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From Revolution to Despotism: Portraiture at the Close of the French

Revolution

Sam Senseman

Introduction

In the midst of the tempest that was the French Revolution, art saw fantastic evolution not in just how it was created and in what quantity, but also in its significance to the individuals that made it, to the men and women that commissioned it, and to people that viewed it. The most popular paintings of the time, those that depicted historical events, were tools that both reflected contemporary events and influenced them. But the genre of portraiture, often overshadowed by the more dramatic and complex historical paintings, was subjected to perhaps the greatest change. During the early years of the Revolution, portraiture was not used as an explicit weapon to draw parallels between past and present for the artist's own needs, but was instead adopted as a means of affirming that which had been gained: the elevation of an individual from a subject of a king. Uncertainty after the Terror culminated in the rise of a figure who inserted himself into the role of a revolutionary hero, an answer to the crises that France was facing, and a source of stability.

Napoléon Bonaparte was well aware of the potential power within art as propaganda. Art was an effective tool for conveying an appropriate image of himself that did not endanger his position of power. But the creation of the portrait involves a profound relationship between the sitter and the artist; neither can entirely control the process without violating the intentions and hopes of the other. Here, the artist Jacques-Louis David inserts himself into Napoléon's story. Few other artists were as prolific and consistently influential as David had been through the end

of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. David had created many of the most famous historical paintings of the Ancien Régime, the Revolution, and the French Empire. He had created portraits of nobles, revolutionaries, himself, and, between 1797 and 1798, began creating his first portrait of Napoléon Bonaparte (Figure 1). The unfinished portrait of Napoléon leaves many questions about why it was never finished and what would it have been if finished. But what is present recalls portraiture of the Revolution: Bonaparte's face is in a stoic pose facing off into the distance, his clothing is not particularly elegant, and the prominence of his body emphasizes him as an individual person. I believe this portrait represents the transition from the civic ideals present in revolutionary portraiture to Bonaparte's subversion and reimplantation of the developments in visual art. And I will argue that remnants of revolutionary ideas of the individuals, citizenship, and the body permeated the culture and regime long after 9 Thermidor.



Figure 1 David, Jacques-Louis. *Le Général Bonaparte*. 1797-1798.

The State of Portraiture

Since the 17th century, the painting genre that commanded the greatest amount of prestige in both the political and artistic spheres was that of historical painting. In its shadow was the genre of portraiture, as many art critics looked down on portraits as little more than flattery attempting to please the sitter and appeal to their tight social circle. In the mid-18th century, men such as Étienne La Font de Saint-Yenne vehemently attacked portraiture as a genre and advocated a return to the historical painting that had lost some prominence in the preceding decades.¹ Men such as La Font de Saint-Yenne believed that the easy money of portraiture lured artists away from creating the historical depictions that could be displayed in the Salon and appeal to a broader audience beyond the commissioner. But this criticism had been almost entirely directed at portraits of those who did not hold official positions of power or were not embedded in the upper echelons of political and social circles. Despite his vitriol, even La Font de Saint-Yenne was willing to admit that portraiture of prominent individuals, such as the King, deserved their prominence and served an important role in the public realm.

The impact that the Revolution had on the genre of portraiture is perhaps most clear in the extension of widespread acceptance of portraiture beyond such depictions of the King. No longer was France concentrated around a single individual; instead, power and significance were distributed to a broader range of individuals that had once been little more than subjects to their divine monarch. And with this distribution came a need to emphasize the importance of these new citizens and reinforce the new social and political paradigms that had begun to dominate the landscape. Whether consciously or unconsciously known, portraiture offered a useful tool by which artists were able to charge individuals with the new understanding of a person the

¹ Amy Freund, *Portraiture and Politics in Revolutionary France*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2014), 6.

significance that they saw fit. As a result, in the early days of the Revolution, before the Terror, portraiture experienced a boom in France.

Louis XVI's decision to call the Estates General marked the beginning of elected officials' new importance to the French political system. In Paris, several series of portraits depicting deputies to the Estates General, and later the National Assembly, began to be created and distributed. In July 1789, a man named Nicolas-Francois Levachez published one of the most widespread and successful of these series. The portraits that Levachez published retained a great deal from the portraiture of the Ancien Régime: elaborate frames, detailed costumes, a three-quarters bust, and an easy disposition. Nonetheless, the prints were a radical departure in that they signified the scattering of political power from one monolithic king to an entire collection of men. The Levachez prints were an early experiment in building up the foundation upon which the French people rested their calls for rights and authority.² Focus shifted away from depicting the King and the complex ceremony and regalia that surrounded him to a group of men whose power originates more from the very fact of their presence than from complex iconography. The ultimate power in the Levachez prints came not from the individual portraits but from their collection; each deputy was depicted as an individual but also a member of a larger body, an individual with only a fraction of the divided power.

What the Levachez prints began would continue through the first part of the Revolution: portraits were imbued with political significance and, in turn, were used as tools in the greater game of Revolution. How they fulfilled this role varied both by time and by artist. Some depicted contemporary living individuals with little dramatization. Others, such as *The Death of Marat* — created in 1793 by Jacques-Louis David — depicted revolutionary martyrs as true heroes of the

² Amy Freund, *Portraiture and Politics in Revolutionary France*, 49-50.

Revolution and reflections of the contemporaneous political climate. In it, Marat is shown dead in the bathtub, but his face retains some warmth and his body is not revolting. Charlotte Corday, Marat's murderer, is left out of the painting entirely, represented only by her name on the papers in Marat's hand. Her absence forces the focus entirely on the martyr, his life, and his death in service of the Revolution. Neither the act of murder nor the murderer can impede on Marat's quiet dignity. *The Death of Marat* was only one of numerous depictions of the heroes and prides of the revolution though, and, as an unanticipated consequence, "Such celebrations of contemporary history during the revolution would later facilitate the capacity of artists to meet the demands of Napoleonic iconography."³

However, the age of politically charged portraiture would not last forever. The rise to power of Maximillian Robespierre and the beginning of the Terror precipitated another shift in the role of portraiture. The intense political climate and the threat of the Guillotine loomed over any commission. To make a political statement in one's portrait exposed the artist and the sitter to the danger of drawing unwanted attention, and few portraits designed took the risk of making a political statement. Those that did were generally not pieces meant for domestic display.⁴ At the forefront of portraiture were grotesque images of Louis XVI's decapitated head, recalling the impact that the guillotine was having on France. Such images did not tap into the civic pride that had been present in the creation and reception of the Levachez prints. And rather than a depiction of a revolutionary martyr in quiet repose, such images depicted and then magnified the growing hostility and intensity that characterized the Terror. And it was in this environment that portraits of individuals as French citizens and legislators began to slip away.

³ Philippe Bordes et al., *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, (Williamstown, Mass;New Haven; Yale University Press, 2005), 7.

⁴ Amy Freund, *Portraiture and Politics in Revolutionary France*, 109.



Figure 2 David, Jacques-Louis. *Portrait of Jeanbon Saint-André*. 1795.

The Thermidorian Reaction once again shifted the role of portraiture in France. The coup against Robespierre and the Committee for Public Safety brought an end to the Terror and mitigated the revolutionary fervour that had been present. But it did not mark an end to the influence of the Revolution on portraiture. Having created paintings, both historical paintings and portraiture for decades under multiple successive regimes, Jacques-Louis David found himself in a position of prominence in the Jacobin party. David had begun to play the role of pageant master for the Revolution and effectively became the dictator of the arts under Robespierre's reign. In 1793, he was even one of those who voted for the death of Louis XVI.⁵ David himself managed to escape execution but just days after the overthrow of Robespierre on July 27, the artist was arrested for his close relation to the Jacobin dictator. In December, the charges against David were dropped and he was released from his first imprisonment. However,

⁵ Antoine Schnapper, *David, Book, Whole* (New York: Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1982), pg. 130-140.

in May of 1795—during several uprisings in Paris that precipitated more anti-jacobin fervor—David returned to prison.⁶ The artist spent his second imprisonment at the former Collège des Quatre-Nations in the company of several other arrested Jacobins—all deputies of the Mountain, the name for the seat of the Parisian Jacobins—and, during this time, undertook recreating their likeness in a series of medallion portraits (Figure 2).⁷

The series of prison medallions exemplify another of the developments in portraiture during the Revolution: a focus on the body of the sitter. The medallion shape of the portraits and the profile pose of the portraits recall the profile portraits on Ancient Roman coins. But in addition to the profile of the sitter's face, David reserves a large amount of space for the bodies of the Jacobins. Their clothing is detailed but not overbearing, hats often obfuscate part of the face, and, in most of the portraits, their arms are crossed. One of the more interesting details present in some of the medallion portraits is the prominence of the hands; in *Portrait of Jeanbon Saint-André*, the fingers of his left hand are just visible. The stoic look and posture in addition to the emphasis of the body and mundane clothing, all elicit an image of individuals standing opposed to or perhaps in spite of something. In this case, David's portrayal of his fellow Jacobins seems to show them retaining their political ideology in the face of intense opposition, unwilling to compromise on their political beliefs. But they are not mythological heroes staring down a heroic tragedy; instead, the clothing may be emblematic of the Revolutionary belief in the importance of the individual French citizen. An intricate background and excessive regalia or symbolism are forfeited in favor of incredibly human portraits. They lack warmth and

⁶ Bordes et al., *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, 1-5.

⁷ Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror*, (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1999), 88.

pleasantness but manage to capture an intensity not directed at the viewer but the overwhelming resistance they faced.⁸

After the end of his prison sentence David returned to public life. He struggled, at first, to obtain the prominence that he had possessed before and during the Revolution. Nevertheless, he produced a great deal of work and, eventually, he began work on *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, a historical painting depicting the reconciliation of the Romans and Sabines which would mark his return to form and eminence. But before he displayed the painting he would begin his long relationship with the future emperor of France, Napoléon Bonaparte.

General Bonaparte

In December 1797, Napoléon Bonaparte returned from an incredibly successful campaign in Italy and, owing to the wide press coverage, the general had become incredibly popular with the public. Napoléon had been able to secure territory for the Directory but also pursued the acquisition of works of art. His consideration of art as proper spoils of war can be attributed to a recognition of monetary value, but it also should be recognized that Napoléon did maintain sincere appreciation for the pieces he was taking: “to the Directory, he candidly expressed his satisfaction in securing a work of art ‘missing from our Museum.’”⁹ Along with many other artists, Jacques-Louis David stood in opposition to this seizure of Italy’s artistic heritage. But even he had developed a keen interest in the growing celebrity of Napoléon.

According to Etienne-Jean Delecluze, a pupil and biographer of David, after his return and before setting out for his Egyptian campaign in May of 1798, Napoléon came to David’s studio to sit for a portrait only once. During this sitting David finished the face and outline of the torso in the unfinished portrait. Napoléon likely expected the painting to have been a battle scene

⁸ Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror*, 88-100.

⁹ Bordes et al., *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, 21.

but, whatever Napoléon had hoped for, David intended to create a portrait of Bonaparte holding the treaty of Campo Formio.¹⁰ Because the piece was never displayed there is painfully little information about it aside from Delecluze's account of the two meeting. Why David decided to not complete the portrait is uncertain but there are a few plausible reasons and the answer likely rests somewhere between them.

During the brief period he was in Paris, Napoléon was in a precarious position. Where his future would go was not yet entirely certain. He did not yet have the agenda of overthrowing the Directory to insert himself as the ruler of France. And, while popular among many, Bonaparte had attracted the ire and mistrust of some in the military and the government.¹¹ This uncertainty may have contributed to the ultimate decision to leave the portrait unfinished; finishing and exhibiting the portrait may have drawn too much attention and exacerbated the jealousy of his opponents. Napoléon had set himself on a course of discretion and modesty: "He even encouraged speculation that he would follow Washington's example and retire from public life. To give credibility to this counter-image of himself, he arranged to be elected to the National Institute on 25 December 1797—to a seat in the mechanical arts section!"¹² But the answer may also be as simple as a lack of interest. With the general leaving in May for his campaign in Egypt, David may have decided to focus on the painting that might mark his return to prominence — *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* — and, as a result, the painting fell into obscurity.

For whatever reason that portrait was left unfinished, the incomplete nature of the portrait leaves much to speculation. But, nonetheless, what is present reveals much about its place in portraiture, the ideals of the Revolution, and as a seed for the propaganda of the imminent French

¹⁰ Schnapper, *David*, 204.

¹¹ Bordes et al., *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, 27.

Empire. The head and upper torso of Napoléon received the most complete work: the general looks off past the confines of the canvas, he wears relatively mundane clothing, the colors are subdued. The rest of his torso as well as his arms are outlined. Like the Jacobin medallion portraits, the subject is standing in a conservative pose and the hands hold positions of prominence with one covering his breast and the other resting on his hip. By not facing directly at the audience, the general displays an aloofness, possibly reflecting his current political position. But the direction of his head also recalls the medallion portraits David had created two years prior. Napoléon seems to be facing down the turmoil that faced him, or perhaps he is even facing off toward his future with quiet determination. Napoléon's body and form is still prevalent and recalls that the great general is a human, more stylized but still on some ideological ground the same as the men of the Levachez portraits or the deputies of the Mountain. David's intention to create a portrait in which Bonaparte recalls the ideals of the Revolution rather than choosing to create a fantastic battle scene, reveals the tenacity of the Revolution even after the turmoil of the Terror and Thermidor. In the face of a rising hero, David still retained the humanizing nature of Revolutionary portraiture.

Supposedly, Napoléon invited David to travel with him on his next military expedition. David refused, likely to avoid the discomfort of leaving France and in order to continue his work on the *Sabines*.¹³ Nevertheless, the partnership of the two was only beginning. In 1799, David displayed the completed *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* in the Salon; the same year, Napoléon mounted his coup against the Directory and imbued himself with virtually unlimited authority as the First Consul. In 1804, David was named the first painter, distinguishing him,

¹³ Bordes et al., *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, 27-28.

once again, as the preeminent painter in France; the same year, Napoléon Bonaparte was crowned Emperor of the French.

Imperial Robes

Napoléon's rise to unchecked power initiated a new paradigm in the relationship between power and art. The emperor commissioned a tremendous number of works, virtually all of which portrayed him in some form of flattering light and even depicted him as "Christ, or as a thaumaturgic king, a saint, a Roman emperor or a classical god."¹⁴ Napoléon unmistakably seemed to have some legitimate interest in art for its value in itself as well. But however much the despot cared for the fine arts, his greatest interest in it was clear: art, in whatever medium, could be used as effective propaganda in establishing a reaffirming power. This unapologetic approach to art as a means of propaganda presented a unique dilemma to commissioned artists. Artists were forced to reconcile their own beliefs about art and representation as well as the decades of imagery that characterized the Ancien Régime, the Revolution, the Terror, the Directory, the Consulate, and now the Empire. Add to this the frustration of working with a man obsessed with image and the artists of the Napoleonic Empire were put under tremendous pressure.¹⁵

Before David completed one of the most famous paintings of the decade, *The Coronation of Napoléon*, the artist completed his second portrait of the emperor, *Napoléon I in Imperial Robes* (Figure 3). The painting depicts the emperor in full regalia, standing just in front of his throne, surrounded by curtains, and adjoined by two columns. The portrait is similar to several

¹⁴ David O'Brien, "Antonio Canova's Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker and the Limits of Imperial Portraiture," *French History* 18, no. 4 (December 1, 2004): 354–78, 376.

¹⁵ O'Brien, "Antonio Canova's Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker and the Limits of Imperial Portraiture." Several artists struggled with consolidating the demands of the Napoleonic regime with their own artistic ideals. This is perhaps most clear in a sculpture of Napoleon created by Antonio Canova.

made by David's contemporaries that all depict the emperor in the same clothes with the same symbols of imperial power. Unfortunately for David, his position as the official painter of Napoléon did not protect from criticism. The emperor was reportedly very dissatisfied upon seeing the painting.¹⁶ The image lacked the elegance and intricacy present in similar depictions by David's contemporaries. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' *Napoléon I on His Imperial Throne* showed the same scene, only with Napoléon sitting instead of standing. The face is clearer and "Ingres's overvaluing of objects is made abundantly clear through his sacrifice of the body to the wondrous surface appearance of things."¹⁷ Ingres' and David's portraits, despite incredibly similar subject matter, seem as though they could not be more different. Evidently, Ingres and David's contemporaries were more in tune with the desires and needs of the new regime before David was.



Figure 3 David, Jacques-Louis. *Napoléon I in Imperial Robes*. 1805.

¹⁶ Bordes et al., *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, 44.

¹⁷ Todd B. Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David*, (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 38.

David's 1805 portrait of Napoléon is bizarre in how different it seems from David's earlier and later works. It lacks his clarity and appears to be unsure of what it is meant to convey. The image is clearly a radical departure from the portraiture of the Revolution. There is little emphasis on the face, the sitter's clothing could not be more intricate, and the background is almost overwhelming, making the emperor's stature seem small. The only clear remnant of early Revolutionary influences seems to be on the emphasis of Napoléon's body. Unlike in Ingres' depiction, David's shows the emperor's body at the center of the portrait, demanding more attention than his face. The emperor is standing on his two feet as a self-made man.¹⁸ It also shows some uncanny similarities to the 1797 unfinished portrait of Napoléon. The left hand is covering part of the body and his right hand is extended to the side. But the most emphatic similarity is the same positioning of the head: that angle that lies between staring directly at the viewer and staring off directly to the side. Once again David's exact intentions may never be entirely clear. Whether the unfinished portrait influenced the 1805 piece consciously or unconsciously, however, their similarities reveal something about David at this time of transition.

The relationship between David's *Napoléon I in Imperial Robes* and the unfinished portrait, as well as the Revolutionary portraiture that preceded both, seems to indicate two things. First, the radical departure from Revolutionary portraiture to the 1805 portrait may have been the result of David being unable to reconcile the demands of Napoléonic propaganda with his understanding of portraiture. The emphasis on the body remains to some extent, but it seems that in David's attempt to meet the expectations of the newly crowned emperor, he forwent even his own previously held standards. And, as result, created an image of Napoléon in which his face is

¹⁸ Bordes et al., *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile*, 44.

barely visible at all. Second, with the power of hindsight we may be able to recognize that the unfinished portrait was an early example of Napoléonic propaganda. David clearly saw it as appropriate to retain some aspects of the unfinished portrait. Perhaps he saw the pose and positioning of the head as appropriate not only for a general growing in celebrity, but also a despot wishing to affirm his authority.

