THE

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Submissions

The Graduate History Review is a peer-reviewed, open access journal published by graduate students at the University of Victoria. We welcome articles and research notes from emerging scholars in all historical disciplines. Submission guidelines are available at: http://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ghr/about/submissions

Front Cover Image

Charpentier, Alexandre-Louis-Marie. *Young Woman Reading*. 1896. Embossed color lithograph, 16 x 22.8 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art. {{cite web|title=Young Woman Reading|url=https://clevelandart.org/art/1991.228|author=Alexandre-Louis-Marie Charpentier|year=1896|access-date=08 September 2022|publisher =Cleveland Museum of Art}}

Back Cover Image

Untitled image, in Gose, Sally, Jenny Bazett, and Shelley Reid, *Help Yourself: Health Care Resource Directory for Women in Victoria*, 13. Victoria Women's Movement Archive, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

A Note on the Type

This journal is laid out in the Crimson Text typeface, designed by Sebastian Kosch. http://fonts.google.com/specimen/Crimson+Text

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President's Message

It is my pleasure to introduce the 11th volume of the University of Victoria's *Graduate History Review.* This thought-provoking collection of articles explores historical periods and events of significance spanning our local and global communities.

Within these pages, readers will engage with wide-ranging themes, including: the influences of hetero-patriarchy, racism and capitalism on the experiences of indigenous women; gender constructs and archetyping; sexualized violence during the Holocaust; perceptions of transfeminine; and the pursuit of geo-political agendas. The articles represent the vast diversity of historical thought and research that contributes to new perspectives and ongoing debate and dialogue.

The Graduate History Review also highlights collaborations between UVic history graduate students, faculty members and colleagues from Carleton University, University of Windsor and Fordham University, who have worked together to bring us this outstanding publication.

Congratulations to the talented graduate students, emerging scholars, faculty advisors and mentors for their contributions to this collection of articles. Thank you for sharing your passion and for creating and disseminating knowledge that help us to better understand our past, our present, and to inform and shape our future.

Sincerely,
Kevin Hall, PhD
President and Vice-Chancellor

Chair's Message

I am thrilled to introduce the 2022 issue of *The Graduate History Review*.

For more than a decade, the journal has published cutting-edge scholarship by graduate students from across Canada. It is often the case that the themes and topics of the most innovative historical work reflect profound changes in current political culture. As historian E. H. Carr put it, "Great history is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insights into the problems of the present." The superb contributions in this issue underscore that reality. In particular, they highlight the extraordinary vibrancy of historical work in the areas of gender and sexuality. Our age is marked by inspiring assertions of individual identity and autonomy as well as assaults on democracy and denials of justice. In this context, all historians must be aware of the importance and implications of their scholarship.

The emerging authors featured in this volume clearly meet that challenge. Their topics include the political implications of racist slurs toward Indigenous women in Canada, the intersection of gender and racial identity in the notion of the "Modern Girl" in the early twentieth century, Jewish responses and resistance to Nazi sexual violence in the Polish Ghettos, the significance of transfeminine erotica in the postwar period, and the implications of the Carter administration's policies for long-term US involvement in Afghanistan. Needless to say, all of these topics have critical connections to issues of great and growing importance in the world today.

As such, I extend my hearty congratulations to the contributors and editors who made this volume possible. It is a source of great pride to me and my colleagues that this exemplary graduate student journal is based at the University of Victoria.

Dr. Jason M. Colby
Chair, Department of History
University of Victoria

Editors' Note

It is our pleasure to present Volume 11 of *The Graduate History Review*, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal published by the History graduate students at the University of Victoria.

This volume brings together a collection of accomplished articles on race, gender, and war from five emerging scholars. We would like to thank our five authors who have worked with us throughout this long editorial process: Sinéad O'Halloran, Amanda Skocic, Kästle Van Der Meer, Chris Aino Pihlak, and Matt Mulhern.

We also thank all the peer reviewers and department staff without whose support this journal would not be possible. They provide incredible feedback, thoughtful contributions, and organizational support.

This volume has been an endeavour of dedication and collaboration. We are proud to have brought it to life for another year and to pass the torch on the next volume's editors: Jamey Jesperson and Chris Aino Pihlak. We are confident they will bring new insights and life to *The Graduate History Review*.

Sincerely,
Cassandra Hadley and Emilee Petrie
Co-Editors
The Graduate History Review

Contributors

Sinéad O'Halloran is a White settler student and researcher from Moh'kinstis Treaty 7 Territory/Calgary, currently residing between Tiohtiá:ke/Montréal and the unceded Algonquin territory of Ottawa. She completed her Bachelor's in Public History and a minor in First Peoples Studies at Concordia University in 2021 and is beginning her M.A. in Public History at Carleton University in Fall 2022. Sinéad's research interests focus on settler colonialism, gender, sexuality, oral history, sensory and emotional histories, and community archiving.

Amanda Skocic is a graduate student in the Department of History at the University of Windsor, where she also completed a B.A. in Political Science and French.

Kästle Van Der Meer is a second year M.A. student in the History Department at the University of Victoria. Her research, which blends the disciplines of Gender Studies and History, focuses on gender, sexuality, and sexualized violence in the Holocaust. She is currently researching Jewish experiences of sexualized violence in forced labour, concentration, and death camps and investigating how such violence was resisted.

Chris Aino Pihlak is an emerging transfeminine scholar who has devoted herself to subjects denied space within the heterocisnormative academy. She is a white, settler scholar, currently working on the land of the Lək^{w}əŋən peoples at the University of Victoria. In addition to her general interest in histories of gender and sexuality, Chris is currently examining how

Anglophone, overwhelmingly white, gender-variant communities constructed femininity from the 1960s through the 1990s via a range of transfeminine periodicals. As a trans woman studying transfemininity, she hopes her analysis of the complexities and messiness of past trans lives honors those who built the path she now walks on.

Matt Mulhern is a third-year History Ph.D. student at Fordham University. After a 35-year career as an actor, writer, and director, he received a M.A. in History from City College of New York in December 2019. His focus is Global Cold War, Diplomatic History, and U.S. Foreign Relations.

Situating the S-Slur Within the Colonial Imaginary: The Shaping and Shaming of Indigenous Un/Womanhood in Western Canada during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Sinéad O'Halloran, she/her
Carleton University

Abstract: This paper charts the shifting connotations, uses and impacts of the s-slur, a derogatory term used by colonizers to refer to Indigenous women, in archival Western Canadian newspapers. It aims to demonstrate the influences of hetero-patriarchy, racism, and capitalism on the perception of Indigenous 'un/womanhood' during the expansion of the settler state. It draws upon feminist and linguistic frameworks to examine the coloniality of gender, naming, and slurs. By examining how the use of the s-slur fluctuated between insinuations of victimhood (in relation to Indigenous gender roles, traditions, and marriage) and threat (in association with sexual deviancy and sex work), this paper aims to demonstrate how the term represented both sides of the racialized gender dichotomy, depending on how it could best serve the colonial project. This research is an attempt to understand the legacies of violence inflicted by, and encapsulated in, the use of this word towards Indigenous women, and to argue for the necessity of de-normalizing its use.

https://doi.org/page10.18357/ghr111202220419

We, as settlers, are in a collective moment of reckoning. The structures and systems implemented to ensure White nationhood's comfort, safety, and future are being brought to account for the attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples. Part of this reckoning requires us to not only bear witness to these realities as histories belonging solely to Indigenous peoples, from which we have perceptually removed ourselves, but to actively engage with them as our own histories as perpetrators. An examination of the historical use of slurs by settlers and their persistence within common nomenclature is an area in which we can enact this type of critical collective reflection. A pertinent example of this is the s-slur, a derogatory term used by colonizers to refer to Indigenous women that has long been imprinted onto the physical and social geographies of so-called North America.[1] In order to understand the legacies of

[1] I will refer to this word as the censored 's-slur' as a means of denoting the severity of the word as a sexual and racial slur and to de-normalize the continuance of its existence within the mouths and writing of settlers. I have censored the spelling of the word within the documents quoted in this paper, a conscious altering of historical and historiographical sources, in an effort to reject its repetition in the settler made archival documents which promoted it and its resurgence in the contemporary works by settlers that criticize it. This is in no way to discount the efforts of Algonquin women, like Abenaki historical consultant Dr. Marge Bruchac, who wrote "Reclaiming the word 'Squaw' in the Name of the Ancestors", who like many other marginalized and racialized communities are reclaiming ownership of the words that were robbed from and weaponized against them. Within the Algonquin language family sq**w is still the root of many words used in reference to women (such as Cree, Ojibwa. Fox, Unami Delaware and Munsee Delaware) and the continuance of its use within this context is a means of refusing to allow the degradation of language, the colonization of tradition or settler ownership of the names they bestow upon

harm inflicted by this word onto Indigenous women and to continue taking steps to de-normalize its use, it is necessary to examine its history.

In this paper I will look into the historical use of the s-slur in western Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Specifically, I will examine how the use of the s-slur fluctuated between insinuations of victimhood (in relation to Indigenous gender roles, traditions, and marriage) and threats (in association with sexual deviancy and sex work). These uses are illuminated through the analysis of historical English language newspapers published in Alberta and British Columbia during the period. I will chart the s-slur's varied use and associations in local media, while analyzing the function of news media in shaping the ideological and relational realities between settlers and Indigenous peoples in the early coastal and prairie settlements. A goal of this paper is to demonstrate how the term represented both sides of the gendered dichotomy, depending on how it could best serve to further the colonial project. This serves as a gateway to examine the influences of hetero–patriarchy, White supremacy, and capitalism on perceptions of Indigenous 'un/womanhood' and sexuality during the expansion of the settler state. This paper makes wider connections to trans-national patterns of settler colonialism and the hegemonic social structures they implement through binary categorization. It will draw upon feminist and linguistic frameworks to examine attempts of othering through the coloniality of gender, the practice

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themselves. See: Marge Bruchac, "Reclaiming the Word the Word "Squaw" in the Name of the Ancestors", *The Cherokee Voice* 27 (December 1, 1999): 8.

of naming, and the implementation of slurs as a colonial tool of domination.

Within this research, I position myself as a White, settler/colonizer researcher, writing with the responsibility to problematize settler colonial mindsets and systems of power from which I inevitably benefit. While my bibliography is heavily populated by White researchers, my methodology and approach to the writing of history is deeply indebted to and informed by Indigenous scholars, in particular Linda Tuhiwai Smith and her monumental book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.*[2] The aim of this research is not an attempt to speak for Indigenous women or to catalogue their experiences of the colonial process. Rather, it intends to cast the light upon settler systems of domination and the insidious ways that colonial power permeated and informed the collective imaginary and our perception of Indigenous women. With this in mind, many of the primary sources used are deeply disturbing and graphic in their use of the s-slur, but I included them (censored) with the intention of unsettling the White readership of this research against whom slurs have never been weaponized.

Colonial Systems of Categorization

Before analyzing more deeply the gendered and racialized construction of the s-slur within the colonial imaginary, it is necessary to first grasp the coloniality of gender itself and the violence

[2] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London: Zed Books, 1999.

of its imposition. Central to the European ideology, which fueled and justified the expansion of empire, was the assertion of social, racial, cultural, environmental, and gendered hierarchies structured through a categorical and dichotomous logic which classified each subject by its distinction and distance from an opposite. María Lugones, feminist philosopher and activist, in her landmark essay "Toward a Decolonial Feminism", presents the concept that at the center of the colonial dichotomy is the distinction between the human and the non-human. She states:

> A hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man. It was accompanied by other dichotomous hierarchical distinctions, among them that between men and women. This distinction became a mark of the human and a mark of civilization. Only the civilized are men or women.[3]

The category of 'Man' was reserved for European males, and 'Woman', not the equal counterpart but responsible for reproducing 'Man' through her "purity and passivity", was characterized as European and female.[4] This conception of gender instrumentalizes and encloses sex within its dichotomous logic, denying the existence of a gender spectrum and the gender identities which exist between the poles of the gender binary. Colonized Indigenous peoples were

[3] María Lugones, "Towards a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 743.

[4] Ibid.

imposed with this Western construction of gender, which denied the existence of their own perceptions of gender and identity, erasing Two-Spirit, non-binary, and intersex peoples entirely. However, through this colonial process they were not made into 'men' or 'women' but rather representatives of their opposite: un-human forms. The coloniality of gender is a process of actively reducing and dehumanizing an individual as a means to subjugate and dominate them through the justification of assumed superiority. Lugones explains how the settler colonial project "used the hierarchical gender dichotomy as a judgment, though the attainment of dichotomous gendering for the colonized was not the point of the normative judgment […] the transformation of the colonized into men and women would have been a transformation not in identity, but in nature."[5] Gender and sex were actively constructed along human and non-human lines, which in their application within the colonial project was the line between White and non-White. The result being that colonized peoples were not gendered but sexed, as animals are, and thus denied any claim to what consider legitimate humanity.

This logic of gender as a colonial categorizing tool is closely linked to the strategy of symbolic domination through naming. Throughout much of the development of the settler colony, a defined and gendered terminology was constructed to refer to Indigenous men, women and children, which was distinctly different from the categories used for White people. Following Lugones' logic, we see how the terms man, child and woman were used almost exclusively for White persons – i.e. 'humans'. The use of 'buck', 'papoose' and the

[5] Ibid, 744-745.

s-slur as referential terms, with separate lexical items to refer to gender and age, is a pattern more closely related to the naming of animals than other human groups.[6] It is through the appropriation and reinterpretation of these words that they were vulgarized and weaponized. Although there have been disputes on the true origins of the word, it is now widely accepted that settlers first adopted the s-slur as early as 1694 from the Algonquin language family, and more specifically the Massachusett language's word for 'young woman'.[7] The belief by some is that the word actually has its roots in Mohawk, part of the Iroquoian language family, linked to the word '*ojiskwa'* which means 'vagina' in the most anatomical sense of the word.[8] The tracing of the s-slur to the Algonquin language and to the original definition of 'young woman' has been used as a justification for the inherent neutrality of the word. However, the etymological root of the word does not discount the harmful semantic reinterpretation it has undergone through its colonization. Through her work examining exclusion, stereotyping and 'othering' of marginalized peoples in American media, Debra Merskin examines the lasting psychological impact the s-slur has had on the North American social geography. Merskin explains how our social, cultural and historical reality is shaped by the words we choose to describe it by, thus "discourses of domination" employ language as a tool of "defining and oppressing those constructed as other."[9]

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[6] William Bright, "The Sociolinguistics of the 'S-Word': Squaw in American Placenames," *Names* 48, no. 3-4 (September/December 2000): 212.

[7] Ibid, 210.

[8] Ibid, 212.

[9] Debra Merskin, "The S-Word: Discourse, Stereotypes, and the American Indian

Indigenous 'Un/Womanhood'

The use of the s-slur by settlers was a means of refusing Indigenous women access or legitimacy to the category of 'Woman'. Through this logic, Lugones argues that the category of the "colonized woman" is in fact a hollow term, for "no woman is colonized; no colonized females are women".[10] Indigenous women were forced to exist within a liminal space in which they were subjected to sexualization, paternalism and other violent expressions of the patriarchy, while being simultaneously denied the privilege of 'womanhood', of humanity as experienced by White women. Thus, the fabrication of an Indigenous 'un/womanhood' was developed in the colonial imaginary.

This concept of Indigenous un/womanhood was not necessarily ubiquitous among western Canadian settlers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sarah Carter, a renowned Canadian historian of gendered Indigenous–settler relations in the Prairie west, touches on this in her piece "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada." She discusses Methodist missionary John McDougall, who in 1895 chastised a fellow missionary, asking: "In the name of decency and civilization and Christianity, why call one person a woman and another a [s-slur]?"[11] In her work examining the

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Woman," *The Howard Journal of Communication* 21 (2010): 349.

[10] Lugones, "Towards a Decolonial Feminism," 745

[11] John McDougall, "A Criticism of 'Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-Fires,'" (n.p. 1895): 12-23, quoted in Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman,'" *Great Plains Quarterly,* 13, no. 3 (Summer

images of Indigenous women created and manipulated by the early Canadian governing body, Carter argues that while a unified perception is unlikely, what is certain is that these negative stereotypes were pervasive because they were "deliberately propagated by officials of the state."[12] The proliferation of these images into the collective consciousness of the growing settler population in western Canada during this period was predominantly achieved through the distribution of localized English language newspapers. These publications, as technologies of the colonial project, acted discursively to construct and control how settlers were to perceive and interact with Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women. The presentation of stories, editorials, reports, and observations were intended as forms of entertainment and education, presented from the objective and masculine journalistic voices of colonial authority.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the representation of Indigenous women in the English language newspapers in B.C. and Alberta largely fell within the imposed dichotomy of the 'Pocahontas' or 'Indian Princess' versus the s-slur. This complex was made to act as a binary through which settlers could understand Indigenous un/womanhood, constructed entirely for the colonial White gaze. The image of Pocahontas, who also used the name Matoaka, is based upon the romanticized and heavily fictionalized historical account of one of the most well known missing and murdered Indigenous

1993): 148. [Excerpt censored by researcher].

[12] Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the "Indian Woman" in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada", *Great Plains Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 148.

women. This image exemplifies what Jean O'Brien describes as a "firsting" story to legitimize the presence of settlers in North America.[13] The legend of Pocahontas throwing herself in front of the Powhatan executioner to protect the colonizer John Smith became "an important, nonthreatening symbol of white American's right to be here because she was always willing to sacrifice her happiness, cultural identity, and even her life for the good of the new nation."[14] The trope of the 'Indian Princess', epitomized by Pocahontas, represented all of the qualities attributed to White femininity—docile, beautiful, aloof, virtuous, silent—while also representing an exoticized and eroticized image of Indigeneity. The perception of the 'Indian Princess' was a fantasy of the colonial imagination across North America, which presented Indigenous women as assistants to the colonial project. Importantly, it portrayed them as desirous of and loyal to the men ushering it forward, even at the expense of their own land, culture, and communities. This pervasive legend employs a favorable perception of a female Indigenous figurehead in a highly limited and objectified sense. The power of and praise for Pocahontas was only asserted by colonial powers so long as it did not contradict the wider patriarchal, racist, and genocidal ideological groundwork of the project. A searing example of this is in the *Cranbrook Herald* in 1898 where a segment discussing both positive and negative associations with the name "Smith" includes a brief segment of a letter from a reader proudly instructing all to "Never to forget Captain John

[13] Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 11.

[14] Elizabeth S. Bird, "Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media," *Journal of Communications* 49, no. 3 (1999): 72.

Smith, our first settler, who killed Pocahontas."[15]

While the Pocahontas legend was used as a means of legitimizing the presence of early colonizers on Turtle Island, it was used concurrently and paradoxically with the s-slur. Where Pocahontas represented Indigenous women's desire for colonization, the s-slur was used as a justification for the necessity of the settler state. The s-slur was represented as "squalid and immoral […] whose physical removal or destruction can be understood as necessary to the progress of civilization."[16] As I will discuss throughout this paper, the image of the s-slur was not static; rather, it shifted through multiple iterations, each fitting within the dichotomous structure of un/womanhood manufactured by the patriarchal and White supremacist colonial machine. The earliest and most fundamental rendition of s-slur imagery was rooted in the symbolic perception of her as "both the past and the obstructions to the future".[17] She was understood to be the holder of cultural tradition and resistant to assimilatory progress, which, through the Eurocentric lens of the colonizers, represented the epitome of 'inhuman'. An example of this violent rhetoric within western Canadian media is found in a 1867 publication of *The Cariboo Sentinel,* which argued that the Bering Strait migration theory can be proven through the continuity of the ancient Asian custom of taking home mutilated corpses as trophies of

[15] *Cranbrook Herald* (Cranbrook, B.C.), 1898

[16] Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 161.

[17] Merskin, "The S-Word: Discourse, Stereotypes, and the American Indian Woman," 355.

war in North American Indigenous tradition.[18] George Wallace, likely the sole contributor and editor of the paper, when describing a war procession, stated:

> Home came the braves and great was the rejoicing. The old [s-slurs] smiled affectionately and the dusky maidens pressed their lovers to their haversacks […] Fixed on poles, like Gesler's cap, were the scalps of the slain, fresh and gory, trimmed with gingham ribbons and the long black hair dangling about like cow-tails in fly time. To carry these, two healthy looking [s-slurs], grim, obese and slatternly, with the sins of fifty years upon their idiotic heads, the filth and grease of a generation on their tattered buffalo robes, were selected.[19]

The depiction of the s-slur, as gruesomely described in this article, was used as the scapegoat and rebel of the colonial narrative, regarded as the figure who instigated, encouraged, and celebrated the brutality of Indigenous men and reared the children in their image.[20]

S-Slur as Victim

It is here we encounter our first major contradiction in the colonial rhetoric of the s-slur itself, for while Indigenous women were being blamed for upholding their 'uncivilized' culture, they were

[18] George Wallace, *The Cariboo Sentinel,* (Bakersville, B.C.), 1867.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

also portrayed as the victims of it. This hetero-paternalist presentation of feminized victimhood can be seen in three major ways—victims of labour, victims of tradition, and victims through marriage. In relation to labour, a particularly common portrayal of Indigenous peoples by colonial media in the late nineteenth-century, that largely continues today, is the image of the 'lazy Indian'. John Lutz, historian of settler-Indigenous relations in the Pacific Northwest, examines the history of this trope extensively in his book *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations.* Lutz outlines how the 'lazy Indian' stereotype emerged from the misunderstanding and disapproval of Indigenous peoples' disinterest in wealth accumulation and prioritization of community over individual profit, which were incompatible with the settlers' "protestant work ethic" of the time.[21] The motivation of settlers to brave the 'New World' in order to reap the rewards of the plentiful natural resources was in a large part driven by the European mindset that one's work ethic and drive determined one's value. This rhetoric had a particular stronghold in western Canada, as early reliance on Indigenous involvement in industry prior to major settlement shifted by the late nineteenth-century as the economy developed.[22] Lutz makes apparent the nuanced ways in which Indigenous peoples interacted with, were absorbed into, and suffered from the settler-capitalist economic system overtime, but he argues that at no point were Indigenous peoples entirely uninvolved in this economy. As the colonial project advanced across the province and more settlers arrived, Indigenous

[21] John Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008): 7.
[22] Ibid.

workers were displaced from the settler wage-based economy, and their own traditional potlach and seasonal trade-based economies were targeted. [23] In turn, the trope of the 'lazy Indian' was deployed as an explanation for their dismissal and to invisibilize their economic involvement all together.

The 'lazy Indian' trope additionally served as justification for settler expansion and exploitation of the land, regarding Indigenous peoples as unwilling or incapable of seizing the economic opportunity the land offered. This rhetoric was an inherently gendered one, as the construction of the social and economic spheres were regulated and upheld by the imposed European gendered roles. These gender roles placed women solely within the private sphere, denying them access to the 'legitimate' economy and all forms of paying labour, while men were expected to be the sole financial provider for their families and the absolute head of the household. Consequently, the 'lazy Indian' trope was a means of emasculating Indigenous men and as a result created the s-slur/drudge stereotype — the subordinated wife who was made to do all the physical labour. Settlers, perceiving Indigenous labour practices in accordance to their patriarchal, capitalist frameworks, were unable to understand "the social power which the labour helped the women to attain."[24] Mark Rifkin, an important scholar working within the fields of Sexuality Studies and Indigenous Studies, discusses the imposition of these frameworks in his groundbreaking research examining the violent infliction of heteronormative Anglo-Saxon conceptions of family,

[23] Ibid.

[24] Carter, *Capturing Women,* 163.

sex, private property, and identity onto Indigenous peoples in North America. Rifkin argues that attempts to villainize and regulate Indigenous gender roles and communal divisions of labour were intended to institutionalize the heterosexual ideal of the nuclear family built around the patriarch provider.[25] These efforts ultimately worked to build a "network of interlocking state-sanctioned policies and ideologies that positioned monogamous hetero-couplehood and the privatized single-family household as the official national ideal by the late nineteenth century."[26] This rigid social and gender structuring was presented through a moralistic lens but functioned as the bedrock of the settler-capitalist formation. In order to colonize a people whose society, economy, and kin networks were not hierarchical, the colonizers were required to first naturalize hierarchies by instituting patriarchy.

These exaggerated criticisms of Indigenous labour and gender roles are found extensively in B.C. and Alberta newspapers in the late nineteenth-century. For instance, in an 1891 issue of *The Prairie Illustrated,* a crude, shadowy illustration of a hooded Indigenous woman next to a horse drawn plow, titled "Blackfoot [S-Slur] and Travoy", is accompanied by a brief, sarcastic and offensive segment and poem. It reads:

> The above cut-represents a lady of the Blackfoot persuasion, out rustling wood with her cutter. It is a peculiar trait of the male members of the Indian tribes

[25] Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.
[26] Ibid.

> that they are essentially domesticated and display a beautiful and elevating love of home – in cold weather. They also show their consideration of their [s-slurs] by giving them a chance to go out in the bracing 40- atmosphere and rustle wood, thus ensuring their better halves a good supply of ozone and exercise; they themselves stay in the teepee, smoke, pound the tom tom with a club, and see who can tell the biggest lie, or perchance sit on any papoose that ventures to lift his voice and wail. In fact,
>
> > "Taking one consideration with another, with another,
> > A Blackfoot [s-slur] is not a happy one–
> > Happy one."[27]

The use of the word 'lady' intermixed with the s-slur is an intentional push towards a re-feminization of Indigenous women within this specific colonial discourse, enough so that public sympathy could be generated and settler-state intervention could be warranted.

