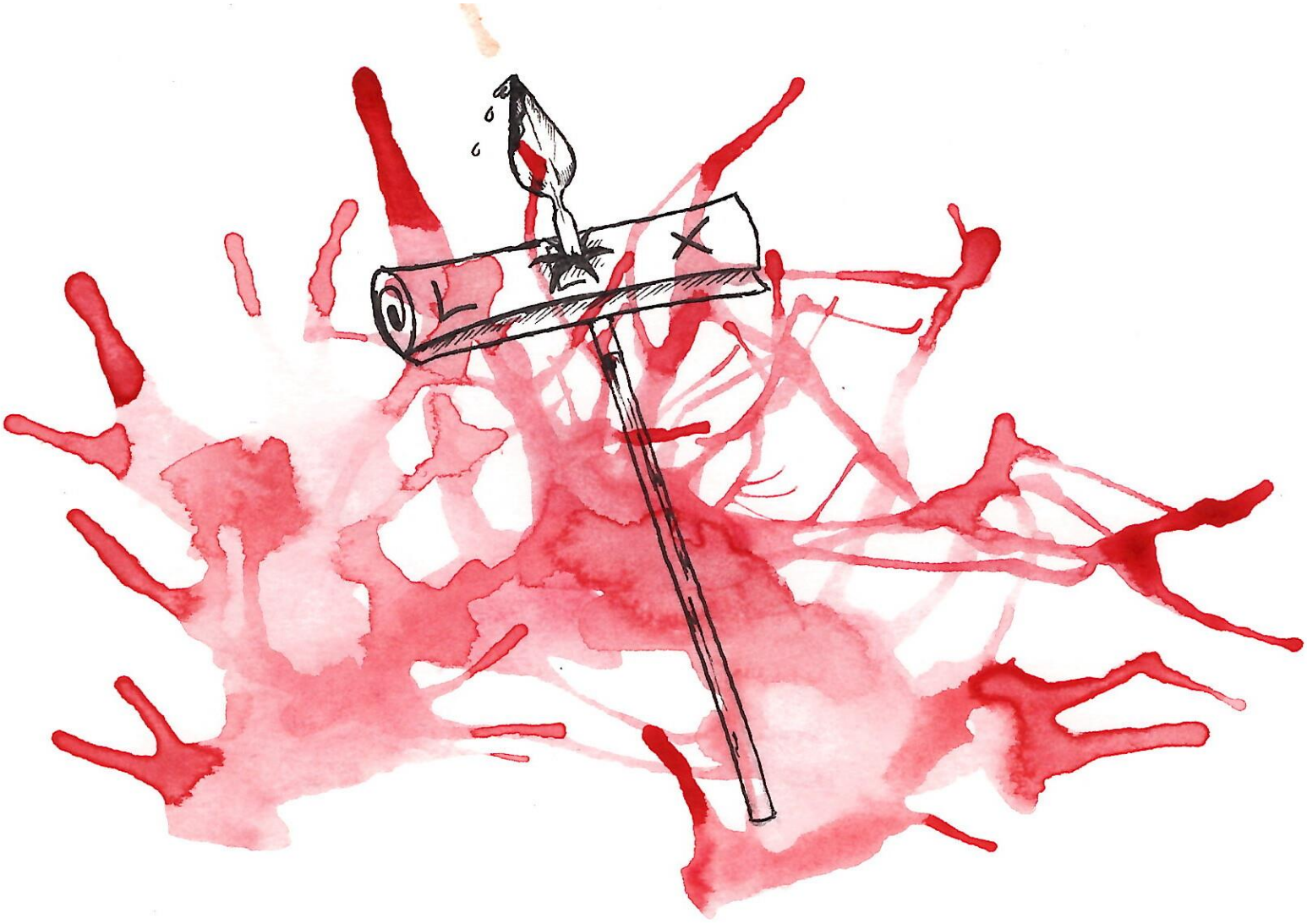
Taylor Craig, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Saul, Nigel, *For Honour and Fame: Chivalry in England, 1066-1500* (London, The Bodley Head, 2011)

Sposato, Peter, and Samuel Claussen, 'Chivalric Violence', in *A Companion to Chivalry*, ed. by Robert W. Jones and Peter Cross (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2019), pp. 99-118

Vale, Malcolm, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1981)

Wright, N.A.R., 'The Tree of Battles of Honore Bovet and the Laws of War', in *War, Literature and Politics in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by C.T. Allmand (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1976), pp. 12-31



The relationship between politics, violence and instability in socio-political institutions of the late Roman Republic

Joe Andrews

The relationship between politics, violence and instability in socio-political institutions of the late Roman Republic

Joe Andrews

Abstract: *This essay explores the late Roman Republic from Tiberius Gracchus' murder in 133 BCE to the formation of the Second Triumvirate in 43 BCE. During this period political violence greatly increased as a result of several factors, destabilising key institutions and eventually, the Republic itself. The first part of this essay contains several case studies examining the use of violence in the late-Republic, focusing on the Gracchi brothers, Catiline and Clodius. It analyses the reasons behind outbreaks of political violence, considering the contrasting or aligning motivations of optimates, populares and those who followed them. The second part more closely examines the approaches of three key ancient sources, these being Plutarch, Sallust and Cicero, who wrote on the subject in question. It examines their explanations for the increase in political violence during this period, accounting for any bias or shortcomings as a result of their respective approaches.*

The murder of popular reformist politician Tiberius Gracchus (133 BCE) marked the beginning of a period in which violence was increasingly used as a means of achieving political aims when more legitimate methods failed. Such violence contributed to the collapse of the Roman Republic as it destabilised fundamental social and political institutions. This article will consider the application of violence by popular leaders like the Gracchi, the response of *optimates* to such threats and ancient authors' explanations for political violence during events between 133 BCE and 43 BCE (foundation of the Second Triumvirate). I will argue that violence in late-Republican politics was symptomatic of underlying socio-economic and political instabilities in Roman society. Primarily, violence was provoked by attempts to address inequality.

To an extent, violence was socially acceptable within Roman politics. In his defence of Milo, delivered before a large public crowd in the Roman Forum, Marcus Tullius Cicero referred to the concepts of natural law and self-defence.[257] His use of these terms in a judicial setting suggests they were ingrained in and understood throughout society, as Cicero clearly felt they would appeal to his audience. Senatorial elites were responsible for using violence to eliminate internal threats to the state. Thus, they had the power to decide the limits of acceptable political violence in Rome. The lack of a formal police force encouraged

[257]Cicero, Pro Milone 4, in *In Pisonem. Pro Scauro. Pro Fonteio. Pro Rabirio Postumo. Pro Marcello. Pro Ligario. Pro Rege Deiotaro*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 252), trans. by N. H. Watts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931).

frequent small-scale violence as an outlet through which the population could express their dissatisfaction. Historian Alexander Yakobson explained that the flexible Roman constitution allowed internal violence as a functional safety valve.[258] If political violence was deemed to threaten the state, the senate could act by employing the *senatus consultum ultimum* (*SCU*). However, historian Antonio Duplá-Ansuategui argued the *SCU* was a political weapon used by conservative senators against threats to the senatorial monopoly of power.[259] Thus, until *populares* addressed socio-economic and political inequalities, violence was less frequent, and the constitution remained stable. Late-Republican politicians resorted to violence more frequently after a series of civil wars, which acclimatised the population to civil conflict. Violence was a recognised tool of Roman political culture and symptomatic of instabilities in Rome.[260] Attempts to address these instabilities provoked increased violence during this period.

Tiberius Gracchus was the first in a series of several late-Republican *populares* to be violently suppressed. According to the Ancient Greek philosopher and historical biographer Plutarch, Tiberius was a virtuous nobleman of distinguished ancestry who represented the rural poor out of genuine concern for their welfare.[261] Yakobson argued the combination of his popular legitimacy and aristocratic authority made him formidable, since plebians were conditioned to respect noble lineages.[262] As plebian tribune, he redistributed public land, which wealthy landowners held illegally, to address recruitment problems, unemployment and food shortages.[263] Many senatorial elites despised Tiberius because of his land reforms, which threatened their wealth, though historian Andrew Lintott argued their hostility was provoked more by his autocratic methods.[264] Tiberius also took charge of distributing the territory Attalus III of Pergamon left to Rome.[265] This angered the senate by infringing on its primacy in foreign policy. Hostility increased after Tiberius carried an unprecedented motion to depose Marcus Octavius, a fellow tribune, by popular vote.[266] Tiberius sought to prevent the rival tribune from vetoing measures on behalf of the senatorial elites he represented. Lintott argued that Tiberius felt justified in breaking precedent since he had gained a special

[258]Alexander Yakobson, 'Traditional Political Culture and the People's Role in the Roman Republic', *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 59.3 (2010) p. 301.
[259]Antonio, Duplá-Ansuategui, 'From Patronage to Violence and Bribery: Towards a New Political Culture', in *A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic*, ed. by Valentina Arena and Jonathan R. W. Prag (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2022), p. 417.
[260]Andrew Lintott, *Violence in Republican Rome* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 175.
[261]Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 1-4, in *Lives, Volume X: Agis and Cleomenes. Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. Philopoemen and Flamininus*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 102), trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1921).
[262]Yakobson, pp. 289-290.
[263]Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 8-9.
[264]Lintott, p.182.
[265]Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 14.
[266]Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 12.

dignitas by defending the oppressed.[267] Property owners had previously bullied Octavius into vetoing Tiberius' proposals which threatened their wealth, indicating that systems of checks and balances protected the interests of the ruling class.[268] They resorted to violent action once their more legitimate attempts to oppose Tiberius failed.

