



VIRGINIA JOURNAL OF  
GENDER STUDIES

SPRING 2021 | VOLUME I, ISSUE II

The Virginia Journal of Gender Studies is independently published and produced. The Journal provides opportunities for undergraduate students and recent graduates to contribute their original research and thought to the field of gender studies. We review submissions from a diverse range of academic departments across the United States and abroad, and then select the most exemplary among them to be published in the Journal.

The Virginia Journal of Gender Studies is an open access journal. Our published content is free to access without charge to the user or their institution. Users are allowed to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of the articles in this journal without asking prior permission from the publisher or the author. Authors retain their copyright and agree to license their articles with a Creative Commons “Attribution” License (CC-BY) unless otherwise noted on the article landing page. You can read more about Creative Commons licenses at [www.CreativeCommons.org](http://www.CreativeCommons.org).

The opinions expressed by the authors of the articles included do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Virginia Journal of Gender Studies, its editors, or the University of Virginia. If you are interested in learning more about the Journal, please visit [vjgs.org](http://vjgs.org).

Cover designs courtesy of Sasha Duckworth.

Featuring:

Nicola Pucci, *Woman at the Mirror* 2015; obtained via USEUM.

## About the Contributors

**Martha Beliveau**, *GRINNELL COLLEGE Class of 2021*: double-majoring in History and Peace and Conflict Studies. She will start a M.A. in History at the University of Oklahoma this fall, where she will specialize in public memory of sexual and racialized violence in the United States. In addition to her studies, she works at a history museum, assisting with their outreach and education programs.

**Anna Milliken**, *YALE UNIVERSITY Class of 2020*: completed her B.A. in African American and Black Studies. While at Yale, she worked as a research assistant for History professor Jennifer Klein, ran the Yale Undergraduate Prison Project through the COVID-19 Pandemic, and interned at the New Haven Public Defender Office. She has advocated for criminal justice reform across Connecticut and is interested in how transformative can impact the juvenile incarceration system.

**Brendan Lui**, *UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA Class of 2022*: majoring in Political Science. Brendan is a Wolf Humanities Undergraduate Fellow, has received grant funding from Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy, and has organized with UNITE HERE Local 274, Philadelphia's service and hospitality workers union. His research interests comparative political economy, comparative political institutions, and construction trade union behavior towards migrant workers in Europe.

**Katherine Weinschenk**, *UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA Class of 2021*: double majoring in Computer Science and Anthropology. They have leveraged their coursework to conduct research on the use of AI/ML in restoring ancient texts, as well as the mechanisms by which algorithms cement hegemonic social structures. Their other research interests include feminist technologies, labor in the tech industry, social impacts of facial recognition technology, and the history of AI ethics.

**Pamela Liu**, *BARNARD COLLEGE Class of 2021*: majoring in Religion. Her research has appeared in New York University's Liberal Studies Global Research Colloquium, Global

Image Gallery, and the Richard Macksey National Undergraduate Humanities Research Symposium at Johns Hopkins University. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue a M.A. in Religious Studies at New York University, where she will conduct research on Protestantism in contemporary China under the guidance of Professor Angela Zito.

**Olivia Ramirez**, *UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE Class of 2021*: is majoring in History, with specializations in Environmental History and the American West. Outside of class, she is a Digital History Research Associate at the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, where she helps to produce the “Western Edition” podcast. Following graduation, Olivia will attend the University of Michigan School of Information, where she will study Digital Archives, Library Science, and Preservation.

## A Letter from the Editor

*“It is the social which throws the color of the absolute over the relative.” - Simone Weil*

The *Virginia Journal of Gender Studies* is pleased to present its second issue. It is a culmination of countless hours of work done by our editors and the authors of the papers published within.

The six articles we selected for the Spring 2021 issue represent some of the best undergraduate writing and research coming out of universities across the country. They tackle topics ranging from Marie Beliveau’s discussion of sexual violence and memory to Brendan Lui’s paper on homosexuality and the German penal code to Pamela Liu’s paper on the construction of womanhood in modern China. Several of our authors use innovative, interdisciplinary approaches; such as Olivia Ramierez’s exploration of masculinity in the pioneer era, Katherine Weinschenk’s analysis of AI and gender performance in algorithms, and Anna Milliken’s investigation of the crossroads between art, tradition, and race. We are honored to publish this scholarship.

I want to express immense gratitude to our editors. Whether they are combing through obscure sources during our fact-checking process, providing insightful comments over three rounds of edits, or pouring over citations until not a comma is out of place, I am consistently impressed by the passion every member of the journal brings to the publication. We are eager to share this hard work with you and hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sasha Duckworth', written in a cursive style.

Sasha Duckworth

*Editor-in-Chief*

## Table of Contents

Martha Beliveau • <i>The Public Secret and Private Pain of Wartime Sexual Violence: Comparing the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 Newborn Monument from the Perspective of NGOs in Kosovo</i>	1-29
Anna Milliken • <i>Assembling the Archive: Annie Mae Young’s Quilted Freedom Framework</i>	30-49
Brendan Lui • <i>A Fascist Stance Towards Homosexuals in a Post-Fascist West Germany: An Analysis of What Led Konrad Adenauer’s Regime to Retain the Nazi-era §175 and §175a of the German Penal Code</i>	50-75
Katherine Weinschenk • <i>Gendered Limits and Residuals: Computational Erasure of Indeterminate Modes of Being</i>	76-94
Pamela Liu • <i>The Chinese Trinity: Protestantism, the Reimagination of Womanhood, and the Modern Nation-State</i>	95-133
Olivia Ramirez • <i>Bear Hunting with Indigenous Alaskans: The Construction of American Masculinity on the “Last Frontier”</i>	134-162

# The Public Secret and Private Pain of Wartime Sexual Violence: Comparing the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 Newborn Monument from the Perspective of NGOs in Kosovo

*Martha Beliveau*

## **Abstract**

In a rare year where there are two monuments dedicated to survivors of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo, the permanent Heroinat Memorial and the year-long Newborn Monument have different approaches and effects in their processes of commemorating wartime sexual violence. This paper approaches a comparison of these two monuments through four interviews with representatives of women-centered civil society organizations in Pristina, Kosovo. This paper finds that the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 theme of the Newborn Monument are sites of contested meanings, because of the different approaches of each respective monument, each of the monuments' gendered implications, and the implications of the nation-building process found in both. Ultimately, the contested meanings and understandings enumerated by the participants about the monuments speak to a broader trend of contested memories of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo.

Separated by the busy street Luan Haradinaj in central Pristina, there are two public monuments.<sup>1</sup> The Newborn Monument sits on one side of the street, whose theme changes each year. For the year of 2020, the letters that spell out “NEWBORN” stand for “Never Ending Wars Bring Oppression, Rape & Neglect,” accompanied by painted designs of flowers and short sentences in Albanian and English.<sup>2</sup> Across from the 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument sits a permanent monument, the Heroinat Memorial, or “Heroines” in the English translation. The Heroinat Memorial is made up of 20,000 circular medals, representing the estimated 20,000 to 46,000 people who experienced wartime sexual violence, and these medals then form a larger, three dimensional face that stretches eighteen feet tall.<sup>3</sup> As the only year in which there are two monuments dedicated to victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo, the year 2020 is a pressing time to research feelings and thoughts toward public commemorations of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo.<sup>4</sup>

Victims and survivors of sexual violence in Kosovo number between 23,200 and 45,600, but this estimate only accounts for the two year war-period in 1998 and 1999, so the actual number is predicted to be much higher.<sup>5</sup> Many oral histories and testimonies establish patterns in the systematic sexual assault and sexual humiliation of ethnic Albanians; Serbian paramilitary troops and police usually targeted young women in their homes or traveling in convoys, or targeted people during other systematic attacks on villages, and many times, people were often abducted and/or drugged at the time of

---

<sup>1</sup> See the Appendix for photographs of the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 Newborn Monument.

<sup>2</sup> Xhirxhina Bami, “In Pictures: Kosovo Newborn Monument Dedicated to Sex Abuse Survivors,” *Balkan Insight*, February 17, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/17/in-pictures-kosovo-newborn-monument-dedicated-to-sex-abuse-survivors/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Heroinat Memorial by Ilir Blakçori,” A’Design Award & Competition, accessed October 25, 2020, <https://competition.adesignaward.com/design.php?ID=33265>.

<sup>4</sup> I use the term “victim-survivor” as a conscious choice to include a variety of terms that people who have experienced sexual violence use to describe themselves. Additionally, experienced in domestic violence and sexual assault work, my organization used the term “victim-survivor.” However, when the interviewed participants use the term “survivor,” I use “survivor” as well, for specificity’s sake.

<sup>5</sup> Michelle Hynes and Barbara Lopes Cardozo, “Sexual Violence Against Women in Refugee Settings,” *Journal of Women’s Health & Gender-based Medicine* 9, no. 8 (2000): 821.

the violence.<sup>6</sup> Although less common relative to sexual violence toward Albanian women, sexual violence and public humiliation of Albanian men was common, as well, especially among men detained by Serbian troops.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, though, sexual violence toward men is widely-underreported globally and there is a lack of estimates that suggest how prevalent this phenomenon was during the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia.

Because nationalist-patriarchal hegemonic narratives in Kosovo tend to ignore completely the experience of those who experienced wartime sexual violence, public commemorations in the last ten years have sought to include a discussion of wartime sexual violence, like the Heroinat Memorial, erected in 2015, and the 2020 theme of the Newborn Monument, unveiled in February of 2020. This paper seeks to answer the following questions: from the perspective of people who work at women-centered NGOs, how do ethnic Albanians in Kosovo feel toward and think about public commemorations of wartime sexual violence, like the Heroinat Memorial and the Newborn Monument in Pristina? The answer to these questions will be found in interviews with four different representatives of civil society organizations. The aim of this research is to gain insight into how Kosovar civil society thinks about how the public monuments contribute to the collective memories of wartime sexual violence.

## **Literature Review**

### *Contested Memories of Sexual Violence*

Mnemonic battles began early over who would control the construction and perpetuation of narratives surrounding the war and the preceding years of conflict with

---

<sup>6</sup> *Kosovo/Kosova as Seen, as Told: An Analysis of the Human Rights Findings of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission October 1998 to June 1999* (Warsaw: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1999), accessed October 25, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/17772?download=true>.

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

Serbia. Scholar Anna Di Lellio argues that wartime sexual violence survivors went through times of having great voice and then periods of being silenced in Kosovo before and during the nation-building and state-building process.<sup>8</sup> Initially, during the war, mainstream Kosovar culture accepted domestic advocacy for survivors and victims of sexual violence, because it helped in the narrative struggle for support of Kosovo's independence; however, the narrative precedent in dominant culture forced survivors and their advocates out of public discourses and into the periphery.<sup>9</sup> For scholar Linda Gusia, the narrative attached to the war is dichotomized into a masculine, heroic figure and, if women are mentioned at all, they become the long suffering mothers, sisters, and daughters of an idealized masculine, Albanian man.<sup>10</sup> In what became hegemonic narratives about the war, victimhood itself became a gendered phenomenon allocated to Albanian women, while Albanian men, especially Kosovo Liberation Army fighters, became glorified as national heroes.<sup>11</sup> In this way, memory is “socially mediated,” to use Vjollca Krasniqi's term, because outward social factors, like gender roles and patriarchy, contribute to the narrative creation of memory.<sup>12</sup>

This paper utilizes the theoretical concept of collective memory to understand how public commemoration comes to reflect memory, specifically how civil society members both articulate collective memory and critiques of those memories. Scholar Jasna Dragović-Soso argues that collective memory is continually and dynamically socially constructed, and “refers to public discourses and images of the past that speak in the name of collectivities,” citing the work of Jeffrey Olick.<sup>13</sup> Importantly for understanding the symbolic role of the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 iteration of the

---

<sup>8</sup> Anna Di Lellio, “Seeking Justice for Wartime Sexual Violence in Kosovo: Voices and Silence of Women,” *East European Politics and Societies* 30, no. 3 (2016): 621–643, SAGE Journals.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 622.

<sup>10</sup> Linda Gusia, “Silence Versus Recognition of Survivors of Sexual Violence in Kosovo,” in *Njohja*, ed. Astrit Salihu (Pristina: Institutit për Studime Sociale dhe Humanistike, 2014), 139.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>12</sup> Vjollca Krasniqi, “Topography of the Construction of the Nation,” in *Strategies of Symbolic Nation Building in Southeast Europe*, ed. Pal Kolsto (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 152.

<sup>13</sup> Jasna Dragović-Soso, “Conflict, Memory, Accountability: What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?” in *Conflict and Memory: Bridging Past and Future in [South East] Europe*, eds. Wolfgang Petritsch and Vedran Džihic (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010), 30.

Newborn Monument, public commemorations help to cement and unify, or contest and complicate, collective memory, meaning that the monuments create new memories in the process of trying to retell the past. Because the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 Newborn Monument seek to encapsulate individual memories as collective memories, these monuments participate in the construction, deconstruction, and/or reconstruction of Kosovar collective memory.

### *Gender and Nationalism*

Sexual violence, scholars argue, must be put in context of positionality, involving the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, colonialism, nationalism, time, place etc.<sup>14</sup> The aforementioned construction of a female-victim/male-hero dichotomy has and continues to contribute to nation-building in Kosovo. According to the scholarship of Vjollca Krasniqi, masculine heroes “personify the state,”<sup>15</sup> whereas feminine victims are “ceremonial battlefields” where the conflicts of the state are waged, as scholar Linda Gusia argues.<sup>16</sup> The gendered memory of war centers the conflict in terms of the “nation” rather than in terms of victim-survivors’ agency. The construction of gender and the construction of nation are intertwined, and therefore ought to be analyzed in relation. In applying this gender-nation relation, one victim-survivor, for instance, is not just a woman but an Albanian woman.

### *Public Comemorations of Sexual Violence*

In another commemoration of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo in 2015, Alketa Xhafa Mripa’s art exhibition “Thinking of You” exhibited 5,000 skirts and dresses donated by Kosovar women in a football stadium in Pristina in order to symbolize the women who had experienced wartime sexual violence during the conflict.<sup>17</sup> Anna Di

---

<sup>14</sup> Dubravka Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 170.

<sup>15</sup> Krasniqi, “Topography of the Construction of the Nation,” 153.

<sup>16</sup> Gusia, “Silence Versus Recognition of Survivors of Sexual Violence in Kosovo,” 141.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Di Lellio, Feride Reshiti, and Kadire Tahiraj, “‘Thinking of You’ in Kosovo: Art Activism

Lellio, an American academic and one of the producers of the art installation, and her colleagues, argue that “Thinking of You” helped to create awareness and solidarity with victims about the “public secret” of wartime sexual violence, and in doing so, collapsed the public and private distinctions that had once kept wartime sexual violence out of public discourse.<sup>18</sup> Important to this paper’s study of other public art installations, Di Lellio and colleagues argue that art has the power to initiate strong emotions which in turn initiate change, like the turn in favor of support for pensions for victim-survivors of sexual violence.<sup>19</sup>

Conversely, other scholars critique the success of “Thinking of You” and the messages that the art exhibition sent. Krasniqi, Sokovlić, and Kostovicova argue that “Thinking of You” was the “recognition of the war crime but not the victim,” because the art installation reinforced binary gender roles and instigated actions of “everyday nationalism.”<sup>20</sup> The use of skirts and dresses to represent victims and survivors of wartime sexual violence essentializes women into female-coded objects, which therefore reduces victims and survivors as diametrically opposite to masculinity, creating and reinforcing a gender binary.<sup>21</sup> The dresses also insinuate that wartime sexual violence was women’s “sacrifice” during the war, making sexual violence the price that women pay during war, erasing any other type of war experience that women may have had, and erasing discussions of how men were also victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence as well.<sup>22</sup>

The essentialized and gendered body serves as a nation-building process in “Thinking of You,” because it focuses on a crime against *a people* (ie. Albanians) rather than a crime against *individual people* (ie. women and men who were sexually abused and assaulted). This critique of “Thinking of You” challenges scholars to complicate the

---

Against the Stigma of Sexual Violence,” *Violence Against Women* 25, no. 13 (2019): 1543, SAGE Journals.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1549.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1552.

<sup>20</sup> Vjollca Krasniqi, Ivor Sokolić, and Denisa Kostovicova, “Skirts as Flags: Transitional Justice, Gender and Everyday Nationalism in Kosovo,” *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 2 (2020): 261-476, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12593>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 468-469.

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

silence-speech dichotomy; even when public commemorations seemingly honor and give voice to victims and survivors of sexual violence, such commemorations can simultaneously reinforce gender roles and nationalism. Analyzing the Heroinat Memorial and Newborn Monument, this paper seeks to understand the ways in which these memorials relate to the nation-building project and the extent to which nation-building has become a gendered process.

### **Methods**

By interviewing civil society members and gaining insight into their thoughts and perceptions of the public memorials, I attempted to understand how the memorials work or do not work, according to their perspective within Kosovo public discourse. The selected participants worked in women-centered NGOs and had some sort of work involving victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence. I interviewed four individuals from different civil society organizations. I interviewed one representative from each of the following organizations: Jahjaga Foundation, Kosova Center for Torture Victims, Kosova Women for Women, Youth Initiative for Human Rights.<sup>23</sup> While two of the participants were in their twenties, two were above/older than their twenties. Three of the participants were women-identified and one was man-identified.<sup>24</sup> Because of the COVID-19 outbreak, these interviews were conducted online via Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom. All interviews were conducted in English and did not require a translator. The interviews were semi-structured in format..

Regarding my own positionality, I am an undergraduate student educated in the United States who studied abroad in southeastern Europe until the outbreak of

---

<sup>23</sup> In this paper, I refer to the interviewees as participant one, participant two, etc., but these representatives are anonymous both in their personal name and their association with their corresponding organization. By keeping the participant's organization anonymous, I aimed to respect each organization's work even while analyzing and critiquing some of the participant's statements. For this reason, I do not list what participant one's organization is, for instance.

<sup>24</sup> See chart in appendix for information on participants.

COVID-19. Raised and educated in the West, I can reflect on my own experiences and biases about southeastern Europe. Orientalist thinking about southeastern Europe has been pervasive in my understanding of the region, and part of studying abroad has been deprogramming what Vesna Goldsworthy calls the “rhetoric of Balkanization” that reduces the region into an essentialized area of endless fighting between unchanging, hateful ethnic groups.<sup>25</sup> When discussing the situation in Kosovo, which is still a site of contested nationhood in geopolitics, I as a researcher must not lose sight that the “ancient ethnic hatreds” narrative in and about the region has been weaponized and has led to more conflict.<sup>26</sup> This paper does not seek to perpetuate this narrative and instead tries unpack how this narrative undermines the commemoration of wartime sexual violence.

Furthermore, the topic of this paper deals with feminist theory, which has been rightly critiqued for its lack of regard for women and nonbinary folks who fall outside of the “West.” Trained in feminist theory and critique in the United States, I must acknowledge the ways in which my thinking may be different even from feminist thinkers within Kosovo. Additionally, the international presence in Kosovo to this day, largely represented by the United States, is involved in the functioning of Kosovar politics and everyday life so much so that the international community has mapped onto Kosovo society a gendered expectation of the roles that Kosovar men and women inhabit.<sup>27</sup> My positionality as holding American citizenship cannot be divorced from the actions of the government whose citizenship I hold, even if I participate in critiquing those systems.

---

<sup>25</sup> Vesna Goldsworthy, “Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization,” in *Balkan as Metaphor*, ed. Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 25.

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

<sup>27</sup> Vjollca Krasniqi, “Imagery, Gender and Power: The Politics of Representation in Post-war Kosovo,” *Feminist Review* no. 86 (2007), 27. SAGE Journals.

