

# the ascendant historian

UNDERGRADUATE HISTORY JOURNAL | VOLUME 2

FEATURING  
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REBECCA HARTLEY | CAITLIN KYLE | JOEY MAURO  
SAKIKO NODA | EMILY STREMEL

the ascendant historian



VOLUME 2



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## ***EDITORS' NOTE***

The University of Victoria stands on the unceded and unsundered lands of the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples, whose historical relationship to their land continues despite the ongoing encroachment and theft perpetrated by uninvited settlers. It is critical that we recognize our positionality in relation to the lands we work, live, and play on. Let's aspire to carve a path towards reconciliation and good relations by using our understanding of the past to create a better future.

From women's liberation to representations of war and the history of asexuality, the research presented in this edition of *the Ascendant Historian* shows the value of studying the past and demonstrates the contributions that the next generation of scholars will make to the field. As the editors of this journal, we are always striving to include and promote marginalized voices and underrepresented historical subjects. In the diversity of this year's offerings, we continue this tradition.

The creation of a journal such as this is not the work of just one or two people, but of a whole team each playing a crucial role. We'd like to thank everyone who volunteered their time to peer review submissions and copy-edit the accepted papers. Without you, this journal would not have been possible. Also, a big round of appreciation goes out to all of those who submitted their research. It has been an honour to read all of your incredible work. Lastly, thank you to our professorial advisors Dr. Bunton, Dr. Cook, Dr. Hammond, and Dr. Lutz who gave us much-needed advice and guided us in the right direction.

This edition of the journal has been a labour of love and we are so happy to share the finished product with you. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Alec Lazenby & Erik Butterfield

## ***CHAIR'S MESSAGE***

I am thrilled to introduce the 2022 issue of the UVic History Department's undergraduate journal, *The Ascendant Historian*. This publication represents an exemplary sample of the original research undertaken by undergraduate history students at the University of Victoria. Despite the challenges of the past academic year, including hybrid learning and shuttered archives, our students continued to prove themselves talented historians-in-the-making.

Over the past few months, we have been reminded of history's importance in understanding and effecting change in the present. In addition to the ongoing disruptions of Covid-19 and movements for social and environmental justice, we have witnessed the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has focused the attention of the world and raised comparisons to previous European and global conflicts. Now, as much as at any point in my lifetime, historians—particularly young historians—need to be involved in the debates and discussions that are redefining regional, national, and international values and priorities. And I am proud to say that we see such engagement in the original scholarship presented in this volume.

The articles published here exhibit an extraordinary chronological and thematic range. Topics include patterns of narrative and representation at the War Museum, Gaelic women's agency in early modern Ireland, the transformation of Scottish Highland farms circa. 1800, the connections between and divergence of Indigenous and Diasporic theories of liberation, Japanese understandings of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the intersection of anti-Semitism and perceptions of disease in early twentieth-century Eastern Europe.

This variety of topics and questions is a testament to the creativity and commitment that our students bring to their study of history. My History Department colleagues and I celebrate the authors for their originality, tenacious research, and compelling insights. We also applaud the editors and peer reviews whose hard work produced this superb edition of *The Ascendant Historian*.

Jason Colby, Department Chair, March 2022



## ***AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES***

**Stefano Buckley** is a second-generation settler of Italian, Ukrainian, and Irish descent having grown up on Kwantlen territory in present-day Fort Langley, who currently resides on the rightful lands of the lək̓ʷəŋən people in southeastern Vancouver Island. He is a third-year History student at the University of Victoria, whose particular interest is in the historical ways of being between cultures and the landscapes they are a part of. He intends to take what he has studied of historical lifeways and implement that learning towards a way in which industrialized societies can disentangle themselves from the issues they bring to their fragmented landscape-relationships.

**Jonah Burkart** is a fifth-year history student also pursuing a minor in anthropology. During his second year at UVic he participated in an international exchange opportunity where he travelled to Singapore and studied at the National University of Singapore. Jonah is particularly passionate in the subjects of late-stage imperialism and the First World War, and is very interested to explore how history and archaeology can be used together in the study of historical epidemics. Jonah is an avid surfer and tries to enjoy the natural wonder of Vancouver Island to the fullest.

**Charlotte Clar** is a fourth-year History student at UVic with a minor in Professional Communications. She is currently in her last year of study and upon completion of her degree, plans on travelling and working in the public history field before returning to school to complete a MA in History at a university in England. Her main historical interests include Queen Elizabeth I and the Tudor period. Charlotte currently works for the Digital Victorian Periodical Poetry (DVPP) project where she researches and compiles biographies of Victorian poets from the most famous to the unknown.

**Rebecca Hartley** is a fourth-year History Honours and Anthropology Minor student at the University of Victoria. She is also the president of the history undergraduate student union. Having volunteered at the Royal BC Museum and worked for Parks Canada as a heritage interpreter, Rebecca is particularly interested in public history and how museum narratives shape understanding. She is looking forward to starting her MA in History in the Fall of 2023 after she completes an archaeology field school in Barkley Sound.

**Caitlin Kyle** is in the last year of her History degree at the University of Victoria. Her topics of interest include feminist history and philosophies of art and beauty. Caitlin is passionate about reading, relationality, sustainable fashion, and her dog, Moe. She hopes to move towards a career researching art collections.

**Joey Mauro** is a settler on the unceded territory of the W̱SÁNEĆ and Lək̓ʷəŋən-speaking peoples. His academic interests include settler-colonial history, 20th-century history, Diasporic and Indigenous literatures, postcolonial theory and practical Marxism. Joey works as a researcher for the Colonial Despatches digital archive at the University of Victoria. He aspires to be a better community organizer one day.

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# Functioning and Alteration in Scottish Highland Farms during the First Phase of Clearance (c. 1775 - c. 1815)

Stefano Buckley

*During the latter half of the 18th century and the early decades of the 19th, the traditional lifeways of farms in rural Highland Scotland underwent a drastic alteration. Hitherto operating in a community-focussed manner that had lasted for centuries, one bound up in notions of hereditary duty to clans and neighbours, this system became subject to a myriad of burgeoning changes both ideological and economic. Throughout the course of this paper, I will examine how these external influences reshaped the cultural and physical landscape of the Highlands, transforming a place that had once been directed towards self-sufficiency into one now dictated by the demands of an emerging capitalist marketplace.*

The term “First Phase of Clearance” was coined by Allan I. MacInnes in 1988 and describes the initial period of the Highland Clearances, in which a number of changes to the traditional way of life in rural Highland Scotland were brought about.<sup>1</sup> Though occurring sometime between the 1730s and 1820s, this paper will focus primarily on the latter portion of this timeframe. It should be noted, however, that the radical alterations which took place throughout the Highlands did not do so in a uniform way, with identical changes at identical times.<sup>2</sup> Instead, it is best to think of this Phase as comprised of events that differ in their time and place yet still remain linked through the sharing of common themes. Such themes will be explored in further depth below. For now, it need only be understood that the First Phase of Clearance is, above all, distinguishable by a deliberate fracturing of traditional townships (which had previously been managed communally) into crofts with individual houses and plots.<sup>3</sup> These earlier townships had acted together to ensure collective success, and their subsequent fragmentation resulted in a lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Finlay McKichan. “Lord Seaforth and Highland Estate Management in the First Phase of Clearance (1783-1815).” *Scottish Historical Review*. Vol. 86,1 Issue 221, (April 2007), 50.

<sup>2</sup> Allan MacInnes, “Commercial Landlordism and Clearance in the Scottish Highlands: the case of Arichonan,” in Juan Pan-Montojo and Frederik Pedersen, ed., *Communities in European History: Representations, Jurisdictions, Conflicts*, (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2007), 49.

<sup>3</sup> MacInnes, “Commercial Landlordism and Clearance in the Scottish Highlands: the case of Arichonan,” 49.

employment<sup>4</sup> and the tenantry's newfound vulnerability to their landlord.<sup>5</sup> Overarching this agrarian scene was the centuries-old clan system, which saw its share of change in the First Phase as well — on the one hand spurring many of the alterations to come for Highland life, but itself becoming altered in the process. While all of this will be discussed in further detail below, it should be emphasised that this First Phase of Clearance was a result of fluctuating ideologies in contact with each other as much as it was of material conditions, and that the outcome was a distinct shift from a primarily subsistence-focused method of farming to one with increased attention to market-directed agriculture.

Even in the 1770s, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland were viewed as the rugged, undomesticated periphery of Britain.<sup>6</sup> The Isle of Arran, for example, in the Firth of Clyde, was largely a Gaelic-speaking land despite its proximity to commercial centres like Glasgow and Greenock.<sup>7</sup> *Duthchas*, the “traditional concept of heritable trusteeship”, in which a clan and those that served it were bound together by bonds of loyalty that had reached far into the past and would, theoretically, remain in the future, had existed in the Highlands for centuries and still held sway by the time of the Clearances.<sup>8</sup> The physical land itself was rather unforgiving for husbandry: composed of soil, peat, sand, *machair* (fertile grassy plain rich in calcium)<sup>9</sup>, clay, gravel, or some combination of the six, only a small amount of it (around 8.8%) could have been deemed fit to call arable.<sup>10</sup> Therefore the majority of land available for agriculture was either pasture or *muir* (moorland).<sup>11</sup>

This was an area that was more suited for the keeping of livestock than the tending of crops. Farmers kept sheep, horses, cattle, and goats,<sup>12</sup> which they used for meat, milk, wool, leather, tallow, and bone. Cattle also served a function as a means of rent payment to the landlord and in the securing of spouses between clans.<sup>13</sup> Yet, in most cases, crops appear to have been of even greater importance to the tenants than livestock was.<sup>14</sup> Though strange considering the Highland's inclement soil, this perplexity has the simple explanation that the tenants of Highland farms were focused above all on subsistence, as

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<sup>4</sup> J. I Little. “Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearance: The Isle of Arran, 1766-1829.” *Scottish Economic & Social History*. Vol. 19 Issue 2, (1999), 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>8</sup> MacInnes, “Commercial Landlordism and Clearance in the Scottish Highlands: the case of Arichonan,” 49.

<sup>9</sup> Dodgshon. “Strategies of farming in the western highlands and islands of Scotland prior to crofting and the clearances,” 699.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 679.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 687.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 692.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 679.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

explained in the introduction, rather than on market production. The cost and effort of keeping livestock around as a regular source of food outweighed that of crop-cultivation.

Knowledge of what, and how much, was grown in such communities can be gleaned from looking at precise accounts of Highland farms, which come in the form of surveys and reports, as well as more general references that present a rougher picture of the overall agricultural practises in place.<sup>15</sup> Concerning the former, we can extrapolate from the *teind* (tithe) paid to the Church to get a sense of the quantity of crops grown in communities, with the knowledge that this *teind* would have been 10% of the harvest. Concerning the latter, we can see that oats and barley were the crops most commonly-grown, along with rye. However, cultivation of rye seemed to be on the wane after c. 1775 due to it taking “excess demands on the soil”.<sup>16</sup> From this fact we can gather that farmers were acutely aware of the importance of good-quality soil but, more significantly, that obtaining the highest yield per foot of earth was a priority due to self-nourishment being the aim of agriculture. As seen just now in the case of rye, knowledge of a crop’s ‘demand on the soil’ could alter the prevalence of said crop in an area, and, especially when one considers the contemporary explosion in Scottish population<sup>17</sup>, it is little wonder that the maximisation of land was of the utmost importance.

As for the means by which crops were grown, the system in most common use was the run-rig method, so named because of the *rigs* (ridges) of the land when ploughed.<sup>18</sup> Here, different tenant-families would alternate rigs throughout the years so that no family indefinitely possessed the best land. This run-rig system must be seen in the context of its broader agricultural structure, which was dubbed the infield-outfield system. A 1799 example from the Hebridean island of North Uist provides an example of this—only half of the arable land in the community would be kept tilled at a time, and this was the “infield”.<sup>19</sup> The other half would be left fallow (or planted with clover, as was done on Arran)<sup>20</sup>, and this second “outfield” is where animals would be folded so that their manure could fertilise the ground while no crops were grown there. It seems that poorer-quality soils (such as might be high in peat or sand) were those chosen most often to keep animals upon,<sup>21</sup> though the example from North Uist suggests that the two halves were simply alternated every few years to allow the soil to rejuvenate.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 682.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 682.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 679.

<sup>18</sup> Little. “Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearance: The Isle of Arran, 1766-1829,” 135.

<sup>19</sup> Dodgshon. “Strategies of farming in the western highlands and islands of Scotland prior to crofting and the clearances,” 686.

<sup>20</sup> Little. “Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearance: The Isle of Arran, 1766-1829,” 134.

<sup>21</sup> Dodgshon, “Strategies of farming in the western highlands and islands of Scotland prior to crofting and the clearances,” 686.

Robert Dodgshon’s much-referenced article “Strategies of farming in the western highlands and islands of Scotland prior to crofting and the clearances” explains that the cultivation of crops was of greater importance to tenants than livestock, as referenced above, yet the majority of his article still focuses on the animal component of farming. This, coupled with the very concept and extent of the infield-outfield system, suggests that fertiliser was of significant value to farmers in the Highlands and Islands, so destitute in soil. In fact, Dean Munro’s 17th-century survey of the Hebrides (though earlier than the timeframe in question) alludes to the very concept of arable land as being defined by the presence of manure in the soil:<sup>22</sup> “sustainable cultivation was only possible if nutrient levels were maintained through heavy inputs of manure and fertiliser”.<sup>23</sup> Therefore we can see that the keeping of livestock, despite the resources of meat, milk, and other raw materials which they provided, was primarily for the manure produced that would aid Highland crops in growing — not as the prime source of sustenance, nor for the selling of animal products. Yet, livestock did not provide the only source of fertiliser to be found. Ferns and thatch were sometimes used,<sup>24</sup> along with peat soil, shell sand, and *seaware* (seaweed)<sup>25</sup> and, on the island of Tiree, perhaps human waste.<sup>26</sup> No matter what kind of fertiliser was used, it dictated a great deal of the farm’s labour—how and where animals were to be kept, for example (as houses existed as an alternative to the outfield)<sup>27</sup>, or else resulting in the effort involved in bringing *seaware* from shore to field. In a time when farming was for the purpose of feeding oneself, enhancement of the land one cultivated was a constant concern.

With this overview of traditional Highland agriculture in mind, it is time to more officially introduce those elements in play during the late 18th century and early 19th that spurred a change to this lifestyle. Due to high populations, “farming had become a struggle of demography over topography”, as townships attempted to maximise the amount of food they grew.<sup>28</sup> George Loch, commissioner for the infamous Sutherland estate, blamed the tenants’ poverty on their overpopulation, a poverty which obliged the landlords of that estate to provide their tenants with meal (most likely oats) to prevent famine.<sup>29</sup> The traditional objective was, as previously emphasised, one of subsistence for the tenants (i.e. crops) rather than what was lucrative for landlords (livestock). But when looking at the presence of livestock on farms, the number required by tenants was much lower than that

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 694.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 694.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 697.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 692.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 698.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 700.

<sup>29</sup> Annie Tindley. “Actual pinching and suffering?: Estate Responses to Poverty in Sutherland, 1845-1886.” *Scottish Historical Review*. Vol. 90 Issue 2, (October 2011), 239.

necessitated by the landlord's wish for market farming. As this desire was indeed rising as a newfound objective among landowners, confrontation and change were inevitable.

This new push for commercially-focused production was the result of a shift taking place not just in the demographic charts of Scotland, but in the minds as well.<sup>30</sup> The traditional relationship between landlord and tenant, hitherto characterised by *duthchas*, was now changing to that dictated by *oighreachd*, the legal concept of a heritable title that likened clan chiefs more closely to English nobles, effectively severing the bonds of loyalty to their tenants.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, following a "belief in progress [...] emanating from the Scottish Enlightenment",<sup>32</sup> the country was gripped with a desire for self-improvement. Though previously deemed a benighted land, this view had switched (possibly augmented by Samuel Johnson's popular *A Journey to The Western Isles of Scotland*)<sup>33</sup> to one of a region of potential. The landlordism of the Hamiltons, ducal family of the Isle of Arran since the 15th century,<sup>34</sup> was driven by a desire "to modernize Arran's agricultural economy [...] by destroying the traditional practices", practises that may have seemed primitive or ineffectual.<sup>35</sup> However the lack of progress that tenants were judged for was, at least on Arran, due to the fact that tenants who made improvements to their lands would often have to pay rent for these additions when they next renewed their lease.<sup>36</sup> So it is little wonder that impoverished farmers were reluctant to modernise. But change did come, in the eviction of tenants as well as in the division of their communal run-rig tenure. As farmers often shared labour and equipment,<sup>37</sup> decisions such as this either forced farmers to leave their communities and work in the kelping and fishing industry of the coasts,<sup>38</sup> or else forced them into poverty and destitution. And with the kelping industry fully underway it only exacerbated matters for those vestigial farms still running traditionally, by limiting their use of *seaware* as fertiliser. It seems that the poorest tenants, especially if prone to recalcitrance, were those most targeted with eviction.<sup>39</sup> And while emigration did occur,

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<sup>30</sup> Little, "Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearance: The Isle of Arran, 1766-1829," 132.

<sup>31</sup> MacInnes, "Commercial Landlordism and Clearance in the Scottish Highlands: the case of Arichonan," 50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>33</sup> Little, "Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearance: The Isle of Arran, 1766-1829," 133.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

landlords were generally opposed to their tenants leaving in case the need for soldiers arose.<sup>40</sup>

But if the Hamiltons had such ideas as this, they were also partial to a contradictory sentiment found on Arran and elsewhere in Highland aristocracy: romantic idealisation. The Hamiltons, despite their aforementioned enthusiasm for improvement, possessed an incongruous but simultaneous wish to preserve as much as possible the historic beauty of Arran.<sup>41</sup> This can be recognized as a heightened awareness in landlords for their role in the community, which in some took the form of an intentional diminishing of *duthchas*, but in others a glorification of it.

This strain of romanticism is not to be underestimated as a potent factor that shaped the later years of the First Phase of Clearance. Earl Francis Humberston Mackenzie, chief of the Seaforth estate in Ross-shire, is perhaps the quintessential embodiment of this reluctance to dispense with Highland tradition in the face of capitalization. Though raised in England,<sup>42</sup> he came into his role as *caber feidh* (hereditary chief) of the Mackenzies with much enthusiasm. Despite his near-deafness, Humberston underwent a rigorous study of Gaelic, and paid homage to his ancestry by commissioning a portrait of Colin Fitzgerald, legendary progenitor of the Mackenzie clan.<sup>43</sup> All of this translated into a pronounced concern for his tenants. Both in 1784 and 1787, Humberston rejected offers from sheep farmers who wished to purchase some of his estate<sup>44</sup>--which would have entailed the eviction of the tenants that lived there. Humberston also raised regiments of soldiers,<sup>45</sup> which shows both his eagerness to play the part of Highland chief, and his reluctance to yield to the urges of clearance that were taking place throughout the country--as those who enlisted were rewarded with new leases on their land. Unfortunately, despite his desires, Seaforth was deep in debt (£147,911 by 1787) and by necessity rent-prices doubled on his lands between 1780 and 1813<sup>46</sup>

Thus one may observe the great complexity present in the physical and cultural landscape of the Highlands at the time. While on the one hand a vigorous zeal for commercialism was burgeoning, which as we have seen became manifested in a breakdown of traditional land management and rural lifestyle, the example of Earl Seaforth demonstrates an opposite mentality that also played a role in the unfolding of the First Phase of Clearance. This period of history was, like all, rife with contradiction and

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<sup>40</sup> McKichan. "Lord Seaforth and Highland Estate Management in the First Phase of Clearance (1783-1815)," 50.

<sup>41</sup> Little, "Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearance: The Isle of Arran, 1766-1829," 146.