Scipio Nasica, the *pontifex maximus* (chief priest), suppressed Tiberius through private action after he sought a second tribuneship (also unprecedented) with further reformist proposals. Ancient writers like Plutarch acknowledged that Tiberius did not pose a violent threat, indicating Nasica acted illegally. Plutarch claimed Tiberius would have yielded peacefully and Cicero admitted the constitution was not seriously undermined by Tiberius.[269] This admission reveals that Tiberius' enemies were motivated by hatred of his policies instead of his methods, contrary to Lintott's suggestion. Nasica's riot was motivated by the desire to protect the economic interests of the senatorial elite, which were responsible for increasing inequality in the late-Republic. Indeed, Duplá-Ansuategui argued that the ruling class ignored the social needs of the population, allowing economic inequality to deepen.[270] In the aftermath, the senate passed Tiberius' *Lex Sempronia,* a law which addressed land distribution, to pacify his supporters and improve the socio-economic issues he had attempted to address.[271] Overall, Tiberius' attempts to resolve long-standing socio-economic inequalities between the rural poor and patricians were met with violent suppression. Thus, violence was symptomatic of existing instabilities since it was provoked by attempts to address these through political institutions.

Gaius Gracchus was similarly suppressed because of his political and socio-economic reforms. He gained popularity with rural voters through his oratorical skill and promotion of popular judicial, military, and agrarian reforms, as well as creating employment through building programmes.[272] Gaius won two tribuneships (123-122 BCE), moved his residence to a poorer neighbourhood and attempted to reduce senatorial dominance in the judiciary. Such measures made him a powerful tribune, but also alienated the senatorial class. Plutarch described how the Senate used rival tribunes, such as Livius Drusus, to undermine

[267]Lintott, p. 177.
[268]Peter A. Brunt, 'The Roman Mob', *Past & Present*, 35 (1966) p. 8.
[269]Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 20; Cicero, *In Catilinam* 1.3.
[270]Duplá-Ansuategui, p. 409.
[271]Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 21.
[272]Brunt, p. 17.

Gaius' reforms and public popularity, eventually resorting to violence.[273] Leading historian Peter Brunt suggested the senate was dominated by a few senior noble families who actively opposed measures to relieve the poor.[274] Consequently, their support for Drusus' reforms exclusively sought to undermine Gaius, rather than to genuinely relieve the poor. When Gaius' political enemies moved to revoke his reforms, he gathered armed partisans as a private citizen to oppose them.[275] The senate granted the consul Lucius Opimius authority to eliminate Gaius through the first *SCU*, after verbal altercations between their partisans sparked violence. Although this suppression was more legitimate since Gaius posed a physical threat, the force taken against him was extremely excessive and unnecessary. Plutarch reported that despite pleading for peace, Gaius and his supporters were slaughtered. This suppression was fiercer than that of 133 BCE, but also more legal.[276] The threat Gaius posed indicatively did not warrant the use of the *SCU*, but such was the senatorial elites' fear of *populares* that they acted uncompromisingly in defence of their interests. Cicero later used Opimius' suppression of Gaius as an example of Roman law allowing for homicide in defence of the state.[277] Like his brother, Gaius was violently eliminated for threatening the interests of the senatorial elite with measures designed to reduce political and socio-economic inequalities. Though Gaius resorted to physical intimidation, the threat he posed was exaggerated by senators to justify their actions. Again, violence was directly provoked by attempts to address pre-existing instabilities in Roman society through political action.

Lucius Catiline utilised and provoked violence as a result of his political ambition, which was stimulated by an increasingly corrupt state and competitive elite culture. Catiline was not a genuine *populares*, like the Gracchi or Clodius, but rather the product of a selfish and violent period. This was indicated by his lack of office, which prevented him from promoting typical popular measures, like cheap grain, during campaigning.[278] Sallust, a 1st-century BCE Roman politician and historian, described Catiline's wicked nature, which he explained was encouraged by a state corrupted by extravagance and greed after the fall of Carthage (146 BCE).[279] He also blamed Sulla, the great general and conservative

[273]Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus* 8-10, in *Lives, Volume X: Agis and Cleomenes. Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. Philopoemen and Flamininus*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 102), trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921).
[274]Brunt, p. 5.
[275]Brunt, p. 18.
[276]Lintott, p. 184.
[277]Cicero, *Pro Milone* 3-4.
[278]Ian Harrison, 'Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics at Rome during the 60s and 50s BCE', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 51.1 (2008) p. 111.
[279]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 5-10, in *Catiline's Conspiracy; The Jugurthine War; Histories*, trans. by W. W. Batsone (Oxford University Press, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2016).

dictator (82-79 BCE) of Rome, for encouraging crime and cruelty, claiming Catiline was inspired by the dictator in desiring control of the state by violent means.[280] After successive defeats in consular elections (64-63 BCE), Catiline resorted to conspiracy and attempts to assassinate opponents like Cicero.[281] In a letter to upstanding politician and friend Quintus Catulus, Catiline claimed to be motivated by the injustice of his failures.[282] This claim indicates the loss of integrity in late-Republican politics, since selfish ambition was his primary motivating factor. Catiline never held widespread support among the plebians as Sallust claimed.[283] Historian Ian Harrison argued Catiline's support was spread throughout the social classes, rather than confined in the lowest of society as Cicero suggested.[284] His attempts to incite revolution within the city were unsuccessful because Catiline was never a genuine *populares*. He appealed mainly to ambitious young men of various classes, criminals and those struggling with debt, by promising proscriptions and wealth.[285] Thus, he appealed to vanity and ambition, rather than the genuine needs of the people, as the Gracchi had. The suggestion that Catiline held widespread support among the plebians was an attempt by authors to portray the lower orders as a violent mob to justify the governance of social elites over them. Catiline's army was crushed after the senate passed the *SCU*. Cicero executed the Conspirators in Rome with dubious legality. In motivating the senate to act, Cicero had appealed to the ancestral tradition of brave men suppressing citizen traitors, like Saturninus and Fulvius, to protect the state.[286] In doing so, he justified his own violence but condemned that of his enemy. Self-indulgent ambition made Catiline a genuine threat to the *res publica*, as he quickly resorted to violence when denied power by legitimate means. Both Catiline and Cicero used violence to fulfil their political objectives, each believing himself entirely justified in doing so. Violence in this instance was symptomatic of underlying political instabilities, namely corruption and intense elite competition, within late-Republican political culture.

Publius Clodius posed a significant physical threat to political stability by inciting gang violence. Violence was increasingly legitimised in late-Republican political culture as a result of increasingly frequent cases of civil violence. The lack of a formal police force exacerbated instability, since the only way to counteract violence which did not warrant the *SCU* was with retaliatory violence through private action. Despite controversy surrounding the *Bona Dea* scandal and rumours of incestuous relationships,

[280]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 11.
[281]Cicero, *In Catilinam* 1.9, in *In Catilinam 1-4. Pro Murena. Pro Sulla. Pro Flacco*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 324), trans. by C. Macdonald (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).
[282]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 35.
[283]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 37.
[284]Harrison, p. 99.
[285]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 21.
[286]Cicero, *In Catilinam* 1.3-4.

Clodius's tribuneship (58 BCE) made him immensely popular with urban plebians.[287] He introduced a free grain dole (*Lex Clodia frumentaria*) and restored the rights of *collegia* (*Lex de collegis*), which had previously been banned by the senate.[288] Clodius also gave up his patrician status to be adopted into the plebian order. Harrison described Clodius as the 'archetypal *popularis'* and Lintott suggested he tried to improve the sovereignty and welfare of the urban plebs as he believed this was their right as citizens.[289] Clodius utilised pre-existing organisational structures within the plebian class. Through the *collegia* and *vici* (neighbourhoods), Clodius was able to quickly mobilise voters and armed gangs within Rome.[290] This meant he had greater leverage than previous *populares*, like the Gracchi, who relied largely on rural voters, and could respond more efficiently to political matters. Clodius was dangerous enough to challenge or bargain with powerful individuals like Pompey, whom he helped win consulships, and Cicero, whom he had exiled.[291] Therefore, Clodius further destabilised an already volatile political culture through his use of social and political institutions to violently achieve his political goals.

Clodius used his gangs to disrupt elections, intimidate rivals, and even kill opponents, further exacerbating political instability. His main rival, the tribune Titus Milo, opposed him in the courts and on the streets with rival gangs. Brunt suggested that gang war was commonly used by clients of great houses to the benefit of their patron's interests.[292] Thus, Milo's opposition to Clodius likely represented the opposition of senior senatorial elites. Rome's lack of police force and the senate's reluctance to pass another *SCU* meant skirmishes occurred unchecked. Conflict culminated in Milo's killing of Clodius after the two stood for rival offices. Cicero defended Milo unsuccessfully in the aftermath, hailing him a hero for slaying an enemy of the state.[293] Clodius' supporters burned down the Senate-house, indicating their loyalty was to those who championed their cause, rather than to those who oppressed them through tradition.[294] Clodius' violent agenda was motivated by his political aims, the success of which depended on his ability to satisfy his supporters with populist measures. Therefore, Clodius' political violence was a symptom of the socio-economic and political inequalities between the patricians and plebians, which he exploited for political support. Violence by opponents like Milo was motivated by political competition. Overall, the gang violence which characterised the 50s BCE was a symptom of underlying socio-economic inequalities which

[287]Plutarch, *Cicero* 28-29, in *Lives, Volume VII: Demosthenes and Cicero. Alexander and Caesar*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 99), trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919).
[288]Harrison, p. 111.
[289]Harrison, p. 97; Lintott, p. 197.
[290]Harrison, p. 111.
[291]Plutarch, *Cicero* 31.
[292]Brunt, p. 25.
[293]Cicero, *Pro Milone* 29.
[294]Cicero, *Pro Milone* 33.

populares, like Clodius, were able to convert into political influence. The intensely competitive political culture of the late-Republic promoted the use of such violence.