The radical and extremely quick developments of the French Revolution, the Thermidorian Reaction, and Napoléon's rise was certainly unprecedented. Social and political ideals evolved rapidly but art was generally able to keep up with and reflect the beliefs of artists and broader spheres in which they lived. Jacques-Louis David possessed the luck and the skill necessary to not only survive decades of regime change but to also remain relevant. Through the development of Revolutionary portraiture and how David accepted and rejected it, we can gain a glimpse into how the Revolution was perceived, reaffirmed, and then used even in the years following the Terror. The unfinished portrait of Napoléon was created at an uneasy time when France was transitioning into a despotic regime. Had it been finished it may well have served as one of the best early examples of Napoléon's appreciation of art that recalled the Revolution as a tool for propaganda. Furthermore, the 1805 portrait of Napoléon in his imperial regalia and its similarities to the unfinished portrait reveals that David, and perhaps the greater art world, lacked the ability to totally abandon the art of the Revolution for the sake of the French Empire.

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Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, and Lakshmi Sahgal: The Idea of the Gender Complement

Kaitlin Risin

Introduction

Women of history often go unnoticed or even ignored. In this paper, I will bring women to the forefront by focusing on three leading women of the Indian nationalist movement. These women are Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, and Lakshmi Sahgal. I will also discuss Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose who can be seen as these women's 'complement'. This will be done in order to examine how these women's opinions on women's participation in the Indian nationalist movement compare to the views of their male complements. This will allow us to understand how women's actions were viewed in the scope of the movement for India's freedom from British imperialism.

The significance of researching the women who led various factions of the Indian nationalist movement in the early twentieth century is layered. Regarding the modern-day, learning more about these women may help us to understand how and why women are treated the way they are in India today and why they react in certain ways to this treatment. For contemporary studies, it will help us to better understand how women felt during this time and how they took this opportunity to make themselves heard. It is just as important to learn the history of women of the nation as it is to learn about men like Gandhi, Nehru, and Bose.

Current historiography on this topic is lacking but not completely non-existent. As women's history is a more modern area of interest, much of the research into these women has

come from the past fifty years. Geraldine Forbes has done much impressive research into the topic. Her research is presented in her books *Women in Modern India* and *Women in Colonial India*. Much of the work in this area focuses on social reforms and the women's movement and not on the women that lead the nationalist movement. While discussing the overall significance of this paper and the overall topic, it is important to note that much research on this subject ignores the role of Muslim women in the Indian nationalist movement. This may be explained by the Hindu bias found in much history regarding India due to the majority Hindu population and the issue of the India-Pakistan partition and relationship. More research is needed on the lives of the Muslim women that led the nationalist movement and participated in the partition discussions.

In analyzing the views of these leading women, I will compare their words to those of a male complement. This idea of the female/male complement is a concept introduced indirectly by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi believed that "man is supreme in the outward life, therefore, it is appropriate that he should have a greater knowledge of the world" while "home life is entirely the sphere of women and, therefore, in domestic affairs women ought to have more control".¹ This means that, in his view, men and women make up an "active-passive' complementary" relationship.² He believed seeing men and women as complements of one another would allow women to gain more freedom while remaining socially subordinate. In this sense, Gandhi defines "complement" as women and men being equal in life but not in function.³

I would also like to acknowledge the counterargument that Gandhi only mentioned the idea of the female/male complement in passing. If this is true, how can you judge an entire history on it? Although it is true that Gandhi only commented on the idea of a gender

¹ *Nationalist Movement in India*, ed. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 249.

² *Nationalist Movement in India*, 249.

³ *Nationalist Movement in India*, 249.

complement in passing, his actions and those of other men in the Indian nationalist movement show that this gender hierarchy influenced their attitudes and actions towards the role of women in the movement. This idea was an unconscious bias in the minds of the men of this time.

Reworking it to show the equal importance of women of the Indian independence movement is beneficial not only to these women but of all women in history.

In this paper, I argue that women and men of the nationalist movement tend to reflect Gandhi's idea of the complement, but not necessarily in the way he has defined it. I am using Gandhi's complement theory to create my own. I will be defining "complement" as a woman and a man who are equal in life *and* function, or, in other words, in status and influence. There is also the issue of how one defines "equal" as no person can entirely mirror another person. In this paper, I define "equal" as having similar status and influence in the Indian nationalist movement. I will be arguing against Gandhi's view, and instead argue that women in the Indian nationalist movement were equal in life, status, function, and influence to men.

Sarojini Naidu

As a woman of both politics and poetry, Sarojini Naidu brought a multifaceted perspective to the conversation of women in the Indian nationalist movement. She was heavily involved in the campaign for women's rights in India, which blurred with her involvement in the independence movement. In 1926, she became the first female president of the Indian National Congress while simultaneously becoming "closely associated with the All India Women's Conference", linking the women's movement with the nationalist movement.⁴ Her perspective on

⁴ Vishwanath S. Naravane, *Sarojini Naidu: An Introduction to Her Life, Work and Poetry* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, 1980), 96.

women's involvement in the nationalist movement is important as her views are wide-ranging, crossing the boundaries of religion, education, and caste.

In discussing the legacy of Naidu, it is important to mention her poetry as a fundamental part of her story.⁵ Her poetry about the nationalist struggle, as well as her less political work, was often judged harshly and was said to make "her seem less than fit for the weighty and masculine work of nation-building".⁶ This critique that may have influenced her views on women's role in the movement, although this idea requires further research. That being said, this paper will not analyze her poetry. It would not be appropriate to compare Naidu's poetry to the speeches of Gandhi as each function differently in a literary and motivational sense. Nevertheless, her poetry was certainly important to many in the movement.

Naidu's views on women in the independence movement were centered on her conservative beliefs in the traditional view of women in Indian history, as well as a sense of harmony between women and men.⁷ It is said that "Naidu championed women by defining their place in the nation through what she defines as the 'essentially' female quality of spirituality and the 'essentially' female capacity to nurture".⁸ We can see that her views of women are defined by the lenses of tradition, history, spirituality, and the relationship between women and men. With this basis, we can analyze her overall views of women's participation in the Indian nationalist movement.

⁵ See Appendix 1.

⁶ Sheshalatha Reddy, "The Cosmopolitan Nationalism of Sarojini Naidu, Nightingale of India," *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 38, no. 2 (2010): 571-589, accessed November, 28, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25733492?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents, 272.

⁷ *Status of Indian Women: Crisis and Conflict in Gender Issues*. Vol. 2, *Progressive Women and Political Identity*, ed. Uma Shanhar Jha, Arati Mehta, and Latika Menon (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 1998), 192.

⁸ Sheshalatha Reddy, "The Cosmopolitan Nationalism of Sarojini Naidu, Nightingale of India," 585.

Many of Naidu's speeches spoke on the issue of women in the Indian nationalist movement. One that stands out was given in 1916 at the Hindu Ladies' Social and Literary Club. Naidu said, "The real test of nationhood is the woman. If the woman has taken her proper place in society, then the central problem is solved. The goal of society depends upon the unit of the woman".⁹ Here we see her directly correlating the place of women with the idea of a nation. She is placing women in an important position for the success of a nation, a nation that, in the case of India, was not yet negotiated as independent.

Naidu's beliefs were set in tradition, and this must be kept in mind when discussing how she viewed women's place and participation in the Indian nationalist movement. As stated previously, she believed women were important to the success of India as a nation but their place was not to be warriors or leaders, but mothers. While giving a speech at the Indian National Social Conference in 1915, Naidu spoke about women's right to education and in doing so explained how educated women could help the nationalist movement. She said,

We ask only that we may be given that chance to develop our body and spirit and mind in that evolution that will re-establish for you ideal womanhood, not an impossible womanhood such as poets may dream of, but an ideal womanhood that will make noble wives who are helpmates, strong mothers, brave mothers, teaching their sons their first lesson of national service.¹⁰

Naidu does not emphasize women as leaders or even as active participants in the nationalist movement overall, but rather defines their place in "national service" as being a wife and a mother who can aid their husbands and sons, but not their daughters, in their efforts in the national movements.

⁹ *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, third edition (Madras: Price Rs. Three), accessed November, 28, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015026616766&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021>, 59.

¹⁰ *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, 57.

Naidu's belief in the traditional place of women went alongside her desire to avoid confrontation between women and men. She often gave speeches calling for India to help the nation prosper by giving women the right to vote. In her speech to the Bombay Special Congress in 1915 she called for women's suffrage while also stating "that men and women have separate goals and separate destinies and that just as a man can never fulfill the responsibility of a woman, a woman cannot fulfill the responsibility of a man".¹¹ She makes clear that women would not and could not take the place of men in society, but that they should still have a place in it.

Gandhi's approach to women's participation in the nationalist movement, on the other hand, can be described in a word, ambivalent. While he is noted as wanting women to have equal legal status, his views on their participation in the nationalist movement called for less equality.¹² He understood that the Indian nationalist movement could not succeed without women actively participating in it, but also believed that women should play "a socially subordinate role".¹³ Defending his concept of the complement, Gandhi believed women should act as "moral guardians" for the movement "without competing with men in the sphere of power and politics".

¹⁴ This reflects Naidu's view that women should avoid competing with men in categories that many believed only men could fulfill.

Gandhi saw women's role in the independence movement as crucial but not as important as the work of men, wanting women to "limit their activity to picketing" while men participated

¹¹ *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, 200.

¹² "India. Mr. Gandhi and Indian women," *International Alliance of Women* (London, England), 1921, accessed November, 28, 2021, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:gerritsen&rft_dat=xri:gerritsen:articlefulltext:Gerritsen-GP103_Volume_16_Issue_1-40.

¹³ *Nationalist Movement in India*, 250.

¹⁴ *Nationalist Movement in India*, 254.

in more ‘impactful’ acts such as the Salt March.¹⁵ Gandhi did not want women to participate in the 1930 Salt March but many women did anyway. This was thanks to Naidu, who disregarded his wishes and joined him in his march, influencing women to join. These women saw Naidu as their leader. This critical moment pushed Gandhi to advocate for “the predominance of women in his army of peace” as he began to believe that “the fear of violence would then be minimized”.¹⁶ This reflects Naidu’s idea of the traditional Indian women as one of peace and moral guidance rather than violence.

Another important pillar of Gandhi’s thinking regarding the women of the nationalist movement revolves around the concept of sacrifice, an idea that parallels Naidu’s belief in the female quality of spirituality. One of Gandhi’s most important quotes regarding the women of the Indian nationalist movement is that “Woman is sacrifice personified. When she does a thing in the right spirit, she moves mountains”.¹⁷ This brings Gandhi’s ambivalence into full view. Despite wanting women to play subordinate roles in the Indian nationalist movement and society at large, he still portrayed them as the embodiment of sacrifice for the movement.

Though there are many parallels between the two, it is apparent that Sarojini Naidu’s views diverge from Gandhi’s. Gandhi was a master of public relations but his views are contradictory.. Naidu made it clear that she wanted women to have a role in the Indian nationalist movement, and that they needed to have a role for the movement to succeed at all. Her status in the movement, being seen as a leader by women, makes her important to the movement but not necessarily equal to Gandhi in life. Her influence is equal to Gandhi, however, having

¹⁵ Rozina Visram, *Women in India and Pakistan: The Struggle for Independence from British Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 27.

¹⁶ Padmini Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu: A Biography* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 229.

¹⁷ M. K. Gandhi. *Women and Social Justice* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1954), 155.

encouraged women to join events that Gandhi did not want them at. Although, Naidu believed in much of what Gandhi outlined, and did not see the everyday woman of India as equal to men in both life and function, but as an individual and important figure in Indian history, she fulfills part of the definition of “complement” this paper has outlined.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was a woman of politics and anti-imperialism. It was not common that she spoke on women’s issues or women’s place in the Indian nationalist movement but her place in it in and of itself speaks volumes. She thought of herself as a person of India and was personally interested in the United Nations, later serving as India’s first delegate and the first female president of the United Nations General Assembly.¹⁸ She attended the founding conference of the United Nations privately while conducting “a campaign on ‘Freedom for India’ and other Colonial peoples”, a precursor to the views she would support while serving in the General Assembly.¹⁹

While her time in the United Nations after Indian independence and her place in the Indian nationalist movement are extremely important for recognizing the part women played in the campaign for independence, it is important to note that she, perhaps more so than Naidu and Sahgal, is an outlier. She was born into a higher caste family and was the daughter and sister of two of the most influential men in the Indian nationalist movement, Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru. Pandit’s brother, Jawaharlal Nehru, was the first Prime Minister of independent India. Notably, one of the only times she is known to have spoken about the equality of women in India

¹⁸ A. W. Parsons, “Mrs. Pandit for President,” *Daily Mail* (London, England), September 15, 1953, accessed November, 28, 2021. <https://link-gale-com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/EE1864102753/DMHA?u=coloboulder&sid=bookmark-DMHA&xid=52013373>.

¹⁹ A. W. Parsons, “Mrs. Pandit for President.”

was at a New York luncheon, something very few outside of the elite could attend.²⁰ It is fair to say that not many women of this period could relate to this privilege but she used that position in a positive way.

Her time serving in the United Nations is important for assessing how some women were treated during the time of the Indian nationalist movement for independence. One of the most relevant speeches she gave was presented when she spoke on behalf of India, about a year before independence, to the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 25, 1946. Pandit addressed India's hopes for its future as an independent nation, its wishes for the United Nations as it existed at the time, and, most relevant to this paper, the role of women in the "nation-building activities" of India.²¹ Her speech was important not only for the nation, but for the women of India because she was speaking as the leader of the Indian Delegation. This means she was the first Indian delegate to be "briefed and accredited by a national government", an incredible step for both India and its female citizens.²²

She began her speech by addressing the assembly as a meeting of "representatives of freedom-loving countries of the world" and pledges India's dedication to the principles of the United Nations.²³ This point is important as she acknowledged the assembly as a place for countries to better the world through freedom. This is an idea she continued to challenge only a few moments later when reiterating this point of India's cooperation by quoting Jawaharlal

²⁰ "India's Women are Called Free by Mrs. Pandit: Sister of Nehru is Final Speaker at Book-Author Luncheon at the Astor Speakers at Yesterday's Book and Author Luncheon," *New York Herald Tribune* (New York City, New York), Mar 07, 1945, accessed November 28, 2021, <https://colorado.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/indias-women-are-called-free-mrs-pandit/docview/1269865650/se-2?accountid=14503>.

²¹ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, "Text of Speech Delivered by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit," South Asian American Digital Archive, accessed November 28, 2021, <https://www.saada.org/item/20141107-3939>.

²² Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, "Text of Speech Delivered by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit."

²³ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, "Text of Speech Delivered by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit."

Nehru, the head of India's national government.²⁴ This is an indirect representation of the complement of women to men as both Nehru and Pandit are important political figures and they are working together to address the United Nations on behalf of India.

Another major point involves the role of women in the nation-building activities of India. As a woman from India, Pandit had lived under the gender divisions that were put in place by Great Britain at the start of its reign in India as a way to control India's people. This included dividing tribes and turning them against one another based on whether they had more 'feminine' or more 'masculine' attributes. Because of this, she saw how such roles affected the everyday women of her nation. Pandit understood the complexity and hardships that came with trying to overcome such divisions. Despite this, she asked every nation to allow men and women to work equally as a way to "create a better and more balanced world".²⁵ She claimed that India was able to ignore caste, creed, and, most importantly, sex all in the name of progress for the nation, so any "freedom-loving country" should be able to do the same.²⁶

This speech offers insight into what the representatives of India were thinking on the brink of independence and, more importantly, the role women were playing in this independence. Pandit spoke on behalf of the entire nation of India as a woman with political opinions from a nation with a history of gender disparity and inequality. She spoke with an underlying tone of nationalism usually associated with men of the independence movement. By acknowledging her as a pioneer of women in politics and nationalism in India, engaging with this speech, and focusing on the nuances of her words we can find a common history of women in the

²⁴ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, "Text of Speech Delivered by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit."

²⁵ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, "Text of Speech Delivered by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit."

²⁶ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, "Text of Speech Delivered by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit."

independence movement of India fighting for a country they loved as much as any nationalistic man did.

Though she did not tend to speak on the issue of women's place in India's nationalist movement, it is appropriate to assume that her views on the subject mirror those of her brother, especially because the statements laid out in her United Nations speech mentioned above were inspired by and even adopted from him. It is even said that when both her brother and her husband, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit, were sent to prison for their part in the nationalist movement, Pandit began to take up their views "with an enthusiasm and determination as great as theirs".²⁷ In this sense, we can say that she is a mirror of her complement regarding women's participation in the nationalist movement.

To further examine her views on the question of women's involvement in India's nationalist movement, it would be helpful to examine Jawaharlal Nehru's views with the assumption that Pandit would hold similar views on the subject. A quote by Nikolai Lenin that "No nation can be free when half the population is enslaved in the kitchen" greatly influenced Nehru's view on women in the nationalist movement, that quote being .²⁸ With this as a foundational part of his views on the nationalist movement as a whole, it is fair to say that Nehru believed women must play a role in it, though he never defined the scope of that role. He is also quoted as saying "See the women of India, how proudly they march ahead of all in the struggle! Gentle, yet brave and indomitable, see how they set the pace for others".²⁹ Nehru, and indirectly Pandit, appear to view women in the Indian nationalist movement as equally influential members

²⁷ A. W. Parsons, "Mrs. Pandit for President."

²⁸ Robert Hardy Andrews, *A Lamp for India: The Story of Madame Pandit* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1967), 124.

²⁹ Robert Hardy Andrews, *A Lamp for India: The Story of Madame Pandit*, 124.

of the movement as themselves, a significant role for any person in a movement as large as this one.

In comparing her words and actions to those of her male complement, her brother, a conclusion can be drawn regarding her views on women's place in the Indian nationalist movement. She saw women's place in the fight for independence as equally important to men's role in the movement but, because she only spoke publicly on the issue once, we can infer that fighting for women's place wasn't a priority for her. She decided to speak for India as a whole rather than focus on one group.. Because she was a woman, Pandit's decision to focus on Indian independence demonstrates the important place that women hold in the history of India. She is equal to her complement in life, or status. Her quietness on the topic, however, brings into question the equality of function in this scenario. I would argue her actions alone seem to be enough to satisfy this component of our theory.

Lakshmi Sahgal

Lakshmi Sahgal was a woman of strong opinions. She shared the belief of her male complement, Subhas Chandra Bose, that in order to win independence, the people of India must fight and kill for it. Much of her involvement with the Indian nationalist movement takes/took (depending on what tense you choose) place in Singapore, where she led the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, an “all-female regiment” that was “created as part of the Indian National Army operating in the Burma campaign during the final stages of WWII”.³⁰ She also served as the “minister in charge of women affairs” in the cabinet of the Azad Hind, the Provisional Government of Free India, that Bose led from Singapore.³¹

³⁰ Vera Hildebrand, *Women at War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 5.