Another colonial imagining of s-slur victimhood presented Indigenous women as the sufferers of their own cultural traditions. This particular iteration can be found within several historical global contexts as the patriarchal assertion of the requirement to protect racialized and White women from Indigenous men was continuously used as a justification for violent colonial intervention. Critiques of Indigenous gender relations and traditions circulated through the

[27] T.B Braden, "Black [S-Slur] and Travoy", *The Prairie Illustrated* 1, no. 15 (Calgary, AB), 1891. [Text censored by researcher.]

colonial world in similar ways, equating 'incivility' with the supposed mistreatment of women and 'civility' with the safekeeping of the values of womanhood. As historian Julia Clancy-Smith presents through her work on the French occupation of Algeria, colonialism is "as much the forging of a gaze—or a spectrum of gazes fixed upon [Indigenous] women—as it is the assembling of mechanisms for political and economic control."[28] The focus on the supposed mistreatment of Indigenous women through their cultural customs allowed for the application of a patriarchal-paternalistic assumption of a settler civil and moral duty to 'rescue' these women from their very Indigeneity. An example of this inflammatory rhetoric can be found in *The Daily Canadian* of Nelson, B.C., where a 1907 issue published the story: "Victim of Superstition: Heads of Indian Tribe Strangled [S-Slur] as Sacrifice to Secure Better Hunting".[29] This headline demonstrates the tactic of using gendered Indigenous victimization and villainization as moral grounds for cultural domination and the necessitation of the role of the White male saviour within Indigenous communities. Within this colonial construct, patriarchal ideology proved remarkably effective, suggesting that Indigenous peoples, in particular Indigenous women, were in dire need of the enlightened and virtuous colonial mission to rescue them from their own culture and selves.

The final iteration of s-slur as victim in colonial discourse is

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[28] Julia Clancy-Smith, "Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830-1962," in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism,* eds. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 155.

[29] *The Daily Canadian, (Nelson, B.C.), 1907.* [Text censored by researcher.]

connected to the misperception by settlers and fur-traders of the marital practices of Plains society and the relative sexual freedoms afforded to Indigenous women. As discussed by Sylvia Van Kirk in *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870,* in the Christian, Eurocentric perspective of settlers, the practice of gift giving as the primary ceremony by which Indigenous marriages were enacted seemed unromantic and more closely aligned to their understanding of prostitution.[30] However, Indigenous marriages were more concerned with the reciprocal obligations of solidifying kin networks, which were most commonly fortified through meeting the "bride price" or practicing "bride service" between the families of the couple.[31] Additionally, the traditional customs of many Plains societies included forms of sororal polygyny and polyandry, in which siblings, either brothers or sisters, would be

[30] This section relies heavily on the pivotal insights of historian Sylvia Van Kirk into settler misperceptions and reactions to these practices in her landmark book *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870.* The book, published in 1980, provides extensive examination of both Indigenous and settler women's participation in the fur trade, pushing the importance of histories of women, marriage and family firmly into the existing historiography of the fur trade. However, this book's place as a forerunner of Canadian women's history does not over cast the valid post-colonial and anti-racist criticism it has since received, which make clear how "wedded '*Many Tender Ties'* is to a Eurocentric, celebratory sort of Liberal feminism." With this in mind, Van Kirk's work still stands as an applicable collection of primary source material on the imperialistic intricacies and inter-personal intimacies of the fur trade. See: Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870,* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980).

[31] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980): 24.

married to the same person. Outside of marriage itself, the practice of "wife lending" was also common.[32] This was the allowance of one's brother or close kin to sexual access to their wife, as an indicator of status and alliance. These customs were not based upon a belief of wives as property but enacted through the cultural lens of reciprocity and community unity, untarnished by sexist conceptions of purity and ownership. Plains societies, unlike the arriving settlers, did not consider marriage bonds to be absolutely indissoluble or a woman's chastity to be sacred. To the Christian, European observer, who understood prostitution to be the pinnacle degradation of a woman's worth, Indigenous marriage customs were the ultimate mark of incivility.

This is exemplified in *The Hosmer Times* story "Experiences with Indians in Western Canada."[33] The lengthy piece, written under the pseudonym "SEC", details several particularly disturbing and pridefully violent encounters the author had with Indigenous peoples during his travels as a Canadian Pacific Railway surveyor. One of which describes an occasion when a group of Indigenous women, out of curiosity, entered the camp in which he was staying:

> A peculiarly beautiful bean pot struck the fancy of an old fat chaperone, who came over to my tent accompanied by her sixteen-year-old daughter, attired in one single garment [...] After manifesting much anxiety and making many violent gesticulations

[32] Ibid.

[33] SEC, "Experiences with Indians in Western Canada", *The Hosmer Times* (Hosmer, B.C.), 1910.

> (the old horror had her daughter in one hand and the bean pot in the other) [...] My young interpreter, in broken English, punctuated by many grins, informed me that marriage contracts in that particular tribe were often entered into through the medium of some such miserable wedding present, and in my case even a measly bean pot would be considered quite legal [...] What a predicament for a modest, innocent, assuming church member to find himself in. There was my wild, unkempt, picturesque bridlet, the untaught daughter of a savage race of warriors, coyly enjoying every moment of my consternation, while I could only explain the awkward situation to her through an interpreter.[34]

In this upsetting excerpt we witness the disdain with which settlers interpreted and misconstrued Indigenous marriage practices in the plains, and the disgust and desire they hurled at the Indigenous women who participated. While the Indigenous mother represents the s-slur/drudge stereotype associated with cultural backwardness previously discussed, her young daughter serves as a representation for the hyper-sexualized and victimized iteration of the s-slur to be discussed.

[34] SEC, "Experiences with Indians in Western Canada", *The Hosmer Times* (Hosmer, B.C.), 1910.

S-Slur as Threat

While these practices shocked and offended many of the earliest colonizers, the liberal sexual attitudes of the Plains societies served to arouse settler men's desires, in a time and place in which their usual objects of affection, White women, were largely absent.[35] As the fur trade expanded west of the Rockies in the early nineteenth-century, the need to establish trading networks and economic partnerships with the Indigenous peoples of the region often required White integration into the complex social and cultural customary practices of the Indigenous communities. As a result, marriages between White men and Indigenous women, sanctified through traditional Indigenous ceremonies referred to as "the customs of the country", were commonplace, and even encouraged by Indigenous leaders and company officials alike between 1849 and 1871.[36] After the ceremonial gift-exchange, it was the custom in many of these unions for an Indigenous bride to undergo a cleansing ritual performed by the other women of the fort, as a means to render her more "pleasing" to the White man.[37] This included the removal of her traditional clothing in exchange for "Canadian fashions" to wear in her new husband's home.[38]

Although these early marriages between Indigenous women and White men were performed on relatively reciprocal terms, it is

[35] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 25.

[36] Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001): 48.

[37] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 37.

[38] Ibid.

useful to note that these women, like White women, were perceived to be uplifted through their unions with White men and were required to assimilate to his culture despite most marriages only being binding in hers. Major critiques of these unions were levied by the missionaries stationed in western Canada who still held considerable power and influence both in Indigenous communities and with government officials. Many missionaries perceived these mixed-race relationships as a form of female victimization, as well as a dangerous degradation of European men, primarily due to the lack of legally binding and Christian-sanctified marriages.[39]

Early official documentation of intimate and domestic relations across racial lines often presents economic motivation as central to these unions. However, these documents are rarely written from the perspective of those taking part in these intimate, sexual, and domestic relationships. By the mid-nineteenth century, records of these relations were largely being produced by missionaries and journalists, whose sensationalized portrayals of colonial life "renders it impossible to construct a tidy division between the experience and representation of mixed-race relationships."[40] We know there are stories of long-lasting and loving marriages and, while these instances provide a necessary nuance to the history and challenge the nineteenth-century notion of inherently doomed inter-racial relationships, they must not obscure the cases of coercion or the wider colonial brutality.[41] Inter-racial sexual relations that existed outside of the regulatory and alliance-based structure of marriage

[39] Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge," 17.

[40] Ibid, 49.

[41] Perry, *On the Edge of Empire,* 62.

occurred simultaneously and at even greater rates. It cannot be understated that many of the gendered and sexual "contact zones" were shaped by the implicit racial and gendered power dynamics which led to consistent non-consensual, violent and exploitative relations and encounters.[42] This was made visible through the controversy of 1886, when Samuel Trivett, a missionary stationed on the Kainai Reserve in present-day southern Alberta, exposed the abuse of Indigenous women at the hands of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) and officials of the Indian Department.[43] The *Toronto Globe* picked up the story about the "brutal, heartless and licentiousness" of the government officials, printing Trivett's claims that Indigenous women were being bought and sold by White men, living with them outside of legal marriage, and abandoning them and their offspring freely.[44] In response to these damning revelations, the Canadian government, under the leadership of John A. MacDonald, adopted the tactic of blaming the Indigenous women for these sexual encounters, both consensual and not.

As the colony developed and Western settlements expanded post-Confederation, the controversy of 1886 increased the anxieties around the ever-blurring racial, gender, and sexual boundaries. The government began to more forcefully shift away from interventionist policies, justified through the s-slur as victim, and towards segregationist policies which sought to institute clearer spatial and racial divisions between Indigenous peoples and settlers. This

[42] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4.

[43] Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 166.

[44] Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 150.

instigated the delegitimization of these relations, which conceived racial-mixing as a subversive threat to White prestige and foresaw an outcome of the moral decay and degeneration of Europeans in the New World.[45] Through this logic, the s-slur shifted away from victimhood and into an association with an inherently transgressive sexuality. The s-slur was the personification of threat to the stability and sanctity of the budding nation-state. Indigenous women were growingly presented in bestial ways, with newspapers emphatically degrading their appearance and describing their sexuality as aggressive.[46] Consequently, the perception of their sexuality was imprinted with an almost mystical and evil association with black-magic, paganism, and Satanic ritual as the only explanation for why White men would ever be attracted to or loving towards them.[47]

A potent example of this trope is found in *The Nelson Economist,* which published a fable-style story called "The Offcasting of Nichemous" by W.A. Fraser, a Canadian writer and oil developer who was involved in the planting of the first oil wells in western Canada. The story presents many of the key elements in the production of the s-slur in relation to White women that I will touch upon later. First, bookending the story is Nichemous, a Cree woman who tricked British Lieutenant turned settler Kootenay Royd into marrying her using a form of Indigenous witchcraft:

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[45] Anne Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995): 46.

[46] Merskin, "The S-Word: Discourse, Stereotypes, and the American Indian Woman," 355.

[47] Lugones, "Towards a Decolonial Feminism," 745.

> Kootenay had seen Nichemous, the chief's daughter, once at Stand Off, the unlawful capital of the whisky smuggler's domain. But that was not at all why he had come for her—even Kootenay knew that; she must have made medicine to lure him, or the spirit-winds from the mountains whispered her name when he sat in the midst of a solitude that was leagues broad on every side. It was something of this sort; it could not have been romance; for she was ugly close to the point of fascination – built on the lines of a wheelbarrow; as devoid of grace; only blacker, and even more disconsolately in evidence forever and ever.[48]

Although the story idealizes Kootenay as a worldly, highly educated gentleman, emphasizing his European "straight, sharp nose planted firmly between his blue-grey eyes", he is still ultimately ruined through his relationship with Nichemous. This was all due to her "medicine bag" of magic, including an amulet, a "weird witch like-song", a kiss, a willow tree, a goblin, and a demon.[49]

This iteration of the s-slur was further degraded in the colonial imaginary through the deployment of the colonial gender/human binary. It was through her defeminization that she was dehumanized, equating her distance from White womanhood as signifier of her closer relation to animals. This was approached on the surface level through explicit and derogatory descriptions of

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[48] W.A. Fraser, "The Offcasting of Nichemous," *The Nelson Economist* (Nelson, B.C.), May 31, 1902.

[49] Ibid. [Excerpt censored by researcher.]

Indigenous women's appearances and bodies within the contents of the newspapers. Weaved throughout "The Offcasting of Nichemous" for example, there are phrases such as "eyes like a hippopotamus", "swine like eyes", "slow-going brain", and descriptions of her "guttural noises".[50] Additionally, Nichemous is presented as masculine in direct contrast to Helen, the young, White, feminine girl who recently moved to the prairies. In a particular passage where Kooteney is falling in love with Helen after seeing her paintings, it reads:

> The man knew the utter failure of her much-awry landscapes—knew it as a charm: that was as a woman should be—just art enough still to remain a woman to be loved. It was better even that the [s-slur] who could swing an axe like a lumberman. She could do things—material things—the [s-slur] wife, and was useful; therefore he hated her. And all the time the Cree woman, course in her huge masculinity, saw these things, and the little, gnarled, blood-streaked eyes groped furtively for premonition of what it would all lead to.[51]

Near the end of the story, Kootenay arrived back at his cabin, after leaving Nichemous for Helen, to find that "every mirrored wall of which reflected a sweet girl-face, and the broad, black visage of the other greyed down into the dead past until it became only something that he had turned his back upon".[52] Describing Nichemous as manly

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

and beastly in comparison to Helen is an example of how the racialized un/womanhood of Indigenous women was purposely compared to essentialized white femininity for the purpose of proving the superiority of whiteness.

This racist logic was bolstered by the rise of scientific social theory, which used the supposed facts of science to distinguish between the races, particularly through the realms of health and reproduction. An example of this in the Canadian context is found in a 1905 issue of *Queen's Medical Quarterly* which, in a segment titled "Ojibway Obstetrics", states: "The lower animals beget their progeny with comparative immunity from pain and danger. Why, then, do our Caucasian women suffer the agonies incidental to motherhood?"[53] By referring to Indigenous women directly as animals and further dehumanizing them by denying their pain or suffering, Indigenous women are seen as unneeding of any support. Whereas, White women, perceived to be hyper-delicate and precious, are in need and deserving of protection. This racist and erroneous notion would be carried so far as to undermine Indigenous women's reproductive agency through forceful eugenicist programs of sterilization in the name of social purity, beginning officially in Alberta in 1929 with cases reported across Canada as recently as 2017 in Saskatchewan.[54] Ultimately, these dogmatic contrasting representations of Indigenous un/womanhood and White femininity confirmed enough of a cultural divide that repressive policies were

[53] L.W. Jones, "Ojibway Obstetrics," Q*ueens Medical Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1905): 25-28.

[54] Yvonne Boyer, "Healing Racism in Canadian Health Care," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 189, no. 46 (2017): 1.

needed.[55]

These negative portrayals of Indigenous women served an additional political purpose. At the time of their growing proliferation in newspapers in the mid- to late-1880s, the Canadian government was in the midst of pushing for the expansion of White settlement in the western Canadian prairies following the completion of the transcontinental railway. Due to a number of setbacks to this development in 1885, namely the Métis resistance in what is now Saskatchewan and years of drought and frost affecting crop yield, settler immigration to the West was not meeting expectations.[56] The Canadian government, making way for "actual settlers", negotiated seven of The Numbered Treaties with some of the Indigenous nations on the prairies between 1871 and 1877, gaining control of the majority of the land and establishing a series of reservations across the territory.[57] Part of the treaty negotiations required that the government provide aid in agricultural production on the reserves in response to the targeting of the buffalo population by the settler state itself. The bison, a deeply culturally and spiritually significant means of Indigenous sustenance which provided food, material, and tools, had been nearly completely and purposefully decimated. However, as more settlers arrived, they were bothered by the economic competition posed by the agricultural yield of the reserves. The vocalization of these complaints encouraged the government to actively attempt to curtail the productivity of farming on the

[55] Carter, *Capturing Women,* 160.

[56] Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 149.

[57] Ibid.

reserves.[58] The fabricated explanations for the ensuing poverty and poor living conditions on reserves again fell onto the shoulders of Indigenous women. The s-slur was even further distanced from White womanhood through claims that it was Indigenous women's neglectful and unmotherly ways that caused high levels of child mortality, hunger, and unsanitary living conditions on reserves.[59]

One of the greatest conveniences for the increasing government effort to keep Indigenous peoples on reserves was the coinciding arrival of White women in large numbers to the western Canadian settlements. Their arrival did not necessarily spur this shift in segregationist policy, but it was employed as a primary justification for its necessity.[60] Although Indigenous women were once considered in need of rescue through the hetero-paternalist and White-patriarchal framework, they were now the threat that needed to be extinguished to protect the purity, innocence, and morality of White women. In this way, the colonization of Indigenous women was legitimized through the strengthening of White male ownership of White women and the cultural sanctity of White womanhood.[61] The apex of patriarchal White womanhood was motherhood and this took on an even larger and more politicized meaning within the settler colonial context, with the requirement to populate and solidify a future nation-state. Inter-racial relationships and the reproductive threat they posed to the emerging White nation-state began to be

[58]Ibid, 150.

[59] Ibid, 160.

[60] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 201.

[61] Andrea Smith, "Not an Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples", *Hypatia* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 76.

considered a major concern both within the localized context of newly urbanizing western settlements and for the legitimacy of the colonial project more widely. During this period, the s-slur was increasingly applied to the Indigenous wives and partners of White men, with lower-class White women perhaps the most overtly hostile due to the perceived competition for husbands.[62] Additionally, the use of the term 's-slur man' was applied to those who were domestically or sexually involved with Indigenous women. It can be found printed several times within the fatalistic story "Chummed with Cree's: Fate of an Englishman who Took up with Indians" in *The Mount Pleasant Advocate.* This was a means of elucidating the potential social "deracination" and "emasculation" of these men, deemed to be morally degraded from their rightful position as the more responsible race and gender, through their associations with Indigenous women.[63]

The solution to the dual concern of Indigenous women corrupting White women and tempting White men was reached through the renewal of the association of the s-slur with prostitution. Where it was once portrayed that Indigenous women were oppressed through the cultural practice of prostitution-like marriages in their own communities, the rhetoric ultimately shifted to the presumption that Indigenous women's inherently transgressive sexuality predetermined their likelihood of being involved in the sex trade. This stereotyping became so imprinted onto the colonial imaginary that the 's-slur' and 'prostitute' became practically interchangeable

[62] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 202.

[63] Perry, *On the Edge of Empire,* 69.

terms for much of the twentieth-century. This belief became so pervasive in western Canada that Indigenous women were almost by definition either 'prostitutes' or 'crones' – and it was the presence or absence of physical desire in newcomer men that determined their identities."[64] The assumption that any Indigenous woman can be considered a prostitute made them susceptible to harsher enforcements on their mobility, for they were duly criminalized under the Indian Act and, after 1892, the criminal code.[65] This served as a legal justification to remove Indigenous women from settler spaces, supported by the colonial moral panic surrounding the existence of racialized female sexuality within the public sphere. The pass system, which legally limited one's ability to leave the reserve without official approval and documentation, was established on the rationale that it would spare the settlements from visits by Indigenous women "of abandoned character who were there for worst purposes."[66] While there is evidence that some Indigenous women did exchange sexual labour for money or goods, there was a general refusal to connect this to the poverty experienced on reserves or the active restriction on economic opportunities by government officials; instead, it was continually associated with an inherent immorality.[67] Unsurprisingly, there is evidence of major public push backs against

[64] Jenn Barman, "Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality during the Colonial Encounter", in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal & Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 205.
[65] Carter, *Capturing Women,* 187.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, 188.

the existence of sexually transgressive spaces within urbanizing settlements by social reformers, particularly middle-class White women, but the damnation was especially fervent when Indigenous women were implicated. For instance, the Victoria newspaper *The British Colonist* published multiple condemnations against the establishment of a dance house which allowed inter-racial sexual encounters to occur.[68] One issue stated, "A dance house is only a hell-hole where the females are white; but it is many times worse where the females are [s-slur]."[69]

The construction of the narrative that any Indigenous woman could be assumed to be a sex worker also served as a justification for and proliferation of the mistreatment, abuse, and abandonment of Indigenous women by White men and the overlooking of this reality by settler society at large. This stereotype not only allowed for the accepted impermanence of relationships and a presumed disposability of Indigenous women, but, by legally forcing them to the margins of settler social spaces, it made them increasingly vulnerable to surveillance, arrest, and incarceration. As was made apparent in the 1886 scandal on the Kainai Reserve, the North-West Mounted Police and government officials, through their positions of power, were taking advantage of systems built for their benefit to exploit, endanger, and extinguish Indigenous women. Through the legal construction of s-slur as prostitute, police power was expanded and they were granted greater permissions to control and remove Indigenous women in the name of public health and

[68] *The British Colonist,* (Victoria, B.C.), November 26, 1862.

[69] Ibid. [Excerpt censored by researcher.]

safety. Even if not charged with prostitution, Indigenous women in western urban courts were routinely charged with petty offenses like drunk and disorderly conduct, with a specific punishment reserved for Indigenous women – shaving their heads.[70] Hair, specifically its length, has a massively significant meaning within many Indigenous Plains communities. Hair is largely perceived as an extension of one's soul and a representation of a strong connection to culture. Like in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the shearing of Indigenous people's hair was integrated into the tactics of punishment used in Residential schools across Canada, specifically deployed against the children who attempted to escape.[71] This carceral abuse was used to deliberately dehumanize and diminish Indigenous peoples by targeting a culturally sacred element of their own bodily autonomy.

The shaming of Indigenous women and prostitution as social ills and the efforts to invisibilize them through legislative recourse encouraged the acceptance of their elimination by the general settler population. The implementation of segregation and the police force devoted to its enforcement presented the physical removal of Indigenous women from the urbanizing settlements as necessary and, thus, the lack of Indigenous presence in these spaces as progress. A potent example of this is the 1889 murder of Rosalie, an Indigenous woman involved in sex work who was murdered by William "Jumbo" Fisk, a settler connected to a prominent Eastern family.[72] Despite his

[70] Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire,* 110.

[71] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939,* vol. 1, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University press, 2015), 138.

[72] Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 149.

guilty plea, it was public opinion that he should not be charged because, as published in the *Herald Sunday Magazine,* "Rosalie was only a [s-slur] and that her death did not matter that much."[73] Rosalie's case illustrates what postcolonial theorist and historian Ann Stoler argues about the colonial social structures—that racism does not exist as a reaction to the crisis of social ills for which racial others are scapegoated but rather as a permanent part of the social fabric. Developing on Foucault's discussion of imperialism in *A History of Sexuality,* Stoler states, "racism is not an effect but a tactic in the internal fission of society into binary opposition, a means of creating 'biologized' internal enemies, against whom society must defend itself."[74] This biologized enemy within the social fabric acted as the target for the proliferating racist state involvement, using discourses of purification to legitimate their violence.[75] The creation of the biologized enemy in Canada was as much a gendered and sexualized construction as it was a racialized one, with Indigenous women, particularly Indigenous sex workers, still the most over-represented population in the criminal justice system and as targets of sexual violence. The persistence of epidemic levels of sexual, physical, structural, and social violence against Indigenous women in Canada today speaks to their targeted systemic and systematic

[73] Donald Smith, "Bloody Murder Almost Became Miscarriage of Justice," *Herald Sunday Magazine,* 1989, quoted in Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," *Great Plains Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 157. [Text censored by researcher.]

[74] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire,* 59.

[75] Ibid, 60.

dehumanization launched by the settler state from its inception to its present-day formation.

Conclusion

Our settler state is now in a moment in which it is necessary to understand and undertake the labour of reconciliatory justice. How we use this opportunity, which has been afforded to us entirely through the labour and will of Indigenous peoples and scholars, requires that we not rupture ourselves from our historical violence but rather engage with these graphic histories as our own as perpetrators and benefactors. The comfort we have been allocated through our perceived removal from the derivation of the structures erected for our benefit exemplifies their continued success in their mission. The way in which we have allowed the s-slur to slip into normalcy, existing on signages and markings across so-called North America, has been challenged in recent years by Indigenous activists and feminists who have tirelessly campaigned for their removal and for these landmarks to be returned to their original Indigenous placenames. However, it is crucial that we do not simply wipe this word and its lasting impacts from our collective memory through this process. Rather, we must sit with the discomfort and sharpness of the language which has been employed to build the colonial imaginary within which settlers still benefit at the expense of Indigenous wellbeing. By doing so, along with the profound understanding that despite the pernicious colonial attempts to delegitimize, degrade and dehumanize Indigenous womanhood, we can understand that Indigenous women have always subverted racialized

heteropatriarchal gender norms. Indigenous women, despite being at the intersection of the systems of colonial domination, have continuously formed "the very core of Indigenous resistance to genocide and colonization since the first moment of conflict".[76] By examining the use of the s-slur in this historical context, and its contradictory and calculated application as it fluctuated between insinuations of victimhood and threat, the extent of the inanity and viciousness is elucidated. It is my hope that this practice can be used as a tool to help us lift the veil that the colonial imaginary casts in these spaces, empowering us further to apply this tool in order to view critically the legitimacy of the structures of the Canadian nation state itself.

[76] Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2015): 18.