## **Interview Findings and Analysis**

### *Approaches of the Monuments*

Because the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument are attached to the public discourse and collective memories of wartime sexual violence, they take on a public meaning, as actors in the public sphere create narratives around their purpose. The meaning of the 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument is far more agreed upon than the Heroinat Memorial's meaning, because the participants more monolithically identify a point of view and approach in the former. However, there is a tension in participants' perspectives between the Heroinat Memorial's ascribed and perceived meanings; because of the Heroinat Memorial's contested meaning, the monument becomes a site of contestation over *how* survivors of wartime sexual violence should be remembered and given agency.

### *The Heroinat's Symbolic Approach*

No singular symbolic meaning of the Heroinat Memorial emerged in the participants' thoughts toward it, and therefore the Heroinat appears as a site of contested meaning. Participants disagreed about who the Heroinat Memorial was about: either all women who engaged in the war at some point, or only women who experienced sexual violence during the war. Participant one spoke repeatedly about how the Heroinat Memorial is a symbol that only represents the survivors of wartime sexual violence, and participant three acknowledged the tension between who the monument is about:

Because it has a number, and it is the number that corresponds to the approximate number of survivors of sexual abuse. It is kind of given more the symbol of the survivors of sexual abuse during the war. Although I think it belongs to all women, the way it is explained is that it's more about the the sexual violence survivors.

There is a tension between what the placard attached to the Heroinat explains and how people generally think about it. As the quote above points out, the Heroinat Memorial is dedicated to all women who participated in the 1998-1999 war, yet most people in Pristina associate it with women victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence. The outcome is a tension between whether the monument is intended to represent all women or whether the monument represents only victim-survivors of sexual violence. This tension complicates the project of centering victims of sexual violence; survivors do not really have a memorial solely for them and yet it would be difficult to get another monument when the opposition could label it as redundant. Participant four articulated the idea that the Heroinat Memorial is about all women:

As I mentioned Heroinat is not only dedicated to survivors of sexual violence, it's also dedicated to women who have contributed to the last war in Kosovo in different forms: by participating directly to the war, or being part of medical teams that offered different medical and social support to the war, but it's not exclusively dealing with the survivors of sexual violence.

For participant four, the Heroinat Memorial's symbolic meaning is not limited in recognition only for women who experience wartime sexual violence but also to women who actively and self-decidedly participated in the war through their own actions as combatants, medics, or cooks. The collapse of women's experiences overly essentializes the historical and present situation. Even if one is to continue with the understanding that the monument is dedicated to all women during the war, it is incongruent to have a monument for women who experienced sexual violence and women who fought as combatants. For example, participant two did not see the inclusion of all women in the Heroinat Memorial as a good thing, because these two experiences are "very horrible things to be put together." Participant two says that "they [victim-survivors] did not contribute to the war by being raped.," because equating the women victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence with the women who actively chose to support the war effort as combatants frames being a victim of sexual violence as a

“contribution” to the war rather than a war crime itself. The tension of who the monument is for prompts further inquiry into whether public commemorations are for victims or are for the greater Kosovar public.

The tensions in symbolic meanings of the Heroinat Memorial are enumerated by the participants. Participant one saw the monument as dedicated to victim-survivors from the very beginning, participant two critiqued putting all women who had some role in the war in the same monument, participant three acknowledged that it was dedicated to all women but only really saw it for victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence, and finally, participant four saw it as dedicated to all women. Though the participant pool for this paper was only four people, it is worth noting that even in the civil society sector, there is no consensus about what the Heroinat Memorial symbolically means and who it is designed to represent.

The symbolic meaning of the Heroinat Memorial was further critiqued for its symbolic rather than realized support. Participant two stated Heroinat is “more of a symbolic support than a real one,” because “the same people who were in power at that time voted against, in the parliament, for these women and men to get reparations.” A monument, even though state-sponsored, is not enough to make the lives of victim-survivors any better when they are afraid to tell their families about their experiences. Still, the participants described the common occurrence of victim-blaming and delegitimizing victim-survivors’ experience. The symbolic meaning of the Heroinat Memorial, for participant two, was not enough to combat the pervasively unresponsive political sphere and the stigmatized social sphere. The Heroinat Monument, being state-sponsored, was a *performance* of recognition of victim-survivors rather than a genuine shift in the culture and political discourse of prioritizing the support of wartime sexual violence victim-survivors.

The physical condition and surroundings of the Heroinat Memorial also relate to the monument’s place in the public sphere. For example, participant two discussed that

when the Heroinat Memorial was unveiled in 2015, it was “quite hidden” by overgrown bushes and could not be easily viewed from the street. For participant two, the hidden nature of the Heroinat Memorial when it was first unveiled hints at how people “did not, maybe subconsciously, want it to be that public.” The public neglect and disappearance even within the public sphere speaks to the ways in which wartime sexual violence is pushed into the level of “public secret” that seeks to avoid conversations of dealing with the past. Because the Heroinat Memorial was hidden in public view, its physical condition was an embodiment of the hidden truth of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo. The physical embodiment of the Heroinat becomes a layered site of performance in which the public secret of wartime sexual violence is physically embodied by its hidden nature and unkempt appearance. Even more broadly the symbolic approach of the Heroinat Memorial does not do enough to accomplish a goal of highlighting a victim-centered memory of the past, because the dedication and approach is not agreed upon, even in civil society circles.

#### *The Newborn’s Descriptive Approach*

Participants thought the meaning of the 2020 theme of the Newborn Monument was less abstract and more descriptive, and thus the symbolic meaning was far more agreed upon than that of the Heroinat Memorial. Ultimately, the 2020 theme of the Newborn Monument contributes to the continued contestation of hegemonic narratives and memories of the war. Participant one observed the messages in the Newborn Monument as very powerful:

When you read them, you can just feel the pain, you can feel the loss, then you can have that kind of feeling that what happened to them is not easy to handle. And as a good reminder to show people that these are the feelings that these people have affected them all of the time and it is very difficult to read, but imagine how it is to handle all of them. And this was something that I would like,

probably to share more and to have more attention because when you give them the facts, people will be much more sensitive, and understanding of the context.

For participant one, the messages on the Newborn Monument serve as a platform for the voices of victim-survivors, and the physical design of Newborn offers a model of how to honor and memorialize victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence. The 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument has messages and stories of sexual violence written on it in paint, and participant one saw these messages as productive in dealing with the past in Kosovo because it supports an accurate memory of wartime sexual violence. Participant two agreed that the Newborn Monument is “quite descriptive, quite raw, quite in your face” and “you cannot unsee it and see those words” to the point that it “stays with people's mind much longer than the Heroinat Memorial because it's [the Heroinat] much more artistic, and more symbolic in itself.”

In short, the physical design of the public commemorations led to either consensus or contention about the symbolic meaning of these memorials. For the Heroinat, its abstract design leaves more for the viewer and audience to interpret, no matter what the placard attached to the Heroinat reads, whereas the 2020 Newborn Monument has much less to be interpreted by the viewer, because the messages are written directly and unmistakably on the monument itself. The contestations over the symbolic meaning of the Heroinat Memorial illustrate the extent to which there are still mnemonic battles over how sexual violence in Kosovo ought to be remembered. These monuments simultaneously and contestedly function as *for* and *about* victim-survivors; on the one hand, they affirm victim-survivor agency while on the other the monuments devolves victim-survivor control over the discussion of sexual violence, turning victim-survivors into objects rather than subjects. In these two memorials' approaches and meanings, collective memory of the war is being reshaped, reinforced, and questioned, as the subjects of gender and nationalism will illustrate.

## *Representations of Gender*

The operation of gender within these monuments is very much also a contested ground inside civil society circles, especially as gender relates to collective memories of the war. Understanding of gender as related to wartime sexual violence is layered, and the participants' descriptions of this layering establishes three competing narrative understandings of gender as it is represented in the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument. First, as discussed in the literature review, there is a hegemonic narrative that excludes women and discussions of sexual violence from memories of the war, therefore reinforcing traditional gender roles. None of the participants interviewed for this paper subscribed to the dominant, hegemonic narrative of traditional gender roles; however, two competing narratives arose among the participants.

Most common among the participants, the first competing narrative which challenges the hegemonic narrative is that women's experiences during the war should be acknowledged and made public as part of Kosovo state-building efforts. The second competing narrative challenges both previously-described narratives because such critics seek to question essentialist gender representations of wartime sexual violence that simultaneously reinforce ethno-nationalism. In short these competing narratives illustrate a tension over whether the memorials subvert hegemonic narratives or whether the memorials reinforce hegemonic narratives. This narrative disagreement illustrates the contested understandings of how the memorials work and therefore increase the ground for contested memories.

### *Monuments as Subversion of Hegemonic Narratives*

For some participants, the very existence of these memorials transgresses the patriarchal, hegemonic narrative operating in Kosovo that recognizes men and completely erases the memory of women and women's experiences during the war. Participant one recognized "everything [was] more focused on men fighting during the

war,” and completely ignored the lives of women. Participant three similarly reiterated the dominant narratives in Kosovo about the war:

Not some of them, except Mother Teresa, they're all men. It's all men. And unfortunately, in this post war, masculinistic society—which was not the case before the war, I was one of the volunteers into establishing a parallel health system— and so the help of women, even in the direct fights was much bigger than it is recognized today, but everybody forgets. And everybody was in a rush to get the credits about the war and the crowd.

To these participants, the memorials serve as a counter-narrative to the extremely male vision of the war in hegemonic collective memories. The “credit” of the war went to men who fought, and this contributes to a narrative about Kosovo independence. Even further, participants one and four directly acknowledged the patriarchal system in Kosovo as a contributing factor that determines how the discourse of the war works. For them, the opposite of the extremely blatant preference for male statues and monuments is the existence of women-centered monuments. Part of the goal of these monuments ought to be to subvert the male-dominated hegemonic narratives by providing documentation, according to participant four. When asked what an ideal monument of wartime sexual violence may look like, participant four emphasized the need for a monument to center documentation as a method of combating the hegemonic narrative that erase the existence of wartime sexual violence.

The participants occasionally used language that perpetuates the idea of the “sacrificial woman” who was sexually abused and assaulted for the benefit of the nation-state. This occurrence was most common in those subscribing to the first competing narrative. Illustrating the pervasive nature of essentialized and stereotyped representations of gender, even participants who work at women-centered and feminist civil society organizations use language of the “sacrificial” woman that participant two

critiqued. For example, participant one used language of “sacrifice,” even while recognizing its limitations:

I mean, at least it is something that should belong there, because we need to remind to ourselves, not only to survivors but even tourists out that these are women that sacrifice—I mean not sacrifice in the sense of they want to do—but we need to remind ourselves that they belong to society and they should not be stigmatized.

While, the participant does caveat the use of “sacrifice,” the use of the word does more to illustrate the pervasive nature of the narrative terminology attached to descriptions of those who experience wartime sexual violence. The use of this term was exhibited by participant four, also, “But Heroinat at the same time remains one of the most important monuments in Kosovo after the war, because the monument of Heroinat express[es] the suffering and the sacrifice of the Kosovo woman during the war in Kosovo.” Once again, representatives of civil society organizations that are women-centered still fall into the cultural and social trap of referring to sexual violence against women as women’s “sacrifice,” when such a sacrifice was, by definition, nonconsensual and violent. The telling slip of “sacrifice” alludes to the mainstream framework of how hegemonic narratives about the war place women. They are unwilling yet necessary casualties of fighting a war. And once victim-survivors cannot be used strategically as a rallying cry to garner more sympathy to the Kosovo independence cause after the war, they can be disregarded and erased entirely from memory.

#### *Monuments as the Reinforcement of Hegemonic Narratives*

In contradistinction to seeing the subversion of patriarchy in the monuments, participant two saw the memorials, particularly the Heroinat Memorial, as reinforcing rather than subverting gender norms in Kosovo. This perspective further illustrates contestation and disagreement in how wartime sexual violence ought to be

memorialized and remembered. For instance, participant two saw the Heroinat as essentializing women's experiences and cannot commit to a survivor-centered message. The following quote from participant two, referenced in the previous section on the Heroinat's symbolic approach, also has implications for representations of gender:

It says that it's a war about sexual violence survivors and women's contribution to the war which is very horrible things to be put together. I mean, we did. They did not contribute to the war by being raped. These are two different things. And it said that we only have one memorial for 20,000 women and we have one memorial for each man who was a hero.

For participant two, Heroinat Memorial's subject is confused and incongruent, because framing survivors of sexual violence as sacrificial contributors to the war is an unethical understanding of unwilling and unconsenting sexual violence against women. It places women and victim-survivors' bodies as the object and sacrifices of war rather than as subjects who did not consent to such involvement in the war. To describe the women who served as combatants and women who experienced wartime sexual violence in terms of sacrifice makes the latter group into collateral damage that stakeholders of the state strategically use to further a national independence movement. Simultaneously, this understanding of sexual violence objectifies women into becoming a physical embodiment of a wartime battlefield.

One major oversight of the Heroinat Memorial is the exclusion of men who experienced sexual violence during the war. This exclusion of men serves to perpetuate patriarchal hegemonic narratives about who is always a victim (women) and who is always a hero (men). The dichotomy of sexually abused women, on the one hand, and fighting men, on the other, reinforces traditional gender roles. Participant two mentioned the Heroinat Memorial's lack of inclusivity twice, as the only permanent public monument dedicated, at least in part, to survivors of wartime sexual violence:

So it lacks to be inclusive when it comes to survivors of sexual violence, again. Because of the narratives that are in place, only Albanian women suffered from that, when in fact it's not true. And as I said, not only women but also men [suffered].

By not including men, the Heroinat Memorial erases the experiences of men, which in turn, perpetuates a gendered understanding of sexual violence. Participant one also mentioned that the lack of inclusion of men in the Heroinat Memorial was criticized for “not mentioning the survivors of sexual violence that were men in Kosovo.” While participant one did not mention directly *who* was criticizing the Heroinat for its lack of inclusivity, the fact that two participants mentioned this criticism at all suggests that the criticism is common in some civil society circles.

The 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument, though explicitly about victim-survivors, does have one pitfall, according to one participant. Participant two critiques the Newborn Monument's messages as further reducing women into objects who are violently acted upon:

And on the other hand, I was very disturbed to be quite frank when I passed through Newborn, and I saw the writings on the letters, because it's quite graphic. And it's quite a public space. And I was thinking how bizarre it is that parents take pictures of their children in front of the Newborn. And if you look closely, it says, “my body was burned with cigarettes.” So it's quite an interesting installation because it gives you mixed feelings. But I think it could have been done with a feminist perspective, because it's very triggering for a lot of people to see those words and I think we should be very careful when we remember sexual violence.

To be clear, participant two's concern was not about whether the topic of wartime sexual violence *should* be the theme of the Newborn Monument for the year of 2020, but rather how the monument works. For the participant, the normalization of extremely

violent material in a public sphere is not necessarily emotionally sensitive for not including a trigger warning. Even so, participant two still had positive stances on the Newborn Monument, as well:

The Newborn one definitely has this victim centered approach. I mean, you hear the words of the victim and what they went through. And not necessarily about Kosovo. I mean, there's nothing about the war, about what the general population went through.

In this excerpt, participant two asserts that the physical design of the Newborn Monument gives the impression of a victim-survivor-centered approach, which improves the gendered narrative surrounding the topic. So while, for participant two, the physical nature of the Newborn Monument is very violent in its depictions of victims' experiences, the participant still sees the value in having a descriptive, albeit brutal, monument.

### **Representations of the Nation**

As reviewed in the literature, gender interacts with nationalism to form narrative understandings of socio-political objects and behaviors in Kosovo. Being one of the youngest states in the world, and continually battling non-recognition regionally and globally, hegemonic narratives about the Kosovo war has brought about a prioritization of viewing sexual violence as a crime against a nation and a state, which decenters those who actually experienced wartime sexual violence. The ultimate stake of nationalistic representations within public commemorations is the perpetuation of false narratives and false collective memories that do not serve victim-survivors, either in the way they view themselves, or outwardly in the way that society in Kosovo interacts with them. In conjunction with constructions of gender, the public commemorations of the Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 Newborn Monument

reinforce ethno-nationalist ideas of nationhood because of the way they articulate victim-survivors in the monuments as the symbolic battleground of Kosovo independence and national discourses. This nationalistic framing sets the terms for collective memory because the framing itself emphasizes a collective national identity.

### *The Heroinat and the Nation*

The Heroinat Memorial comes to represent the memory of victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence as the symbolic battlefield of the 1998-1999 war because it articulates victim-survivors in ethnic terms. The Heroinat Memorial is really only dedicated to ethnically Albanian women, which limits its survivor-centered approach in favor of an ethnic-centered approach. Participant two critiques the Heroinat Memorial's prioritization of Albanian women over other ethnic groups:

But I mean, as a policy student, I have to also think about how we talk about it and deconstruct it. But as a civil society organization, we have to work on advocating more for the rights of these women and men and to be as inclusive as possible, mentioning Serbian women, Askhali, the Roma, whoever was involved.

The mention of other ethnicities and groups of people whose members experienced wartime sexual violence points to a rather large oversight of the Heroinat Memorial's conceptualization of victim-survivors of wartime sexual violence. By reserving this monument to a sliver of those who experienced wartime sexual violence, the Heroinat Memorial nationalizes the question of wartime sexual violence rather than denounces the crime itself for the harm it does to individuals. Ultimately, viewing victim-survivors as part of an ethnic group rather than individuals, a majority of whom were Albanian, essentializes victim-survivors, a majority of whom were women, into a collective that is unseen and unknowable, but who's aforementioned "sacrifice" was necessary and led to the independence of Kosovo.

Furthermore, the lack of coordination with civil society organizations on the Heroinat Memorial may have led to its nationalist implications. Contributing to the problem of symbolic meaning attached to the nation, participant two recognized that the lack of a civil society perspective limited the Heroinat's approach:

It's quite problematic in the way they see this victimhood and surviving the trauma so I doubt that they had coordination with any NGO, and since this is much more artistic, from what I know is that they cooperated with artists more rather than an NGO to help them in making a concept which is much more inclusive.

While artists have a duty and a role to play in creating these public commemorations, discussions should center *all* victim-survivors' voices, not only those that are supported and put forward by the state. Once again, there is a tension between understanding sexual violence in Kosovo within the framework of ethnic conflict, or within the framework of patriarchy, or the alternative that acknowledges that both gender and ethnicity contribute to wartime sexual violence. Participant three also acknowledged how the Heroinat Memorial came about through the state rather than through civil society channels:

Well, we were not really involved in how the Memorial should look. I think it was more—it was the Parliament of Kosova, so it was Women's Caucus. I don't know if the other organizations were involved in the design, but I don't think so. I think it was more institutional, which is fine.

While participant three did not see the harm in a government-directed memorial, the victim-centered approach of NGOs could have resolved some of the critiques of the Heroinat Memorial's approach. The beliefs of the civil society members interviewed for this paper, however, did not articulate the same critique or disdain for what the Heroinat Memorial could stand for in reference to the nation. The other three participants did not engage in any discourse on the Heroinat Memorial's subjects as

only being Albanians, perhaps because they are, not unrightly, concerned with including women, even if only Albanian women, in the narrative discourse about the war. To further challenge the hegemonic discourse to include non-ethnically Albanians, as well, would be difficult to find support in the already male-dominated, hero-focused, and nation-focused narratives about the war in Kosovo that form the hegemonic collective memory of the war. In short, perhaps the other participants do not see the inclusion of Serb women or other ethnic minorities as a strategic possibility to shift hegemonic memories.