In his narratives on the Gracchi, Cicero and Clodius, Plutarch emphasised the role of personal animosity in motivating political violence. He explained that conflict between Cicero and Clodius originated in the former testifying against the latter during the *Bona Dea* scandal, despite their friendship.[295] For Plutarch, this betrayal inspired Cicero's exile and his defence of Clodius' murderer. Similarly, Plutarch suggested that Nasica despised Tiberius for redistributing public land he held and led action against him for this reason.[296] He also argued the senate's support of Drusus' populus policies indicated they hated Gaius personally, rather than his political programme.[297] Duplá-Ansuategui criticised ancient writers like Plutarch for being aware of the link between violence and economic inequality but focusing on moralistic interpretations instead.[298] It is unsurprising that Plutarch's biographical approach caused him to blame violent episodes on the characteristics and personal relationships of the actors he examined. The biographer dismissed socio-economic and political instabilities to indulge instead in his fascination with moral character. In this case, Plutarch's obsession with the micro interactions between individuals led him to neglect the underlying structural and cultural factors which caused political violence in the late-Republic.

Personal animosity was stimulated by such underlying instabilities within the political culture of the late-Republic, rather than the cause. In particular, corruption and intense competition between Roman elites promoted animosity and instability. For example, the senatorial class hated the Gracchi because their political and socio-economic interests were damaged by the brothers' reforms, which sought to rectify imbalances between social classes in several areas. The senate supported Drusus' policies purely to undermine Gaius' popularity with the voters he depended on. Similarly, Clodius and Milo's conflict was based on political competition which brought them into opposition with one another through the polarised causes they represented. Their conflict was encouraged by a competitive political culture which became increasingly fierce, polarised and accepting of violence through the late-Republic. Much of the conflict between Cicero and Clodius was motivated by similar factors, since the two found themselves supporting opposing sides of the first triumvirate. Plutarch's biographical and interaction-focused approach led him to neglect the macrostructural causes of instability in Roman society and culture. Thus, he neglected the

[295]Plutarch, *Cicero* 29.
[296]Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 13.
[297]Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus* 9.
[298]Duplá-Ansuategui, p. 410.

underlying socio-economic, political and cultural instabilities, which violence was an inevitable symptom of.

In his *Bellum Catilinae*, Sallust argued that violence was caused by instabilities which arose because of Rome's moral corruption. He identified the fall of Carthage (146 BCE) as the point at which Roman society became unjust and cruel, comparing greed to a plague for the way it infected the hearts of virtuous men.[299] After Carthage, Rome had no major rival for dominance and therefore, no fear of a foreign enemy (*metus hostilis*) to motivate young men into virtuous action for glory.[300] Thus, civil violence increased as ambitious Romans competed with one another for a limited quantity of high offices. Sallust also attributed Sulla blame for the increase in criminal behaviour, claiming the dictator's example had encouraged ambitious men to pursue self-indulgence.[301] For Sallust, Catiline was inspired by Sulla and represented the dictator's legacy.[302] Episodes like Sulla's proscriptions (81 BCE) and the Social War (91-88 BCE) desensitised late-Republicans to mass violence. Consequently, politicians used violence as a political tool increasingly often, as Lintott suggested.[303] Part of the reason Sallust wrote on this topic was to excuse his own behaviour when he was seduced into the same corrupt and avaricious political environment. He claimed to have fallen victim during his youth, as Catiline had, but to have found peace from politics with age.[304] Therefore, Sallust excused his own self-indulgent behaviour as just another symptom of a morally corrupt political culture. As a result of this, Sallust ignored the underlying inequalities which made Roman society unstable, since these had little effect on him. Harrison criticised Sallust for his flawed 'moral schema', which caused his ideological bias against plebians.[305] The moral degradation of Rome was not directly responsible for the increase in civil violence. Instead, it exacerbated the existing political and socio-economic inequalities which made political culture so volatile in this period. Ancient writers like Sallust looked to blame circumstances outside of their control, like the moral decline of a society caused by a war approximately a century before, rather than address longstanding socio-economic and political inequalities. These existing inequalities were responsible for the instabilities that political violence was a symptom of in the late-Republic.

[299]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 10.
[300]J. Alison Rosenblitt, 'Sallust', in *A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic*, ed. by Valentina Arena and Jonathan R. W. Prag (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2022), p. 137.
[301]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 11.
[302]Harrison, p. 100.
[303]Lintott, p. 187.
[304]Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy* 3-4.
[305]Harrison, p. 101.

For Cicero, *populares* were the cause of instability in the late-Republic because they used violent methods which threatened the state. Cicero demonstrated a hatred for *populares*, perhaps for how they forsook distinguished ancestries to represent plebians, while he struggled to elevate himself above criticism of his low birth. He justified violent measures taken by him and *optimates* as acts of self-defence against revolutionaries, which he argued were allowed by natural law.[306] Duplá-Ansuategui suggested Cicero effectively vindicated tyrannicide against *populares*.[307] This argument was personally important to Cicero, since the glory he felt his career warranted depended on widespread acceptance of his executions of the Catilinarian Conspirators as a legal and essential decision. However, Cicero's accusations were obviously biased because he was politically active in the period and consequently had political objectives, which *populares* often threatened. For example, he was extremely critical of both Catiline and Clodius since they were personal enemies of his and made attempts on his life.[308] Clodius was especially disruptive since he pushed for Cicero to be exiled, then prevented votes to recall him.[309] Such bias meant Cicero refused to acknowledge that violence by senatorial elites was usually a defence of their economic or political interests, not the state. For example, both Gracchi were eliminated for their reforms despite hardly posing a threat to the state. Senatorial elites committed terrible acts of violence to exterminate *populares*. Since the *populares* gained power by attempting to resolve political and socio-economic inequalities, the violence of *optimates* against them was effectively provoked by the existence of these inequalities. Similarly, *populares* attempted to use violence to resolve these inequalities. Therefore, political violence in this period was symptomatic of social, economic and political instabilities based on class inequality. Cicero's political stance prevented him from acknowledging this.

In conclusion, political violence in the late-Republic was symptomatic of political and socio-economic class inequalities. These inequalities were embedded in Roman culture and exacerbated in this period by civil conflict, which became increasingly common due to internal fragmentation of the elite and a lack of *metus hostilis*. The urban plebians suffered most in this period from hunger, illness, unemployment and poor housing, since repeated civil violence strained resources. Most plebians lived in poorly built apartment blocks, lacking proper facilities for cooking, water and sewage.[310] As a result, the plebian tribuneship became an increasingly powerful office because dissatisfied plebians were more willing to engage in political activity with the hope of improving their circumstances. Plebians depended on

[306]Cicero, *Pro Milone* 3-4.
[307]Duplá-Ansuategui, p. 415.
[308]Cicero, *Pro Milone* 7; Cicero, *In Catilinam* 1.9.
[309]Brunt, p. 3.
[310]Brunt, p. 12.

opportunistic tribunes to represent their cause, since they could not themselves.[311] *Populares* tribunes were almost always killed in conflict, which only made the plebs more hostile to the senate.[312] The increased power of this office was best indicated when Sulla hamstrung the tribuneship to restore senatorial dominance. When Pompey reversed this, he restored the plebians' ability to express their discontent. As violence became increasingly acceptable, due to men like Sulla exposing citizens to a higher threshold of conflict, tribunes became more willing to use plebian supporters as physical forces. Rome's lack of a police force meant gang violence became an effective political tool. It also meant the only way to counteract violence, was with violence. The *populares* gained political power by tackling social inequalities through reform. *Optimates* protected their traditional interests by opposing these reforms. The conflict between these groups was motivated by their desire to protect their respective political interests. Thus, their violent struggle was symptomatic of the underlying political and socio-economic inequalities which were exacerbated in this period, until they destabilised the Roman Republic.

[311]Yakobson, p. 284.
[312]Duplá-Ansuategui, p. 414.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cicero, *In Catilinam*, in *In Catilinam 1-4. Pro Murena. Pro Sulla. Pro Flacco*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 324), trans. C. Macdonald (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL324/1976/volume.xml [accessed 27 November 2024]

Cicero, *Pro Milone*, in *In Pisonem. Pro Scauro. Pro Fonteio. Pro Rabirio Postumo. Pro Marcello. Pro Ligario. Pro Rege Deiotaro*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 252), trans. N. H. Watts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931) https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL252/1931/volume.xml [accessed 27 November 2024]

Plutarch, *Cicero*, in *Plutarch, Lives, Volume VII: Demosthenes and Cicero. Alexander and Caesar*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 99), trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919). https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL099/1919/volume.xml [accessed 27 November 2024]

Plutarch, *Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus*, in *Lives, Volume X: Agis and Cleomenes. Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. Philopoemen and Flamininus*, (*Loeb Classical Library* 102), trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1921). https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL102/1921/volume.xml [accessed 27 November 2024]

Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy*, in *Catiline's Conspiracy; The Jugurthine War; Histories*, trans. W. W. Batstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2016), doi:10.1093/actrade/9780192823458.book.1

Secondary Sources

Brunt, Peter A., 'The Roman Mob', *Past & Present*, 35 (1966) 3–27 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/649964> [accessed 28 November 2024]

Burton, Paul, 'A History of the Social War - C.J. Dart, the Social War, 91 to 88 Bce. A History of the Italian Insurgency against the Roman Republic. Pp. Xii + 252, Ills, Maps. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.', *The Classical Review*, 66.1 (2016) 204–6 doi:10.1017/s0009840x15002784

Duplá-Ansuategui, Antonio, 'From Patronage to Violence and Bribery: Towards a New Political Culture', in *A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic*, ed. Valentina Arena and Jonathan R. W. Prag (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2022), pp. 408–21 <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/soton-ebooks/reader.action?docID=6839044&ppg=429> [accessed 28 November 2024]

Harrison, Ian, 'Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics at Rome during the 60s and 50s BCE', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 51.1 (2008) 95–118 doi:10.1111/j.2041-5370.2008.tb00277.x

Hölkeskamp, Karl-J., 'Political Culture: Career of a Concept', in *A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic*, ed. Valentina Arena and Jonathan R. W. Prag (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2022), pp. 4–19 <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/soton-ebooks/reader.action?docID=6839044&ppg=25> [accessed 28 November 2024]