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"A barbaric, elemental force": The Liminal Role of the Eastern European Modern Girl in Western Culture

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Abstract: The Modern Girl was a feminine archetype that emerged in the early 1900s, challenging traditional gender roles and redefining racial boundaries. Particularly revealing of these dynamics is the case of the Eastern European Modern Girl, a figure who was characterized by her barbaric, primitive origins and 'off-White' racial status. This article seeks to investigate the construction of femininity and Whiteness in the interwar era through a comparative discourse analysis of two quintessential Modern Girls: Hollywood stars Pola Negri and Gilda Gray. It examines the ways in which each starlet's ethnicity has been used to situate her as an exotic, racial Other. However, while Eastern European women were often exoticized and Othered, they could also be ideologically 'Whitened' through juxtaposition with members of more visibly racialized groups. This paper examines the ways in which Eastern European Modern Girls negotiated this unique position within the boundaries of femininity and, in doing so, argues that the social construction of Whiteness is fundamentally a relational process.

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Regarded all at once as "a new figure, bizarre, fascinating, daring" and "a barbaric, elemental force," the liminal space of Eastern European women in Hollywood has long been a subject of debate in the Western cultural imaginary.[1] Many contemporary scholars have begun taking up issues of race in their analyses of Hollywood at the turn of the twentieth century, an era largely characterized by its portrayals of racist storylines and Orientalist tropes. The Modern Girl, a feminine archetype that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, certainly did not escape this effect, as shall be demonstrated through the prominent films and fandom culture of the time. The Modern Girl was an iconic figure of the interwar era whose existence challenged traditional gender roles that had previously limited women's identities to that of daughters, wives, and mothers. She rejected various traditional gender norms in her pursuit of a modern notion of femininity. The Modern Girl went by many names but was perhaps most commonly perceived as a 'flapper' in North American culture. These women were characterized by a new and particular form of consumerism, as seen most famously in their bobbed hair, excessive makeup, and provocative fashion choices. They also exhibited 'immoral' behaviours of cigarette and alcohol consumption, dance, and open expressions of sexuality. The Modern Girl was, in some regards, considered hedonistic, consumerist, and superficial and, in others, an independent female figure of emancipatory potential.

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[1] Malcolm H. Oettinger, "Every Move A Picture!," *Picture-Play Magazine*, March 1926, 52; Myrtle Gebhart, "An Artist Talks On Screen Beauty," *Picture-Play Magazine*, July 1926, 24.

As is well established by the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, the Modern Girl was a worldwide phenomenon and her global reach was inextricably linked to dominant discourses of White supremacy, colonialism, and nationalism – forces that informed the non-White Modern Girl's performance of femininity.[2] The Research Group explained:

> Modern Girls appeared to challenge 'proper' female commitments to the nation—be it as active participants in nationalist struggles for liberation; as mothers, the biological reproducers of national subjects and populations; as transmitters of national culture; as upholders of the boundaries of nations through restrictions on sexual behavior and the circumscription of 'marriage' within clearly defined ethnic and racial groups; or as symbols and signifiers of nations.[3]

Particularly revealing of these dynamics is the case of the Eastern European Modern Girl, who was constituted by her 'barbaric,' 'primitive' origins and 'off-White' racial status.[4] As we shall explore later, though Eastern Europeans share a common skin colour with their 'White' counterparts, certain ethnic differences serve to set

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[2] Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

[3] Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, 15-16.

[4] Diane Negra, *Off-white Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom*. (London: Routledge, 2001).

them apart. In this way, Hollywood's Eastern European Modern Girl was categorized as being 'ethnic White,' occupying a particular brand of racial in-betweenness, allowing her to reap certain benefits of White privilege while still being cast as markedly different.

This research seeks to investigate the construction of femininity and Whiteness of Eastern European movie stars in the interwar era through a comparative discourse analysis study of two famous Polish Modern Girls: Pola Negri and Gilda Gray. I will begin by examining the ways in which Pola Negri's Eastern European ethnic background has been used to situate her as an exotic, racial Other manifested through her characterization as a 'femme fatale.' In contrast, I will also look at portrayals of Gilda Gray in popular culture to determine how she fit into many of the same stereotypical roles of the 'femme fatale' or 'vamp' but, also, how she eluded them. While Eastern European celebrities such as Pola Negri were often exoticized as racial Other, they could also be ideologically 'Whitened' through juxtaposition with more visibly racialized groups, as is the case with Gilda Gray. Through a comparative analysis of two Polish film stars in early Hollywood, I show the ways in which Eastern European Modern Girls negotiated their positions within the boundaries of femininity and, in doing so, argue that the social construction of Whiteness is fundamentally a relational process.

Methodology

I conducted a comparative discourse analysis by examining two films, as well as a broad array of fan magazines. I first explored the film *Carmen* (1918, released in the United States with the

alternative title *Gypsy Blood* in 1921), where Negri plays the titular role. In this tale, Spanish cavalryman Don José falls in love with Carmen, a seductive Romani woman who leads José into temptation and eventual ruin. This film was selected on account of the fact that the character Carmen embodies the essential characteristics of the femme-fatale that Negri most often played (as we shall see) and whom scholar Mario Praz identifies in literary history as a watershed figure, among the first of the archetype to be replicated elsewhere throughout popular culture.[5] The next film I looked at was *Piccadilly* (1929), where Gray stars as Mabel Greenfield. In this film, a young Chinese woman, Shosho, is appointed as the new main act at Valentine Wilmot's nightclub, becoming his romantic interest in the process. In doing so, she replaces Mabel in both roles, eventually resulting in dire consequences. *Piccadilly* was selected because Gray plays a central role in the film and because it is the only such film readily available through online and archival research, as the rest of her works have most likely been lost to time.

In addition to these two films, I studied depictions of Negri and Gray within a collection of fan magazines, including *Photoplay, Picture-Play Magazine,* and *The Film Daily*. Movie fan magazines were commercially produced, widely distributed publications that detailed the lives and careers of early Hollywood's biggest stars. This unique form of media allowed film producers to carefully construct narratives about the movie stars and films they so chose to promote, while also permitting audiences to engage more directly with Hollywood cinema. So, while some of the magazine articles

[5] Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 197.

referenced here deal with the two films I discuss, they are not limited to this as their purpose is to show how the actresses were portrayed, not just the characters they played. I have used the key word search function of Media History Digital Library's Lantern database to find the articles most relevant to my analysis.

Historiography

Dominant historical narratives have long prioritized androcentric perspectives of the early twentieth century that leave little room for understanding female histories. Various feminist historians have begun to problematize such traditional historical accounts of the era by challenging conceptualizations of the Modern Girl as an insignificant, unworthy subject of serious academic study. As much of the scholarship has only fairly recently emerged, there still exists a gap in intersectional study of the Modern Girl. Although pioneering works such as *The Modern Girl Around the World* have sought to expand their focus in order to decentre Western modernity and explore global developments of the Modern Girl, they have neglected to include a case study of the unique Eastern European experience.[6] However, The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group has taken up various issues of race, notably in Weinbaum's incisive chapter, "Racial Masquerade: Consumption and

[6] Weinbaum et al., eds., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization.*

Contestation of American Modernity."[7] The chapter explores how 'modernity' was constructed vis-à-vis the linked processes of consumption and control over racial categorization. In Weinbaum's 'racial masquerade,' White women are able to put on a 'racial mask' but are also able to remove it and thus remove the stigma of racial 'otherness' as a way to showcase their modernity and highlight their privilege.[8] This performance of racialized identity most often included practices of Blackface, consumption and appropriation of typified 'Oriental' styles, and the donning of racialized costume masks. Building upon Weinbaum's analysis, I will look at non-White women's performances of racial masquerade in order to examine important nuances related to interwar ideals of Whiteness and their relation to the phenomenon of the Modern Girl. My analysis of the Eastern European Modern Girl will expand this definition to include racialized women's ability or inability to alternately put on and take off their own racial Otherness.

Interestingly, a great deal of existing scholarship on the Eastern European Modern Girl can be found in the vast and growing body of research done on the film stars of early Hollywood. Among these are the works of Hilary Hallett and Lucy Fischer, which provide a foundational basis for understanding links between racial and national boundaries, as well as details of gender roles and relations in

[7] Alys Eve Weinbaum, "Racial Masquerade: Consumption and Contestation of American Modernity," in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
[8] Weinbaum, "Racial Masquerade," 121.

early Hollywood that I hope to extend and complicate in my analysis.[9] Janet Staiger's *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema* also holds important insights to a fundamental understanding of cultural images of women's sexuality within the new consumer culture of the interwar era.[10]

Unfortunately, very little literature has been written on Gilda Gray (this can be partly attributed to a few of her major films being lost). Gray is discussed in a few academic works but usually in a passive, secondary manner. However, a substantive body of historiographical literature exists on Pola Negri's conceptualization in American popular culture.

Several works documenting Negri's life (both on and off-screen) have been recently published. The works of Diane Negra and Agata Frymus warrant particular mention, as I draw primarily on their analyses of Negri as well as their historiographical positioning of Eastern European actresses within Western conceptions of femininity more broadly.[11] Negra's work examines the positioning of the trope of ethnic femininity through a case study of various film stars. She considers Hollywood films and cultural discourse as vehicles for expressing and negotiating gender and ethnic identities

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[9] Hilary Hallett, *Go West, Young Women! The Rise of Early Hollywood,* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2012); Lucy Fischer, *American Cinema of the 1920s: Themes and Variations,* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

[10] Janet Staiger, *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema,* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

[11] Negra, *Off-white Hollywood*; Agata Frymus. *Damsels and Divas: European Stardom in Silent Hollywood*. (New Brunswick, NJ, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

in an American narrative. In contrast to older, less nuanced analyses, Negra's intersectional and multidisciplinary framework in particular has become widely accepted. Indeed, Frymus credits Negra's framework as largely informing her own, but she adds "post-colonial theory, developments in the field of fan studies, and academic evaluations of fan magazines of the 1910s and 1920s" to her analysis.[12] I will thus rely upon their synthesized framework as a crucial starting point to develop my study. I am also heavily reliant upon their in-depth chapters on Pola Negri, as they are among the few scholarly works that critically assess Negri's situating within Western constructs of Whiteness. Their respective chapters examine discourses related to Negri's cinematic and extra-filmic persona, depicting how Negri's roles were taken to be a reflection of her actual personality. I build upon some of their ideas and apply them to my case study of *Carmen*.

My discussion of Whiteness will draw mainly upon themes considered in Richard Dyer's book, *White*, which maintains that Western culture's conceptualization of Whiteness is a relational category, meaning that Whiteness is a fluid, shifting boundary that is defined through the identification of Others.[13] Dyer examines this racial hierarchization through various visual cultural mediums, including advertising, film, and television. These discussions are inextricably linked to Edward Said's book (and establishment of the term) *Orientalism* which is absolutely integral to any analysis of the

[12] Frymus. *Damsels and Divas,* 17.

[13] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

Other in Western discourse.[14] The concepts Dyer and Said discuss are of indispensable value to my own analysis of racialization of Eastern European women.

Although the historiography has evolved over time to create space for these sorts of intersectional analyses, the bulk of the current scholarship takes for granted the fact that Eastern European actresses in early Hollywood were racialized and Othered. To this end, these analyses fail to adequately grapple with Whiteness as a moving target and, therefore, fall into many of the very theoretical traps they critique. Thus, my comparative analysis of two Eastern European film stars, one constructed as White and one as non-White, will contribute to the literature by effectively showing what single-subject analyses cannot – that the construction of Whiteness is fundamentally relational. While this fact is widely accepted in more abstract scholarship, it is rarely seen in the specific case of female movie stars in the 1920s.

Analysis: Pola Negri

Born Apolonia Chalupec, Pola Negri's adopted pseudonym is supposedly a combination of the shortening of her own name and the incorporation of Italian poet Ada Negri's last name; taken together, the pseudonym roughly translates to Black Pole in Italian.[15] This moniker serves as a powerful allegory for Negri's portrayal in popular culture. Negri was most often cast in the role of the femme fatale or

[14] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[15] Sergio Delgado, *Pola Negri: Temptress of Silent Hollywood* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Et Company, 2016), 12-13.

the 'classic vamp.' This archetypal character is defined by her rejection of traditional standards of femininity, as well as the ability to seduce and entice victims through her uniquely enchanting powers – powers that have the potential to destroy men. Staiger describes the femme fatale as "a woman gone astray, a parasite woman who could feed off the solid stock of America, destroying the vital future it should have."[16] Negra explains that this cultural figure, in effect, serves as a "thinly disguised incarnation of the threat of female immigrant sexuality."[17]

Among Negri's most famous films, *Carmen* is a great example of these dynamics. The film is based on Prosper Mérimée's famous novella *Carmen*, a cautionary tale of doomed passion and untamed womanhood.[18] Pola Negri plays the character of Carmen, an exotic Romani woman who resolves to seduce Don José, a visiting soldier. As Don José gives into Carmen's allure, he resorts to increasingly immoral actions and behaviours, eventually becoming an outlaw in a desperate attempt to retain Carmen's love and attention. His efforts are in vain, as Carmen ultimately moves on to the next, new male victim. In a fit of jealous rage, Don José kills Carmen and himself. The final shot of the film says: "So runs the tale. But some say she did not die… for she was in league with the Devil himself!"[19]

It is clear that Negri plays the role of the quintessential femme fatale, a trope that is inextricably linked to dominant cultural

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[16] Staiger, *Bad Women,* 147.

[17] Negra, *Off-white Hollywood,* 62.

[18] Frymus. *Damsels and Divas,* 67.

[19] *Carmen [Gypsy Blood]*, directed by Ernst Lubitsch (Berlin, Germany: UFA GmbH, 1918), 1:19:15 YouTube.

narratives of the beginning of the decade. The social upheavals of the First World War resurfaced public anxiety over women's increasing independence and public visibility.[20] The 1920s encapsulated these rapidly expanding social changes, with an unprecedented number of women entering the workforce and many having recently gained voting rights.[21] As Kristen Smith has identified, the femme fatale trope becomes increasingly common during time periods characterized by shifts in gender norms.[22] Hence, Negri's classic vamp represents, and is a reaction to, cultural fears of women's newfound (upward) social mobility in the early twentieth century.

The film is also set against a background of emerging and unfamiliar 'modern' forces like a proliferation of immigration and a subsequent fear of a contaminating foreign influence from newcomers with the ability to threaten the existing social order.[23] Negri's portrayal of this cultural motif resonates with its audience, as immigrants like Negri personified many of these fears. More precisely, Polish women like her occupied an unusual, liminal space within boundaries of Whiteness. As Dyer explains, "some people are whiter than others. Latins, the Irish and Jews, for instance, are rather

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[20] Frymus. *Damsels and Divas,* 70.

[21] Agata Frymus, "Evil Women and the Feminine: The Eternal Vamp and The Construction of Pola Negri's Star Persona in 1920's America," in *Perceiving Evil: Evil Women and the Feminine* (Oxford, England: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2015), 3.

[22] Kirsten Smith, "'Keep Mum, She's Definitely Not Dumb': The Complex and Cunning Femme Fatale in Espionage Fiction and History," as quoted in Frymus, "Evil Women and the Feminine," 3.

[23] Frymus. *Damsels and Divas,* 70.

less securely white than Anglos, Teutons and Nordics."[24] Negra develops this further, claiming that ethnicity plays a potentially dangerous role as it erodes the distinction between those who are White and those who are not, a dichotomy that was fundamental to American society during this time.[25] Moreover, she claims that "Dyer's discussion of whiteness as essentially undefined except in opposition to color is generalizable to ethnicities that in some sense, signify the threat of 'color' within whiteness."[26] Eastern European immigrants brought with them different languages, cultures, features, and customs from those of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) and, therefore, occupied a lower rung on the racial hierarchy of Whiteness. Consequently, they were an easily identifiable Other against which WASP society could define itself and subsequently exploit to reassert their social positioning of structural advantage.

The racialized femme fatale thus turned into a target and "a tangible symbol used by conservatives either as a warning, or as a sign of impending doom."[27] This simultaneously allowed American audiences to enjoy the foreign body and its sexuality from a comfortable distance, while also addressing it as an important site of social control.[28] Pola Negri embodied the moral panic of an ethnic femininity that would corrupt others – men and women alike. Western masculinity was threatened, as men would inevitably fall

[24] Dyer, *White,* 12.

[25] Negra, *Off-white Hollywood,* 4.

[26] Ibid., 5.

[27] Frymus, "Evil Women and the Feminine," 3.

[28] Negra, *Off-white Hollywood,* 18.

under her spell, lose their self-control, and submit to her authority.[29] Further, such interethnic mixing had the power to permanently taint America's Whiteness and so-called 'pure' population, destabilizing the racial social order.[30] American women, too, might gain inspiration from the character of Carmen and from women like Pola Negri to renounce their dutiful roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Her success fueled and indeed reinforced American concerns about the changing nature of immigration, namely because it seemed that female immigrants, and women at large, "might have the most powerful incentive to achieve" some degree of socioeconomic self-efficiency – a quality previously only possessed by wealthy White American men.[31] Given the freedoms granted by their entry into a new world, some Americans believed that improperly socialized immigrant women would become ambitious and, even more alarming, potentially successful.[32] However, these worries are quickly assuaged, as Carmen's tragic fate serves as a moral lesson and a dark reminder to all women: the woman who dares to deviate from her prescribed gender role will be punished for her transgressions and the patriarchal order will be re-established.

In addition to this film, we can see these forces clearly at work through an analysis of fan magazines. As Dyer explains, stars' cinematic performances are often interpreted as divulging their actual personalities, especially throughout the silent era.[33] Negri's

[29] Staiger, *Bad Women,* 150.

[30] Negra, *Off-white Hollywood,* 62.

[31] Ibid., 63.

[32] Ibid., 63.

[33] Richard Dyer, *Stars,* 2nd ed. (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 178.

personality was also seen as informing her performance and making it authentic, as seen in *Picture Play*:

> Carmencita, as played by Negri, is a disreputable, low-down, and rowdy gypsy girl. Her clothes are in atrocious state, her finery is shabby, and her morals are unquestionable. That is to say, they are unquestionably bad. Miss Negri doesn't try to look pretty, play to the camera, or attempt to be alluring. She simply gives a marvelously faithful picture of a vulgar, ignorant, and wanton gypsy girl.[34]

Indeed, her appearance was a common site of debate, with some claiming that Negri's Eastern European features were an indication of her personality:

> Pola's beauty is the beauty of suggested drama. It is the Orientale. It is the barbaric throb of drums in hot-scented jungles by moonlight. It is a volcanic flame with the enchantment of threat…Savage, threatening Cossack beauty that knows no law.[35]

Negri was seen as having the ability to embody the racially predatory woman she presented in film, becoming "synonymous with an unsuppressed female desire that stood in stark opposition to ideas of white virtuousness."[36] Ergo, the contention that American society

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[34] "Gypsy Blood," *Picture-Play Magazine*, June 1921, n.p.

[35] Herbert Howe, "The Most Beautiful Women on Earth," *Photoplay*, August 1925, 111.

[36] Frymus. *Damsels and Divas,* 24.

was justified in its enforcement of traditional gender roles to ensure that other women did not follow in such footsteps can be seen not only in Negri's films but also in fan magazine portrayals of her. Similarly, these themes can be seen in the works and depictions of another Eastern European actress, Gilda Gray, although at times they manifest themselves differently because of her different relative position.

Analysis: Gilda Gray

Gilda Gray (born Marianna Michalska) was a very successful Polish-American actress and dancer. An examination of Gray's portrayal within popular culture illustrates many parallels to that of Negri. Gray, too, most often starred in films wherein she played the hypersexual, exotic femme fatale. As previously mentioned, although the vast majority of Gray's films are considered lost (most notably *The Devil Dancer, Cabaret,* and *Aloma of the South Seas*), fan magazines supplement much of this gap in knowledge.

The Devil Dancer was actually an original script, specifically "written for the exotic Miss Gray," to depict "the Orient country and its strange people."[37] In film stills, we can see Gray clad in Orientalist garb, suffused with Asian, vaguely Eastern ethnic imagery. It is plain that Gray plays the provocative, erotically dressed title character, whom the White Stephen rescues in an effort to save her from her 'barbaric' surroundings. Harkening back to the beginning of this paper, one fan magazine article describes Gray as "a new figure,

[37] "Gilda Gray's 'The Devil Dancer' Comes to the….. Theatre," *The Devil Dancer (United Artists)*, 1927, n.p.

bizarre, fascinating, daring. A little sister to Little Egypt. The rajah's favourite in a Callot gown. Barbary Coast on its good behaviour."[38] The article goes on to discuss her singing as somehow mysteriously primordial, perhaps even verging on the supernatural: "She has no voice, musically speaking, but her singing sways you with its primitive power."[39] Her performance is consistently described through her "exotic clime" and one fan magazine article even goes so far as to suggest that restaurants and hotels "serve Indian and Chinese dishes during the engagement of '*The Devil Dancer*'."[40] Gray's unsophisticated origins are also commonly discussed to connect her to the role: "Born in Krackow, Poland, of hard working peasant folks, she came to America at the age of eight," deemed a "real Cinderella tale."[41] Based on this account, Gray's status as an Othered, Orientalized femme fatale may seem unambiguous; however, upon closer inspection of her other work, it is plain that this is not the case.

The one film that survives Gray is *Piccadilly*, a later film in which, contrary to her prior racialized depictions, she represents a White woman. The film follows Piccadilly Circus, a nightclub and restaurant in London, where Mabel Greenfield (played by Gilda Gray) performs her signature 'shimmy' dance.[42] Mabel is the love

[38] Oettinger, "Every Move A Picture!," 52.

[39] Ibid.

[40] "Heralds on 'The Devil Dancer' in Stock," The Devil Dancer (United Artists), 1927, n.p.; "Gilda Gray Town Tie-Ups," *The Devil Dancer (United Artists)*, 1927, n.p.

[41] "Editors Like Biographies," *The Devil Dancer (United Artists)*, 1927, n.p.

[42] Rebecca A. Bryant, "Shaking Things Up: Popularizing the Shimmy in America," *American Music* 20, no. 2 (2002), 170.

interest of the owner of the nightclub, Valentine. One night, Mabel's performance is interrupted by a customer complaining about a dirty plate and, when Valentine investigates, he finds Shosho distracting the other dishwashers with her dancing. Shosho's character is played by Anna May Wong, who is widely regarded as the first Chinese-American movie star. When business suddenly hits a downturn, Valentine, in desperation, hires Shosho to perform a 'traditional' Chinese dance. She is an instant sensation and soon becomes Valentine's new love interest.

Here, Shosho represents the racialized femme fatale, the exotic woman who seduces the White man and steals him from Mabel, her White foil. Throughout the film, Shosho's Otherness is constantly emphasized. When Valentine asks her to meet with him, a bystander looks on in horror as Shosho leads Valentine up the stairs, both literally and figuratively climbing the social ladder. Her lower-class, intrinsically different status is apparent as Mabel is surprised to see a Chinese woman in the office, giving Shosho a judgmental, rebuffing look and telling Valentine to take her "back in the scullery."[43] When she learns that Shosho will perform at the club, she claims that people will laugh and then proceeds to laugh at Shosho herself. Although Shosho's initial poverty leads her to wear tattered clothes and ripped stockings, she exchanges this outfit for a 'traditional,' extremely revealing Chinese costume. She is constantly identified by visual markers of racial difference like carrying around

[43] *Piccadilly*, directed by Ewald Dupont, (London, UK: British International Pictures, 1929), 38:05 DVD.

a Chinese mascot and writing in Chinese characters, and the movie even takes on a uniquely purple tint during her dance sequence.

Mabel, on the other hand, is depicted as high class, always dressed in expensive, elaborate, and fairly modest showgirl clothing. She is very clearly a member of the 'in crowd' working at the restaurant and she very directly participates in Othering Shosho. Meanwhile, her own Whiteness is never questioned. Indeed, it is directly affirmed by Jim (Shosho's Chinese friend, and eventual murderer) saying, "Shosho – she wanted Mr. Wilmot to give up the white woman. They had a big quarrel about it. I told her Mr. Wilmot would soon tire of a Chinese girl."[44] The final shot of the film features a sign reading "The World's Greatest Sin." The film serves as a stark reminder of what happens when a racialized woman digresses from her racial and class status – she will pay for her sins and act as a warning to others about the dangers of inter-racial sexual relations.

These dynamics are clearly reinforced through fan magazines, where Anna May Wong is consistently described in terms of her racialized status, referred to as "Shosho the Chinese girl," an "obscure little Chinese dishwasher," and "Chinese queen."[45] One article continuously uses a derogatory slur to describe Wong, rather than use her name: "[t]he owner of the class joint digs up a chink dancer from the scullery."[46] This racialization is emphasized by the ways her performance is perceived. She stages an "exotic oriental dance," where

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[44] *Piccadilly*, 1:36:17 to 1:36:32.

[45] "Exceptional Photoplays," *National Board of Review Magazine*, April 1929, 8; "What Makes A Picture "BIG" – No. 1," *The Film Daily*, April 1929, n.p.; O'Malley, "Pictures --- Reviewed and Previewed," 13.