### *The Newborn Monument and the Nation*

Further echoing a narrative about the Kosovo nation and not victim-survivors, the Newborn Monument was designed to represent the independence of Kosovo, a design which then has implications for the theme of wartime sexual violence. Each participant mentioned the Newborn Monument's specific connection to the national cause. For instance, participant four described the Newborn Monument's link to the state:

Also Newborn is another monument that is interlinked, directly to Kosovo independence. And, as you may know, each year, the Newborn represents a different thing. And this year, we have strongly engaged that this thing to be survivors of sexual violence, not only in Kosovo but worldwide in different conflicts.

Because, admittedly, the Newborn Monument is linked to independence, it would logically follow that wartime sexual violence is linked to Kosovo independence. Once again, by making wartime sexual violence linked to the state, the crime itself becomes a question of the nation rather than the subjugation of women and the patriarchal dynamics of sexual violence toward men, as well. Admittedly, participant four's above comments allude to the 2020 Newborn Monument's discussion of sexual violence as a global problem, and such messages seek to internationalize the issue to all conflicts

globally. At the same time, the Newborn Monument's status as a tourist attraction and association with the new state of Kosovo creates a tension with a global message that expresses support for victim-survivors of sexual violence during wartime. The war, insofar as it has been portrayed, is a battle between ethnic identities, but the recognition that the crime of sexual violence is an act of gendered humiliation and destruction of one's dignity and autonomy is not necessary part of the conversation. At the very least, this critique does not appear to exist in the monuments themselves, or in the interviews with three of the four interviewed participants. Participant three described Kosovars' deep attachment to the Newborn Monument, beyond only 2020's theme:

It became a symbol of Pristina. I think whichever website you open, you write Pristina, the first thing you will see is Newborn. And I think it's excellent. Because it's kind of very original. We tend to, unfortunately, build all the time these sculptures of heroes, so it's their full body and they are everywhere. It's [Newborn] in such a good place that in an organic way, it made its place there and the name is you know, is excellent for the almost newest country, youngest country in the world. So it's an excellent monument. And now that it can have a different message every year. It becomes even more comprehensive, so everyone can relate him or herself with it.

While the tension of nationalism and national identity is not just a question of the 2020 Newborn Monument theme but of the Newborn Monument itself, the topic of wartime sexual violence highlights the degree to which certain victim-survivors are remembered and others are forgotten, along ethnic lines. Even recognizing the emphasis of the 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument on international contexts of sexual violence, participants also recognize the degree to which the Newborn monument establishes itself as symbolic of the nation-state itself. Participant one mentions how tourists and internationals interact with the Newborn Monument:

But I think as a monument, it is internationalized. When people across the world come here, we can show something that is related to the war because these are things that we need to tell people on what's going on and historical context that happened during the war in Kosovo. At the beginning of Kosovo after the war, it was everything more focused on men fighting during the war, and the war [did] not mention the pain and the struggles that women had, especially these women that were raped during the war.

If the Newborn Monument is considered to represent the Kosovo war by both Kosovars and internationals, the conflation of Kosovo's war for independence and wartime sexual violence ignores that victim-survivors were also non-Albanian. The framework understanding sexual violence in the Newborn Monument leans toward one of nation, not one of gender or sexual violence as a war crime. Participant four's perspective on the issue reiterates an international lens:

And this year by dedicating the Newborn to all survivors of sexual violence, I mean, it was a very huge step with regard to the public awareness, not the public awareness onto rising the public awareness only locally, but also internationally.

This perspective reiterates that of participant one; the Newborn Monument has a meaning in the international community, and that meaning is tied to the Kosovo state. Mapping onto the monument the experiences of wartime sexual violence survivors complicates its division from its nationalist origins. At the very least, the Newborn Monument confuses national and international narratives.

This perspective reiterates that of participant one; the Newborn Monument has a meaning in the international community, and that meaning is tied to the Kosovo state. Mapping onto the monument the experiences of wartime sexual violence survivors complicates its division from its national origins. At the very least, the Newborn Monument confuses national and international narratives. While the tension of nationalism and national identity is not just a question of the 2020 Newborn Monument

theme but of the Newborn Monument itself, the topic of wartime sexual violence highlights the degree to which certain victim-survivors are remembered and others are forgotten. Similarly, the Heroinat Memorial's recognition of Albanian women only frames public discourse in terms of ethnicity, not in terms of survivors. The collective memory of wartime sexual violence, established through both monuments, emphasizes a collective identity of victimhood in order to legitimize the state of Kosovo. Having a political agenda such as this does not leave room for a victim-centered or survivor-centered monument, and thus weaponizes victimhood in order to create a national narrative that furthers political gains. The collective memory of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo has a gendered and nationalist tone, which further divorces the memorials from victim-survivors.

### **Conclusion**

While I opened this paper describing the two memorials, the Heroinat and the Newborn, as sitting across the street from one another, this tiny patch of Kosovo that encompasses any mention whatsoever of wartime sexual violence will soon be reduced to only the Heroinat Memorial. Because the Newborn Monument has a yearly theme, survivors of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo will no longer have two monuments that even attempt to speak to their experiences. As a researcher myself, I cannot deny my own disappointment that this discussion of wartime sexual violence could be followed by a period of silence, like the one that scholar Anna Di Lellio located in the period right after the war, especially at a time when victim-survivors still need advocacy and platforms to express their own agency.<sup>28</sup>

In this paper, I have sought to document and analyze the perspectives of civil society actors on the permanent Heroinat Memorial and the year-long 2020 theme of the Newborn Monument. By looking at the points of view of civil society, we can gain

---

<sup>28</sup> Di Lellio, "Seeking Justice for Wartime Sexual Violence," 622.

an understanding of both support for and critiques of public commemorations of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo. Because civil society in Kosovo does not have a singular perspective or subscribe to a singular narrative about the war, these findings of contested narratives further support the idea of complexity and tension in the collective memory of wartime sexual violence, and the overall war itself. Hopefully, the material in this paper will lead to more nuanced, survivor-focused memorials in the future.

In analyzing the thoughts of civil society agents, I have found that the Heroinat Memorial, more so than the 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument, does not allow or express the full extent of survivor's experiences, and, for that matter, does not even recognize all survivors of wartime sexual violence. By modeling indifference toward survivors that are men and survivors that are not Albanian, the Heroinat Memorial cannot be the only monument to raise public discourse or consciousness on wartime sexual violence. Likewise, the Newborn Monument's connections to nation-building and nationalism make its 2020 iteration about wartime sexual violence more centered toward the state rather than the survivors. An effective and successful monument should seek to be inclusive, accessible, and complicate dichotomies of gender and nationhood. Overall, the disagreements among the participants regarding the monuments' design approaches, gender representation, and representation of nationalism illustrate the degree to which there are contentions and critiques within Kosovo on the collective memory of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo. The Heroinat Memorial and the 2020 iteration of the Newborn Monument reinforce and perpetuate the hegemonic collective memory that places collective victimhood in gender and nationalist terms before doing so on the terms of victim-survivors. In order to deal with the past in Kosovo, the tensions between how Kosovars remember the war should be first recognized and then reconciled. For the sake of victim-survivors' well-being and fully-realized agency, these steps should be taken sooner rather than later.

## **Acknowledgements**

First, I would like to thank the very gracious Dr. Vjollca Krasniqi who generously offered her expertise, time, and consideration in all stages of the process of this paper. Her wealth of knowledge not only improved the outcome of this paper but served as inspiration and motivation when the writing and revision process stalled.

Additionally, the academic advisor for this program, Orli Fridman, and our fearless leader of the Independent Study Project seminar, Jelena Loncar, made the experience—even though we were not in the same place—just as worthwhile and insightful when the semester shifted to online learning. Much appreciation to Dr. Fridman and Dr. Loncar for the planning and execution of this untraditional semester.

And finally, I need to thank my cohort of fellow students who encouraged me and supported me through this unconventional time. Particularly, I would like to thank Ariel Troy for her generous dedication of time and comments that greatly improved the draft of this paper.

This paper is dedicated to all victim-survivors of sexual violence and domestic violence, both those who choose to speak out and whose names we know, and also those that choose to speak in and whose names we may never know. Sexual violence does not stop when wartime stops, so I also want to acknowledge and support those who continue to experience sexual violence and domestic violence.

## Works Cited

A'Design Award & Competition. "Heroinat Memorial by Ilir Blakçori." Accessed October 25, 2020. <https://competition.adesignaward.com/design.php?ID=33265>.

Bami, Xhirxhina. "In Pictures: Kosovo Newborn Monument Dedicated to Sex Abuse Survivors." *Balkan Insight*, February 17, 2020. <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/17/in-pictures-kosovo-newborn-monument-dedicated-to-sex-abuse-survivors/>.

Di Lellio, Anna. "Seeking Justice for Wartime Sexual Violence in Kosovo: Voices and Silence of Women." *East European Politics and Societies* 30, no. 3 (2016): 621–643. Sage Journals.

Di Lellio, Anna, Feride Reshiti, and Kadire Tahiraj. "'Thinking of You' in Kosovo: Art Activism Against the Stigma of Sexual Violence." *Violence Against Women* 25, no. 13 (2019): 1543-1557. SAGE Journals.

Dragović-Soso, Jasna. "Conflict, Memory, Accountability: What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?" In *Conflict and Memory: Bridging Past and Future in [South East] Europe*, edited by Wolfgang Petritsch and Vedran Džihic, 29-46. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010.

Hynes, Michelle, and Barbara Lopes Cardozo. "Sexual Violence Against Women in Refugee Settings." *Journal of Women's Health & Gender-based Medicine* 9, no. 8 (2000): 819-823.

Goldsworthy, Vesna. "Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization." In *Balkan as Metaphor*, edited by Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić, 25-28. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

Gusia, Linda. "Silence Versus Recognition of Survivors of Sexual Violence in Kosovo." In *Njohja*, edited by Astrit Salihu, 139-148. Pristina: Instituti për Studime Sociale dhe Humanistike, 2014.

*Kosovo/Kosova as Seen, as Told: An Analysis of the Human Rights Findings of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission October 1998 to June 1999*. Warsaw: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1999. Accessed October 25, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/17772?download=true>.

Krasniqi, Vjollca. "Imagery, Gender and Power: The Politics of Representation in Post-war Kosova." *Feminist Review* no. 86 (2007): 1-23. SAGE Journals.

Krasniqi, Vjollca. "Topography of the Construction of the Nation," in *Strategies of Symbolic Nation Building in Southeast Europe*, ed. Pal Kolsto (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 139-163.

Krasniqi, Vjollca, Ivor Sokolić, and Denisa Kostovicova. "Skirts as Flags: Transitional Justice, Gender and Everyday Nationalism in Kosovo." *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 2 (2020): 261-476. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12593>.

# Assembling the Archive: Annie Mae Young's Quilted Freedom Framework

*Anna Milliken*

## Introduction

Annie Mae Young, known to her community as “Nig,” was not a typical resident or quilter of Gee’s Bend, Alabama. She did not even live in Gee’s Bend proper, but was born in 1928 in Primrose, a neighborhood in the nearby Alberta, Alabama.<sup>1</sup> As a teenager, Annie Mae<sup>2</sup> was strong, a good baseball player, and could “plow like a man” in the fields—still, she “always wanted to be like a little lady and do pretty things” like make quilts. When she took up quilting though, she did not fit the mold—she didn’t like patterning or “too many little bitty pieces” on intricate quilts. She didn’t particularly like to sew and she “didn’t like silk or crepe, and didn’t use wool too much.” What she did like was old clothes; those she could “tear...up and put ... together” to keep her large family warm.<sup>3</sup> When several women, including Annie Mae’s own sister, opened up the Freedom Quilting Bee in 1969 to make and sell quilts together, they did not welcome Annie’s “old clothes” quilts and “tear up” patterns—they didn’t think they would sell. So imagine Annie Mae’s surprise when her 1976 quilt was chosen as the centerpiece of the internationally-renowned 2002 exhibit, *The Quilts of Gee’s Bend*. Starting in 1998, outsiders began labeling Annie Mae’s quilts modern art and buying them for museum

---

<sup>1</sup> Alberta is only a couple miles from Boykin, the official town name for Gee’s Bend, but by 1965, there were only two cars in the whole town of Boykin, so distances were felt harder.

<sup>2</sup> I will be using first names instead of last (or colloquial nicknames) when referring to quilters, because, due to the seclusion and deep history of slavery in Gee’s Bend, most of these women share one or two last names from a former enslaver, regardless of biological or marital relation. Colloquial nicknames are not typically used by outsiders, as I myself am, and are a tool of community which I do not want to claim without permission.

<sup>3</sup> William Arnett, *Gee’s Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt*, First Edition edition (Atlanta, Ga: Tinwood Books, 2006).

prices. However, these collectors and curators, like white museum actors before them, undervalued and whitewashed Black art, ignoring the deep connection of Gee's Bend quilts to Black feminist theory and creative expression.

By centering Black women's voices, artistry, and theory, I will examine how Annie Mae Young grew into her own methodology of Black artistry and performed acts of "getting free" through her patchwork strip quilts of 1944, 1965, and 1976 (Fig 2, 4, 5). Annie Mae's lived freedom framework, which takes shape in her search for and creation of joy, radical care, and an archive within her quilts, predates present academic and Black feminist studies of "getting free."<sup>4</sup> Black women theorists, like Christina Sharpe and Saidiya Hartman, acknowledge this precedent, and root their scholarship in the everyday praxis of freedom by Black women who came before their theory. Annie Mae, like Sharpe and Hartman, understands that any element of her joy or survival must be constructed by her alone or in her communities, as, historically, organizations of power have neither sustained wellbeing and happiness nor respectfully recorded the lives of Black women. Therefore, examining Annie Mae's quilts through the framework of "getting free" reveals how quilting and quilts in Gee's Bend embody a shared Black feminist project. This essay also demonstrates how white paternalism and commodification plague the twenty-first century criticism and commercialization of the quilts. Art historians, reviewers, and collectors compared the quilts of Gee's Bend to great modern paintings, minimizing the quilters' artistic autonomy as well as the quilts' place in discussions of Black art. Through my analysis of Annie Mae Young's quilts alongside Black feminist theory, I aim to disrupt the dominant whitewashing narratives and demonstrate that this attempt to fit the quilts within a white genealogy ignores the Black feminist methodology of quilting and its underlying freedom framework.

---

<sup>4</sup> For Black feminist concepts of "getting free," see: Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, First edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); Christina Elizabeth Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor et. al., *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2017); Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

In 1998, William Arnett, a white collector of African-American vernacular art, stumbled upon a photograph of a quilt in Roland Freeman's 1996 book, *A Communion of the Spirits: African American Quilters* (Fig 1). The quilt was not perfectly presented and photoshopped; it was thrown over a pile of firewood, rippling in the hallows of the mound. The smiling quilter, Annie Mae Young, stood with her great-granddaughter in front of the pile. This image began Arnett's quest for the woman and her quilts, which would lead him to Boykin, Alabama—colloquially named after an antebellum plantation-owner in the area, Joseph Gee. Since the white landowners left at the beginning of the twentieth century, the residents of Gee's Bend have existed isolated and nearly all Black, descending from enslaved people. With the new interest of the Arnett family and its Atlanta-based non-profit, Tinwood Alliance, this community and hundreds of their quilts grew to national prominence in a matter of years. Arnett's foundation bought hundreds of quilts at a couple hundred dollars apiece—much less than they would sell to the museums and much more than anyone had ever received for a quilt in the Bend.



**Figure 1:** Annie Mae Young and her great-granddaughter posing in front of her quilt. Photograph by Ronald Freeman 1993. From Souls Grown Deep Foundation.

Along with their collecting, the Arnett family and its foundation for vernacular African-American art became obsessed with how to raise the quilts out of craft and into the realm of fine art. In order to justify initial exhibits at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and The Whitney Museum of American Art and later at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arnett and his fellow curators described the 1960s and 1970s quilts as “parallel creations” to modernist paintings by twentieth-century white male artists. Arnett sensationalized his ‘discovery’ of a “parallel art world”—one that was Black and southern and self-taught—which produced artwork comparable to the likes of Picasso, Cézanne, and Mondrian.<sup>5</sup>

With only short paragraphs from the artists themselves, a 2002 exhibit catalog, *Gee’s Bend: The Women and Their Quilts*, echoes Arnett’s analogies to “contemporary artists” and modernist painters—all of whom are white and male.<sup>6</sup> Even art historians writing in the catalog assert that any reference to mid-century painters “quickly seem[s] irrelevant,” as they were most likely not a direct influence. Still, the initial alignment with white male artists became the quilts’ entry-point into the museum space and the mainstream. In his raving *New York Times* review, Michael Kimmelman encouraged his readers, “Imagine Matisse and Klee...arising not from rarefied Europe, but from... the rural South in the form of women, descendants of slaves when Gee’s Bend was a plantation.” Kimmelman even doubted any New Yorker “attuned to modern art” could avoid the “echoes of painterly equivalents: here a Barnett Newman, there a Frank Stella, here a Josef Albers, there an Agnes Martin.”<sup>7</sup> While these similarities were cast aside in long form criticism of the art, in the commodification of the work—in exhibition advertisements and reviews, collector sales and gallery wall text—white artistic comparisons were emphasized. The Arnett family and their museum colleagues encouraged a white viewership and appreciation by implicitly and explicitly setting

---

<sup>5</sup> Sally Anne Duncan, “From Cloth to Canvas: Reinventing Gee’s Bend Quilts in the Name of Art,” *Museum Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2005): 192.

<sup>6</sup> Alvia Wardlow “Annie Mae Young,” in *Gee’s Bend: The Women and Their Quilts*, 1st ed (Atlanta, Ga. : Houston: Tinwood Books ; Museum of Fine Arts, 2002), 102.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Kimmelman, “ART REVIEW; Jazzy Geometry, Cool Quilters,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 2002, sec. Arts.

white male production as the standard against which we consume these quilts created by Black women of the rural South.

In the physical space of the gallery, this reimagining of the quilts as modernist paintings took shape in curatorial design. This spatial organization catered once again to seasoned (white) museum-goers and emphasized a connection to fine art. One New York reviewer admired, “occupying the entire third floor of the Whitney...the [*The Quilts of Gee’s Bend*] exhibition displayed the quilts as if they were canvases.”<sup>8</sup> Against flat white walls and lit up with bright museum lights, the quilts resembled their modern art parallels in presentation as well as in composition. The experience of viewing the quilts barely differed from admiring a framed Rothko or Klee. Those who frequented the Whitney or read *The New York Times* comfortably appreciated the quilts as they were accustomed to viewing the supposed white modernist parallels. The space of museums and elite consumers occupying it could remain ignorant to the narratives of African-American quilt-making or anything else that might challenge their hegemonic understandings of art.