Krebs, Christopher, 'The Imagery of "the Way" in the Proem to Sallust's Bellum Catilinae (1-4)', *American Journal of Philology*, 129.4 (2008) 581–94 <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/imagery-way-

proem-sallusts-bellum-catilinae-1-4/docview/223132746/se-2?accountid=13963> [accessed 28 November 2024]

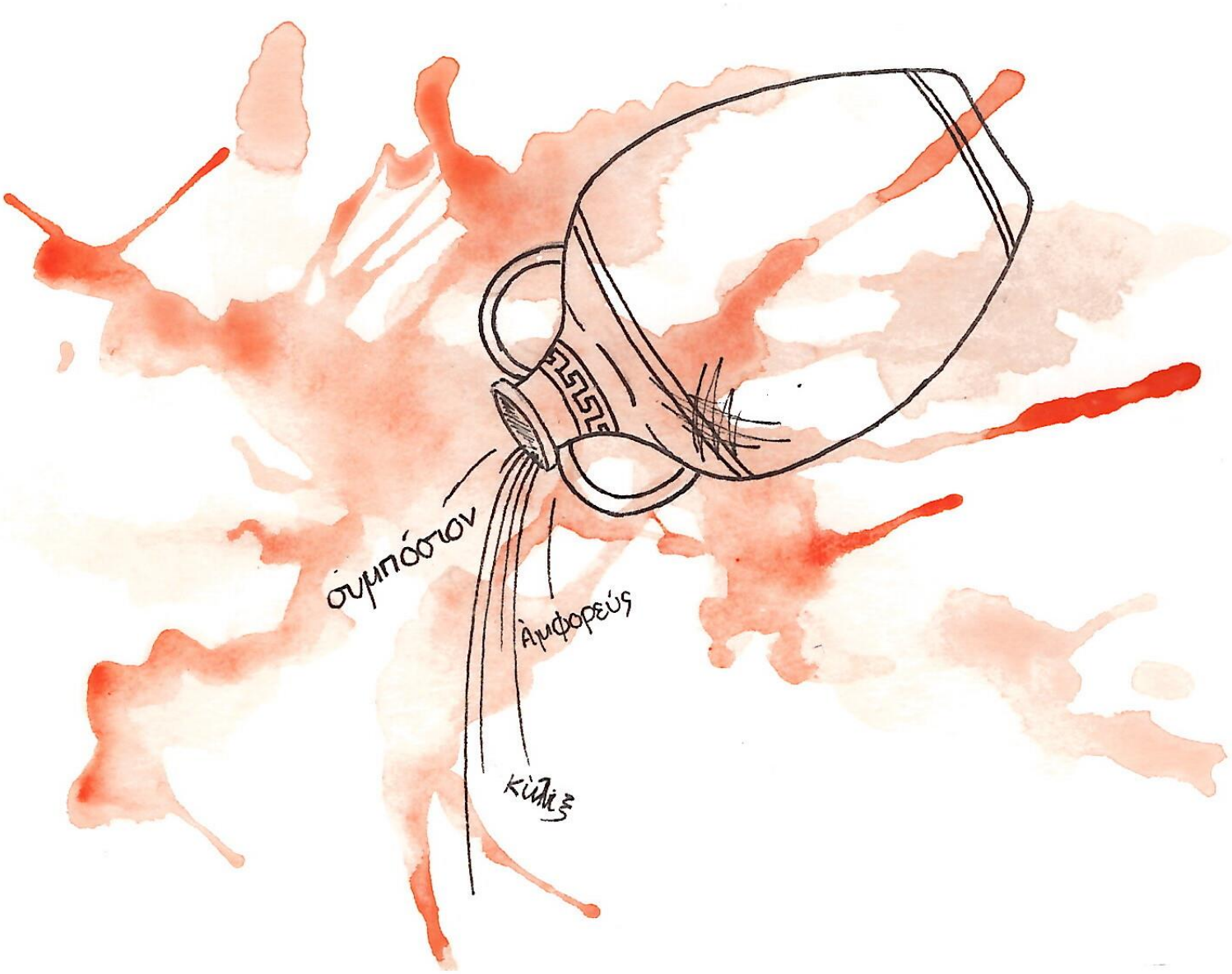
Lintott, Andrew. *Violence in Republican Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Rosenblitt, J. Alison, 'Sallust', in *A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic*, ed. Valentina Arena and Jonathan R. W. Prag (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2022), pp. 136–45 <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/soton-ebooks/reader.action?docID=6839044&ppg=157> [accessed 28 November 2024]

Sherwin-White, A. N., 'Violence in Roman Politics', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 46.1-2 (1956), 1–9 doi:10.2307/297959

Yakobson, Alexander, 'Traditional Political Culture and the People's Role in the Roman Republic', *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 59.3 (2010) 282–302 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25758311> [accessed 28 November 2024]

Yakobson, Alexander, 'The Political Culture of the Republic since Syme's the Roman Revolution: A Story of a Debate', in *A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic*, ed. Valentina Arena and Jonathan R. W. Prag (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2022), pp. 93–106 <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/soton-ebooks/reader.action?docID=6839044&ppg=114> [accessed 28 November 2024]



How Can the Overlap between Story-telling and Function on Material Objects Be Displayed?

Emily Haines-Furse

How Can the Overlap between Story-telling and Function on Material Objects Be Displayed?

Emily Haines-Furse

Abstract: *This essay closely analyses the multifaceted uses of Greek vases in Classical Athenian society. Two prominent case studies, the Maenads and the Hetaira, analyse this usage from a feminine perspective outside of the traditional male setting. It provides analysis of female agency and worship in this period and how they sought to be remembered and depicted in their art. Linked by the worship of Dionysus, the God of wine and ecstasy, the two case studies explore the elevation of gatherings into religious formats, providing opportunities for women to honour their Gods within their work, depicting the intricate relationship between art and societal expectation in Classical Athens. The analysis of these case studies revealed a deep rooted want among the Hetaira to see themselves depicted on objects they would have used, along with their inherent similarities to the Maenads as their mythological counterparts. This paper allows a glimpse into the personal thoughts and actions of Athenian women, an otherwise under developed area of scholarship, through the analysis of images in comparison with contemporary sources.*

The images depicted on Greek vases are key to the historical interpretation of Athenian life. They were used in all contexts, both public and private, by both men and women, old and young. The case studies analysed in this paper are within an Athenian Classical context, without taking into regard the development of attitudes into the Hellenistic period or other uses outside of Athens. This is due to the lack of contemporary sources for areas outside of the Attic region and the dramatic change in vase styles seen after the Classical period. They primarily concern the Maenads, female followers of Dionysus that are often depicted in frenzied ecstasy, and *Hetaira*, a type of courtesan, linked by their situations in sectors of Dionysian worship and as women outside the regular bounds of society.[313]It demonstrates the use of material objects by women and their position in a male-dominated world.[314] This paper will seek to reveal the reasons behind the frequency of images on certain vases and the purposeful desire and demand for these decisions.

Images on vases were chosen for their relation to the context in which the object was used – either mythological or a depiction of the event itself. Painters were likely aware of the market demand for certain

[313] A.W. Gomme, 'The Position of Women in Athens in the 5th and 4th Centuries', *Classical Philology',* 20.1 (1925), pp. 1-25 (p.1) https://www.jstor.org/stable/262574 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

[314] Sarah Olsen, 'The Dancing Girls of Ancient Greece: Performance, Agency & Entertainment', *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, 46 (2017), pp. 20-41 (p.20) https://www.jstor.org/stable/26795724 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

images, and chose iconography they deemed appropriate for the setting in which the vase was to be used. [315] [316] This is evident with the illustrations present on Symposia ware, combining both decorative art and object function - gatherings could be elevated from simple drinking parties to full-scale worship of Dionysus. The 'Maenad Kylix' shows scenes of frolicking Maenads and Dionysus.[317] Images of Bacchic worship in the Symposium would inspire conversation surrounding the God that 'organised' the gathering, and the physical power Dionysus held through a slow reveal of his imposing shape in the Tondo. The Maenads would have been instantly recognisable to patrons due to the presence of Dionysus in everyday Athenian life, uniting people in acts of consumption and the mutual sharing of wine. [318] Without Dionysus, neither the gathering depicted on the vase nor the Symposium itself could occur; he is the 'puppet master' of the Symposium. The shape of the 'Maenad Kylix' was reserved primarily for formal Sympotic use, based on its level of quality and presentation, and its ability to open the individual up to a divine experience. [319] [320] Maenads depict the outside aspect of Dionysiac worship with Symposium occasionally taking place in the courtyard of a house rather than the dedicated Andron. [321] Whilst the Douris vase is a somewhat peaceful scene, these scenes are often evidence of the objectification of women on Sympotic vessels, relating to the desired images wanted by male Symposia attendants. [322]This is seen in the way Bacchic worship freed women from their conventional Athenian restrictions, often being drawn in a frenzied dance, in comparison to their usual role as Athenian women who were condemned to seclusion. [323]Whilst frequently shown in the standard, demure chiton of Athenian women, they exist outside their *oikos* (household) in supplication of Dionysus, describing them as 'other'. [324] This 'other' sustains the narrative of women being an object of societal ostracisation to the traditional Athenian man. The dance that Maenads performed was one of euphoric expression, the wine and worship transcending them to an exceptional state, similar to the realm of the Symposium.[325] The scholar Sarah Olsen theorises that this dance can relate to another aspect of the

[315] Kathleen M. Lynch, 'The Sympotic Context Part I: Drinking Vessels' in *The Symposium in Context: Pottery from a Late Archaic House near the Athenian Agora* (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2011), pp. 75-123 (p.76)

[316] Lynch, 'The Sympotic Context Part I: Drinking Vessels', p.103

[317] Douris, 'Maenad Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.500-450BCE, from Athens, Greece, The Cleveland Museum of Art, USA. Beazley: 205157. Image from: https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1915.718 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

[318] Lynch, 'More Thoughts on the Space of the Symposium', p.243

[319] Lynch, 'The Sympotic Context Part I: Drinking Vessels', p.80

[320] Lynch, 'The Sympotic Context Part I: Drinking Vessels', p.102

[321] Lynch, 'More Thoughts on the Space of the Symposium', p.246

[322] Olsen, p.23

[323] Gomme, p.1

[324] Susan B. Matheson, 'Revelling with Dionysus: A Drinking Cup by the Oedipus Painter', *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, (2007), pp. 102-109 (p.103) https://www.jstor.org/stable/26378756 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

[325] Isler-Kerényi, p.209

Symposium – the *Hetaira,* these women, alongside entertaining and debating with male guests, often engaged in dance within the setting - they often took on the title of '*Orchestris'* during this activity. [326] This link between the wine and dancing along with a Bacchic frenzy and the *Hetaira's* dancing would have been easily recognised by the patrons. The images reflect a kind of socially condoned "ritual inversion" as well as concerning images of women operating to their own wants. [327] Furthermore, women on pottery used in this setting were generally not respected citizens, seen in both the Bacchic frenzy of the Maenads and the Sympotic dancing of the *Hetaira* – these were events ridiculed by men as they were seen as barbaric rituals, ending in death and destruction.[328][329] Therefore, this lends itself to the theory that story-telling and function combine on material objects to reveal the thoughts and priorities of those within a Sympotic setting.