<sup>42</sup> McKichan. "Lord Seaforth and Highland Estate Management in the First Phase of Clearance (1783-1815)," 52.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 54

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 59.



competition whose co-mingling resulted in monumental changes across Scotland, bringing material and ideological influences together to shape what we now dub the Highland Clearances. Yet, despite whatever fondness for tradition may have risen to counter the challenges of this time, both chiefs and tenants were subject to the great changes occurring around them, and were ultimately ineffective at altering the transformation of subsistence-based rural life in view of the flourishing face of modern commercialism.

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# **Disease, Vermin, and Anti-Semitism: The Significance of Epidemic Typhus in Eastern Europe, 1916-1942**

Jonah Burkart

*Typhus has long been a stigmatized disease, associated with dirt and poverty due to its mode of transmission through body lice. The disease claimed the lives of millions in Eastern Europe during the early 20th century, exacerbated by conflict, refugee movements, government policies, and racial violence. This paper examines the toll that typhus took on both sides of the Russian Civil War and the hygiene policies put in place to reduce the spread of lice. It also explores the shifts in Soviet hygiene programs and their effects on the epidemic, as well as how the gulag system intensified the spread of the disease. Lastly, it investigates the connections between epidemic typhus and the Holocaust and discusses how fear of the disease helped to shape Nazi 'sanitization' policies and contributed to the mass murder of millions.*

Plagued by epidemics throughout the turbulent twentieth century, Russia's most prolific disease was typhus. In the span of six years, from 1916 to 1923, thirty million people were infected and approximately three to five million were killed. Typhus is spread by the body louse which thrives and spreads easily in dirty, unsanitary conditions. These conditions were common during times of instability and strife, which is why typhus was able to attain such high infection rates during this period. A confluence of catastrophic events, including the First World War, the Russian Revolution, the Russian Civil War, and the influenza pandemic of 1918, strained the country to its breaking point. Conflict and famine, along with the mass movement of troops and refugees, worked to spread typhus across the newly formed Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. Implementing public health measures and receiving international aid was crucial for the new revolutionary government to curb the spread of typhus after the end of the Civil War. However, this victory was short-lived; under Stalin's regime, typhus returned, mainly because of the hardships caused by forced collectivization and the Gulag system. Not only did typhus cost the lives of millions of people, but it also furthered racial and ethnic divides as the fear of lice and disease led to an increase in anti-Semitism. This was reflected not only by the pogroms of Soviet Russia, but also by the delousing programs associated with the Holocaust in Nazi Germany.

Epidemic typhus is caused by the *Rickettsia prowazekii* bacteria and is transmitted to human beings by the body louse *Pediculus humanus corporis*.<sup>47</sup> The bacteria grow in the gut of the louse and are excreted through their feces. When the louse bites the human host, the bites become itchy, and the process of scratching rubs the infective louse feces into the abraded skin, penetrating the body and infecting the new human host. Although the disease cannot move from person to person itself, the body louse acts as the vector, and spreads the *R. prowazekii* bacteria between human hosts via close contact such as prolonged skin contact, hair contact, or through sharing infected bedding or clothes.<sup>48</sup> These modes of transmission are exactly what makes typhus prevalent during periods of conflict. During Russia's Civil War, troop trains and refugee caravans criss-crossed the nation, spreading the disease much further than it would have been able to during times of stability and peace. Epidemic typhus causes body rash, intense fever, nausea, and its complications can cause gangrene, pneumonia, kidney failure, coma, and heart failure.<sup>49</sup> On average, epidemic typhus has a mortality rate of about 40%, but that would most certainly have been higher during the Russian epidemic as there was a scarcity of resources for treatment. Despite a concentrated international effort to create a vaccine for typhus between 1918 and 1920, one was never created during this period.<sup>50</sup> Although there have been several attempts at creating a vaccine since, there remains no effective vaccine available for epidemic typhus even today.<sup>51</sup> Typhus can now be treated with antibiotics, but in the early twentieth century there were no treatment options available apart from good nursing and supportive care -- neither of which could be provided during the Civil War.

Typhus was not a new disease in Russia and numerous epidemics of the louse borne disease had plagued the country throughout its history. Typhus had been a major factor during several wars in Russia, including the Seven Years War, the Napoleonic Wars, and finally on the Eastern Front during the First World War. The typhus epidemic began in Russia in 1916 amongst the military, and by 1917 had started to become a serious problem amongst the civilian population.<sup>52</sup> Following the Bolshevik October Revolution in 1917,

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<sup>47</sup> Yassina Bechah et al., "Epidemic Typhus," *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* 8, no. 7 (2008): 418.

<https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/science/article/pii/S1473309908701506?via%3Dihub>

<sup>48</sup> Bechah et al., "Epidemic Typhus," 418.

<sup>49</sup> Julia Irwin, "The Great White Train: Typhus, Sanitation, and U.S. International Development during the Russian Civil War," *Endeavour (New Series)* 36, no. 3 (2012): 90. <https://sites.bu.edu/revolutionaryrussia/files/2013/09/The-Great-White.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Irwin, "The Great White Train," 91.

<sup>51</sup> "Epidemic Typhus," CDC, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/typhus/epidemic/index.html>

<sup>52</sup> Clara Cuncell, "War and Infectious Disease," *Public Health Reports (1896)* 56, no. 12 (1941): 551.

[https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/4583663?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/4583663?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

anti-Bolshevik forces coalesced under the leadership of Admiral Alexander Kolchak, who assumed command of the many different army groups scattered across the vast nation.<sup>53</sup> The leaders of the armies were made up of high-ranking officials from the Imperial Army still loyal to Emperor Nicholas II, including Anton Denikin, Yevgeny Miller, and Nikolai Yudenich.<sup>54</sup> These forces became known as the White Army, and they established themselves on the peripheries of the country over 1918. The Whites began to launch attacks on the new Soviet government, which by this time had fielded its own military, the Red Army, and had appointed Leon Trotsky as its commander.<sup>55</sup> As the two groups went to war, the conflict pushed typhus cases to hitherto unseen levels: the movement of troops, hospital trains, and the dislocation of millions fleeing the occupying armies provided the perfect transmission routes for lice. Figure 1 shows the growth of typhus cases over the Civil War period, and as a testament to the unprecedented spread the graph must be expressed in logarithmic scale.

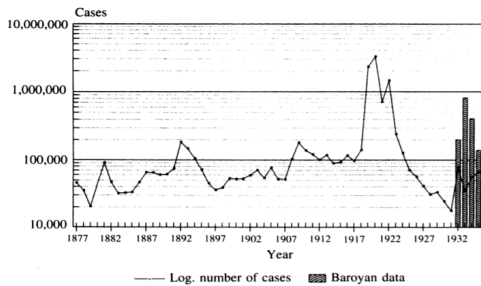


Figure 1. Epidemic typhus cases in Europe 1877-1936.

Source: Patterson, "Typhus and its Control in Russia, 1870–1940."

Thriving off the discord created by the conflict, typhus ravaged both sides. Although the White Army did not properly record any sort of data on the reach of typhus in their lines, it is estimated that they suffered equal -- if not greater -- losses than the Red Army.<sup>56</sup> Soviet demographers estimated that from 1918 to 1920 there were at least 573,000

<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2-3.

<https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/concern/monographs/6w924c269>

<sup>54</sup> John Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1919: And the Part Played by Canada*, Vol. 4;4, (London; New York;: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 17. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.4324/9781315208947>

<sup>55</sup> Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1919*, 17-18.

<sup>56</sup> David Patterson, "Typhus and its Control in Russia, 1870–1940," *Medical History* 37, no. 4 (1993): 376.

typhus cases in the Red Army, resulting in approximately 100,000 deaths.<sup>57</sup> Due to the attrition being leveled upon the armies, both belligerents realised that delousing and hygiene practices would be crucial to their ability to remain in the war. The hygiene strategy of the Red Army included building hundreds of bathing and disinfection stations along railways and near the front lines with attached delousing teams.<sup>58</sup> The system succeeded in exterminating massive amounts of lice; in the accounts of some Soviet doctors visiting the delousing stations, a “two inch layer of dead lice covered the floor” after the procedure.<sup>59</sup> The White Army groups spread out around the fringes of the country were not faring much better in their battle against the lice. As historian Paul Weindling writes of the situation in the White Army, “a hospital train was characterized as a ‘train of death’ as its passengers starved, infected one another, and were overwhelmed by vermin and filth.”<sup>60</sup> Unlike the Soviets, however, the White Army was not left alone in this conflict. During the years following 1918, the White Army was supported by the military intervention of the Allies of the Great War, which included Great Britain, France, Japan, the United States, and many other nations.

The spread of disease and the scale of the epidemic provided the Western Allies with an excuse to intervene on behalf of the White Army, with leaders such as Winston Churchill stating that the world was threatened by:

“a poisoned Russia, an infected Russia, a plague-bearing Russia, a Russia of armed hordes smiting not only with bayonet and with cannon, but accompanied and preceded by the swarms of typhus bearing vermin which slay the bodies of men, and political doctrines which destroy the health and even the soul of nations.”<sup>61</sup>

This statement demonstrates not only fears of a spreading epidemic, but the Western fears of socialism, as these leaders believed that the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia would inspire revolutions around the world, undermining the hegemony of the capitalist powers. Although there existed some fear of the typhus epidemic spreading further into Europe, the main reason for the Allied intervention in the Civil War was to restore a Russian government, which would rejoin the fight against the Central Powers. Lenin’s Bolshevik government had signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1036775/?tool=pmcentrez&report=abstract>

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<sup>57</sup> Patterson, "Typhus and its Control in Russia," 376.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Paul Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe, 1890-1945* (New York;Oxford;: Oxford University Press, 2000), 150. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198206910.001.0001

<sup>61</sup> Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*, 150.

Germany on May 3, 1918, which removed them from the conflict and alleviated some pressure on the Bolsheviks, but it also freed Germany to focus their forces against the Allies on the Western Front. Churchill also further compared Bolshevism to a disease, declaring that “Lenin was sent into Russia by the Germans in the same way that you might send a phial containing a culture of typhoid or of cholera to be poured into the water supply of a great city.”<sup>62</sup> The Allies provided not only military support to the White Army, but also medical aid. The Americans set up numerous field hospitals and typhus isolation wards along the White Army lines, intent on trying to stamp out the disease which crippled military efficiency. The United States even developed a mobile sanitary train, which was intended to be able to bring disinfecting supplies across Siberia and would also act as a mobile delousing station.<sup>63</sup> Within these typhus hospitals and trains, disinfectant teams would spray the ward with chemicals such as sulphur and carbolic acid, and even hydrogen cyanide.<sup>64</sup> Typically, disinfection by use of steam was the most common method and was widely employed by both Whites and Reds on clothes, linens, and people. The disinfection teams in the American hospitals shaved and bathed patients, burned infected mattresses, and sterilized clothes and bedding as well, if possible.<sup>65</sup> With American help, the newly established nation of Estonia was able to bring the typhus epidemic under control within their borders, but Allied victories in the war on lice stopped there.<sup>66</sup> Although the typhus epidemic did not decide the outcome of the Civil War and ultimately led to great losses on both sides, it is certain that the disease had a large role in weakening the White Army forces and leading to Admiral Kolchak’s eventual defeat.

Revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin and the new Bolshevik government recognized that the survival of the Revolutionary state depended on their ability to control the typhus epidemic. Lenin famously declared, “socialism must defeat the louse or the louse will defeat socialism.”<sup>67</sup> The Soviet hygiene system was largely an extension of their Civil War epidemic strategy, but now it was able to focus their efforts away from the military and towards their citizens. Recognizing the role of the railways in the spread of typhus, the Soviets took special care of trains coming in and out of Moscow by disinfecting around 40-50,000 passengers per day, as well as adding disinfection stations along the railways throughout the country.<sup>68</sup> One key element of Soviet epidemic control was the *banya*, or traditional Russian public bathhouse. Although most of these bathhouses had either fallen into disrepair in recent decades or had been co-opted by the wealthy

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<sup>62</sup> Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Irwin, "The Great White Train," 91.

<sup>64</sup> Patterson, "Typhus and its Control in Russia," 380.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>67</sup> Ethan, Pollock, *Without the Banya we would Perish: A History of the Russian Bathhouse* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 140. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780195395488.001.0001

<sup>68</sup> Patterson, "Typhus and its Control in Russia," 380.

aristocrats under the tsar, they provided the perfect opportunity for the Soviets to widen their disinfection program.<sup>69</sup> The Soviets had began the push to construct more *banyas* for the citizens of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic by 1919, and in September of 1920 Lenin passed a decree with the purpose of “decisively fighting epidemics of typhus and relapsing fever and with the goal of widely disseminating to the population the means to attain cleanliness.”<sup>70</sup> The *banyas* were overseen by the People’s Commissariats of Interior and Health, who were tasked with attracting as many people as possible, and was achieved through propaganda.<sup>71</sup> Posters such as Figure 2 equate the White Army and its leaders to parasites, as a Lenin-like figure carrying Red Cross supplies warns his comrades of the new enemy, typhus, and encourages the population to bathe and sanitize their clothing. Figure 3 depicts a scene at a *banya*, emphasising the dangers of dirt and parasites, and reads that “Dirt is the source of illness: wash in the banya and change clothes no less often than one time a week.” The *banya* strategy helped to encourage cleanliness amongst the Russian people, but Lenin’s government was still attempting to deal with the economic turmoil caused by the revolution and other conflicts and looked to the international comm community for help.



Figure 2. “The Red Army has Scattered the White Parasites - Yudenich, Denikin, Kolchak. A New



Figure 3. “Dirt is the Source Of Illness: Wash in the Banya and Change Clothes No Less Often Than One Time

<sup>69</sup> Pollock, *Without the Banya we would Perish*, 131.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

Calamity has Taken Over - Lice  
 Carrying Typhus! Comrades! Fight this  
 Infection! Destroy the Louse!" (1921)  
 Source: The Wellcome Library.

a Week." (1931) Source: Ethan  
 Pollock, *Without the Banya We Would  
 Perish: A History of the Russian  
 Bathhouse*.

In dealing with the typhus epidemic, the Soviets avoided making public international pleas for aid, as the capitalist Allied powers might perceive Russia as weak and attempt another intervention.<sup>72</sup> Instead, Lenin calculated that Russia's best chance for foreign aid would come from the newly established socialist government in the Weimar Republic. The Bolsheviks began to make overtures towards the more sympathetic German government, and soon a German-Soviet medical relationship was formed.<sup>73</sup> Although many in Germany at the time saw this as a noble mission which could reinvigorate and energize the German spirit from the trauma of defeat in the Great War, historian Paul Weindling believes that there may have been ulterior German motives behind the nation's agreement to provide aid. Weindling argues that "epidemic prevention became an extension of right-wing politics to resurrect a German racial state," and that behind the thin veneer of salvation lay the hidden agenda of expanding German *Lebensraum* in the East.<sup>74</sup> Whether or not this was the true objective, medical supplies provided by the German Red Cross were gratefully received in Russia as they looked towards curbing the spread of the epidemic.

With the implementation of the *banya* system and the arrival of foreign medical aid, typhus cases began to steadily decline in the country. The biggest factor for this was the cessation of conflict and a return to relative stability. This victory over the disease proved to be short-lived, however, as cases started to rise dramatically once again after 1931. The reason for this sudden return of typhus is attributed to the famines and instability caused by Stalin's forced collectivization and Gulag systems. Although Soviet reports to the League of Nations Health Organization did announce a sizable increase in typhus cases, it is likely that these numbers were severely underreported. Reported cases remained in the range of 40-80,000 per year between 1931 and 1937, when the USSR stopped reporting infection rates to the League of Nations. Reports published in the 1960s indicate that typhus cases were well over 200,000 in 1932 and got even as high as over 800,000 in

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<sup>72</sup> Despite the risk of revealing the true extent of Russia's desperation, and although not a member of the League of Nations until 1934, the Soviets continued to report epidemic typhus cases to the League of Nations Health section throughout the Civil War period and beyond until 1937, two years before they were kicked out of the organization. For more information, see Patterson, "Typhus and its Control in Russia."

<sup>73</sup> Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*, 155.

<sup>74</sup> Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*, 155-156.



1933, as is demonstrated by the bars labelled Baroyan data in Figure 1.<sup>75</sup> As was the case during the Civil War, Stalin's forced collectivization campaign caused widespread destitution and depravity, and typhus thrived in the chaos of famines and forced dislocation of peasants. Peasants who refused to adapt to the collectivization were detained and deported to exile settlements or into forced labour camps known as Gulags, where disease and starvation ravaged the interned population. Within these Gulags, Soviet scientists conducted medical experiments and research on the prisoners, studying the effects of illnesses which afflicted both the camp and civilian populations.<sup>76</sup> These included nutritional deficiencies, scurvy, tuberculosis, and of course, typhus. Although the experiments in the Russian Gulags do not seem to have been as intent upon lethality as those conducted in Nazi Germany, they echoed contemporary research being conducted in the United States on vaccine efficacy and disease transmission.<sup>77</sup> Soviet doctors chose to study the clinical effects of disease on the prisoner populations rather than provide aid. Despite the poverty and suffering experienced in the countryside under Stalin's reign, epidemic typhus never again reached the levels it had during the 1917-23 period, most likely because of the continued success of the *banya* and disinfection strategies, as well as the presence of a much more stable government.

Epidemic typhus caused widespread suffering and death, but it also deeply changed cultural views, deepening racial and ethnic divides in Russia and beyond. Typhus and other louse-borne diseases spread terror throughout Eastern Europe. This fear stemmed not from the insects themselves, but rather from those who were perceived to be carriers of lice, namely refugees and Jewish peoples. At the height of the epidemic, as millions of people died of disease, hygienic campaigns and propaganda depicted lice and other parasites as terrifying, monstrous enemies of humanity. Over time, this fear of lice began to merge with anti-Semitism, and Jews around the world were increasingly identified as transmitters of the parasites. In Russia, delousing procedures were incorporated into the vicious pogroms<sup>78</sup> which had intensified during the Civil War, with thousands of these riots

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<sup>75</sup> Patterson, "Typhus and its Control in Russia," 381.

<sup>76</sup> Golfo Alexopoulos, "Medical Research in Stalin's Gulag," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 90, no. 3 (2016): 363-393.

<https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/article/634472/pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Numerous studies and experiments concerning the spread of infectious disease and vaccine tests were conducted on prison populations and vulnerable minorities in the United States during this time, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, and Jonas Salk's development of the polio vaccine at the Polk State School for the Retarded and Feeble-minded. For more information, see "The U.S. Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee,"

<https://www.cdc.gov/tuskegee/timeline.htm> and "The Salk polio vaccine: A medical miracle turns 60,"

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-salk-polio-vaccine-a-medical-miracle-turns-60/>

<sup>78</sup> A Russian term for violent riots against ethnic or religious minorities, especially of Jewish people, with the aim of killing or driving out the victims.

taking place in Ukraine in 1918-1919 alone.<sup>79</sup> Captured Orthodox Jews would have their customary ringlets shaved off, reminiscent of delousing procedures of clearing the body of hair.<sup>80</sup> In the rest of the world, the immigration of Jews and other ‘undesirable’ peoples became restricted in the early twentieth century, as fears intensified that they would cause epidemics like those seen in Russia.<sup>81</sup> The racialized medicine of this era also developed further the perception of Jewish people as pathogenic beings, and soon the lines between Jewish people and lice began to blur as pseudoscience and the rise of extremism in Europe further dehumanized Jewish people. In Germany, the word *Ungezeifer*, or vermin, began to mean not only pests and insects, but Jewish people as well, reducing them to the status of a parasite.<sup>82</sup> The fear of lice also had a noted role in the Holocaust. The relocation of Jewish populations into the Ghettos and forced labour camps was justified as an ‘epidemic control’ procedure, as they wished to keep typhus controlled within the Reich.<sup>83</sup> This mass relocation of people into squalid conditions with little to no food caused an explosion of typhus in the ghettos and camps, killing thousands, which was exactly the hope of the Nazi regime as they looked to liquidate the Jewish population.<sup>84</sup> Zyklon B, the infamous chemical agent which was used by Nazi Germany to kill millions of people, started as a hydrogen cyanide-based pesticide used for delousing. In 1940, an outbreak of typhus in the Auschwitz prison camp necessitated the stockpiling of vast amounts of the chemical to try and control the spread of the disease.<sup>85</sup> Anti-typhus measures in the winter of 1941 instigated the next lethal step in the Holocaust, as experiments proved to the camp’s leader Rudolph Höss that Zyklon B was a more effective killing agent than carbon monoxide.<sup>86</sup> Millions would perish in gas chambers disguised as showers and disinfection rooms. For Nazi Germany, ‘epidemic control’ meant destroying the *Ungezeifer*, and the propaganda of the Reich had long since reduced the Jewish people to nothing but vermin in the eyes of the state. This industrialized killing was the culmination of decades of fear, dehumanization, and racialized science which reduced the killing of millions to a matter of semantics, where disinfection and destruction of lice meant the same thing as massacre and genocide.