³¹ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997), 62.

It should be noted, before discussing her views, that there seems to be an absence of primary sources regarding Sahgal despite her important role in Indian nationalist history. One primary source that we will be focusing on in this paper is her memoir, *A Revolutionary Life: Memoirs of a Political Activist*, written in 1997, half a century after India's independence. Sahgal spends much of the memoir praising and explaining the actions of her male complement, Bose. Despite this, her memoirs provide the reader with a look into the thoughts and actions of a female nationalist leader.

Sahgal was close to Bose and he was the one who asked her to take charge of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, as well as to take up the minister of women's affairs position. It was after his speech in Singapore in July of 1943 that she began to truly think about the realization of the nationalist movement, especially of what women's part in it could and should look like. In her memoir, she recounts, "I spent sleepless nights after this rally as I kept thinking of a women's regiment, wondering if it could ever be done".³²

Sahgal also looked up to Bose and admired him as the "rising star - the rebel and *enfant terrible*" of the Indian nationalist movement.³³ She recognized Bose as an important figure of the Indian nationalist movement because he represented an alternative, even opposing, vision to the nonviolence advocated by Gandhi. This makes her point of view very important to history as her opinions reflect those of a woman who strongly aligned with those of Bose.. Her opinions are not only those of a Bose supporter, but those of a female leader ready to embrace a military struggle.

Military resistance was not Sahgal's only focus. One aspect of her beliefs was more focused on the political side of the movement. In her memoir she states "... we all know how

³² Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 55.

³³ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 48.

government programmes work - they are often a source of corruption and harassment to women".³⁴ She viewed the problem of India's independence movement as one that leaves women out inhibiting them from taking part in the movement's efforts effectively. A desire to defy stereotypes might be what drove her to lead an all female regiment.. This view drove her to Bose's more militant nationalist movement as "he knew how deeply [the women of India] felt the chains of slavery ... He knew that given the chance, women would readily come forward, eager to share the burdens of their brothers, husbands, sons and fathers in the fight for the freedom of their Motherland".³⁵

Sahgal, like Bose, saw the struggle of Indian women as a historical one that continued to affect their role in India's nationalist movement. Her conviction was that Indian women, due to "traditions and superstitions were regarded as being incapable of playing any vital part in such an important and far-reaching political and military struggle".³⁶ It is clear that Sahgal was drawn to Bose's views because they complemented hers. Both believed that women could fight with the same bravery and strength as any man. Bose once said, "I know what our women are capable of, and, therefore, I say without the slightest exaggeration that there is no work, there is no sacrifice and there is no suffering which our sisters are not capable of", providing further evidence of their shared views.³⁷ Both of these leaders supported women and their efforts to help the movement through military means.

In her memoir, Sahgal also shares her views on women's place in nationalism, saying that "no mass movement can succeed if one entire section of the community were to remain outside

³⁴ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 125.

³⁵ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 140.

³⁶ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 137.

³⁷ Vera Hildebrand, *Women at War*, 98.

it”.³⁸ She clearly saw women as vital for the success of the movement in the same way as Bose. In saying almost the exact words, “Bose stressed that if women, who constitute half of society, did not engage, India would not progress”.³⁹ He, in many speeches, stated that “the Army of Liberation would be incomplete unless women also came forward and volunteered for the fighting ranks”.⁴⁰

Despite his strong words, when the Rani of Jhansi Regiment could have finally met a combat situation, Bose “gave orders that the Rani of Jhansi Regiment be disbanded and its members allowed to return to their homes” to the disappointment of the entire regiment.⁴¹ Bose had said that “the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was to be no mere propaganda weapon” but when the moment came, they were the first group sent away from the war front.⁴² Though his justification for this is amiable, as he said, “What you have done is already something which we didn’t think was possible - you have proved yourself”, most of the women felt that they were ready and should be allowed to fight, and even die if necessary, alongside their brothers.⁴³ This is where Sahgal and Bose disagreed as she believed in her regiment with her entire heart and knew that they were more than capable of fighting for their cause.

In analyzing Sahgal’s memoir and accounts that speak of her character, it is clear that she truly believed that women played an important role in the nationalist movement. Her male complement, Bose, greatly influenced these opinions but Sahgal put her words to action while Bose remained a bit more hesitant. The nature of her beliefs is also important to note because she

³⁸ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 138.

³⁹ Vera Hildebrand, *Women at War*, 66.

⁴⁰ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 54.

⁴¹ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 148.

⁴² Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 140.

⁴³ Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memories of a Political Activist*, 176.

goes beyond the non-violent stance of many nationalists of the time, and believes that women were vital to the movement beyond serving men's efforts but fighting and killing for the movement themselves. She is without a doubt equal to her complement in both life and function as she led an entire regiment of women whom she convinced to risk their lives for an idea of a nation, a nation they themselves were exiled from.

Conclusion

These women and their stories represent important views of the Indian nationalist movement. Their equality to their male complements in their function cannot be highlighted enough. They were able to lead and influence groups of people for the cause of the nation. To the women of India, these leading ladies are heroes. Figure 1 is the perfect image to bring our discussion to a close.⁴⁴ This image shows Sahgal and Bose inspecting the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. The female soldiers in this image were inspired by Sahgal to fight, kill, and even die for their nation. They looked up to her, just as she looked up to Bose. Naidu and Pandit had followers with the same conviction. Women were ready to put their all into the Indian nationalist movement, just as any man, because of the inspiring words and actions of these three women.

Their equality in life and status to their male complements is also important to reiterate. Their statuses, though not always completely equal to that of their male complement, is also an important factor in telling their stories and analyzing their roles in the Indian nationalist movement. The fact that these women were able to lead alongside men made them role models to women, demonstrating that there is a place for every woman to make an impact in the

⁴⁴ See Appendix 2.

movement and in history. Their positions in the movement gave women of the nation hope for their individual futures as well as that of India's future as a nation.

Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, and Lakshmi Sahgal were and will remain important figures in the history and legacy of the Indian nationalist movement for independence in the first half of the twentieth century. Their views and voices inspired many to take up picketing, marching, and even fighting for what they believed in. Many thought this could only be achieved by men, but these women's stories prove this to be false. While women may complement men it can conversely be stated that men complement women. The women and men that I have discussed shared many views and supported each other in many efforts but without the support of these women, the Indian nationalist movement may not have succeeded.

Appendix

1. Here is an example of one of Sarojini Naidu's more nationalist poems⁴⁵.

To India

O YOUNG through all thy immemorial years!
 Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom,
 And, like a bride high-mated with the spheres,
 Beget new glories from thine ageless womb!

The nations that in fettered darkness weep
 Crave thee to lead them where great mornings break

Mother, O Mother, wherefore dost thou sleep?
 Arise and answer for thy children's sake!

Thy Future calls thee with a manifold sound
 To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast;
 Waken, O slumbering Mother and be crowned,
 Who once wert empress of the sovereign Past.

⁴⁵ Sarojini Naidu, "To India," *All Poetry*, accessed December 10, 2021, <https://allpoetry.com/To-India>.

2. Image of Lakshmi Sahgal and Subhas Chandra Bose inspecting the Rani of Jhansi Regiment⁴⁶.



⁴⁶ Ateendriya Gupta, "Women in command: Remembering the Rani of Jhansi Regiment," *The Hindu* (Chennai, India) March 8, 2020, accessed December 10, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/women-in-command-remembering-the-rani-of-jhansi-regiment/article30999665.ece>.

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Welsh Indians: A Myth of Convenience and Consciousness

Treyton Williams

Myths and legends embed themselves into the framework of exploration throughout history. Often, these myths give a justification for exploration and conquest when more practical, readily apparent, and nakedly imperialist reasons cannot support moments of aggressive expansion. Myths such as the Holy Grail, the Fountain of Youth, and the Lost Tribes of Israel provided a *casus belli*, a reason for war, to various European powers and enabled them to smash into new lands and subjugate new peoples under the banner of religion, discovery, and civilization, rather than plain and simple greed for increased wealth and power. The legend of Madoc and the Welsh Indians is no stranger to the world of myth serving as smokescreen for imperialist ambitions. However, to merely write off the legacy of the Welsh Indians as such would be a massive disservice to what the myth came to stand for centuries after its initial prominence. Unlike many other mythic stories, the tale of Madoc and the Welsh Indians left a second legacy of liberty, self-determination, and the radical awakening of a new consciousness among a minority people, in direct contrast to its original legacy of justifying imperialism. The ultimate reasoning behind the peculiar myth of Madoc and his supposed descendents was to give the English Crown legitimacy in the New World against Spain, then later to give the Welsh people a new history of freedom in the wake of the wave of liberalization across Europe in the late eighteenth century.

In order to delve into the legacy of the Madoc story, it is important to reiterate the myth, as well as contextualize when and by whom the story was brought into public and historical discourse. The two earliest written records about Madoc's supposed journey to the Americas both come from the 1580s, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The first of these came in

1583, when a man named George Peckham wrote a report on the New World, specifically to justify English colonization and exploitation and to object to a Spanish monopoly of North America. In the report, Peckham alleged that the territories of North America claimed by the English are, in actuality, the ancient birthright of Queen Elizabeth herself. Peckham bases this on the story of “a noble and worthy personage, lyneally descended from the blood royal, borne in Wales, named Madocke ap Owen Gwyneth, departing from the coast of England, about the year of our Lord God 1170 arrived and there planted himselfe, and his Colonies, and afterward returned himselfe to England.”¹ This marked the first written elaboration of the Madoc myth, as well as the first formation of the base story of a Welsh prince arriving in America, establishing a colony, then returning to Britain. The references to Elizabeth’s heraldry are not without base; as a Tudor, the Queen’s noble ancestry did indeed go back to Wales, instead of being a pure English, or continental European bloodline. Note that this first printing of a supposed four hundred year old story about a Welsh prince journeying across the Atlantic, finding new lands, then returning, was written in English, not Welsh.

Peckham followed this recounting of Madoc’s adventure and settlement with an alleged quote from Montezuma, the last emperor of the Aztec Empire, supposedly written in the Spanish Chronicles of Hernan Cortez’s conquest of Mexico. The quote allegedly came from a speech Montezuma gave to his people in an effort to pacify them, where he said “we are not naturallie of this Countrie, nor yet our Kingdom is durable, because our Forefathers came from a far countrie and their King and Captain who brought them hither, returned again to his natural countrie, saying that he would send such as should rule and governe us, if by chance he himselfe returned not.”² Peckham came to the conclusion that this quote, combined with the timeline of the story

¹ George Peckham, *A True Reporte of the Late Discoveries and Possession Taken in the Right of the Crowne of Englande, of the Newfound Landes* (Tarrytown, N.Y: W. Abbatt, 1920), 33.

² Peckham, *A True Reporte*, 34.

of Madoc, must mean that the Aztecs were either the direct descendants of Madoc's settlers, or at least the descendants of a people incorporated by them. This fact meant Queen Elizabeth, not Spain, had a legitimate claim to Mexico and North America as a whole.³

The second earliest written account of the Madoc story came from the writings of Caradoc of Llancarvan about the history of Wales, translated from Welsh to English and published in 1584, just a year after Peckham's report. The account discussed Madoc's backstory before his exodus to America in greater detail with the explanation that Madoc sought adventure in the sea as an escape from a bloody succession war between his brothers following the death of their father, the ruler of North Wales.⁴ It is later in the story that Caradoc's writing overlapped significantly with Peckham's. It told the same story of Madoc settling in North America in 1170, then returning to Britain before heading back, along with a dismissal of Spain's claim of original discovery, a firm claim that Madoc settled in either Florida or Mexico, and a reference to Montezuma's supposed speech of foreign forefathers.⁵ The timing of the appearance of these works and their dismissal of or challenge to Spanish claims of right of first discovery to the New World cannot be coincidental. The 1580s saw the peak of rising tensions between England and Spain, which culminated in the outbreak of war in 1585 between the two powers. It should come as no surprise that two English books written a year or two before the start of outright hostilities would carry an overt anti-Spanish sentiment.

Something that distinguishes this era of the telling of the Madoc myth from its subsequent boom at the end of the eighteenth century is the minor role that the supposed "Welsh Indians" actually played in it. The references to Montezuma and his kin being likely descended

³ Peckham, *A True Reporte*, 34-35.

⁴ Caradoc of Llancarvan, *The Historie of Cambria, Now Called Wales: A Part of the Most Famous Yland of Brytaine, Written in the Brytish Language Aboue Two Hundreth Yeares Past*, trans. H. Lhoyd Gentleman (London: Rafe Newberie and Henrie Denham, 1584), 166.

⁵ Llancarvan, *The Historie of Cambria*, 166-167.

from Madoc and his Welsh settlers were only really presented as a method of contesting the rights of Spain to rule over them. The ramifications of the native peoples of Mexico being themselves descended from Britons were not explored by Peckham or Llancarvan in any moral or ethnic way. The “Welshness” of the Aztecs or any other native group was only presented as relevant from a geopolitical perspective. It seems that another ethnic group and relevant legend could have been used just as easily to contest the Spanish in North America; the fact that it happened to be the Welsh seems to be just convenience based on the genealogy of Queen Elizabeth.

On an opposite note, both works from the 1580s made explicit references to the Welsh language and alleged traces of it in the languages of Native Americans, a theme common to both distinct eras of the Welsh Indian myth. Peckham and Llancarvan reported on a region of North America and a type of bird both called “Pengwyn,” which they noted as Welsh for “white head.”⁶ In hindsight, it is easy to see that this name is a stretch of logic to equate to Welsh, as penguins, regardless of particular species or region, do not have white heads at all and instead universally have black feathers covering their heads. This overlooking of the possibility of linguistic coincidence, particularly in the face of readily apparent evidence to the contrary, underlines much of the effort to shoehorn a direct relation between the Welsh language and that of any particular native group. Centuries after the publishing of the aforementioned works, there were still attempts to present these supposed linguistic similarities, such as by George Catlin in 1842, who compiled a table of Mandan words and presented them alongside Welsh words of supposedly similar pronunciation and meaning.⁷ However, skepticism met the attempts to draw a direct connection of Welsh to various Indian languages. A good example of this is seen in

⁶ Llancarvan, *The Historie of Cambria*, 167.; Peckham, *A True Reporte*, 33.

⁷ George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Customs and Manners of the North American Indians* (London, 1842), 786.

Thomas Stephens's essay from 1858 disputing the Madoc and Welsh Indian myth, where Stephens analyzes five Indian words, previously selected by other past intellectuals as being analogous to Welsh words of equivalent meaning, and comes to the conclusion that each one either bears no true resemblance whatsoever or related to the Welsh meanings in such a vague way as to be too far of a stretch to deem credible.⁸

The second distinct era of the legacy of Madoc begins in the late 1700s, about two hundred years after the initial publishings of the Madoc legend. It was in this period that the importance of actually finding Welsh Indians, as well as the changing meaning behind the legend, took hold. Before recalling this era's expeditions to find Welsh Indians, it is fundamentally important to note the political climate of the time and the rise of a new, liberal Welsh intelligensia.

As the 1790s dawned, Europe at large was in a state of great political change and upheaval. A large-scale rebellion in North America saw thirteen British colonies form their own sovereign republic as the United States of America and the revolution in France was in full swing. It was a time marked by a great outburst of thinking centered on concepts like natural freedom, the rights of man, and republicanism. Considering the centuries of absolutism and extreme conservatism that had come before, it appears clear that this era was one of the most politically and socially radical that Europe had ever seen. This wave and style of radicalism was not lost among the Welsh thinkers of the day, who would go on to recontextualize the myth of Madoc and the Welsh Indians in a previously unseen way. Gwyn A Williams, looking back on this period of Welsh Radicalism, makes references to an influential and growing group of

⁸ Thomas Stephens, *Madoc: An Essay on the Discovery of America by Madoc Ap Owen Gwynedd in the Twelfth Century* (London, 1893), 170.

“London-Welsh intellectuals” who “were in the grip of their America fever.”⁹ These men, a collection of Jacobins, liberal republicans, radical scholars and theologians, and, above all, proud Welshmen, were the people who pushed the Madoc story beyond being a mere tool of anti-Spanish propaganda.

It is then admittedly ironic to state that another escalation of tensions between the British and the Spanish at least partially sparked this revival. A telling piece of literature written by one such member of this new, radical Welsh group of thinkers -- a man by the name of John Williams -- revisits the Madoc myth in the context of 1791, and importantly, in the face of new grievances against Spain. Williams noted the death of “four millions of Mexicans” at the hands of Cortez and his conquistadors with disgust, before immediately segueing into a present diplomatic crisis at “The Bay of Honduras” where Spanish authorities violated the rights of British traders.¹⁰ As shown here, the Spanish conquest of Mexico and the destruction of the Aztec Empire were still written about with distaste by British writers centuries after the fact and used as a backdrop to the historical violations of rights the Spanish were known for in the New World. This was not the only event to raise Anglo-Spanish tensions at this moment of time either; Gwyn A. Williams attributes the sharp decline of diplomatic relations, as well as the revitalization of the Madoc myth, to the Nootka Sound crisis in 1789.¹¹ It is in John Williams’s essay that the changing narrative of the Madoc myth and what it was coming to mean to the radical Welsh is readily apparent. While Williams is obviously not a fan of Spain and its dealings in the Americas, he did not make a claim on behalf of the English monarch like those who wrote about Madoc in the 1580s. Instead, Williams asked questions and made points that were blatantly

⁹ Gwyn A. Williams, “Welsh Indians: The Madoc Legend & the First Welsh Radicalism.” *Journal of Socialist Historians* 1 (1976): 136.

¹⁰ John Williams, *An Enquiry into the Truth of the Tradition Concerning the Discovery of America by Prince Madog Ab Owen Gwynedd about the Year; 1170* (London: J. Brown, 1791), 72-73.

¹¹ Williams, *Welsh Indians*, 142.

anti-imperialist. He posed a striking philosophical question: “But after all,” he asked, “what is it that gives a people right to a Country?” Then he opined that one can only justifiably claim uninhabited land and any conquest of an existing people is a crime on par with literal highway robbery.¹² This principle, combined with a condemning of “the slavery of our poor African Brethren,” paints Williams as a man who values liberty and hates the imperialist institutions of military conquest and forced, exploitive labor.¹³ It is safe to say that Williams found himself in likeminded company among the community of the aforementioned “London-Welsh.”