Figure 1: Exterior: Douris, 'Maenad Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.500-450BCE, from Athens, Greece, The Cleveland Museum of Art, USA. Beazley: 205157

[326] Olsen, p.20

[327] Olsen, p.22

[328] Marina Fischer, 'Ancient Greek Prostitutes and the Textile Industry in Attic Vase Painting ca. 550-450BCE', *The Classical World*,' 106.2 (2013), pp.219-259 (p.224) https://www.jstor.org/stable/24699760 [Accessed 27 October 2024]

[329] Sarah Culpepper Stroup, 'Designing Women: Aristophanes' "Lysistrata" and the "Hetairization" of the Greek Wife', *Arethusa*, 37.1 (2004), pp. 37-73 (p.45) https://www.jstor.org/stable/44578393 [Accessed 1 November 2024]



Figure 2: Tondo: Douris, 'Maenad Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.500-450BCE, from Athens, Greece, The Cleveland Museum of Art, USA. Beazley: 205157

A depiction of the *Hetaira* is illustrated by the 'Dancing Hetaira Kylix', showing a Symposium where a *Hetaira* dances for her patron. [330]As the drinker drank from the Kylix, the woman would be slowly revealed, reflecting the dancing taking place in the real Symposium. These women were outside of regular, contractual relationships in a similar way to the Maenads. [331] Whilst Maenads enjoyed a freedom comparable to men - frenzied dancing, sexual liberty (according to the accusations made by Pentheus in Euripides '*Bacchae'*) - Hetaira were capable of attending Symposium. [332] Their presence implies a place for the female gaze in this setting.[333] This can be illustrated by women's use of skyphos – they are often depicted with these deep drinking vessels in a story of women being incapable of moderation, with moderation being a male virtue. [334] This links to the concept of wine turning people into fools, entering a Bacchic state, leading to the depiction of ritual scenes of decorous behaviour.[335] This incapability of

[330] Brogos Painter, 'Dancing Hetaira Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.490-80BCE, from Vulci, Italy, The British Museum, UK. Museum Number: 1848,0619.7. Image from https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1848-0619-7 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

[331] Sheila McNally, 'The Maenad in Early Greek Art', *Arethusa*, 11.1/2 (1978), pp. 101-135 (p.102) https://www.jstor.org/stable/26308156 [Accessed 24 October 2024]

[332] Elaine Fantham, 'Sex, Status, and Survival in Hellenistic Athens: A Study of Women in New Comedy', *Phoenix*, 29.1 (1975), pp. 44-74 (p.51) https://www.jstor.org/stable/1087583 [Accessed 27 October 2024]

[333] Margaret M. Toscano, 'The Eyes Have It: Female Desire on Attic Greek Vases', *Arethusa*, 46.1 (2013), pp. 1-40 (p.9) https://www.jstor.org/stable/26322735 [Accessed 24 October 2024]

[334] Marjorie Susan Venit, 'Women in Their Cups', *The Classical World*, 92.2 (1998), pp. 117-130 (p.125) https://www.jstor.org/stable/4352236 [Accessed 24 October 2024]

[335] Zinon Papakonstantinou, '"A Delight and a Burden" (Hes., Sc. 400): Wine and Wine-Drinking in Archaic Greece', *Ancient Society,* 42 (2012), pp. 1-32 (p.18) https://www.jstor.org/stable/44079957 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

moderation can be interpreted as an aspect of the *Hetaira* due to their presence in the Symposium and overtly sexual nature. This stereotype was taken further by women holding their own Symposiums. Whilst in the Hellenistic period, the scholar Sean Corner explains regulations were relaxed and women were allowed to explore their Dionysus worship with male counterparts, in the Classical period, it was often a gender split. [336] Whilst literary sources only reference *Hetaira* having Symposium, it is difficult to tell a woman's position based on her depiction on objects, ergo it can be assumed that women of all statuses may have attended these Symposia. [337][338] For example, noblewomen often appear at banquets in the Homeric world such as Arete in the Odyssey.[339] In the Classical era, Aspasia, the consort of Pericles, was said to have held Symposium – this can likely be attributed to her reputation as a *Hetaira* and her status as a public woman. [340] Her style of entertainment was a Sympotic setting for wives and occasionally male visitors.[341] It can be theorised that *Hetaira*, especially those capable of choosing their companions and holding Symposia, specifically commissioned and purchased pottery depicting themselves and their livelihood, demonstrating the relation between story-telling and function on material objects. This can be illustrated by the 'Female Symposia Image' that depicts women, likely *Hetaira*, drinking in a Symposia-style setting.[342] The presence of this vase suggests a demand in the market for this style of Psykter, likely used in the setting that reflects the object's depiction. The sentimental value of these objects implies a legacy of *Hetaira* and the possibility that pieces were passed down through generations. It is evident that Classical Athenian sex-work was often a mother-daughter business and the presence of female instructors on vessels implies a transmission of knowledge from woman to woman, in the same way that vases may have been handed down. [343] This can be illustrated by the 'Dancing *Hetaira* and Instructors Vase,' which depicts dancing *Orchestris* being supervised by their elders who handed down extensive training[344]. These vases may again have been used in female Symposium settings, demonstrating the want of *Hetaira* to see themselves represented on their vase ware. Thus, a link is evident between story-telling and function of material objects.

---

[336] Corner, p.35
[337] Culpepper Stroup, p.47
[338] McNally, p.101
[339] Joan Burton, 'Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World', *Greece & Rome*, 45.2 (1998), pp. 143-165 (p.145) https://www.jstor.org/stable/642980 [Accessed 1 November 2024]
[340] Burton, p.152
[341] Burton, p.156
[342] Euphronios, 'Hetaira Symposium Vase', Attic red-figure Psykter, c.520-500BCE, from Cerveteri, Italy, State Hermitage Museum St Petersburg, Russia. Beazley: 200078. Image from https://www.jstor.org/stable/23264558 [Accessed 1 November 2024]
[343] Olsen, p.24
[344] Fischer, p.222



Figure 3: Brogos Painter, 'Dancing Hetaira Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.490-80BCE, from Vulci, Italy, The British Museum, UK. Museum Number: 1848,0619.7



Figure 4: Phiale, 'Dancing Hetaira and Instructors Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.430BCE, from Athens, Greece, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, USA. Museum Number: 97.371

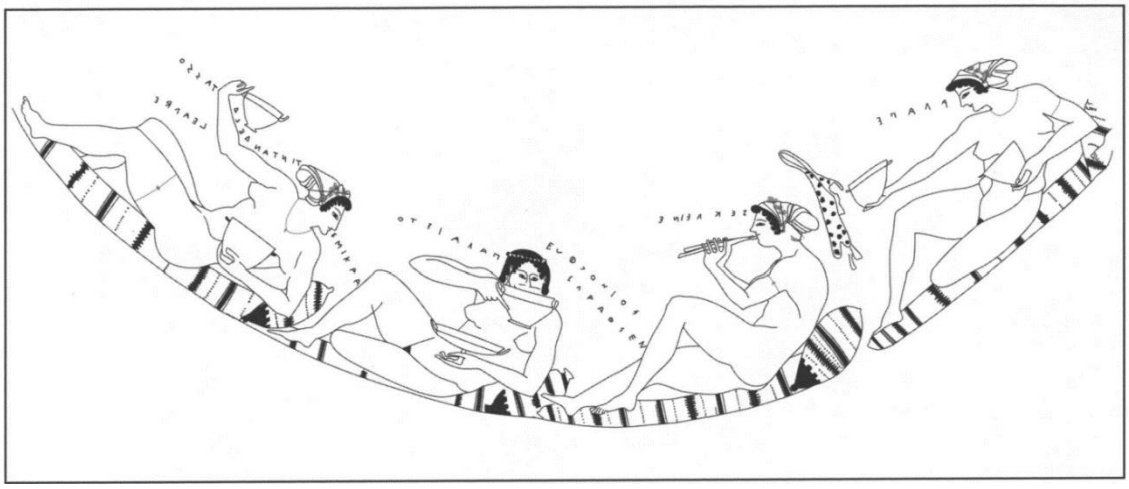


Figure 5: Euphronios, 'Hetaira Symposium Vase', Attic red-figure Psykter, c.520-500BCE, from Cerveteri, Italy, State Hermitage Museum St Petersburg, Russia. Beazley: 200078

It is apparent that the main case studies of both the Maenads and *Hetaira* are clear examples of the association between story-telling and function on material objects. They are linked by their worship of Dionysus, existing within a space that primarily focuses on the worship of him and the ways in which they could express this.[345] Their combined position as women outside the traditional Athenian circle provides a unique view of the Symposium and the use of objects by individuals other than citizen women. The use of these objects reflects a clear want of women to see themselves depicted on the object that they used, and the idea that the women shown on these items are usually not in a role as modest Athenian wives makes this use intriguing due to the lack of political alignment these women have.