Epidemic typhus played a significant role in Eastern Europe’s early twentieth century, infecting tens of millions in major epidemics which swept across Russia and other

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<sup>79</sup> Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*, 145.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> L. Stone, et al., "Extraordinary Curtailment of Massive Typhus Epidemic in the Warsaw Ghetto," *Science Advances* 6, no. 30 (2020): 1-2.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32923606/>

<sup>84</sup> Stone, "Extraordinary Curtailment of Massive Typhus Epidemic in the Warsaw Ghetto," 3.

<sup>85</sup> Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*, 300.

<sup>86</sup> Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*, 300-301.

nearby nations. The epidemic began during the chaos of the First World War, and the subsequent series of catastrophic overlapping conflicts created the perfect conditions for mass transmission of typhus and other louse-borne diseases. Typhus seriously affected the course of the Civil War, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths and forcing the Red and White Armies to focus resources on treating the sick and disinfecting supplies. Even with the intervention of the Allied powers on behalf of the White Army, the White Army was unable to make any serious progress against the epidemic and in the end was defeated by the Red Army. After the conclusion of the Civil War, the Soviet government was free to focus its attention towards combating the epidemic. The state managed case numbers by implementing disinfection strategies such as building delousing stations along major railways, establishing *banyas*, and encouraging hygienic practices amongst the citizenry. However, the scourge of typhus was not eliminated completely, and case numbers began to increase again during Stalin's push for industrialization and forced collectivization campaigns, as well as in the Gulag, where prisoners were subject to medical experimentation. Racial science and anti-Semitism became increasingly associated with fears of lice and disease as violence against Jewish people became more commonplace. Anti-typhus measures in Nazi Germany played a crucial role in the Holocaust, as epidemic control programs were used as justification for the mass deportation of Jewish people into ghettos and camps. Millions of Eastern Europeans lost their lives to this deadly disease in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet beyond this initial death toll, typhus and related government propaganda spread fear and stigmatization, contributing to the mass murder of millions more.

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# How Gaelic Irish Women Exercised Agency in Early Modern Ireland, 1400-1700

Charlotte Clar

*With the increasing presence of the English government in Ireland during the Early Modern Period, the history of Gaelic Irish women is often left untold. These women were a part of everyday life and yet their narratives have often been framed to contextualize the stories of men, if they are indeed mentioned at all. This paper explores how Gaelic Irish women were able to exert agency in various aspects of their lives including marriage, labour, and leadership. From dowries and property rights to brief mentions of women stepping into leadership roles outside traditional gender norms, this paper aims to examine important junctures of Gaelic Irish women's lives and whether or not it can be said that they were true agents of their situations, or simply conforming to the patriarchal societal expectations. As many saw the Gaelic Irish culture vanishing, these women left their mark on history with deeds not documented yet crucial to the fabric of society.*

Ireland's history from 1400-1700 has long been of interest to historians because of the country's fraught relationship with England and how the Gaelic Irish Lords attempted to resist the colonization of their island. What is missing from these studies and narratives during this period is the lives and roles of the women who were undoubtedly just as affected by the larger political events as the men. Within traditional Gaelic Irish culture, men and women both fulfilled their necessary roles to ensure their society functioned. While most women followed these traditional societal expectations, a few were able to demonstrate capabilities outside of long-established gender assumptions through exercising agency.

Agency can be defined as the "ability or capacity to act or exert power."<sup>87</sup> In this period of Irish history, when Gaelic Irish Lords tried to exert agency over each other and the English, women were able to do the same within the smaller contexts of their own lives. Traditionally, Gaelic Irish women's main roles in society were connected to the circumstances of their families, either under their father's roof or later under their husbands'. Their upbringings were designed to prepare them for the labour and duties that were expected of a wife. Certain aspects of this custom, such as dowries, landholding, and children, could be used by women as a means for increased influence in society. Female labour was important as it ensured society's survival. Women were

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<sup>87</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, third edition. (December 2021).  
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/3851?redirectedFrom=agency#eid>

responsible for cooking and childbearing without much opportunity to exert power or influence over their own families. Few women were respected in leadership positions, as this occurrence was rare rather than the standard. Gaelic Irish women did exercise agency in many aspects of their lives including in their families and politics. While it was not universal for all women throughout the period under certain circumstances select women were able to assert their independence.

Gaelic Ireland was a patriarchal society. Women's lives and their importance in society, in regards to marriage and family, were secondary to their male counterparts. This is not to say they were inferior to men, rather they had separate roles within the family structure. For the upper ranks of society, marriages were conducted with strategic alliances in mind. When the political purpose of the union no longer served the husband, his wife returned to her father's family with the dowry she had brought into the marriage. Within this rigid cultural structure, it was difficult overall for women to exercise agency, but it was possible to a certain degree in certain parts of their lives in the family framework.

The names of Gaelic Irish girls are not often recorded in written records, usually only appearing in documentation when they married, which was commonly around the age of 16.<sup>88</sup> In regards to raising their children, the Gaelic Irish tradition of fostering was not exclusively for boys. Prior to marriage, it was common for girls of wealthy Gaelic families to be raised in a foster household.<sup>89</sup> The extent of women's formal education is not known, but presumably it was only available to the women of higher ranks, if at all. There is evidence that some Gaelic Irish women were literate in either Gaelic, Latin, or both. Gráinne Ní Mhallie, a Connaught chieftain in the sixteenth century, presumably received some formal education as she wrote letters and petitions to the English court and, on her visit to England in 1593, spoke to Queen Elizabeth I in Latin.<sup>90</sup>

Most Gaelic Irish women married. Higher ranking women, such as daughters of chieftains, married those equal to their rank for political advantages. Some English families intermarried with Gaelic Irish ones and became gaelicized. More commonly it was noble English women who married Gaelic Irish Lords. However, Gaelic Irish women also married into Anglo-Norman families who had become gaelicized. By the seventeenth century, religion became more important in a marriage partner than ethnic origin. Therefore, marriages between the Anglo-Normans and Gaelic Irish were more common, as both groups were Catholic.<sup>91</sup> In regards to the choice of a marriage partner, this was done by the girl's father which left her no opportunity to exercise free choice.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Mary O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 254.

<sup>89</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 76.

<sup>90</sup> Anne Chambers, *Granuaile: Ireland's Pirate Queen, c. 1530-1603* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>91</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 16.

<sup>92</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 252.

One of the main aspects of Gaelic Irish society that separated men and women from positions of power was landholdings. In Gaelic Ireland, married women could manage their own property independently of their families or husbands.<sup>93</sup> This land would be from a life-interest of her family's or husband's estates.<sup>94</sup> However, despite administering this property separately, it did not give women the means to receive the same level of economic or military control as men.<sup>95</sup> Although the wife of a chieftain could be granted the right to collect rents from a certain portion of her husband's land, she would not have been able to use the funds to gain any political advantage. For example, in 1633 Dermot McOwen Carthy lent his new wife, Syly, land for the duration of her lifetime in exchange for animals, cattle, and horses from her dowry.<sup>96</sup> There is no record of what Syly did with the land, which points to the fact that she most likely did nothing out of the ordinary. Another way in which Gaelic Irish women received land was through a dowry. This was privately owned land known as *solathar* and was independent from the clan lands ruled by the chief. There was no restriction on how much private property a woman could own. Gaelic law dictated that women could not inherit family land until the sixteenth century when a new law determined women were only eligible to inherit property if there were no male heirs.<sup>97</sup> Otherwise, the only way to have independent land was through a dowry which became common in Ireland around 1400.<sup>98</sup> Dowries in Gaelic Ireland not only included land, but also cattle because of its source of wealth, and were negotiated between the bride's father and her new family, either her father-in-law or husband.<sup>99</sup> Property in women's dowries accounted for a sizable portion of the wealth of the country and could be passed through the female line.<sup>100</sup> Women were in possession of gold, silver, sheep, and cattle independently from their husbands and had authority over decisions which concerned this property. If the wife and husband divorced she could take her land and property with her. Customarily, women did not instigate divorce from their husbands themselves, rather the end of their marriage was the consequence for when their husbands no longer needed a political alliance. Although women were independently able to hold land and property, they were able to exercise a small form of agency, but as they were still

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<sup>93</sup> Kenneth Nicholls, "Irishwomen and Property in the sixteenth century," in *Women in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>94</sup> Katharine Simms, "Women in Norman Ireland," in *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension*, ed. Margaret Mac Curtain and Donncha Ó Corráin (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), 14.

<sup>95</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 22.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>97</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 81.

<sup>98</sup> Nicholls, "Irishwomen and Property," 20.

<sup>99</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 76-77.

<sup>100</sup> Nicholls, "Irishwomen and Property," 25.

under the subjugation of their former families or their husbands, they were unable to fully exert authority over their lands, properties, and dowries.

Widows in Gaelic Ireland did not have access to an automatic third of her husband's estate, as was the English custom.<sup>101</sup> Instead, they were entitled to the repayment of their dowries.<sup>102</sup> Unlike certain European societies where widows could remain unmarried and keep their property, upon the end of the marriage of a Gaelic Irish woman, she would return to her former family and then be eligible to marry again. For Gaelic Irish women, widowhood did not offer them any additional opportunity to use their dowered lands and assets for any benefit and simply meant they were expected to follow the traditional custom of returning to their former families after their marriage was over.

Another aspect of society unique to Gaelic Ireland was that the attribution of paternity to children was under the authority of the mother.<sup>103</sup> She could claim her child belonged to any member of society, including more powerful chiefs. For example, Alison Kelly claimed that her son Matthew's father was Conn Bacach O'Neill. This act had major political consequences as O'Neill made Matthew the heir to the Earldom of Tyrone, ahead of his more "legitimate" sons. This led to conflict within the O'Neill family which had repercussions in their governance and the Tudor administration, which affected the country of Ireland overall. This example proves the paternity of a child was of great consequence and the woman's ability to declare it was a small form of agency.

Upbringings, marriage, widowhood, and divorce offered no opportunity for women to exercise agency, while dowries, landholding, and children only offered limited circumstances. Women were either raised in the households of their fathers or, for higher ranking women, in a foster house. Their opportunity for formal education was limited because their upbringing intended to prepare them for marriage. Women did not have free will to choose a marriage partner, nor determine if that union would end as it was their husbands who chose to divorce them or, they were left as widows. Once a marriage ended they were expected to go back to their former families where their fathers or the highest ranking male members of their family would decide what they would do next in reference to marriage.<sup>104</sup> In regard to their dowries, women could leave their marriages with all the holdings they had brought into it, which they held independently. However, this license did not offer them opportunities to do anything with these assets. Similarly, although they were able to proclaim the paternity of their children, the child's upbringing would have followed traditional conventions. Within the context of the family, women were only able to act independently in extremely restrictive circumstances and did not abandon their cultural standards.

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<sup>101</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 99.

<sup>102</sup> Nicholls, "Irishwomen and Property," 22.

<sup>103</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 23.

<sup>104</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 252.



In the fifteenth century the landscape of Ireland was almost entirely rural. Women's labour was largely confined to the home for both higher and lower ranking women. Aristocratic women's duties would have largely focused on raising children, hospitality to guests, and running their households.<sup>105</sup> Lower ranking women's duties included tasks such as care of the animals, childcare, textile and dairy production, beer brewing, and food preparation.<sup>106</sup> In the absence of market towns in Ireland, homes were self-sufficient. It was understood that women would be responsible for these homemaking tasks and therefore they brought household items, such as pans, iron griddles, and utensils for cooking and beer brewing, with them as part of their dowries.<sup>107</sup> In regards to dairy production, women were responsible for making milk and butter.<sup>108</sup> Food preparation included grinding corn and growing crops such as oats and barley.<sup>109</sup> Women spun linen and woollen yarn for household use. Some women in the south and east were able to export their spinning to England or Flanders because of the established textile trade in the region.<sup>110</sup> Employment for unmarried women was scarce. As tower houses were military fortifications as well as a lord's household, most of the operations were done by men where the only task single women did was the low-status job of carrying water.<sup>111</sup> This lack of opportunity points to the overall fact that remaining single in this culture was extremely uncommon. Although women's labour was vital to the continuation of Gaelic Irish society, as they were responsible for making food and having children, it continues to remain overlooked and understudied. In this aspect of their lives, labour was not an opportunity for women to act independently as it was undoubtedly essential to Gaelic Irish society as a whole.

The patriarchal Gaelic Irish society made it difficult for women to assume positions of power and influence. Good clan leaders were characterized by strength and competence in order to be chieftains, attributes not often used to describe women. Since the introduction of Christianity to Ireland, female leaders had become an idea of the past. The military structure of Gaelic Irish society and the role of women within the culture made it hard, though not impossible, for women to exert political influence.<sup>112</sup> There were no established political roles for women and therefore no need for them to be involved except to make allies through marriage and produce heirs through childbirth.<sup>113</sup> A woman's

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<sup>105</sup> Chambers, *Granuaile: Ireland's Pirate Queen*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Mary O'Dowd, "Women and paid work in rural Ireland, c. 1500-1800", in *Women and paid work in Ireland 1500-1930*, ed. Bernadette Whelan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 14.

<sup>107</sup> O'Dowd, "Women and paid work in rural Ireland," 14.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 86-87.

<sup>112</sup> O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, 22.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

“ability to exercise direct political authority usually depended on her access to resources to make that power effective.”<sup>114</sup> Only a few Gaelic Irish women in early modern Ireland were able to act independently of traditional expectations and become respected leaders in their communities. The only example of a female chieftain in Gaelic Ireland comparable to the men of the period is Gráinne Ní Mhallie whose authority was legitimized by her military strength.<sup>115</sup> The fact that only one woman was in a leadership position is not to say that Gaelic Irish women had no political influence at all. Aristocratic women in particular influenced, helped, and consulted with their husbands to exercise agency within the means that were available to them.

Ní Mhallie (c.1530-1603) was the daughter of Eoghan Ó Máille, the chief of the Mayo clan, and his wife Margaret.<sup>116</sup> Located along the west coast of Ireland, the Ó Máilles used their ships for fishing, trading, and piracy.<sup>117</sup> Nothing about Ní Mhallie’s childhood is recorded, although we can assume based on later events that it was in this period where she learned to sail and operate the boats of her family’s clan.<sup>118</sup> When she was around fifteen or sixteen years old Ní Mhallie married her first husband Dónal an Chogaidh, the *tánaiste* to Dónal Crone Ó Flaithbheartaigh, and had three children, Maidread, Murrugh na Maor, and Eoghan.<sup>119</sup> After her husband died, she returned to her home territory with some men from her late husband’s clan and gathered both *gallóglaigh* and men from other clans. She then formed her own rebellious army to gain more power in the area, which she referenced in her petition to Queen Elizabeth I.<sup>120</sup> After her father’s death she was made chieftain of the Ó Máille clan.<sup>121</sup> Ní Mhallie had a brother, most likely half-brother, Dónal, and for reasons that are unclear, he himself was not chosen as the leader of the clan. In Gaelic Irish tradition, selection of the most competent leader over birthright was more important. Records are not clear as to why Dónal did not succeed as chieftain. In any case, quite unusually, the clan chose Ní Mhallie as their chieftain. She continued to lead her men and accumulated wealth by raiding the coast.<sup>122</sup> She married her second husband, Risteard-an-Iarain Bourke, the *tánaiste* to the MacWilliams, in 1566 and had a son, Tiobóid na Long, the following year.<sup>123</sup> All the while, Ní Mhallie had continued to operate her ships off the coast of Ireland, raiding and rebelling against the English. From

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *Celtic Women: Women in Celtic Society and Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 21; Chambers, *Granuaile: Ireland’s Pirate Queen*, 20.

<sup>117</sup> Chambers, *Granuaile: Ireland’s Pirate Queen*, 7.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>119</sup> Ellis, *Celtic Women*, 214.

<sup>120</sup> Chambers, *Granuaile: Ireland’s Pirate Queen*, 52.

<sup>121</sup> Ellis, *Celtic Women*, 215.

<sup>122</sup> Chambers, *Granuaile: Ireland’s Pirate Queen*, 54.

<sup>123</sup> Ellis, *Celtic Women*, 215.

1577-1579 she was imprisoned by Gerald Fitzgerald, the 14th Earl of Desmond.<sup>124</sup> Afterwards, Ní Mhallie returned to Connacht and when her husband died in 1583 she went to claim his property, including his castle Carraig an Cabhlaigh.<sup>125</sup> She became involved in an insurrection against England to which the new Governor of Connacht, Sir Richard Bingham, responded by continuously attacking her lands, and on one occasion even took her son Tiobóid as a hostage.<sup>126</sup> It was under this backdrop that Ní Mhallie appealed directly to Queen Elizabeth I requesting Bingham to stop his harassment. After Bingham took her son and brother into custody, Ní Mhallie travelled to England in 1593 to petition the Queen for her son and brother's release for which she was successful.<sup>127</sup> The English presence in Ireland continued for the rest of Ní Mhallie's life. She returned to Connacht around 1600, but stayed out of any action until her death in 1603.<sup>128</sup> Ní Mhallie undoubtedly is an example of a Gaelic Irish woman who successfully exercised agency in a time and period where the role of women was not to lead clans, but to simply work within their system. Her leadership capabilities, judgement on how to handle enemies, and strength on the sea proves that independent leadership of women in Gaelic Ireland was possible.

Not all women were as visible as Gráinne Ní Mhallie in regards to how they were able to exercise agency. Women such as Finola Ó Domhnaill, Máire Ní Ciaragáin, Mór Ní Cearbhaill, and Máire Rua Ní Mhathúna, are all examples of women who exercised agency in the political sphere and operated within the confines of the acceptable nature of women in the culture. As Katharine Simms wrote,

The wife of the chieftain is sometimes found actively engaged in negotiations for the release of hostages, and even sitting in council with her husband's leading vassals to decide on questions of war and peace, or to determine succession to the throne.<sup>129</sup>

The example she provides is of Finola Ó Domhnaill, also known as Iníon Dubh, who was the wife of the chieftain Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill.<sup>130</sup> In his biography on the life of her son, Hugh Roe O'Donnell, historian Lughaidh O'Clery explains how Ó Domhnaill was invited to a gathering that Hugh had called as "the head of advice and counsel of the Cinel Conaill."<sup>131</sup> Although she was a woman and possessed 'womanly qualities,' her

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<sup>124</sup> Ellis, *Celtic Women*, 216.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-217.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>129</sup> Simms, "Women in Norman Ireland," 14.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.; Lughaidh O'Clery, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Ui Dhomhnaill: Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell* (Ireland, 1895), 39.