In her seminal 2003 book, *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum*, art historian Bridget R. Cooks contextualizes *The Quilts of Gee’s Bend* exhibit through the lens of white curation of Black art. Cooks argues throughout her book that two main strategies exist for exhibits of Black art in American museums: anthropological examination of the art and artists against the “elevated, white ‘norm’” and corrective curation which highlights significant and overlooked Black art. Cooks believes these methodologies usually exist in an *either / or* context for curators, making it impossible to highlight *both* artistic merit *and* Black identity. In her final chapter, dedicated to the Gee’s Bend exhibit, Cooks argues that the curators continued along the anthropological track when it came to the quilters, including Farm Security Administration photos of the impoverished town and dialectic quotes from the artists

---

<sup>8</sup> Amelia Peck, “Quilt/Art: Deconstructing the Gee’s Bend Quilt Phenomenon,” in *My Soul Has Grown Deep: Black Art from the American South* (New York : New Haven: The Metropolitan Museum of Art ; distributed by Yale University Press, 2018), 67.

in the exhibit. Yet the display and discussion of the quilts, which hung like canvases against white museum walls and were compared to modern paintings of the twentieth-century, diverged from this track and raised the artwork alone to the level of “corrective curation.”<sup>9</sup> There was a disconnect between the quilts and the quilt-makers, as these curators chose to dismiss identity and culture when it came to the art, while highlighting it in the artists. Their practice had symbolic and material consequences—not only did the artists lose name recognition for their work (falling under the category Gee’s Bend quilters) and become exoticized figures of Black ruralism, but many of the artists remain below or near the poverty line as museums continued to display and purchase their quilts.<sup>10</sup>

Even as white audiences and curators ignore the Black identity and feminism present in Gee’s Bend artwork, African-American creatives, historians, and families have long understood quilts as a touchstone of Black life. African-American quilting remains a flagship of Alabama folk art and Black art more generally, in part due to the violent historical and cultural entanglements of slavery, when many enslaved Africans were taught to quilt by white women as a form of labor. Few formal histories exist to document enslaved women’s participation in quilting, but Black folklorist, Gladys-Marie Fry, articulates in *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Antebellum South*, that, denied the opportunity to read or write, enslaved women “diaried” in their quilts, archiving their lives, griefs, and joys in their stitches. While Harriet Powers, probably the most famous enslaved quilter, documented her life and religion on appliqué Bible Quilts, several women around the country were similarly sharing their stories through this medium.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, “slave quilts” were passed down in the Post-War South, gifting this community history to younger generations of Black women. This persistent archive becomes especially evident when Black artists and authors—Faith Ringgold, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison, to name a few—incorporate the motif or

---

<sup>9</sup> Bridget R. Cooks, “Back to the Future: The Quilts of Gee’s Bend, 2002,” in *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (Amherst, UNITED STATES: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Shaila Dewan, “Handmade Alabama Quilts Find Fame and Controversy,” *The New York Times*, July 29, 2007, sec. U.S.

<sup>11</sup> Gladys-Marie Fry, *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South* (New York :, 1990), 1.

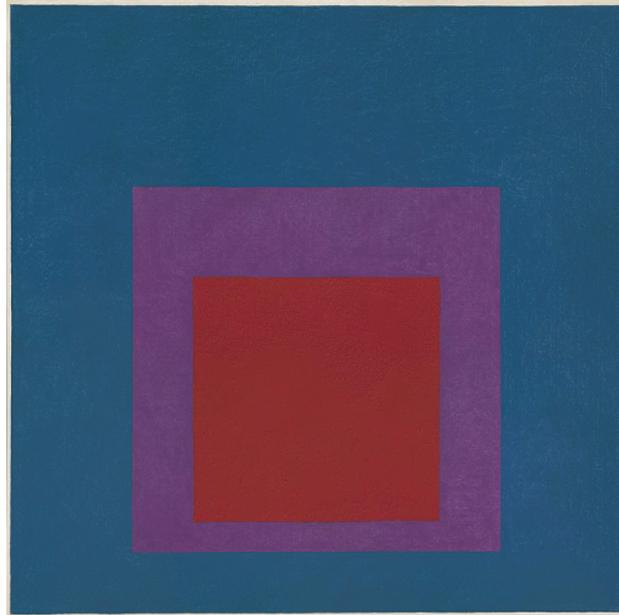
medium of quilting into their work on Blackness and Black womanhood in America. These Black thinkers document in their own creative masterpieces how quilting, stories of quilting, and inherited quilts shape race-gender consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Cultural productions, such as Walker's *Everyday Use* or Ringgold's *Story Quilts*, emphasize the importance of quilting in Black womanhood, even as it escapes white spaces which instead choose to exoticize Blackness and whitewash its art.

Annie Mae Young, whose quilt William Arnett saw in that initial photograph and sparked his obsession with *Gee's Bend* (Fig 1), remained one of his favorite quilt-makers through a wave of early exhibitions. Annie Mae's 1976 work-clothes quilt, with a pop of color at the center medallion, has become one of *Gee's Bend's* most famous quilt, mostly due to Arnett's approval (Fig 2).<sup>13</sup> Arnett loved these geometric strip quilts and used his "parallel art world" to match Annie Mae's patchwork with Josef Albers' "Homage to a Square" paintings (Fig 3). Yet, when we instead analyze this 1976 quilt in a continuum with her previous creations and outside of this white framing, we can understand how Annie Mae grew into her methodology of Black feminist quilting.

---

<sup>12</sup> See: Faith Ringgold's *Story Quilts*, Faith Ringgold (ex: *Street Story Quilt*, 1985, Cotton canvas, acrylic paint, ink marker, dyed and printed cotton, and sequins, sewn to a cotton flannel backing, Overall: 90 x 144 in. (228.6 x 365.8 cm), 1985, Gallery 899, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.); Faith Ringgold, *Cassie's Word Quilt*, 1st Edition (New York: Dragonfly Books, 2004); Faith Ringgold, *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Alice Walker, *Everyday Use* (Rutgers University Press, 1994); Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day*, Illustrated Edition (New York: Vintage, 1989); Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Reprint edition (New York: Vintage, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Wardlow "Annie Mae Young," in *Gee's Bend: The Women and Their Quilts*, 102.



*Right to Left.* **Figure 2:** Annie Mae Young. “Work-Clothes Quilt with Center Medallion.” Denim, corduroy, synthetic blend (britches legs with pockets). 108 x 77 inches. Metropolitan Museum of Art gift of the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. 1976. **Figure 3:** Josef Albers. “Homage to a Square: Red Brass.” Oil on Canvas on Pressed Wood. 40 x 40 inches. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. 1961.

One of Annie Mae’s earliest works, a 1944 work-clothes quilt, resembles many similar styles of the era in Gee’s Bend, created from long labored-in denim and thick cotton (Fig 4). The wear on these clothes demonstrates the back-breaking field labor, first as enslaved families and later as share-croppers and subsistence farmers.<sup>14</sup> Annie Mae describes her own process of quilting as collecting strips and sewing them “however they be” which becomes especially visible in this quilt, as discoloration and wear emerge in the patchwork.<sup>15</sup> One can see a body take shape—can see the uneven wear and imagine the bend of joints; can see old pockets which kept valuables; can see a hole made from overwork. Moreover, one can also see the love and care of the quilter

<sup>14</sup> Melanie McKay and Maaja Stewart, “‘The Tradition of Old People’s Ways’: Gee’s Bend Quilts and Slave Quilts of the Deep South,” *Uncoverings* 26 (2005): 161.

<sup>15</sup> Annie Mae Young, “Annie Mae Young,” in *Gee’s Bend: The Women and Their Quilts*, 104.

who shapes and repurposes that body. Work-clothes quilts hold in *their bodies* both the labor of the quilter and of the former owner(s) of the work clothes themselves. They emphasize a kind of care this collective of quiltmakers takes, to remember the lives and experiences of their community.



**Figure 4:** Annie Mae Young. “Bars and Blocks Work-Clothes Quilt.” Denim. 70 x 89 inches. Souls Grown Deep Foundation. 1944.

The work-clothes quilts, even more than remembering one individual laborer or even one family or community, thoughtfully materialize the memory of slavery, a project of Black feminist theory. In Black theorist and writer, Christina Sharpe’s, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, she describes the “precarities to the afterlives of slavery” and the ways in which in “the wake, the past ... reappears, always, to rupture the present.”<sup>16</sup> Sharpe borrows the term, “afterlives of slavery,” from another prominent Black feminist theorist, Saidiya Hartman, who used it to describe the extensions of slavery in legal and extra-legal forms, such as the carceral system or racialized

---

<sup>16</sup> Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* 9.

poverty.<sup>17</sup> Sharpe articulates further that these slavery-adjacent structures emphasize how the so-called “past” of slavery may be atemporal in nature or at least persists in the present. Similarly, in Annie Mae’s work-clothes quilts, such as that of 1944, the medium of work clothes affirms Annie Mae’s care for the laborer but also emphasizes the roots of that labor. The ubiquitous combination of indigo and cotton on Gee’s Bend quilts “materializes memories” of American southern slavery, which violently sustained itself on these profitable crops.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Annie Mae’s indigo patches have faded with time and overwork, echoing the fading yet present memory (or afterlife) of this labor and subjection. While indigo fades from parts of the cover, the deep color in other swatches demonstrates that these traumatic waves of “the wake” crash more heavily at certain moments to “rupture the present.”

As a midpoint between her 1944 work-clothes quilt and the famed 1976 medallion quilt, Annie Mae Young’s 1965 eclectic strip quilt grabs the attention of anyone who passes the piece, hung on a clothesline or in a museum (Fig 5). In this center medallion strip quilt, long pieces of bright corduroy, shirt material, polyester, wool, and cotton sheeting are assembled with multiple thicker borders of solid, earthier tones. The strips of fabric, which form a loose square medallion, or “housetop,” alternate in color, thickness and length to create a sense of centripetal movement and energy in the quilt. This hopeful energy reminds its viewer of the much anticipated moment of Black liberation which infiltrated even the most secluded communities of African Americans during the sixties.

---

<sup>17</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, First edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 6.

<sup>18</sup> McKay and Stewart, “The Tradition of Old People’s Ways,” 2.



**Figure 5:** Annie Mae Young. “Center Medallion Strips With Multiple Borders.” Cotton (shirt material, corduroy, sheeting), polyester (dress and pants material), wool. 91 x 81 inches. The Museum of Fine Arts Houston. 1965.

In February 1965, just three weeks before Bloody Sunday rocked the nation, Martin Luther King Jr. made a stop at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, a Black church in the remote Boykin, Alabama. His speech invigorated the citizens of Gee’s Bend; many quiltmakers remember that King was the first person to affirm that each of them “was somebody,” that they mattered.<sup>19</sup> Quilters and community members, inspired by King’s words, crossed the Alabama river to register to vote in the neighboring white town of Camden and some even marched on Bloody Sunday with King.<sup>20</sup> Annie Mae’s excited and loud strip quilt echoes the words of King: she might not have as much as those in Camden, but she is just as important as they are.<sup>21</sup> The shift from a somber wartime quilt to this sharp and unapologetic work of art demonstrates her own status as a woman who will not let white America define her. Annie Mae will not be satisfied with

---

<sup>19</sup> J.R. Moehringer, “Crossing Over,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Clyde Haberman, “Martin Luther King’s Call for Voting Rights Inspired Isolated Hamlet,” *The New York Times*, March 8, 2015, sec. U.S.

<sup>21</sup> Moehringer, “Crossing Over,” *Los Angeles Times*.

only repurposing work clothes or with the mundane life of working and barely surviving. This new abstraction asserts Annie Mae's own excited livelihood and her will to inject the joy of color into her art and life at the Bend.

While most of the 1965 quilt is composed of dull wools and light sheeting, the shorter and skinnier pops of polyester reds and purples spring to life next to these dark navies and stained off-white pieces. While Annie Mae might not have had access to an abundance of brighter colors for this quilt, she expertly alternates skinny strips of synthetics with those of work clothes and corduroy to distribute the loud colors among the duller. Saidiya Hartman describes the "how-to-live" of Black girls and women as a process of finding moments of delight even in fugitivity or subjection. Hartman asserts this "how-to-live" with the example of "loving in doorways," of finding moments of love and joy in tenements or poverty or spaces meant to oppress and dehumanize.<sup>22</sup> Annie Mae creates this sense of excitement and joy of color, even as racially-fueled poverty and seclusion restrain the total quantity of color and fabrics at hand.<sup>23</sup> The sporadic use of hue in this quilt underscores Annie Mae's striving to bring joy and practice "how-to-live" under the economic "afterlives of slavery."

Annie Mae's intense devotion to her stripping technique also emphasizes the uniquely African-American method of assemblage, a movement which was taking place around the country in the sixties but which has a particular salience and genealogy in this Black women's quilting community. Assemblage, or the artistic practice of collection and collage of found objects, is not a uniquely African-American methodology, but Black artists such as Noah Purifoy, began taking on assemblage to collect "garbage" and "debris" and incorporate it into their art in the 1960s. The tradition of "recovering the rubble" of Black neighborhoods or communities takes on a care for African-American humanity and memory.<sup>24</sup> In a moment when the civil rights movement was shining a light on the ways in which the government and institutions

---

<sup>22</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Duncan, "From Cloth to Canvas: Reinventing Gee's Bend Quilts in the Name of Art," 203.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Von Blum, "Recovering the Rubble: African American Assemblage Art in Los Angeles," 2011, 14. 249

did not care for Black humanity, African-American artists stepped in to demonstrate that Black life *was* cared for and could not be ignored out of existence.

Annie Mae gives her community and her home an archive, making the radical claim that, even if few know this little plot of land exists, it will be remembered. Hartman analyzes decades later, this concept of “locating” stories and people who have led the “minor lives”: those who have been ignored or who have been “debris.”<sup>25</sup> In creating a collage of this “debris,” Annie Mae and her contemporaries actively remember these remnants and their stories. Therefore, this material ceases to be trash and becomes part of the artistic and communal archive. This archive is especially integral to critical race theory and Black feminist theory, as Black genealogy has been systemically stripped of African Americans due to the middle passage, the separation of enslaved families, and slavery’s carceral and migrant afterlives. Having the will to remember and to preserve is a rebellion against a state which sanctions the violence toward and the disappearance of Black life.

Quilting in Gee’s Bend has always recorded ‘the collective’ by incorporating “waste” fabric—those “useless” scraps which are either too worn or oddly shaped to wear. By the collection of many “useless” pieces, quilters can assemble something of great use, while saving the memory of whoever wore those clothes. One Gee’s Bend quilter wrote about her assemblage, “I can point to my dead brother’s pants or my father’s shirt. Or I can point to my grandmother’s dress and tell my kids what she did in that dress.”<sup>26</sup> This quilter assembled an archive which values the collective, both in its verb and noun forms. Annie Mae’s and her contemporaries’ act of *collecting* values each individual brother, father, and grandmother, while their quilted *collections* bring this family back together in a tactile memory. Gee’s Bend quilters might archive a *collective* familial bond in one quilt or save scraps from different homes and laborers to in order assemble a *collective* oneness of a larger community. Annie Mae’s quilts demonstrate a

---

<sup>25</sup> Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Anna C. Chave, “Dis/Cover/Ing the Quilts of Gee’s Bend, Alabama,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 1, no. 2 (July 2008): 225.

will to remember and to document familial and community ties that she will not allow to be stripped from her.

In her 1944 quilt, this collection and record consists of work clothes and remembers the honest and humble existence of continuous labor. In 1965, Annie Mae's excitement breaks through in her assemblage of declarative fabrics. She asserts that her community, from whom she is collecting and for whom she is creating, is more than a group of laborers, of (ex-)slaves. There is an effort to bring joy and delight "in the midst of...[the] unlivable" as many Black scholars emphasize is key to "getting free." Christina Sharpe describes her mother, "[she] brought beauty into that house in every way that she could; she worked at joy, and she made livable moments, spaces, and places in the midst of all that was unlivable." Sharpe's mother attempted to "make a small path through the wake" of constant oppression.<sup>27</sup> Even as Sharpe's family, and the women of Gee's Bend, lived precarious to racialized poverty and oppression, they "did not *simply* or *only* live *in* subjection and *as* the subjected."<sup>28</sup> Annie Mae and the women with whom she created "worked at joy" to make "livable moments, spaces, and places" with the colors and designs of their quilts. Annie Mae and the quilters of Gee's Bend embody and create within Sharpe's theory, long before Sharpe theorized it.

Still, this life was only "a small path" and had to be carefully guarded, like the optimistic center medallion on Annie Mae's 1965 quilt. The wool and corduroy borders around Annie Mae's unapologetically joyful medallion might represent an expediency and contrast to her artistic "how-to-live" of bright strips, but they also bring to mind a kind of protective shield for this "small path" to joy. The thick materiality of corduroy and cotton as well as the large space these border occupy protect Annie Mae's joy—the joy she has collected from her community—against the constant precarity of Black life in America (as Sharpe calls it, "life [...] lived near death").<sup>29</sup> The thickness and deep hues of the border juxtapose the skinny, bright chaos of the medallion and hint at a

---

<sup>27</sup> Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* 4, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* 4. Emphasis hers.

<sup>29</sup> Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* 5.

heavy guardedness to which Gee's Bend women are accustomed, even in their most optimistic memories of the 1960s. This outer armor underscores the white backlash to Black joy and humanity, as witnessed by many quilters who attempted to register to vote or march with King. The medallion asserts the hope of the movement, while this shield reminds the viewer of the violent and demeaning realities. While Annie Mae's 1944 quilt does not hold the same joy as this later creation, it also does not require a strong defensive wall.

The 1965 triple border's figurative and tactile reference to a protective shield mirrors the physical and emotional use of quilts and emphasizes the utility of the quilt as integral to its creation. The women of Gee's Bend used "cover" and "quilt" interchangeably when discussing their creations, linguistically asserting how these pieces ought to function.<sup>30</sup> These works of art often "covered" a bed, a child, a drafty corner of a room, or a clothes line. The structural aspects of the quilts in space served as a protection from the cold and dirt as well as from bleak emotional realities of slavery's "afterlives," giving physical and aesthetic comfort to their owners. In her 1987 masterpiece, *Beloved*, Toni Morrison writes of her formerly-enslaved matriarch:

"...it was clear why Baby Suggs was so starved for color. There wasn't any except for two orange squares in a quilt ... The walls of the room were slate-colored, the floor earth-brown, the wooden dresser the color of itself, curtains white"<sup>31</sup>

Baby Suggs, enslaved and then impoverished, is "starved for color" and desires it desperately. Toni Morrison, a Black feminist theorist and author, demonstrates how the African-American quilting tradition offers this "color"—a small token of delight—to those "starved" of it. Black quilters might not have access to an abundance color or might choose to shield it from damage or assault by giving only, insular "two orange

---

<sup>30</sup> Chave, "Dis/Cover/Ing the Quilts of Gee's Bend, Alabama," 222.

<sup>31</sup> Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, 19.

squares,” but either way, they create a “small path” to joy. Annie Mae’s quilts both represent her community through the collection of their “debris” and responsively serve this community’s needs for warmth and aesthetic pleasure in the face of desperate poverty. Again, the quilt becomes a token of both joy and care, for the physical and emotional protection of a community whose “life ...is lived near death” and who treasures this gift of “color” (joy) in moments of starvation.

By 1976, this border—that guard which protects and infringes upon the bold colors—has grown to dominate a larger section and emotional significance within Annie Mae’s quilts. Annie Mae’s famed 1976 quilt features an even more dominating border of denim work clothes, with a rigid square medallion of red and orange corduroy strips (Fig 2). Building on the aesthetic of her 1965 medallion quilt, Annie Mae strips the fabric in similarly thinner central pieces and thicker, deeper-hued border pieces. The indigo border calls back the somber image of her 1944 quilt and dredges up the atemporal “afterlives of slavery” present in work clothes. Sharpe’s description of being “in the wake” where “the past ... reappears, always, to rupture the present,” becomes especially salient in “the wake” of late-sixties and early-seventies white backlash.<sup>32</sup> In addition to many horrifically violent forms of white supremacy, Martin Luther King (who had such a large impact on the Benders that they wanted to rename their town to King) was assassinated in April 1968. His death reverberated around the nation and suffocated the joy of the civil rights movement.<sup>33</sup> The deep hues of this border, unlike the faded denim of Annie Mae’s 1944 quilt, as well as the streaks of violent red, underscore the freshness this “past”—this instance of white brutality and Black pain. Annie Mae’s quilt reminds the viewer of the omnipresent “wake” which Black women cannot fully escape and where this past can *always* “rupture the present.”