[345] Papakonstantinou, p.7

Bibliography

Images

Figure 1: Douris, 'Maenad Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.500-450BCE, from Athens, Greece, The Cleveland Museum of Art, USA. Beazley: 205157. Image from: https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1915.718 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Figure 2: Brogos Painter, 'Dancing Hetaira Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.490-80BCE, from Vulci, Italy, The British Museum, UK. Museum Number: 1848,0619.7. Image from https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1848-0619-7 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Figure 3: Phiale, 'Dancing Hetaira and Instructors Vase', Attic red-figure Kylix, c.430BCE, from Athens, Greece, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, USA. Museum Number: 97.371. Image from: https://collections.mfa.org/objects/153850 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Figure 4: Euphronios, 'Hetaira Symposium Vase', Attic red-figure Psykter, c.520-500BCE, from Cerveteri, Italy, State Hermitage Museum St Petersburg, Russia. Beazley: 200078. Image from https://www.jstor.org/stable/23264558 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

Primary Sources

Aristophanes, 'Lysistrata', trans. by Jeffery Henderson (Harvard University Press, 2000) https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL179/2000/volume.xml [Accessed 20 October 2024]

Aristophanes, *'Women at the Thesmophoria'*, trans. by Jeffery Henderson (Harvard University Press, 2000) https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL179/2000/volume.xml [Accessed 20 October 2024]

Euripides, *'Bacchae'*, trans. by David Kovacs (Harvard University Press, 2003) https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL495/2003/volume.xml [Accessed 20 October 2024]

Secondary Sources

'205157, ATHENIAN, Cleveland (OH), Museum of Art, 508.15,' Beazley Archive, (n.d.) https://www.carc.ox.ac.uk/record/BB97E416-B684-409D-A6C2-C8CBBD640910 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Bowie, A., M., 'Thinking with Drinking: Wine and the Symposium in Aristophanes', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 117 (1997), pp. 1-21 https://www.jstor.org/stable/632547 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Bundrick, Sheramy D., 'Housewives, *Hetairai*, and the Ambiguity of Genre in Attic Vase Painting', *Phoenix*, 66.1/2 (2012), pp. 11-35 https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7834/phoenix.66.1-2.0011 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

Burton, Joan, 'Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World', *Greece & Rome*, 45.2 (1998), pp. 143-165 https://www.jstor.org/stable/642980 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

Corner, Sean, 'Did 'Respectable' Women Attend Symposia', *Greece & Rome*, 59.1 (2012), pp. 4-45 https://www.jstor.org/stable/23275154 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Fantham, Elaine, 'Sex, Status, and Survival in Hellenistic Athens: A Study of Women in New Comedy', *Phoenix*, 29.1 (1975), pp. 44-74 https://www.jstor.org/stable/1087583 [Accessed 27 October 2024]

Fischer, Marina, 'Ancient Greek Prostitutes and the Textile Industry in Attic Vase Painting ca. 550-450BCE', *The Classical World*,' 106.2 (2013), pp.219-259 https://www.jstor.org/stable/24699760 [Accessed 27 October 2024]

Glazebrook, Alison, 'Prostitutes, Plonk, and Play: Female Banqueters on a Red-figure Psykter from the Hermitage', *The Classical World*, 150.4 (2012), pp. 497-524 (p.497 etc.) https://www.jstor.org/stable/23264558 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

Gomme, A.W., 'The Position of Women in Athens in the 5th and 4th Centuries', *Classical Philology',* 20.1 (1925), pp. 1-25 https://www.jstor.org/stable/262574 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

Hedreen, Guy, 'The Return of Hephaistos, Dionysiac Processional Ritual and the Creation of a Visual Narrative', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies,* 124 (2004), pp. 38-64 https://www.jstor.org/stable/3246149 [Accessed 24 October 2024

Isler-Kerényi, Cornelia, 'Chapter 5: Dionysian Happiness: Cups and Other Small Vases from the 2nd half of the 6thc.BCE', in *Dionysos in Archaic Greece: An Understanding through Images,* trans. by Wilfred G.E. Watson (Brill, 2007), pp. 159-208

Isler-Kerényi, Cornelia, 'Chapter 6: Dionysos in Archaic Greek Art: A Summary', in *Dionysos in Archaic Greece: An Understanding through Images,* trans. by Wilfred G.E. Watson (Brill, 2007), pp. 209-233

Kurke, Leslie, 'Inventing the "Hetaira": Sex, Politics, and Discursive Conflict in Archaic Greece', *Classical Antiquity*, 16.1 (1997), pp. 106-150 https://www.jstor.org/stable/25011056 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

Lynch, M. Kathleen, 'More Thoughts on the Space of the Symposium', *Building Communities: House, Settlement and Society in the Aegean and Beyond*, 15 (2007), pp. 243-49 https://www.jstor.org/stable/40960593 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Lynch, Kathleen M., 'The Sympotic Context Part I: Drinking Vessels' in *The Symposium in Context: Pottery from a Late Archaic House near the Athenian Agora* (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2011), pp. 75-123

Matheson, Susan B., 'Revelling with Dionysus: A Drinking Cup by the Oedipus Painter', *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, (2007), pp. 102-109 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26378756 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

McNally, Sheila 'The Maenad in Early Greek Art', *Arethusa*, 11.1/2 (1978), pp. 101-135 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26308156 [Accessed 24 October 2024]

Moon, Warren G., Berge, Louise, *Greek Vase-Painting in Midwestern Collections* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1979)

Olsen, Sarah, 'The Dancing Girls of Ancient Greece: Performance, Agency & Entertainment', *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, 46 (2017), pp. 20-41 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26795724 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Papakonstantinou, Zinon, '"A Delight and a Burden" (Hes., Sc. 400): Wine and Wine-Drinking in Archaic Greece', *Ancient Society,* 42 (2012), pp. 1-32 https://www.jstor.org/stable/44079957 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

'Red-Figure Kylix (Drinking Cup): Dionysos and Satyr (I); Satyrs and Maenads (A, B),' The Cleveland Museum of Art (n.d.) https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1915.718 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

Sapirstein, Philip 'Painters, Potters, and the Scale of the Attic Vase-Painting Industry', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 117.4, pp. 493-510 https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3764/aja.117.4.0493 [Accessed 23 October 2024]

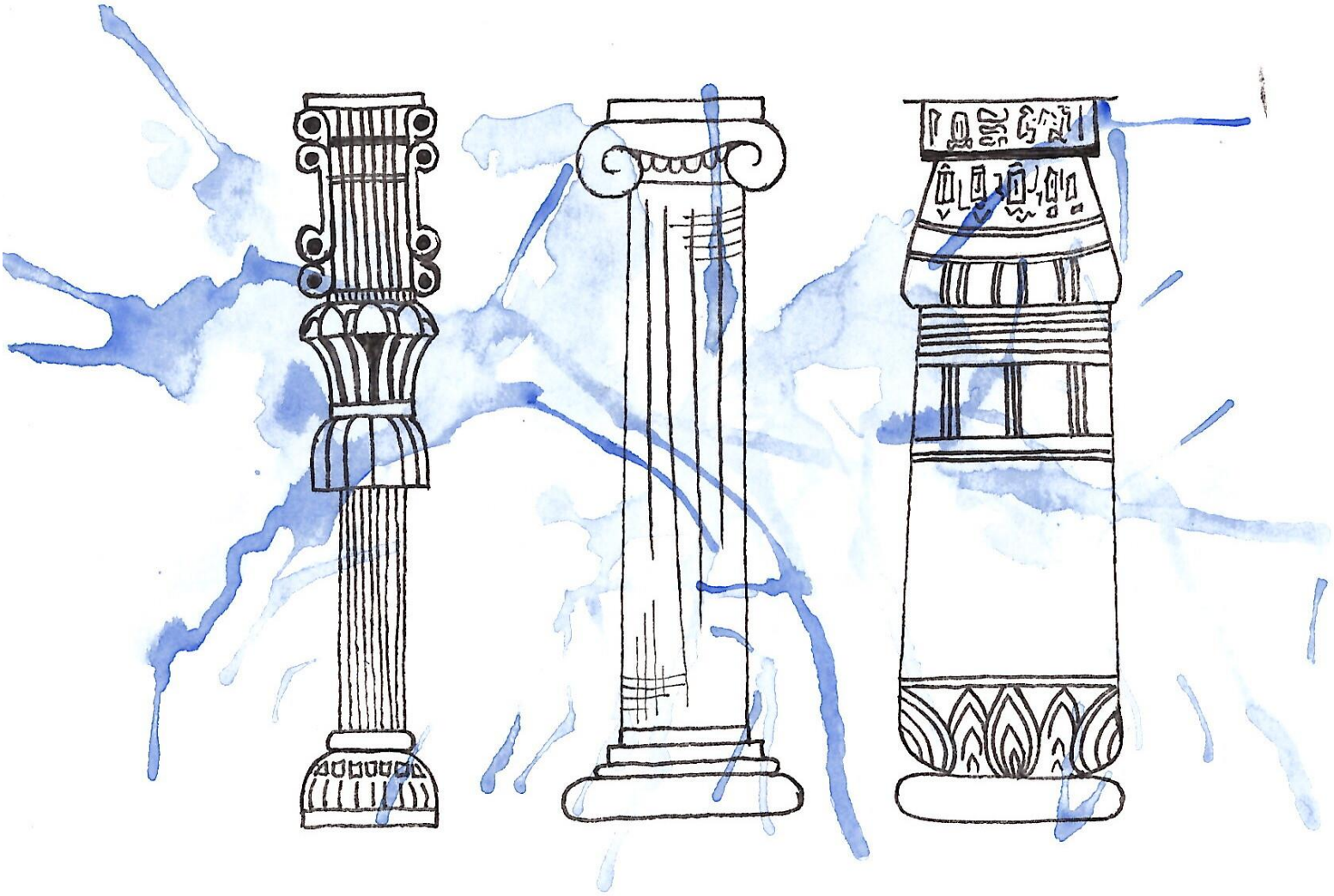
Stroup, Sarah Culpepper, 'Designing Women: Aristophanes' "Lysistrata" and the "Hetairization" of the Greek Wife', *Arethusa*, 37.1 (2004), pp. 37-73 https://www.jstor.org/stable/44578393 [Accessed 1 November 2024]