[46] Sime, "Film Reviews," *Variety*, July 1929, 35.

her "Oriental 'it' finally ensnares the nightclub man, who finds himself in her arms during a visit to her seductive Chinese boudoir."[47] Another article mirrors this sentiment, saying that Valentine "is fascinated by his new star's Oriental charm, and she lures him into her flat, where he forgets Mabel, who loves him."[48] This juxtaposition of the two female characters is of note as only Mabel is seen as capable of true (and morally sound) love. This contrast is clearly delineated through construction of racial difference between Mabel and Shosho, as evidenced in various fan magazines. One article claims "[t]he dish manicurist easily outstrips her white rival in nimble underpinning and becomes a night club fad"; another says, "[t]hen comes the conflict between the Oriental dancing girl and the white prima donna."[49] The same article that refers to Shosho as a racial slur claims that Asian people like her "hold as much attraction in their types for anywhere as any native alien slum characters would hold for the English" and then very clearly identifies Gray as "the remaining white dancer."[50] Clearly, Gray's depiction differs meaningfully from what was seen in the previous section with Pola Negri. The following comparative section highlights and further interrogates these differences along key axes of Whiteness.

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[47] "Exceptional Photoplays," 8; "Piccadilly," *The Film Daily*, July 1929, 5.

[48] "Piccadilly," *The Picture Show Annual*, 1930, 146.

[49] Ed O'Malley, "Pictures --- Reviewed and Previewed," *Hollywood Filmograph*, August 1929, 13; "Piccadilly," *The Film Daily*, July 1929, 5.

[50] Sime, "Film Reviews," 35.

Comparison

Through a thematic comparison of various components of early- to mid-twentieth-century constructs of Whiteness, we will see Negri and Gray represented as alternately White and non-White. As has been made evident throughout this paper, although Negri and Gray's Polish identities were often used to racially Other them, they could also be used to Whiten them. Coming back to Weinbaum's understanding of racial masquerade, I complicate and extend her definition by including racialized women, not just White women, as sometimes also being able to put on and take off their racial Otherness. As is the case with Gilda Gray, she was able to use her white skin tone and European features to pass as White, yet, at other times, she was able to accentuate the non-White aspects of her identity to better embody archetypal non-White characters. This performance of racial masquerade is made apparent through four main characteristics: dancing, visual appearance, romantic and sexual behaviour, and the in/ability to progress.

I will contrast the ways in which each actress is portrayed along certain key axes of Whiteness. Perhaps the most striking of these is the occupation of dancing that both characters share. In line with a traditional Orientalist narrative, Carmen represents the common Oriental trope of the sensual dance performer, one that is reduced to the feminine, the corporeal, a sexualized automaton devoid of the Western ability of linguistic communication.[51] Carmen is demonized for using her ability to dance to climb the social ladder

[51] Donnalee Dox, "Dancing Around Orientalism," *TDR:The Drama Review* 50, no. 4 (2006): 55.

and advance her status from lower to higher class, yet Mabel is celebrated for doing the same because, as a 'White' woman, she is granted agency over her dancing ability, something that is denied to her racialized counterpart. Mabel and her show partner Vic's dance moves are explicitly choreographed to incorporate various contemporary dance forms and their performance is, as Li puts it, "as a heterosexual pair whose conjoined and organized bodies glide and spin in a disciplined, rehearsed and educated fashion through space."[52] Mabel is unable to become a solo dancer without the assistance of her male dance partner – her status as White woman indicates that she is directly reliant upon men.[53] By contrast, Carmen dances alone, shedding garments and swinging her arms with fast, uncoordinated, aggressive movements. She does not follow a routine or coherent beat and, as a result, her hypersexualized body remains the central focus of the dance, not her abilities.

Carmen's eroticism clearly flows through her dancing, and this same Oriental status is also seen through her physical presentation. Carmen is clothed in markedly ethnic, highly sexualized garments associated with traditional lower-class stereotypical Romani attire. She wears dark colours, aggressive patterns, and prints that emphasize her bodily curves and bring further attention to her visibility in the public sphere.[54] Additionally, her heavily accentuated and made-up eyes, lips, and pale face seem unnatural and "render her

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[52] Yumin Li, "Shape Shifters: Racialized and Gendered Crossings in Piccadilly (1929) and Shanghai Express (1932)," *Sexualities* 23, no. 1-2 (2018), 178.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Negra, *Off-white Hollywood,* 77.

an excessively produced body."[55] On the other hand, Mabel is always clad in classy, decorous garments that delineate her wealthy upper-class status and fairly modest disposition. Her makeup is light, emphasizing her features in a soft, 'natural' fashion. These visual markers define her in clear opposition to Carmen's Orientalist appearance, as Mabel's modern Western clothes, accessories, and makeup place her higher on the social hierarchy.

This visual presentation is further linked to the romantic and sexual behaviour of both characters. Mabel is characterized by her monogamous devotion to Valentine and controlled refutation of the offers of an affair with Vic. Even when given the choice to advance her career by going abroad, she chooses to remain loyal to Valentine and sacrifice professional development in favour of remaining a traditional female partner. Meanwhile, Carmen is actively and openly seductive, widely known as a 'temptress.' Her unrestrained sexual desire and unauthorized sexuality are constructed as 'immoral' and, because of this, she engages in affairs with other men. Carmen does not seem to have compassion for Don José's pain; her cruelty leads her to manipulate and exploit all the men she meets. Conversely, Mabel appears subservient to Valentine, always determined to regain his love. She attempts to threaten Shosho with a gun but ends up fainting in fear. Through examples such as these, her "soft, feminine nature" is reasserted.[56] By contrast, Carmen is illustrated as being driven primarily by shameless passion and lust, a lifestyle that is seen

[55] Ibid., 76.

[56] Li, "Shape Shifters," 180.

as incompatible, and indeed irreconcilable, with Western notions of a pure, unselfish, self-sacrificing femininity.

These concepts are also linked to Carmen's perceived lack of rationality, seen through her practice of palm reading, a practice regarded as a primitive, ancient magical ritual that situates her outside of reason, science, and Western knowledge. Mabel, on the other hand, is associated with Western modernity and civilization through her divergence from these same primordial, 'backwards' rituals (seen, for example, through the Chinese Mascot statue that Shosho gives to Valentine for good luck). Orientalism emphasizes the West as representing modernity, while the East represents ancient tradition. Carmen is shown as being governed by ancient traditions and backwards ways of life, while Mabel is constructed as a modern twentieth-century woman, enlightened enough to have progressed past her ancestors' history. Carmen's racialized status means her personality is reduced to Orientalist stereotypes and sensationalized practices whereas Mabel is independent, free from essentialist tropes and permitted a complex identity.

As can be seen through an analysis of Negri and Gray's differing portrayals along such key axes of Whiteness examined here, not all Eastern European Modern Girls were always treated as having the same degree of Whiteness. Rather, based on differing contexts and juxtaposition against women who were more noticeably non-White, these actresses were able to perform some degree of racial masquerade in order to better fit into certain roles in such a way that smoothed over the complexities that ethnicity presented for the strict racial hierarchy of early twentieth-century America.

Conclusion

Through this comparative discourse analysis of two Polish Modern Girls, it is evident that social constructions of Eastern European femininity in the interwar era were fluid, complex, and often contradictory. Such gendered and racialized boundaries are constantly being negotiated and thus our understanding of Whiteness must be fundamentally understood as a relational process. As has been shown through the case of Pola Negri, Eastern European women have often been regarded a disruptive ethnic presence, an Other that arouses Western racial and gender anxieties. At the same time, the preceding case study of Gilda Gray has uncovered a unique exception to this phenomenon, one that exposes a dynamic inherent to conceptualizations of Whiteness: its recognizability only in reference to Others. Such studies of ethnic female stardom undeniably have the potential to uncover important historical knowledge and the power to contribute to a necessary feminist retelling of the early twentieth century.

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"It is Unfair to the Animals to Call the German Rapists Animals": Jewish Resistance to Rape at the Hands of Nazis in Polish Ghettos

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Abstract: Despite the close examination of Nazi brutality in the postwar years, certain atrocities remain relatively understudied. Crimes involving sexualized violence in particular were neglected by scholars until recently for a variety of reasons, including the incorrect notion that German laws prohibiting Rassenschande (racial defilement) prevented "Aryan" Germans from raping Jews. As a result, certain forms of violence such as rape have not traditionally been considered part of the Nazi terror apparatus. In an effort to shed light on the topic of sexualized violence in the Holocaust and to emphasize the agency of victims and survivors, this paper investigates how Jews resisted rape and attempted rape in ghettos across occupied Poland by members of the Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces) and Schutzstaffel (Protection Squad, SS). An analysis of survivor testimony belonging to Jewish survivors who either experienced such violence at the hands of Nazis in Polish ghettos or were witness to it shows that rape in this context was resisted with vigour and in various ways.

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Despite the close examination of Nazi brutality in the postwar years, crimes involving sexualized violence in Nazi occupied territory have been grossly under researched. As a result, certain human rights abuses, such as rape, have not been traditionally considered part of the Nazi terror apparatus despite the role these crimes played in subjugating victims. In an effort to shed light on this topic, this paper seeks to discover how Jews, and in particular Jewish women, resisted sexualized violence in the forms of rape and attempted rape by members of the *Wehrmacht* (German Armed Forces) and *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squad, SS) in ghettos across occupied Poland during the Holocaust. I begin to answer this question by exploring how attitudes surrounding rape in the Holocaust shaped the ways in which this history has, and has not, been told. I then provide a brief overview of attitudes toward *Rassenschande* (racial defilement) in the German military. Through an analysis of survivor testimony belonging to victims of attempted rapes and witnesses to actualized rapes in ghettos across occupied Poland, I flesh out the literature concerning sexualized violence in the Holocaust and examine how female Jewish victims of rape resisted the violence they endured. This essay concludes by arguing that such violence was resisted with vigour in various ways and that greater attention must be paid to sexualized violence in the Holocaust in order to destigmatize this topic and bring justice to those who experienced it.

Despite the plethora of research concerning the Holocaust, sexualized violence has remained a relatively understudied topic until recently. When scholars in male dominated academia became invested in theorizing the Holocaust in the late 1960s, male survivors' experiences were utilized to draw a picture of a universal Holocaust

experience. It was not until the 'second wave' feminist movement in the early 1980s that the work of women scholars researching the ways in which gender impacted one's Holocaust experience entered mainstream Holocaust studies.[1] Certain forms of violence only cisgender (a gender identity that aligns with the sex assigned at birth) women experienced, such as amenorrhea (the loss of menstruation), forced pregnancy, and abortion, were cited as proof that women and men's Holocaust experiences differed. However, some scholars maintained that rape specifically was absent in the Holocaust because of Nazi racial laws prohibiting *Rassenschande;* that is, forbidden sexual relations between those belonging to the "Aryan race" and "inferior races."[2] In the late 1990s, bolstered by the work of scholars who observed and analyzed the role of rape in the wars in former Yugolsavia, more Holocaust scholars began to acknowledge the experiences of sexualized violence.[3] The growth of the field of study

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[1] Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5-6; Annette F. Timm, "The Challenges of Including Sexual Violence and Transgressive Love in Historical Writing on World War II and the Holocaust," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 3 (2017): 353; Amy E. Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey* (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 15.

[2] JoAnn DiGeorgio-Lutz and Donna Gosbee, *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2016), 5.

[3] Myrna Goldenberg and Amy H. Shapiro, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 24; Regina Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," *German History* 37 (2020): 12-15; Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey,* 107-

of wartime sexualized violence gave way to research in the early 2000s concerning topics such as forced sex work and brothels under the Nazi regime.[4]

Despite these breakthroughs, the subject of sexualized violence at the hands of the Nazis, and particularly resistance to such violence, remains relatively understudied.[5] The reason for this is twofold. First, there has been a lack of attention paid to stories of sexualized violence in the Holocaust until recently as a result of the taboo nature of sexualized violence in general.[6] Nomi Levenkron

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109, 120; Anette Bringedal Houge, Sexualized War Violence. Knowledge Construction and Knowledge Gaps," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 25, (2015): 80.

[4] Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History,* 2, 4, 16; Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* (Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998), 39, 44; Elizabeth Roberts Baer and Myrna Goldenberg, *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 265; Robert Sommer, "Camp Brothels: Forced Sex Labour in Nazi Concentration Camps," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe s Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 170.

[5] Nicole Ephgrave, "On Women s Bodies: Experiences of Dehumanization during the Holocaust," *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 2 (2016): 18-20; Baumel-Schwartz, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust,* 40; Baer and Myrna Goldenberg, *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust,* 26; Anna Hájková, "Introduction: Sexuality, Holocaust, Stigma," *German History* 38, no. 2 (2020): 3; Anna Hajkova, et. al., "Holocaust and the History of Gender and Sexuality," *German History* 36, no. 1 (2018): 85.

[6] Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History*, 1-2, 76.; Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 12; DiGeorgio-Lutz and Gosbee, *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance,* 136-137; Timm, "The

argues that scholars have been reluctant to address these issues for fear that such "scandalous" topics would overshadow the magnitude of the genocide's death and destruction.[7] Such issues were considered trivial within the academy, and Holocaust deaths were considered both more important and quantifiable than instances of sexualized violence.[8] As a result, many women and men who wished to tell their stories of abuse postwar were shunned by uninterested scholars. This absence of testimony is also due to the stigma victims of sexualized violence experience. In her work concerning the dehumanization of women during the Holocaust, Nicole Ephgrave asserts that the stigma regarding sexualized violence has prevented survivors from speaking about their experiences candidly.[9] This stigma is particularly strong among those who were raped by Nazis. Although victims of sexualized violence in any context of genocide are not collaborators nor are they in any way responsible for the brutality they endure, they often experience shame and guilt as a result of being raped by members of the perpetrating group, which prevents many from

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Challenges of Including Sexual Violence and Transgressive Love in Historical Writing on World War II and the Holocaust," 353.

[7] Nomi Levenkron, Death and the Maidens: Prostitution, Rape, and Sexual Slavery during World War II," in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust,* eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 28.

[8] Levenkron, Death and the Maidens: Prostitution, Rape, and Sexual Slavery during World War II," in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust,* 24.

[9] Ephgrave, "On Women s Bodies: Experiences of Dehumanization during the Holocaust," 19.

speaking about their experiences.[10] Lilian S. Kremmer argues that women have also repressed their stories of sexualized violence because they have been socialized in a way that requires them to stay mum about their trauma. [11] Polish survivor Esia Shor's story exemplifies this phenomenon. In 1998, when speaking about her experience of an attempted rape by a Nazi officer in the Nowogródek ghetto, Esia stated that she did not tell her father about the incident until years after it had occurred. When asked by the interviewer why she refrained from speaking about such a traumatic event for so long, Esia replied, "we were brought up… [that] certain things you don't talk about, even if it happened to you." [12] Esia's explanation for avoiding the discussion of her assault is common among survivors of sexualized violence.[13] While this sentiment is shifting, there remains a common perception that instances of sexualized violence belong in the private sphere and should to be kept to oneself.[14] The lack of

[10] Beverley Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule* (Guildford, Surrey: Grosvenor House Publishing Limited, 2015), 231; Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey,* 301.

[11] Lilian S. Kremmer, "Women in the Holocaust: Representation of Gendered Suffering and Coping Strategies in American Fiction," in *Experience and Expression: Women, Nazis, and the Holocaust,* ed. Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 262.

[12] Esia Shor, interview by Ruth Meyer, 26 April 1998, interview 41035, audio-visual recording, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[13] DiGeorgio-Lutz and Gosbee, *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance,* 5.

[14] Kremmer, Women in the Holocaust: Representation of Gendered Suffering and Coping Strategies in American Fiction," 262; Hájková, "Introduction:

survivor testimony concerning this topic has meant that scholars have had little access to information concerning sexualized violence in the Holocaust, thus hindering research.

Instances of rape and other forms of sexualized violence in the Holocaust have also been understudied because mass rape was not a tactic employed by the Nazi regime to carry out their genocidal aims.[15] While systematic mass rape has been understood as a tool used by perpetrators of more recent genocides, Nazi racial theories precluded mass campaigns of rape.[16] However, while mass rape was not employed by the Nazis, sexualized violence was nevertheless present in the Holocaust and took place in camps, ghettos, and prisons across Nazi occupied territory.[17] Depending on the context,

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Sexuality, Holocaust, Stigma," 5; DiGeorgio-Lutz and Gosbee, *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance,* 136-137.

[15] DiGeorgio-Lutz and Gosbee, *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance,* 74.

[16] Lisa Sharlach, "Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda," *New Political Science* 22, no. 1 (2000): 94-101; Jonathan Gottschall, "Explaining Wartime Rape," *The Journal of Sex Research* 41, no. 2 (2004): 129; Helene Sinnreich, "'And it Was Something We Didn't Talk About': Rape of Jewish Women During the Holocaust," *Holocaust Studies* 14, no. 2 (2008): 3; Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 15, 21; DiGeorgio-Lutz and Gosbee, *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance,* 201, 220.

[17] Chalmers,*Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 212-213; Stacy Banwell, "Rassenschande, Genocide and the Reproductive Jewish Body: Examining the use of Rape and Sexualized Violence Against Jewish Women during the Holocaust?" *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 15, no. 2 (2016): 215;

such violence took on different forms and levels of pervasiveness. In concentration and extermination camps, the forcible shaving of body hair, genital searches, and reproductive experiments were institutionalized methods of sexualized violence.[18] On the Eastern front, rape was used by some *Wehrmacht* and *Einsatzgruppen* (special action groups, the paramilitary death squads of the SS) soldiers to dehumanize Jews before their death.[19] No matter the location or type, sexualized violence carried out against Jews was meant to alienate those subjected to it from their families, religion, and culture, to destroy their social relations, and to remove from victims the little agency they had left over their bodies.[20] While the scope of this paper is limited to the rape and attempted rape of Jewish women by Nazi soldiers in ghettos across occupied Poland, it is important to note that rape was just one form of abuse in a context in which sexualized

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Steven Katz, "Thoughts on the Intersection of Rape and *Rassenchande* during the Holocaust," *Modern Judaism* 32, no. 3 (2012): 294-295; Hájková, "Introduction: Sexuality, Holocaust, Stigma," 4.

[18] Banwell, "Rassenschande, Genocide and the Reproductive Jewish Body: Examining the use of Rape and Sexualized Violence Against Jewish Women during the Holocaust?" 209; Na ama Shik, "Sexual Abuse of Jewish Women in Auschwitz-Birkenau," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe s Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 223.

[19] Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 21; Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 131-132.

[20] Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 21; Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey,* 201.

violence occurred often and was carried out against people of all sexualities and genders.[21]

Methodology

The primary source base for this paper is oral testimonies sourced from the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute's Visual History Archive (VHA). The VHA contains tens of thousands of audio-visual testimonies and has been made fully searchable with indexed keywords and hyperlinks. The archive's testimonies can be narrowed down by use of the indexing system, which allows users search certain phrases, key words, or names in order to summon specific digitized testimony. For the purposes of this project, I searched the terms 'Polish ghetto rape' and 'Polish ghetto rape resistance,' selecting 'Jewish survivor' as the experience group. Of this combination, 43 testimonies of Jewish survivors were available in English for the first search term and 22 for the second search term, with some of the results overlapping. After reviewing the testimonies tagged with the keywords I selected, I selected five testimonies based on their relevance to this project. These testimonies are the only ones in which rape or attempted rape was carried out by a Nazi in the context in which this paper covers. While the search results provided testimonies in which Jewish men and women described instances of sexualized violence at the hands of

[21] Shik, Sexual Abuse of Jewish Women in Auschwitz-Birkenau," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe s Twentieth Century*, 222, 224, 231-23; Beverley Chalmers, "Jewish Women's Sexual Behaviour and Sexualized Abuse during the Nazi Era," *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 24, no. 2 (2015): 187-90.

by non-German authority figures and rapes by Nazis in other settings, the scope of this paper does not permit an analysis of these testimonies.

The benefits and limitations of using digitized testimony have been discussed by scholars.[22] This project takes into account that the information available through these interviews is scarce due to the stigma surrounding this topic which has prevented many survivors from speaking about their experiences. Additionally, the archive only contains testimonies belonging to survivors, so the stories of those who endured rape but did not survive the Holocaust are not examined here. Undoubtedly, the lack of testimony on the particular topic this paper covers speaks to the shame that is attached to those who endured rape by Nazis. I also recognize that the information provided by such testimony is limited to that which is offered by survivors in response to questions asked by the interviewers. However, this testimony provides valuable insight into the nature of rape by Nazi soldiers and officers and the ways in which such violence was resisted by victims.

In this paper, I borrow a definition of resistance from Holocaust scholars Wolf Gruner and Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, who define resistance as:

> Any individual or group action in opposition to known laws, actions, or intentions of the Nazis and

[22] Noah Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 15-20; Paul Frosh, "The Mouse, the Screen and the Holocaust Witness: Interface Aesthetics and Moral Response," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 1 (2018): 253.

> their collaborators, whether successful or unsuccessful, which comprises a wide range of acts of opposition and defiance.[23]

As Gruner and Pegelow Kaplan argue, this definition "return[s] agency to the persecuted minorities and challenge[s] the myth of these men and women's alleged passivity."[24] In the pages that follow, I discuss instances of attempted and actualized rapes in the ghettos of Białystok, Warsaw, Kraków, Nowogródek, and Stanislawów. While physical resistance to such violence was difficult because it often meant death for the victim and their loved ones, the stories below show that resistance in a myriad of forms was possible and indeed common.

Studying the ways in which rape was resisted in the context of the Holocaust restores agency to victims and using testimony allows survivors' words and stories to be amplified. However, this paper acknowledges that there is inherent risk of what Jonathan Friedman calls "sweetening the Holocaust."[25] That is, applying hope and uplifting narratives to stories of the Holocaust where none can be found. In no way do I wish to fall into this historiographical trap. My hope is that by focusing on resistance to rape, rather than simply

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[23] Thomas Pegelow Kaplan and Wolf Gruner, "Introduction" in *Resisting Persecution: Jews and Their Petitions during the Holocaust,* eds. Thomas Pegelow Kaplan and Wolf Gruner (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020), 7-8.

[24] Kaplan and Gruner, "Introduction," 7-8.

[25] Jonathan Friedman, "Togetherness and Isolation: Holocaust Survivor Memories of Intimacy and Sexuality in the Ghettos," *The Oral History Review* 28, no. 1 (2001): 73; Chalmers, "Jewish Women's Sexual Behaviour and Sexualized Abuse during the Nazi Era," 254.

on instances of rape, the individuals subjected to this violence will be granted a degree of agency, instead of being re-victimized through the re-telling of their trauma.

Rassenschande in the German Military

Almost immediately after Hitler's seizure of power, the Nazi regime enacted racial hygiene laws to prevent the contamination of 'pure' German blood. Such legislation included two of the Nuremberg Laws adopted in September 1935: the *Reich Citizenship Law* and the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour,* and their thirteen implementation decrees issued between November 1935 and July 1943.[26] The *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour* specifically forbade Jews from having sexual relations with or marrying Germans. Couples who violated these laws were considered to have engaged in *Rassenschande* and faced punishment in the form of hard labour or imprisonment. Infringements of these laws were most often kept out of the press, particularly if they involved instances of *Rassenschande* in German brothels or Nazi Party members.[27] The regime did not want to publicize transgressions by those who were supposed to exemplify "Aryan" purity. This explains why, despite the regime's greatest attempts to prevent *Rassenschande*,

[26] Chalmers, "Jewish Women's Sexual Behaviour and Sexualized Abuse during the Nazi Era," 14; Annette F. Timm, Sex with a Purpose: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Militarized Masculinity in the Third Reich," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2 (2002): 234.

[27] Chalmers, "Jewish Women's Sexual Behaviour and Sexualized Abuse during the Nazi Era," 15-17.

instances of the crime were not uncommon within the German military. Although the rape of Jewish women by German soldiers was made illegal through German racial hygiene laws as well as military laws prohibiting *Notzucht* (sexual assault), *Wehrmacht* and *SS* authorities did not often prosecute *Rassenschande,* particularly in the occupied East. This is in large part because soldiers who raped Jews used rape as a form of military violence in the attack against Jews, not simply as sexual fodder.[28] While these rapes were mostly based on individual motives and opportunities, military command did little to prevent them and in fact exploited such behaviour in order to spread fear among the occupied populations and foster a sense of unity among the men, both of which served military aims.[29] Historian Helene Sinnerich argues that when soldiers committed acts that constituted *Rassenschande*, particularly in the East, they received minimal or no reprimand. When they were punished, it was for failing to maintain military discipline rather than for the act of *Rassenschande* itself.[30]

Sexualized violence is a political, social, and gendered act performed out of aggression rather than sexual attraction or lust. In contexts of war and genocide, rape is carried out not for pleasure but

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[28] Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 20-21; Chalmers, "Jewish Women's Sexual Behaviour and Sexualized Abuse during the Nazi Era," 253.

[29] Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 21.