In addition to national tragedies and assassinations at the end of the decade, Gee’s Bend suffered from personal white backlash as well. In 1966, whites from the

---

<sup>32</sup> Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* 9.

<sup>33</sup> Haberman, “Martin Luther King’s Call for Voting Rights Inspired Isolated Hamlet,” *The New York Times*.

neighboring Camden, Alabama, cut off the ferry to travel between Gee's Bend and the rest of the state speedily. There was no warning for those citizens of Gee's Bend, just a sudden gash between the secluded community and the rest of the state. While no reason was ever officially stated, most believe this action was a racist response to voting attempts and protesting in white spaces.<sup>34</sup> The rigid insularity of color—bright reds and oranges against the dark border—materializes this blunt and often violent gash between those with free movement and those trapped by racialized geography. The deep, encompassing indigo in this later quilt also recalls the Alabama river, which protects the community from deadly white backlash while also separating them from doctors and schools and institutions of social and physical life support. By 1976, the surrounding border consumes more joy than it protects. Still, the bright strips highlight an organized, controlled joy—rigidly structured and protected within a period of grief, but nevertheless hopeful. The path out of “the wake” is never completely unimaginable.

In analysis of William Arnett's favorite quiltmaker and even in his “discovery” quilt, Black feminist praxis and theory emerge—“parallel” to later Black writers and philosophers, rather than to white modernist painters. Christina Sharpe and Saidiya Hartman, while writing after Annie Mae's death, emphasize the practice of “getting free” as pre-dating their theory, affirmed in their historical writings and focus on Black women who came before them. Arnett's ignorance and the repeated ignorance of contemporary exhibits to forefront this lived and performed theory in Gee's Bend quilting demonstrates a lack of commitment to African-American pedagogies and storytelling. Black feminism can stand in academia or against a white wall or on a bed of fire wood or wherever it sees fit without the aid of Arnett's “discovery” or white, male “art world.” Instead, the centuries-old performance of Black women's quilting in Gee's Bend exists as clear documentation of Black feminist methodology, commemorating the joy and tragedy of Black life.

---

<sup>34</sup> Moehring, “Crossing Over,” *Los Angeles Times*.

## Works Cited

- Beardsley, John, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Tinwood Alliance, eds. *Gee's Bend: The Women and Their Quilts*. 1st ed. Atlanta, Ga. : Houston: Tinwood Books ; Museum of Fine Arts, 2002.
- Blum, Paul Von. "Recovering the Rubble: African American Assemblage Art in Los Angeles," 2011, 14.
- Chave, Anna C. "Dis/Cover/Ing the Quilts of Gee's Bend, Alabama." *The Journal of Modern Craft* 1, no. 2 (July 2008): 221–53.  
<https://doi.org/10.2752/174967808X325514>.
- Cooks, Bridget R. "Back to the Future: The Quilts of Gee's Bend, 2002." In *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum*. Amherst, UNITED STATES: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/yale-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4532902>.
- Dewan, Shaila. "Handmade Alabama Quilts Find Fame and Controversy." *The New York Times*, July 29, 2007, sec. U.S.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/29/us/29quilt.html>.
- Duncan, Sally Anne. "From Cloth to Canvas: Reinventing Gee's Bend Quilts in the Name of Art." *Museum Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2005): 19–34.  
<https://doi.org/10.1525/mua.2005.28.1.19>.
- Fry, Gladys-Marie. *Stitched from the Soul :Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South /*. New York :, 1990. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015019482978>.

- Haberman, Clyde. "Martin Luther King's Call for Voting Rights Inspired Isolated Hamlet." *The New York Times*, March 8, 2015, sec. U.S.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/09/us/gees-bend-alabama-martin-luther-king-voting-rights-1965.html>.
- Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. First edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.
- . *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.
- Kimmelman, Michael. "ART REVIEW; Jazzy Geometry, Cool Quilters." *The New York Times*, November 29, 2002, sec. Arts.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/29/arts/art-review-jazzy-geometry-cool-quilters.html>.
- McKay, Melanie, and Maaja Stewart. "The Tradition of Old People's Ways': Gee's Bend Quilts and Slave Quilts of the Deep South." *Uncoverings* 26 (2005): 155–73.
- Moehringer, J.R. "Crossing Over." *Los Angeles Times*. August 22, 1999.  
<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-aug-22-mn-21385-story.html>.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Reprint edition. New York: Vintage, 2004.
- Naylor, Gloria. *Mama Day*. Illustrated Edition. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Peck, Amelia. "Quilt/Art: Deconstructing the Gee's Bend Quilt Phenomenon." In *My Soul Has Grown Deep: Black Art from the American South*. New York : New Haven: The Metropolitan Museum of Art ; distributed by Yale University Press, 2018.

Ringgold, Faith. *Cassie's Word Quilt*. 1st Edition. New York: Dragonfly Books, 2004.

———. *Street Story Quilt*. 1985. Cotton canvas, acrylic paint, ink marker, dyed and printed cotton, and sequins, sewn to a cotton flannel backing, Overall: 90 x 144 in. (228.6 x 365.8 cm). Gallery 899. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/485416>.

———. *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Sharpe, Christina Elizabeth. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Walker, Alice. *Everyday Use*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994.

# A Fascist Stance Towards Homosexuals in a Post-Fascist West Germany: An Analysis of What Led Konrad Adenauer's Regime to Retain the Nazi-era §175 and §175a of the German Penal Code

*Brendan Lui*

## **Introduction**

The postwar era was a time of moral reckoning for the German *Volk*. With the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945, Germany was left destitute and demoralized. To the west, the Allied British, French, and American forces began their occupation of Germany. Under the influence of the Allied forces, West German politicians would help direct the future of West German democracy. They were tasked with rebuilding a nation and reshaping the moral visage of the German people following the horrific crimes of Hitler's Nazi regime. To reconcile with the injustices of National Socialism, the first government of the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (BDR), formed in 1949 by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's victorious *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU) and *Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern* (CSU) alliance, pledged to strike from the *Strafgesetzbuch* (Penal Code) any laws that contained national socialist thought. Yet in this process of "denazification," the Nazi-era §175 and §175a, a section of the Penal Code criminalizing homosexual sodomy, was notably absent from these revisions. Why did Adenauer's government retain Nazi-era laws criminalizing homosexual sodomy despite them clearly reflecting National Socialist and fascist thought?

The criminalization of homosexual sodomy in Germany dates back to the rule of the Prussian Empire. The Penal Code maintained the Prussian-era version of §175 until

1935 when the National Socialists came to power. The Prussian-era §175 defines sodomy, or *widernatürliche Unzucht* translating to “unnatural fornication,” as sexual acts occurring between men and animals or between two men.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the law states that sodomy is punishable with time in prison and the loss of civil rights. In 1935 under the Nazi regime, §175 was revised to outlaw both homosexual sodomy and other less severe sexual acts between two men. The 1935-version of the law added §175a, where individuals could face up to ten years in prison and no less than three months if they: use force or threat to coerce another man to commit sodomy with him; abuse a position of dependence, whether in service, employment, or subordination, to force another man to commit sodomy with him; seduce a man under the age of twenty-one to commit sodomy with him if he is over the age of twenty-one; or commits sodomy with another man for material profit.<sup>2</sup> The National Socialists sought to eradicate all who challenged their vision of a purely Aryan and heterosexual society. They revised §175 of the Penal Code to make the grounds for punishment more comprehensive and the consequences more severe. Plainly, §175 and §175a reflected national socialist and fascist ideas.

There is a limited literature on the criminalization of homosexuality available in the English language covering the period between the end of World War II and before the height of the sexual liberation movement of the 1970s. Much of the literature that does exist on homosexuality in West Germany focuses on the Nazi-era persecution of gay men, the sexual liberation movement, and the decriminalization of homosexual sodomy. However, scholars of German history and the history of sexuality have written substantively on the legal and social status of gay men in West Germany during the immediate postwar era. These works, to be subsequently discussed, were crucial to the investigations of this paper.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. von Staundingers, ed., Hermann Schmitt, rev., *Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich*. 10. Aufl., 2. Abdruck. München: C.H. Beck, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard O.W. Mueller, Thomas Buergenthal, trans., “The German Penal Code of 1871,” *The American Series of Foreign Penal Codes*, (South Hackensack: Fred B. Rotham & Co., 1999.): 101-2.

Dagma Herzog and Clayton J. Whisnant's have written on the sexual and family policies of the Adenauer regime. These policies greatly shaped the social environment surrounding sexuality during the first two decades of the postwar years. Herzog focuses on a broader range of sexual policies, including the laws regulating birth control, abortion, and pre- and extramarital sex.<sup>3</sup> She also touches upon the criminalization of homosexuality under §175 and §175a. Whisnant, however, brings a far more robust discussion to the literature of how the Adenauer government stifled gay liberation efforts through sexual and family policies.<sup>4</sup>

Robert G. Moeller and Whisnant have made significant contributions to the literature on the legal status of homosexual sodomy in West Germany. Specifically, they have written about the series of court cases that set the legal precedent affirming that §175 and §175a were in accordance with West German jurisprudence. In 1951, the *Bundesgerichtshof* (Federal High Court) ruled against appellants arguing that §175 and §175a reflected national socialist thought. Both the Court's belief in the law's righteous origins and the Allies' acceptance of the law justified its constitutionality. Subsequent rulings by the *Bundesgerichtshof* reinforcing the validity of §175 and §175a led to Court's 1954 declaration: case law affirmed §175 and §175a's accordance with German Basic Law – the set of laws influenced by Enlightenment and liberal ideas guaranteeing basic human rights to all German citizens.<sup>5</sup> Opponents of §175 and §175a argued that because lesbianism was not criminalized but homosexuality was, men and women were not treated equally, which in turn violated the Basic Law. However, jurists rejected this claim because female sexuality was believed to be by nature more reserved. Women were also far less susceptible to the sexual instability that characterized the male inclinations towards promiscuity.<sup>6</sup> This decision determined, much to the celebration

---

<sup>3</sup> Herzog, Dagma. *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press), 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Clayton John Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-69* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan), 2012.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 93.

of supporters of §175 and §175a, that criminalizing homosexuality was not at odds with the liberal and democratic nature of the burgeoning Federal Republic.

Moeller's work sheds light on a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1957 that marked a critical victory for proponents of §175 and §175a and a disheartening setback for gay liberation activists. The Federal Constitutional Court decided that a law originating in the Third Reich did not necessarily contain National Socialist *Gedankengut* (body of thought). The careful vetting of justices on the Federal Constitutional Court ensured they had no significant ties to the Nazi regime, invalidating criticisms that the judges were Nazi apologists.<sup>7</sup> Members of the *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat*, the two legislative chambers of the Federal Republic, select and appoint judges to the Federal Constitutional Court. But as Taylor Cole notes, the Federal Constitutional Court is not entirely free from government or partisan influence.<sup>8</sup> The CDU/CSU's parliamentary majority during this period meant that while the Federal Constitutional Court's rulings were not directly influenced by the Adenauer regime, the party could quietly guide the decisions and legal direction of the Court. Furthermore, the appointment process meant that the CDU/CSU could select judges who reflected their Christian values and whose legal decisions would reflect such beliefs. As such, the Federal Constitutional Court's legal legitimization of the Adenauer government's decision to maintain §175 and §175a was not entirely unbiased.

Scholars have also paid great attention to the grassroots homophile movement that arose in the postwar years. Leaders of the homophile movement fought for sexual liberation and made repealing of §175 and §175a a key facet of their advocacy platform. Whisnant's work goes to great depths discussing the leaders and local organizations of the homophile movement in West Germany. However, the homophile movement emerged far after the initial decision to leave the Nazi-era §175 and §175a in place.

---

<sup>7</sup> Robert G. Moeller, "Sex, Society, and the Law in Postwar West Germany," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 3, (1994): 404-5.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor Cole, "The West German Federal Constitutional Court: An Evaluation After Six Years." *The Journal of Politics* 20, no. 2, (1958): 285.

Furthermore, these organizations were unsuccessful in any attempts to repeal §175 and §175a before 1969 when the law was finally replaced. Their failures were largely due to conflicting priorities and visions among the leaders of the movement. A string of legal defeats and police harassment ultimately led to the demise of these grassroots organizations and with them, the movement itself. The homophile movement would not reemerge until the sexual revolution of the 1970s.<sup>9</sup>

What this literature lacks, and what I attempt to achieve in this paper, is a specific focus on the pivotal decision to preserve §175 and §175a in the West German penal code. I aim to discover the causal link explaining how the socio-political realities of West Germany in the immediate postwar era led to this fateful decision. I will employ a process tracing method to present and eliminate rival hypotheses and confirm the main hypothesis to make a causal claim as to *why* Adenauer's government decided to retain the Nazi-era §175 and §175a of the West German penal code. I argue that in the attempt to erase the true underlying causes of Nazism and instead blame the rise of National Socialism on secularization and sexual liberality, the Adenauer government allowed for an explicitly fascist law to remain in order to uphold this false narrative. In doing so, the West German government left no room for the expression of homosexuality because it threatened the narrative that sexual conservatism would restore the moral fiber of the German nation and repair the collective German conscience.

There are several rival hypotheses that could also explain the central decision in question. International pressures could have convinced the Adenauer government to uphold the 1935 versions of §175 and §175a. It was widely believed during the postwar era that homosexuals were especially susceptible to Soviet and communist influence, and that many homosexuals were in fact Soviet spies. With the fears of Soviet and communist influence constantly looming over West Germany, pressures from the

---

<sup>9</sup> Clayton John Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-69* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 64-111.

American sphere of influence could have convinced West Germany to take drastic measures policing homosexuality in order to protect them from communist subversion. Fears of population decline, due to low birthrates and the loss of so many young German men during the war, could have fueled the desire to stamp out homosexuality within West German society. Proponents of pronatalism argued that homosexual acts and the failure of homosexual men to form nuclear families and procreate threatened the future existence of the German *Volk*. It is also possible that the Adenauer government maintained §175 and §175a because they truly believed that homosexuality violated their Christian morals. West Germany was a traditionally Christian nation-state. With the CDU/CSU's rise to power, the government was naturally led by politicians who were Christian and held Christian values. The Adenauer government also gave the church direct influence over government policy debates, allowing the values of the Church to help shape policy outcomes.

The substantive content of this paper will draw from the existing literature concerning postwar policies that regulated sexuality and promoted traditional, nuclear families in West Germany. In addition, I will engage with the literature describing the social realities of gay men in the Federal Republic during the postwar era. I will focus on the pivotal year of 1949, when the CDU/CSU coalition came to power following the first Federal Election in West Germany. During this year, the government began to revise and denazify the Penal Code. 1949 was the critical moment at which the Adenauer government concluded that §175 and §175a should remain in the Penal Code. However, it is necessary to look at the historical conditions under Nazism and postwar narratives about these conditions to gain a deeper understanding of what led to this decision. On a theoretical level, I will examine how the West German government's stark moral opposition towards homosexuality and active enforcement of a fascist law fits within the broader theoretical discussion of how policy outcomes are shaped by a regime's degree of autonomy from the church.

I will first proceed by discussing and discounting the rival hypotheses that could explain the Adenauer government's decision to retain §175 and §175a of the Penal Code: the influence of transnational organizations, fears of population decline, and the Christian morals of political leaders. I will then turn to the main hypothesis, arguing that the Adenauer regime's revisionism and erasure of the root causes of Nazism, in their attempts to redeem German morality through sexual repression and religious revival, was the principal motivation to maintain §175 and §175a. Following this examination, I will finally turn to the broader theoretical discourse on the institutional access of the church and its effect on policy direction.

### **The Influence of International Actors and Organizations**

#### *How West Germany was Unmoved by International Attitudes Towards Homosexuality*

During their occupation of West Germany, the Allied Forces, but particularly the United States, had considerable influence in shaping the laws and constitution of the emerging BDR.<sup>10</sup> In an effort to create a Federal Republic that was both liberal and democratic, the Allied Forces hoped to mold an institutional framework that could resist any future attempts to revive National Socialism and Fascism in West Germany. Significantly, this institutional framework included the adoption of the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law), a new penal code, which first had to be approved by the Allied Powers.<sup>11</sup> America's outstanding role in shaping the new Federal Republic meant that American foreign policy goals had the potential to greatly affect the laws and framework of West Germany. As the newfound leader of the "Free World," the American government had a strong desire to root out communism at home and abroad and protect the liberal and democratic order they sought to establish throughout the world. A growing idea among

---

<sup>10</sup> Richard L. Merritt, "American Influences in the Occupation of Germany," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 428, (1976): 92.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

the international community of western democracies painted homosexuals as a group particularly susceptible to Soviet and communist influence.

The conflation between homosexuality and communism was originally an American idea. In America, the fear that gay men had a unique proclivity for communist sympathies manifested itself in what was known as the “Lavender Scare” – a purge of homosexuals from federal government agencies and departments to protect American institutions from homosexual, and thus communist, subversion.<sup>12</sup> Following the Lavender Scare, after coming to power in 1953, American President Dwight D. Eisenhower continued to root out homosexuals from the federal government and encouraged his west European allies to do the same.<sup>13</sup> While fears of the subversive and communist nature of homosexuals stretched well in the 1950s, the idea that homosexuals posed a ‘security risk’ to the democratic state was not new to this decade. These anxieties originated in the 1940s under U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt’s administration charged the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to investigate those in the federal government who were suspected of homosexuality and potentially subversive activity.<sup>14</sup>

The United States had a vested interest to ensure that communism and communist sympathies would not arise within West Germany. Resting on the edge of the Iron Curtain, West Germany was a strategic asset to the foreign policy interests of the United States. While the United States and Allied Forces were committed to the denazification of West German law, they were also wary of the importance in keeping West Germany under the western sphere of influence. §175 and §175a, although clearly fascist in nature, provided a means to root out gay men in West German society and with them, potential communist agents. In the case of homosexuality, the United States’

---

<sup>12</sup> Douglas M. Charles, “Communist and Homosexual: The FBI, Harry Hay, and the Secret Side of the Lavender Scare, 1943-1961,” *American Communist History* 11, no. 1. (2012): 1.

<sup>13</sup> Clayton John Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-69* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 62.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas M. Charles, “Communist and Homosexual,” *American Communist History* 11, no. 1. (2012), 102.

interest to prevent the spread of communism in West Germany trumped their desires to rid the penal code of all National Socialist ideas. In crafting the Basic Law of West Germany, the American paranoia of communist homosexuals subverting the democratic order could have had a direct influence on the decision to keep the Nazi-era §175 and §175a. Two notable works published in West Germany reflected this reputed belief of the communist sympathies of gay men, echoing anxieties similar to those of the paranoid American government. Richard Gatzweiler's *The Third Sex: The Criminality of Homosexuality* dubbed gay activists “Moscow’s new guard” and pointed to the growing homophile movement within West Germany and its international network of homophiles. This international network was thought to be particularly vulnerable to Soviet influence and espionage.<sup>15</sup> Hans Langemann, a West German security officer, published an article in the West German police journal *Kriminalistik* discussing why gay men were especially at risk of possessing communist sympathies. Langemann claimed that homosexuals were an easy target of blackmail by communist spies and could be lured into espionage and treason by communist agents masquerading as lovers. Langemann also argued that resentment towards the law and with it, the state, due to persecution and discrimination made gay men especially prone to treasonous feelings. (An obvious remedy to this concern would have been to decriminalize homosexuality and outlaw discrimination against gay men. But clearly, Langemann’s homophobia inhibited such profound forethought.) Furthermore, Langemann believed that the underground organizations and communities of homosexuals created an echo chamber for these sentiments to multiply and deepen within the consciousness of gay men. Lastly, Langemann argued that the “sexual defects” of homosexuals damaged their psyches, leading to the erosion of their “ethical and moral character.”<sup>16</sup>

While some members of West German society raised alarm about the communist inclinations of gay men, there is no clear evidence that these fears became

---

<sup>15</sup> Clayton John Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-69* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 61.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 63.

central to the discussion of criminalizing homosexuality within the Adenauer government. Members of the government may have indeed taken the potential threats of gay men to the democratic order into consideration. However, as Clayton John Whisnant notes, there was considerable variation between how the West German government and the United States governments considered the idea that gay men possessed extraordinary communist sympathies. No parallel to the '91 sex perverts' scandal – the removal of ninety-one U.S. State Department employees accused of homosexuality – occurred in Bonn.<sup>17</sup> Thus, pressures and influence from the United States to criminalize homosexuality due to the threats they posed to liberal democracy were not a central cause for the West German government to uphold §175 and §175a.