<sup>131</sup> O'Clery, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Ui Dhomhnaill*, 39.

advice and counsel was respected amongst the attendees as she also had “the heart of a hero and the soul of a soldier.”<sup>132</sup> O’Clery further explains that she was well connected and able to command *gallóglaigh* from Scotland as well as hire and pay Irish soldiers, “especially during the time that her son (the Roe) was in prison and confined by the English.”<sup>133</sup> Ó Domhnaill’s position as the wife of a chieftain and mother of the family member with the strongest claim to the chieftaincy gave her access to resources which allowed her to assert political will in a clear and direct way. She knew people who could help her and used these connections to advocate for the chieftaincy on behalf of her son. Ó Domhnaill was able to put herself into an important position through strategically asserting agency which made her respected among her peers.

Two examples of women leading troops into battle are Máire Ní Ciaragáin and Mór Ní Cearbhaill. Ní Ciaragáin was the leader of a sept in Fermanagh during the fifteenth century.<sup>134</sup> She was known to lead her clan into battle against the English without taking any prisoners.<sup>135</sup> Unfortunately, nothing else is known about her life or what led her to these circumstances. Ní Cearbhaill (d.1548) from Muster married James Fitzgerald, the 13th Earl of Desmond.<sup>136</sup> When her husband succeeded to Earldom, Ní Cearbhaill was kept informed of plans of conflict against the Butler family and led a sept of the clan into battle where she herself died.<sup>137</sup> Similarly in the seventeenth century, Máire Rua Ní Mhathúna is remembered for her resistance during the Cromwellian Wars in Ireland where she tried to save her family’s estate and Leamaneh Castle. Her second husband was Conchobhar Ó Briáin of Leamaneh Castle with whom she had five children.<sup>138</sup> When he was mortally wounded in 1651 she took over the defense of the castle to protect it, which ultimately fell to the Cromwellians.<sup>139</sup> Commanding forces in situations as Ní Ciaragáin, Ní Cearbhaill, and Ní Mhathúna all did is not only a demonstration of exercising agency, but also a show of bravery. These women took charge of the difficult situations they found themselves in and created their own arrangements to better themselves and their families’ positions.

Ní Mhallie, a chieftain, Ó Domhnaill who had influence and respect in her clan, Ní Ciaragáin led her clan into battle, and Ní Cearbhaill raised troops to protect her home. These are all examples of women who exerted influence over their own situations with effective results. Their abilities to assert their independence in a culture where men and women’s cultural roles were extremely distinct is a testament to their capabilities.

Gaelic Irish women’s lives changed considerably from 1400-1700. As the politics of the island changed their culture dramatically, women adapted as best they could.

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Ellis, *Celtic Women*, 213.

<sup>135</sup> Ellis, *Celtic Women*, 213.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

In certain instances, a few women were able to exercise agency. Overall the family structure of Gaelic culture stayed constant with their upbringing, marriage, widowhood, and divorce, thus not allowing many opportunities for independence. On the other hand, their dowries, landholding, and children only offered limited means to operate outside of the control of the patriarchal system of their society. Labour was provided by women as a necessary pillar of their society and therefore did not allow women freedom outside of its structure. Politics was an area in society where women could find more of an opportunity to assert their independence and prove their capability as leaders, Ní Mhallie being the prime example, although this was rare. Gaelic Irish women did exercise agency in many aspects of their lives, specifically within their families and in the politics of Ireland. Although not a possibility for all women, the documented examples prove negative stereotypes of submissive women that exist today to explain historical women are not rooted in complete historical fact.

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# Warping Narrative: Historical Representation at the War Museum

Rebecca Hartley

*Museums shape and augment the cultural memories and historical experiences of their visitors. They are institutions charged with authority and emotion, and because of this, have the power to influence the formation of national identities. This paper examines a specific type of museal institution, the war museum, to understand how historical narratives are presented and why they are especially effective institutions for provoking historical consciousness. Objects, displays, and dioramas within two example institutions (the Imperial War Museum in London and the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa) serve to represent soldiers' and civilians' wartime experiences. The Imperial War Museum has traditionally emphasized a narrative of national sacrifice rather than military glory, while the Canadian War Museum has used its galleries to create a narrative describing Canada as a distinct nation forged "in the fire of battle." However, these narratives are not immutable. Without adapting to the changing expectations of their visitors, war museums risk losing their status as 'sites of transformation' to instead become sites of stagnation.*

In the summer of 1942 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, an exhibition called “Road to Victory” showcased hundreds of photographs of rural Americans, soldiers, navy officers, and government organizations preparing for war less than 6 months after the bombing of Pearl Harbour.<sup>140</sup> Though it showed photographs of explosions from the Japanese attack, the highly censored exhibit did not show pictures of the dead and wounded. Newspapers across the country praised the exhibit to be a “morale builder” and a “supreme war contribution.”<sup>141</sup> The new Office of War Information – the propaganda wing of the American government-sponsored smaller versions of the exhibit for the remainder of the war. However, the omission of negative images from “Road to Victory” created a gap in the exhibit’s historical narrative of the war. However, for the curators and the many visitors, the construction of an authentic depiction of reality was not the point. The exhibit was naked and obvious propaganda, depicting a ‘good’ war that was free from bloodshed and the negative effects of conflict.

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<sup>140</sup> “Road to Victory,” MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3038> (accessed April 16, 2021).

<sup>141</sup> Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 15. doi:10.5149/9780807868218\_huebner.

War-themed exhibits such as “Road to Victory” are temporary events that serve propagandistic purposes for government agendas. They have been effective tools for rallying populations for present and future conflicts, but the fleetingness of exhibits such as these makes them unsuitable for cementing long-term national narratives. To solidify narratives of *past* conflict, and shape them to serve national purposes, permanent institutions sponsored by the government must be built. These institutions are war museums. Though the war museum’s purpose and relationship with historical representation has changed throughout the twentieth century, this type of institution has been integral in its role as a propaganda machine and as a ‘custodian of history.’<sup>142</sup> Exhibits in war museums have inspired citizens to mobilize for war while curating nation-building narratives out of past conflicts. This paper will argue that subjective historical representation in the war museum helps to create national myths through the exhibition of certain experiences. To understand the power of the war museum, we must first analyze the broader authority of museums, and why the war museum in particular is significant for the shaping of visitors’ perceptions of reality. After discussing the relationship between the war museum and representation, this paper will examine two institutions, the Imperial War Museum in London and the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, and their changing narratives throughout the twentieth century as case studies of institutional representation. These museums, one in the capital of the British Empire and the other in the capital of one of its former colonies, opened almost twenty-five years apart. Although these museums’ presentations of history were not the same and were instead influenced by their different relationships to empire, they both sculpted national narratives from stories of conflict.

Museums have the power to challenge pre-existing notions of visitors, influence historical perceptions, and create narratives through the display of objects. Curators at these museums actively participate in history by shaping, augmenting, and adding to the cultural memories and historical experiences of their visitors.<sup>143</sup> Perhaps most importantly, museums, especially those on the national level, are voices of authority that appeal to a broad audience.<sup>144</sup> With potentially millions of visitors every year, large institutions have the ability to broadcast their narratives around the globe. There are countless types of museums that draw on their authority to educate the public, conserve objects of significance, and provoke historical consciousness in visitors.<sup>145</sup> Different museums are thematically suited to telling certain stories through their exhibitions. Yet the war museum in particular is important for the creation and

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<sup>142</sup> Jennifer Wellington, *Exhibiting War: The Great War, Museums, and Memory in Britain, Canada, and Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 11.  
doi:10.1017/9781316471388.

<sup>143</sup> Susan A. Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (1997): 47.

<sup>144</sup> Graham Black, “Museums, Memory and History,” *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 424.

<sup>145</sup> Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” 45.

maintenance of national narratives. National war museums are tangible places that citizens can visit to learn about their country's role in conflict. Governments believe it is vital to control narratives of the nation at war in order to convince citizens to fight in future wars for their country, but also to instill citizens with pride and a sense of cultural unity – national war museums, as government-regulated institutions, represent the perfect opportunity to do this.<sup>146</sup> The immortalization of national narratives happens when the personal and chaotic world of a visitor's memory collides with the official and ordered world of the museum.<sup>147</sup> This collision is enhanced by the visitor's sense of 'resonance' and 'wonder' at the museum, otherwise described as awe from the display of cultural experience and the power from unique objects to evoke emotions.<sup>148</sup> Capitalizing on these feelings of resonance and wonder can help war museums inspire feelings of patriotism and gratitude in visitors, or instill in them a sense that the nation's history with conflict has been crucial for forging its identity.

It is important to make the distinction between 'war' museums and 'military' museums. Military museums do not usually create exhibits based around strong cultural narratives; instead, their purpose is to showcase the advance of weapon technology or exhibit pieces of valour disconnected from an overarching national story.<sup>149</sup> Prior to the First World War, it was these military museums that dominated the display scene of weapon and booty gained in battle.<sup>150</sup> This type of display was based upon scientific conceptions and classifications of history that blossomed during the Enlightenment, and was related to principles such as Leopold Ranke's idea to depict "how things actually were."<sup>151</sup> War museums, in contrast, rely on the connections created between events, though they are structured on factual evidence, their purpose is to stimulate emotion and provoke historical consciousness. War museums will omit certain parts of reality from display, thereby creating understandable and persuasive narratives – such as what happened with the "Road to Victory" exhibit, in order to accomplish these goals. They are therefore uniquely situated to embrace subjectivity in the museal world because of their tendencies to propagandize and tell national narratives. Subjectivity in the war museum is not necessarily a device for deception. Representations are necessary for museums to create meaning from stories and to make people care. The meanings of these stories and

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<sup>146</sup> Wellington, *Exhibiting War*, 7.

<sup>147</sup> Catherine Pearson and Suzanne Keene, *Museums in the Second World War: Curators, Culture and Change* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 168.

<sup>148</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42.

<sup>149</sup> Stephen Jaeger, *The Second World War in the Twenty-First-Century Museum: From Narrative, Memory, and Experience to Experientiality* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 32.

<sup>150</sup> Wellington, *Exhibiting War*, 2.

<sup>151</sup> Fritz Stern, *Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present* (London: Macmillan Education, Limited, 2015), 57.



experiences are created through the mixing of displayed objects, often by provoking resonance or wonder. Meanwhile, factual information places objects in the context of a larger cultural history.<sup>152</sup> Mixing historical research with perceptions and personal memories works to reflect a narrative of the nation's history that visitors believe has authentically occurred.<sup>153</sup> This is the important distinction between the war museum and the military museum. While the traditional military museum defines objects, the war museum represents experiences.

Ultimately, neither museums nor visitors are neutral. They must both interact with each other to create narratives out of cultural memory. The war museum draws on the 'excess of memory' of visitors, that is, the prejudices, emotional needs, and personal understandings of history that visitors possess before they enter the museum.<sup>154</sup> People search for representations that are meaningful to them. If the war museum can negotiate meaningful representations that engage people's 'excess of memory,' it can create new memories and distort old ones in order to shape a national narrative that fits with visitors' expectations and experiences. The history of representation at the Imperial War Museum in London exemplifies the changing purpose of narrative in war museums. Established in 1917 and opening one year later, the Imperial War Museum grappled with how to commemorate conflicts in the wake of the First World War while also informing the public about the nation's role in the war.<sup>155</sup> King George V proclaimed the museum's purpose was to realize the project "of erecting a memorial which speaks to the heart and to the imagination."<sup>156</sup> In other words, the new war museum was tasked with creating meaning. As discussed earlier, prior to the First World War, military museums had mainly displayed weapons to showcase the advance of technology; they were not storytellers in the way they are today. While the Imperial War Museum was not radically different from these military museums when it opened, weapons and trophies gained in battle were exhibited in the museum as relics rather than examples of technology.<sup>157</sup> For one of the first times, bureaucracies were actively managing the collection and display of trophies gained in war and displaying them as witnesses to the novel experience of the First World War.<sup>158</sup>

Because it was established *during* the conflict it was meant to commemorate, the objects collected by the Imperial War Museum for its opening held special significance. Relics from its founding collection included the usual military museum arsenal of guns and

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<sup>152</sup> Jaeger, *The Second World War in the Twenty-First-Century Museum*, 34.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>154</sup> Crane, "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum," 63.

<sup>155</sup> Alys Cundy, "Thresholds of Memory: Representing Function through Space and Object at the Imperial War Museum, London, 1918-2014," *Museum History Journal* 8, no. 2 (2015): 247.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Wellington, *Exhibiting War*, 4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

badges, but it also included items donated by civilians on the home front.<sup>159</sup> The intention of the Imperial War Museum was not to collect examples of war technology for scientific purposes, but rather to display items that represented the war for soldiers, civilians, women, and children – these were objects of historical and human interest.<sup>160</sup> “All the little things which meant so much to sailor and soldier have been included,” notes one file from the museum’s archives; “the collection of trench relics... has been made with a dramatic sense of the human meaning of war.”<sup>161</sup> These objects, though not necessarily unique, were marked by the experience of war; when placed in narratives that represented individual stories of the war, they created resonance for the visitors to the new Imperial War Museum.

However, some of these objects were not even authentic artifacts. The museum displayed ship models, replica naval guns, and facsimiles of German paraphernalia. Sometimes these objects substituted the original objects when the real ones were too difficult to display because of their size, or because the objects were stored elsewhere in the world.<sup>162</sup> Despite the inauthenticity of these objects, they were valuable for the Imperial War Museum because they had the power to inspire wonder through their colossal sizes or arresting uniqueness. Most importantly, the objects recognizably *represented* the wartime experiences of people, and along with dioramas, provided alternate ways of looking at the war.<sup>163</sup>

The museum’s mission “to make it so... that every individual, man or woman, sailor, soldier, airman or civilian who contributed... may be able to find in these Galleries an example... of the sacrifice he made” meant a variety of civilian and soldier experiences were represented.<sup>164</sup> However, this allowance for a plurality of narratives can often muddle national myths, since the unified experience is sacrificed in order to tell personal stories that do not always fit with shared cultural memory. This was the case of the Imperial War Museum in the decades following the First World War. The dual purpose of the museum as a piece of propaganda meant to uplift citizens that also offered a sobering memorialization of the lives lost in battle has created a “perennial uncertainty... as to the societal function it performs.”<sup>165</sup> While war museums in former British colonies, such as in Australia and later in Canada, focused on telling the contributions of their nation to the war effort, the

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<sup>159</sup> Paul Cornish, “Sacred Relics: Objects in the Imperial War Museum 1917-39,” in *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, ed. Nicholas J. Saunders (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>163</sup> Wellington, *Exhibiting War*, 254.

<sup>164</sup> Wellington, *Exhibiting War*, 239.

<sup>165</sup> Kasia Tomaszewicz, “We are a Social History, not a Military History Museum: Large Objects and the ‘Peopling’ of Galleries in the Imperial War Museum, London,” in *Museums, Modernity and Conflict: Museums and Collections in and of War since the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Kate Hill (New York: Routledge, 2021), 216.

Imperial War Museum aimed to include the efforts of the entire empire, although its exclusion of East Indian troops in its exhibitions of the First World War clearly showed that there were racial limits to whose experiences the Imperial War Museum wanted to represent.<sup>166</sup> The museum emphasized sacrifice instead of military glory by representing diverse perspectives such as women's experiences of war through photographs, and children's experiences through toys.<sup>167</sup> These narratives concerning the whole population were important for keeping morale high for exhausted civilians; by memorializing their costly sacrifices, institutions such as the Imperial War Museum tried to convince civilians of the tragic but heroic nature of the First World War.

Today, there are multiple museums around Britain that operate under the aegis of the Imperial War Museum. In the last decade, the main branch of the Imperial War Museum has attempted to 'people' its galleries, after the museum has been accused of catering to 'great men' who had 'great experiences'.<sup>168</sup> This demonstrates a general trend seen in the war museum world as exhibits shift away from memorialization of the dead and education on weapon technology and instead choose to emphasize the 'social history' aspect of the collections. 'Great' events that have been mythologized through the narratives and exhibits of war museums are scrutinized for their uncritical portrayals of history and the nation's relation with its constructed identity.

The Imperial War Museum is located in London, the heart of the British Empire. It therefore represents a relationship with war that is from an imperial perspective instead of from the point of view of a colony.<sup>169</sup> Its opening in the wake of the First World War represented an attempt to grapple with a seemingly unmendable rupture in history and to make sense of the incredible and unprecedented loss of life. The early Imperial War Museum sought to display the war effort from the many corners of its Empire along with the sacrifices of its everyday citizens, whereas the later Canadian War Museum in Ottawa sought to emphasize the nation's independence through war.

The Canadian War Museum did not open until 1942, partly due to conflicting ideas for what a national institution such as this should look like.<sup>170</sup> Prior to this, Canadian trophies gained in battle were collected by government archives, but were not yet placed in representational exhibits. Opening in the middle of the Second World War, the new museum sought not only to commemorate the sacrifices of Canadian citizens, but also to mythologize Canada's role in the conflict. Battles fought and won by Canadians, such as Vimy Ridge, were immortalized in museums and in national culture as instances of admirable Canadian independence, and periods of transformation during which Canada

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>167</sup> Wellington, *Exhibiting War*, 243.

<sup>168</sup> Tomaisiewicz, "We are a Social History, not a Military History Museum," 218.

<sup>169</sup> Wellington, *Exhibiting War*, 5.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 256.

became a distinct nation forged “in the fire of battle.”<sup>171</sup> Whereas Britain did not need to prove its worthiness as a nation in war, former colonies needed to create and control new national narratives in order to establish their independence from the imperial powers.

The Canadian War Museum has undergone many changes and renovations since its inauguration in the early 1940s. One message that has stayed remarkably consistent through its representation of history is its presentation of both world wars as tragic losses of life, but also as the crucible in which the Canadian national identity was forged.<sup>172</sup> Rather than reflecting on the stories and experiences of individuals, the current Canadian War Museum emphasizes narratives of nationhood and national identity shaped by war.<sup>173</sup> The theme of totalizing multiculturalism features heavily in the museum and emphasizes unity from diversity.<sup>174</sup> Photographs are shown of Indigenous veterans and Japanese-Canadian internment camp victims; yet their stories are not individualized, and are assimilated into the overarching cultural narrative of one nation and one story.<sup>175</sup> In addition, the rooms of the museum are framed as representing history as a series of lessons, moralizing scenes of destruction to warn future generations of the mistakes of the past.<sup>176</sup> In the war museum, national identities are bestowed upon citizens and made to be the most defining and important identities they have.

Of the Canadian War Museum’s 13,000 works of art, only 64 are images of the dead.<sup>177</sup> Instead, the collection contains paintings that evoke the devastation of the landscape during war, or the personal belongings of soldiers and victims.<sup>178</sup> There is a significant gap in the museum’s narrative of war, especially considering that death is arguably the most devastating consequence of conflict. It is not just the war museum’s art collection that excludes death from the historical narrative: the weapons gallery at the Canadian War Museum only lists the technical descriptions of the guns and artillery exhibited and does not display the deadly effects of those weapons. The museum fails to create a narrative in its presentation of its armaments. The museum instead focuses on the technological aspects of the weapons rather than their effects, similar to military museums from before the First World War. However, other war museums around the world, such as the German Tank Museum, have recently tried to put their weapons in context by showing

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<sup>171</sup> Tim Cook, “Battles of the Imagined Past: Canada’s Great War and Memory,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (2014): 418. [muse.jhu.edu/article/554491](http://muse.jhu.edu/article/554491).

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Jaeger, *The Second World War in the Twenty-First-Century Museum*, 63.

<sup>174</sup> Katarzyna Rukszo, “Haunted Spaces, Ghostly Memories: The Canadian War Museum,” *Third Text* 22, no. 6 (2008): 750.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 751.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 749.

<sup>177</sup> Nisha Shah, “Death in the Details: Finding Dead Bodies at the Canadian War Museum,” *Organization (London, England)* 24, no. 4 (2017): 550.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

images of the victims of these weapons.<sup>179</sup> The refusal to represent a key aspect of war shows that the Canadian War Museum prioritizes a narrative of unity and national identity rather than authentic narratives of the consequences of war.