Understanding the mindsets of John Williams and his peers is central to understanding the deeper meaning of his understanding of Madoc’s interactions with native peoples. Williams supposed that “How Madog and his Colony behaved, when they landed, to the original Inhabitants of the Country, does not appear; not in a hostile, but in an amicable and affectionate manner, as may be supposed; for his memory was held in high esteem by the Mexicans when Cortez arrived there.”¹⁴ The legacy of Madoc was one of peace, understanding, and cohabitation in the eyes of Williams. Madoc and his people did not simply take up a corner of the Americas and remain an isolated community, they interacted peacefully with the people already there to such a high degree that centuries later, during the Spanish invasion of Mexico, the memories of the good nature and kindness of Madoc and his Welsh settlers remained among the native population. This explicit contextualization of the Madoc story ending as one of good, bloodless habitation of a new, free world goes a long way towards explaining its importance to a society of men who valued liberty for their people above all else.

It is worthwhile to mention that Williams, much like the writers that predated him, brought up the word “pengwyn” and the issue of a black-headed bird being called “white head.”

¹² Williams, *An Enquiry*, 70.

¹³ Williams, *An Enquiry*, 70-71.

¹⁴ Williams, *An Enquiry*, 71-72.

Somewhat humorously, Williams still defended the similarity of the words by asking “But is it not certain that some Birds vary in Plumage in different Climates? In this Island the Royston Crow, as it is called is different in its Plumage from other Crows.”¹⁵ Given the longevity of the futile and excuse-filled attempt to connect Indian words and languages with Welsh, it seems appropriate to ask the question of why this obsession seems so important and carries so much weight. Jerry Hunter, in his work analyzing the Madoc myth and the attempts to find the Welsh Indians, ties this search for elements of the Welsh language to the cultural and historical importance the Welsh language has to the Welsh people. He quotes the Welsh writer Theophilus Evans, who maintained that the Welsh retention of their original tongue greatly offset a history of loss by saying, “Yet still we remain, remnants of the Ancient Britons, residing in a corner of this great island, which we were once masters of from one corner to the other; and retaining our original language, if not completely perfect, still purer than any other nation in the world. ‘They will keep their Language, they will lose their Land’, says Myrddin.”¹⁶ The Welsh language is a living, resilient Welsh legacy. Despite the actions and aggressions of Anglo-Saxons, Normans, or English over many centuries, the old ‘true’ Britons live on through their culture, particularly their native language. Finding Welsh Indians meant finding a new piece of a fragile legacy for the Welsh. If their language indeed existed once in the far away lands of America and actually survived, even in a modified form, it meant that the Welsh legacy could carry on in some way even if the Welsh somehow lost what little land in Britain they had.

It is at this junction where it becomes apparent just what exactly Welsh Indians meant and represented to the members of the new, radical Welsh consciousness. Wales was a tiny country, ruled over by a foreign King and government. The idea of Wales returning to the glory and

¹⁵ Williams, *An Enquiry*, 25.

¹⁶ Jerry Hunter, “Myth and Historiography: One Hundred and Sixty Years of Madog and the Madogwys.” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 46 (2016): 52.

territory of the Britons of old from whom they claim descent was nothing more than a pipe dream that even the most radical and nationalist of Welshmen wouldn't dare to hope for. Wales could not expand, and because it could not expand, it would always remain at risk of shrinking even more. The entire concept of Madoc and the current existence of Welsh Indians ultimately meant one thing: there is a Wales outside of Wales, free from the tyranny or oppression of English monarchs or other forms of barbaric European imperialism. America represented a place where people, be they individuals or an entire collective culture, could start again and shape their lives and reality in a way that they wanted to, immune to unwanted or aggressive outside influences.

Given the harsher and harsher responses to the revolutionary ideals brought onto the forefront of European politics and reality by the 1790s, it stands to reason that those who subscribed to the more radical and liberty-focused mindsets feared the backlash of the ultra-conservative powers of Europe in the years to follow. Gwyn A Williams effectively breaks down the thought process of these radicals by asking “where could they look but to that America which claimed to be the physical realization of the principles of Enlightened Liberty?”¹⁷ In the particular case of the “London-Welsh,” America seemed to be the place to go to establish a truly free Welsh society. The existence of Welsh Indians would provide living, breathing, Welsh speaking proof of the fact that America was the place to be if the Welsh ever wanted to be masters of their own destinies again, as they claimed they were in more ancient times. Gwyn A Williams puts it very succinctly: “Welsh Indians were Welsh freedom.”¹⁸

Just who the Welsh Indians were supposed to be was a question that elicited different answers across the centuries after the publishing of the Madoc story. As discussed previously, the

¹⁷ Williams, *Welsh Indians*, 151

¹⁸ Williams, *Welsh Indians*, 151

original publishers of the myth maintained that Montezuma and his people were the inheritors of Madoc's legacy. By the time of the great revival of interest in the myth in the 1790s, the suspected identity of the Welsh Indians had gone through a few changes, the stories of which would influence the London-Welsh's efforts to find their mythic American kin greatly. In 1686, the minister Morgan Jones published a written account detailing his capture by Indians years before, where a Doeg Indian thwarted the attempt to execute Jones after recognizing the minister speaking Welsh. Following this, Jones alleged that the Doeg took him to his people, where he was able to preach the Gospel to them in Welsh.¹⁹ Far more recent to the Welsh intellectuals was the visit of William Bowles to London in 1791. Bowles, an Irish-American who had married an Indian woman and become an Indian warrior himself, told the story of him meeting a Welshman who had found the Welsh Indians in the form of the Padoucas beyond the Missouri River.²⁰ The constant moving of the supposed discovery of the "real" Welsh Indians further and further into the unexplored regions of North America did not seem to dampen hopes of "this time" being the start of the reunification of the long lost descendants of Madoc with their cousins across the Atlantic. Gwyn A. Williams found that "at least 13 real tribes were identified as Welsh Indians; 5 other imaginary tribes were given names to fit; three others described but not named."²¹

The stories and attitude of this window of time were massively influential on the expedition of the Welshman John Evans, whose exploration and mapping would later prove crucial in the early planning of Lewis and Clark's famed expedition. Evans left for America in 1792, a year after the publication of John Williams's influential *Enquiry*, and was known to be in contact with members of the London-Welsh, men supremely interested in launching their own

¹⁹ David Williams, "John Evans' Strange Journey: Part I. The Welsh Indians." *American Historical Review*, no. 54 (January 1949): 283.

²⁰ Williams, *John Evans*, 286.

²¹ Williams, *Welsh Indians*, 145.

expedition to finally and decisively find their Welsh Indians.²² According to a summary of Evans's letters home, published in 1800, Evans finally began his search for the Welsh Indians after leaving St. Louis in August of 1795, lived with the Mandans a year later, and returned to St. Louis the year after that. Evans did not come to the conclusion that the Mandans were the Welsh Indians and, in fact, was doubtful that there were any Welsh Indians at all.²³ Evans's expedition held the irony of being on the payroll of the Spanish government, the very political entity that the Madoc myth existed in direct opposition to in its earliest years.²⁴ Later expeditions to the Mandans, including that of Lewis and Clark, also remained unconvinced of the Welsh nature of the Mandans, with the notable exception of George Catlin, who remained convinced of the evidence pointing towards the Mandan having Welsh origins.²⁵

The legacy of Madoc and the Welsh Indians in the years past the early 1800s remains a rather mixed affair. Thomas Stephens' essay on Madoc in 1858 which directly dismissed the truth of the Madoc myth and the existence of any kind of Welsh Indians was written for an essay contest about Madoc's discovery of America and was thrown out of contention due to being about the *non*-discovery of America!²⁶ It remains the earliest written refutation of the Welsh Indian myth following the boom of its popularity in the 1790s. The myth of Madoc and his Welsh Indians did not die in the nineteenth century, however. Some tribes were continually identified as the Welsh Indians as far as the 1950s and in 1953, a plaque commemorating Madoc's landing at Fort Morgan, near Mobile, Alabama, was erected.²⁷ Modern scholars and historians by and large see the myth of Madoc landing on American shores and the proposition

²² Williams, *John Evans*, 292.

²³ Stephens, *Madoc*, 107-108.

²⁴ Stephens, *Madoc*, 106.

²⁵ Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, 781-786.

²⁶ Stephens, *Madoc*, v-vii

²⁷ Williams, *Welsh Indians*, 146.

that he left behind a legacy of the Welsh language among Indian tribes as lacking any factual substance. Simply put, there are no Welsh Indians, and there never were.

Despite its removal from reality, the Madoc myth should not be forgotten and cast aside from history. *What* the story claimed pales in significance to *why* it was told, and the use of the story as a tool of larger political and social machinations is rooted in actual history. To the English of the 1580s and those loyal to Queen Elizabeth, Madoc provided an excuse, a convenient tale that just so happened to directly invalidate any legitimate claim the hated Spanish had to the vibrant and resource-laden New World. The Queen's ancestry was Welsh, and said ancestors happened to be the ones to directly discover the Americas centuries before the Spanish did. To the Welsh themselves, two hundred years later, Madoc and the Welsh Indians represented a lost past that held the potential to turn into a future of liberty in the historical moment where the European desire for nations to be built on the ideals of natural freedom was at its zenith. Wales in Britain was small, a far cry from its glory days of Ancient Britons, and the Welsh were a minority in the kingdom in which they found themselves. Wales in America was something that, God willing, had been going on for over half a millennium and carried the aspects of Welsh identity, particularly language, in a land far away from the oppression of any king or invasion. To a select group of radical thinkers, Wales could never be free, but the Welsh could, just by finding their long lost kin, who they swore were just a little further inland.

Lewis and Clark: The Evolving Story

Cesar Pena

Introduction

While reading about the Lewis and Clark expedition, many questions come to mind. Many of those questions can be answered by the journals, but as I read more of the journal entries, I could not help but wonder if what I knew of the expedition was off. As I thought about what I learned two decades ago, I began to think about what students learn today. How does it differ from what I learned, and how have the journal entries evolved since their initial writing? This led me to dig deeper into the evolution of the journals and what is taught today in primary and secondary education classrooms.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark are American Heroes. This is what kids are taught growing up. Like any other heroes, their path to becoming heroes was paved by their actions, stories, achievements, and, even more importantly, authors, filmmakers, editors, and publishers. That is not to say that they did not accomplish something extraordinary; their accomplishment contains more information than what people are told. There are aspects of their travels hidden from the general populace to maintain a level of dignity or keep some facts hidden because some people might not approve of the actions or events. Lewis and Clark are heroes for the outstanding achievement which they accomplished in only a few years, but the story of their adventure has changed throughout time. Their journals evolved with every editor and reprinting. What students learn today can be argued as being a creation, an edited version of history. A history that still contains traces of previous editors who molded the journals to suit their goals.

Evolution of the Journals

From the onset of the expedition, keeping notes was essential. President Jefferson explicitly stated that it was of the utmost importance for Lewis to record his observations with "great pains and accuracy" and ensure the survival of his writings throughout the voyage. President Jefferson wrote of the notes that were to be taken: "Guard by multiplying them against the accidental losses to which they will be exposed. A further guard would be that one of these copies be written on the paper of the birch, as less liable to injury from damp than common paper."¹ Through his instruction, President Jefferson ensured people would have access to the chronicles of the journey for generations to come. For most people to access the journals, an edited, published version is the easiest way to access them. Here lies the issue: through the process of editing, information may be interpreted differently than intended, and some information can be left out entirely. With multiple versions of the same journals being edited and printed, the information a reader received can differ significantly from one version to another.

After the expedition, neither Lewis nor Clark published their journals immediately; it would not be until 1814 that the official account of the expedition was published. This is not to say that a book was not published before 1814. Sergeant Patrick Gass published his version of the expedition a few years before Lewis and Clark. In 1807 with the help of a schoolteacher by the name of David McKeehan, his recollection of the expedition was written and published by Zadok Cramer.² This recollection of the expedition is universally agreed upon by historians to be filled with inaccuracies and material that the editor created. The next account of the expedition was prepared by two men, Nicholas Biddle and Paul Allen. Nicholas Biddle was selected for the

¹ Thomas Jefferson, "Jefferson's Instructions to Meriwether Lewis," Thomas Jefferson Foundation, accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson/louisiana-lewis-clark/preparing-for-the-expedition/jefferson-s-instructions-to-lewis/>.

² Virginia Center for Digital History. N.d. "Sergeant Patrick Gass." University of Virginia. http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/lewisandclark/biddle/biographies_html/gass.html

task of editing the journals by none other than William Clark. Biddle began editing the journals but did not finish. He instead asked Paul Allen to complete the work as he focused on his political career. Paul Allen then completed editing the journals and saw the publishing of the two volumes he created. It is important to note that Nicholas Biddle went uncredited in the publishing, and the published version of the journals has come to be known as the Biddle version.³

Although Nicholas Biddle was responsible for the editing of the journals, Paul Allen was instrumental in acquiring some critical aspects of the journals and setting the precedence of the journey. Through his own words in the preface, Allen stated that the story's narrative was created from the copious amounts of material he collected.⁴ He established the romanization of the journey as setting it as an adventure rather than the fact-finding mission it was. As noted in *Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* introduction, "the omission of the scientific findings helped establish a view of the expedition, common to this day, as primarily a romantic adventure."⁵ He left out the large amounts of scientific data and observations made throughout the journey. The addition of this information could have changed the narrative of the trip and the significance of the expedition. However, at the request of Paul Allen, Thomas Jefferson penned the "Memoir of Meriwether Lewis" to include aspects of Meriwether Lewis's life in the publication for those who might read, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, the "narrative of his western discoveries."⁶ Paul Allen did not simply organize the journals into the narrative he was after; he

³ Virginia Center for Digital History. N.d. "Nicholas Biddle." University of Virginia. http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/lewisandclark/biddle/biographies_html/biddle.html

⁴ Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, to the Sources of the Missouri, Thence Across the Rocky Mountains and down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean*, ed Paul Allen (New York: ABM. H. Inskeep, 1814), vol I, iv.

⁵ "Introduction, The Lewis and Clark Expedition, History of the Expedition," Lewis and Clark Journals, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/item/lc.jrn.introduction.general>.

⁶ "Thomas Jefferson to Paul Allen, 18 August 1813," *Founders Online*, National Archives, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0341-0002>.

also hid some material from some readers. Material that might be considered too risky for some readers is published, but in a form that only intellectuals might be able to understand. Sections of journal entries were published in Latin, which wasn't widely spoken by ordinary people.

The "Biddle version" was the first iteration of the journals, so it shaped the narrative; however, each subsequent version of the journals contains multiple additions of information and various entries that were edited by removing information. When comparing the "Biddle version" to the next published version, which Elliott Coues, an academic edited, the difference is immediately apparent. Coues' version is much longer as printed in a four-volume set, whereas the Biddle is only a two-volume set. Before reaching the preface that Biddle initially published, Coues wrote the differences between the two in his introduction. He states that where he amplified a statement or diverted a passage, he indicated it with brackets.⁷ More importantly, he says, "I have prepared new title and synopses of the chapters, and new headlines of the pages; one new chapter is interpolated, by digesting the Clatsop diary for that purpose. Excepting in these several respects, the present edition is literally true to the original. Nothing whatever is omitted." He chose to add more information rather than erase what was already written.

The reason why he may have chosen to add more information rather than to change some of it is because he was an academic who was providing more information on the expedition. He published books on ornithology, mammalogy, and history, including a book on Zebulon M. Pike. His writings at the beginning of each chapter serve as a guide for what happened and what is happening during the expedition. The footnotes explain the broader picture in a journal entry and explain events, actions, or items that may have been used in the passage that are not necessarily

⁷ Lewis, Meriwether, and William Clark, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, to the Sources of the Missouri, Thence Across the Rocky Mountains and down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean*, ed Elliott Coues (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1893) vol I, vii.

written in. His version of the journals presents the reader with a lot more information that Paul Allen could have hoped to put in his version.

The changes did not stop with Elliott Coues; only a few years after printing the Coues' edition, Reuben Thwaites published his eight-volume set. His version of the journals contains more information than the previous two versions; he included a large amount of information on explorations that occurred before the journey across the continent and biographies on both Lewis and Clark. Like Elliott Coues, Reuben Thwaites included valuable information in the footnotes; however, there is one significant difference. He removed material from individual journal entries. The information that he removed was not what was initially written by Lewis or Clark but rather material compiled after the expedition and printed in the Biddle version. Reuben Thwaites does, however, reference many of those passages back to the Biddle version for further context. In one instance, January 5, 1805, the journal entry features sexual acts during a ceremony.⁸ Biddle hides some of the events by writing them in Latin; Coues did the same.⁹ Thwaites, in turn, removed parts of the entry. The footnote says to reference back to the Biddle account for more information on the journal entry.

One has to wonder why the journal entries have been edited to remove content. Why was this version produced only a few years after Coues published his? Reuben Thwaites was a director of the Wisconsin Historical Society in the late 1800s. In 1893 he discovered Sergeant Charles Floyd's journal; with the centennial of the expedition approaching, the American Philosophical Society decided to print the journals. Reuben Thwaites put together his version of the journals but went further and contacted the families of those involved with the expedition in

⁸ Lewis, Meriwether, and William Clark, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806*, ed Reuben Gold Thwaites (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1904) vol I, 244-245.

⁹ Coues, 221, 222.

the hopes of finding more material from the expedition. In 1903 he was able to find the journal belonging to Joseph Whitehouse.¹⁰ With everything he was able to gather, he compiled the journals' definitive version for his time. Removing some of the material may have been to keep the content appropriate; this was when women's suffrage movement was gaining momentum. Whatever the case was, Thwaites compiled more records of the expedition than his two predecessors and created the expedition's definitive version.

A century later, Gary E. Moulton published *The Lewis and Clark Journals* following a grant from the National Endowment for Humanities Division of Public Programs. The grant was issued to complete a bicentennial project. Just as Reuben Thwaites put together a comprehensive collection, Gary E. Moulton did as well. His collection was formatted for the digital age; it allows anyone to access the material from anywhere. Unlike his predecessors, the material is not in Latin, and he removed material from the printed and the online version. The material itself is not part of the original journals but rather material that was added when the Biddle version was published and the subsequent versions that were published. The Moulton version is an accurate representation of the journals; what was published was written during the expedition. The online version provides many footnotes that offer more information and notes what parts of the journals are not necessarily conclusive. On March 25, 1804, Clark wrote a journal entry that is difficult to transcribe. Moulton acknowledged this and stated in a footnote that one of the letters in the word could be a different letter. The word can be an entirely different word as it had a different meaning in a different dialect of English.¹¹

¹⁰ Blessing, Matt. 2004. "Reuben Gold Thwaites and the Historical Resurrection of Lewis & Clark." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 88, no. 2 (Winter): 46-47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4637125>.

¹¹ Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *The Lewis and Clark Journals*. ed Gary E. Moulton. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003). <https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/item/lc.jrn.1804-03-25>.