If not the United States, then perhaps pressure from international security organizations to continue criminalizing homosexual sodomy led West Germany to maintain §175 and §175a within the Penal Code. As a fledgling democracy of the West, the Federal Republic became a member of The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) and United Nations (UN). These transnational organizations focused on international security interests and global trends of criminal activity that potentially threatened their member states. Florent Édouard Louwage was a prominent member of the transnational forensic and law enforcement community and an influential actor within Interpol.<sup>18</sup> Louwage was concerned with the wartime deterioration of the family and how this deterioration affected juvenile delinquency and sexual promiscuity. He was deeply troubled by the growing rates of homosexual activity both in his native Belgium and across western Europe. Firmin Frassen, director of Brussels's forensic police and close confidant of Louwage, became a senior Belgian delegate at Interpol. Louwage's concern regarding homosexuality and crime had a clear influence on Frassen. At Interpol's General Assembly of 1957 in Lisbon, Frassen proposed that Interpol produce a global report on the criminality of homosexuality.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>18</sup>Wannes Dupont, "The Two-Faced Fifties: Homosexuality and Penal Policy in the International Forensic Community, 1945–1965," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 28, no. 3 (2019): 363.

Accordingly, the UN secretariat sent out a questionnaire to all member states – HOSEX-4731 – in order to gather data on the rise of homosexual crime around the world.<sup>19</sup> However, international debates on the criminalization of homosexuality occurred far after West Germany faced the initial decision to repeal or retain §175 and §175a. While international policy organizations did discuss the legality of homosexuality, they did not pay significant attention to the subject until 1956, seven years after the BDR's adopted its Penal Code. It is clear that international pressures did not factor into the West German government's decision to uphold §175 and §175a. We now turn to a second alternative explanation: fears of population decline and the influence of pronatalist arguments.

### **Pronatalist Arguments Against Homosexuality**

#### *Fears of Population Decline during the Immediate postwar Era*

In the aftermath of World War II, West German society faced a demographic reality of a “surplus of women” following countless deaths of young German men in the war. Declining birth rates, trends toward limited family size, and war deaths led to widespread fears that the German *Volk* were “dying out.” Moreover, many worried these demographic trends would hinder economic growth. Homosexuality presented a further threat to the future of the German population, as leading criminologists believed that gay men possessed an “inability to engage in heterosexual acts,” notably a National Socialist idea.<sup>20</sup> With the Federal Republic already facing a “scarcity of men,” homosexuals had no place in the reproductive heterosexuality deemed necessary to save the West German people.<sup>21</sup> Despite the fears of pronatalist proponents, demographic trends and statistics tell a much different story. West Germany experienced population growth in the immediate postwar period due to immigration

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 364.

<sup>20</sup> Moeller, “Sex, Society, and the Law in Postwar West Germany,” 423.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 423-4.

from East Germany, the immigration of German expellees, and the recruitment of foreign laborers mainly between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five.<sup>22</sup> In line with global demographic trends, West Germany also experienced a baby boom between 1946 and 1955, with birth rates growing by 16.8% in 1949 and lowering slightly in 1950 by 16.2%.<sup>23</sup> Between 1939 and 1950, the population in West German territories grew by 7,600,00 people or 18.2 %.<sup>24</sup>

Family policies that came out of the first five years of the ruling CDU/CSU coalition also reveal a counternarrative to pronatalist arguments. From 1949 on, Adenauer's government did not see pronatalism as a policy priority and had few incentives to pass such policies. In their efforts to denazify the German government and German society, pronatalist policies carried with them strong memories of National Socialism.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, despite the loud calls for pronatalist policy to save the "dying" German people, in actuality there was a lack of broad public support for these policies.<sup>26</sup> Changing conceptions of nation strength in the global postwar reality, particularly in the context of a demilitarized West Germany, led to further disincentives for the Federal Republic to pursue pronatalism. Where the strength and international influence of a nation was once based on population size and military strength, the global peacetime consensus prioritized wealth, education, public health, and alliances.<sup>27</sup>

In the context of Adenauer's *Familienpolitik* (family policy), the CDU/CSU coalition was more concerned with the "political reconstruction of the family" and the

---

<sup>22</sup> Bernd H. Kuennecke, "Governmental Service Implications of a Decreasing Population in West Germany," *American Geographical Society* 69, no. 4 (1979): 459.

<sup>23</sup> Hanna Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2001), 112.

<sup>24</sup> Robert G. Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany: Women and Social Policy in the Federal Republic, 1949-1955," *Feminist Studies* 15, no. 1 (1989): 158.

<sup>25</sup> Herbert F. Ziegler, "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 45, no. 38 (1986): 25.

<sup>26</sup> Alison McIntosh, "Recent Pronatalist Policies in Western Europe," *Population and Development Review*, 12 (1986): 321.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

return of the “normal family” – a heterosexual marriage with two children, where the husband earned the wage and the wife lived in subordination to care for the home.<sup>28</sup> Only after the second federal election in 1953, when the CDU/CSU coalition increased their parliamentary margin in the *Bundestag* from nine to ninety-two, did Adenauer’s government pass their first major policy aimed at increasing birthrates. This policy, known as *Kindergeld*, was a federal government stipend granted to families with three or more children. However, this policy only applied to a small minority of the population, and in the years following implementation did little to increase the national birth rate.<sup>29</sup> The lack of pronatalist policies in the first years of Adenauer’s government and the subsequent lack of policies significantly altering the birthrate determines that pronatalism was not a chief concern of the Adenauer government. There were few incentives for the government to pursue a pronatalist policy agenda due to denazification efforts, a dramatically growing population, and the lack of broad public support. As such, the absence of pronatalist sentiments within the Adenauer government cannot adequately explain why the Federal Republic allowed for §175 and §175a to remain in the Penal Code.

### **Good, God-loving Christians**

#### *The Christian Morals of West Germany’s Leaders*

In the mid-twentieth century, conventional wisdom held that to be German was to be Christian. While other religious minorities did exist within German society, the overwhelmingly dominant religious affiliations were Protestantism or Catholicism.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Moeller, “Reconstructing the Family,” 153.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 154.

<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Evans, “Once a majority, Protestants now account for fewer than a third of Germans,” Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, February 12, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/12/once-a-majority-protestants-now-account-for-fewer-than-a-third-of-germans/>

When the CDU/CSU coalition that came to power following the 1949 Federal Election, West Germany was to be governed by good, God-loving Christians with explicitly Christian values and morals. The very premise of the founding of the CDU was to provide Germany with an “infusion of Christian ethical principles in economic, social, and political life.”<sup>31</sup> An obvious explanation as to why Adenauer’s government allowed for §175 and §175a to stay codified in West German law was that homosexuality simply violated their religious beliefs. To stop the spread of homosexuality in West German society, only the harshest of legal punishments to discourage and ultimately erase these tendencies from the German people would suffice, even if these legal punishments were rooted in National Socialist thought. While the members of West Germany’s CDU/CSU coalition were undoubtedly Christian, the fact that their pure religious beliefs principally motivated allowing the Nazi-era §175 and §175a to remain must be called into question.

The Catholic Church and Catholic organizations in West Germany were outspoken in their opposition to homosexuality. The *Volkswartbund*, a voluntary moral purity organization connected to the Catholic Church, labeled homosexuals as “Public Enemy Number One.”<sup>32</sup> They sought to combat the spread of homosexuality in German society by issuing pamphlets, books, and lectures discussing its moral ills.<sup>33</sup> Voluntary organizations like the *Volkswartbund* were critical aspects of the German Catholic subculture, where a vast network of local youth groups, mothers’ clubs, and Christian trade unions made up the “Catholic milieu.”<sup>34</sup> Prior to the secularization efforts of the National Socialists, the Catholic milieu greatly influenced the social and cultural facets of German society. The staunch opposition of the Catholic Church and Catholic

---

<sup>31</sup> Clayton John Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-69* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 25.

<sup>32</sup> Robert G. Moeller, "Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male Homosexuality in West Germany." *Feminist Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 528-552, 700-701.

<sup>33</sup> Joanna Gotzmann: *Der Volkswartbund. Die bischöfliche Arbeitsstelle für Fragen der Volksittlichkeit im Kampf gegen Homosexuelle*, in: Balser u. a. (Hg.), “Himmel und Hölle,” *Das Leben Kölner Homosexueller 1945/1969*, Köln 1995, S: 169-83.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Edward Ruff, *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1965* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press 2005), 1-2.

organizations towards homosexuality was critical in shaping the opinions of the larger laity.

When Konrad Adenauer rose to the Chancellorship in 1949, he embarked on an explicit attempt to re-Christianize West Germany. In the process of re-Christianization, family, sexuality, and gender entered into the mainstream political discourse. The Adenauer government proposed policies and broader political platforms concerning gender, sexuality and family life that reflected strict, conservative Christian values and morals.<sup>35</sup> *Familienpolitik* was a key aspect of the Adenauer government. *Familienpolitik* included both broader political discourse about the family as well as specific policies designed to politically reconstruct the traditional German family.<sup>36</sup> Thanks to Adenauer and the CDU/CSU granting the church direct institutional access, church spokespersons could influence debates regarding the reform of civil family law and criminal sexual law.<sup>37</sup> Sexual conservatism was an important aspect of *Familienpolitik* and included an opposition to homosexuality. The decision to criminalize homosexuality to such an extreme degree reflected the church's vigorous rejection of homosexuality and the belief that it was at odds with Christian morals and teachings. However, the Adenauer government's focus on re-Christianization, sexual conservatism and the reconstruction of the family was not just a result of a Christian Democratic coalition coming to power, attempting to embed Christian values within West German society with the help of the Catholic Church. There were underlying political motives that prompted this determination to reorder family life and redefine what was morally acceptable sexual behavior. These underlying political motives, to revise history and attribute the rise of Nazism to sexual promiscuity and secularization, constitute the central rationale for the Federal Republic to maintain a National Socialist law criminalizing homosexuality, albeit amidst a concerted effort to denazify the Penal Code.

---

<sup>35</sup> Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 73.

<sup>36</sup> Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 27.

<sup>37</sup> Moeller, "Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male Homosexuality in West Germany," 535.

## Revisionist History

### *How the Federal Republic Redefined the Root Cause of Nazism*

In the immediate postwar years, the memory and shame of the evils of Nazism weighed heavily on the conscience of the German people. Adenauer's government faced the task of reshaping the morality of West Germany and reassuring his own citizens, as well as the citizens of the world, that Nazism and fascism would never see light in Germany. The political and economic instability during the final years of the Weimar Republic led to immense social unrest in Germany. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the ensuing global economic depression made the shortcomings of economic liberalism strikingly clear. However, there had already been resentments growing within Germany towards economic liberalism, free trade, and the societal reverberations of rapid industrialization. The National Socialists capitalized on these resentments. The economic crisis, promising to provide social and economic protections from the ravages of the free market system, were particularly salient at the time.<sup>38</sup>

Hitler's *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) democratically rose to power thanks to popular support among the German people for national socialist ideas. During the Nazi-era, the German public was well aware of the widespread persecution, imprisonment, and extermination of Jews, gypsies, prostitutes, homosexuals, and political adversaries. There were undoubtedly those who privately and in rare occasions publicly denounced the actions of Hitler's regime. But the Germans were, by-and-large, at best guilty of acting as bystanders, at worst liable for complicity in the crimes of the Nazis. Adenauer pledged to structurally reform the Federal Republic's institutions and morally reform the German people to prevent a recapitulation of Nazism. However, as a newly established western democracy

---

<sup>38</sup> Sheri Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 86-9.

embedded in the global liberal economic order, attributing Nazism to the failures of economic liberalism and popular opposition against it would have been politically imprudent for the Adenauer government.<sup>39</sup>

The Adenauer regime also sought to downplay cultural criticisms of Germany, including arguments that Germany's history of anti-Semitism and hostility towards immigrants and ethnic minorities helped lead to the rise of National Socialism. Instead, Adenauer's government promoted the narrative that secularization, the erosion of the family, and sexual promiscuity created the social and political environment that opened the doors of power to Nazism.<sup>40</sup> Catholic commentators and church spokespersons were critical actors in relaying this narrative to the public. They argued that licentious behavior was the inflection point in a person's religious journey where they turned away from God and toward moral erosion.<sup>41</sup> Catholic physician Anton Hoffman also expressed the belief that sexual promiscuity under Nazism was connected to genocide. The decline of spirituality and the subsequent "obsession" with "erotic pleasure" resulted in the impudence of the bodies of others, naturally leading to genocide.<sup>42</sup> Sexual conservatism, then, was the solution to re-Christianization, rebuilding the family, and ultimately saving the soul of the German nation.

Under Nazism, sexual policies did diverge from church teachings. In their pronatalist desires to grow the German race, Nazi policies encouraged sex between married partners and even promoted pre-marital sex. To increase the number of racially and eugenically healthy Germans, the Nazis also called for German youths to find partners based on physical strength and sexual appeal, an idea ardently opposed by the church.<sup>43</sup> These policies validated the Adenauer government's criticisms of sexual impropriety under National Socialism and seemingly justified their belief that

---

<sup>39</sup> Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 26.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 73.

<sup>42</sup> Dagmar Herzog, "Sexuality, memory, morality." *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past*, vol. 17, no. 1-2 (2005): 243.

<sup>43</sup> Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 45.

sexual divergence away from church teachings was the chief moral indignity of the Third Reich.

West Germans generally accepted these criticisms of the greater, albeit limited, degree of sexual freedom under the Nazis. Following the fall of the Nazis, there was an overwhelming collective guilt among the German people.<sup>44</sup> In coping with the guilt of the crimes of the Third Reich, Germans were eager to distance themselves from the legacies of Nazism and painted themselves as victims of fascism. Any positive affirmations of the Nazi years, including the enjoyment of newfound sexual liberality, were to be forgotten.<sup>45</sup>

Amidst the broader arguments calling for a return to sexual conservatism, there was a renewed vigor to strictly enforce the criminalization of homosexuality. The instability in the immediate postwar years under occupation led to a surprising degree of sexual freedom for gay men. Concerns with reconstructing a country ravaged by war and the legal uncertainty that came with the three occupational zones meant policing homosexuality was not at the forefront of law enforcement concerns.<sup>46</sup> But after the establishment of the Federal Republic in 1949, strict policing of homosexuality returned. In the Adenauer government's conviction that sexuality had to be significantly restrained to post-marital heterosexual relationships, homosexuality clearly had no place in a morally righteous West German society. There was also a widely held notion that homosexuality was not a naturally occurring human tendency but rather a result of seduction, exposure to homosexual activity, materials, or individuals, and habituation. The characterization of homosexuality as a disease capable of contagion meant that young boys and men, believed to be particularly susceptible to sexual exploration and seduction, were at heightened risk of contracting

---

<sup>44</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, "Religion and Politics in Germany since 1945: The Evangelical and Catholic Churches," *Journal of Church and State* 42, no. 1 (2000): 119.

<sup>45</sup> Dagmar Herzog, "Sexuality, memory, morality," *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past*, vol. 17, no. 1-2 (2005): 24.

<sup>46</sup> Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 24-5.

the homosexual “disease.”<sup>47</sup> Homosexuality not only threatened to spread throughout society; it also threatened future generations of young German men and the fate of the traditional heterosexual German family.

The German Catholic church’s firm opposition to homosexuality required an equally resolute rejection of homosexuality by the Federal Republic if they were to successfully re-Christianize West Germany. It was acknowledged that §175 and §175a were undeniably laws coming from the Third Reich. But why would the Adenauer government repeal a law that so effectively communicated the government’s unconditional intolerance towards homosexuality? The ardent determination to re-establish sexual conservatism and with it, repress homosexuality within society – in order to reconcile with the legacies of National Socialism – led the Adenauer government to retain §175 and §175a. Ironically, this law carried with it the very legacy of National Socialism that the Federal Republic sought to erase.

### **A Broader Theoretical Question**

#### *The Institutional Access of the Church*

Investigating the narrower question of how the church influenced and shaped the position of the CDU/CSU coalition towards homosexuality falls within the broader question of how the degree of institutional access of the church affects policy outcomes. The first fifteen years of the Federal Republic provide an extremely insightful case study into this broader theoretical discussion. During this time period, the government was led by a Christian Democratic coalition that gave the church in West Germany a considerable degree of institutional access. Nation states like Germany that have Christian Democratic parties with histories of electoral strength help explain how the church comes to possess political power. However, as Stathis Kalyvas notes, the

---

<sup>47</sup> Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 130.

literature on confessional parties and more generally, parties of the right, is an underdeveloped one.<sup>48</sup>

In his seminal work on confessional party formation, Kalyvas's *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* argues that confessional party formation was an unintended consequence of the decisions of political actors. Conservative political elites and the church never intended for confessional parties to come into existence.<sup>49</sup> However, the rise of democracy in western Europe meant the end of the "altar and throne" alliance that allowed the church to independently and directly access institutions and affect policy outcomes.<sup>50</sup> Anticlerical attacks that began in the late nineteenth century further threatened church power, legitimacy, and influence.

The structure of the Catholic Church is by nature hierarchical and centralized.<sup>51</sup> This organizational structure was fundamentally undemocratic, and the church found itself out of step with the new democratic order of Western Europe. Forced to confront the constraints of democracy, Kalyvas presents three strategies for the church to gain influence over policy outcomes which involve decreasing degrees of direct institutional access for the church: mass organization, participation, and confessional party formation. The latter, which occurred in Germany first with the *Zentrum* in 1870 and later with the CDU/CSU, was the least desirable for the church. With confessional party formation, party activists become independent actors from the church and make political decisions based on socio-political matters and not on theological concepts, canon law, and the direct interests of the church.<sup>52</sup> Based on Kalyvas's conclusions, confessional party power is by no means a guarantor of church political power. It is, in fact, the strategy which provides the church with the *least* amount of institutional access and influence over policy outcomes. However, as discussed previously,

---

<sup>48</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

Chancellor Adenauer granted the church substantial sway over policy directions, particularly in the realm of sexual and family policy.