These histories of the Imperial War Museum and the Canadian War Museum represent two case studies that demonstrate how museums represent historical experiences in order to conform to national narratives and public expectations. While former colonies must prove their independence from their imperial power through the crucible of war, those same imperial powers must navigate the ‘peopling’ of its galleries by representing the diverse stories of people across the empire. War museums foster emotional connections with events, injecting meaning by creating a narrative of cultural memory. War museums are more than memorials for the dead, or displays depicting the advance of weapon technology. They are sites of transformation, working to curate national stories and incorporate the cultural identities of the visitors. Small war-themed exhibits such as “Road to Victory” have the benefit of having the defined purpose of propagandizing conflict. War museums, however, have the challenge of being permanent institutions tasked with the representation of impermanent narratives. As the expectations of visitors change, and they wish to see their experiences represented in the history of their nation, perhaps national myths that were once thought to be cemented in the historical consciousness will begin to fracture.

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<sup>179</sup> Ralf Raths, "From Technical Showroom to Full-Fledged Museum: The German Tank Museum Munster." *Museum and Society* 10, no. 3 (2012): 178.

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# The Resilience of Russian Women in Revolutionary Russia

Caitlin Kyle

*During a small window after the Bolshevik Revolution, from 1917 to the mid-1920's, women in Russia experienced greater freedoms and gender equality than many other women in the Western World. This essay explores the variety of female roles in Russia leading up to the Revolution and throughout the interwar period to evaluate what influences they had over their newfound freedoms. It also highlights the achievements of Alexandra Kollontai, the Marxist theoretician who worked with Vladimir Lenin to improve legislation for female autonomy in domestic, social, and political life. I argue that women – particularly working-class women – were instrumental in the revolution, but that women's rights and advocacy differed along class lines.*

During a small window after the Bolshevik Revolution, from 1917 to the mid-1920s, women in Russia experienced greater freedoms and gender equality than many other women in the Western world. Women achieved the ability to vote, gained access to birth control, enjoyed sexual freedoms, and joined the male-dominated ranks of the government. Until recent decades, however, the substantial contributions women made to the Russian Revolution have been skimmed over in the historical narrative. What degree *did* the influence of women have over the events of February 23, 1917? It was International Women's Day, after all. This essay explores the variety of female roles in Russia leading up to the Revolution and throughout the interwar period to evaluate the influence they had over their newfound freedoms. This essay will also examine the achievements of Alexandra Kollontai, the Marxist theoretician whose legislation improved female autonomy in their domestic, social, and political lives. I argue that women – particularly working-class women – were instrumental in the revolution, but that women's rights and advocacy did not collectivize across class lines. Ultimately, the Russian state, renowned for its backwardness, would unlace this social progress throughout the 1920s and 30s.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the "woman question" was being asked around the globe. Political, economic, and professional roles, as well as social and sexual roles, were changing in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. In Russia, the woman question was approached with greater urgency than in other parts of Europe because it worked in symbiosis with the "class question" popularized by communism. If communist doctrine claimed everyone was equal, then its leaders *needed* to respond to women's calls for equality to maintain the movement's momentum and legitimacy. Likewise, women could not access equality without first abolishing (or at least weakening) class structures — an integral aspect of the rise of Bolshevism. However, upper-class and lower-class women had different requirements to define their equality.

Historically, wealthy women in the aristocracy and the merchant class had enjoyed powers and freedoms (for example property ownership) since the 18<sup>th</sup> century; status could also be achieved by women with literary talents<sup>180</sup> The rhetoric of developing capitalism, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, propelled *bourgeoise* women to pursue university careers and independent incomes.<sup>181</sup> Many found roles as governesses and doctors, although middle-class women were still considered unequal to middle-class men in terms of what occupations they could choose. During this period, women also could not vote, divorce, or have abortions. Upper- and middle-class frustrations with gender inequality inspired a wave of feminism that leveraged its privilege to improve gender equality *within* the governing monarchical system. Significant milestones within this movement include the work of Anna Pavlovna Flisofova, a daughter of wealthy nobles, who established the Bestuzhev Courses in 1879 to improve women's education and went on to lead the International Council of Women in 1899.<sup>182</sup> Anna Shabanova, daughter of a wealthy landowner, founded the Women's Mutual Philanthropic Society in 1895, advocating for workplace equality and childcare support; Shabanova would also go on to found the All-Russian Women's Congress 13 years later. In 1898, The House of Diligence for Educated Women was founded to help high-school girls and qualified governesses gain employment. Many of these movements agreed on advocating for self-help programs, prohibition of alcohol, and sexual freedom for all.<sup>183</sup> While these women's philanthropic efforts were intended to reach across class boundaries, their benefits remained amongst the upper and middle classes.

On the other hand, the lives of *proletariat* women during this period were defined by grueling work conditions and demanding domestic responsibilities. These working- and peasant-class women also did not have access to voting, divorce, or birth control. Since 1720, peasant families had lived in self-governing communities (*mir*), and their communal work continued under new land tenure systems created by Alexander II's 1861 Emancipation reforms. In this setting, both men and women farmers worked in solidarity on the same side of Russia's state oppression. Factory work also did not discriminate by gender. As capitalism's influence continued to increase in Russian society, solidarity

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<sup>180</sup> Edith Saurer, Margareth Lanzinger, and Elizabeth Frysak, *Women's Movements: Networks and Debates in Post-communist Countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*. (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag Köln, 2006), 365.

<sup>181</sup> Jodi Dean speaking at The People's Forum NYC. "KOLLONTAI AND REVOLUTION: THERE IS NO SOCIALISM WITHOUT FEMINISM," (Webinar), July 22, 2020, [Youtube], 1:02:00. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ES6XGkANYhU>

<sup>182</sup> Seeboth Christine Worobec, *The Human Tradition in Imperial Russia*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), page 74., and Barbara Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Northwestern University Press, 2000), 59-61.

<sup>183</sup> Cathy Porter, *Alexandra Kollontai: A Biography* (London: VIRAGO Limited, 1980), 56.



between men and women became necessary for survival to oppose government interference in their daily lives that had become complicated by the market economy.<sup>184</sup> Thus, the definition of equality looked different to proletariat women: they wanted shorter work days, fairer treatment, equal pay, and less police surveillance.<sup>185</sup> These issues, by contrast, had no impact on bourgeoisie women or their politics. Despite differences between these two strands of feminism, both reached a point of exasperation around 1896.<sup>186</sup> upper- and middle-class feminists wished to collaborate with proletariat women's desires, while proletariat women tended to reject the theory of "feminism" altogether, as it had so far done nothing to liberate them from the bottom of the economic structure.<sup>187</sup> Instead, the exasperation of working class women fueled increasingly militant, revolutionary behaviour in the streets, which in turn received sympathy and support from women of the middle-class.

Pre-existing working-class militancy, especially amongst women, became more deeply agitated at the onset of World War I. In Petrograd, December 1915, women waited in freezing temperatures for morsels of sugar and flour.<sup>188</sup> During the same period, in Rostov, journalist Rhoda Power observed:

"Peasants stood shivering hour after hour outside the bakery, their tickets clutched between blue fingers, waiting for a loaf of bread. If there were not enough to go round, they went away empty handed. Some of them lined up at midnight and waited 'til the shops opened in the morning. They had families to feed and could not be turned away... [A peasant woman] had often to stop and rest because her limbs, weary with standing, refused to support her."<sup>189</sup>

According to Russian historian, Iurii Kir'ianov, dozens of women-led riots (*bab'I bunty*) took place during this period, consisting almost exclusively of working-class women and their families.<sup>190</sup> For example, in Bogodrods, October 1, 1915, a sugar shortage caused 30 women to smash in windows of small-businesses on the streets, and wreak havoc in the town square, proliferating into a several thousand-person riot that went on for weeks; 12,000 women would strike again at the end of the month for the same reason. Recently

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<sup>184</sup> Barbara Engel, "Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I." *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 69, no.4 (December 1997), 702. <https://doi.org/10.1086/245591>

<sup>185</sup> Jodi Dean, "KOLLONTAI AND REVOLUTION," 13:00.

<sup>186</sup> Porter, *Alexandra Kollontai*, 56.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Engel, "Not by Bread Alone," 697.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 699.

released Secret Service historical documents reveal that Russia's central government was warned almost two decades earlier that if a revolution occurred, it would most likely be triggered by women's anger over food shortages.<sup>191</sup> Some scholars argue that the reason these riots continued was the unwillingness of Cossack forces to use violence against women and youth, despite how aggressive their revolts were.<sup>192</sup>

Another reason for the ongoing riots was the fact that women had grown to become economically invaluable. In the decades leading up to the revolution, the number of women in the working-class increased significantly. Between 1904 and 1910, more than 80% of new industrial workers were women.<sup>193</sup> Even more substantial, over the course of World War I (WWI), the proportion of women in the industrial labour force rose from 26.6% to 43.2%.<sup>194</sup> Another aspect of women's increased economic and social value were the wives of soldiers, or *soldatki*. In 1912, the government, using the *sosloviia* system, promised to take responsibility for families of soldiers, but the system collapsed under Russia's depleting wartime economy.<sup>195</sup> This had a major social impact on communities, because it meant the increase of women in the workplace mainly derived from families of soldiers. This was particularly true of the peasant-class, who had lost 47.8% of their workforce to conscription.<sup>196</sup> For this reason, *soldatki* women experienced social elevation and sympathies for supporting their husbands and country in the war effort, allowing them Cossack protections. Their newly acquired positions were advantageous for putting up resistance against the state for their failure to supply bread and basic necessities. Also of significance was the founding of the *Rabotnitsa (The Woman Worker)* journal in 1914, commissioned by Vladimir Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya. The journal provided a public forum for working women to speak out about their dire living conditions. Ultimately, the working women's economic necessity furnished them with greater political value.

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<sup>191</sup> Discussed by Katy Turton, Soviet historian and author of *Forgotten Lives: The Roles of Lenin's Sisters in the Russian Revolution, 1864 – 1937*, and *Family Networks and the Russian Revolutionary Movement (1870 – 1940)*. National Library of Scotland, "Women of the Russian Revolution," Webinar, June 4, 2021, YouTube, 57:54. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0yV0igtyEE>

<sup>192</sup> Engel, "Not by Bread Alone," 696.

<sup>193</sup> Paula Erizanu, "The Revolutionary Sex," Aeon, May 31, 2018, <https://aeon.co/essays/the-shining-moment-when-russian-revolutionary-women-reinvented-sex>

<sup>194</sup> Alfred G. Meyer, "Impact of World War I on Russian Women's Lives," in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine Worobec (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 214.

<sup>195</sup> Engels, "Not by Bread Alone," 710-712.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 708.

On February 23, 1917, other factions of Russian society converged in Petrograd to take down the Tsar. The *mezhrainsty* handed out leaflets campaigning for the merchant class: “*Are we going to put up with this silence much longer, now and then venting our smouldering rage on small shop owners?*”<sup>197</sup> Others joined in protest, not just for women’s rights, but in protest of the end of the war, the monarchy, and for a small minority, class honour. It may be an exaggeration, then, to state that the February 23 women’s march *intended* to be a revolution, but it is undeniable that the consistent reactivity of angry lower-class women drew attention to revolution’s possibility, playing a distinct, dependable, and active role encouraging an uprising. The very nature of working-class women’s roles depended on the socialist values of the Communist Party; likewise, the validity of Bolshevik values and the Communist Party’s reputation depended on the support of the working class and its women. Converging in mutual interest, they were powerful enough to tip the autocracy.

The abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the subsequent end of autocratic rule in Russia impacted societal sectors differently, but for working women, it offered hope that freedom, food supplies, and workplace equality would finally be prioritized.<sup>198</sup> It also indicated the beginning of a breakdown of other bureaucratic resources, such as the armed forces, as they had shown a candid reluctance to use weapons against women and youth demonstrators on behalf of the State. While it was a positive step forward for most women, change was not celebrated by all. For the 5,000 Russian women who fought in WWI, and other women working at the front, there were no tangible improvements. Alexandra Tolstoy, a nurse on the Turkish and Germany frontiers, describes her thoughts on the events of February 23 in her memoir, *I Worked for the Soviet*:

“Yet, officers, doctors, nurses, the zemstvo workers — everybody — pretended that with a change in government we had a group of intelligent people at the head of our country instead of Nicholas II, and that everything was utterly changed... And I who awaited a more liberal government for many years, one without militarism, and with religious and political freedom, and with land for peasants, watched these changes with mixed feelings.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> China Mieville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (London: Verso, 2021): 41-43.

<sup>198</sup> Marcelline Hutton. *Resilient Russian Women in the 1920s & 1930s*, 2015. *Zea E-Books*. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeabook/31>, 26

<sup>199</sup> Alexandra Tolstoy, *I Worked for the Soviet*, trans. by the author in collaboration with Roberta Yerkes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935) 2

Likewise, women of the petty-bourgeoisie, who had little to gain from the labour movement, criticized the Bolshevik Party throughout this period for failing, in their eyes, to address the “woman question” satisfactorily.

The most significant outcome of the February Revolution was that it enabled the return, or repatriation, of major revolutionary figures to Russia, including Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and, most notably for our purposes, Alexandra Kollontai. Kollontai’s contributions to the revolution and its aftermath are inextricable from the subject of the “woman question” in Russia. She was a Marxist theorist, a historical materialist, and a key ideologist in sexual freedom in Russia during this period. Since the late 1800s, Kollontai understood that it was the economic value of working women that would bring the possibility of true equality, and that it would not be able to happen under capitalism. Her progressive and anti-authoritarian theories led her to join Lenin’s Bolshevik Party in 1905, and she joined him in exile between 1908 and 1917. During her exile, Kollontai travelled around Europe, spreading her beliefs about social equality and Marxist-Leninism. She also prophesized that the women’s movement would remain divided across class lines. She notes this in her 1909 pamphlet, *The Social Basis of the Women’s Question*:

“However apparently radical the demands of the feminists, one must not lose sight of the fact that the feminists cannot, on account of their class position, fight for that fundamental transformation of the contemporary economic and social structure of society without which the liberation of women cannot be complete.”

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In 1917, she became the first People’s Commissar for Welfare under Vladimir Lenin, making her the first woman in history to be a prominent member in a government cabinet. She was keen to work with Lenin, pressing him to “draw a sharp line” between the Bolshevik Party and the provisional government.<sup>201</sup> In the cabinet, she also worked closely with Inessa Armand on the “woman question.” In 1917, Kollontai made a political call in the *Rabotnitsa*:

Comrade women workers! We can no longer resign ourselves to war and rising prices! We must fight. Join our ranks, the ranks of the Social-Democratic Labour Party! However, it is not enough to join the party. If we really want to hasten peace, then working men and women must fight to ensure that state power is transferred from the hands of big capitalists—the ones really responsible for all

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<sup>200</sup> Kollontai, *The Social Basis of the Women’s Question: 1909*, Pamphlet. Ed. By Alix Holt. Allison & Busby, 1977. From *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1909/social-basis.htm>

<sup>201</sup> Mievellé, *The Russian Revolution*, 87.

our woes, all the blood being shed on battlefields—to the hands of our representatives, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>202</sup>

As previously mentioned, socialist views and working women's rights went hand-in-hand. If the basis of Marxist-Leninism was that everyone was equal, there would necessarily *have* to be equality between the sexes. However, leading up to the October Revolution, Lenin and other members of the Bolshevik Party expressed fears that women would act erratically and sabotage the Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>203</sup> Bolshevik women's persistence to be politically and militarily involved in new Soviet society is what earned them recognition and, eventually, the equality and rights that they were striving for. For example, during the Russian Civil War (1904-1905), approximately 20,000 women trained as nurses for the Red Army, 60,000 *fought* in the Red Army, and numerous others practiced a socialist version of a domestic lifestyle: organizing childcare, cooking for school programs, and sewing for each other.<sup>204</sup>

The Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 helped to crystallise the reality that working-class women fought for in the February prior. Female support for the Communist Party (particularly in the *Komsomol*) and the Bolshevik Party did provide returns; for example, between 1917 and 1927, the Bolshevik land redistribution program allowed 10 million peasant women new domestic and agricultural opportunities.<sup>205</sup> In 1919, Alexandra Kollontai and fellow Russian Communist Party members founded the *Zhenotdel*, a department dedicated to women's affairs. The department legalized and increased access to abortion, secularized marriage, simplified divorce, and decriminalized homosexuality.<sup>206</sup> Ideologically, and separately from bourgeoisie women, the proletariat women prioritized the movement over their domestic lives. The Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis spoke with a 22-year old woman in Moscow, 1928, who stated: "My great joy is not getting a man, but to work and feel that I'm not a parasite."<sup>207</sup>

Despite these encouraging advances, the 1920s were a period of economic despair and poor Bolshevik diplomacy, which peeled back many of the gains women made since during the Revolution. Women's work had become a farcical source of propaganda for the Bolshevik party rather than an effectual prerogative; party members did not

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<sup>202</sup> Kollontai, *Our Tasks: 1917*. Speech. Petrograd: Rabotnitsa (Woman Worker), republished by Progress Publishers, 1984, From *Alexandra Kollontai Selected Articles and Speeches*. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1917/tasks.htm>

<sup>203</sup> Hutton. *Resilient Russian Women*, 36

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>206</sup> Erizanu, "The revolutionary sex."

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

prioritize attendance to women's demonstrations.<sup>208</sup> Similarly, high turnover rates within the *Zhenotdel*, which was eventually shut down by Stalin in 1930, did not reflect well on the public's perception of women. In the decade after the revolution, high-ranking women of the Communist Party advocated for more liberal marriage laws and the destruction of the nuclear family. While these ideas were supported by Lenin, who felt this would strengthen class solidarity and implement a more productive society, Joseph Stalin felt that the nuclear family was the basis of socialism. Stalin thought it would promote larger families, and therefore more production. By 1930, women were actually in a worse position than the pre-revolutionary period: they had earned more responsibility, but lost their freedoms.

In conclusion, there were various factions of women in Russia living in different circumstances, which made it difficult to line up ideologies for a collective feminist movement. Women of the bourgeoisie wanted change *within* the political system, and the working-class wanted to dismantle the political system entirely. These women used their voices, and their value to society was eventually noticed by the Communist Party. The real obstacle for the movement, however, was Russia's unstable societal and economic structure in the years following the revolution, the urgency of which inevitably eclipsed the issue of gender equality. The country was so poor that women's equality could not be made a priority by the Party. As the party increasingly relied on the help of women workers, and women workers continued to provide loyal service, the result by the beginning of the 1930s was ultimately more responsibility and yet more difficult living conditions. Despite this, 1900 to 1920 represents a temporary period of catalyzed freedom for Russian women, an unprecedented achievement in the Western world.

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<sup>208</sup> Mievelle, *The Russian Revolution*, 94.

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# Mapping the Conversation: Tracing Incommensurability and Solidarity in Theories of Indigenous and Diasporic Liberation.

Joey Mauro

*This paper traces incommensurability and solidarity in theories of Indigenous and Diasporic liberation. The author takes the position that Indigenous and diasporic forms of liberation are both deeply related and sharply divided. While these groups share histories of displacement and oppression—usually through settler-colonial, capitalist expropriation of lands, resources, and the exploitation of labour—their differences are equally prominent in their distinct formulation of liberation. While these groups both want to build a new world, the worlds they want to build are not the same. By mapping out the tensions between Indigenous and diasporic conceptions of liberation as they are addressed in theory and scholarship, we can glimpse a deeper understanding of the respective ontological ideals and stark differences in the worlds both groups aspire to build. Historically, however, people organizing have found ways to go beyond incommensurability in praxis where joint resistance becomes the only option for realizing liberation.*

In her essay on Indigenous and diasporic solidarity, Soma Chatterjee argues that shared relationships and struggle with the state form a natural basis of solidarity between these groups.<sup>209</sup> However, shared histories of oppression between two groups do not necessarily mean that those groups will share a vision for the future or a project for liberation. As a point of departure, this paper assumes that Indigenous and diasporic forms of liberation are both deeply related and sharply divided. While these groups share histories of displacement and oppression—usually through settler-colonial, capitalist expropriation of lands, resources, and the exploitation of labour—their differences are equally prominent in their distinct formulation of liberation. Assumptions of solidarity between groups can actually eclipse the tensions between Indigenous and diasporic liberation projects. By mapping out the tensions between Indigenous and diasporic conceptions of liberation as they are addressed in theory and scholarship, we can glimpse a deeper understanding of the respective ontological ideals and stark differences in the worlds both groups aspire to build; however, theory and practice are very different things. In the real world, people go beyond incommensurability in praxis where joint resistance becomes the only option for realizing liberation.