This version of the journals falls under the same faults as the Thwaites version, and although they contain more information than the Biddle version, it does not include everything included in the Biddle version. Like Thwaites, the journal entry for January 5, 1805, does not include all the information that Biddle included in Latin.¹² Biddle hid some content by printing it in Latin, Coues followed along, Thwaites excluded it, and Moulton followed along. One may think that this may be because of social changes and because of what may have been written, but Moulton only published the actual content of the journals. What he removed was not included in the journals themselves.

Multiple events occurred that can quickly be passed over and not mentioned in books about the expedition. Some of the events are detailed in the journals, and some are not; some of the editors disguised the passages while others left them out. Only through comparing two versions is it possible to see what information was added by an editor. Moulton's version, nothing more than the actual journal entries themselves, serves as a good baseline of knowledge.

The journals have gone through significant changes since their original publishing. This does not mean that they have not had a considerable impact on the way children learn today. In the last few decades, there has been little change in how children are introduced to Lewis and Clark and what they know about the expedition. The effects of the "Biddle version" are still felt today; the expedition's story is that of the romanization of exploration with little to no mention of the notes taken during the expedition.

Modern Representation

In *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, there are many controversial or taboo topics being discussed. As the book is a narrative of the expedition, it would be easy to pass over some details

¹² Moulton, 92-93.

to protect the expedition members or the image of the expedition as a whole. One such fact that is never revealed to students is the topic of the consumption of dog meat. In one notable event, dog meat consumption got to a point where a Nez Perce person threw a puppy at Lewis as a mockery.¹³ The event itself appears in all the journals but could have been avoided in the book. The topic involving the consumption of dog meat is brought up time and time again in the book. National Geographic also mentioned this topic, not as a mention in an article detailing the expedition, but as a standalone detailing a few overlooked facts.¹⁴ Facts like this are not taught in grade schools as they are never mentioned in textbooks. Only in more advanced books and in colleges and universities are facts like this taught. Ronda explains of the expedition, “They serve as a map and guide for life on the American road.”¹⁵ The stories of the expedition serve as a roadmap of an ever-growing country, and it is as if teaching these facts to young students would take away some of the mystique of the expedition and would hurt the reputation of the American heroes and possibly the nation.

The National Geographic Society is a renowned publication that publishes scientific and educational material for children and adults. Using the journals, they too published a children's rendition of the journey.¹⁶ The article reads like an adventure story. For example, "Suddenly a violent storm moved in, it pelted the area with snow and hail. The men didn't turn back, though. Instead, they hunkered down and spent the next five months here preparing for the trip they were about to embark on, in which poor weather would be one of the many dangers they'd face."¹⁷ The

¹³ James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 222.

¹⁴ Anthony Brandt, “Sex, Dog Meat, and the Lash: Odd Facts About Lewis and Clark,” National Geographic, December 7, 2003, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/article/lewis-clark-expedition-history>.

¹⁵ Ronda, James P. 2013. “Why Lewis and Clark Matter.” Smithsonian Magazine, April 28, 2021. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-lewis-and-clark-matter-87847931/>

¹⁶ National Geographic Kids. N.d. “Lewis and Clark.” National Geographic, Accessed April 3, 2021. <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/lewis-and-clark>.

¹⁷ National Geographic Kids, “Lewis and Clark.”

article romanticizes the expedition as an adventure and overlooks the scientific data that was collected. It can be argued that because the article contains little information because it is meant for young children; however, articles intended for older children do no better when recounting the expedition.

McDougal Littell is one of the largest publishers of school textbooks in the country. Their approach to teaching about Lewis and Clark is to keep it vague and highlight key events. In their textbooks, only the route the expedition took, major tribes encountered, and some important dates are highlighted. One individual who is always stressed and mentioned by name in the textbooks that was not discussed very much in the journals is Sacagawea. She is mentioned in *America's Past and Promise*, *Creating America, A History of the United States*, *The Americans: Reconstruction through the 20th Century*, and *United States History + Geography* textbooks that were produced by McDougal Littell and McGraw Hill. One may argue that as time passes by, the amount of information that is presented will increase and that the importance of Sacagawea's contribution to the expedition will be taught. This does not appear to be the case.

America's Past and Promise is a middle school textbook published by McDougal Littell in 1997. In it, seven pages are dedicated to exploring the West; of those seven pages, only three pages are devoted to Lewis and Clark. In those few pages, very little is mentioned about the actual events of the expedition. A mention is made of the notes, observations, and discoveries that were made; they are nothing more than a side note.¹⁸ Sacajawea does not fare any better; she is only mentioned in passing. This is not the case in future publications.

Creating America, A History of the United States is another McDougal Littell middle school textbook published in 2001. This textbook did not do better at explaining the expedition;

¹⁸ McDougal Littell, *Americas Past and Promise* (Evanston: McDougal Littell, 1997), 323.

it romanticized the expedition as an adventure. It briefly mentioned the two captains' backgrounds and their role in the expedition; it barely mentions the scientific notes and observations that were taken. The wealth of knowledge that was brought back was reduced to one line in the book, "The Lewis and Clark expedition brought back a wealth of scientific and geographic information."¹⁹ In a side note, it states, "Lewis and Clark kept beautiful journals that provided priceless information about the West."²⁰ Sacajawea receives more attention in this book, but it reduced her to being a woman with a child whose language and knowledge could be of great value.²¹

A book published in 2001 did nothing to change the notion of the Lewis and Clark expedition being a romanticized expedition across an unknown land. *The Americans: Reconstruction through the 20th Century*, a high school textbook published in 2003, did far worse at talking about the expedition. Whereas books like *America's Past and Promise*, a book published several years before had multiple pages of information, *The Americans: Reconstruction through the 20th Century* reduced the amount of information down to just two paragraphs and a map. It noted Sacajawea as an interpreter and a guide and highlighted essential dates along with a map but failed at explaining the purpose of the expedition other than being an expedition to get to the Pacific coast.²²

Switching to a different publisher does not yield different results. McGraw Hill published *United States History + Geography* in 2019, a high school textbook; it did not better explain the Lewis and Clark expedition, what was discovered, or much information on events that occurred

¹⁹ McDougal Littell, *Creating America A History of the United States* (Evanston: McDougal Littell, 2001), 322.

²⁰ McDougal Littell, *Creating America A History of the United States*, 322.

²¹ McDougal Littell, *Creating America A History of the United States*, 321.

²² McDougal Littell, *The Americans: Reconstruction through the 20th Century* (Evanston: McDougal Littell, 2002), 120, 121.

during the expedition. It does, however, include more details of Sacagawea's background, such as her being the daughter of a Shoshone chief,²³ and talks more about how she contributed to the expedition.

The argument can be made that big publishing companies need to keep books to a specific size, and they have a lot of information to cover, so they need to keep events short. *U.S. History*, a university-published textbook, should contain more information and go in-depth into such an important journey using that logic. Information on the tasks that the expedition set out to accomplish is expanded on; some of the actions the expedition took are mentioned in greater detail than the previously mentioned textbooks, as well as the role Sacagawea played in the expedition. Unlike the previous textbooks, her role is not romanticized. Information on her is more forthcoming as it explains how her presence and the presence of her infant demonstrated that the expedition was not a war party.²⁴ The textbook also brings up an important legend that is taught to children as a fact. Sacagawea was a child when she was kidnapped; she most likely did not "guide" the expedition across the Montana wilderness like school children are taught today. This textbook is not the first published material to question what students are taught.

Laura Le Roux points this out in her article *Sacajawea vs. Charbonneau*. In it, she states, "The Lewis and Clark expedition in its novelistic form amplifies her role, giving her a prominence that competes even with that of the captains. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Sacajawea was given the elevated status of an Indian princess."²⁵ Sacajawea was not heavily featured in the journals, yet her contribution to the expedition as an interpreter and guide is almost universally accepted. Kevin Blake also highlights this and notes the changing

²³ McGraw Hill, *United States History + Geography* (Columbus: McGraw Hill, 2019), 295.

²⁴ Rice University, *U.S. History* (Ann Arbor: XanEdu Publishing, 2014), 11.1.

²⁵ Knowlton-Le Roux, Laura, 2006. "Sacajawea vs. Charbonneau", *Transatlantica*, 1, (March). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/transatlantica.300>.

interpretations of the journals. In his article *Great Plains Native American Representations Along the Lewis and Clark Trail* he states, "Changing interpretations of the Lewis and Clark Expedition reflect changes in society, such as the increasing interest in Sacagawea concurrent with women's movement."²⁶ This is important as what students learn about the expedition changes along with what is acceptable with society and what is printed in the journals.

What's Next?

There have been calls to change how students learn, and there is a growing trend of doing precisely that. The National Middle School Association highlighted that learning should include "independently gathering, assess, and interpret information from a variety of sources; and using digital tools to explore, communicate, and collaborate."²⁷ By allowing students to interpret information for themselves, it is possible to overcome biases and overlook changes in the material that may be unwarranted. Many schools have stepped away from using textbooks and allowing teachers to use texts and materials more freely. Project-based learning is becoming more popular as students are being encouraged to make decisions for themselves. James Hendrix talks about the romanization of the expedition and its importance to the American people. In 30 years, the country had fought for independence, ratified two constitutions, struggled to reestablish a viable economy, saw the rise of political parties, so what the young country celebrated in the formative years was "often more illusory than real."²⁸ Looking past the

²⁶ Blake, Kevin S. 2004. "Great Plains Native American Representations Along the Lewis and Clark Trail." *Great Plains Quarterly* 24, no. 4: 263-282, <https://colorado.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/great-plains-native-american-representations/docview/763150247/se-2?accountid=14503>.

²⁷ Waring, Scott M., and Cicely Scheiner-Fisher. 2005. "Using SOURCES to Allow Digital Natives to Explore the Lewis and Clark Expedition," *Middle School Journal* 45: no. 4 (August): 3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2014.11461891>.

²⁸ Hendrix, James P., J.R. 2001. "A New Vision of America Lewis and Clark and the Emergence of the American Imagination." *Great Plains Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Summer): 211-32. <https://colorado.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/new-vision-america-lewis-clark-emergence-american/docview/762462790/se-2?accountid=14503>.

romanization of the expedition and exploring the facts can allow students and society to end the expedition's romanization as a journey and see it for the fact-finding mission that it was.

Conclusion

The Lewis and Clark journals are not perfect; depending on which version is being viewed, information differs. Each editor has made changes to their published version affecting how people view the expedition. Biddle gave us the romanticized narrative of the expedition, Moulton gave us the actual journal entries as they were written, while textbooks today only partially mention the expedition. As society has changed, editors made changes to reflect that change. This gave Sacajawea a rise in popularity and importance in later versions of the journals. Today students learn a broad picture of the romanticized expedition and do not include topics that may be taboo. Just as the journals went through changes, the way students learn is also going through changes. Calls to reform how students learn are leading towards allowing teachers to step away from textbooks and have them look at the facts and make decisions for themselves.

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Religious Reasoning: Free and Enslaved African American Perceptions of the Civil War

Connor Siruta

To any contemporary political observer, the civil strife in the years leading up to the Civil War was apparent. Abolitionists became increasingly radical, and some advocated for more violent means to help slaves, as evidence by the John Brown-led insurrection attempt at Harper's Ferry. Arguably, this radicalization increased after the Supreme Court strengthened slavers' rights in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*.¹ Southerners doubled down on an institution they viewed as a God- and Constitution-given right as they saw the North encroaching on their way of life more and more as the years went on. Once the war began, it was framed by the South as a fight to protect slavery. For the North, it was about keeping the nation together. This narrative, although correct in this context, overlooks the views of those most affected, African Americans.

Throughout the Civil War era, free and enslaved African Americans held various views of the war, often in explicitly religious terms, that are often overlooked. It is likely that many free Blacks prayed that the war was a nation beginning to correct its failings from its national ideals. For many slaves, the war was God's will to finally free them. Yet these categories still overlook the many complexities in the differences of views on the Civil War between free and enslaved Blacks, as well as within these groups. In this paper, I will argue that enslaved and free Blacks viewed the Civil War through religious terms (or a lack thereof) with some overlap, but in distinct ways from 1863 and before.

¹ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 19 393. (Supreme Court 1857)

A comparative account of religious views held by African Americans regarding the Civil War 1863 and prior is needed for a few significant reasons. There is a rich literature, mostly produced in more recent years, on the African American community during the Civil War. However, explicit comparative accounts between the two groups are lacking. The result is that the community is often treated as one voice, its own monolithic thing. This continues to happen today and, I would argue, is in large part due to historical pieces treating African Americans as one voice. Additionally, slave religion especially is often overlooked, left uncontextualized or not elaborated on. There seems to be a common perception that enslaved African Americans let go of all previous religious beliefs, such as superstition or vodou, when Christian missionaries began their proselytizing of slaves. While Christianity was important to enslaved perceptions of the Civil War, it is evident that these other religious views did not simply disappear. Because free Blacks were able to produce a more extensive record, their views dominated the narrative, despite them having been an extreme minority of the Black population at the time. Christianity, thus, tends to be over emphasized. This essay focuses on the year of 1863 and prior in part to keep the topic manageable. More importantly, the years chosen also allow us to see how the war was seen in its early stages. It is likely that the war took on a different meaning to many, free or enslaved, African Americans as the novelty of the Emancipation Proclamation wore off and as the war ground on. By focusing on the earliest years, when the Union's reach into the South was still relatively constrained, the clarity of religious distinctions will be more pronounced.

There are a variety of sources employed in this paper, though not without their challenges. Religious views on the Civil War from slaves come mainly from the WPA Slave Narratives, a federal project that was part of the New Deal. The obvious concern with these is that they were compiled decades after the war, meaning a reader must be careful in applying

opinions from these interviews to a specific time period. In many instances, a respondent gives an overarching view on the war. There are cases in which I retroject these views into how they viewed the war in the beginning when I believe it is justified. Additionally, the interviewees were at the mercy of the interviewers. It was very evident that interviewers from many states were Confederate-biased, such as South Carolina, where questions regarding the “goodness” of the masters were prevalent. Other, more subtle biases are present throughout and the way in which interviewers wrote down how the formerly enslaved spoke points to other general problems. I nonetheless quote directly from the WPA records to avoid mis-transcribing from the text. Unfortunately, because of the extremely low literacy rates and ever-present power of the Southern slave regime, contemporary accounts by slaves are hard to come by. However, slave songs provide a very useful lens in exploring slaves’ religious views in the context of the war in their own, unadulterated words.

Sources from free Blacks are much more accessible, though there are issues here as well. Mainly, discourse of the Civil War from a freed perspective has long been dominated by Frederick Douglass. One only needs to look at Black newspapers from the time, whereby *The Christian Recorder* of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was the only one not edited by Frederick Douglass. To counter this, I also use letters or correspondences from Northern soldiers to get a more ground-level view of the Civil War. *The Christian Recorder* was employed for a similar purpose. Regardless, the views of Douglass are widely important to free views on the war and are thus discussed in depth. In sum, the differences in sources allow for an effective comparison between the religious views of free and enslaved African Americans and reflect the different beginnings and development of religious thought between the two groups.

Pre-War Development of Enslaved Religion

Religion of enslaved African Americans was far from static and is an understandably complicated topic to discuss. It has been argued by previous scholars that the religious rites of African slaves did not take hold in what would become the United States like it did in other regions, such as Haiti or Brazil.² Though it may not have taken root as strongly, this assertion is largely false. The conversion of slaves was mostly frowned upon until the first Great Awakening in the 1740s.³ Many contemporary observers wrote about what they described as “pagan” and “African” religious rituals, generally described as dancing or shouting, in their Christian worship.⁴ Additionally, the practice of vodou was present in the Antebellum South to a rather significant degree. While it was largest in New Orleans, in part due to the Haitian migration to the area, practices of vodou were observed in areas such as Missouri and Mississippi.⁵ It is evident that old African influences were present up to the Civil War in other regions as well. A former slave from South Carolina, Govan Littlejohn, discussed having been conjured, meaning he had had a spirit set on him, by a “conjunction [of] pins, feathers, and something else” tied up in a bag. To cure it, his mother ran water over the conjuring object.⁶ In Missouri, a former slave, George Bollinger, described how his father “cud break a ‘Hoodoo’ spell, an’ cud tell things” that had happened when he was not present.⁷ The presence of these beliefs at the dawn of the Civil War demonstrates that these ‘superstitious’ non-Christian beliefs were still important to slaves and were paramount to their perceptions of the war. However, conversion efforts were eventually

² Albert J Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 52.

³ *Ibid.*, *Slave Religion*, 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *Slave Religion*, 66-67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Slave Religion*, 80-81.

⁶ Govan Littlejohn, interview by Caldwell Sims, *WPA Slave Narratives*, South Carolina Jackson-Quattlebaum, June 14, 1937.

⁷ George Bollinger, interview by Mollie Smith, *WPA Slave Narratives*, Missouri Abbot-Younger, 1937.

brought to plantation life in the South with an increasing authoritarianism and, as a result, a rather substantial Christian community was present among the slaves whereby folk beliefs were renounced or co-opted⁸. Nonetheless, Christian views among the slaves were a recurring theme in how they viewed the war as well.

Pre-War Development of Free Black Religion

The development of Christianity among African Americans in the North, where freedom would come both earlier and to a wider extent, was markedly different from religious development among the slaves. In large part, this is due to the different initial conditions of Northern slaves, and later the free Black community. For example, Jared Ross Hardesty found that slaves in Boston in the 18th century were able to use their labor skills and workplace conditions to shape some of their general life conditions and argue for redress to wrongdoings in more formalized ways.⁹ It is likely that since much of the North depended on specialized labor like Boston, these results were relatively commonplace throughout the region. As such, religious institutions followed a similar path. William Gravely discussed the rise of Black denominational churches in the early United States. He found that there were many moments where Black leaders were denied the right to form independent churches and would find ways to challenge the white power behind these rulings.¹⁰ Oftentimes, this took place through state court systems.¹¹ Arguably, this tactic was a manifestation of the autonomy Black laborers fought for in the early days of the Northern colonies. Because of this, some Black denominations had a significant institutional independence that allowed for other political and social developments within the

⁸ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 209.

⁹ Jared Ross Hardesty, "The Negro at the Gate: Enslaved Labor in 18th Century Boston," *The New England Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (2014): 97.

¹⁰ William Gravely, "The Rise of African Churches in America (1786-1822): Reexamining the Contexts." *Journal of Religious Thought* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, "The Rise of African Churches," 67.

free community.¹² Indeed, themes of religiosity regarding the war from free Blacks are prevalent. However, their experience and success in other, more secular aspects of society allowed for non-religious justifications for the war when the time came.