[30] Sinnreich, "'And it Was Something We Didn't Talk About': Rape of Jewish Women During the Holocaust," 2.

to mark a group as weak by violating its citizens.[31] Although the Nazi regime prioritized the maintenance of pure "Aryan" blood and took lengths to ensure that "undesirable races" were annihilated, some Germans employed rape against Jews in an effort to further establish themselves as the "superior race."[32] This can be explained by the fact that the destruction of the Jewish people was to be carried out through humiliation and dehumanization prior to eventual annihilation. Rape served as a way to degrade Jews prior to their death, to reinforce their supposed worthlessness, and to emphasize German power.[33] As scholars of genocide have argued, rendering a victim subhuman often enables rape by perpetrators rather than deterring it. [34] For example, Nazi propaganda depicting Jews as

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[31] Banwell, "Rassenschande, Genocide and the Reproductive Jewish Body: Examining the use of Rape and Sexualized Violence Against Jewish Women during the Holocaust?" 210-212; Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey,* 304.

[32] Goldenberg and Shapiro, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust,* 104; Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 16-17; Katz, "Thoughts on the Intersection of Rape and Rassenchande during the Holocaust," 294-295; DiGeorgio-Lutz and Gosbee, *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance,* 5.

[33] Goldenberg and Shapiro, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust,* 104; Regina Mühlhäuser, "Reframing Sexual Violence as a Weapon and Strategy of War: The Case of the German Wehrmacht during the War and Genocide in the Soviet Union, 1941–1944," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 3 (2017): 386.

[34] Sinnreich, "'And it Was Something We Didn't Talk About': Rape of Jewish Women During the Holocaust," 2; Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Genocide's Sexuality," *Nomos (New York, N.Y.)* 46 (2005): 317.

animals served to dehumanize Jews and thus justify their mistreatment and degradation. Although it contradicted the regime's racial policies, the rape of Jewish women conformed to Nazi goals which necessitated the subjugation and extermination of "races" deemed inferior.[35]

Rape in the Ghettos

While the rape of Jewish women by Nazis in the ghettos was not systematic, it was not uncommon either. Jews lived in ghettos for extended periods of time under the supervision of German authorities who sought to dehumanize them before their deaths. While the threat of *Rassenschande* and a disgust with the Jewish "Other" prevented many Germans from raping Jews, others were not deterred.[36] Those who experienced rape within the ghettos were not passive victims; they resisted their assailants, even if they did not physically fight back. In addition to fighting back verbally and physically, many women attempted to make themselves as unattractive as possible in order to prevent assaults by cropping their hair and dirtying themselves with soot and dirt. Because of the awful conditions in the ghettos, appearing unattractive was not difficult. Many were already emaciated, especially immediately prior to

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[35] Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 230-231; Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey,* 302-304.

[36] Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 230-231; 249; Katz, "Thoughts on the Intersection of Rape and Rassenchande during the Holocaust," 299; Hájková, "Introduction: Sexuality, Holocaust, Stigma," 4.

liquidations, and cosmetic supplies with which to beautify oneself were difficult to find as food was prioritized over frivolities.[37] These pre-emptive forms of resistance to rape were important, because the ability to physically fight off assailants in actualized situations of rape required a certain amount of strength that many living in the ghettos simply did not have. However, because instances of rape in genocidal contexts are about exercising power rather than simply attraction or lust, these forms of resistance were not always successful in avoiding rape. Nevertheless, each and every act of resistance against the Nazi terror apparatus reinforced Jewish agency and helped to undermine the regime's resources and challenge its power structure.

The rape of Jewish women was viewed by some Germans as a way to further assert dominance over not only the women themselves but the Jewish population as a whole.[38] Rape was a way to both dehumanize and dishonour not only the woman but also her family and the collective Jewish community. Such rapes were carried out with wanton violence in order to inflict as much physical and psychological pain as possible.[39] Polish survivor Lusia Haberfeld's story of witnessing rape in the Warsaw ghetto in May 1943 exemplifies the malice and sporadic nature that characterized such attacks. Lusia recounted how prior to the ghetto's liquidation, the German guards "were beating people constantly and raping

[37] Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 67; 192.

[38] Ibid., 219, 253; Goldenberg and Shapiro, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust,* 104.

[39] Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsiderationof Research and Sources," 17-20.

women."[40] Lusia then described the nature of the rapes, stating that they were "absolutely and totally inhuman… The Germans, they were doing it with such a laugh… I can't even tell you. Such cruelty and such sadism."[41] The public nature of the rapes Lusia described further exemplifies the ways in which the Nazis sought to degrade their victims prior to murdering them.

Lusia recalled that as a result of the rapes, "two girls threw themselves out of the windows" of the building they were in.[42] The link between rape and death in the Holocaust should not be understated.[43] While some women, such as those described by Lusia, felt that death offered an escape to the trauma that rape produced and thus committed suicide, many women were simply killed by their attackers after they were raped.[44] The not insignificant threat of being exposed for *Rassenschande* meant that Nazis who raped Jews had additional incentive to murder their victims in order to erase the evidence of their transgressions.[45] Indeed, Regina Mühlhäuser argues that the incentive for some men to rape women before their death

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[40] Lusia Haberfeld, interview by Yael Hirsch, 13 October 1996, interview 20848, audio-visual recording, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[41] Lusia Haberfeld, interview by Yael Hirsch, 13 October 1996, interview 20848.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Katz, "Thoughts on the Intersection of Rape and Rassenchande during the Holocaust," 300.

[44] Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 215, 218-219, 256.

[45] Doris L. Bergen, Sexual Violence in the Holocaust: Unique or Typical?" in *Lessons and Legacies VII: The Holocaust in International Perspective*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 186.

was stronger simply because they were going to die anyway.[46] However, this reality did not prevent women from fighting back in instances of rape, if not physically, then verbally.

In a 2001 interview, Polish survivor Sidney Zoltak recounted when, as a young boy in the Białystok ghetto, his mother was the victim of an attempted rape by a *Wehrmacht* soldier:

> One solider came into our house. And into my parents' bedroom. And he had a revolver in his hand, and he actually came in to rape my mother. I heard the yelling and crying, and I cried, my father cried, my mother cried. And I heard some other cries from around because the buildings were attached to one another so you could hear what was happening… next door, too… And I don't know how long it lasted but another German solider came in and he sort of took him out before he could go through with whatever he was planning to [do].[47]

Sidney's mother avoided rape because her and her community's verbal response to the violence alerted another nearby solider who disapproved of his comrade's actions. Because punishment for *Rassenschande* in the military was sporadic and the crime could go unpunished in certain circumstances, it is unknown whether the

[46] Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 10.

[47] Sidney Zoltak, interview by Gerry Singer, 14 June 2001, interview 54453, audio-visual recording, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

soldier who attempted to rape Sidney's mother was punished for *Rassenschande* or for disobeying orders, if at all. There was little Sidney's mother could do in this instance except cry out. She was surrounded by her family, who likely would have been shot alongside her had she tried to fight back physically.[48] This attempted rape exemplifies the nature of many Nazi rapes, especially in occupied territories. In such contexts, soldiers carried out rape in order to dishonour, traumatize, and assert power over Jewish women and their families prior to their death.[49]

The story of Polish survivor Anna Weiss' attempted rape at age seventeen exemplifies the fact that some soldiers were comfortable with committing *Rassenschande* but only if they were not caught doing so. When Anna was living in the Kraków Ghetto in 1942, the SS would periodically enter homes in the ghetto in order to forcibly recruit people for work at labour camps or to collect metal. One such time, Anna was hiding in her house, alone, with the exception of the other children who lived with her family. Anna recounted her experience when a German solider discovered her hiding and attempted to rape her:

> A young soldier [came]. He pushed [the children] off to the other room and left me alone there and said I should undress, which I refused. I said, 'I'm not.' And he must have heard the other fellow coming, because they always were in a company, so he really, he really

[48] Katz, "Thoughts on the Intersection of Rape and Rassenchande during the Holocaust," 295-296.

[49] Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 249.

> left me alone. It was quick because it was *Rassenschande*. If he would have raped me and got caught, he wouldn't get away from their own soldiers. They weren't allowed to do that because I was Jewish. It gave me a scare.[50]

Anna's rape was prevented because her German attacker feared punishment for *Rassenschande.* Anna's own defiance in this situation exemplifies her courage and commitment to resistance. Knowing that disobedience could lead to death, Anna was committed to avoiding whatever kind of violence the solider had planned. However, had the soldier's partner not intervened, Anna may not have avoided rape, despite her most fervent attempts to resist. Later in the interview, Anna expressed awe at the fact that the solider did not punish her despite her bold verbal resistance to his violence and the fact that she had been hiding from him.

While Anna's attacker reconsidered his plans for rape because he was afraid of being caught committing racial treason, the threat of *Rassenschande* did not deter other soldiers from attempting to rape Jews.[51] When Esia Shor lived in the Nowogródek Ghetto, she worked for a brief period as a housemaid in the home of a German officer, a man who she describes as having "human feelings" and whom she did not perceive as frightening in contrast to the other

[50]Anna Weiss, interview by Sharon Savdie, 12 December 1995, interview 7132, audio-visual recording, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

[51] Katz, "Thoughts on the Intersection of Rape and Rassenchande during the Holocaust," 295-296.

Nazis she had encountered.[52] One day when she was working in his home, the officer "tried to rape" Esia.[53] When asked by the interviewer if she fought the officer off, Esia replied, "not really, not really," although she remembers trying to talk the officer out of raping her.[54] It is unclear from Esia's testimony whether the officer succeeded in his attempts, as she admits she "blacked out" for part of the encounter:

> I don't know what took place. I can't recall that, you know, vividly, what happened. But I was scared. I was a very naive girl, I would say, a child. I, like, blacked out at that time, so I really don't recall what took place. I was very scared… And I'm really not sure how… I blacked out. I really don't know what took place. He didn't hit me; I didn't have any marks. But I guess fear did it to me, I don't know.[55]

Whether or not a rape occurred is not necessary to determine the impact of this event on Esia. Recounting this story over fifty years after it took place, Esia's tone and body language make clear that the attack left a powerful impact on her. Given the authority of the officer, Esia's decision to use her words in an attempt to deter her assailant rather than fighting back physically likely saved her life, as a physical attack may have prompted a more extreme reaction from the officer. While Esia "of course… stopped working there" after the

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[52] Esia Shor, interview by Ruth Meyer, 26 April 1998, interview 41035.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid,

[55] Ibid.

encounter, like Anna she received no punishment or difference in treatment after it occurred, much to her shock.[56]

As has been explored recently by an increasing number of scholars, one form of rape that some Jewish women experienced in the Holocaust was sexual enslavement in Nazi operated brothels.[57] Czech survivor Michael Jackson's story of meeting a sexually enslaved Jewish woman in the Stanislawów ghetto is an example of such violence. During a period in 1942 when Michael was living in the ghetto, he worked in a labour battalion tasked with cleaning buildings in the area. One day his group was charged with cleaning the stairs and select rooms in an "officer's club for Hungarian and German officers."[58] Michael and the rest of the young men in his group did not immediately realize that the club was a brothel. It only became clear to the men once they reached the top floor of the building and:

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Robert Sommer, Forced Prostitution in National Socialist Concentration Camps: The Example of Auschwitz," in *Forced Prostitution in Times of War and Peace: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls*, eds. Barbara Drinck and Chung-noh Gross (Bielefeld, Germany: Kleine Verlag, 2007); Sommer, "Camp Brothels: Forced Sex Labour in Nazi Concentration Camps," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe s Twentieth Century;* Nicole Bogue, "The Concentration Camp Brothels in Memory," *Holocaust Studies* 22, no. 2-3 (2016); Timm, Sex with a Purpose: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Militarized Masculinity in the Third Reich," 240-243; Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," 7-10.

[58] Michael Jackson, interview by Jeannie Miller, 21 February 1997, interview 26142, audio-visual recording, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

> Saw in the rooms lots of young women. We didn't catch on right away what was going on there. We… boys, we spoke among ourselves Yiddish. And [when] one of the girls overheard us, that we [spoke] Yiddish, she broke out in a lament of tears. And she started to talk to us and tell us that they are simply here for pure rape for these animals [the Germans]. And after some times [sic], these girls disappeared and never [came] back here.[59]

Michael and his comrades were shaken by this encounter, and especially by the fact that they were powerless to help the imprisoned women. Michael's testimony also alludes to the common link between rape and death. The women who "disappeared and never [came] back" were very likely killed and replaced with women whom the Nazis considered more "desirable." They may have been murdered as punishment for resistance, or simply because the men became bored with them.[60]

While resistance was not impossible in brothels, the consequences were just as severe as in the other cases of rape that took place in the ghettos. Outright resistance could very easily lead to a swift death.[61] Michael recalled that some of the girls in the building "were throwing themselves down the windows… from the fourth

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[59] Michael Jackson, interview by Jeannie Miller, 21 February 1997, interview 26142.

[60] Bogue, "The Concentration Camp Brothels in Memory," 209.

[61] Sommer, "Camp Brothels: Forced Sex Labour in Nazi Concentration Camps," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe s Twentieth Century,* 182.

floor" in an attempt to resist the terror of the brothel and hopefully avoid death.[62] After the Germans discovered this, "they secured the windows [so] that [the women] could not open [them] anymore. And they also put up a twenty-four-hour guard on the floor."[63] These actions likely severely limited the women's avenues of resistance in the brothel.

While Michael only had a few brief moments with the girl and never discovered her fate, he remembered clearly that she told him, "if you survive the war, tell our story. Tell the world what these beasts did to us."[64] This is exactly what Michael sought to do by recalling the woman's story in his testimony for the VHA. By telling her story in a publicly accessible venue, Michael "fulfil[led] the promise… that I made to this girl."[65] Indeed, the fact that the woman's story made it onto the historical record is a form of resistance. The documentation and research of rape and other Nazi atrocities ensures that such violence does not go unnoticed, even if the victims did not survive the Holocaust and could not tell their story.

The responsibility of being the bearer of such a tragic story weighed on Michael. The pain Michael felt in hearing the girl's story and in recounting her words decades later was clear as he spoke with a breaking voice and tears in his eyes:

> God in Heaven, this face of this Jewish girl I will never forget. The deep anguish and her pain I saw in her

[62] Michael Jackson, interview by Jeannie Miller, 21 February 1997, interview 26142.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

> eyes… It is unfair to the animals to call the German rapists animals… My dear Jewish sister, I am fulfilling now your request. I looked into your eyes and I saw and feel your pain, and I still am feeling the pain. And I will as long as I live.[66]

Michael's words exemplify the impact that rape in contexts of genocide has on the larger victim group. Not only do victims of rape themselves become traumatized; their loved ones and other victims of the genocide carry the pain of their attack. This is, of course, the goal of perpetrators who utilize such violence. They aim to disrupt peace and destroy morale among the victim population by inflicting violence that will cause pain, both emotional and physical, to as many people as possible.[67]

In exploring Jewish resistance to rape by Nazi soldiers in ghettos throughout occupied Poland, this paper looked at a small subsection of the much larger picture of sexualized violence in the Holocaust. This brief analysis of survivor testimony has revealed that victims of rape and attempted rape in this context were by no means passive recipients of Nazi brutality; they challenged such violence in various ways. In doing so, victims and survivors directly challenged the process of dehumanization that the Nazis sought to inflict upon them. However, is important to note that in a context in which the regime sought to annihilate Jews entirely, survival itself was a crucial form of resistance.

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey,* 301-303.

Understanding genocides in their historical context is a fundamental part of the work to prevent them. The Holocaust was a thoroughly modern genocide made possible only by the extensive bureaucratic and technological capabilities of the twentieth century. The steps the Nazi regime took to dehumanize its subjects through sexualized violence must thus be understood as possible in a modern context. Indeed, recent genocides have shown that the use of rape is an effective tool in subjugating civilian populations.[68] In order to better understand how sexualized violence operates within genocides, scholars must further investigate the various forms such violence took in the Holocaust and give those who experienced this violence the attention they deserve. Neglecting the stories of those who have experienced sexualized violence can have dire implications, including the stigmatization of victims. As the relative lack of testimony concerning sexualized violence in the Holocaust has indicated, this stigma prevents survivors from coming forward about their abuse, thus limiting the ways in which scholars can study and attempt to prevent such violence.[69] Increased attention paid to this topic will help to ensure that future survivors of sexualized violence in genocides will not experience the same disavowal that those who endured rape at the hands of the Nazis have had to face.

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[68] Mathias Thaler, *Naming Violence: A Critical Theory of Genocide, Torture, and Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 22.

[69] Levenkron, Death and the Maidens: Prostitution, Rape, and Sexual Slavery during World War II," 33; Bringedal Houge, Sexualized War Violence. Knowledge Construction and Knowledge Gaps," 80-83; Chalmers, *Birth, Sex, and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule,* 231.

While this paper has focused almost exclusively on Jewish women's resistance to rape, sexualized violence against Jewish and non-Jewish men in the Holocaust is an equally important topic, and one that has gained increasing attention from scholars in recent years.[70] Further research concerning how the Nazi regime carried out sexualized violence against all types of prisoners in the camps will help scholars recognize the patterns which characterize sexualized violence in contexts of genocide, particularly when it is not systemic.[71] Research concerning how such violence was resisted will not only help scholars develop tools that may help future victims of genocidal rape and abuse challenge their perpetrators and rebuild their lives after the violence has ended, but also highlight the agency of those who experienced such violence.

[70] Chalmers, "Jewish Women's Sexual Behaviour and Sexualized Abuse during the Nazi Era," 192; Bringedal Houge, "Sexualized War Violence. Knowledge Construction and Knowledge Gaps," 81; Dorota Glowacka, "Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys during the Holocaust: A Genealogy of (Not-so-Silent) Silence," *German History* 39, no. 1 (2021); Tommy J. Curry, "Thinking through the Silence: Theorizing the Rape of Jewish Males during the Holocaust through Survivor Testimonies." *Holocaust Studies* 27, no. 4 (2021).

[71] Randall, *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey,* 301.

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How Transgressive a Transsexual? The Contradictions in Transgression and Conformity Within Transfeminine Print Erotica

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Abstract: Mainstream transfeminine porn was the central element shaping mid-century American cultural understandings of transness. Despite this representational importance, the study of transfeminine erotica is a niche field. This paper helps fill this gap via analysis of eighty-six issues of erotica from the late 1960s to early 1980s. Pihlak demonstrates the contradictions in transfeminine desirability in these works. Despite overwhelming bodily normativity, the presence of a penis invariably led to models being framed as lurid, transgressive erotic objects. Pihlak's findings demonstrate the insufficiency of the concept of normativity. Then and now, the smallest breach to normative white cisfemininity renders one's claim to womanhood unstable. While this instability has material consequences for trans femmes, for many this precarity is solely an alluring invitation, to take a walk on the wild side.

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> Lisey has a fantasy. She wants to see her husband suck a cock. Well, that ain't going to happen. He's no fag. But what if that cock belonged to a woman. And thus we enter the conundrum of the tranny. Is it gay to suck a tranny cock? Today we find out. It just so happens Lisey has a friend that is now a woman. And this is how it begins. Natalie is a TS woman who works with Lance. Lance is married to Kacie who wants to experience sex with a trans woman. So, her husband arranges a get-together with his co-worker.[1]

This description for the 2017 porn video *Menage À Tranny,* in its questioning of the gender of Natalie and its focus on her penis, would not be out of place throughout historical transfeminine erotica. Indeed, the fact that Natalie Mars, who plays Lance's colleague, is a cisnormative passing, highly feminine, and beautiful sex worker lends only further historical irony to the description.[2] This one modern sample exemplifies the bifurcated gender model at play across the breadth of histories of transfeminine erotica. Actors that pass as cis women and that are cisnormatively beautiful become objects of lurid transgression by possessing a penis.

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[1] "Description for *Menage À Tranny*," *Adult Entertainment Broadcast Network,* accessed December 3, 2021. https://vod.aebn.com/straight/movies/219675/menage-a-tranny?refId=AEBN-029910

[2] "Stars," *Adult Entertainment Broadcast Network,* accessed December 3, 2021. https://vod.aebn.com/straight/movies/219675/menage-a-tranny?refId=AEBN-029910

The enduring stability of this bifurcated system of normativity and transgression in transfeminine desirability is an intriguing scholastic subject within histories of erotica. Yet, gaps mark the scholarship more than vigorous examination. Therefore, to redress the scarcity of analysis, this paper will utilize extensive primary source research of mid-twentieth century transfeminine print erotica to interrogate the presence of normativity and transgression within the genre and medium. This paper finds motivation for its analysis of normativity around the presumption shared by Whitney Strub and many in the field of trans porn studies that mid-century transfeminine erotica generally reproduced societal norms of gender, race, and sexuality.[3] As this work centres on the contradictions between bodily normativity and a simultaneous framing of transgression within transfeminine models, defining each is critical to understanding the paradox at play.

My understanding of transfemininity draws from trans and critical femininity studies, along with the socio-historical context of my subject. I take inspiration from Ulrika Dahl's call for critical femininity studies acting not simply as a rearticulation of womanhood studies but instead viewing femininity as a genre of idealized embodiment of endless socio-historical variations. While these articulations are typically associated with femaleness, I align

[3] Whitney Strub, "Trans Porn Genealogy beyond the Queer Canon: Kim Christy, Joey Silvera, and the Hetero-Industrial Production of Transsexuality," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (2020): 175-176.

with Dahl and others in rejecting a cis-heteronormative conflation of femininity as inter-changeable with womanhood.[4]

I further draw from Susan Stryker's definition of trans as a historicized set of behaviours, aesthetics, and self-understandings all reflective of one moving away from their gender-assigned at birth.[5] Transfemininity in this paper's temporal context encompasses a range of identities that includes male cross-dressers, hair fairies, transgender and transsexual women, drag queens, transvestites, female impersonators, the gender-queer, and further gender variances that all existed within my paper's temporal focus. Despite the breadth of terms, the members of these communities all engaged with femininity to varying degrees of permanency.

This articulation of transfemininity should not be understood as an authoritative claim to knowing how these people understood themselves. In addition, self-identification is auxiliary to this paper's focus on aesthetic and textual normativity. Furthermore, as in our own lives, how folks understood and defined themselves grew and evolved over time. Prominent transfeminine erotica actor and editor Kim Christy was a transsexual woman within this paper's temporal focus, before understanding himself to be a man by the twenty-first-century.[6] Attempting a study of transfemininity wholly defined by those who lived and died as transsexual women is methodologically

[4] Ulrika Dahl, "Turning like a Femme: Figuring Critical Femininity Studies," *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 20, no. 1 (2012): 60-62.

[5] Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York City: Seal Press, 2017), 1.

[6] Strub, "Trans Porn Genealogy," 176-177.

and epistemologically impossible. Moreso, it is historically anachronistic.

Now, conflating a cross-dressing man and a trans woman is considered offensive; however, such a mutability or sense of shared difference was once dominant within both erotica and the wider transfeminine community. Across the surveyed material, editors and consumers were unconcerned with any need for intensive delineation.[7] Within non-erotic contexts, community pillars like the periodical *TV/TS Tapestry* defined the transfeminine populace as: "'Our people' include members of the TV-TS [transvestite-transsexual] Community ('our' Community)."[8] While some variation in attitudes on definitional borders existed, one must engage with this now discarded conceptual porousness to properly study the historical umbrella of transfemininity.

Reflecting the stability of transfeminine norms of desirability, John Phillips's analysis of late 1990s to early 2000s transsexual internet video erotica models provides an ideal typology for my paper's own vastly different temporal and medium focuses. Accordingly, Phillips notes a prevalence of cisnormative-passing,

[7] "Editorial," *More She-Males* 4, no. 6 (1977): 3, AR421, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[8] Merissa Sherrill Lynn, "TV-TS Tapestry Statement." *The TV-TS Tapestry*, no. 41 (1984): 5, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/hx11xf29x

non-fat, and girlishly beautiful models that were typically aged between 18 and 30.[9] Essentially: a *Playboy* model with a penis.

The same stability in norms that enables the use of Phillips' concept of normativity allows for this paper's definition of transgression to draw from Whitney Strub's analysis of the failure for complete heteronormative consolidation of transfeminine video erotica from the 1980s to the 1990s.[10] The framing of transfeminine erotica not as a stable heterosexual erotic product like porn featuring cis female models but as one marketed as a lurid potential risking of one's heterosexuality defines this paper's concept of transgression. Of course, all of this presumes a cis, straight, male viewpoint. However, given that the transfeminine industrial porn this paper is examining marketed itself towards such an audience, this framing is appropriate.[11]

This work is divided into three main topics: bodily normativity, sexual normativity, and a final section on bodily transgression epitomized by the transfeminine penis. This paper will affirm that mid-century American transfeminine print erotica overwhelmingly reflected an aesthetic and sexual normativity; conversely, a framing of eroticized exoticism and transgression

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[9] John Phillips, "Walking on the Wild Side: She-Male Internet Pornography," in *International Exposure: Perspectives on Modern European Pornography, 1800–2000*, ed. Lisa Z. Sigel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 265.

[10] Strub, "Trans Porn Genealogy," 185-186.

[11] Nicholas Matte, "The Economic and Racial Politics of Selling a Transfeminine Fantasy in 1970s Niche and Pornographic Print Publications," in *Porno Chic and the Sex Wars: American Sexual Representation in the 1970s*, eds. Carolyn Bronstein and Whitney Strub (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 156, 167.

marked these same transfeminine erotic subjects. Ultimately, this simultaneous interplay of normativity and transgression destabilizes an attempt to neatly categorize transfeminine erotica as belonging wholly to either category.