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<sup>209</sup>Soma Chatterjee, “Immigration, Anti-racism, and Indigenous Self-Determination: Towards a Comprehensive Analysis of the Contemporary Settler Colonial,” *Social Identities* 25, no.5 (2019): 645.



Before exploring solidarity, I would like to identify my position in relation to this work. I am an uninvited settler living on Lək'əŋən territory. I was born Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory. My grandparents, coming from Italy, were the first of my relatives to settle in what is now called Canada. They were also uninvited. My grandmother entered Canada as a refugee and my other grandparents came here in the post-war period. I come to these bodies of work on liberation, Indigenous and diasporic, trying to navigate my own identity as a settler who is also part of a diaspora. The theorists and writers below offer me, and hopefully others, different modes of identifying positionality and relationality in the contemporary and future worlds. I am extremely grateful to be able to engage with this work.

To start, solidarity should not be assumed—especially solidarity based on shared oppression—because this assumption veils the tensions between Indigenous and diasporic modes of liberation. In fact, Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua call for nonwhite members of diasporic communities to decolonize antiracist liberation projects and theory. In their argument, Lawrence and Dua bring attention to how antiracist projects (both movements and discourses) exclude Indigenous people and perspectives on decolonization by continually failing to honour and incorporate distinct aspects of Indigenous liberation.<sup>210</sup> These authors position anyone who is not Indigenous as a settler and, thus, as part of the settler-colonial project. Their argument is explicit: regardless of how, when, or why a settler came here, the settler occupies stolen and contested land which implicates Indigenous sovereignty. The settler-colonial projects in the so-called Americas operate with political policies and cultural logics of extermination, displacement, and assimilation as a means of erasing Indigenous people and freeing the land for settlers to take their place.<sup>211</sup>

Lawrence and Dua go on to argue that antiracist praxis, as it presently appears, extends from the ongoing settler project.<sup>212</sup> The authors see the antiracist project as upholding the settler projects in two ways: firstly antiracist projects fail to challenge states like Canada as colonial states, first and foremost.<sup>213</sup> For example, when immigrant rights or civil rights activists challenge the federal government to be more inclusive, they give legitimacy to the state (giving the state power as an authority of the land) and, at the same time, undermine Indigenous sovereignty by passing the authority of Indigenous title over the land. Anti-racist resistance, historically, has wanted to “improve” the settler state, which consequently contributes to the attempted displacement of Indigenous title.<sup>214</sup> Secondly, by ignoring Indigenous sovereignty and the demands of Indigenous resistance,<sup>215</sup>

<sup>210</sup>Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, “Decolonizing Antiracism,” *Social Justice* 32, no. 4 (2005): 123.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid.

<sup>212</sup>Ibid, 129-30.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid, 136.

<sup>214</sup>Lawrence and Dua, “Decolonizing Antiracism,” 135.

<sup>215</sup> A central demand of Indigenous resistance is the the right to self-determination.

anti-racist projects participate in ongoing colonization by both propping up the Canadian state as well as relegating the project of colonization to the past, as if it were an already completed project.<sup>216</sup> In other words, the practices of many anti-racist projects in Canada often (re)produce and imagine “Indian” figures whose political projects and nations are part of the pre-history of North America, whose sovereignty and political agency has long since disappeared from the geography.<sup>217</sup> Because of this epistemological exclusion and disregard for Indigenous sovereignty, many Indigenous peoples do not see a place for themselves within the mainstream anti-racist context (both political and academic), and Indigenous activism happens without allies from racialized communities.<sup>218</sup>

There are consequences in grouping all settlers as a monolithic group, as Lawrence and Dua do. Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright respond directly to Lawrence and Dua’s article for this reason. Sharma and Wright interrogate the conflation between processes of migration and those of colonialism. They ask if it is historically accurate to describe the forced movement of refugees, unfree indentured Asian people, enslaved African people, and subsequently displaced people from South America, Central America, and the Middle East (many of whom are themselves Indigenous) as settlers or as part of a process of settler colonialism.<sup>219</sup> I agree with this line of thinking: there is a difference between the colonizer and the refugee or the enslaved, between those who arrive to pillage the land and those who arrive because they have nowhere else to go or were brought to the land against their will. That is, if the only way to avoid colonizing is to remain on the land that one is associated with, then what is meant to come of those who are stolen or forced from their lands, including Indigenous peoples? Sharma and Wright take this line of thinking further and argue that, in the era of global neoliberalism, much of global migration is a consequence of colonization and so-called “postcolonial” nationalist movements.<sup>220</sup>

At the center of Sharma and Wright’s argument is the concern that discourses of autochthony create a binary between “Native” and “non-Native” that discriminates not so much against elite colonizers, but rather the most vulnerable diasporic populations. Autochthonous discourses rely on a dialectical difference between the category “Native” that has a natural connection to the land and the “non-Native” who disrupts the “natural” order.<sup>221</sup> For Sharma and Wright, this narrative is part of a larger anti-immigrant sentiment that naturalizes xenophobia in both contemporary understandings of decolonial justice as well as in nationalist movements.<sup>222</sup> In other words, in the oppositional categories of

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<sup>216</sup>Lawrence and Dua, “Decolonizing Antiracism,” 124.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid, 122.

<sup>219</sup>Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright, “Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States,” *Social Justice* 35, no. 3 (2008): 121.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid, 123.

<sup>221</sup>Ibid, 124.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid, 126.

“Indigenous” or “Native” and “settler”, the vulnerable migrant becomes the enemy. Lawrence and Dua’s argument fails to acknowledge that the groups they target as complicit settlers are predominantly not actually the settlers who occupy positions of power. Largely, members of these groups fighting in the struggle for anti-racism are not part of the neoliberal, settler elite who benefit overwhelmingly from the exploitation of stolen land, resources, and anti-Indigenous violence (as well as migrant labour), but rather those who are oppressed by the settler state—the racialized settlers.<sup>223</sup> In this way, contemporary ideals of “post-colonial” nationalism, including Indigenous sovereignty, can actually preserve the neoliberal order where the most vulnerable members of diasporic communities go unaccounted for and are positioned as expendable.<sup>224</sup>

While Sharma and Wright make an important intervention in the formulation of a unified, all-encompassing “settler” identity, their analysis of Indigenous sovereignty is problematic because they understand the concept of sovereignty within the Western epistemological standpoint and evacuate it of the historical specificities of settler colonialism in what is now called North America. In her work on ethnographic refusal, Audra Simpson, in agreement with Taiaiake Alfred, argues that sovereignty is a problematic concept because it is rooted in Western forms of domination that involve a singular, hegemonic authority over the land and its resources.<sup>225</sup> Simpson argues that the Western concept of sovereignty is completely foreign to Haudenosaunee and most other Indigenous philosophical traditions.<sup>226</sup> In fact, Western formulations of sovereignty perhaps as much as military might, drive the process of colonialism.<sup>227</sup> As Simpson argues, Western knowledges imagine and speak for an Indigenous “other” as a means of fixing, essentializing, limiting, ordering, ranking, governing, and possessing Indigenous lifeways, which are otherwise dynamic, changing, and relational.<sup>228</sup> Simply put, Western knowledge aims to achieve an epistemological dominance, or what Simpson calls the “ontological endgame” that positions Western lifeways (such as Western formulations of sovereignty) as dominant and natural.<sup>229</sup> This is the not-so-subtle form of aggression that settler-colonial logics produce in order to dispossess Indigenous people of their land. Simpson, Sharma, and Wright could all agree that the concept of sovereignty is anchored in Western aggression and violence.

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<sup>223</sup>Ibid, 128.

<sup>224</sup>Ibid.

<sup>225</sup>Audra Simpson, “Ethnographic Refusal: Anthropological Need,” in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2014), 95.

<sup>226</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>227</sup>Those coming from Locke’s understanding of private property.,

Simpson, “Ethnographic Refusal: Anthropological Need,” 96.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid, 98.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid, 97.

However, Simpson does not dispense with the term sovereignty altogether; rather, Simpson refuses Western articulations of it. Simpson posits the idea that the term sovereignty matters because it represents the nature of jurisdictional authority, as in the right to speak or to refuse.<sup>230</sup> Specifically, Simpson argues that sovereignty, when conceptualized in contrast to western assumptions, matters at the level of representation and methodology because it relates to how power is distributed and how we understand that distribution.<sup>231</sup> In other words, sovereignty matters as a system of conduct. For example, speaking about Kahnawà:ke Mohawk nationhood and citizenship, Simpson shows how territorial jurisdiction (as in the articulation of sovereign lifeways on the land) transcends the imagined border between the United States and Canada and disrupts the sovereignty claimed by said settler-colonial nations.<sup>232</sup> By refusing colonial sovereignty, both the border between settler-colonial nations and the borders of the reserve, the Kahnawà:ke Mohawks articulate their sovereignty not *over* the land, but as the protectors and defenders of it.<sup>233</sup> Thus, the refusal of Western knowledges, the associated imagining of borders, and articulations of sovereignty reveal the asymmetrical power relations and colonial histories in North America as well as the colonial systems of knowledge production. Mohawk articulations of sovereignty, then, disrupt Western knowledge production and settler dominance over the land. This is a very different conception of sovereignty than the one articulated by Sharma and Wright.

Yet, at the same time, there is an absence in Simpson's formulation of articulations of sovereignty: where are all the non-white settlers? In Simpson's formulation, the settler-colonial state is white and informed by European notions of sovereignty. I enthusiastically agree with Simpson about the problematic concept of sovereignty based on how different articulations of sovereignty operate; however, as Amy Fung points out, settler-colonial theory and scholarship overwhelmingly favour a dialectical understanding between a white settler and Indigenous peoples.<sup>234</sup> This is an important observation because at times the scholarship speaks unequivocally about how any settler is complicit in the settler-colonial project, no matter how they joined it. At other times, however, the settler in question is the one who benefits most from the settler-colonial project, specifically a European settler. That is, the term "settler" can stretch far enough to make racialized diasporic groups responsible for colonization but also operates without them, as a stand-in for whiteness. As Fung notes, while it is not the fault of any individual scholar, the dominant scholarship relies on a binary between a settler group and an Indigenous group, where the settler side toggles between including and

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<sup>230</sup>Ibid, 104.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid, 102.

<sup>233</sup>Ibid, 106.

<sup>234</sup>Amy Fung, "Is Settler Colonialism Just Another Study of Whiteness?" *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 53. No. 2 (2021): 122.

excluding racialized settlers: scholars include diasporic communities to explicate the force of the larger settler project and exclude them when considering specifics of colonialism.<sup>235</sup> In the context of slavery, indentured labour, and exclusionary immigration policy primarily targeted at Black, Brown and Asian people from nations with their respective histories of colonial exploitation, the diasporic identity acts as an instrument in the settler-colonial project without ever belonging in settler societies.<sup>236</sup>

With that, Fung does not actually absolve the racialized diasporic settler from the settler project nor does she imagine a sort of violence inherent to Indigenous sovereignty that Sharma and Wright imply. Rather, Fung argues that diasporic projects risk complicity in settler-colonialism in two primary ways: firstly, civil and immigrant rights movements, while benefiting diasporic communities, only lend legitimacy to the settler state and its institutions that occupy stolen land.<sup>237</sup> Secondly, the mobilization of liberal discourses of multiculturalism occludes Indigenous calls for decolonization.<sup>238</sup> For Fung, the position of “settler” in the settler-colonial state must be understood as fundamentally an economic identity where the subject works toward inclusion into white society, thus naturalizing the settler state and white-supremacist capitalism.<sup>239</sup> Fung calls for diasporic communities to “unbecome” settlers by rejecting privilege and educating themselves in the history of the given territory that they occupy as a means of pursuing anti-colonial justice.<sup>240</sup>

While the notion of “unbecoming” a settler is interesting as an ethic, it does not seem to offer any real route toward decolonization with respect to Indigenous sovereignty. In fact, in their essay, Tuck and Yang argue that decolonizing the person or the mind is not so much a decolonial move as it is a settler move toward innocence.<sup>241</sup> Tuck and Yang argue that the term decolonization is too often used as a metaphor “for other things that we want to do to improve our societies and schools.”<sup>242</sup> In fact, decolonization exclusively involves the return of Indigenous land and lifeways.<sup>243</sup> For Tuck and Yang, using the terminology of decolonization without the returning of land makes it a metaphor by hollowing out the meaning and allowing settler-colonial power to persist unbothered.<sup>244</sup> Tuck and Yang reject the way metaphor both “invades decolonization” and absorbs it into

<sup>235</sup>Ibid, 125.

<sup>236</sup>Ibid, 123.

<sup>237</sup>Ibid, 117.

<sup>238</sup>Ibid.

<sup>239</sup>Ibid.

<sup>240</sup>Ibid, 124.

<sup>241</sup>Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 19. “Decolonizing the mind” is identified as a settler move to innocence wherein the settler absolves themselves from past and ongoing colonization through education and a sort of self fulfillment.

<sup>242</sup>Ibid, 2.

<sup>243</sup>Ibid, 2.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid, 5.

the colonial framework.<sup>245</sup> The two argue that this absorption happens through the aforementioned “settler moves to innocence”, a process where settlers (white and non-white) use the rhetoric of decolonization to absolve their guilt and responsibility in the colonization process without returning land.<sup>246</sup> The scholars acknowledge that education and pedagogy can be used to aid people’s learning about settler colonialism, how to recognize it and how to critique it; however, until land is relinquished, education cannot disrupt or change settler colonialism.<sup>247</sup> For these scholars, decolonization is extremely unsettling: it offers different perspectives to human rights, post-colonial, and civil rights approaches to justice that bypass the issues of land return.<sup>248</sup> In fact, Tuck and Yang’s formulation of decolonization is incommensurable with other forms of justice and liberation: in their words, “decolonization is not an ‘and’. It is an elsewhere.”<sup>249</sup> Liberation might not be a joint effort in this world, but, perhaps, by building a new world, we can imagine something more equitable.

Tuck and Yang’s essay is obviously a very influential contribution to the scholarship. In the neoliberal era, the language of decolonization is used, and abused, by corporate entities, institutions of power (such as the western academic system), and individuals.<sup>250</sup> Tuck and Yang’s argument positions the return of the land to Indigenous people at the centre of decolonization. This argument, it seems to me, is a world-making project. In other words, Tuck and Yang’s work inspires a future by outlining a new world, one that normalizes the repatriation of Indigenous land and lifeways. At the same time, this future that they inspire is extremely difficult to achieve, vague in focus, and seemingly impossible without some form of commensurability. It is hard to dream of a future where people with power, of any amount, voluntarily give up their power and dislocate themselves in order to return land to Indigenous people. I use the word dislocate not to suggest that the authors ask settlers to leave—the authors never say that. They do say, however, that we need to disrupt and discard the current world and dream of a better one through land repatriation. Tuck and Yang make clear that the future of decolonization is not something decolonization needs to answer for because decolonization does not answer to settler futures, only Indigenous futures.<sup>251</sup> Positioning the return of land at the center of decolonization, as the essence of the project, permits us to dream of something better.

However, if Tuck and Yang’s vision of the future comes from the incommensurability of Indigenous ontologies with other liberation projects, Jared Sexton wants a world where everyone is free because nobody is sovereign. Sexton interrogates the political goals of Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization and argues that abolition is a

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<sup>245</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>246</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>247</sup>Ibid, 20.

<sup>248</sup>Ibid, 36.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid.

<sup>250</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>251</sup>Ibid, 36.

stronger project. He argues that Indigenous decolonization is fixed by a desire for “resurgence, recovery, and recuperation.”<sup>252</sup> These are uncompromising formulations of sovereignty. Indigenous peoples can still claim, name, and pursue land based on their indigeneity to it, so of course land is central to Indigenous liberation.<sup>253</sup> However, for members of the Black diaspora, indigeneity (a rootedness in the lands of one’s origin) is an impossible claim that can, at best, be acknowledged in the abstract. It is irrecoverable in the history of both transatlantic slavery and global anti-Blackness, so something else, something baseless, must be central to Black liberation.<sup>254</sup> In fact, territorial sovereignty, in the contemporary world, relies on modalities of inclusion and exclusion as a means of realizing sovereignty.<sup>255</sup> Sexton actually rejects the argument that because Indigenous sovereignty is qualitatively different from other forms of sovereignty that it mitigates this formula of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>256</sup> I tend to agree with Sexton: on some level, sovereignty is the right to indicate what lifeways are allowed and which are not on a given territory. This is what Sexton is pushing back against.

Sexton argues that the politics of abolition, specifically “degeneration, decline, and dissolution,” rejects some of the central claims of decolonization. For Sexton, Black impulses toward abolition lead to a baseless form of politics that assumes “nothing for no one” in an equitable way that is liberatory for all.<sup>257</sup> Sexton argues that the racialized Black body is a formation of the non-human in the contemporary world because sovereign states need an antithesis for the human, for the sovereign. In this sense, territorial sovereignty is inherently anti-Black. For Sexton, Black liberation does not come from gaining sovereignty—one that recovers language, lineage, land, or any lifeways—because there are no dialects of loss and recovery, but rather dialects of the *loss* of loss and recovery.<sup>258</sup> For Sexton, we must dream of a future of the unsovereign.<sup>259</sup> This formulation of liberation offers a compelling dream of the future too. In the contemporary moment, the power of Western nations—albeit a declining power—relies on the subjugation of the vulnerable (the vulnerable being both citizens and not, and a myriad of identities on top of that), the extraction of resources from the land and the concentration of wealth in few hands, and the sovereignty that the elites have to do so. This is the white-supremacist project: to dominate the world, its resources, and those who live in it. Sexton’s dream world does more than subvert the possibility of the sovereign, it actually abolishes it. To quote Sexton: “No

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<sup>252</sup>Jared Sexton, “The Vel of Slavery: Tracking the Figure of the Unsovereign,” in *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*, (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2020) 100.

<sup>253</sup>Ibid, 97.

<sup>254</sup>Ibid, 104.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid.

<sup>256</sup>Ibid.

<sup>257</sup>Ibid, 109.

<sup>258</sup>Ibid, 103.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid, 108.

ground for identity, no ground to stand (on). Everyone has a claim to everything until no one has a claim to anything. No claim. This is not a politics of despair brought about by a failure to lament a loss, because it is not rooted in hope of winning. The flesh of the earth demands it: the landless inhabitation of selfless existence.”<sup>260</sup> A world without land-based identities is a world where borders do not pose as life-or-death barricades for migrants to survive; where the most vulnerable do not need to use the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house; and where civil rights are not reducible to demands upon the state, but on demands for common humanity. Sexton’s future is a radical one, and his ideal world is something entirely otherwise from the one we currently live in.