War Time Enslaved Christianity

Traditionally, discussions on slaves' religious views about the war have focused on the Old Testament. While in the past this has caused scholars to overlook other religious aspects, an emphasis on the Old Testament thought among slaves is justified, as it was a very prevalent theme in their views on the war. Specifically, the story of Exodus, whereby Moses led the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt, was the most intensive area of focus in the Old Testament, for rather intuitive reasons. The Reverend W.B. Allen of Georgia, a slave at the time of the Civil War, played on this vein of thought. In response to his master asking him to pray for the Confederates, he said that he could not and that he believed God was using the Yankees to "scourge the slave-holders" as He had done for the Israelites.¹³ Allen mentioned that he said this in 1865, though he also stated that he had been praying for much longer. This points to the likelihood that he held these views throughout the war. There were also instances of slaves using Exodus by seeing contemporary figures as Moses or Moses-like. Mary Colbert, another former slave in Georgia, described Abraham Lincoln as a servant of God, sent to free the slaves.¹⁴ In Missouri, Lou Griffin described how Abraham Lincoln had visited the South to "how de Rebs do de slaves" and that the Lord ended slavery after that point.¹⁵ In both of these instances, it is evident that they were invoking the theme of Moses through their descriptions of Lincoln. In

¹² Kyle T Bulthuis, "The Difference Denominations Made: Identifying the Black Church(Es) and Black Religious Choices of the Early Republic." *Religion and American Culture : R & AC* 29, no. 2 (Summer, 2019): 275.

¹³ W.B. Allen, interview by J.R. Jones, *WPA Slave Narratives*, Georgia Adams-Furr, June 29, 1937.

¹⁴ Mary Hall, interview by Sadie B. Hornsby, *WPA Slave Narratives*, Georgia Adams-Furr, 1937.

¹⁵ Lou Griffin, *WPA Slave Narratives*, Missouri Abbot-Younger, 1936-1938.

both, he was an agent of God to serve divine justice. As Union boats moved down the Mississippi corridor, more slaves saw their prayers for freedom come to fruition. One slave woman (name not given) remarked that the Lord she had seen and that set them free was the same “that led the children of Israel” out of bondage and through the Red Sea.¹⁶ Most explicitly, slaves’ views on the Exodus story are evident through their praise of Harriet Tubman, dubbed the “Moses of her people” for literally leading slaves out of bondage on the Underground Railroad. The story of Exodus was very prominent in slaves’ religious views of the war, as it provided an easy Biblical story to superimpose on their own situation.

Other general Christian views were also very evident in songs from the era. Many songs were sung on the plantation before the war and invoked themes of freedom. However, many were created during the war, or reappropriated when the war started. For example, some enslaved persons in South Carolina were arrested at the beginning of the war for singing a song saying, “We’ll soon be free, When de Lord will call us home (...) We’ll soon be free, When Jesus sets me free.”¹⁷ Susie King Taylor described a similar scene with her grandmother. In response to Southern whites demonizing Yankee soldiers, Taylor’s grandmother and others would sing “Yes, we all shall be free, When the Lord shall appear,” with Lord replacing Yankee to avoid more severe punishment than imprisonment.¹⁸ The use of Lord in substitute of Yankee was not only a way to remain covert, but probably a demonstration of perceived divine intervention on behalf of the enslaved population as well. A traveler had heard a song asking “Fader Abraham”

¹⁶ Andrew Ward, *The Slaves' War: The Civil War in the Words of Former Slaves*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2008), 110.

¹⁷ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 248.

¹⁸ Susie King Taylor, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops, Late 1st South Carolina Volunteers*. (Boston, 1902): 8.

to go into the South and tell Jefferson Davis to let the slaves go.¹⁹ Very early on, songs were used to make sure people knew what the Civil War signified to slaves.

Reappropriated songs were used in a similar way. One example was “Roll, Jordan, Roll,” likely most well-known for its use in the film *12 Years a Slave*. “Roll, Jordan, Roll” was a plantation song for many years prior to the war, often sung at funerals. However, there are accounts of slaves singing the song in the Sea Islands of South Carolina during the Civil War.²⁰ The song’s significance before the war was arguably rooted in the spiritual crossing into heaven that the River Jordan is associated with. After the war began, though, the meaning potentially played on the Book of Joshua, where Joshua led the Israelites across the river into the Land of Israel, a story that is easy to superimpose on their situation. Regardless of what specific event surrounding the River Jordan was preferred, enslaved people obviously saw it as important enough to use in the context of the Civil War, even though that was not the original purpose of the song. In short, slave songs were used to level “controversial claims about slavery, race, and the war,” advocating for their freedom and status as God’s chosen people.²¹ More significantly, slaves took control of the narrative of what the war meant to them long before the Emancipation Proclamation was in consideration.

Enslaved Non-Christian Religion

Of course, Christian views were not the only religious terms enslaved people used to think about the war. Superstitious rationalizations of the Civil War were especially prevalent to describe the immediate build up to the war. Views described as ‘superstitious,’ used here to describe views that cannot be labeled neatly into Christian beliefs, are often overlooked in

¹⁹ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 249.

²⁰ Michael C. Cohen, "Contraband Singing: Poems and Songs in Circulation during the Civil War." *American Literature* 82, no. 2 (2010): 285-286.

²¹ Cohen, "Contraband Singing," 272.

contemporary discourse. The distinctions between Christianity and superstition were not so neat in the enslaved population, as Christian slaves would often “appropriate and baptize magical lore” from older traditions.²² The blurred lines between the two can sometimes be seen in slaves’ memories. For example, Dora Jackson recalled that her mother and some other women saw guns and swords streak across the “firmament,” the separation of the heavens from Earth, and they knew that meant war was coming.²³ The mention of the firmament is likely a Christian reference, though the streaking of symbols across the sky is more of what many would call superstitious. Many views, however, were clearly non-Christian in their entirety. Marshal Butler of Georgia recounted how he believed he knew war was coming, saying “I’se saw a red cloud in de west in 1860” and at that moment, he knew that war was brewing.²⁴ Richard Mack of South Carolina talked about seeing a comet as he heard talk about the potential beginning of the war.²⁵ Interestingly enough, another enslaved man, Frank Patterson, also described seeing a comet, stating “I saw the elements all red as blood, and I saw after that a great comet” that signaled war.²⁶ Many of these views clearly had an emphasis on the cosmos or sky. These sorts of revelations were probably the only ones that could show the severity of the events to come, and enslaved people wished to reflect this. Many enslaved people saw the Civil War, or the coming of it, through terms that were not strictly or at all Christian based. Overall, there are near-countless mentions of some sort of attribution to God or other spiritual powers that enslaved people thought in. They simply cannot all be discussed given the brevity of the context discussed here, but the above mentions are meant to give a general idea of the kinds of terms enslaved

²² Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 287.

²³ Ward, *The Slave’s War*, 7.

²⁴ Marshal Butler, Interview by Joseph E. Jaffee, *WPA Slave Narratives*, Georgia Adams-Furr, May 8, 1937.

²⁵ Richard Mack, Interview by Martha S. Pinckney, *WPA Slave Narratives*, South Carolina Jackson-Quattlebaum, 1937.

²⁶ Ward, *The Slave’s War*, 7.

people thought in. Additionally, many people overlook the countless individuals in bondage who could not practice Christianity on their own terms. By some estimates, perhaps as few as one quarter of slaves in the lead up to the Civil War were Christian.²⁷ This suggests a possibility that there was a substantive population that swore off belief systems as a whole. In the WPA Slave Narratives, the lack of religious mentions by a significant portion of respondents is supporting evidence of the above point. Similarly, many respondents mentioned joining church or finding the Lord after the war. To a large degree, this would be the simple result of their inability, at the hands of the slave regime, to join a formal church. Yet it could also suggest enslaved people were not willing to listen to Christian preachers while they were enslaved, either as a sort of resistance or a realization of the hypocrisy of self-avowed Christian slavers. Nonetheless, more studies on this topic could certainly be helpful.

Free Black Secularism and Justifications

Free Black religion was rooted in more formal and independent mechanisms and institutions. Because of the way their religious institutions developed, free African Americans were able to develop more institutionally formal ways to think outside of religion. The result is a high prevalence of secularism in their views of the war. This is best evidenced by Frederick Douglass, undeniably the most prolific free Black political and social actor at the time of the Civil War. In large part, Douglass thought in very non-religious ways. That is not to say he was not religious at any point in his life. Many scholars argue that Douglass was religious earlier in his life and became less so as time went on.²⁸ Indeed, there are some religious themes evident in his work before the Civil War on the issue of slavery, such as his speech on the Dred Scott

²⁷ Christopher Cameron, *Black Freethinkers: A History of African American Secularism*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019): 17.

²⁸ Cameron, *Black Freethinkers*, 26.

decision. Douglass stated that Judge Roger Taney could do many things, but the Supreme Court was not as strong as the Supreme Court of the Almighty and that it was against God's will to uphold the institution of slavery.²⁹ Clearly, Douglass had religious convictions at this time. However, his mentions of liberty throughout show that he was thinking in other ways as well. These more secular views would come through heavily once the war started.

In the earliest days of the war, Douglass's religious views appeared to be much less present. He gave his views on how the war should be ended, and his solution was Emancipation must be accomplished and African Americans needed to be able to fight for their freedom.³⁰ This must be done, he argued, for justice, humanity, and wisdom. The lack of religious imagery or justification is telling. His secular views become even more explicit in later works concerning the war. After Emancipation, Douglass turned his attention to trying to recruit Black soldiers for the war. In Rochester, he gave a speech, later redistributed as a pamphlet, titled "MEN OF COLOR, TO ARMS!" In it, he beseeched free Blacks to participate in the war effort. Douglass focuses heavily on themes of secular ideals. For example, he argued that liberty won for Blacks by white soldiers only would diminish the accomplishment greatly.³¹ As such, they must fight for it to make sure it is more thorough. Douglass stated that free Blacks should fight in the Massachusetts regiments, as the state had the best civil rights record in the Union.³² Black soldiers had the chance to secure freedom and achieve equality in the eyes of the law throughout the nation, the reasoning went. While Douglass did bring in some brief religious imagery into

²⁹ Frederick Douglass, *The Dred Scott Decision May 14, 1857*. Speech. 2018. From University of Rochester, *Frederick Douglass Project*. <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4399>.

³⁰ Frederick Douglass, "How to End the War." *Douglass Monthly*. May 1861. From University of Rochester, *Frederick Douglass Project*. <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4373>.

³¹ Frederick Douglass, *Men of Color, To Arms!* March 21, 1863. Speech/Pamphlet. 2018. From University of Rochester, *Frederick Douglass Project*. <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4372>.

³² Douglass, *MEN OF COLOR, TO ARMS!*, University of Rochester.

this speech, such as calling previous leaders of slave uprisings martyrs, these paled in comparison to the rest of his secular themes. Religious views about the war are essentially non-existent a month later in his article “Why Should a Colored Man Enlist” from his *Douglass Monthly* paper. In this, he argued that Black men should enlist in the army to prove their manhood, their courage and self-respect, and secure their citizenship and liberties.³³ This article is focused on serving the Union as an entity with no mentions of Christian themes or service to God. This was common in much of Douglass’s thoughts on the war and occurred at a higher prevalence among free Blacks as a whole.

Unexpectedly, secular concerns in the war were even present from writers at *The Christian Recorder*, the mouthpiece of the famed African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The paper issue published immediately after the war started contained an article announcing the beginning of the war. The author gave reasons for the war beginning that included a power struggle between the two parties and disagreements over what to do with the Territories of the United States.³⁴ This article did mention how God does not look kindly on those who break their oaths, in this case to uphold the Union, but this was not a religious justification or rationalization of the war itself. Another article the next week discussed how after their duty to God, Black citizens had a duty to their country. This duty was to fight the South to maintain the Union in perpetuity and to maintain the sanctity of the Constitution.³⁵ The author of this article believed that there were times Christianity impelled Christians to war. While one could argue that this was a religious justification for the war, the author also differentiated between their duty to God and

³³Frederick Douglass, “Why Should a Colored Man Enlist?” *Douglass Monthly*. April 1863.

From University of Rochester, *Frederick Douglass Project*. <https://rbsep.lib.rochester.edu/4396>.

³⁴ “WAR! WAR! WAR!” *Christian Recorder*. Apr. 20, 1861. From Christian Recorder, *Accessible Archives*.

³⁵ “Better Than Peace.” *Christian Recorder*. Apr. 27, 1861. From Christian Recorder, *Accessible Archives*.

their duty to the country. As such, their reasons for the war are the secular ones listed above. Among Northern soldiers, secular themes were present as well. Corporal James Henry Gooding was a soldier of the infamous Massachusetts 54th Regiment (for its assault on the Battery Wagner and subsequent national recognition of Black soldiers) and documented his time there to a remarkable degree through his letters. In one of his letters, earlier in the days of the formation of the regiment, Gooding noted the lack of soldiers coming in and admonished “loud orators” who appealed to the patriotic sentiments of free Blacks and had yet to show up.³⁶ He stated he wished to see more people prove those who state that colored men do not know what is good for them wrong. Corporal Gooding argued for the regiment’s manhood at multiple battles in July of 1863,³⁷ reflecting the manhood theme in Douglass’s appeals for Black men to enlist in the war effort. An unknown soldier of the 55th Massachusetts Volunteers stated that Black soldiers acted with “as purely patriotic motives” as any other white soldier and had performed their duties as admirably.³⁸ It should be noted that this letter was written in January of 1864, though this soldier was reflecting on events and battles from 1863. Also, a *Christian Recorder* writer wrote that many of the soldiers at a camp they were visiting appeared more interested in their duty to the country than to the demands of their religion and God.³⁹ To a great degree, there were many free African Americans who were more concerned with a sense of national duty instead of a Christian one. Despite these secular reasons, religious themes were certainly present as well.

³⁶ James Henry Gooding, *On the Altar of Freedom: A Black Soldier's Civil War Letters from the Front*. Edited by Virginia M. McPherson. (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1991): 15 .

³⁷ Ibid., *On the Altar of Freedom*, 38.

³⁸ Noah A., Trudeau, *Voices of the 55th: Letters from the 55th Massachusetts Volunteers, 1861-1865*. (Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1996): 57.

³⁹ Mary Manley, “A Visit to the Soldiers’ Camp.” *Christian Recorder*. Aug. 21, 1862. From *Christian Recorder, Accessible Archives*.

Free Black Religious Justification

While some writers of *The Christian Recorder* did indeed use secular justifications for the Civil War, the AME Church unsurprisingly had writers who thought in terms of Christianity. One writer stated that God would not stop his plagues and afflictions on the nation until slavery and inequality were ended.⁴⁰ The view that God was directly involved in the sufferings of the nation is clearly reflected with these lines. Another writer documented the arrival of more Black soldiers into a processing area. This writer was reminded of a poem with the lines “We are coming, Father Abraham - three hundred thousand more.”⁴¹ The view that Black soldiers were agents of God was reflected among soldiers themselves as well. For example, I. H. Welch of the 55th Massachusetts Volunteers wrote in a letter that he and his regiment were soldiers and men (reflecting the manhood theme once more) of God, and God blessed them in their efforts against the South.⁴² Another writer for *The Christian Recorder* implored Northerners to trust in God as the South invaded Pennsylvania and that the North must do all the “patriotism and religion demand” in service of God and Country.⁴³ Despite Christian themes having been woven throughout much of free Black views on the war, secular views still find places in their writings. Harriet Tubman, one of the great figures in America’s rich history, also had heavy religious views on the war. I have included Tubman within the free African American community because of her young age at the time of escape from bondage. After that moment, she had years as a free individual to develop her religious views under her own accord. Unfortunately, Tubman was a

⁴⁰ H.M.T. “Washington Correspondence.” *Christian Recorder*. Aug. 25, 1862. From Christian Recorder, *Accessible Archives*.

⁴¹ Cerebus. “Washington Correspondence.” *Christian Recorder*. Aug. 30, 1862. From The Christian Recorder, *Accessible Archives*.

⁴² Trudeau, *Voices of the 55th*, 40-41.

⁴³ Moravian. “The War.” *Christian Recorder*. Sept. 27, 1862. From The Christian Recorder, *Accessible Archives*.

relatively stoic figure who left little in the way of letters or personal communications. At times, one must infer her views based on actions. There were moments, however, where she gave explicit views. For example, Tubman remarked that God would not allow Lincoln to achieve victory in the war until he freed the slaves.⁴⁴ Harriet Tubman, as mentioned earlier, was referred to as the Moses of her people, a nickname she was fond of and one that continued through the war. Indeed, her religiosity was so deep she claimed to have had visions and to have spoken to God. Some contemporaries viewed her as fanatical or crazy, the result of a brutal childhood injury at the hands of her master. Nonetheless, her deep religiosity demonstrates its prevalence among free Blacks. Additionally, she was fond of John Brown,⁴⁵ who as stated was a deeply religious veteran of the “Bloody Kansas” battles who viewed the destruction of the war in explicitly religious terms. While Tubman herself did not herself give explicitly religious views in this sense, it seems reasonable to assume she was fond of Brown’s views because their religious justifications overlapped to some degree. One can clearly see that Christian rationalizations and views on the Civil War were present among many free Black figures of the time, anywhere from journalists and soldiers to “General Harriet Tubman.”

Comparisons Between Religious Views

The similarities and differences in religious views between free and enslaved communities are many. One of the main similarities are the Old Testament views expressed, which were widely present among the enslaved population, but also used fairly frequently among free Blacks. For instance, references to Black soldiers as agents of God or marching for Abraham are reflecting the belief that God is using them to free an enslaved people, much like the

⁴⁴ James A. McGowan, and William C. Kashatus, *Harriet Tubman: A Biography*. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011): 98.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, *Harriet Tubman: A Biography*, 80

Israelites were freed by divine intervention. The mentions of afflictions sent by God by both free and enslaved African Americans is a further overlap of Christian views on the war. However, where free Blacks saw themselves as explicit agents of God, slaves tended to see the war as a whole, rather than specific manifestations of the war, as God's will. Additionally, superstitious views among free Blacks were not observed in the sources I used, in contrast to a significant prevalence among the enslaved population. Many Northern missionaries who moved into occupied territories tended to look down on these views of slaves. Furthermore, even where free Blacks expressed Christian themes on the Civil War, it still tended to be infused with explicit secular concerns. Themes of God and country, rather than the two having been combined, was frequent. And while some enslaved people had probably renounced Christianity or did not view the war in those terms, explicit secular views on the war were not present to a great degree in the sources for enslaved African Americans.