Linda William's 1989 *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* inaugurated pornography's legitimation as a subject for scholastic inquiry.[12] Soon after, the emergent field of porn studies gained its first work on transfeminine erotica. Laura Kipnis' 1993 "She-Male Fantasies and the Aesthetics of Pornography" chose the genre not out of an interest in trans lives but to demonstrate the intellectual value of erotica to feminist scholars.[13] For Kipnis, anti-pornography feminists premised their arguments on the incorrect presumption that erotica always represents cis femininity. By analyzing porn not featuring cis women, she hoped to "avoid reproducing all the usual gender assumptions of the porn debates."[14] Her decision to instrumentalize transfeminine models to legitimatize erotica as an academic subject exemplifies the continued fringe position of transfemininity within porn studies.

In noting this marginality, Whitney Strub goes further in arguing that extant trans porn studies work, due to archival

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[12] Sophie Pezzutto, and Lynn Comella, "Trans Pornography: Mapping an Emerging Field," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (2020): 154.

[13] Laura Kipnis, "She-Male Fantasies and the Aesthetics of Pornography," in *More Dirty Looks: Gender, Pornography and Power,* ed. Pamela Church Gibson (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 204, 214.

[14] Laura Kipnis, "She-Male Fantasies and the Aesthetics of Pornography," in *More Dirty Looks: Gender, Pornography and Power,* ed. Pamela Church Gibson (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 204, 214.

deficiencies and scholastic inclinations towards the counter-normative, distorts an accurate genealogy of transfeminine erotica.[15] The normative transfeminine representations, which made up a majority of the market, occupy a scholastically marginal position in favour of erotica seen as more radical. This ironic under-examination is further problematized by fellow porn scholar Nicholas Matte's contention that this same erotica was an essential element shaping mid-century American cultural understandings of transness.[16]

Besides addressing this gap, this paper's temporal focus of the late 1960s to early 1980s is a deliberate choice to add longitudinal depth to an oftentimes siloed academic output. Rarely have chosen temporal and medium focuses of scholars overlapped, preventing content-based interrogation of one another's works. For example, Nicholas Matte's chapter in *Porno Chic and the Sex Wars* and Whitney Strub's 2020 article in *TSQ* share a focus on transfeminine erotica in general and temporally overlap but diverge in their chosen medium of analysis. Correspondingly, I primarily selected research material to ensure temporal and methodological overlap to account for any individual quirks. The main temporal focus is the late 1960s through 1983; although given uneven publication histories, the complete timeline analyzed ran from 1963 to 1985. The research corpus for this paper consists of eighty-six issues across thirteen publications. [17] Within the nature of the erotica, the surveyed publications differed in their degree of sexual explicitness. Much of the material is softcore pornography, containing breasts but no genitals and no sex acts. A

[15] Strub, "Trans Porn Genealogy," 175-176.

[16] Matte, "The Economic and Racial Politics," 154-155.

minority of the corpus is hardcore pornography, defined by either the presence of genitalia, or of simulated or actual sex acts.

Attempting to identify the exact audience size of transfeminine print erotica from the 1970s to the early 1980s is an impossible task. Indeed, this difficulty was a contemporary concern, as a 1981 editorial response to a letter in *Female Mimics International* noted their difficulty in discerning their genre's size.[18] Given the oftentimes inflated claims of revenue and scarcity of any concrete income statements, Chauntelle Anne Tibbals' contention that no precise comprehensive statistics exist within the porn industry rings true.[19] Furthermore, Vincent L. Barnett's analysis of the interrelation of money-laundering by organized crime and the porn industry at this time further distorts any evaluation of the historical size of the industry.[20] Despite these difficulties, it is possible to make some contextual estimates based on extant data.

The 1970 President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography utilized Internal Revenue Service forensic accountants to estimate the size of the porn industry. For the 1969 fiscal year, it found 259.4 million copies of softcore pornography or otherwise

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[18] Kim Christy, "Letters to the Editor," *Female Mimics International* 12, no. 5 (1982): 11, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed November 7, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/xg94hp56z

[19] Chauntelle Anne Tibbals, "Gonzo, Trannys, and Teens: current trends in US adult content production, distribution, and consumption," *Porn Studies* 1, no. 1-2 (2014): 127-128.

[20] Vincent L. Barnett, "'The most profitable film ever made': Deep Throat (1972), organized crime, and the $600 million gross," *Porn Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 135-136.

lighter erotica.[21] It estimated total sales of between 14 to 18 million copies of hardcore magazines for the same fiscal year.[22] Conversely, there were between 45 to 48 million distributed letters for mail-order erotica. [23] Given that *Drag* was the only surveyed publication sold on newsstands, as evidenced by their bombastic advertising of this fact, we can infer the other researched publications were overwhelmingly in the latter two categories.[24] The commission contends roughly 10% of hardcore magazines were homosexual and less than 5% were fetish-based, though the report's listing of fetishes does not include transfemininity.[25] Within mail-order erotica there is a similar claim of 10% homosexual content and negligible fetish content.[26] This leaves an absolute maximum of between 6.6 to 7.5 million possible issues, assuming the commission counted transfemininity as homosexual. If we exclude homosexual material, there is a total of 700,000 to 900,000 potentially sold issues for the 1969 fiscal year. Of course, it would be spurious to claim all fetish mail-order erotica and adults-only magazines as transfeminine, so the market would likely

[21] Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, *The Report of the Commission on Obscenity and* Pornography, 1970, 13-14, accessed November 20, 2021. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112028350624&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021

[22] Ibid., 17.

[23] Ibid., 17-18.

[24] Drag, "Having Trouble Finding *Drag* on Your Newsstand?," *Drag* 6, no. 24 (1975): 7, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed November 7, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/wp988j884

[25] Commission, *The Report,* 16.

[26] Ibid., 17.

be substantially lower.[27] A 1983 editorial from *Female Mimics International* claims a readership in the thousands, though this could have been mere rhetoric.[28] All this is in the context of a non-erotic periodical industry with an estimated number of sold copies at 2.5 billion.[29] No matter the estimated total, this paper is studying a niche genre within a small industry. Yet, recalling Nicholas Matte's analysis, this tiny number of works helped make transness visible and legible to the American public.

Normative Beauty

Returning to John Phillips's categorisation of transfeminine models, normative beauty is defined in terms of thinness, cisnormatively passing, and youthful girlishness.[30] These descriptors overwhelmingly describe the transfeminine erotic subjects within these publications. Although explicit articulations of these desired ideals were rare, what few examples we do have reinforce this typology.

Accordingly, a 1968 *Female Mimics* article on professional female impersonation notes that "an obese, elderly transvestite would

[27] Ibid., 17, 15-16.

[28] Kim Christy, "Editorial," *Female Mimics International* 12, no. 6 (1983): 3, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed November 21, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/bv73c049j

[29] Commission, *The Report*, 13.

[30] Phillips, "Walking on the Wild Side," 265.

succeed only in making a ridiculous spectacle of himself."[31] For one to be fat and old is to be ugly, unwomanly, and indeed not worthy of eroticization. A 1980 *Les Girls* article further speaks to the importance of youthful feminine vitality, as among a list of typical transsexual surgical operations were also facelifts and dermal abrasion.[32] The absence of body hair was a further important mark of proper feminine appearance, consistently appearing in any self-help article or guide. In the words of one 1981 *Female Mimics International* article, one should not "expose needless body hair. Long sleeves or gloves should be required by law."[33] Relatedly, the above-mentioned *Les Girls* article lists seven different methods of hair removal.[34] This same work succinctly encapsulates the importance of hairlessness as "very necessary to female impersonators"[35]

The degree to which audiences accepted or supported these norms once more relies more on inference than explicit evidence. The sheer preponderance of normative bodies across these publications provides the strongest, unsaid demonstration of their acceptance or preferability. Of course, which letters to the editor are

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[31] Gil Truman, "Girls Who Are and Can't," *Female Mimics* 1, no.12 (Summer 1968):19-20, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed November 7, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/v979v311w

[32] Henri Vadim, "A Guide to Female Impersonation," *Les Girls: Boys Will Be Girls* 1, no. 2 (1980): 29, HQ 77 L47, from University of Victoria Libraries Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia.

[33] Kim Christy, "Kim Christy's Do's & Don [sic]'ts of Drag!," *Female Mimics International* 13, no. 4 (1983): 15, 17, accessed November 7, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/9g54xh68r

[34] Vadim, "A Guide," 30-31, 38.

[35] Ibid. 30.

chosen for publication is hardly a neutral act, but the following example's criticality of the periodical lends a greater potential for authenticity. Accordingly, a 1980 letter to the editor in *Female Mimics International* levels scorn at several specific transfeminine models that appeared in the work, claiming that "if they wish an audience, I feel they should look convincingly female. Otherwise, they project a negative image for others in the field."[36] Such a biting remark was not alone in the surveyed material, which implies a certain level of expected 'quality' in models defined by these norms.

If these discerning readers expected certain beauty standards in publications, what were the actual vessels for erotic content? All the visual erotica surveyed falls into two main categories. The first, is an interview, real or constructed, with a transfeminine model in erotic poses in various outfits across a small number of settings. The 1974 erotic photo-essay, "More Than Enough," from *More She-Males*, featuring white transfeminine model, Mary-Anne, is an ideal exemplar. Across eleven-pages, Mary-Anne is in two outfits: one in lingerie, stockings, and garter; and the second in a chemise. As *More She-Males* was one of the few hardcore archival sources, her penis is visible and prominent in the shots. Intercut with the pictures is an interview typically consisting of compliments about the subject's body and the model discussing her life, career plans, or a topic related

[36] Cindy, "Letters to the Editor," *Female Mimics International* 11, no, 1 (1980): 5, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed October 28, 2021. https://ia800202.us.archive.org/13/items/femalemimicsinte111unse/femalemimicsinte111unse.pdf

to transfemininity.[37] In this case and as a common topic, Mary-Anne discusses her ambition to work in the entertainment industry.[38] Yet, these interviews were not necessarily mere fluff, as a 1976 erotic photo essay starring Consuela featured a wide-ranging monologue from her on the factors that have led to a perceived rise in transfeminine societal acceptance.[39]

The second category of erotic photo essay is a narrative. The text is intercut with a transfeminine model going about her day or, in a few cases, getting into amorous adventures. For example, a 1979 article from *Busty and Hung* titled "Public Exposure" features Black transfeminine model Tanya first walking down Hollywood Boulevard in a black dress. She then arrives in her living room where she strips down to a bra, stockings, and a garter before proceeding to lick her breasts and masturbate.[40] Here, the text is a blend of Tanya's inner monologue on her horniness, mixed with third-person narration of the actions in the photos.[41] The first erotic category is the bulk of the surveyed material; however, much of the hardcore transfeminine erotica falls into the second type. As the shooting of hardcore pornography was illegal and produced content relied on lax enforcement by local authorities, such scenes are rare in the analyzed

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[37] "More Than Enough," *More She-Males* 1, no. 2 (1974): 19-30. HQ77.9 M68, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[38] Ibid., 20, 22, 24, 27-28.

[39] "Consuela," *Dressed* 1, no. 5 (April 1976): 23- 32. HQ77 D739, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[40] "Public Exposure," *Busty and Hung* 1, no. 1 (1979): 5-12, HQ 77.9 B 79, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[41] Ibid., 5-7, 10-12.

material.[42] These types were the sole representational spaces for those bodies deemed worthy of eroticization.

Across the eighty-six issues analyzed, these photo essays featured only four non-normative bodies. This is not to say that these are the sole examples present in the magazines, rather these are the only examples found in erotic photoshoots. At a quantitative level, the lack of non-normative bodies is demonstrative of the overwhelming preference for normative femininity as an erotic subject within the magazines. Subsequently, this paper will appraise these four outliers to show the ways they disrupted or affirmed overall feminine normativity.

A 1965 issue of *Female Mimics* includes the earliest example of a non-normative body, covering fat, white, and transfeminine sex worker Abby Sinclair.[43] The article's placement within the magazine is notable as it is the last photo essay in the issue. Her size is unique only as it is simultaneously rare within the corpus but otherwise unremarkable beyond the medium. The work itself makes no mention of Sinclair's fatness and consists of *Drag's* usual superlative compliments of the model being glamorously beautiful.[44] The main area of semiotic interest is in its striking visual and textual cohesion to scripts of normative feminine domesticity.

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[42] Georgina Voss, *Stigma and the Shaping of the Pornography Industry* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2015), 25.

[43] "Abby Sinclair: ex-GI becomes Bride to Be," *Female Mimics* volume 1, no. 6 (August 1965): 54-63, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed November 4, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/5h73pw11p

[44] Ibid., 61.

Writing on mid-century depictions of transsexual women, Emily Skidmore notes that oftentimes the coverage of white transsexual women was dominated by scripts of the domestic and arch-feminine, despite the radical ways trans existence challenged normative assumptions of gender.[45] Within news articles on these women, the interviewed subjects often emphasized their domestic and feminine similarities to normative white middle-class cis American women. Visually, these same news articles used photographs in the kitchen or other domestic spaces to emphasize these women's feminine normalcy.[46] It is striking that in an erotic text we can see the same gestures to domesticity. Textually, Sinclair speaks of her plans to marry and become a housewife, mapping onto Skidmore's domestic scripts. [47] Visually, Sinclair is primarily photographed at home or while acting as a secretary to her business manager. [48] As Sinclair's primary occupation was a nightclub performer, this is a deliberate narrative choice. Indeed, the article's very title, "Abby Sinclair: ex-GI becomes Bride to Be," clearly echoes white trans celebrity Christine Jorgenson's famous headline debut, "ex-Gi becomes Blonde Beauty."[49]

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[45] Emily, Skidmore, "Constructing the "Good Transsexual": Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and
Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press," *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 2 (2011): 271-273.

[46] Ibid., 275.

[47] "Abby Sinclair," 59

[48] Ibid., 59-61.

[49] "Ex-GI Changes Sex after Surgery," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 Feb. 1954, B2, quoted in Emily, Skidmore, "Constructing the "Good Transsexual": Christine

"Millie," from a 1977 issue of *Dressed,* is the second fat, white, body found in the corpus. Though in contrast with the transsexual Sinclair, Millie specifically positions himself as a happily married heterosexual transvestite, using a third of the scant textual space to note that cross-dressing is not an inherently homosexual activity.[50] Millie was not unique in emphasizing this point, as other works also took pains to do so. For one example, a 1976 *Female Mimics* article on cross-dressing myths written from the perspective of a heterosexual cross-dresser has five of the six dispelled myths directly emphasize the masculinity and heterosexuality of cross-dressers. [51] Though differing from Sinclair, the work still acts as a normative reinforcement of, in this case, the heterosexual masculinity of a straight transvestite.

The actual aesthetic of the article is relatively unremarkable. Millie is in a women's blouse, coat, and skirt, before he strips down to stockings and shows his asshole.[52] As is illustrative of the relatively low production quality of many of these works, it appears to have been shot in the model's home. Comparatively, the other photo essays in the magazine appear much better shot, more well-lit, and contained additional texts and images. All this suggests an overall lack

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Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press," *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 2 (2011): 273.

[50] "Millie," *Dressed* 2, no. 1 (April 1977): 39-40, 43-45. HQ77 D739, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[51] "Cross-Dressing Myths," *Female Mimics* 7, no. 2 (1976): 40-50, from Digital Transgender Archive, accessed November 12, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/2f75r8170.

[52] "Millie," *Dressed,* 39-40, 43.

of attention paid to Millie. Much like Sinclair, Millie is also the last photo essay in the issue.

The final fat body and only Black transfeminine subject within this group is intriguing in its counter-intuitive nature. "Sugar Nicole," from a 1981 issue of *Female Mimics International,* holds a marquee position, being the first photo essay in the magazine.[53] The article, opening with "big girls are beautiful" is the only example in which a fat body is directly acknowledged and, indeed, used as a point of desirability.[54] Besides these two disruptions, the work otherwise reflects a desexualization of the Black, fat, transfeminine body. By 1981, *Female Mimics International* aggressively sexualized its photoshoot subjects. Yet in the article, Sugar Nicole is only complimented in terms of elegance and non-eroticized glamorous beauty.[55] By contrast, the issue's subsequent photo essay starring the white, normatively feminine Robyn opens with: "Sexy and provocative au natural- this is true sex appeal!" [56] Nicole's compliments revolve around her glamourous beauty and professionalism, but she is not referred to as sexy or otherwise eroticized like the normative Robyn.[57]

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[53] "Sugar Nicole," *Female Mimics International* 11 no. 5 (1981): 6-11, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 12, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/4t64gn26f

[54] Ibid., 6

[55] Ibid., 8.

[56] "Robyn," *Female Mimics International* 11 no. 5 (1981): 18, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 20, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/4t64gn26f

[57] "Sugar Nicole", 6, 8, 10.

The final non-normative body and only non-fat body in these examples is a 1981 *Les Girls* photo essay on Tiny.[58] Surpassing even Sugar Nicole's visibility, Tiny is the cover model for the issue.[59] At a height of five foot two inches, the article draws significant erotic attention to Tiny's diminutive size compared to other models. Accordingly, the article notes that she "has single-handedly broken through the height barrier and demonstrated to the world that beauty and talent can come in small packages."[60] In addition to otherwise passing and being conventionally beautiful, her non-normativity is a significantly eroticized aspect throughout the article.[61] Presumably, due to her small size further enhancing a sense of cis-feminine, girlish beauty. In contrast to the three prior examples, though acknowledging Sugar Nicole's positively framed fatness, the non-normativity of Tiny is an eroticized aspect of the photo essay.

Many of these publications also functioned as community spaces, reporting on transfeminine events and providing pages in which one could post a personal advertisement to engage with other readers. It is within these categories that we see disruptions to the otherwise hegemonic normative femininity. Articles covering community events like female impersonation competitions or the

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[58] "Tiny: The Toast of New York," *Les Girls: Boys Will Be Girls* 2 no. 1 (1981): 21-30, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 12, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/bz60cw315

[59] "Cover," *Les Girls: Boys Will Be Girls* 2 no. 1 (1981): cover, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 12, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/bz60cw315

[60] "Tiny," 26, 29.

[61] Ibid., 22, 26, 29.

personal advertisements found in the back-pages of magazines contained a plethora of transfeminine people that were fatter, older, and less likely to pass. The inclusion of these community events speaks to many of these publications' stated missions of providing a glimpse into transfeminine life.[62] Depending on one's cynicism, these community articles had the coincidental or intended benefit of dodging obscenity charges by providing evidence of these works containing an educational component.[63]

Despite these two counterexamples, it is important to emphasize that these sections were not framed as sexual but as informative or as a means of building transfeminine community. While a counter to the historiographical narratives on transfeminine erotica being wholly representationally normative, these advertisements do not significantly disrupt the general scholastic claim as they were located in spaces not specifically framed as titillating. So, if normative bodies predominated, what of normative sexuality?

Normative Sexuality

Once more, in discussing normative sexuality, it is important to define the term. Sexuality in this section does not refer to the fetishistic framing of transfemininity that will form the core analysis of the next section Instead, sexuality refers to the degree to which

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[62] Kim Christy, "Letter from the editor," *Female Mimics* 5, no. 1 (1979): 2, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 5th, 2021. https://archive.org/details/femalemimics51unse.

[63] Laurence O'Toole, *Pornocopia* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1998), 8-9.

other, non-transfeminine fetish categories like BDSM were present at an aesthetic or textual level.[64] Indeed, fetish content was overwhelmingly absent from the examined material. Besides the distinct visual language of works incorporating genitalia addressed in section three, the researched photo-essays were hardly lurid. Predominantly, the actual erotica consisted of a solo model posing to emphasize their butt or breasts, oftentimes in lingerie. While the irony of calling transfeminine erotica sexually normative is obvious, yet it is still the most succinct encapsulation of the relative tameness of the surveyed works. The main rupture to this sexual normativity was of the prevalence of gesturing to commonly associated outfits for BDSM. Typically, this would take the form of an outfit composed partially or entirely of black leather, oftentimes with an accompanying whip. These outfits functioned as themed costumes, the same way one might include a French maid outfit amongst a range of other clothes while otherwise not containing a BDSM narrative.

The sole photo essay that combines fetish iconography and editorial text comes from a 1975 issue of *Female Mimics.*[65] Here, transfeminine model Genie Dee poses solo in two different dominatrix outfits: a black leather vest and pants; and a black leather top with a skirt, knee-high boots, and an accompanying whip. The article's text speaks of her love of dominating and humiliating submissive men.[66] As we have seen in other non-normative cases,

[64] BDSM is the acronym for: Bondage, Domination, Sadism, and Masochism.

[65] "Leather-Lover in Drag", *Female Mimics* 7, no. 1 (1975-1976): 43-48, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 5th, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/4q77fr401.

[66] Ibid., 44.

this is the last photo essay of the issue. Beyond this, the two other ways in which fetish content was present in these publications were relatively marginal, though the second is important in understanding the framing of transfeminine erotica.

Female Mimics and its successor *Female Mimics International* were unique among magazines featuring transfeminine models as the only purveyors of regular fetish content in the form of print erotica. Writing on pulp novels in the same period, RL Goldberg notes transfeminine text erotica typically involved BDSM and forced-feminization.[67] *Female Mimics*' printed erotica reflects these genre conventions. For one example, "Trained by Aunty," serialized in volume 13 of *Female Mimics International*, involves the naïve Paul being forcibly feminized via being made to wear lingerie, before sexually servicing his dominatrix aunt Sarah.[68]

In addition, the porn advertisements in transfeminine erotica reinforce the contradictory normativity and transgressiveness of the genre. These advertisements, often featuring a collage of purchasable erotica, reflect the fetishistic framing of otherwise sexually normative transfeminine erotica. Commonly, the same ad for mail-order hardcore erotica would freely mix transfeminine works with BDSM,

[67] RL Goldberg, "(Trans) Sex Sells: Star Distributors Ltd. and Trans Sleaze," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (2021): 448-449.

[68] "Trained by Aunty: F. M. I. Serialized Fiction Part III," *Female Mimics International* 13, no. 4 (1983): 11, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 3, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/9g54xh68r

lactation, and pregnancy fetish material.[69] This genre, regardless of its aesthetic normativity, was still framed as an extreme fetish. The incongruity between visual normalcy and lurid presentation once more emphasizes the insufficiency of a binary of transfeminine erotica between normativity and transgression.

In explaining the relative absence of fetish material from the research corpus, one might first assume that the illegality of fetish pornography is the sole explanation. As Laurence O'Toole notes, censors were significantly more likely to label BDSM obscene then vanilla erotica.[70] Yet, the fact that written erotica was only in one publication and that fetish material was devoid within the already illegal hardcore erotica speaks to the importance of consumer or editorial preference, rather than solely legal impairments. If one views transfemininity as a fetishistic category apart from heterosexuality, it follows that a savvy editor would not want to further divide a fetish market by including other fetish material.

Transgressive Framing and the Transfeminine Penis

While normativity dominated at the level of sexuality and aesthetics, transfeminine erotica models were simultaneously and contradictorily framed as bizarre, lurid sexual objects. An editorial from a 1981 issue of *Transsexual Bonanza* provides the most succinct demonstration of this extravagant exoticization: "The transsexual

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[69] "Sex, Sizzling Sex," *Female Mimics International* 11, no.4 (1980): 50, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 3, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/j6731382c

[70] O'Toole, *Pornocopia*, 206.

reigns in a unique twilight world of sexuality, a netherworld somewhere between the two poles of the sexes…the transsexual is truly a sign of our times, a bizarre and erotic sexual being whose time seems to have arrived."[71] Across all publications, the transfeminine subject, whether cross-dresser or transsexual, was consistently exoticized as a shocking, transgressive sexual object. Such a point is hardly a revelation, but, by examining common aesthetic and textual themes that rendered the transfeminine transgressive, we gain a greater understanding of how otherwise normative bodies become sensationalized.

While more common in works that framed themselves as examinations of female impersonation, like the early period of *Female Mimics,* the liminality of transfemininity consistently appeared throughout these publications. Within the erotic photo essays of female impersonators, this manifested in highlighting the constructed nature of the model, presenting them first in masculine dress, then after their transformative feminization. [72] Oftentimes photo essays would include a variety of shots of the transfeminine model getting ready, visually emphasizing a constructed nature.[73] A common article type would be of 'catching up' at a performer's home,

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[71] "Toni: Tall, Torrid, and Dangerous," *Transsexual Bonanza* 1 no. 3 (1981): 6, HQ 77.9 T78693, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[72] "Tammy Novak," *Female Mimics* 1, no. 9 (1967): 3-13, HQ 77 F4566, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[73] "Latin Illusion: Shalimar," *Drag* 1, no. 1 (1963): 13-14, 17, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed November 3, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/7w62f8323

providing a plausible reason for a few shots of them in masculine dress, before devoting the majority of the pages to them in a variety of lingerie.[74] Such usage of before/after juxtapositions are common to trans visual representations, yet its deployment here emphasizes, if not the 'true' male nature of the subject, then their liminality or bigender nature.[75]

The eroticized fluidity of the transfeminine subject acts as a consistent through-line in publications. In more sexually explicit works, this liminality in gender oftentimes manifests in noting transfeminine models being "the best of all worlds."[76] Or, their exotic beauty is so potent as to completely transcend the gender-binary, as in an issue of *Les Girls* which describes one subject as follows: "[her] beauty transcends the sexes, allowing for a voyage into the erotic essence."[77] Indeed, even naming the transfeminine subject was constantly in flux, as a 1977 *More She-Males* editorial notes: "Call it what you like- she-maleism; cross-dressing; female impersonators; female mimics; and so on and so on."[78] While often referred to with she/her pronouns, rarely are models afforded the uncritical category of womanhood. It is more common for certain publications to use

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[74] "He must have been a beautiful baby," *Female Mimics* 1, no. 4 (Fall, 1964): 37, from Digital Transgender Archives, accessed October 28, 2021. https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/cc08hf71g

[75] Eliza Steinbock, *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 97.