Anna Gryzmała-Busse's *Nations Under God* grapples with why and under what conditions some churches gain extensive political power and others fail to do so.<sup>53</sup> Gryzmała-Busse attributes the political power of the church to their ability to gain moral authority and rise above partisan politicking.<sup>54</sup> The church acquires the greatest influence over politics when they have direct institutional access sharing sovereignty with secular governments, not when, as echoed by Kalyvas, they rely on partisan coalitions or confessional parties.<sup>55</sup> While this shared sovereignty is generally opposed by the public, Gryzmała-Busse argues church institutional access is more readily accepted when it is viewed as nonpartisan and concerned with national interests or because the public is generally unaware of it due to opaque mechanisms of influence.<sup>56</sup> These mechanisms can include joint commissions, vetting of bureaucrats and ministers, policy and legislative consultations, and sharing control over state sectors such as education.<sup>57</sup>

Gryzmała-Busse relies on three paired comparisons – Ireland and Italy, Poland and Croatia, and the United States and Canada – to prove her argument, with each pairing explaining varying degrees of church influence and different socio-political environments. Notably, the West German case is absent from Gryzmała-Busse's study. West Germany, under the CDU/CSU coalition government during the mid-twentieth century, provides an interesting example of a regime both governed by confessional parties *and* directly influenced by the church. Furthermore, the church was open in its commentary regarding family and sexual policy, far from the opaque mechanisms Gryzmała-Busse describes. The West German case requires further investigation into

---

<sup>53</sup> Anna Gryzmała-Busse, *Nations Under God: How Churches Use Moral Authority to Influence Policy* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press: 2015): 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 10-1.

the unique postwar environment that allowed for these actors to simultaneously exercise substantial political power.

### **Conclusion**

The social and political environment in West Germany was characterized by a drive towards increasing modernity and freedom and a simultaneous return to conservative norms and values. The presence and influence of the Allied occupation forces, but particularly the Americans, opened the Federal Republic to a modern commercial and consumerist culture, allowing for the exchange of global ideas and products. However, the desire to return to “normalcy,” led by a conservative government intent on re-Christianizing West Germany, meant that while certain modernist activities and beliefs flourished, others were repressed or worse, criminalized. Homosexuality fell within the latter category, and although gay men were not prosecuted and sentenced to concentration camps as they were under the Third Reich, they were still policed and criminalized amidst a gradually modernizing society. For gay liberation activists, after years of fighting for freedom and self-determination, the West German government finally repealed §175 and §175a in 1969. Homosexuality was at last decriminalized, with the new law only punishing sex between men over eighteen years of age with men under twenty-one years of age, attempts to sexually abuse subordinates, and male prostitution. The larger bill ‘First Law for the Reform of the Criminal Code,’ introduced by the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*’ government, also decriminalized adultery, bestiality, procuring, and fraudulently obtaining sexual favors.<sup>58</sup> While homosexuality was by no means culturally accepted nor embraced in West Germany, these legal reforms signified a growing liberality towards sexuality. The Federal Republic was gradually beginning to acknowledge that sexuality was a private matter and that individuals should be freer to choose how they

---

<sup>58</sup> Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 200-1.

expressed their sexual desires. The government had no right to impede on this matter unless they were under extraordinary circumstances.

The collective German remembrance of the very recent atrocities of World War II led to a complicated relationship with memories and narratives of the past. In the process of moral redemption, gay men fell victim to sexual conservatism that significantly colored the social environment and policies of West Germany in the immediate postwar years. The demarcated time period of this study prevents a broader discussion of the deep history and rich literature on homosexuality in West Germany beyond 1949. However, to get a broader understanding of the criminalization of homosexuality and gay liberation efforts in West Germany, it is essential to first examine the initial decision to continue criminalizing homosexuality by National Socialist law.

## Works Cited

- Berman, Sheri. *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Birns, Nicholas. "Fascism Now: The Legacy of World War II in Today's Latin America." *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* (April 23, 2019).
- Cecchini, Laura Moure. "The *Nave Italia* and the Politics of Latinità: Art, Commerce, and Cultural Colonization in the Early Days of Fascism," *Italian Studies* 71, no. 4 (2016): 447-8.
- Charles, Douglas M. "Communist and Homosexual: The FBI, Harry Hay, and the Secret Side of the Lavender Scare, 1943-1961." *American Communist History* 11, no. 1 (2012): 101-24.
- Cole, Taylor. "The West German Federal Constitutional Court: An Evaluation After Six Years." *The Journal of Politics* 20, no. 2 (1958): 258-307.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2127041>.
- Darby, Joseph J., and Hans Heinrich Jescheck. *The Penal Code of the Federal Republic of Germany*. Littleton, Colo.: Fred B. Rothman, 1987.
- Drucker, Peter. "Science and Sex: Hirschfeld's Legacy." *New Politics* 15, no. 2 (Winter, 2015): 124-126.
- Dupont, Wannes. "The Two-Faced Fifties: Homosexuality and Penal Policy in the International Forensic Community, 1945–1965." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 28, no. 3 (2019): 357-395.
- Evans, Jonathan. "Once a majority, Protestants now account for fewer than a third of Germans." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, February 12, 2019.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/12/once-a-majority-protestants-now-account-for-fewer-than-a-third-of-germans/>

Gotzmann, Joanna. *Der Volkswartbund. Die bischöfliche Arbeitsstelle für Fragen der Volkssittlichkeit im Kampf gegen Homosexuelle.* in: Balsler u. a. (Hg.), "Himmel und Hölle," *Das Leben Kölner Homosexueller 1945-1969*, Köln 1995, S. 169-83.

Grau, Günter PhD. "Return of the Past." *Journal of Homosexuality* 37, no. 4 (1999): 1-21.  
[DOI: 10.1300/J082v37n04\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v37n04_02)

Gryzmała-Busse, Anna. *Nations Under God: How Churches Use Moral Authority to Influence Policy.* Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Herzog, Dagmar. *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Herzog, Dagmar. "Sexuality, memory, morality." *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past*, vol. 17, no. 1-2 (2005): 238-66.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/his.2005.17.1-2.238>.

Kuennecke, Bernd H. "Governmental Service Implications of a Decreasing Population in West Germany." *American Geographical Society* 69, no. 4 (1979): 459-463.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/214808>.

McConohay, Mary Jo. *The Tango War.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018.

Merritt, Richard L. "American Influences in the Occupation of Germany." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 428 (1976): 91-103.

Moeller, Robert G. "'The Homosexual Man Is a 'Man,' the Homosexual Woman Is a 'Woman': Sex, Society, and the Law in Postwar West Germany." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 3 (1994): 395-429. [DOI: 165.123.227.88](https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-1994-003)

Moeller, Robert G. "Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male

Homosexuality in West Germany." *Feminist Studies* 36, no. 3 (Fall, 2010): 528-552, 700-701.

Mueller, Gerhard O. W. *The German Penal Code of 1871*. Translated by Thomas Buergenthal. South Hackensack, N.J.: Fred B. Rothman, 1999.

Ramet, Sabrina P. "Religion and Politics in Germany since 1945: The Evangelical and Catholic Churches," *Journal of Church and State* 42, no. 1 (2000): 115-45.

Ruff, Mark Edward. *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1965*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Schissler, Hanna, editor. *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001

Von Staundingers, Dr. J., editor. Schmitt, Hermann, rev., *Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich*. 10. Aufl., 2. Abdruck. München: C.H. Beck, 1912.

Whisnant, Clayton John. *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-69*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Ziemann, Benjamin. *Encounters with Modernity: The Catholic Church in West Germany, 1945-1975*. Translated by Andrew Evans. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014.

Ziegler, Herbert F. "Fight Against the Empty Cradle: Nazi Pronatal Policies and the SS-Führerkorps." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 45, no. 38 (1986): 25.

# Gendered Limits and Residuals: Computational Erasure of Indeterminate Modes of Being

*Katherine Weinschenk*

## **Abstract**

As people begin to question the ethical implications of artificial intelligence, we must also investigate the ways in which we engage with these issues. Instead of viewing computational ethics as answerable within a “code of conduct” checklist, these ethical dilemmas must be confronted using a relational ethics approach informed by the anthropology of moral experience and recent data ethics studies. In this paper, I apply relational ethics to gendered technologies, understanding gender as performative and thus indeterminate, while viewing algorithmic systems as determinate and imbued with the objectivity granted by (white patriarchal) design practice. I also expand on the “glitch” as a concept, finding technological gender glitches, breaking down the assumptions that uphold these glitches, and examining how algorithms become a replacement epistemological medium in the stead of human bodies. Through the analysis of gender recognition technology and computer architecture, I posit that computation is fundamentally at odds with relational ethics because it cannot resolve indeterminate, embodied moral dilemmas. I also argue that algorithms cannot interpret gender ambiguity, and therefore commonly erase subjects who are trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming. Thus, if gender must be algorithmically infrastructured, it must not be on a predictive or inferred basis but rather based on user input. However, in most cases, the solution to ethical issues of gender and technology must be the abolition of technology that delimits and defines gender;

adhering to queer/trans politics, we must recognize the harm of surveillance and its deployment against marginalized groups.

## Introduction

Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning have brought computational processes closer to those of human cognition. Indeed, in recent years, researchers have begun to train and improve artificial intelligence networks with embodied and diverse data, in part due to initiatives by research and activist groups including Data and Society, The Algorithmic Justice League, and Data 4 Black Lives. However, there are still gaps in computer architecture that cannot be amended by merely improving data or “eliminating” bias in data. The disembodied and deterministic foundation on which algorithms are built demonstrate that they are structurally at odds with ethical complexity.

Because morality and ethics itself constitutes a field of study, there is no consensus on exactly what we mean when we’re discussing the subject. In many ways, the current ethical turn in technology is heavily influenced by modern Western ethical thought of “doing good,” “thinking rationally” and “avoiding harm.” However, these guidelines do not sufficiently address technology’s complicitness in upholding modern structures of violence. In their attempts, most tech companies in Silicon Valley have established their own ethical rulebooks. A report by the Berkman Klein center at Harvard synthesizes and parses these rulebooks to create what they call the “‘normative core’ of a principle-based approach to AI ethics.”<sup>1</sup> This normative core contains familiar principles such as privacy, security, and fairness. One issue with these lists is that to an extent these companies have co-opted ethical language to simply write in their code of conduct and to never practice or look at it again. Yet another issue is that this form of

---

<sup>1</sup> Jessica Fjeld et al., 2020, “Principled Artificial Intelligence: Mapping Consensus in Ethical and Rights-Based Approaches to Principles for AI,” *Berkman Klein Center Research Publication*, p. 5.

codified ethics has been critiqued for—ironically—its algorithmic nature. Critical technology and media scholars note that algorithms delimit intelligibility or define what we understand is true and can be true.<sup>2</sup> Thus a parochial, codified prescription of ethics limits how we can engage with broad moral dilemmas.

We cannot see what the normative core of principled AI ethics excludes. In contrast, a more relational approach does not delimit such borders; there is a fluidity to what becomes and unbecomes in awareness. Through attunement, or the recognition of and responsivity to singularity, one is not bound to predefined choices but rather is free to creatively resolve an ethical dilemma. Jarrett Zigon, anthropologist of moral experience, theorizes that this resolution is the act of performing as a response to moral breakdown, or “The need to consciously consider or reason about what one must do.”<sup>3</sup> However, when computers perform the ethical within the algorithmic, they are severely limited. Zigon engages with Levinas’s “call of the Other” and Heidegger’s “being-in-the-world” to demonstrate the necessity of attunement in data-driven technology.<sup>4</sup> Simplified, the Other is an irreducible subject who is infinitely beyond what “I” could imagine—the Other is singular in being. In the space between the Other and oneself, one wonders “how is it between us?” in the relationally composed being-with in the world. Zigon recounts a short narrative: one of Mark Hemmings, a man who was denied an ambulance after calling an emergency number. According to the operator’s instructions, Hemmings’s situation did not necessitate an ambulance; however, within a few days, Hemmings had passed away in his home. Instead of listening to Hemming’s emotions and distress—the factors *beyond* oneself—the operator only relied on predetermined analysis. Zigon claims that the emergency instructions as a form of algorithmic triage could only calculate meaning through Hemmings’s factual inputs, while the ethical demand was actually an affective—not statistical—hail, only

---

<sup>2</sup> Alison Adam, *Artificial Knowing: Gender and the Thinking Machine*. London: Routledge (1998); Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2015).

<sup>3</sup> Jarret, Zigon, “Can Machines Be Ethical? On the Necessity of Relational Ethics and Empathic Attunement for Data-Centric Technologies,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 2019 86(4):1001-1022.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

recognizable by the empathically, affectively attuned.<sup>5</sup> Can technology overcome ethical prescriptions to a (generalized) projection or prediction of the Other? In other words, can computers become capable of recognizing something beyond an encoded generalization?

Rather than contenting themselves with the (still new) normative guidelines for computing ethics, theorists like Zigon are creating less discrete ethical frameworks for computing practice, pointing toward the possibility for a relational computer ethics. One paper presented in the Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS) 2019 conference outlined a less theoretically dense and more practical set of ethical suggestions for computing, proposing to center the suffering, prioritize pre-model understanding, move beyond (re)producing the social order, and recognize the ongoing struggle of ethics.<sup>6</sup> Anthropologist Sareeta Amrute similarly calls for more relational thinking, calling for an attuned techno-ethics.<sup>7</sup> In agreement with these theorists, I posit that an attention to relationality can lead us toward a more ethical computing, especially relating to the ethics of gender and technology.

Considering the gendered history of science and computing, we must imagine new tech-worlds that do not limit gender, are not transphobic, and are not erasing.<sup>8</sup> In this paper, I investigate how existing and proposed software delimits ways of living, guided by hegemony that can be perpetuated through ignorant neutrality. Invoking critical design theory, queer theory, and data activism, I propose new ways of reconstructing computers' entanglement with gender, claiming that consented user data—rather than predicted data—must be the basis of future data analysis.

It's important to note that much of the research in this paper is recent: these books and articles mostly were published in 2018 and 2019. However, the exploration of

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Abeba Birhane and Fred Cummins, "Algorithmic Injustices: Towards a Relational Ethics."

<sup>7</sup> Sareeta Amrute, "Of Techno-Ethics and Techno-Affects." *Feminist Review*, 123(1):56-73.

<sup>8</sup> Adam, *Artificial Knowing*; Mar Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing*, History of Computing Series, Cambridge: MIT Press (2017).

feminism and queerness in relation to intelligent systems is not as new. Feminist theory for decades has encompassed critiques of essentialist scientism. An early discussion of feminism and technology, *Artificial Knowing: Gender and the Thinking Machine*, was published in 1998 and contains an extensive discussion on different feminist ways of approaching artificial intelligence systems. Its author, Alison Adam expansively covers instances of machine learning, computer vision, natural language processing, and other forms of artificial intelligence. It seems as though her acute analysis was overlooked, as her work is not centered in our current focus on data ethics. The exact systems that she problematized became more substantial, more pervasive, and more harmful to users. I attempt to unravel these newer algorithms to show how both the architecture of the algorithms and the modern societal inculcation of whiteness, apoliticism, and individualism have prohibited a more relational computer ethics.

### **Gender Glitches**

Throughout this paper, gender--quoting the well-known and applauded work of Judith Butler--is understood as "an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*."<sup>9</sup> Recognizing gender as performative rather than innate allows us to understand potential selves that may not align with binary categories and that may change over time. Butler further argues that sex collapses into gender as a social construct. The terms' entanglement can be described as their reliance on each other to exist; one is always justified by the other. Thus, by their conflation they are equally restrictive in their dictation of life and the body.<sup>10</sup> Knowing this, even on the surface computers and their static, binary encodings seem incompatible with infrastructuring gender. This is a basis to understand why "residual" identities--referring to residuality as describing "the 'other' categories that do not make it into the classification system"--are othered

---

<sup>9</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 519.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

and erased in coded systems.<sup>11</sup> Queerness, in its instability and openness to change, creates bugs in the system.

The inquiry into the interplay between gender and code begins with the glitch. The basic definition of a glitch is a malfunction of a digital system, one that through its defect but beyond its technicality “indexes hidden memories, unrecognized populations and latent ideologies within technological systems.” In a way, this is a moral breakdown through a technical lens. In one article, Amrute focuses on the glitch as one locus of attunement, using narratives of attentiveness to the glitch to reveal underlying technological assumptions.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, non-binary researchers Os Keyes, Katta Spiel, and Pinar Barlas explore glitches, or in their words, “gender bugs,” to raise awareness of the gendered issues in human-computer interaction and the field of computer science itself. Formatting narrative moral breakdowns in the form of “bug reports,” they poetically demonstrate their ethical resolutions and participate in creative world-building.<sup>13</sup> In this paper, I adopt the glitch as a breakdown that reveals as much in its brokenness as in its repair.

Glitches are not always spontaneously occurring faults; sometimes they may be overlooked as functional until proven otherwise. The moment at which the system is seen as broken is the glitch—a reflective moment. One that permits the questioning, deconstructing, and reconstructing of the system. Such glitches have appeared in the domains of computer vision and language/voice processing, two computational fields fundamentally concerned with classification and categorization. Instances of software produced from these fields directly conflict with queer notions of gender identity and expression. I contend that because these programs must necessarily encode gender into determinate labels (labels even beyond the binary), they cannot adequately

---

<sup>11</sup> Morgan Klaus Scheuerman et al., “How Computers See Gender: An Evaluation of Gender Classification in Commercial Facial Analysis and Image Labeling Services.”

<sup>12</sup> Amrute, “Of Techno-Ethics and Techno-Affects.”

<sup>13</sup> Katta Spiel, Os Keyes, and Pinar Barlas, “Patching Gender: Non-binary Utopias in HCI,” in *Extended Abstracts of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY: Paper 05, 1.

represent the complexity of gender identity, bound to oversimplify or generalize. To substantiate this, I break down the systematic and architectural structures that limit creative ways of being. Then, I will suggest some means of repair, illustrating how these solutions encode meaning about the glitch itself.

Iterations of facial recognition algorithms have advanced with new computer vision technology toward high accuracy classifications. Many existing large tech companies now offer their own facial recognition APIs—little parcels of code with a particular functionality—that come with a selection of recognition categories to choose from. Yet using these APIs exposes the discrepancies in accuracy between categorizing different racial and gender groups.<sup>14</sup> This intersectional examination by Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru was influential in its exposition of the compounded oppression of gender and race in computer vision: it was found that “All classifiers perform better on male faces than female faces,” “All classifiers perform better on lighter faces than darker faces,” and that “All classifiers perform worst on darker female faces.”<sup>15</sup> In summary, the algorithm renders Black faces unintelligible, meaningless, impossible. Another vision study also demonstrated the intertwinement of race and gender: in one algorithm, Black women were consistently labeled as male, and Asian men were consistently labeled as “female.”<sup>16</sup> Because these algorithms were created on the racialized and gendered assumptions of modernity, they (re)produced those stifling assumptions. Across the APIs from Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Clarifai, and IMB, a different study compares the accuracy of these APIs using a dataset of people who self-identify with the labels agender, genderqueer, man, non-binary, trans man, trans woman, and woman.<sup>17</sup> This team of researchers analyze both the language offered by these companies about their algorithms and the products of the algorithms themselves. They concluded these models performed poorly on gender diverse datasets. Following

---

<sup>14</sup> Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru, “Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification,” *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research*, 81:1–15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Browne, *Dark Matters*, 111.

<sup>17</sup> Scheuerman et al., “How Computers See Gender.”

this paper and gender glitches, it is clear that computers in their design cannot be or become capable of gender recognition.

Another example of impossible, harmful categorization is voice recognition. One of many voice recognition algorithms first presented at the NeurIPS 2019, an article titled “Face Reconstruction from Voice using Generative Adversarial Networks” received a glitchy backlash from those who argued that it was poorly informed and transphobic. At times the paper equates gender with biophysical traits, and at no point did researchers describe which gender labels were used in the study or even what their definition of gender was. As such, it assumes the hegemonic or prototypical meaning of gender, one that doesn’t include the free expression of trans, non-binary, and gender nonconforming persons. It also determines what is intelligible: by only being able to recognize speech in a categorical way, the algorithm purports a specific way of understanding voice. The paper claims that a “person’s voice is incontrovertibly statistically related to their facial structure,” but produces images of people with certain lengths of hair, certain compositions of makeup, facial hair patterns—all unrelated to facial structure but related to gender.<sup>18</sup> While it is noted that these aren’t directly related to voice, one must wonder about the purpose of reconstructing someone’s facial structure (especially using General Adversarial Networks). This is not explained in the paper. For reasons that unfold throughout this essay, some algorithms aren’t meant to be fixed, their purposes unredeemable.