Emancipation Proclamation

Further comparisons can be drawn in reactions to the Emancipation Proclamation. Frederick Douglass, while ultimately happy there was progress in the issue, was quick to point out the slow moving nature of it (Emancipation was announced months before it would be implemented), as well as the fact that slaves would continue to have to live in bondage.⁴⁶ Harriet Tubman was to have remarked that she could not celebrate Emancipation, as she had had her celebrations years earlier and could not do so anymore.⁴⁷ However, many slaves celebrated the "great jubilee" that commenced with the announcement.⁴⁸ Many slaves, or recently freed ones, felt that they had a legitimate sense of humanity for the first time of their lives. This stands in

⁴⁶ Frederick Douglass, "Emancipation Proclaimed." *Douglass Monthly*. October 1862. From University of Rochester, *Frederick Douglass Project*. <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4406>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, *The Slave's War*, 109.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, *The Slave's War*, 108-109.

contrast to the relative cynical views of Tubman and Douglass during the event. However, there were many Northern Blacks who were very joyous with the occasion as well. In the Port Royal area of South Carolina, a massive celebration took place with freed people and Northern Blacks. It was remarked that the “Year of Jubilee has come!”, and that there was a great patriotic celebration among the formerly enslaved.⁴⁹ The Jubilee theme was common, another instance where it was easy to use the Bible in their own life experiences. In the Book of Leviticus, the Israelites are finally freed from bondage and their land is given to them. There is no difficulty in seeing why the theme of jubilee was brought up after Emancipation. It was brought up again in *The Christian Recorder*, with one writer describing the Proclamation as a God ordained event that commenced the Jubilee throughout the world.⁵⁰ It is evident that many African Americans, free and enslaved, saw the Emancipation Proclamation as a momentous occasion. While those like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, who had been so deeply involved in the abolitionist movement for decades prior to the war, may have been somewhat dissatisfied with it, and Lincoln as a whole, this did not appear to be a widely held view.

Conclusion

The religious views of the Black population concerning the Civil War were far from monolithic and simple. Enslaved people are often thought of as deeply Christian. While there were certainly many Christian slaves, this has been overrepresented in our main sources of enslaved thought, those being the WPA Slave Narratives. Popular culture and the general discourse solidify these Christian-oriented perceptions as well. Scholars and the general public

⁴⁹ Kathleen Ann Clark, “The Vanguard of Liberty Must Look into the Past” in *Defining Moments : African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005): 23.

⁵⁰ H.M.T. “Washington Correspondence.” *Christian Recorder*. Jan. 4, 1863. From Christian Recorder, *Accessible Archives*.

must remember that superstitious views were prevalent, as was a lack of religiosity. In all, religion was undeniably and remarkably important to the war effort, with some arguing that slave religion was one of the reasons slaves were so effectively able to uprising at the time of the Civil War.⁵¹ But it is paramount that we remember these were not the only ones held and must look between the lines at times to get a better sense of the views held by enslaved African Americans. Free views of the war have tended to be overrepresented by Frederick Douglass, who was overall concerned with non-religious reasoning. While secularism is an important facet of free Black views on the war, it was shown that there were deep religious convictions held by them as well. Most significantly, the differences explored in this paper all point to the fact that understanding the various religious and secular views, both within and between the two communities, is necessary to gaining a holistic understanding of Black engagement in the Civil War. As mentioned, the lack of this approach has led to the African American community being treated as some simplified entity. The result is a tragic lack of understanding that, for all the shared experiences of the Black community, there have always been diverse experiences and perspectives within it. Given that most people's experiences with learning about the Black community is the Civil War, the importance of providing a nuanced view of African American perspectives in the war cannot be overstated. Only then can America better understand Black memory of the war, as well as the general development of the United States after Appomattox.

⁵¹ E. A. Henderson, "Slave Religion, Slave Hiring, and the Incipient Proletarianization of Enslaved Black Labor: Developing Du Bois' Thesis on Black Participation in the Civil War as a Revolution." *Journal of African American Studies* 19, (2015).

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Christianity and the Bible as a Tool During the Mau Mau Emergency

Jeffrey Steele

The Mau Mau Conflict took place during the 1950s in Kenya. In this conflict, the Native Kikuyu people fought against British Colonial rule to achieve independence. “Mau Mau” was a term used by the British to identify all those who assisted forest fighters in any way against the British, and all those who took part in the “oathing” process, pledging allegiance to the cause. Throughout the conflict, the British incarcerated between 160,000 to 320,000 people in internment camps.¹ Within the camps, detainees were identified by the British as either “black, grey, or white” depending on their level of dedication to the cause.² Many detainees were transported throughout the “pipeline” to different camps, depending on their perceived level of “rehabilitation” and current status of classification. The British government perceived the Mau Mau as partly a spiritual problem, believing that the reason for resistance against their rule was because of a lag and inability to adjust to civilized society based on Western standards.³ Many different Christian church denominations saw colonial expansion as an opportunity to convert and civilize the native population and had a presence in Kenya as early as 1907, far before the Mau Mau.⁴ Before the camps however, missionaries did not resort to physical force, coercion, or violence in their conversion efforts.

As part of a civilizing mission to rid the detainees of their “impurities” within the camps, the British government partnered with the Church Mission Society (CMS) to assist in this

¹ Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Owl Books, 2005), 233

² *Ibid.*, 103

³ J.C Carothers, *The Psychology of Mau Mau* (Nairobi: The Government Printer, 1954), 2

⁴ Johnson Kiriaku Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary African Readers’ Hermeneutics: A Case Study of the Agikuyu Encounter with the Bible* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, 2011), 33

endeavor. The CMS was an Anglican Evangelical organization whose objective was to convert as many of the prisoners as possible. To have access to such a large captive audience, they accepted guidance from the British and worked in their interest. As shown in their sermons, CMS members often put “flag before cross” and focused on biblical interpretations that taught the Mau Mau to be subservient to the colonizers. One arrested forest fighter exclaimed that it was “in the camps where we fully realized that Christianity had been used so as to make us blind to the injustices that were being done to us... We had been fooled, and we weren’t going to be fooled again.”⁵ Detainees in the camps received bibles to study and found passages and teachings that directly supported their fight for independence and freedom. These interpretations were likewise believed outside of the camps and within the forests, aided by Kikuyu taught in the Christian tradition. The purpose of this paper is to analyze biblical interpretations by the Christian colonizers, which taught African subservience to colonizers, and to contrast Mau Mau interpretations which taught that their resistance and goal of liberation was biblically justified. Section one opens with a case study of a member of the Mau Mau, Mohamed Mathu, and his interactions with religion throughout the conflict. Section two addresses the colonial vision, and section three addresses the Mau Mau vision.

Section 1

Mohamed Mathu was a relatively successful ordinary man of Kikuyu descent. He completed some education and could not move on due to a lack of finances. He moved to Nairobi in search of work, and by 1950 began working for the city council.⁶ His reluctance to join and participate in the Mau Mau shows that he was a man heavily influenced by his unique

⁵ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 172.

⁶ Mohamed Mathu, *The Urban Guerilla: The Story of Mohamed Mathu* (Richmond: LSM Information Center, 1974) 11.

position in history, getting wrapped up in and experiencing all modes of Mau Mau existence. His autobiography recounted his experiences split up into three sections. The first detailed his insider work within Nairobi, helping secure supplies and housing for the Mau Mau. Section two is about his experiences working as a forest fighter in the Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA), the fighting force of the Mau Mau. Unlike the majority of KLFA members, Mathu fought in the forests on the outskirts of Nairobi, conducting operations within the city. The third section detailed his experiences within the detention camps until his eventual release.

Throughout Mathu's journey covering all sides of the Mau Mau experience, he is constantly questioning the dominating spirituality of those around him. He was tricked into oathing, during which he "took seven bites from the chest of a ram, sank [his] teeth seven times into the heart and lungs of a goat, [and] sipped blood seven times from a traditional Kikuyu gourd."⁷ He had trouble seeing the significance in many parts of the ritual. He "resented having been tricked into attending it."⁸ He overlooked the deceptive nature of his oathing later and understood that the most important objective was the goal of African unity against colonialism and freedom of self rule. Mathu ignored many of the directives laid out to maintain spiritual purity. He drank, smoked, and lived with a prostitute. The cause was enough to motivate him. When Mathu was living as a forest fighter, oftentimes troop movements and actions were based upon what the followers of traditional Kikuyu religion and magic saw fit. Mathu saw these as "useless."⁹ They were instructed by seers to pray facing Mount Kenya, shake the demons out of their bedding in the morning, and undergo rituals pertaining to purification that involved bits and

⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁹ Ibid., 40.

blood of animals.¹⁰ He was mocked for questioning the practices, and later went out of his way to disprove many of the superstitions.

Mathu's first encounter with Christianity was during his detention in Camp Embakasi. Mathu was well aware that the attempts to convert detainees to Christianity were only meant to get prisoners to confess valuable intel and admit to guilt. He wrote "Christianity was only being used to break down our resistance and, by turning us against the evils of 'Mau Mauism,' make us willing and docile supporters of the government."¹¹ Mathu led an anti-propaganda campaign in his camp against the Christians, reminding other detainees that the same people who were attempting to convert them were the ones who had locked them away, taken their land, and tortured them. Later, Mathu encounters a group advocating for "Moral Rearmament." It was Christian based, and the main principles were of "Love, purity, honesty, and unselfishness."¹² He joined the organization, and attempted to convert other detainees. This was short-lived however, as the colonial government did not support the organization due to its teaching that "men of different races [are] equals."¹³ This was certainly not a novel idea within Christianity, but the goal of the government was to subjugate the native people and nothing more. The colonial government could care less about "brotherhood and love."¹⁴ All they cared about was coming up with ways to manipulate the detainees into giving more detailed confessions, so that Mau Mau associates outside the camps could be found and crushed. Christianity was used as a brainwashing (or re-education) tool.

¹⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹¹ Ibid., 65.

¹² Ibid., 71.

¹³ Ibid. 72.

¹⁴ Ibid. 73.

Mathu's tendency towards skepticism makes his accounts a perfect vehicle to discuss the ways in which the Mau Mau as well as the British colonial government took advantage of religion and spirituality to assist their objectives in the conflict. The Mau Mau attempted to preserve their traditional religion in order to keep up fighting morale and secure the moral high ground with their soldiers. Their approach to religion encompassed the importance and knowledge of their native land and was seen as an advantage. The colonizers and their missionaries used Christianity as a vehicle to force detainees into confessing not only their sins, but important wartime intelligence that would benefit the crushing of the movement. Detainees often provided false confessions in order to be relieved from their torture.¹⁵ Christian ideals that did not support this objective were quickly abandoned, as seen in the Moral Rearmament project.

Section 2:

The British Colonial interpretation of the Bible and its lessons served to further the interests of settlers in Kenya. The main goals were to suppress the movement and encourage servitude and obedience among the Kikuyu population. Popular interpretations were primarily based upon the prevailing ideas discussed in the previously cited report, *The Psychology of Mau Mau* by J.C Carothers. Mau Mau was characterized by missionaries as the "work of the devil." Biblical interpretations and colonial political goals were inextricably linked. The Revivalists, who headed the Moral Rearmament Project, were ousted precisely because of their apolitical messaging and hermeneutical interpretation. These factors fed directly into the tactics that were used in the detention camps to "reform" the minds of Mau Mau members and oath takers.

The Psychology of Mau Mau was an attempt to identify the "general mental characteristics of Africans" and served as the colonial foundational understanding in which both

¹⁵ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 185.

the government and missionaries based their tactics.¹⁶ Mau Mau and its adherents were viewed through a binary lens, in which there was a “battlefield, on which the Powers of Light and Darkness” were at war.¹⁷ Carothers concluded that there was no inherent difference between Africans and Europeans, but the problem lay mostly in their underdeveloped culture and environment. Africans could be taught morality, but their “forest psychology” stunted their development and they lacked a “personal integrated and critical approach to life.”¹⁸ In his view, they may not have had enough time to adequately adapt to their quickly changing world. He identified three responses various Kikuyu engaged with: reach into the past and embrace Kikuyu traditionalism, a new solution (namely, Mau Mau), or fully engage with Western ideas and culture in an attempt to psychologically “achieve equality with Europeans.”¹⁹ However, the bar for achieving equality is left intentionally vague. This framework was broken when many existing Kikuyu Christians “thought caring for Mau Mau was a Christian duty.”²⁰

Mau Mau was popularly viewed as the “work of the devil,” by missionaries rather than a political movement by colonial religious leaders. Carothers’ influence on missionaries is easily traceable. Missionaries saw Mau Mau as coming “to the limit of their mental capacity leading to mental breakdown on a nation scale.”²¹ In their eyes, it did not matter that there might be a psychological explanation for the behavior of Mau Mau; evil must be dealt with. Of course, there was no popularly recognized political explanation at the time for Mau Mau either. The Church of Scotland viewed oath-takers as “outcast, so degenerate that he could never conceive himself as

¹⁶ Carothers, *Psychology*, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4, 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11

²⁰ Derek R. Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2004), 209.

²¹ Kinyua, *Hermeneutics*, 255.

redeemable.”²² The CMS characterized in no uncertain terms that Mau Mau was “an evil... [a] surprising echo from a very recent savage past.”²³ This comes from an internal newsletter. Of course, there were CMS and missionaries of other denominations who did not necessarily agree. One such leader was Canon Bewes, who grew to “love [the Kikuyu], understand their language, share their thoughts.”²⁴ Bewes met with Colonial Governor Baring and expressed his concern over the violence of the home guard and police. He expressed shock over the torture methods being used during the “rehabilitation” process in the camps. Baring defended the torture tactics, as they led to confessions and valuable intel that could be used to combat forest fighters. Even though Bewes held a prestigious position within the CMS, the organization would continue to toe the line for the government. The missionaries and colonial government had a relationship of “mutual dependence,” and missionaries “wanted above all else to continue God’s work in upholding Britain’s civilizing mission.”²⁵ The violence was overlooked. The organization and other missionaries did not have to disavow the tactics that were employed because there was a tight hold on press information. The world did not widely know of the atrocities committed until after the conflict was over.

Due to the British perception of Mau Mau as backward, savage, and unenlightened, the biblical ideas delivered in the camps to detainees encouraged subjugation, servitude, and served to acquire intelligence. In the camps, confessions of sin were synonymous with Mau Mau confessions. Allegiance to the British Crown was synonymous with purification. Detainee Geoffrey Ngari converted to Christianity and renounced his oath after a preacher at Tumutumu

²² Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, *The Mau Mau in Kenya* (London: Hutchinson, 1954) 14-15.

²³ CMS Membership Bulletin Special Issue, *Mau-Mau: What is it? What lies behind it? How does it affect Church and Mission in Kenya?* (CMS Archives: December 1952)

²⁴ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

delivered 2 Corinthians 13:5: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?”²⁶ Confessions within Anglicanism are traditionally conducted with only a priest. This is not required, though. Many Anglicans confess directly to God rather than another person. Because of the perception of Mau Mau as evil, detainees were encouraged to “confess” to acts that were hardly crimes at all. One detainee confessed to donating meat to a home that was sheltering Mau Mau, buying a watch and trousers for a forest fighter, and giving a pack of cigarettes to a third party that delivered them to a forest fighter.²⁷ These are not sins in traditional Anglican canon. They only served as a generation of intel used by the home guard and the police.

Section 3:

The Mau Mau took advantage of the Bible to justify their struggle against British Colonial rule and interpreted it purposefully to frame their struggle as one ordained by God. Kikuyu who were already Christians participated in Mau Mau in high numbers and did not see it as contradicting their faith. Kikuyu intellectual leaders, such as Bildad Kaggia, purposely interpreted the bible in a subversive manner to support Kikuyu political goals. Dedan Kimathi, leader of the KLFA, used Christian prayers and hymns in his effort to boost morale and support propaganda for the cause.

Kaggia was a Kikuyu intellectual leader that was a part of the famous “Kapenguria Six.” Kaggia was not plainly engaged with the organization of Mau Mau, but his ideas surrounding religion became the precursor to the African Nationalism expressed by Dedan Kimathi. He traveled to Jerusalem and later England, where he encountered different denominations of

²⁶ Derek R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: a History of Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 238.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

Christianity who practiced their faith differently from what the Africans had been taught in Kenya.²⁸ Kaggia's scholarly conclusion was that the Bible was being manipulated by the colonists to suppress Africans. In his new approach, he "changed the emphasis from 'converting the heathen' to 'demolishing the citadel of ungodly formality and hypocrisy'" as a way to combat the "whole hierarchy of the '*mzungu* church'" that acted like "the Pharisees of old... who outwardly professed godliness but were ungodly inside."²⁹ The purpose of his work no longer stood to understand the Bible, but to create a "liberation of the mind... to pave the way for liberation from the colonial government."³⁰ During the Kapenguria trials, Kaggia defended his position and actions as being ordained by Christianity, as he was following in the footsteps of both Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi. Africans deserved "rights of the human mind."³¹ The Magistrate argued for the emphasis of duty in good Christians. Of course, this meant the duty to the crown. Kaggia claimed that Jesus stood for both duties and rights.³² Just as KLFA fighters used European guns and technology to fight against the British and their unfair colonial policies, Kaggia used the Bible as an intellectual tool to fight a battle of the mind.

Dedan Kimathi, the de-facto leader of the KLFA and former Sunday school teacher at Tumutumu understood the importance of propaganda and morale for the Mau Mau movement.³³ The purpose of his mission was to "fight for the whole of Kenya."³⁴ The real "evil" was the Kikuyu people "being killed, tortured, raped, and convicted because they are demanding land

²⁸ Montagu Slater, *The Trial of Jomo Kenyatta* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1955) 192.

²⁹ Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom 1921-1963, The Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975) 70.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

³¹ Slater, *The Trial of Jomo Kenyatta*, 194.

³² *Ibid.*, 197.

³³ Peterson, *Creative Writing*, 205

³⁴ Maina wa Kinyatti, *Kenya's Freedom Struggle: The Dedan Kimathi Papers* (St Martin's Press, 2009), 45.

and freedom.”³⁵ Within the movement, there existed *Arathi*, who according to Jomo Kenyatta, were holy men in direct communication with God.³⁶ The Arathi justified the struggle against the British by citing Psalm 68:31: “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” This was used as justification that the Mau Mau were the chosen people of God. The movement was not just one of liberation, but of destiny and prophecy. The Arathi and their teachings spread its arms into the movement with Kimathi’s help. Their framework was directly influenced by the works of Kaggia. The Arathi claimed that their interpretation of the Bible was the “correct” interpretation, as opposed to the colonial interpretation. An anthem espoused in their ceremonies was “Let us lift our eyes to heaven, where the master is due on earth for the harvest, the harvest of his good people.”³⁷ Kimathi would end KLFA meetings with Bible quotes such as Revelation 22:12-14. He added “when Jesus parted with his disciples, he sent them to teach and preach to all nations and baptized them... Go all over Kenya and preach to all African people and baptize them in the name of... our soil. Die for the soil that will never perish.”³⁸ This sentiment extended to the use of Christian hymns on the battlefield that substituted biblical characters with figures from within the movement. One such hymn was the Song of Kimathi, in which Kimathi takes the place of Moses ascending Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from Exodus 19 and 20: “When Kimathi ascended, Into the mountain alone, He asked for strength and courage, To defeat the white man.”³⁹ Other parts of the song refer to Luke 22:39-44 and Mark 10:35-40. Kimathi’s song was sung during raids, fighting, and running away from the Home Guard.