Topper, Kathryn, 'Primitive Life and the Construction of the Sympotic Past in Athenian Vase Painting', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 113.1 (2009), pp. 3-26 https://www.jstor.org/stable/20627539 [Accessed 24 October 2024]

Toscano, Margaret M., 'The Eyes Have It: Female Desire on Attic Greek Vases', *Arethusa*, 46.1 (2013), pp. 1-40 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26322735 [Accessed 24 October 2024]

Tsonaka, Konstantina, 'Vases on Vases: An Overview of Approaches', *Greek Art in Motion: Studies in Honour of Sir John Boardman on the Occasion of his 90th Birthday*, (Archaeopress, 2019), pp. 194-203

Venit, Marjorie Susan, 'Women in Their Cups', *The Classical World*, 92.2 (1998), pp. 117-130 https://www.jstor.org/stable/4352236 [Accessed 24 October 2024]



The Greeks and their Neighbours: The Influence of Egypt and Persia on Ancient Greek Civilisation

Aerin Lings

The Greeks and their Neighbours: The Influence of Egypt and Persia on Ancient Greek Civilisation

Aerin Lings

Abstract: *There is a long-standing issue of the insularity of Classical Studies – its focus on Greece and Rome, and therefore the dismissal of other societies within that same time period. This paper will take a comparative approach by focusing on the cultural interactions between Greece and Persia, and Greece and Egypt in the Ancient world. These case studies will therefore illustrate what can be learnt when historians study societies and their neighbours in conjunction with one another, rather than in isolation. I shall utilise a combination of primary – Herodotus and Thucydides – and secondary sources to further my argument and provide an overview of the interactions in the Ancient world.*

The Graeco-Roman world is often regarded as making a unique contribution to Western society, and this ethnocentric perspective has meant that universities continue to organise Ancient History through an insular lens, separating the study of Greece and Rome from that of other ancient cultures. Classics degrees, offered by many universities, focus on Classical Greece and Rome, as opposed to offering an Ancient History degree. In the case of both Oxford and Cambridge University, these other' societies are placed under 'Asian and Middle Eastern Studies', rather than integrating them within Ancient History. However, other universities incorporate a range of perspectives into their courses, focusing not solely on the Graeco-Roman world, but also on other societies of the time period, and their interactions. To give an example, the Ancient History course at Southampton has a focus on the connectivity of the Ancient world, which is a key theme throughout.[346] Studying Ancient Societies in isolation, as is common with the study of Classics, results in an incomplete historical narrative. Cultural exchange and interaction provides key insight into a society's values and identity formation. This paper explores the relationships between Ancient Greeks and their neighbours, Persia and Egypt, illustrating how these interactions shaped the Greek identity. This concept of connectivity can be applied to all societies in any time period: all historians must consider the interactions between the societies that they study, and how they influenced each other.

In order to fully understand the Greek identity, it is necessary to study the interactions they had with their neighbours – who they termed barbarians – and how this influenced their views about themselves and contributed to the construction of the shared Greek identity. During the 5th Century BCE it was mainly the Persians who were seen as *barbaroi,* in Greek: βάρβαροι. The Panhellenic identity was constructed

[346] University of Southampton, 'Introduction to the Ancient World: Module Overview' <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/courses/modules/hist1155#overview>.

during this time, in opposition to the Persians.[347] Although there existed some element of a shared Greek identity in the Archaic period, the polarisation between Greeks and the barbarians was strengthened during and after the Persian wars.[348]

Herodotus, 5th Century BCE Greek historian, depicts what it meant to be a Hellene in his *Histories*, by presenting a portrait of a Persian, effectively defining a Greek in opposition to a non-Greek.[349] He emphasises the differences between the Persians and Greeks throughout his work, particularly focusing on their deferring attitudes to religion. For instance, in Book VIII, he describes the aftermath of the Persian invasion, stating that 'the cult-statues and temples of the gods have been left as charred rubble', highlighting the Persians' disrespectful attitude towards the Greek religious practices.[350] In the same passage, he depicts a scene whereby the Athenians urge their Spartan counterparts to side with them against the Persian enemy. The Athenians address the Spartan envoys with a speech, declaring that 'we are all of us Greeks, of one blood and one tongue, united by the temples that we have raised to the gods, and by the way in which we offer them sacrifice, and by the customs that we have in common'.[351] Herodotus here identifies four common elements between all Hellenes: genealogy, language, religion, and customs. This forms the ethnic identity of the Greeks.

As well as a shared Greek identity, each city state had its own distinct identity as an individual polis. They maintained their own ideas and customs. The Athenians viewed themselves to be superior to the other poleis, which was integral to their identity. By way of an example, we can study Perikles' funeral oration, described in Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides was an Athenian historian and general, described as the 'father of scientific history'. Perikles, prominent statesman and general, gave his speech at the funeral dedicated to those who had died during the first year of the war.[352] Despite this, it focuses on Athens as a whole, emphasising the qualities which make it superior to the other Greek city

[347] Katrina Van Amsterdam, 'When In Greece, Do as the Persians Don't: Defining the Identity of the Greeks Against the Persian Imperial "Other"', *Hirundo, the McGill Journal of Classical Studies*, XII (2013), p. 1 <https://www.mcgill.ca/classics/files/classics/2013-14-02.pdf>; Robert Browning, 'Greeks and Others: From Antiquity to the Renaissance', in *Greeks And Barbarians*, ed. by Thomas Harrison, Edinburgh Readings on the Ancient World (Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 257–77 (p. 259) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r2591.22>.
[348] Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 6 <https://edithhall.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/inventing-the-barbarian.pdf>.
[349] Conor James, 'The Formation of a Hellenic Identity: The Impact of Herodotus on the Ancient Greek and the Reception of His Histories' (Providence College, 2023), pp. 1–2 <https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/history_undergrad_theses/68/>.
[350] Herodotus, *Histories*, 8.144
[351] Ibid.
[352] Thucydides 2.34

states, so much so that the speech has been described as a 'eulogy of Athens itself', reflecting how the speech is almost entirely dedicated to the polis.[353] Throughout the speech, there is a continued narrative of polarisation, as Athens is portrayed as the superior society, one to be emulated rather than emulating others.[354] Perikles utilises elements of Athenian society to show how it is superior, especially to Sparta. He first states that Athens is a democratic society, in contrast to Sparta, with its oligarchical system.[355] He depicts Athens as the 'School of Hellas', reflecting Athens' role as a cultural and intellectual leader. This is 'no mere boast inspired by the occasion, but actual truth, [which] is attested by the very power of our city'.[356] These continual comparisons between Athens and the other poleis serve to present Perikles' notion of the greatness of Athens. Thucydides utilises Perikles' speech to express his ethnocentrism, the belief that one's own culture is superior to another's.[357] It is generally agreed upon by scholars that although Thucydides *was* most likely present at the oration, and therefore that his transcription is largely accurate, the specifics of the speech quite clearly play into his wider narrative of Athens and his history of the Peloponnesian War.[358] Focusing on the poleis central to the war, and their relationship to Athens, provides insights into the Athenian identity, as this was constructed in opposition to other city states, Sparta in particular. historians were to ignore the relationships between ancient societies and their neighbours, namely the Greeks and the Persians, and the Athenians and Spartans, they would be disregarding a crucial element of Hellenic and Athenian identity.

There exist a multitude of perspectives on Ancient Greek achievement. which are pertinent to consider when discussing the study of Greece and Egypt. Bernal, Professor of Government and Near Eastern Studies at Cornell University, challenged the traditional Eurocentric view of the Greeks in his thesis *Black Athena*.[359] His work is an example of Afrocentric discourse, wherein he argues that there has been a reshaping of history, which erases the influence of African countries, particularly Ancient Egypt, and

---

353 Thucydides 2.34-2.46; David Cartwright, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides: A Companion to Rex Warner's Penguin Translation* (University of Michigan press, 1997), p. 107.
354 Thucydides 2.37
355 Matthew Dillon, *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Alexander the Great*, Routledge Sourcebooks for the Ancient World, Third edition (Routledge, 2010), doi:10.4324/9780203854556. pp. 3, 214
356 Thucydides 2.41
357 Helmut Heit, 'Western Identity, Barbarians and the Inheritance of Greek Universalism', *The European Legacy*, 10.7 (2005), pp. 725–39 (p. 727), doi:10.1080/10848770500335800.
358 Edith Hall, 'The Greatest Speech of All Time: Pericles' Funeral Oration', *Gresham College*, 7 March 2019 <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/watch-now/pericles-funeral-oration-cemetery>; A.B. Bosworth, 'The Historical Context of Thucydides' Funeral Oration', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 120 (2000), pp. 1–16 (p. 5), doi:10.2307/632478; Nicole Loraux, 'The invention of Athens: the funeral oration in the classical city' (Harvard Univ. Press, 1986).
359 Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (Rutgers university press, 1988), I.

portrays Ancient Greece as the foundation of Western civilisation. In *Black Athena*, Bernal proposes two models of Ancient Greek civilisation: the Ancient model, and the Aryan model. The Ancient model is the view that Greek culture arose as a result of influence from the Egyptians and Phoenicians, who colonised and civilised Greece around 1500 BCE. Bernal argues that this model was accepted by the Greeks themselves, during the Classical and Hellenistic period. On the other hand, according to the Aryan model, Greek civilisation is as a result of Aryan conquest, i.e. from Indo-European speakers of the North. Bernal posits that this model was only invented in the late 19th Century, and overthrew, so to speak, the Ancient model.[360] This mode of thinking contradicts the Classical Greek sources, which depict the arrival of the Egyptians and Phoenicians in Greece.[361]