With the different, at times irreconcilable, theories of future worlds posed by Tuck and Yang and Sexton in mind, Sandy Hudson shows us how joint projects for liberation, even if the solidarity between groups is not perfect, are key for contemporary resistance. Hudson argues that the colonial state relies on white supremacist logics to produce and maintain colonial power and shows the liberatory power that comes when Black and Indigenous people resist these logics together. Hudson looks specifically at how solidarity, while imperfect, worked in practice at #BLMTOTENTCITY as an antidote to white supremacist logics.<sup>261</sup> Hudson points to three formulations of these logics, specifically: the logic of Disappearance, the logic of Slaveability, and the logic of One True History. The logic of Disappearance is a mythology that the white settler and the settler state peddles to make themselves “native” to the land.<sup>262</sup> At the center of this logic is the tactic of disappearing Indigenous people from the land.<sup>263</sup> Be it land theft, the reserve system, residential school, or sexualized violence and murder, disappearance is central to this logic of white supremacy.<sup>264</sup> The logic of Slaveability is one that the white settler and settler state use to dehumanize the Black body by reducing the human to an object to justify multiplying an enslaved workforce.<sup>265</sup> Enslavement, lynchings, the “One Drop” rule, the prison industrial complex all point to dehumanization being central to this logic.<sup>266</sup> Finally, the logic of One True History produces and maintains the hegemonic status of white supremacy by erasing other histories, especially those of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities.<sup>267</sup> The logic of One True History is the logic that dislocates the history of anti-Blackness in Canada and, at the same time, glorifies Canada’s history in

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<sup>260</sup>Ibid, 109.

<sup>261</sup>Sandy Hudson, “Indigenous and Black Solidarity in Practice: #BLMTOTENTCITY,” in *Until We Are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter Canada*, (Regina: University of Regina, 2020) 296.

<sup>262</sup>Ibid, 298.

<sup>263</sup>Ibid.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid, 299.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid.



the Underground railroad.<sup>268</sup> It is also the logic that relegates the history of colonialism in the past, denies ongoing colonialism, and peddles a myth of multiculturalism in Canada.

Hudson then shows how Indigenous and Black solidarity in practice subverted these logics at the anti-police actions at #BLMTOTENTCITY. When Indigenous, specifically Mohawk, organizers joined the tent city in support of BLM, respect developed between the histories of struggle that are shared by Black and Indigenous people.<sup>269</sup> A relationship formed that rejected the logics of white supremacy because of the public display of Indigenous visibility, Black humanity, and historical multiplicity. As Hudson puts it, it was respect for one another that facilitated the powerful relationship at tent city.<sup>270</sup> So, BLM saw the need for Mohawk leaders and elders to bring medicines, prayer, and stories into the tent city and Indigenous leaders and elders chose to show up for and with BLM while respecting and honouring BLM's leadership on the land.<sup>271</sup> Together Indigenous and Black people empowered each other's resistance to the logics of white supremacy.

The reading from Sandy Hudson transcends the limitation of theory that is presented above. The solidarity between Indigenous and Black activists that Hudson shows is not a perfect one. There is no returning of land in this action, and the Canadian state maintains its illegal sovereignty. However, the action offers one type of disruption to white supremacist logics: Black and Indigenous activism working in tandem. Hudson's contribution shows us how Indigenous and Black liberation projects, working together, can move beyond incommensurability by honouring separate forms of liberation in practice and overcome limitations that exist in theoretical discourses. BLM acknowledged the necessity of Mohawk visibility in the Black liberation project that happens on stolen land. At the same time, Mohawk leadership acknowledged that the BLM anti-police movement is bigger than a resettlement project and that it actually transcends calls for reforming the settler state. From my perspective, Hudson reveals how Black and Indigenous forms of liberation are imbricated at the level of praxis; each moves against the logics of white supremacy in pursuit of joint liberation.

Often, in the writing about the relationship between diasporic and Indigenous formulations of liberation, there is an assumption of solidarity based on the shared experience of oppression in societies built on white supremacy and settler colonialism. However, by assuming oppression is the basis for solidarity, we risk assuming that liberation looks the same in both Indigenous and diasporic formations. One the end of the spectrum, some writers view the relationship between Indigenous and diasporic groups as an inherently antagonistic one based on the implication of the goals of each respective mode of liberation. It seems to me that this type of theory, while essential, is removed from

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<sup>268</sup>Ibid, 300.

<sup>269</sup>Ibid, 302.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid, 303.

<sup>271</sup>Ibid, 303.

activism as it materializes on the ground. The ideals and the imaginative capacity of theory break down in real life, and allow for powerful spaces of creativity and relationship building to be constructed. As Hudson's work implies, theory can inform praxis in ways that lead to joint liberation while, at the same, preserving differences.

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# Pearl Harbour and the Unification of Japan: a New Perspective on the Attack of Pearl Harbour through a Japanese Pan-Asianist Lens

Sakiko Noda

*On December 7th (8th in Japan) 1941, Japan, without provocation, bombed Hawai'i's Pearl Harbour, effectively imposing war on the United States. Since this event, much of the world at large has questioned why Japan would wage war with such a powerful nation without any chance of victory. This paper offers an alternative perspective on the popular history of the events of Pearl Harbour by examining former relations between Japan and the U.S., and how those relations impacted Japan's motives behind the attack. Japan's strike on the West was fueled by the objective of Pan-Asianism, an ideology which was paramount in Japan's ongoing search for identity and its feelings of obligation in protecting other Asian countries from the perceived harm of the West. With this understanding, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour, however misguided, may be regarded as an attempt to attain a sense of identity and unity.*

The notion of identity and unification has been a prominent and continuous struggle for Japan since the arrival of American naval captain Matthew Perry in 1854. Japan has since grappled with the idea of what it means to be Asian, and specifically, what it means to be Japanese. The creation of Pan-Asianism allowed Japan to find a sense of self as well as commonality with other Asian countries in a world they saw as overrun by Westernization, modernization, and racism. The evolution of Pan-Asianism created the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, an alternative regional identity which worked to liberate Asia from Western powers and influences. It is through this Pan-Asianist lens that Japan's quest for unity and identity becomes comprehensible and helps make sense of Japan's devastating, yet widely glorified, bombing of Pearl Harbour.

Pan-Asianism can be understood as a fusion of Asian countries linked through a spiritual, cultural, or political commonality which join forces and resources to liberate Asia from Western influence and infiltration. In her article "'The War of 'World Historical Significance' Pan-Asianism and Japan's War," Eri Hotta describes three main variations of Pan-Asianism. The first model is "Teaist," which is considered the mildest, least political form of Pan-Asianism.<sup>272</sup> Teaist refers to *The Book of Tea* by author Okakura Tenshin which focuses on Asian connection through aesthetics and culture.<sup>273</sup> The key idea is

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<sup>272</sup> Christopher Goto-Jones, "Pan-Asianism," History 365: Overcoming Modernity in Japan (Class lecture via Zoom, 25 October 2021).

<sup>273</sup> Goto-Jones, "Pan-Asianism."

centred around a core, generic Asian aesthetic, smell, or taste, that can be found throughout Asia, allowing Asians to continuously feel at home regardless of where they are within the continent. The second category of Pan-Asianism is “Sinic,” which is based on the vision of a connected Asia stemming from the expansion of Chinese culture.<sup>274</sup> This model is thought to be a relatively equal alliance between Asian nations unified by a common culture, although it did involve aspects of imperialism.<sup>275</sup> The final model of Pan-Asianism is known as “Meishu,” roughly translating to “leader” in Japanese, and is the most chauvinistic of the three models.<sup>276</sup> Through the Meishu model, Japan’s leaders believed there was an imbalance in the Asian countries with regards to civilization, modernity, and power. They also concluded that it was their duty to lead Asia in the quest to purge Western domination and influence, through a paternalistic Japanese Pan-Asianist frame.

The Meishu model has since become the most prominent form of Pan-Asianism. By the 1930s, Pan-Asianism was beginning to gradually increase in popularity amongst high-ranking members of Japanese society. This is likely an effect of the 1931 Manchurian Incident (which further led to various Sino-Japanese conflicts) and Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations (LON) in 1933 where they announced their intentions to “follow [their] own path in Asia.”<sup>277</sup> Japan had felt misled as it had played a large role in the LON, yet they were being condemned for their occupation of Manchuria, which had given Japan the impression that the LON was a “regional rather than a universal organization.”<sup>278</sup> This justified Japan’s beliefs that Western powers were inherently racist towards Japan and Asia as a whole, which led to increased isolation of Japan, and an expansion of Pan-Asianist thinkers.<sup>279</sup> The exclusion and racism Japan faced from international powers helped pave the way for Pan-Asianism, and allowed it to foster a sense of regional identity for Japan. This newfound sense of purpose led Japan to believe they would be an apt representative and leader for the united nation of Asia. In 1933, the Greater Asia Association (Dai Ajia Kyōkai) was established. Its membership included prominent figures such as Army General Ishiwara Kanji and future Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro.<sup>280</sup> The association promoted a unification of Asia and advocated for solidarity throughout Asian societies.<sup>281</sup> Pan-Asianism was also growing within intellectual spheres that had no previous connection to “conservative radical nationalist groups.”<sup>282</sup> Leading

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Goto-Jones, "Pan-Asianism."

<sup>277</sup> Christopher Goto-Jones, “Overcoming and overcome by modernity: Japan at War,” In *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 78.

<sup>278</sup> Goto-Jones, “Overcoming and overcome by modernity,” 78.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Cemil Aydin, "Japan's Pan-Asianism and the Legitimacy of Imperial World Order, 1931-1945," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 6, no. 3 (March 03, 2008), 14.

<sup>281</sup> Aydin, “Japan’s Pan-Asianism,” 14.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, 3.

scholars such as members of the Kyoto School of Philosophy contributed to the acceptance of Pan-Asianism by contributing their theories on overcoming modernity and Eurocentrism, and by seeking alternative avenues for Japanese and Asian cultural traditions to incorporate modernity.<sup>283</sup> The progression of Pan-Asianism continued following the formation of the British Commonwealth and the League of Nations. It seemed as though the world was splitting into regional blocs as opposed to individual countries, and Japan wanted to lead the Asian bloc.

In 1938, the New Order was introduced to Japan in a speech made by Prime Minister Konoe. This strategy was established as a way for Japan to rationalize its wars in other Asian countries by claiming Japan was responsible for upholding ethical and moral responsibilities for the people of Asia. Through this, Chris Goto-Jones explains in his chapter “Overcoming and overcome by modernity: Japan at war,” that as its confidence grew, Japan slipped into an “aggressive sense of mission,” leading the country to think it had an obligation to rescue other Asian nations from succumbing to modernity and Westernization.<sup>284</sup> This led to Japan’s creation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Daitōa Kyōeiken), which was first publicly announced by Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke in 1940.<sup>285</sup> Included in “Greater East Asia” was Japan, Manchukuo, China, Southwest Asia, Eastern Siberia, and even the outer areas of Australia, India, and the Pacific Islands.<sup>286</sup> The Japanese government’s ultimate aim of the Co-Prosperity Sphere’s was to achieve “order for co-prosperity, mutual respect for sovereign independence among Asian nations, while calling for the elimination of racial discrimination’ and ‘full freedom for Asiatics.’”<sup>287</sup> The ideology behind the Co-Prosperity Sphere rests on the philosophical model of expansion through synthesis rather than conquest.<sup>288</sup> Japan’s vision was to travel to Asian countries, banish any Westerners, help modernize the country, and then give said country these modernization techniques. After doing so, Japan would collect a part of the culture to contribute to the growth of the Co-Prosperity Sphere and then the process would continue through this synthetic system. Through this method, Japan would integrate itself and other Asian countries into a prosperous nation benefiting everyone in Japan’s claim to saving Asia from the West.

The reception of Pan-Asianism amongst Japan and other parts of Asia varied. Japan’s hypocrisy was criticized as it seemed to be that Japan was doing to other Asian

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Goto-Jones, “Overcoming and overcome by modernity,” 63.

<sup>285</sup> Janis Mimura, “Japan’s New Order and Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: Planning for Empire,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 9, no. 49 (December 06, 2011), 1.

<sup>286</sup> Mimura, “Japan’s New Order and Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” 1.

<sup>287</sup> Eri Hotta, “The War of ‘World Historical Significance,’” In *Pan-Asianism and Japan’s War*, 177-198, New York: Palgrave, 2008, 186.

<sup>288</sup> Christopher Goto-Jones, “Pearl Harbour,” *History 365: Overcoming Modernity in Japan* (Class lecture via Zoom, 28 October 2021).

countries what the West had done to Japan.<sup>289</sup> In an attempt to justify these actions, Japan claimed it was helping these countries “as an Asian brother helps another under threat from the West.”<sup>290</sup> The Asian public was confounded as Japan had expressed its desire to save and lead Asia, while at the same time, it continued to harm fellow Asian countries. Although not everyone in Japan agreed on protocols implemented under Pan-Asianism, the overarching aim of national interest and unity was enough of a common denominator to continue supporting the cause. The danger in this rhetoric is that decisions regarding policies may be based on influences from certain groups that advocate aggressive programs and who rely on their ideological commonalities to achieve their agenda.<sup>291</sup> This can then lead to harmful directives being passed under the guise of Pan-Asianism. The largest event to stem from Pan-Asianism was undoubtedly Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbour in Hawai’i on 7 December 1941 (8 December in Japan). Once the notion of Pan-Asianism became a force strong enough to envelop opposing strategies and garner support from some of Japan’s highest ranking officials, in Japan’s eyes, the next logical step was to wage war with the West. The attack was considered a monstrous victory for Japan as there were 4,000 American casualties as well as two battleships, nearly 200 aircrafts, and ten other warships were destroyed.<sup>292</sup> Comparatively, Japan lost 65 men and 30 aircrafts.<sup>293</sup> Despite the massive success of Japan’s mission, it further fueled the animosities of World War II as the attack took place before an official declaration of war had been announced.<sup>294</sup>

It seems to be a common question amongst scholars and even the general public as to why Japan would engage in war with such a powerful nation such as the United States. Pan-Asianism plays a critical role in Japan’s war entry and can help make sense of Japan’s reasoning behind the bombing of Pearl Harbour. Emperor Hirohito’s declaration of war several hours after the attack proclaimed the reasons for Japan’s decision to go to war with a Western power, stating

Our empire has always been about peace in Asia. Nobody seems to understand this. Our enemies seek to exploit us and Asia. We have been so patient and they have been so unreasonable. Since we are invested in the good of all, with divine purpose, we have no choice but to defend ourselves in Asia. Millennia of ancestors and nations unified by righteousness will win the day.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Goto-Jones, “Overcoming and overcome by modernity,” 64.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>291</sup> Hotta, “The War of ‘World Historical Significance,” 181.

<sup>292</sup> Goto-Jones, “Overcoming and overcome by modernity,” 81.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>295</sup> Goto-Jones, “Pan-Asianism.”

Japan saw the attack on Pearl Harbour as an opportunity to liberate Asia from the cruelty and oppression of the West and change the course of world history;<sup>296</sup> it was a way to stand up for Asia in order to save Asia. In Japan's eyes, America was seen as "an uncultured land of bubblegum, tall buildings, and moral vacuity,"<sup>297</sup> it was a monster of modernity without any cultural or spiritual backbone. Prime Minister Tōjō and the team behind Pearl Harbour had planned it to be "so devastating that the American public would lose all stomach for war with Japan and hence surrender quickly."<sup>298</sup> It immediately became apparent that this was a gross miscalculation. Although the rest of the world saw Pearl Harbour as an enormous misstep, the attack was widely celebrated by the Japanese, including those who had opposed previous Japanese military excursions. To many Japanese, it felt as though Japan had finally achieved a unified sense of nation. Japan's aspirations of standing up for Asia against the West had at last manifested; words were becoming actions and promises were being fulfilled for the first time. The Japanese felt as though the course of history was changing by rejecting and punishing America, whom the Japanese viewed as the epitome of modernity and Westernization. The euphoric feeling surging through Japan following the success of Pearl Harbour has since come to be understood as the "Philosophy of December 8" (Jūnigatsu Yōka no Shisō).<sup>299</sup> The "crisis of confidence" which had plagued Japan in various aspects of society for years had finally been overcome, and was replaced with a feeling of confidence and pride.<sup>300</sup> Japan's Pan-Asianist war aims transcended the boundaries of class, politics, and age, obtaining support throughout the country as it "seemed to open up a new opportunity for Japan to fulfill its ambition for a world role at long last."<sup>301</sup>

A renowned scholar, "China expert,"<sup>302</sup> and vehement opponent to Japan's military engagements in China, Takeuchi Yoshimi (1910-1977), had developed a new, enthusiastic view of Japan's war with the West. Takeuchi published a piece discussing Pearl Harbour, stating "our Japan was not afraid of the strong after all [...] It is now our determination to labor, without stint, for the true goal of creating a new order in East Asia and of liberating all nations."<sup>303</sup> Other scholars, including members of the Kyoto Imperial University also shared the same excitement as many others in Japan. The intellectual endorsements and support among literati, including ones with a previous anti-war stance, gave credibility to Japan's proclaimed war aims.<sup>304</sup> Furthermore, many intellectuals at the

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<sup>296</sup> Hotta, "The War of 'World Historical Significance,'" 195.

<sup>297</sup> Goto-Jones, "Overcoming and overcome by modernity," 83.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> Hotta, "The War of 'World Historical Significance,'" 189.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

time believed Japan would be the “guiding light and leading force in Asia’s salvation.”<sup>305</sup> The commencement of Japan’s operation in the Pacific “transformed a narrow and limited claim of Japan’s Pan-Asianist mission in China into a nation-wide euphoria and a willing endorsement of the ‘Co-Prosperity Sphere’ ideology.”<sup>306</sup> Although the embracing of the Philosophy of December 8 was not universal, it seems as though there are very few people that did not share this feeling of triumph.<sup>307</sup> The bombing of Pearl Harbour was a defining moment in the development of Pan-Asianism as Japan’s once purely state ideology had transcended into a national ideology.<sup>308</sup> Japan’s goal to achieve a unified nation through the Co-Prosperity Sphere appeared to finally have been recognized and accepted.

In a time when encroaching Western powers plagued Japan with modernization, racism, and exclusion, Japan’s longing for a unified national identity became overwhelming. The ideology of Pan-Asianism was a way for Japan to belong to something bigger than itself, as well as a chance to be a part of a collective community. A once innocent idea transformed into the imperialized and aggressive Co-Prosperity Sphere, wherein Japan felt as though it was the most suitable candidate to liberate the Asian nation from Western infiltration. In Japan’s attempt to emancipate Asia from the West, Japan in itself became oppressive and chauvinistic towards its fellow Asian countries. The attack on Pearl Harbour became an exhilarating and monumental event for Japan. For the first time, Japan was finally taking action in their claim to protecting Asia from Western harm. It is with this knowledge that the fateful event of Pearl Harbour can be understood from a different perspective, one in the search for unity and identity.

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid, 192.

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# A History of Asexuality: From Medical Problem to a Recognized Sexual Orientation

Emily Stremel

*Historically, people who are non-sexual have been considered to have a medical disorder. Most histories of asexuality do not look further back than 2000, when the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) was founded. However, people who do not experience sexual attraction have been recognized since at least the nineteenth century by sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1886), Alfred Kinsey (1948) and Michael D. Storms (1980), while the New York Radical Feminists' Asexual Manifesto (1972) is the first known published recognition of asexuality as a queer identity. Although the formation of AVEN in 2000 helped establish asexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation, there has since been internal controversy over the definition of asexuality, and a conflict between asexual and disability rights activists.*

There are many aspects to one's sexuality, including sexual behaviour, physiological response, and choice of sexual activity. There are also aspects such as who you desire or are attracted to. Furthermore, a person can have any combination or even all of these aspects. Because this partial or total non-sexuality has been continuously defined and redefined throughout its modern history, the line between asexuality as a medical disorder or as a sexual orientation has always been blurred. To overcome this problem of shifting definitions, this paper uses the broad term "non-sexuality" to avoid categorization by any specific aspect of sexuality, and to avoid confusion with historicized terminology which have varying definitions. A "non-sexuality" may include a person's non-expression of, or identification with, one or more of sexual behavior, physiological response, choice of sexual activity, sexual desire, sexual attraction, or other aspects of one's sexuality being low or absent.