³⁵ Ibid., 45.

³⁶ Kinyua, *Hermeneutics*, 221.

³⁷ Ibid., 223.

³⁸ Ibid., 230.

³⁹ Ibid., 232-233.

Conclusion

Throughout history, the Bible has been used by many groups of people to justify their political goals. This is particularly true on an organizational level. It is no more than a tool. For individuals, it is oftentimes a spiritual tool with no ulterior motives attached. It is a complex and dense book that can be interpreted in myriad ways. This is exemplified by the near-infinite different denominations of Christianity. Mau Mau intellectual leaders understood that the book was being used by the British to justify their colonial interests. They understood that they needed to use the same tools to argue their case and subvert the interpretations levied on them. It is much easier to justify acts of oppression when a group is able to delude itself into thinking immoral and barbaric acts are ordained by God. It was necessary for Mau Mau to flip the narratives wrested upon ordinary Kikuyu and create a counter-narrative. Wars are fought just as much on an ideological level as they are with weapons. Securing the hearts and minds of both real and potential compatriots allows a faction to unify more tightly. Much scholarship during this event is focused on the supply and weapons raids against the British, acts which transformed the materials taken from being tools of oppression to tools of liberation. As historians, it is important to garner understanding beyond that of troop movements, statistics, and important battles. Ideological battles serve as the catalyst for these events, and we may sometimes, through careful observation, identify ideological seeds in our own time that have the potential to erupt into the physical world.

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Staging Peace During the 7 Years War: *Les Indes Galantes*, Noble Savages, and Utopianism at the End of Empire

Kaori Quan

Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera-ballet *Les Indes Galantes* (*The Galant Indies*) premiered in Paris in 1735. At that initial performance, it consisted of a prologue and three acts, each entry taking place in a different colonial theatre. In 1736, Rameau would add a fourth act entitled "Les sauvages," which took place in North America among an ambiguous Native American tribe. "Les sauvages" would go on to become by far the most popular act of *Les Indes Galantes*, enjoying numerous performances outside of the context of the rest of the opera, even in the later years of Louis XV's reign.¹ Today, the opera is rarely performed, and the overt aesthetic racism of the entire work (but especially "Les sauvages") is almost always obscured. All in all, it is hard to extrapolate from our 21st century vantage point what broader political message, if any, was contained within the farcical fantasy land of *Les Indes Galantes*.

"Les Sauvages," opens upon a vengeful² Native American man named Adario.³ He laments that he finds himself in competition with two Europeans—Damon and Alvar—for the affections of his chief's daughter, Zima. At the end of his dark, minor key aria, he addresses the audience with a solemn missive as Damon and Alvar enter, stating that he will "find out who he is to avenge himself upon."⁴ Zima, for her part, prefers the "natural love" of Adario to the

¹ Joellen A. Meglin, "'Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics': Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth Century." *Dance Chronicle* 23, no. 2 (2000): 89-90.

² Adario never explicitly wishes violence upon his European counterparts in his mentions of revenge. He instead asks rhetorically why he must always "yield his victories" to others. (Hélas! Dois-je toujours vous céder la victoire?)

³ Meglin, "Sex Roles," 105; Adario is the name of an actual Native American man borrowed from the writings of the Baron de Lahotan.

⁴ See the récit following "Rivaux de mes exploits": "Sachons et si je dois et sur qui me venger!"

performative affections of Damon and Alvar anyways. The rest of the act is a farce in which Zima leads the Europeans through the American woods, never intending to give either of them her heart, but teaching them her culture and reproaching their quarrelsome behavior anyways. At the act's close, all parties reconcile in a *Danse de grand calumet de la paix*, embodying in musical and social harmony the peaceful message Rameau espouses throughout the entire work.⁵

In the years preceding Rameau's opera, similar theatrical pieces depicting the peoples and cultures of North America enjoyed popularity in French society. For instance, in 1725, actual Choctaw and Natchez dancers performed in Paris to great success—Rameau explicitly took their dances and music to heart when he wrote “Les sauvages.”⁶ Popular literature written by men like Baron de Lahontan and Pere Lafitau, who both had spent time among Native Americans, also presented sanitized or otherwise obscured depictions of Native Americans. Their work depended on the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas were also popular in French society at the time.⁷

The eventual importance of “Les sauvages,” and indeed any work depicting Native Americans, parallels the rise of the North American colonies to prominence.⁸ For many countries, colonies in North America were late additions to their proverbial imperial treasure trove, but the value of places like New France became quickly apparent in the form of cash crops like sugar and tobacco. This meant that the year 1736 would have been a hopeful one for France. At that time, they were still in possession of significant holdings in Canada, as well as

⁵ Olivia Ashley Bloechl, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 96; *Dance of the great peace pipe* in English.

⁶ Reinhard Strohm, “‘Les Sauvages’, Music in Utopia and the Decline of the Courtly Pastoral,” *Il Saggiatore musicale* 11, No. 1 (2004): 27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43030412>.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

immensely profitable Caribbean colonies like Saint-Domingue. Their initial success in the Americas was a prerequisite for their forthcoming failures in the War of Austrian Succession and the 7 Years War, however.⁹ The sheer size of France's American holdings created administrative conflicts that distracted from the matter at hand during times of war: most often, fighting the British to keep their territory.¹⁰

It is no wonder, then, that Rameau felt compelled to add "Les sauvages" to his opera when imperial ambitions in France were increasingly focusing upon the Americas in the 18th century. Courtiers would have cared little for the Incas of Peru, or the generous Turk by 1736, but the noble savage of America was on everyone's minds. The third act presented a message of prosperity and peace that French nobles were willing to believe regardless of its factual basis because of the value of prosperity in the American colonies.¹¹ But at the opera's inception, a deeply flawed colonial system in New France was already a reality, even if the court of Louis XV did not yet realize it. Only something as traumatic as a war of global scale would make the dysfunction an undeniable reality. As the cracks in New France grew too big to be ignored at the onset of the 7 Years War, so too did the popularity of the fun-house mirror depiction in "Les sauvages." The widespread performance of a work so distorted as "Les sauvages" (and indeed the entirety of *Les Indes Galantes*) indicates that though France would lose the 7 Years War because of their failures in the American theatre, the cross-ocean disconnect that their defeat was predicated upon rested firmly in the Old World.

Noble Savages and Neoclassical Utopias

⁹ Christian Ayne Crouch, *Nobility Lost: French and Canadian Martial Cultures, Indians, and the End of New France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 18-19.

¹⁰ Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 66-69.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

“Les sauvages” is best described as a series of lies: lies about Native Americans, lies about what justifies colonization, and lies about how the colonized interact with their colonizers. The opera is not purposefully misleading, however. Rameau and his librettist Louis Fuzelier had never been to America, so their perception of it came entirely from the writings of those who had. Inevitably, such literature carried its own ulterior motivations, as much of it was marketed through the lens of Utopian philosophy to encourage further colonization of the Americas.¹² Seizing upon neoclassical themes popular at the time, such philosophy depicted the Americas as a land where “savages” were closer to the lifestyle of the Greek gods because of their “simplicity.”¹³ Everything depicted in Rameau’s opera is grounded in the reality of New France as it was perceived through neoclassicism and utopianism at Versailles. The fatal disconnect between the New World and the Old World started in the latter precisely because popular philosophy of the time stood to gain from the obscuring of America’s image.¹⁴ To depict Native Americans as obedient, cooperative, and inferior to Frenchmen bolstered faith in imperial efforts to make them more intellectual in nature.

“Les sauvages” is predicated upon the noble savage stereotype championed by French philosophers of the time, for it was the popularity of that idea that created a market for art depicting “savagery” in the first place.¹⁵ The noble savage is an archetype extrapolated from Rousseau’s philosophy that depicts a man uncorrupted by civilization. His ideas and actions are simpler than his civilized counterparts, but he is considered purer because of his lack of exposure

¹² Strohm, “Music in Utopia,” 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁴ Will Verhoeven, “‘When wild in woods the noble savage ran’: The European Discourse of American Utopianism, 1748-1783,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 46 (2016): 228-229, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/yearenglstud.46.2016.0219>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 219-220.

to corrupting factors (personal property, in many cases). This simplicity and unaffected air permeate almost every word of the opera's narrative, where Zima and Adario use comparatively simple French to express simple ideas of peace and love.¹⁶ Their uncorrupted status is further supported by their non-violent nature. Though their interests conflict with those of the Europeans they interact with, they work their differences out through diplomacy. The opera as a whole pushes this "make-love-not-war" perspective on colonization, which is consistent with two opposing schools of thought on the matter¹⁷. On one hand, many looked towards the noble savage to bring him into civilization; on the other, some looked towards him as an uncorrupted ideal Europeans had departed.¹⁸ "Les sauvages" is, at first glance, a microcosm of that debate itself, for it contains contradictory depictions of the noble savage. The story Rameau and Fuzelier chose to tell is, at its heart, a love tale in the vein of the pastoral ideal. Yet a supposedly vengeful character like Adario contradicts the lightheartedness of the story, evoking the noble savage as an imperfect and improvable archetype through the juxtaposition of his words and his actions.¹⁹ French courtiers dreamed of living in a society as harmonious as the Acadian utopia proposed by Rameau's "Les sauvages," but they inevitably saw a chance to infuse that landscape with favorable elements of their own society.²⁰ Viewed this way, the reconciliation between Europeans and Native Americans at the opera's close represents a compromise between the pastoral ideal and the enlightenment goal of constant improvement.

¹⁶ A good example of this can be seen by comparing lines of recitative dialogue in Scene IV of "Les sauvages." Damon and Alvar discuss emotions like inconstancy and perseverance. Zima and Adario speak simply of anger and love.

¹⁷ Meglin, "Sex Roles," 99-100.

¹⁸ Verhoeven, "When wild in woods," 227.

¹⁹ Bloechl, *Native Song*, 211-212.

²⁰ Strohm, "Music in Utopia," 23.

Narratives of mutual understanding like Rameau's were not always the preferred depiction of Native Americans on French stages. Jean-Baptiste Lully's 1685 opera, *Le Temple de la Paix* (*The Temple of Peace*) may depict erroneously peaceful relations as well, but it does so with Native peoples as an explicit example of the perfect absolutist subjects. His Native Americans are obedient, and more importantly, frenchified. Lully likely meant his works surrounding the noble savage ideal as an allegory for the ideal French citizen,²¹ and, albeit in a much-changed political climate, Rameau did as well. It is important to view "Les sauvages" as a landscape in which the proverbial social contract is working. Rameau thus meant his America as an allegory in favor of the sort of political structure advocated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, where interests that are mutually agreed upon cannot be violated.²² In practice, the difference between Rameau and Lully lies in the fact that Rameau's characters have agency to avoid conflict while advocating for their own needs.²³ Lully's characters obey unquestioningly, even if it is to their detriment. Therefore, Rameau's Native Americans exist more firmly in that realm of noble savage theory where indigenous peoples are a utopian ideal (even if the libretto prevents Rameau from fully eradicating the enlightenment one). Lully, by contrast, enacts more sweeping changes to the character of the Americas to propel them towards a supposedly more advanced European status quo, steadfastly confirming the superiority of the Old World without recommending any positive attributes of the new one besides an exotic aesthetic.

Rameau does not advocate for violent conflict in *Les Indes Galantes* at any point. However, a sanitized version of colonization is still depicted favorably in the opera, especially in "Les sauvages." This can be explained as a concession to his audience of French courtiers, most

²¹ Bloechl, *Native Song*, 143.

²² Strohm, "Music in Utopia," 33.

²³ Meglin, "Sex Roles," 103-104.

of whom would have had an economic stake in success in overseas territories. It is more likely that Rameau himself believed in the colonization and reeducation of native peoples at least as a political fixture, if not a philosophical one as well.²⁴ As we have already discussed, he manages to justify European incursions onto indigenous lands through the use of the noble savage stereotype—but he also seizes upon popular neoclassical themes of the time to give imperialism a godly stamp of approval.

Before any of the “galant indies” are visited, *Les Indes Galantes* presents its audience with a short scene wherein the Greek goddess Hebe holds a festival for young Europeans of French, Spanish, Italian, and Polish descent. Their celebrations are interrupted by another, decidedly less peaceful goddess: Bellona, the god of war, who calls upon them to seek military glory in a presumably European theatre. Hebe pleads with Cupid to stop him, but Cupid flees to the more tranquil “indies.”²⁵

Admittedly, this neoclassical premise matches the first three acts better than “Les sauvages.” Peru and East Africa were not under French influence at the time, making them better vehicles for exoticized aesthetics and auspicious idealism. New France was a settler colony that came with its own political landscape and even its own set of nobles. The Americas may have seemed an exotic landscape to French elites who had never been there, but they were more an extension of the homeland than any of France’s other overseas holdings. Still, costumes from 1765 and 1769 French court productions of “Les sauvages” label many of the *corp de ballet*’s

²⁴ Strohm, “Music in Utopia,” 27. Bloechl’s *Native Song* also discusses Rameau’s admittedly complex thoughts on Native Americans and the noble savage through his harmonic theories (pg. 196-198).

²⁵ Strohm, “Music in Utopia,” 25.

costumes as “wood nymph” or “faun.”²⁶ It is thus evident the neoclassical theming is meant to carry through to the opera’s close.

At first glance, Cupid’s idealization of America in “Les sauvages” is a truthful depiction of France’s philosophy towards colonization in the Americas, as the first Frenchmen in Canada were Jesuit missionaries who shared their Catholic beliefs with native peoples instead of (or rather, before) conquering them with violence. This, however, was in the early 1600s, decades before New France became necessary to France’s status as a great European power. Rameau’s 18th century depiction of colonization as a non-violent act of love is thus outdated, for at its initial premier, Europe had already turned the Americas into a theatre of war more than once. Even in the context of alliance, native cultures of war clashed heavily with French ones, resulting in more animosity than affection. *Les Indes Galantes* may have been indicative of neoclassical utopian philosophies popular at the time, but the very word “utopia” disqualifies the events of the story from becoming reality, for utopian philosophy cannot exist without an ever higher ideal to look towards.²⁷ The sweepingly positive dynamics and narrative motivations touted by Rameau carried implications his audience of French courtiers undoubtedly found charming—but they would not have dreamed of embracing them, for that involved admitting that they may have been the real savages.

Harmony and Dissonance

Even when they were looked towards as a utopian ideal, Native Americans were viewed as inferior to their European counterparts. While one of the many morals of *Les Indes Galantes* may be that complexity is not always better, the implication of placing Native Americans in a

²⁶ Meglin, “Sex Roles,” 89-90.

²⁷ Strohm, “Music in Utopia,” 48-49.

position of simplicity is that their mental capacity is somehow lesser than their European counterparts. The stereotype of the noble savage is thus admirable because his thinking is unburdened by complex ideas—because of his simplicity of thought, he is more easily satisfied.²⁸ “Les Sauvages” should not be viewed as an admiration of native culture so much as a pittance of it. Rameau’s America is one where cultures that are not equal cannot clash. Fuzelier’s libretto seizes upon this notion while neglecting the reality that cultural differences were framed as inferiorities by Frenchmen in Canada, especially in times of war.²⁹

Yet Fuzelier and Rameau in turn manage to highlight neglected similarities between indigenous people and French transplants by depicting their response to conflict. Both cultures viewed war as highly performative and ceremonious (albeit in their own ways). Native Americans expected gifts from their European neighbors in exchange for their wartime assistance, and the French expected highly formalized conduct on the battlefield (which was itself a theatre for the performance of honor and valor).³⁰ Interactions between Adario and his European rivals in “Les sauvages” are indiscriminately diplomatic in nature because both parties agreed that war was synonymous with diplomacy, from the dissonance of Adario’s competition with his European counterparts to the harmony of the *danse de grand calumet de la paix* that ends the act. “Les sauvages” thus becomes a reflection of what might have been should the French have ultimately come together with indigenous peoples over their similarities rather than causing discord over their differences.³¹ The irony of its popularity during the 7 Years War lies in the fact that the French court that enjoyed Rameau’s utopian depiction was the same French

²⁸ Verhoeven, “When wild in woods,” 224.

²⁹ Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 71-72.

³⁰ Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 19-20; 91-94.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 211.

court that thought they stood to gain from ignoring what was necessary to come close to the synchronicity it depicts. Canadian commanders were frequently passed over in favor of more socially connected men from the court of Louis XV—men like the Marquis de Montcalm, who decidedly did not like or understand Native American’s seemingly barbarous culture of war.³² There could be no *danse de grand calumet de la paix* outside the realm of opera unless Versailles came to understand the viewpoints of those who understood the reality of the Americas.

Coda

France’s defeat in the 7 Years War is a multifaceted issue with factors originating from both the Old and New World. The most obvious explanation for the war’s outcome is that they were squarely outmaneuvered and outnumbered by Great Britain in the Americas, who gained the favor of the Six Iroquois Nations at the end of the war through exactly the diplomacy France failed to enact. Philosophical disconnect between Versailles and New France was one of many factors resulting in failure during the 7 Years War, but it is nonetheless an intriguing example of how culture affects what nations can and cannot do to succeed in conflict. Colonial war was also a relatively new phenomenon both in the 1730s and 1750s, making the issues of culture clash and miscommunication new obstacles for European powers to contend with. Idealism in theatrical works like *Les Indes Galantes* is indicative of a fundamental misunderstanding on France’s part of what it meant to control territories across the sea—a misunderstanding that seems easy to remedy from a modern vantage point but presented a very real cultural challenge in its time.

“Les sauvages” is a shining example of a pastoral ideal dominated by the concept of a noble savage: men who, unburdened by the complexities of European society, lived a happier

³² Ibid., 119-121.

and more harmonious life. When the operatic scene rose to popularity again towards the close of the 7 Years War, it represented the positive relationship that the French state wished it could have with Native Americans. The opera seized upon themes of exoticism and utopia to create a world where two distinct cultures could coexist without admitting that they were equals.

Fundamentally, “Les sauvages” and its cultural significance represents a juxtaposition between the pragmatism of a colonial empire at war and the ostentatious culture of superiority and valor that controlled it from thousands of miles away. It is that juxtaposition that made the maintenance of a vast colonial empire impossible in the long term.

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