[76] "Editorial," *Busty and Hung* 1, no.1 (1979-1980): 3, HQ 77.9 B 79, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[77] "Amanda," *Les Girls* 1, no. 3 (1980-81): 38, HQ 77 L47, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[78] "Editorial," *More She-Males*, 3.

eponymous and preferred nomenclatures, female mimics and she-males for example.

The above norms are important in reinforcing the degree to which a penis did not have to be visible to semiotically mark the transfeminine as transgressive. Bifurcation marked the whole of the body, visually normative yet framed as lurid. But of course, any historical analysis on transfeminine erotica would be remiss to not note the overwhelming fixation on the penis.

In all the surveyed works that include visible genitalia, the transfeminine penis does not fail to take center stage. As an apt example, before even reading the table of contents in the debut issue of *She-Males,* one must flip past a fold-out of a penis framed with stockinged legs.[79] Oftentimes in any explicit photo essay, there would be one or several isolated photos of solely a penis.[80] The prevalence of such photos, bereft of any elements besides genitals, speaks to the overwhelming erotic exoticism imbued in the transfeminine penis. This body part on its own with no other adornments is enough to be the exclamation point of any erotic photo essay.

When not a disembodied close-up, the penis would commonly be at the center of the frame, with the model in the

[79] "Fold-out," *She-Males: A Psycho-Sexual Phenomenon* (1974): fold-out, AR421, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[80] "Sanji," *Dressed* 2, no. 1 (1977): 31. AR421, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

background looking down. [81] This common photo framing suggests two main themes. First is in emphasizing the liminal nature of the transfeminine erotic subject by having the penis in the foreground and a beautiful, normative feminine body in the background providing a visually striking rendering of the 'best of both worlds.' Secondly, the positioning of the shot calls to mind a substitution of the camera for the imaginative reader, ready to perform oral sex on the salacious transfeminine penis, a lurid transgression for any connoisseur of the exotic.

All these above-mentioned aesthetic and textual choices center the penis as a nexus of exotic sensuality. Such a framing of course contains a subtextual reinforcement of the penis as a further nexus of gender-liminality or vestigial masculinity. In the former case, oftentimes descriptors of the model's genitals would speak to this gender alterity, as in one example when a subject's penis is instead called her "meaty bisexuality." [82] However, in the latter case, transfeminine genitals as masculine appendages act as the central visual shorthand in the final examined trope.

The 'tranny reveal' is a transfeminine erotica convention that reifies the exoticized, lurid masculinity of the transfeminine penis.[83]

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[81] "Anyway, She Wants It," *More She-Males: A Psycho-Sexual Phenomenon* no. 2 (1974): 4, HQ 77.9 M68, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[82] "Bisexuality and Transvestism," *She-Males: A Psycho-Sexual Phenomenon* (1974): 22, AR421, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[83] Jeffrey Escoffier, "Imagining the She/Male: Pornography and the Transsexualization of the Heterosexual Male, 2011, *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 12, no. 4 (2011): 273-274.

To draw from historian Jeffrey Escoffier's examination of the trope: a seduction between a cis man and apparent cis woman begins; at some point, the woman reveals herself to have a penis; while initially shocked, the man rapidly accepts this new context; and the parties then engage in any number of sex acts.[84] In an archival quirk, the two examples found in my research all involved cis women. However, the trope itself is overwhelmingly seen between the pairing of cis man and transfeminine subject.[85] Even so, the two examples can be mapped onto this trope. From an undated issue of *Bon Vivant,* following the unnamed cis woman's discovery that her lover has a penis, she says, "'I'm glad you have a penis, Denise.' She, or I should say he, grows long and stiff, and suckable."[86] The 'tranny reveal' is an apt example to end on as it epitomizes this paper's larger examination of transfeminine erotica. A normative woman is shown to have a penis and becomes semiotically transformed into a liminal, sensational sex pot.

In writing on the interplay of deviancy and beauty, sociologists Druann Maria Heckert and Amy Best note that norms of beauty are very often malleable throughout time and communal space.[87] But not in transfeminine erotica. This paper opened with a description of a 2017 porn film starring beautiful, passing, trans

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[84] Ibid.,

[85] Ibid., 273.

[86] "Castro Drag," *Bon Vivant* no. 12 (undated): 13, HQ 77 BB2, from University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, British Colombia, Canada.

[87] Druann Maria Heckert and Amy Best, "Redheads as Deviant Types," in *Deviance: The Interactionist Perspective,* eds., Earl Rubington and Martin Weinburg (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2008): 11-12.

women that would not have been out of place in the pages of *Female Mimics,* or *Busty and Hung*. While terms like she-male have largely receded from transfeminine erotica, fifty years on the genre is still marked more by continuity than change. We still see the same strained interplay between bodily normativity and the supposed transgressiveness of transfeminine desirability. This very tension destabilizes our understanding of normativity. How might we understand a holistic mix of the transgressive and normative when the smallest breach renders such normativity contaminated? How transgressive a transsexual? It seems no matter how normative, we are still too often seen as existentially deviant.

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[88] From its debut to 1978 *Drag* was consistently published, before the subsequent issues appeared in 1980 and 1983.

[89] Volume 11 contained 8 issues spread across 1980-1981, before moving to publishing 5 issues a year.

Zbigniew Brzezinski's Arc of Crisis and the Origin of U.S. Involvement in Afghanistan

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Abstract: Zbigniew Brzezinski misrepresented Soviet motivations in their Afghan invasion to pursue his own geo-political agenda in the "arc of crisis" region that became a primary focus for the shift in strategic planning during the Carter administration. Based on State Department documents released in December 2018, in addition to former Soviet-era primary sources from the Cold War International History Project, the article describes how Brzezinski misread Soviet intentions and facilitated a response that later metastasized into something the U.S. could not control once the Reagan administration continued Carter's arming of the most radical elements of the Afghan rebellion. Despite Brzezinski's efforts to increase the U.S. footprint in the Middle East having such a consequential impact on American foreign policy during the past 40 years, scholars are only beginning to understand the full weight of these moves during the final years of the Carter administration.

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On April 30, 1978, a small faction of Afghan communists overthrew the government of Mohammed Daoud Khan and replaced him with Nur Muhammad Taraki. Hafizullah Amin, Taraki's former second in command, then overthrew Taraki. Frustrated by the hardline and the increasingly uncooperative Amin, Moscow decided to invade and to replace him with Babrak Karmal in December 1979. As the architect of the U.S. response, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's national security adviser from 1977 to 1981, bore responsibility for much of what happened then and has happened since: he framed the invasion through his "arc of crisis" geopolitical and strategic vision; he ignored intelligence about limited Soviet intentions in Afghanistan; and he advised that radical elements of the Afghan resistance be covertly armed. On December 2, 1978, nearly one year prior to the Soviet invasion, Brzezinski outlined his thoughts to Carter in a presidential memorandum expressing Brzezinski's fear of Moscow's influence on fragile governments "stretching from Chittagong (Bangladesh) through Islamabad to Aden."[1]

Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) documents on Afghanistan show that Brzezinski fully understood that the Soviets had quickly become mired in Afghanistan and that they sought ways to withdraw from the landlocked country.[2] Soviet primary

[1] Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) to President Carter, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS]*, 1977–80, vol. I, doc. 100, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v01/d100.

[2] Memo prepared in the CIA, 15 Jan. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 168, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d168.

documents released through the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) and provided by Alexander Lyakhovsky show the Soviets had invaded with regional—not global—goals to shore up a communist government on their southern border.[3] The FRUS documents on Afghanistan also show Brzezinski knew that Soviet leaders wanted the United States to stop secretly arming the Mujahideen, the Afghan rebels resisting the USSR.[4] If Washington had allowed Moscow to consolidate Taraki's communist government in Kabul, Soviet leaders planned to remove their troops as soon as possible. However, Brzezinski pushed Carter to covertly arm the rebellion.[5]

Brzezinski's decision to confront the Soviets in Afghanistan compelled leaders inside the Kremlin to remain in Afghanistan for years. As Lyakhovsky recalled,

> in the end of February 1980, the Soviet leadership worked on the issue…of withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, because it was believed that having

[3] CIA memo, 15 Jan. 1980, *FRUS*, doc. 168. Also, *The Cold War International History Project* supports the full and prompt release of historical materials by governments on all sides of the Cold War. Through an award-winning Digital Archive, the Project allows scholars, journalists, students, and the interested public to reassess the Cold War and its many contemporary legacies. It is part of the Wilson Center's History and Public Policy Program.

[4] Embassy of the Soviet Union, telegram to the Department of State, 11 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 204, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d204.

[5] Thomas Thornton, memo to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 26 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 219, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d219.

> overthrown Amin and having solidified the new Afghan government of B. Karmal, they have fulfilled their main task. However…D. F. Ustinov and Yu. V. Andropov (possibly A. A. Gromyko as well) were against withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. In their opinion, at that time, withdrawal of troops would have meant a concession to the aggressive policy of the United States.[6]

As soon as Soviet officials concluded the United States would continue to arm the Mujahideen, they resolved to stay, whatever the cost, rather than back down to a U.S.-supported rebellion on their southern border.[7]

I argue that Brzezinski reacted to the Soviet invasion on the basis of an anti-Soviet mindset that saw the invasion as inevitable, given his suspicion of Moscow's motivations for the region. Rather than allowing for the possibility that what the Soviets were saying– they were invading to shore up a fledgling communist government on their southern border and planned a quick exit upon securing that objective – was true, Brzezinski insisted the Soviets had larger strategic designs on the world's oil supply. His viewpoint persisted despite the explanations of the Soviets as well as the alternate view

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[6] Alexander Lyakhovsky, "On the Changing Mission of the Soviet Forces in Afghanistan, The Tragedy and Valor of Afghan," *The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan: Russian Documents and Memoirs*, (Moscow: GPI Iskon, 1995), 176–7, U.S. National Security Archive [NSA], doc. 14, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/r14.pdf.

[7] Lyakhovsky, "On the Changing Mission," doc. 14.

of Carter's Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who believed the Soviets, and the rigidity of this view led to a policy of covertly arming the Mujahideen – the Afghan insurgency fighting the Soviet presence. This policy, embraced by Carter, put Moscow in a defensive position that convinced them to stay in Afghanistan to avoid a humiliating retreat that would alarm their allies in the region as to the depth of Soviet commitment. The long-term repercussions include the connection between Brzezinski's arming of the most radical elements of the original Mujahideen and the later movement by radical Islam to hold the United States responsible for its presence in Islamist nations in violation of their sovereignty and religious beliefs. Brzezinski was warned at the time of the potential for blow-back by other members of the Carter administration, including National Security Council staffer Thomas Thornton. Thornton knew the Mujahideen might eventually turn on the United States, but Brzezinski felt their activities at the time in helping rid Afghanistan of the Soviet presence outweighed any longer-term potential for Afghanistan evolving into a breeding ground for radical Islamist groups that had little love for the US either.

Brzezinski's arc of crisis theory and his approach to Afghanistan

The Soviet invasion alarmed Brzezinski because he viewed it as part of a larger unraveling of U.S. influence in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region:

> an arc of crisis stretches along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries.[8]

This "arc of crisis" theory had gained such credence in internal discussions in the Carter White House that the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatolii Dobrynin, called it "most excellent propaganda."[9] Dobrynin was referring to what the Soviets viewed as Washington's paranoia over Moscow's hegemonic intentions.

Brzezinski's view regarding the invasion relied on a conscious choice he made about actual Soviet intentions, despite evidence to the contrary. In his memoirs, Brzezinski says he recognized those intentions well in advance and responded forcefully and correctly to those moves. However, FRUS documents paint a more complex picture. Brzezinski ignored intelligence about Soviet expansion and instead facilitated a response based on his arc of crisis theory, his anti-Soviet stance that later metastasized into something the United States could not control. Ronald Reagan's administration intensified Carter's policy of arming the most radical elements of the Afghan rebellion and the United States continued to lose command of the situation.

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[8] Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Iran: The Crescent of Crisis," *Time Magazine*, 15 Jan. 1979, 16.

[9] Anatolii Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Times Books, Random House, 1995), 420, 452.

Scholars are only beginning to understand the full impact of these moves during the final years of the Carter administration. Justin Vaïsse's recent biography of Brzezinski recounts the transition Brzezinski made when his initial agenda fell by the wayside. Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker depict a Brzezinski contemptuous of the balance-of-power politics advocated during the Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford administrations, wanting instead to confront the Soviets. However, they focus largely on how Brzezinski wanted to use China to counter Soviet power.[10] David C. Engerman examines Brzezinski's emergence as a political thinker and Adam Garfinkle illuminates Brzezinski's development and his larger geopolitical outlook.[11] David Crist notes in his study of U.S.-Iranian relations how Brzezinski linked the Middle East to the Cold War. Brzezinski pressed Carter to neglect the traditional post-Second World War focus on Europe, and he replaced it with an obsession with the Persian Gulf and the possibility of Soviet incursions there threatening the world's oil supply.[12] This strongly reflects Olav Njolstad's argument and the growing consensus, articulated most

[10] Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Beijing's Friend, Moscow's Foe," in *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski*, ed. Charles Gati (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 87.

[11] David C. Engerman, "The Fall of Totalitarianism and the Rise of Zbigniew Brzezinski," in *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski*, ed. Charles Gati (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 27–43; Adam Garfinkle, "The Strategic Thinker," in *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski*, ed. Charles Gati (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 192–203.

[12] David Crist, *The Twilight War: The Secret History of America's Thirty-Year Conflict with Iran* (London: Penguin Press, 2012), 36.

recently by W. Taylor Fain, of how the United States shifted its priorities from Western Europe to the Indian Ocean.[13]

Most recently, Conor Tobin deconstructed the myth of the "Afghan Trap," which suggests that Brzezinski lured the Soviets into Vietnam.[14] As Tobin demonstrates, Brzezinski has been unfairly accused of luring Moscow into invading. Brzezinski noted the creeping Soviet intervention into Afghan affairs and read these moves as aligning with his arc of crisis theory that the Soviets would fill a vacuum without an increased U.S. presence in the region. Tobin shows Brzezinski as more nuanced than the simple rabid anti-communist, anti-Soviet zealot portrayed in recent historiography.[15] However, he does not address the fact that Brzezinski's nuanced view was backed by a steely suspicion of Soviet expansionist plans. Finally, Tobin emphasizes that the United States was already giving non-lethal aid to Afghanistan.

These authors rightly connected the creation and implementation of the arc of crisis strategy as the foundation for the administration's response to the Soviet invasion. What they

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[13] W. Taylor Fain, "Conceiving of the 'Arc of Crisis' in the Indian Ocean Region," *Diplomatic History*, 42, no. 4 (2018): 694–719, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhx072; Olav Njolstad, "Shifting Priorities: The Persian Gulf in US Strategic Planning in the Carter Years," *Cold War History*, 4 (April 2004): 21–55, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1468274042000231141.

[14] Conor Tobin, "The Myth of the 'Afghan Trap': Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan, 1978–1979," *Diplomatic History*, 44, no. 2 (2020): 237–64, https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhz065.

[15] Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game, How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (New York: Dell, 2006), 251.

overlook, however, is how Brzezinski used the invasion to pursue his larger strategic objectives while consciously ignoring a crucial point: the USSR did not invade Afghanistan with larger ambitions to drive through Pakistan and India to reach the Gulf, nor did they wish to destabilize the entire region. In addition, by weaponizing political Islam to fight the Russian army in Afghanistan, he helped create an ongoing national security problem.

The Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan

K. U. Chernenko, fifth secretary-general of the Communist Party in Moscow, clearly stated the invasion's purpose: "to promote the interests of strengthening the state, and pursued no other goals." The minutes of the meeting constituted a secret internal Politburo document indicating the goals of invasion as limited, not expansionist.[16] However, six weeks after the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan, Kremlin leaders knew they had made a serious mistake.

[16] Alexander Lyakhovsky, "On the Changing Mission of the Soviet Forces in Afghanistan, The Tragedy and Valor of Afghan," *The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan: Russian Documents and Memoirs*, NSA, doc. 5, (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv [Endowed Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the Former GDR in the Federal Archive], Berlin, doc. DY30 JIV 2/201/1342, trans. Christian F. Ostermann), https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/r5.pdf. Also, the main Soviet sources on the decision to intervene in Afghanistan come from the Russian Presidential Archive, the Ministry of Defense Archive and from the published memoirs of Soviet officers and political leaders. They belong to the following categories: the minutes of the CC CPSU Politburo discussions, which were declassified by President Yeltsin's executive decree in 1992; the KGB and military intelligence reports from Kabul, many of which were published in the

In low-level talks after the invasion, Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, and Dobrynin commiserated over the difficulty of asserting their shared temperate approaches.[17] When Vance questioned Dobrynin about expansionist goals, Dobrynin replied, "I could assure him officially right then and there that the Soviet Union had no plans for expansion into Pakistan, Iran, or any other country of the region."[18] Vance believed Dobrynin. Brzezinski did not.

Within months of the invasion, any hope of a quick turnaround evaporated. The Mujahideen declared a jihad against the Soviet invaders. Although the Soviets had superior weaponry and controlled all the major cities, the Mujahideen, taking advantage of the mountainous terrain, held eighty percent of the country within three months. The military told Moscow they should get out. Already

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influential study The Tragedy and Valor of Afghan by veteran of the Afghan War General Alexander Lyakhovsky; political letters from USSR Ambassadors in Afghanistan to the Soviet Foreign Ministry from the Russian Foreign Ministry Archives; memoranda of conversations of the Soviet Ambassadors and other leaders with their Afghan counterparts found in the Center for Preservation of Contemporary Documentation in Moscow; and analytical letters to the Central Committee and the military leadership also found in the Center for Preservation of Contemporary Documentation. Among the most important memoirs on the Soviet war in Afghanistan are those by former Deputy USSR Foreign Minister Georgy M. Kornienko and the last Commander of the Soviet Limited Contingent of Forces in Afghanistan, General Boris Gromov. Some of the most important documents on the Soviet War in Afghanistan were published in the English translation in the Cold War International History Project Bulletin, No. 8-9, Winter 1996-1997.

[17]Dobrynin. *In Confidence*, 447.

[18] Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 447.

in early 1980, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, General Valentin Varennikov, and General Sergei Akhromeev, all high-ranking officers in the Soviet Army, saw no military solution to the unfolding situation.[19] In Moscow, some leaders were genuinely concerned about the consequences of keeping troops there.[20]

Brzezinski, however, believed that the Soviets needed warning and, if necessary, confrontation as the Cold War re-emerged into a new U.S.-Soviet power struggle. Disagreements over messaging created a source of tension between Vance and Brzezinski, stemming from their fundamental difference over what Vance saw as Moscow's short-term, non-hegemonic actions and Brzezinski's geopolitical and strategic mindset regarding Soviet expansionism. While Vance believed that constant complaints over Soviet behaviour were unproductive, and Brzezinski countered that

> Had we been tougher sooner, had we drawn the line more clearly…had we engaged in the kind of consultations that I had so many times advocated, maybe the Soviets would not have engaged in this act of miscalculation. As it is, American-Soviet relations will have been set back for a long time to come. What is done had to be done, but it would have been better

[19] Yurii Gankovskii, "Afghanistan: From Intervention to National Reconciliation," *Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, 4, no. 1 (1992): 134–5.

[20] Alexander Lyakhovsky, "Inside the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the Seizure of Kabul, December 1979," Cold War International History Project, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/inside-the-soviet-invasion-afghanistan-and-the-seizure-kabul-december-1979.

> if the Soviets had been deterred first through a better understanding of our determination.[21]

Non-lethal covert U.S. intervention began several months before the Soviet invasion.[22] However, with the arming of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, Brzezinski's arc of crisis theory burrowed itself into the bones of U.S. policy and marched the United States to a forty-year involvement in the affairs of the Afghan people.

Carter's foreign policy, the choice of Brzezinski, and conflict with Vance

The Iran crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan overshadowed the foreign policy agenda later in Carter's term, but the ambition of the proposals and the degree to which Carter and Brzezinski accomplished each one is testament (despite the prevailing narrative) to the strength and vision of their partnership. When Carter finally offered Brzezinski the national security job, Brzezinski knew why Vance and secretary of defense Harold Brown had already been appointed: because of opposition to his own appointment.[23]

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[21] Karen Elliot House and Thomas J. Bray, "An Interview With Zbigniew Brzezinski," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 Jan. 1980, 20.

[22] Vincent Jauvert, "The Revelations of a Former Advisor to Carter," *Le Nouvelle Observateur*, 15 January, 1998.

[23] Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview along with William Odom, Leslie G. Denend, and Madeleine K. Albright, conducted at the Miller Center (University of Virginia) for the Carter Presidency Project, 18 Feb. 1982, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/zbigniew-brzezinski-oral-history.

Advisers told Carter that Brzezinski concerned them as a firebrand who, due to his hatred of the USSR, his ambition, and his aggressive instincts, would create unhelpful tension among a group of otherwise temperate men.

Brzezinski's father Tadeusz Brzezinski was a Polish diplomat and consular official who had been posted in the Soviet Union during Stalin's Great Purge, witnessing hundreds of Ukrainian dissidents face arrest and execution, all in order to stamp out the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement. He would share stories of the horrors he witnessed with his wife and son upon returning to Warsaw.[24] Brzezinski himself described the influence of his family's experience with the Soviet Union during his childhood, recalling "the extraordinary violence that was perpetrated against Poland…made me much more sensitive to the fact that a great deal of world politics is a fundamental struggle."[25] This mindset clearly identified a great power, the USSR, threatening the peace. That power needed to be opposed by the only other great power—the United States.

Carter was swayed by his personal regard for Brzezinski's brilliance and Brzezinski's support before his election. Brzezinski had been foreign policy adviser to the former governor.[26] Carter had run

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[24] Justin Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018),15.

[25] Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview by Riz Khan, *One On One*, Al Jazeera English, 11 Dec. 2010.

[26] Interview with Jimmy Carter, conducted at the Miller Center (University of Virginia) for the Carter Presidency Project, 29 Nov. 1982, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/jimmy-carter-oral-history.

for president as an outsider who rejected the status-quo approaches of men like Vance. He appreciated Brzezinski's outspoken and aggressive positions on geopolitical questions. He also liked Brzezinski personally and Brzezinski certainly cultivated Carter's regard. He settled in as Carter's pick, with direct access to the president in the West Wing. The absence of the Secretary of State due to international travel meant Brzezinski began to dominate Vance in terms of influencing President Carter.[27] Vance later vented his frustration in his memoir, observing that "the tenuous balance between visceral anti-Sovietism and an attempt to regulate dangerous competition could no longer be maintained. The scales tipped toward those favouring confrontation."[28]

Vance believed that the Soviets displayed less global ambition and more opportunistic reactions to specific events. Brzezinski believed the opposite. Both CWIHP and FRUS documents show a Soviet Union determined to protect its own interests by stabilizing Afghanistan.[29] There is little evidence to indicate that the Soviets felt a desire to eventually push through Afghanistan to the Persian Gulf.[30] Vance believed in negotiations to work out differences and had

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[27] Douglas Brinkley, "The Lives They Lived; Out of the Loop," *The New York Times*, 29 Dec. 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/29/magazine/the-lives-they-lived-out-of-the-loop.html.

[28] Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 393–4.

[29] "Alexander Lyakhovsky's Account of the Decision of the CC CPSU Decision to Send Troops to Afghanistan," 10 Dec. 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115531.

[30] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 11.

soured on the use of force, a position he shared with Carter. Brzezinski, however, saw the Soviets using détente to stabilize the relationship with the United States on issues like arms control, while at the same time exerting its influence in the Third World. Brzezinski, therefore, pushed for a more confrontational approach that challenged the Soviet and Cuban presence in the Horn of Africa, engaged the Chinese, and countered Soviet initiatives in West Africa and the Near East.[31] The advantage that Brzezinski gained regarding Afghanistan arose from his ability to have the last word with Carter over Vance, Brown, vice president Walter Mondale, and the Central Intelligence Agency's Stansfield Turner.[32] While there is no evidence Brzezinski consciously manipulated information that went to Carter to promote his own agenda, there is clearly a record of reduced access for these other advisers.[33] This reduced access, along with Carter's regard for Brzezinski, no doubt contributed to the success of Carter's foreign policy agenda.