I locate myself as a pansexual, panromantic white transgender woman. I am allosexual, a person who does experience sexual attraction, meaning I am not asexual. My goal is to write this history with respect to asexual people's identities, including the various identities that fall under the asexual and aromantic umbrellas. With that said, I am focusing on asexuality as a specific identity to provide a comprehensive history of asexuality that is accessible for as many readers as possible. Due to its relevance near the end of this paper, I also locate myself as disabled.

When sexology emerged in Western society as a field of study in the nineteenth century, such non-sexualities became seen as a medical problem to correct. Researchers

have continued to attempt categorization of such “deficiencies” and devise treatments to “cure” them. This has been an ongoing process that has continued into the twenty-first century, which has been marked by a growing social recognition of asexuality as a non-pathologized sexual orientation. This recognition emerged shortly after the start of the gay liberation and second wave feminist movements. Overlapping ideas about non-sexuality put these two views at odds with each other, though in the first decade of the twenty-first century, attempts were made by both asexual activists and medical professionals to disentangle these conflicting definitions so that acceptance of asexuality can coexist with treatments against biological barriers to a satisfactory sex life for those who desire it. Finally, there is another conflict between asexual and disability rights activists caused by widespread social assumptions that disabled people are inherently asexual.

Researchers of asexual history have generally followed a limited timeline, focusing on the founding of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) in 2001, or shortly before, as the starting point for activism promoting asexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation. These include psychologists Anthony F. Bogaert (2006),<sup>309</sup> Andrew Hinderliter (2013)<sup>310</sup>, Emily M. Lund & Bayley A. Johnson (2014)<sup>311</sup>, and the legal scholar Elizabeth F. Emens (2014).<sup>312</sup> On the academic development of asexual research, Bogaert<sup>313</sup> and Emens<sup>314</sup> recognize Michael D. Storms’ 1980 model of sexual orientation, which included asexuality, though other scholars do not. Most focus on the introduction of Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (HSDD) to the *Diagnostic & Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1987 as the beginning of scientific analogues to asexuality, or its predecessor, Inhibited Sexual Desire, beginning in 1980. Since 2000, scholars of asexuality have attempted to understand the difference between HSDD, still recognized as a psychiatric disorder, and asexuality, as a sexual orientation, most notably Bogaert (2006)<sup>315</sup> and Hinderliter (2013)<sup>316</sup>. Though some scholars are more thorough than others, the evolution of scholarly research into non-sexualities — which overlapped and developed into

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<sup>309</sup>Anthony F. Bogaert, “Toward a Conceptual Understanding of Asexuality” *Review of General Psychology*, 10:3 (2006), 247.

<sup>310</sup>Hinderliter, Andrew. “How Is Asexuality Different from Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder?” *Psychology & Sexuality*, 4:2 (2013), 170-171. DOI: 10.1080/19419899.2013.774165

<sup>311</sup>Emily M. Lund & Bayley A. Johnson, “Asexuality and Disability: Strange but Compatible Bedfellows” *Sex & Disability*, 33 (2015), 123-132. DOI 10.1007/s11195-014-9378-0

<sup>312</sup>Elizabeth F. Emens, “Compulsory Sexuality” *Stanford Law Review*, 66:2 (Feb. 2014), 303-386.

<sup>313</sup>Bogaert, “Toward a Conceptual Understanding of Asexuality,” 241.

<sup>314</sup>Emens, “Compulsory Sexuality,” 308.

<sup>315</sup>Bogaert, “Toward a Conceptual Understanding of Asexuality,” 241-250.

<sup>316</sup>Hinderliter, “How Is Asexuality Different from Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder?” 172-178.

asexuality — can be traced back further to the late nineteenth century, and its recognition as a sexual orientation, of which evidence can be found at least as far back as 1972.

Richard von Krafft-Ebing, an early German sexologist, first published the famous *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1886. He cited 10 cases of what he termed “Anæsthesia Sexualis (Absence of Sexual Feeling) as a congenital anomaly”, of which all but one were men.<sup>317</sup> He described the subjects as people completely disinclined toward sexual activity of any kind, and some who only masturbated. He claimed all cases of anæsthesia sexualis could all be attributed to “degenerative defects” or “functional cerebral disturbances.”<sup>318</sup> Despite the disproportionate number of male cases, he noted that congenital anæsthesia sexualis was more common for women, though in “a milder form.”<sup>319</sup>

Some contemporaries of Krafft-Ebing include the Italian sociologists Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, and the British sexologist Havelock Ellis. Lombroso and Ferrero attributed the perceived “frigidity” of women to generally diminished senses, including hearing, emotion, and even pain.<sup>320</sup> Ellis saw men and women as having equally powerful sexual desire, and believed that anæsthesia sexualis in women was caused by cognitive or physiological issues. He followed a general trend of separating *libido* (sexual desire) and *voluptas* (sexual pleasure), and argued that contemporary attitudes toward female sexuality as a private matter made it difficult for sexologists to accurately ascertain their subjects’ libidos.<sup>321</sup> The entomologist Alfred C. Kinsey is known for upending public perceptions of sexuality. His 1948 *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and the follow-up *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* are collectively known as “the Kinsey Reports”, and shocked the American public by revealing the wide variety and popularity of not only sexual activities which were accepted and even encouraged, but also activities which were widely considered “deviant” by society. Interviewing around 6300 men<sup>322</sup> and “nearly 8000” women<sup>323</sup> across the two studies, Kinsey’s goal was to track sexual behavior accurately and objectively, without regard for public perceptions of propriety.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 42-47, trans. Charles Gilbert Chaddock. Philadelphia, PA: The F. A. Davis Co. Publishers, 1892.

<https://archive.org/details/psychopathiasexualis00kraf/page/42/mode/2up>

<sup>318</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>320</sup> Eunjung Kim, “Asexualities and Disabilities in Constructing Sexual Normalcy” *Asexualities: Feminist and Queer Perspectives*, 259-260, eds. Karli June Cerankowski, Megan Milks. New York: Routledge, 2014.

<sup>321</sup> Kim, “Asexualities and Disabilities in Constructing Sexual Normalcy,” 262-263.

<sup>322</sup> Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 6. Philadelphia, PA: W. B. Saunders Company, 1948.

<sup>323</sup> Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, and Paul H. Gebhard, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, v. Philadelphia, PA: W. B. Saunders Company, 1953.

<sup>324</sup> Kinsey “*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*,” 5.

In the first report, he established what is popularly known today as the *Kinsey Scale*, used to gauge a person's sexual orientation. The scale ranges from 0 to 6, with 0 marking "exclusively heterosexual", 6 marking "exclusively homosexual", and numbers in between marking a corresponding graded scale of bisexuality. This scale is "based on both psychologic reactions and overt experience."<sup>325</sup> Less well known is that Kinsey included an 'X' category in his data, which he defined as "men with no socio-sexual contacts or response", though there is no discussion of people in this group<sup>326</sup> aside from the statement that they "rapidly disappear between the ages of 5 and 20."<sup>327</sup> The second report expands the definition: "individuals are rated as X's if they do not respond erotically to either heterosexual or homosexual stimuli, and do not have overt physical contacts with individuals of either sex in which there is evidence of any response."<sup>328</sup> In a comparison of statistics regarding sexual orientation and behaviour, Kinsey noted that women in this category were much more common than men. Though he ultimately attributed this to the women's "inexperience",<sup>329</sup> by positioning this category in relation to hetero-, homo- and bisexuality, he inadvertently implied that not feeling sexual attraction can be its own sexual orientation.

Meanwhile, psychiatric diagnoses were becoming formalized. The *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders* is a series of books detailing possible diagnoses psychiatrists could make. Though the first two editions were not taken very seriously, the thorough and detailed DSM-III quickly became the gold standard for professional diagnosis following its publication.<sup>330</sup> Tracing a series of related diagnosis labels and their progressive changes can be used to investigate the evolution of medicalizing and pathologizing non-sexualities.

The first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders* was published in 1952. "Sexual deviancy" was the only diagnosis included that was of a sexual nature,<sup>331</sup> though it listed "frigidity" under "supplementary terms of the urogenital system," However, frigidity was left undefined.<sup>332</sup> It was removed with the 1968 publication of the

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 638-639, 641, 647

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 656.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 658.

<sup>328</sup> Kinsey, "*Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*," 472.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Rick Mayes & Allan V. Horwitz, "DSM-III and the Revolution in the Classification of Mental Illness" *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 41:3 (2005), 249–251.

<sup>331</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders*, 38-39. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1952.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 125.

DSM-II.<sup>333</sup> Meanwhile, sexual deviancy was categorized into several subtypes.<sup>334</sup> These two books were short (130 and 134 pages, respectively).<sup>335</sup>

The DSM-III, published in 1980, was a gargantuan 494 pages and formalized psychiatric diagnoses into specific, listed criteria.<sup>336</sup> *Inhibited Sexual Desire* was introduced in the DSM-III, under the new class of *Sexual Dysfunctions*.<sup>337</sup> This was later renamed and split into two separate conditions in the DSM-III-R (1987)—Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (HSDD), an absence of sexual desire, and Sexual Aversion Disorder (SAD), an “extreme aversion to, and avoidance of... genital sexual contact with a sexual partner.” They were described with a single paragraph each, plus a requirement that it not be explained better by another disorder.<sup>338</sup> In 1994 these diagnoses were updated in the DSM-IV. They were worded exactly the same as in the III, but with one additional criteria that they “cause marked distress or interpersonal conflict.” They also were assigned subtypes: “lifelong” or “acquired type[s]”, “generalized” or “situational type[s]”, and “due to psychological factors” or “due to combined factors.”<sup>339</sup> These disorders remained unchanged in 2000 with the publication of the DSM-IV-TR.<sup>340</sup> This edition would remain the standard until the release of the DSM V in 2013.

The medicalization of non-sexuality is only one historical approach to addressing those with little or no interest in sex. Influenced by the gay liberation and radical feminist movements in the 1970s, another approach which has gained support over the past 50 years is the recognition of asexuality as a sexual orientation.

Written in a similar style as the Radicalesbians’ *The Woman-Identified Woman*, the manifesto which marked the beginning of lesbian feminism, it seems appropriate that Lisa Orlando’s 1972 *Asexual Manifesto* functioned similarly for asexual women. Orlando was a member of the New York Radical Feminists. While the organization created three caucuses, all based on sexual orientation, Orlando and colleague Barbie Hunter Getz found themselves not relating to any others, and formed the Asexual Caucus, consisting only of Orlando and Getz.<sup>341</sup> Asexuality was defined as “relating sexually to no one”, and was a

<sup>333</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders, Second Edition (DSM-II)*, 44. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1968.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>335</sup> Mayes & Horwitz, “DSM-III and the Revolution in the Classification of Mental Illness,” 251.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 250-251.

<sup>337</sup> Bogaert, “Toward a Conceptual Understanding of Asexuality,” 243.

<sup>338</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, Revised (DSM-III-R)*, 293. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1987.

<sup>339</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV*, 498-500. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994.

<sup>340</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV-TR*, 539-542. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000.

<sup>341</sup> Lisa Orlando, *The Asexual Manifesto*, 1. New York: New York Radical Feminists, 1972. <https://app.box.com/s/p7ngvv3iueaj0hk7xadkwd92af2zx4yz/>

response to sexual objectification.<sup>342</sup> This objectification, originally by men, was copied by women toward each other due to social conditioning about sex and its function in intimacy. Thus, all “interpersonal sex”, including lesbian sex, was oppressive.<sup>343</sup> Intimacy could be achieved through activities they considered non-sexual, including physical touch and kissing. Being asexual was a political act against such oppression. Orlando gives a list of seven myths about the importance of sex in relationships, before also naming sex as a distraction and barrier to fighting sexism.<sup>344</sup> Significantly, both Orlando and Getz self-identified as asexual. While they did not explicitly state that they believed it to be another sexual orientation, the caucus’ existence as a result of analogy to the other caucuses which were based on sexual orientation, indicates that Orlando and Getz did conceptualize asexuality similarly.

There was a small, but growing awareness of asexuality in the New York lesbian and gay community by the late 1970s, as demonstrated by the January 23, 1978 edition of the *Village Voice*. Arthur Bell’s front-page article titled “Asexuality: Everybody’s Not Doing It” is a commentary on the desexualization of culture and media during this time. The humorous opening line, “it wouldn’t surprise me to see a rash of asexual non-dating bars... where people of different asexual persuasions stare at each other and keep their rocks on”,<sup>345</sup> reveals an awareness of the diverse experiences of asexual people. Asexuality is discussed in parallel at the cultural and personal levels. Bell notes a reduction in “sexploitation” in newer media, using films like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, plus Broadway plays such as *Annie* and *Dracula* as examples of media bucking the trend of sex- and romance-themed entertainment. He also noted that they had become less graphic.<sup>346</sup> This was effectively cultural asexuality, an orientation shared collectively by the American public, and expressed via entertainment media.

At the personal level, Bell speculated about the (a)sexuality of Ed Koch, who was too busy with mayoral duties to think about sex. He acknowledges the absence of any activism for asexual rights: “[asexual people] prefer to keep their mouths shut.”<sup>347</sup> However, against the advice of one of his interview subjects, he conflates asexuality with celibacy. Another interview subject, the Studio 54 co-owner Steve Rubell, resolves this problem. Rubell, a self-identified asexual, gives his definition of asexuality as “someone who has no desire for sex.”<sup>348</sup> Though Bell assigned multiple non-sexualities to asexuality, his article demonstrates a continuity with the *Asexual Manifesto*, as the idea spread from radical feminism.

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<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7.

<sup>345</sup> Arthur Bell, “Asexuality: Everybody’s Not Doing It”, *Village Voice*, 23:4 (January 23, 1978), 1.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

In 1980, attention toward asexuality returned to the scholarly domain. Michael D. Storms' *Theories of Sexual Orientation* expanded on Kinsey's 7+X point scale. Instead of the one-dimensional approach to homo-, bi- and heterosexuality, with those with a non-sexuality set aside and dismissed as having barriers to healthy sexual expression, Storms proposed a two-dimensional scale, where the horizontal axis corresponded to what he referred to as "hetero-eroticism", and the vertical axis for "homo-eroticism." He then extended his theory further by dividing this into quadrants, each representing a different category. Those exhibiting high homo-eroticism but low or no hetero-eroticism were categorized as homosexual, and those with the inverse as heterosexual. People who scored high in both dimensions were labelled bisexual. This left a fourth quadrant, representing people with low or no homo-eroticism and low or no hetero-eroticism. These people he categorized as asexual. Asexuality, for Storms, was a fourth sexual orientation.<sup>349</sup> This marked the beginning of scholarly recognition of asexuality as a sexual orientation, though it would take time before it received wider acceptance. That would require bringing wider public attention to the existence of people with an asexual orientation.

This opportunity came with the popularization of the Internet. Two small online communities were formed between 2000 and 2001. The first was the creatively named Haven for the Human Amoeba (HHA), a peer support-based Yahoo! Group for self-identified asexual people. The second, created almost at the same time as the HHA became popular in July 2001, was the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) website in spring 2001. The founder, David Jay, defined an asexual person as "a person who is attracted to neither gender" on the AVEN website connected with college LGBTQ+ student organizations, and soon collaborated with HHA members to grow the AVEN website.<sup>350</sup> In recognition of non-binary people, he later changed the definition to "a person who does not experience sexual attraction." This definition remains on the AVEN website today.<sup>351</sup> This conceptualization of asexuality was both orientation and in particular, identity-based.

In 2006, an argument spilled out on the internet between Jay and HHA member Geraldine Levi Jones. Jay believed that asexual people could be sex-positive, and still identify as asexual if they masturbated, since the definition focused on sexual attraction as opposed to behavior. Jones, on the other hand, believed the definition of asexuality should encompass both attraction and behavior. In particular, she thought masturbation should exclude a person from an asexual identity. Her and her supporters were dubbed "anti-sexuals" and carried a sense of elitism over allosexual people. The split resulted in

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<sup>349</sup> Michael D. Storms, "Theories of Sexual Orientation" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38:5 (1980), 784-785, 790.

<sup>350</sup> Hinderliter, "How Is Asexuality Different from Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder?" 170-171.

<sup>351</sup> Asexuality Visibility and Education Network. "Welcome." <https://www.asexuality.org> (accessed Dec. 5, 2021).



The Official Asexual Society. “Nonlibidoism” in the name replaced “Asexual” in the title when it became clear that there was widespread support for AVEN’s position. 2006 marked the end of The Official Nonlibidoism Society, but it is recognized by AVEN members as a useful group that helped asexuals to clarify the definition of the identity and come to a consensus.<sup>352</sup>

Asexual activists have come into conflict with the disability rights movement. This stems from different connotations of asexuality for each group, and the impact of asexuality becoming more visible on disabled people. Some queer and crip theory can illustrate the problem. The feminist author Adrienne Rich introduced the concept of *compulsory heterosexuality* in her 1980 article “Compulsory Sexuality and Lesbian Existence.” The theory says that there is an assumed social expectation that all women are naturally inclined sexually toward men. Women who claim a lesbian orientation are seen as only having a “preference” or are feminists rebelling against patriarchal society.<sup>353</sup> However, it stands to reason that compulsory *heterosexuality* implies the existence of compulsory *sexuality*.<sup>354</sup>

Robert McRuer, in his *Crip Theory*, expands on compulsory heterosexuality, introducing the analogous *compulsory able-bodiedness*. He argues that neither compulsory heterosexuality nor compulsory able-bodiedness can exist without the other.<sup>355</sup> This effectively means that an asexual person is inherently disabled, and a disabled person, due to the social myth that disabled people don’t have sex,<sup>356</sup> is inherently asexual. This leads some disability rights activists to oppose framing asexuality as a sexual orientation, believing that it would reinforce negative myths which erase disabled people’s sexualities. Conversely, many asexual activists see disability as negative, and seek to disassociate asexuality with a disability, which is implicated by the continued pathologization of non-sexualities.<sup>357</sup> The problem is further complicated by intersectional issues experienced by people who are both disabled and asexual. Such people find themselves excluded in both disability and asexual communities. The gender studies scholar Eunjung Kim argues, however, that this is an artificial conflict and that both communities can gain from supporting each other—if they can present each identity as separate from each other. People can be asexual, disabled, or both, but not one *because* they are the other. Both disability and asexuality can be depathologized.<sup>358</sup>

<sup>352</sup> Hinderliter, “How Is Asexuality Different from Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder?” 171-172.

<sup>353</sup> Adrienne Cecile Rich. “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence (1980)” *Journal of Women’s History*, 15:3 (Autumn 2003), 13. DOI: 10.1353/jowh.2003.0079

<sup>354</sup> Kim, “Asexualities and Disabilities in Constructing Sexual Normalcy,” 250.

<sup>355</sup> McRuer, Robert. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, 2. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

<sup>356</sup> Kim, “Asexualities and Disabilities in Constructing Sexual Normalcy,” 273.

<sup>357</sup> Kim, “Asexualities and Disabilities in Constructing Sexual Normalcy,” 273.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 273-274.

In conclusion, the history of asexuality goes back to the late nineteenth century, when the emerging field of sexology attempted to explain and treat various “non-sexualities”, ranging from the inability to orgasm, to not experiencing sexual attraction. Non-sexualities were redefined throughout the first half of the twentieth century in various different ways, ultimately leading to their increasing pathologization in successive editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. In 1972 asexuality was introduced by feminists as a potential sexual orientation. It slowly gained support, including in the medical profession after Michael D. Storms expanded on the Kinsey scale to create a two-dimensional model of sexual orientation which included asexuality. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, online asexual communities formed and successfully pursued wider awareness of the orientation. However, some asexual activists and disability rights activists attempt to counter each other due to a perceived issue with their co-association. The scholar Eunjung Kim has proposed a solution to this problem: work together to battle this co-association while supporting each other’s pursuit for increased recognition. Notions of asexuality have shifted and evolved over the past 150 years, resulting in both conflict and cooperation between medical professionals and the asexual community.

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