Bernal's thesis has attracted wide criticism from classicists. Most notably, from Mary Lefkowitz, Professor Emerita of Classical Studies at Wellesley College. She does not completely disregard the influence of Ancient Egypt, as those who follow what Bernal terms the 'Extreme' Aryan model do, but she opposes Bernal's view that the culture of Ancient Greece had been 'transplanted' from Egypt.[362] Lefkowitz's critique is three-pronged: her attack concerns Bernal's sources, methodology, and interpretation.[363] She critiques Bernal's return to the Ancient model, and his over-reliance on Herodotus to support his view. Herodotus, in her view is a 'slippery' historical source and we cannot be sure how accurate his work is, and should instead, therefore, rely on archaeological and linguistic evidence. The reason that 'no one before 1600 seriously questioned … the belief that Greek civilisation and philosophy derived from Egypt' was not due to a deliberate effort to suppress Egypt's influence, but simply because not much was known about Egypt.[364] Lefkowitz views Bernal's position as a politically motivated one, and that this Afrocentric discourse is nothing more than what she terms 'feel good' history.[365]

I do not believe it is necessary, or helpful, for me here to give a judgement on the objective truth of *Black Athena.* Rather, it is better to focus upon the challenge to traditional views that Bernal's work has introduced into the field.

---

[360] Bernal, *Black Athena*, I, pp. 1–2.
[361] Martin Bernal, An Interview with Martin Bernal (Duke University Press, 1993), p. 1, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466441>.
[362] Mary Lefkowitz, 'Ancient History, Modern Myths', in *Black Athena Revisited*, ed. by Mary Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, 5th edn (Univ. of North Carolina Pr, 20), p. 6.
[363] Maghan Keita, 'The Politics of Criticism: "Not Out of Africa" and "Black Athena" Revisited', *Journal of World History*, 11.2 (2000), pp. 337–45 (p. 340) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078853>.
[364] Lefkowitz, 'Ancient History, Modern Myths', pp. 11–14; Bernal, *Black Athena*, I, p. 121.
[365] Martin Bernal, 'The Afrocentric Interpretation of History: Bernal Replies to Lefkowitz', *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 11 (1996), pp. 86–94 (p. 86), doi:10.2307/2963325; Mary Lefkowitz, *Not out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (BasicBooks, 1997), p. 3.

Ann Ward, Associate Professor of Political Studies and Philosophy at the University of Virginia, presents a middle ground between Bernal's position of Afrocentrism, and Lefkowitz's criticism. Her paper *Self-reflection, Egyptian Beliefs, Scythians and "Greek Ideas"*, concludes that the Ancient Egyptians did have a significant influence on the Ancient Greeks, specifically in their religious thought and practices, but that the Greek's later achievements cannot be solely attributed to the Ancient Egyptians and these are in fact unique to the Greeks. She, as does Bernal, utilises evidence from Herodotus, to draw her conclusions.[366] The relationship between Ancient Greece and Egypt profoundly impacted the development of Greece, their religious systems in particular. Herodotus, in Book II of his *Histories*, discusses this. To ignore or to dismiss this would be a grave error. In section 52, Herodotus describes how the Pelasgians, the autochthonous occupiers of Greece, from whom the Athenians were 'sprung from', began the practice of naming their gods.[367] They learned of the names used by the Egyptians for the gods, and adopted these. Prior to this, however, the gods whom they worshiped had no titles. Therefore, the Greek names for the gods originated from Egypt.[368] Additionally, Herodotus states in section 58 that the Egyptians were 'the first people to meet in large crowds to stage religious festivals, to hold ritual processions and to formulate set approaches for the bringing of gifts to the gods.' These practices 'provided the models for the Greeks'.[369] These examples are clear indications of Herodotus' belief that the Ancient Greek's approaches to religion derived from Egypt. Ward illustrates the Ancient Egypt's influence, not just constrained to religion. She posits that Egyptian religion is 'at the root of the Greek city in a psychic or intellectual sense'. Therefore, it is the Egyptian influence on Greece that has allowed it to make a 'unique contribution' to the art, philosophy and politics of the West. Although these contributions were Greek, they would not have been possible without the original influence of Egypt. [370]

Within the discipline of classics, there often exists an insistence that the Ancient Greeks were the foundation of Western civilisation, and to suggest otherwise, as Bernal did, is near blasphemy. Ancient Greece has often been put on a pedestal and lauded as a civilisation *sui generis*, with unrivalled contributions to society today. As such, connections between the Greeks and other societies were previously ignored or sidelined. The culture of Ancient Greece did not develop in a vacuum but was shaped through contact and contrast with its neighbours. As evidenced in this article, there were connections between

[366] Ann Ward, 'Self-Reflection, Egyptian Beliefs, Scythians and "Greek Ideas": Reconsidering Greeks and Barbarians in Herodotus', *The European Legacy*, 11.1 (2006), pp. 3–4, doi:10.1080/10848770500489011.
[367] Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.52; 1.56
[368] Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.52
[369] Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.58
[370] Ann Ward, 'Self-Reflection, Egyptian Beliefs, Scythians and "Greek Ideas"', p. 14.

societies in the Ancient World, and studying these reveals a wealth of new knowledge to Ancient historians. For all historians, regardless of which time period they are focusing upon, it is imperative to consider a society's neighbours and their interactions with them. Without this, one can only gain a cursory knowledge of that society. There are a multitude of benefits to be had from this: an increased understanding of cultural exchange between the societies; how a society developed in response to or as a result of another; and a better understanding of cultural identity and how this developed.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by Tom Holland, New edition (Penguin Classics, 2014)

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by C. F. Smith (Harvard University Press, 1919) <http://www.loebclassics.com/view/thucydides-history_peloponnesian_war/1919/work.xml>

Secondary Sources:

Amsterdam, Katrina Van, 'When In Greece, Do as the Persians Don't: Defining the Identity of the Greeks Against the Persian Imperial "Other"', *Hirundo, the McGill Journal of Classical Studies*, XII (2013) <https://www.mcgill.ca/classics/files/classics/2013-14-02.pdf>

Bernal, Martin, An Interview with Martin Bernal (Duke University Press, 1993), JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466441>

——, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (Rutgers university press, 1988), i

——, 'The Afrocentric Interpretation of History: Bernal Replies to Lefkowitz', *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 11 (1996), pp. 86–94, doi:10.2307/2963325

Bosworth, A.B., 'The Historical Context of Thucydides' Funeral Oration', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 120 (2000), pp. 1–16, doi:10.2307/632478

Browning, Robert, 'Greeks and Others: From Antiquity to the Renaissance', in *Greeks And Barbarians*, ed. by Thomas Harrison, Edinburgh Readings on the Ancient World (Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 257–77 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r2591.22>

Cartwright, David, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides: A Companion to Rex Warner's Penguin Translation* (University of Michigan press, 1997)

Dillon, Matthew, *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Alexander the Great*, Routledge Sourcebooks for the Ancient World, Third edition (Routledge, 2010), doi:10.4324/9780203854556

Earls, Averill, and Sarah Handley-Cousins, 'Black Athena Controversy: Battle of Historians' <https://digpodcast.org/2017/08/13/black-athena-controversy-battle-of-historians/>

Hall, Edith, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Clarendon Press, 1991) <https://edithhall.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/inventing-the-barbarian.pdf>

——, 'The Greatest Speech of All Time: Pericles' Funeral Oration', *Gresham College*, 7 March 2019 <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/watch-now/pericles-funeral-oration-cemetery>

——, 'When Is a Myth Not a Myth?', in *Greeks And Barbarians*, ed. by Thomas Harrison (Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 133–52 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r2591.14>

Heit, Helmut, 'Western Identity, Barbarians and the Inheritance of Greek Universalism', *The European Legacy*, 10.7 (2005), pp. 725–39, doi:10.1080/10848770500335800

James, Conor, 'The Formation of a Hellenic Identity: The Impact of Herodotus on the Ancient Greek and the Reception of His Histories' (Providence College, 2023) <https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/history_undergrad_theses/68/>

Keita, Maghan, 'The Politics of Criticism: "Not Out of Africa" and "Black Athena" Revisited', *Journal of World History*, 11.2 (2000), pp. 337–45 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078853>

Kennedy, Rebecca Futo, 'Orientalism and Classics', *Classics at the Intersections*, 18 September 2010 <https://rfkclassics.blogspot.com/2010/09/orientalism-and-classics-part-1.html>

Kennedy, Rebecca Futo, and Nick Barksdale, 'Black Athena Explained | Dr. Rebecca Futo Kennedy' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shEEsy0BkzQ&t=1s>

Lefkowitz, Mary, 'Not Out of Africa', *The New Republic*, 10 February 1992 <https://newrepublic.com/article/187186/not-africa>

——, *Not out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (BasicBooks, 1997)

——, 'Ancient History, Modern Myths', in *Black Athena Revisited*, ed. by Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, 5th edn (Univ. of North Carolina Pr, 20)

Levine, Molly Myerwoitz, 'The Challenge of "Black Athena" to Classics Today', *Arethusa*, 22 (1989), pp. 7–16 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26308573>

Loraux, Nicole, 'The invention of Athens: the funeral oration in the classical city' (Harvard Univ. Press, 1986)

University of Southampton, 'Introduction to the Ancient World: Module Overview' <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/courses/modules/hist1155#overview>

Ward, Ann, 'Self-Reflection, Egyptian Beliefs, Scythians and "Greek Ideas": Reconsidering Greeks and Barbarians in Herodotus', *The European Legacy*, 11.1 (2006), pp. 1–19, doi:10.1080/10848770500489011



All content is © the authors