The region, the options, and Brzezinski's fears of Soviet hegemony

On October 6, 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces launched coordinated attacks on Israeli forces in the Sinai and the Golan Heights. Known variably as the October War or the Yom Kippur

[31] Vaïsse, *Brzezinski,* 89.

[32] Luis da Vinha, "Selling the Arc of Crisis: Promoting Foreign Policy Change during the Carter Presidency," *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences*, 16, no. 2 (2016): 162–189, http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/sjps-2016-0009.

[33] Vaïsse, *Brzezinski,* 254.

War, this conflict lasted until late October when Washington and Moscow, working through the United Nations, forced a cease-fire on the warring parties. The threat of regional instability, energy crises, and superpower confrontation made a U.S. hands-on role in the region inescapable. The 1973 Middle East war had completely changed U.S. thinking about the Indian Ocean, especially the vulnerability of oil shipments from the Persian Gulf and the Arab oil embargo during the Nixon administration. Thus, the Soviet intervention in the Horn of Africa to protect its own oil installations threatened other oil shipments and prompted Carter's conversion from the cooperation of the Nixon-Ford years to the containment of the Reagan years. Carter was anxious to reassert the United States in diplomatic, economic, cultural, and scientific matters, areas where it remained confident. The Soviet Union, however, was about to learn that, in a massive military intervention where people do not want to be occupied and know they have nothing to lose, victory is impossible.

The planning for these foreign policy changes started well before the invasion of Afghanistan. In February 1979, Carter sent Brown to the Middle East to encourage Egypt and Israel to make peace, convince the Saudis of the U.S. commitment to defend them, and look for ways to bolster the U.S. military presence in the region. Brown saw no real progress on his trip in terms of stopping Soviet destabilization efforts in Iran or in reducing the number of Soviet-Cuban advisers in Libya, South Yemen, and Ethiopia. He also advised Carter after the trip that he saw no chance of a military base on Saudi soil, something Brzezinski hoped for. Brzezinski, frustrated with what he felt was a slow pace, nevertheless acknowledged the limits of

Washington's power in the arc of crisis: "we cannot duplicate NATO in this region; a more eclectic mix of bilateral, multilateral, and informal arrangements must suffice."[34] This was a group of governments in a very different part of the world, naturally suspicious of Carter and his envoys and who understood the selfish goals of both the United States and the Soviet Union.

In debates about this situation and the proxy battles in the Horn of Africa, Vance and Brzezinski felt compelled to convey their differences of opinion and their reasoning to the president, but Carter did not fully grasp what those decisions meant in relation to Brzezinski's and Vance's overarching ideas. They did not purposefully omit information, but the president might have reacted with more consistency had he understood better how his advisers pictured the larger geopolitical role of the United States. Brzezinski saw the U.S.-Soviet proxy battles in Ethiopia and Somalia as indicative of global Soviet ambition and believed that the Soviets were breaking the rules of détente; Vance did not. This point of contention triggered their disputes over an appropriate response and the disconnect is at the heart of the missed opportunities to de-escalate, rather than intensify, the growing mutual mistrust.[35]

By 1978, the crisis in the Horn of Africa started affecting the sea lanes through the Gulf of Aden. Brzezinski and Carter took note of the Soviet warships' increasingly frequent appearances to facilitate Ethiopian operations. Once the Soviets moved into Afghanistan,

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[34] Edward C. Keefer, *Harold Brown: Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge, 1977–1981* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 339.

[35] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 253.

Brzezinski had to reconsider his arc of crisis theory. As he wrote to Carter on December 26, 1979, one day after news of the attack, "If the Soviets succeed in Afghanistan, and Pakistan acquiesces, the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean will have been fulfilled…It could produce Soviet presence right down to the edge of the Arabian and Oman Gulfs."[36] Brzezinski's reaction bore little relation to actual Soviet strategy.[37] Brzezinski understood the Soviets to be acting as he expected, reinforcing his assumptions about wider Soviet goals.

At the CIA, Turner countered Brzezinski's thoughts on Soviet ambitions. Less than three weeks after the invasion, Turner told Carter, "It is unlikely the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan constitutes the pre-planned first step in the implementation of a highly articulated grand design for the rapid establishment of hegemonic control over all of Southeast Asia."[38] However, Brzezinski replied, "[Turner] does not examine the possibility the Soviets may move more forcefully with their military power against Iran, and possibly Pakistan, in the near future."[39]

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[36] Zbigniew Brzezinski, memo to President Carter, 26 Dec. 1979, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 97, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d97.

[37] William C. Green, "The Historic Russian Drive for a Warm Water Port," *Naval War College Review* 46 (1993): 80–102.

[38] CIA memo, 15 Jan. 1980, *FRUS*, doc. 168.

[39] Walter Mondale, memo to President Carter, 3 Jan. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. VI, doc. 253, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v06/d253; CIA memo, 15 Jan. 1980, *FRUS*, doc. 168.

The short-term political considerations facing Carter weighed heavily on him regarding his reaction to the Afghan invasion. On January 9, 1980, barely two weeks after the attack, Carter met with forty-five of the top-ranked political advisors in the country, including Averell Harriman, George Ball, James Schlesinger, John McCloy, Arthur Goldberg, and Bill Scranton, at the White House to get a sense of the level of support for his response to the crises in Iran and Afghanistan. He wrote in his diary, "they are highly supportive of our action in Iran and Afghanistan, and thought, if anything, we should be even more forceful."[40] He understood that if he faltered in the Iran hostage crisis, or in response to the Soviets, his chances for re-election would be severely diminished. Brzezinski's awareness of the political reality facing Carter made his ambitions for U.S.-Soviet policy possible. Tobin debunks the notion that Brzezinski tried to trap the Soviets into invading, but Brzezinski undoubtedly saw the invasion as an opportunity to push Carter into a harsh response that, ironically, trapped the Soviets in a disastrous ten-year war.

The president's sense of relief at the supportive feedback from the unofficial advisers is clear, as demonstrated by his growing impulse to take a tough stance.[41] However, the leaders of the USSR were operating, at that point, under the sudden panic that they made

[40] Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 390.

[41] Carter, *Diary*, 390.

a colossal mistake in invading Afghanistan.[42] They misjudged the response of the Afghan army and underestimated the dedication of the Mujahideen. They needed and looked for a way to get out.[43] However, domestic political pressure overwhelmed Carter, forcing him to make a series of decisions (the grain embargo, the Olympic boycott, the Carter Doctrine, and arming the Mujahideen) that backed the Soviets into a corner. Carter wrote, in the 2010 addition to his real-time diary entry from January 3, 1980, that "the Soviets' occupation is a threat to the security of the United States. If they consolidated their hold and moved into adjacent countries, I would have been forced into military action against them."[44] Soviet documents, however, show that they planned to frame the invasion as aid to another communist state in its revolution, requested by the Afghan leadership itself.[45] On January 9, 1980, the same day Carter met with his unofficial advisers, Brzezinski sent Carter a memo spelling out the views previously discussed in the National Security Council's Special Coordination Committee on the three interrelated central strategic zones and on the consequent need for a new

[42] Embassy of the Soviet Union, telegram to the Department of State, 5 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 196, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d196.

[43] Embassy of the Soviet Union to the Department of State, 5 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, doc. 196.

[44] Carter, *Diary*, 388.

[45] Alexander Lyakhovsky, *The Tragedy and Valour of Afghan,* trans. Svetlana Savranskaya (Moscow: GPI Iskon, 1995), 109–12, Cold War International History Project, doc. 14, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/r8.pdf.

"Regional Security Framework" for the Middle East.[46] Brzezinski's consultative security framework—essentially a loose grouping of pro-Western states, each of whom would have defense (and sometimes basing) agreements with the United States—became the bedrock of Carter's Middle East policy moving forward, as the administration sought to securitize the region against further shocks. He intended to show the president "how the Egyptians, the Saudis, the Pakistanis, and the Turks could all be a part of this new alliance to combat Soviet aggression."[47] However, covertly arming the most radical elements of the Islamic resistance created long-term problems for the United States.

The U.S. response: Abandoning Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) II and turning toward the Persian Gulf

In his memoir, Mondale recollected the stunned reactions of both Carter and Brzezinski to the Soviet invasion in December of 1979. Brzezinski was warned by his staff member Thomas Thornton that "we should be careful in implying blank endorsement to the Muslim forces in Afghanistan." [48] Thornton told Brzezinski there was little reason to think the Mujahideen liked the United States any better than the Soviet Union. He advised Brzezinski that they were likely to take "the Khomeini approach" against any non-Muslim governments in Islamic countries.[49] That meant no acceptance of

[46] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), 444.

[47] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 444.

[48] Thornton to Brzezinski, 26 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, doc. 219.

[49] Thornton to Brzezinski, 26 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, doc. 219.

non-Islamic governments in Muslim lands. Khomeini's weaponization of political Islam – any interpretation of Islam as a source of political identity and action – was a beast Brzezinski did not fully understand, thinking it could be used to enable U.S. interests in Afghanistan without negative consequences. He advised Carter that the United States would be in a position to exploit Muslim reaction to the invasion.[50] Brzezinski displayed instincts informed less by the intelligence available to him and more by his belief in an inevitable challenge by an expansionist, evil Soviet Union.[51]

Brzezinski cautioned Carter against any false hope that the Soviets would not prevail.[52] He convinced Carter that the invasion presented the most serious action by the Soviets since 1945, the last time they had deployed troops outside their sphere of influence. Carter grasped the importance of the crisis and responded with rhetoric that surprised the Soviets.[53] The president worried about the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), the primary goal of which was to replace the Interim Agreement with a long-term comprehensive treaty providing broad limits on strategic offensive weapons, but he felt the invasion trumped ongoing talks to secure a deal.[54] He stated that the goal must be to get the Soviets to withdraw and, in a presidential finding dated December 28, 1979, authorized

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[50] Brzezinski to Carter, 26 Dec. 1979, *FRUS*, doc. 97.

[51] CIA memo, 15 Jan. 1980, *FRUS*, doc. 168.

[52] Brzezinski to Carter, 26 Dec. 1979, *FRUS*, doc. 97.

[53] Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 28 Dec. 1979, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 107, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d107.

[54] Minutes, 28 Dec. 1979, *FRUS*, doc. 107.

military aid to the Afghan rebels through Pakistan.[55] As to whether SALT II was mortally wounded by the time the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Brzezinski hesitated:

> I think it was dying…but once we normalized relations with the Chinese, the Russians all of the sudden became more interested in having it. And there was a brief period of time when we looked as if we might get it. Over here is a picture of us signing SALT. And I notice the only person standing there and grinning, it's me. Because, I thought the whole thing was a little bit of a farce. And, it's pretty late by then…If we had gotten SALT a year earlier, we'd have had a chance.[56]

Following the Soviet invasion, the United States ceased to even pretend to support détente. In fact, Brzezinski wished to fundamentally redefine the concept of détente as more of a practical give-and-take: "we should insist on equal treatment (retaliating in kind, if necessary) and that the Soviets could not have a free ride in some parts of the world while pursuing détente where it suited them."[57] The demand for reciprocity motivated Brzezinski's insistence on linking events in the Horn of Africa to other aspects of bilateral relations, including Iran and Afghanistan.

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[55] Minutes, 28 Dec. 1979, *FRUS*, doc. 107.

[56] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle,* 136.

[57] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 136.

Carter reacted angrily to the invasion, calling it "the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War."[58] In his State of the Union address on January 23, 1980, he outlined his Carter Doctrine and told Congress, "let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[59] Brzezinski wrote this sentence, borrowing from the Truman Doctrine, reasserting U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean and creating a new security framework for the region. This shift back toward the Cold War was obvious. Brzezinski contended that "The collapse of Iran; and the growing vulnerability of Saudi Arabia had dictated the need for such a wider strategic response."[60] This was one issue.

The other issue involved help for the Mujahideen. Brzezinski felt their success depended on a strong message of support from the United States, while Vance saw them digging in and lingering as an irritant for Moscow. Carter believed there was scant chance of Soviet success, despite the number of troops, due to the unorthodox type of conflict being waged by the Afghan resistance. Brzezinski believed

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[58] Philip Geyelin, "The Carter Doctrine and the Draft," *The Washington Post*, 30 June 1980, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/06/30/the-carter-doctrine-and-the-draft/90192755-48fb4a90-8e1a-458480910752/.

[59] Geyelin, "The Carter Doctrine."

[60] House and Bray, "Interview," 20.

the aid to the rebels gave them the confidence to continue and that without it they would collapse.[61]

Threats to the Persian Gulf and fostering relationships with political Islam

The situation in Afghanistan and Brzezinski's fears regarding the overall threat to the Persian Gulf region absorbed much of the Carter administration's focus from 1979 to 1981. Vance wanted Carter to take a wait-and-see approach in determining Soviet intentions, but Brzezinski wanted him to use the CIA to engage the Soviets before it was too late. William Odom, one of Brzezinski's closest advisers, explained, "we had to work slowly to try to bring the realities to the eyes of the President, the eyes of the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and make them realize that we had to tackle some of those policies from very fundamentally different directions."[62]

Vance had negotiated on arms control with Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party, in April 1978, delivering proposals that Brzezinski had worked out with the input of Odom. Brzezinski turned to Odom for perspective on the Soviet Union, since Odom was a Russia specialist and a hardliner, often skeptical of Moscow's intentions. Odom fueled Brzezinski's anti-Soviet suspicions with his thoughts on Soviet advances in intercontinental ballistic missile technology and the increasing strength of their

[61] National Security Council Meeting, 28 Dec. 1979, Jimmy Carter Library, Remote Archives Capture Documents, NLC-25-98-28-2-5.
[62] Rothkopf "Setting the Stage," 73.

"launch-on-warning" capabilities, and Brzezinski passed this information to Carter.[63] Vance's talks with Brezhnev did not go well due to Vance's inability to improvise, one of Kissinger's strengths in his Nixon-era meetings with the Soviet leader. When they failed, Brzezinski publicly blamed the Soviet leadership for its inability to respond in a positive way. Nonetheless, it would seem that Brzezinski's own aggressiveness pushed an aging and paranoid Soviet leadership into a corner.[64] This pattern characterized Brzezinski's dealings with the Soviets, whether on arms control or in his manipulation of Carter's response to the invasion of Afghanistan. His aggression led to escalation and conflict, rather than offering a way out of a ten-year war in Afghanistan against a rebellion financed by the United States.[65]

Based on Odom's work, Brzezinski helped update the U.S. deterrent policy through presidential directive PD-59, with an approach known as "countervailing strategy."[66] The previous doctrine, based on mutual assured destruction and U.S. superiority, stipulated that if tensions increased, the United States would assert itself, forcing the Soviet Union to reverse course, as seen in the Cuban Missile Crisis. The recommendation from Odom and Brzezinski contradicted the recommendations of Vance and the director of the

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[63] William E. Odom to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Soviet Launch-on-Warning Capability, Top Secret, excised copy," 23 Jan.1978, NSA, doc. 24; Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, "Information Items," 24 Jan.1978, Top Secret, NSA, doc. 25.

[64] Rothkopf, "Setting the Stage," 74.

[65] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye,* 56.

[66] Vaïsse, *Brzezinski*, 66.

Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Paul C. Warnke, which favoured the upcoming Indian Ocean demilitarization talks, as well as arms control initiatives with the Soviets, and not increasing military readiness and capabilities in the Gulf.[67] Brzezinski's ideas linked suspected Soviet power moves into the Gulf with the need for nuclear capabilities in the region to protect U.S. interests there.

Weaponizing political Islam

Brzezinski went on record early to encourage involving the Muslim world to counter the Soviet threat after the invasion of Afghanistan. In a meeting in Riyadh on February 4, 1980, Brzezinski told Saudi Crown Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud that the Soviet invasion called for a response on all levels, "none more so than the Islamic world."[68] He told Prince Fahd that while the United States did not currently seek actual military bases in Islamic countries, it did seek to increase its military presence in the region in order to provide a quick response in case of trouble. Brzezinski then told the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud: "I am prepared to accept the fact that the Soviet motives are limited to Afghanistan itself."[69] The CIA had told him, and he had seen intelligence coming into the State Department, that the Soviets were bogged down in Afghanistan. He knew that they needed a way to

[67] Njolstad, "Shifting Priorities," 7.

[68] Memo of conversation, 4 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 195, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d195.

[69] Memo of conversation, 4 Feb. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 194, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d194.

withdraw their forces. He knew that they were facing long-term consequences.

During the meeting with the Saudis, Brzezinski claimed that "the rationale for entering Afghanistan is irrelevant; the results are to create a strategic dynamic which is not limited to Afghanistan. The effects of the invasion are of global significance regardless of their immediate interests."[70] Brzezinski's remarks here explain his focus on arming political Islam to counter what he believed were inevitable consequences, based on his arc of crisis theory and his understanding of historical precedent. In the absence of any evidence regarding expansionist goals for the invasion itself, Brzezinski suggested a policy in which the Islamic world would arm the Mujahideen based on what Brzezinski thought the Soviets *might* do, rather than what the Soviets – and Secretary of State Vance and CIA Director Turner – said they *were* doing. He told Prince Saud that the Soviet invasion of a Muslim nation needed a response: "You represent a revitalized religious renaissance which is on the move."[71] This was to emphasize U.S. support for the Islamic world rising up to counter Soviet aggression in the region. This is perhaps the most relevant evidence of Brzezinski's thinking regarding the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: he deliberately encouraged a vital Middle Eastern ally, Saudi Arabia, to weaponize the response of the Muslim world to counter the Soviets. There is no consideration of the possible negative consequences.

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[70] Memo, 4 Feb. 1980, doc. 194.

[71] Memo, 4 Feb. 1980, doc. 194.

The aftermath of the invasion and the consequences of arming the Mujahideen

Upon Carter's loss in the election of 1980, hope for a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan evaporated. The Reagan Doctrine intensified Brzezinski's approach, increasing the costs of Soviet support for Third World socialist governments. Under the Reagan Doctrine, the United States provided overt and covert aid to anti-communist guerrillas and resistance movements in an effort to "roll back" Soviet-backed pro-communist governments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Pakistan had been increasingly involved in Afghanistan, from the overthrowing of Khan in 1978 to taking in Afghan refugees in the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Carter, lobbied by Brzezinski, urged Turner and the CIA to explore using Pakistan as a conduit for arming the rebels.[72]

The new ruler of Pakistan, General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, declared martial law in 1977, and installed Sharization (Islamization), as the centerpiece of the new government. ul-Haq, a devout Muslim, dictated Pakistan's absolute control of U.S. aid going into Afghanistan to supply the Mujahideen. He suspected India of conspiring with the Soviets and accepted Brzezinski's "gateway to the Gulf" thinking. ul-Haq quickly set upon a strategy to arm the Mujahideen by supplying the multiple Afghan groups concentrating on the Pakistani side of the Afghan border.[73] Days after the invasion, Carter offered millions in

[72] Zbigniew Brzezinski, memo to President Carter, 3 Jan. 1980, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 140, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d140.

[73] General Zia, letter to President Carter, 9 May 1978, *FRUS*, 1977–80, vol. XII, doc. 16, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-90v12/d16.

aid to Pakistan if ul-Haq would facilitate the rebellion in Afghanistan, a policy Brzezinski encouraged.[74] Then, under Reagan, ul-Haq went from a potentially volatile and unstable military dictator to an ally supporting the Afghan resistance.

Brzezinski's weaponization of political Islam began to metastasize into something much larger and much more dangerous, with terrorist implications for U.S. national security. Later in his life, Brzezinski flatly rejected criticism of this initiative and argued that the buildup of covert U.S. support for Afghan rebels via the CIA could be viewed only in the context of the time.[75] According to Brzezinski, subsequent permutations of the Afghan resistance, such as the Taliban and al Qaeda, should not be confused with the rebels he urged Carter to finance and arm. In his mind, those original fighters remained a U.S. asset that served a distinct and vital purpose: they rejected the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, thwarted its expansionist ideology, and stopped the larger Soviet movement to the Gulf.

The Taliban, formerly a militia of Pashtun Islamic fundamentalist students, received their training in religious schools in Pakistan, which was populated by former refugees from Afghanistan who fought with the CIA-armed and -financed Mujahideen.[76] The training facilities al Qaeda used in 1996, built by

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[74] Steve Galster, introductory essay, "Afghanistan: Lessons From the Last War—Afghanistan: the Making of U.S. Policy, 1973–1990," 9 Oct. 2001, NSA, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/essay.html.

[75] Adam Garfinkle, "'I'd Do It Again': Talking about Afghanistan with Zbigniew Brzezinski," *The American Interest*, 1 May 2008, 3–4.

[76] Michael Rubin, "Who is Responsible for the Taliban?" *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (March 2002): 74.

the CIA, housed Osama bin Laden, who first appeared in Afghanistan to give financial aid to the Mujahideen in 1982. To argue there is no connection between the Mujahideen, the Taliban, and al Qaeda is to deny that the blowback from supporting the Mujahideen had its roots in ul-Haq's focus on arming the more radical Islamic Afghan groups, such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i Islami. This covert policy certainly fed Soviet objections, since Moscow insisted Washington stop secretly arming a form of radical Islam to fight the Soviet Army in Afghanistan while publicly denying they were doing so.

Conclusion

Afghanistan proved disastrous for the Soviet Union. It tarnished the reputation of the Soviet Army and resulted in 15,000 Soviet soldiers killed and 35,000 wounded. The war killed over a million Afghan civilians and rebels. It did not significantly contribute to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.[77] It drained resources and failed in its central goals: to shore up and stabilize Afghanistan; to keep the Afghan government communist and pro-Soviet; to establish another buffer state on the southern border of the Soviet Union; and to expand Soviet influence, prestige, and reputation. Brzezinski hoped to exhaust Soviet efforts by supplying and financing the Afghan rebels through Pakistan, via the CIA, and keeping U.S. fingerprints off the effort as much as possible. However, Brzezinski's embrace of the Mujahideen and the complicity of the Carter administration in arming the more radical Afghan groups led to Hekmatyar-trained and -inspired foreign terrorist and

[77] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 107.

guerrilla fighters who poured into Afghanistan to aid the Mujahideen.[78]

By the time the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, both nations had changed. The Soviet Union teetered on the brink of collapse, largely from economic mismanagement and subsequent decline.[79] The war had destroyed Afghanistan, leaving over one million dead and three million refugees in Pakistan. Financial and military aid ended, and so did efforts to reorganize the country the United States had helped decimate. Instead, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia remained in control.[80] The United States left uncontrolled warlords to fill the power vacuum that opened up once the Soviets withdrew.[81]

Designating blame for U.S. support of an Afghan opposition demands context. Overwhelming pressure to act prevailed in the early part of the war for fear of leaving Afghanistan to Soviet domination, which might have resulted in an extension of Soviet influence into Pakistan. However, within weeks of the invasion, the Soviets recognized the quagmire they had gotten into. They were looking for a way out but made a long-term commitment when Washington rebuffed their terms for withdrawal: stop arming the Mujahideen and lying about it.[82] Brzezinski's aggressive and ambitious drive to frame U.S. policy in the region in his own anti-

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[78] John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 47.

[79] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 107.

[80] Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 176.

[81] Rashid, *Taliban*, 176.

[82] Lyakhovsky, "On the Changing Mission," doc. 5.

Soviet terms made possible the covert arming of the Mujahideen, weaponizing political Islam in an unprecedented and dangerous way, a price Brzezinski and others were willing to pay.

After Carter, Washington might have pressured Pakistan to reduce support for Islamic fundamentalism, especially after the emergence of the Taliban. Instead, the United States' government and public, both tired of the seemingly unending quagmire of Afghanistan, relinquished responsibility, handing Pakistan a sphere of influence in Afghanistan unblocked by any other foreign pressure. While the rebellion in Afghanistan did eventually drive the Soviets out, the argument that the war led to the fall of the Soviet Union and, therefore, justified backing the Mujahideen is no longer an accepted rationale for Brzezinski's response. Despite the tendency of some historians to credit the Afghan invasion as a key part of the later collapse of the Soviet Union, the evidence shows that the Soviet Union collapsed as a result of its mishandling of its economy, and that the costs of Afghanistan – both in blood and treasure – were absorbed without any existential threat to the health of the nation. [83] According to Brzezinski's arc of crisis reasoning, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan with intentions to drive to the Gulf and seize the world's oil supply. Then, despite acknowledging (to the Saudis in Riyadh) that the Soviets did not invade with those goals, he set in motion a radicalization of Muslim fighters to offset the possibility that the Soviets might expand into neighbouring countries. Reagan inherited this policy and greatly increased arms and money to the most radical groups. When the United States abandoned Afghanistan, they left a

[83] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 107.

decimated wasteland in the grip of radical Islam, which was armed and funded by the United States. It is no small irony that in 2003 the United States invaded Afghanistan to eradicate the threat of political Islam originally set-in motion in 1979 when Zbigniew Brzezinski facilitated arming the most radical elements of the Mujahideen. In a particularly cruel twist, the United States then withdrew in 2021, again leaving a decimated wasteland in the grip of radical Islam.

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