### **Limitations of Contemporary Architectures**

Surrounding software and data technologies is an assemblic system—one composed of many different human and technological actors—that relies on these fluid and complex relationships to function. Two components of this system include design

---

<sup>18</sup> Yandong Wen, Rita Singh and Bhiksha Raj, “Face Reconstruction from Voice using Generative Adversarial Networks,” 33rd Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS 2019), Vancouver, Canada. [arXiv:1905.1060](https://arxiv.org/abs/1905.1060)

practice and algorithmic architecture. Referencing the previously mentioned studies and glitches, I aim to explain how these components limit a free autopoiesis or a liberatory ethical care of the self.

The principles of design practice emerged through theory created by white cisgender men. Steeped in Kantian rhetoric of reason, rationality, and morality, while also denying the situatedness of scientific knowledge, methods of design tend toward reductive “cookbook” proceduralism. It is the design of “views from nowhere,”<sup>19</sup> the rejection of situatedness, the distancing from accountability. Consequently, as Adam illuminates, “this preserves the rational ‘male-as-norm’ ideal and also deflects a thoroughgoing discussion of responsibility.”<sup>20</sup> Although there have been improvements, such as more collaborative design with stakeholders, these concepts remain in design practice. To preface her call for “critical fabulations,” or “ways of storytelling that rework how things that we design come into being and what they do in the world,” Daniela Rosner delineates this history to make transparent our taken-for-granted assumptions of design.<sup>21</sup> She argues that one pillar of traditional design is universalism, which includes designing for a generalized subject and is (by design), “apolitical” or “acultural.”<sup>22</sup> On the assumption of universals, designers (including software engineers) create technologies with a certain user in mind, therefore projecting their assumptions about that user onto all of their users. Hence, they practice design oriented toward generalizability, which connotatively implies the loss of information. Rosner demonstrates the wide consequences of generalizability by critiquing a Stanford run “women’s” hackathon:

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Adam, *Artificial Knowing*, 58.

<sup>21</sup> Daniela Rosner, *Critical Fabulations: Reworking the Methods and Margins of Design*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (2020).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The design thinking packets in front of us—espousing a framework of empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test—implicated users in discrete decisions while framing the designers as impartial investigators. This position allowed us to evade our responsibility for the tools’ consequences, such as aiming to design for a universalized category, “women.” In doing so, the hackathon organizers ultimately contradicted their aim. They ignored diversity, neglecting the needs of underprivileged groups (those outside the networks where news of the hackathon circulated or those who could not spare the time to be there) and focused on themselves, the elite media consumers.”<sup>23</sup>

Rosner intimates a few problems here: the universalist categorizations, the focus on privileged self-making, and the stance of objectivity. Seen as progressive, these emphases of empathy and womanhood are narrow, limiting, and echoing liberal feminism. Hackathons are the epitome of modern design in practice—not radical, but toward individualism, binaries, and capital.

The limitations and consequences of this type of design can also be found in the aforementioned computer vision and voice recognition algorithms. Those subjected to the algorithms are also subject to assumptions projected on them: that in general, those in the images or those who are speaking will be either a (white) cis man or a (white) cis woman. In *Dark Matters: on the Surveillance of Blackness*, Simone Browne examines the role prototypical whiteness plays in biometric surveillance, inclusive of facial and voice recognition. Expanding on Sarah Ahmed’s understanding of whiteness as a “straightening device,” Browne reads Blackness as out of alignment in biometric data.<sup>24</sup> Thus, we can also read whiteness as a straightening device that marks boundaries excluding (Black) queerness or non-straightness in biometric data. While there are endeavors to “fix” these algorithms and to make them more accurate, I question why such labels are necessary in the first place. Can there be a computational infrastructure

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Browne, *Dark Matters*.

of gender that is not subject to the colonial project that first cemented binary gender? How can a data point become fluid if deterministically labeled? An authentic attunement to the experiences of an Other would instead allow for possibilities of living and letting-be that are not predefined.

Underneath the higher level decisions of design are the architectural structures that make algorithms incompatible with gender encodements. Absent in widespread algorithms (even machine learning algorithms) is the ability to be indeterminate. Computers in their processes operate through logical encodings, existing only in determinate, representational states. Humans, on the other hand, are theorized to experience indeterminate and intermediate ways of being. Habituated embodiment and the unconscious movement through the world need not require determinacy to perceive; as Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote, “analysis [begins] with the pre-objective act of perception rather than with already constituted objects.”<sup>25</sup> This particularly human capability of learning through the body and holding knowledge within embodiment allows us to question existence before objectification. Within this paper, this is not to suggest that gender develops in a certain biological type of body, but that the body—any body—itself is an epistemic medium. For instance, if I feel pain but have not consciously recognized it, then I have gained knowledge of my pain without textualizing it, speaking it, or objectifying it. Without a body or consciousness, could computers question its objects? Or will objects remain deterministically as defined?

To analyze the phenomenon of gender, one must consider the pre-objective (but not pre-cultural) meaning of experience. Butler’s phenomenology of gender does precisely this, questioning the discursive meaning of gender as binary and reconstructing it as performative, embodied iterations of intelligible ways of being. Defining gender this way loosens its restrictions; we perform gender but are not tied to it. It is indeterminate. However, according to classification algorithms including facial recognition and voice recognition, gender is deterministic, not only by biological

---

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Thomas J. Csordas, "Somatic Modes of Attention." *Cultural Anthropology*, 8(2):137.

sex—which in fact isn't binary but shaded with intersexuality—but also by one's (cultured) appearance and voice.

Language and semiotics are primary barriers to indeterminacy, yet everything in an algorithm is symbolically coded and manipulated. Hence in addition to not having a body itself, the computer destroys that body; when bodies are digitized, that digital information “is required to speak the truth of and for muted bodies,” falling into what Lewis Gordon calls “the problematic of denied subjectivity” (cited in Browne 110). This problematic is made concrete in Scheuerman's study of gender diversity and gender recognition. When scraping data from Instagram using hashtags to pair gender identity with faces, Scheuerman et al. acknowledged that

even the gender binary is not easily split into simple cisgender or transgender categories. For example, #man and #transman could easily represent the same person: like cis men, many trans men identify with the label “man” without the trans prefix. The same is true with transwomen. Thus, we cannot assume that the men in #man and the women in #woman are cisgender. In the same way, we cannot assume that the trans men in #transman and the trans women in #transwoman identify solely with the binary. For example, some trans women may identify with the label trans women, but not women. Non-binary, meanwhile, is often used as an umbrella term. #agender and #genderqueer may fall under #nonbinary; individuals who tag with #transwoman and #transman may also be non-binary.<sup>26</sup>

Discussing sex through a psychoanalytical (rather than biological) sense, Joan Copjec contends that “sex is that which cannot be spoken by speech; it is not any of the multitude of meanings that try to make up for this impossibility.”<sup>27</sup> Hence, language is often inadequate to describe indeterminate, pre-objective experiences and identities—especially related to gender. Indeterminacy becomes residual. Therefore

---

<sup>26</sup> Scheuerman et al., “How Computers See Gender,” 13.

<sup>27</sup> Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists*, London: Verso (2015).

the inadequacy of computers to be indeterminate calls for different practices of computing that are more relational and that seek fidelity to “standing with.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Data collection as relational “standing with”**

Upsetting the older anthropological tradition of bio-exploitation in indigenous communities and aiming to democratize academic knowledge production, indigenous scholar Kim Tallbear devised a feminist approach to inquiry that privileges “standing with” over “giving back.” “Standing with” is caring for and collaborating with research subjects, making knowledge together and sharing commitments with each other. Too often are technologies built with self-serving interests, resulting in individual creations to precipitate money or status. Tallbear, though, sees data as a representation of co-creation for oneself and those for whom the data was amassed. In the case of gender and computing, ethics as relationality is a framework that engenders “standing with.”<sup>29</sup>

The only way to know someone’s gender is to ask, and the act of asking is the act of problematization: recognizing that it is an issue, becoming reflective, and thoughtfully proceeding. This breakdown is an indeterminate moment: one of unknowing. A computer when it assumes—but does not ask—predicts on false bases and does not feel this moment of breakdown, reflection, glitch. Thus, only people are capable of rightfully asking and answering. Herein, self-identification is necessary in data encoding gender. In this way, data is created with the subject and in care of the subject. Software is shaped to attune to the subject.

At the same time, we must consider that sometimes the solution to a faulty algorithm is not reform, but abolition. We must not only ask, “can it work?” but also must wonder: “should it work?” From the field of surveillance studies we learn that

---

<sup>28</sup> Kim TallBear, “Standing with and speaking as faith: A feminist-indigenous approach to inquiry,” *Journal of Research Practice*, 10(2): Article N17, retrieved from <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/405/371>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

these forms of “fiches de l’homme” (using Frantz Fanon’s words),<sup>30</sup> or the records that form the biography of the modern subject, can be used—are used—as a form of control.<sup>31</sup> Writing of Blackness and recognizing its relationship to colonial gender, Browne explains that “epidermalization”—the projection of race on the skin—and consequently digital epidermalization is the “moment of fracture of the body from its humanness” in its legibility to whiteness. Further, she expansively and historically describes methods to subvert surveillance, referencing many instances of Black rebellion and dark sousveillance during slavery and its afterlife. We can see the intersection of race, gender, and surveillance especially within the United States’ carceral framework. Because (Black) queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people have always been included as targets of the police state, it is certain that the disclosure of gender identity through surveillance can lead to violent carceral outcomes such as “physical assault, psychological abuse, rape, harassment, and medical neglect.”<sup>32</sup> Learning from these essential works, we can imagine a sousveillance that challenges the colonial project of gender—one that exposes the subject/object dualism and leads to an abolition of the technological agents of this project.

At a higher level, we must reconfigure our view of the algorithm not as a lone object, but as part of the environment in which it is created. This environment is an assemblage of engineers, corporations, politics, history, culture, activists, and more. Thus, it is essential to understand a reconstruction of ethics affecting both human and technological subjects. Design must be implemented by a collaboration of ethical persons who understand their users as singular but interdependent beings. Furthermore, engineers must understand their positionality within institutions that reject their ethical conclusions and question why that is. These imperatives would require dedication to eliminating exclusion, erasure, or the existence of a residual. Instead, technologies must uplift the marginalized, taking a political stance against

---

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Browne, *Dark Matter*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith, *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, Chico, CA: AK Press (2015), 243.

hegemony. While I call to abolish most predictive categorization algorithms, I do encourage the inclusion of gender in other algorithms such as those that predict medical outcomes (e.g. maternal death or mental wellness) such that “residuals” are included as people. Additionally, public data on trans workers or other gender nonconforming people in the artificial intelligence industry does not exist (West 2019, 3). Without recording data that also includes these identities, we (1) fail to recognize these identities as valid and (2) cannot “stand with” trans and gender nonconforming peoples in their erased existences. Thus, non-exclusive data as a means to hold dominant structures and institutions accountable is a form of relational “standing with.”<sup>33</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Earlier I mentioned that these algorithms do, in fact, work. They work for the purposes that they were built for. One cannot ignore the potential for surveillance that these technologies afford. For in what cases would they need to exist? Why not eliminate the incapable algorithm? In many cases, these algorithms as such properly work to perpetuate limited expressions of gender. Binary algorithms help police binary gender. Fortunately, there has been some successful resistance to these technologies; for instance, Google has eliminated a gender category in its facial recognition API. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, some papers were accepted into the NeurIPS conference that received criticism for their ethics. This has been happening for years, but the ethical turn in AI and machine learning has led to more vigorous awareness of problematic technology. Because of this, the conference has actualized a requirement to include a discussion of societal impacts of the work and disclosure of financial

---

<sup>33</sup> TallBear, “Standing with and speaking as faith.”

conflicts of interest for future conference submissions.<sup>34</sup> Thus, we can see how research has social and economic dimensions. Although beyond the scope of this paper, one large contributing factor in the unethical creation of software is economic incentivization, embedded in businesses and in ourselves through the neoliberal milieu.

Further research regarding this topic may include a discussion of neoliberal politics, and it may also include an analysis of intersections of gender and race, which in computer vision is highlighted well in scholar and activist Joy Buolamwini's research. Additionally, I would like to explore empirical examples of the biopolitical scheme to regulate bodies: considering the relationship between algorithm and behavioral modification, I'd like to see if there are any correlations between code and gender performativity. This paper marks the beginning of these investigations into theories of design, gender, information, and control.

---

<sup>34</sup> Khari Johnson, "NeurIPS Requires AI Researchers to Account for Societal Impact and Financial Conflicts of Interest." *VentureBeat*, February 25, 2020, <https://venturebeat.com/2020/02/24/neurips-requires-ai-researchers-to-account-for-societal-impact-and-financial-conflicts-of-interest/>.

## Works Cited

- Amrute, Sareeta. 2019. "Of Techno-Ethics and Techno-Affects." *Feminist Review*. 123(1):56-73.
- Adam, Alison. 1998. *Artificial Knowing: Gender and the Thinking Machine*. London: Routledge.
- Birhane, Abeba and Fred Cummins. 2019. "Algorithmic Injustices: Towards a Relational Ethics." Access on [arXiv:1912.07376](https://arxiv.org/abs/1912.07376)
- Browne, Simone. 2015. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Buolamwini, Joy and Timnit Gebru. 2018. "Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification." *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research*, 81:1-15.
- Butler, Judith. 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 519-31.
- Copjec, Joan. 2015. *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists*. London: Verso.
- Csordas, Thomas J. 1993. "Somatic Modes of Attention." *Cultural Anthropology*, 8(2):135-56. Accessed May 1, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/656467](http://www.jstor.org/stable/656467).
- Fjeld, Jessica and Achten, Nele and Hilligoss, Hannah and Nagy, Adam and Srikumar, Madhulika. 2020. "Principled Artificial Intelligence: Mapping Consensus in Ethical and Rights-Based Approaches to Principles for AI." *Berkman Klein Center Research Publication* No. 2020-1.
- Hicks, Mar. 2017. *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing*. History of Computing Series. Cambridge: MIT Press.

- Johnson, Khari. 2020. "NeurIPS Requires AI Researchers to Account for Societal Impact and Financial Conflicts of Interest." *VentureBeat*, February 25, 2020.  
<https://venturebeat.com/2020/02/24/neurips-requires-ai-researchers-to-account-for-societal-impact-and-financial-conflicts-of-interest/>.
- Rosner, Daniela. 2018. *Critical Fabulations: Reworking the Methods and Margins of Design*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Scheuerman, Morgan Klaus, Jacob M. Paul and Jed R. Brubaker. 2019. "How Computers See Gender: An Evaluation of Gender Classification in Commercial Facial Analysis and Image Labeling Services."
- Spiel, Katta, Os Keyes, and Pinar Barlas. 2019. "Patching Gender: Non-binary Utopias in HCI." In *Extended Abstracts of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI EA '19)*. Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY: Paper 05, 1–11.
- Stanley, Eric A. and Nat Smith. 2015. *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, Chico, CA: AK Press.
- TallBear, Kim. 2014. "Standing with and speaking as faith: A feminist-indigenous approach to inquiry." *Journal of Research Practice*, 10(2): Article N17. Retrieved from <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/405/371>
- West, Sarah Myers, Meredith Whittaker and Kate Crawford. 2019. "Discriminating Systems: Gender, Race and Power in AI." AI Now Institute. Retrieved from <https://ainowinstitute.org/discriminatingsystems.html>.
- Wen, Yandong, Rita Singh and Bhiksha Raj. 2019. "Face Reconstruction from Voice using Generative Adversarial Networks." 33rd Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS 2019), Vancouver, Canada. [arXiv:1905.1060](https://arxiv.org/abs/1905.1060)

Zigon, Jarret. 2019. "Can Machines Be Ethical? On the Necessity of Relational Ethics and Empathic Attunement for Data-Centric Technologies." *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. 86(4):1001-1022.

## Bear Hunting with Indigenous Alaskans: The Construction of American Masculinity on the “Last Frontier”

*Olivia Ramirez*

On March 6, 1901, James H. Kidder sailed from Seattle to Alaska in search of Kodiak bear specimens of different variations. Armed and hungry for kills, Kidder set off to the Aleutian Islands in pursuit of the Kodiak bear, accompanied by his college friend, Robert P. Blake and two Aleut guides, Fedor Deerinhoff and Nikolai Pycoon. Relying heavily on his indigenous guides for navigation, Kidder’s trip exemplifies the collision of American hunting culture and indigenous hunting customs. This essay examines the role of bear hunting in United States’ imperial society, specifically the Alaskan frontier, and how American ideals of rugged masculinity promoted by hunting and outdoor publications facilitated reciprocity between indigenous Alaskans and American trophy hunters in the early twentieth century. This project explores the exchange of various cultural forms—language, hunting norms, ideas of wilderness and material goods—that resulted from increased bear hunting in Alaska following its purchase by the United States from the Russian Empire in 1867.

In 1912 the United States officially incorporated Alaska into the country as an organized territory. The new nature of the territory attracted trophy hunters looking to assert their masculinity and dominance over the wild, “undiscovered” terrain. With the discovery of gold, Alaska experienced an influx of over 100,000 immigrants, establishing the territory as a valuable holding for the United States. Trophy hunters in search of glory ventured to the vast, untamed terrain, eager to take down a prized kill. While the role of bear hunting in American imperial society provided a means for American men to display and assert masculine self identities, a close examination of hunting narratives offers a second avenue for investigation. I explore how the newly

acquired American territory provided hunting tourists the ability to interact with the indigenous population of the region. I argue that American trophy hunters, guided by cultural expectations of rugged masculinity, devised these bonds out of necessity, resulting in a clash of cultural values between the indigenous Alaskan population that utilized hunting for subsistence and ritual.

The historical approaches to studying cultural collisions of indigenous populations and American travelers in Alaska focus primarily on the divisions of legal systems, religions and the masculinity of frontier hunting. Caskey Russell focuses primarily on the “metaphysical collisions” that occurred between Tlinglit Indians, Americans and Europeans, and argues that this process created cultural hybridity.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the study of the gendered aspects of hunting in Alaska offers another avenue for investigation. Following Sine Anahita’s argument that “frontier masculinity” maintained legitimacy by state policy makers, I examine the ways in which American sport hunters constructed their masculinity and participated in the romanticized idea of the Alaskan frontier.<sup>2</sup> With the help of the indigenous guides, and encouraged by published hunting accounts, American hunters created a new relationship of reciprocity with indigenous Alaskans. Finally, previous research on Alaska has deconstructed the imagination of Alaska as the last frontier; Susan Kollin best approaches this understanding by contending that the scenic and natural wonder of Alaska changed throughout history.<sup>3</sup> Kollin challenges the notion of Alaska as a last frontier and notes that this re-glamourization of Alaska appeared in the late 1980s after the Exxon Valdez disaster.<sup>4</sup> I will utilize this reimagining of Alaska to argue that bear hunting served as an extension for U.S imperialism, rather than a revisioning of Alaska as the last frontier. With regard to these historical approaches to the complexities of the Alaskan frontier, my work most closely resembles Anahita’s, which discusses the

---

<sup>1</sup> Caskey Russel, "Cultures in Collision: Cosmology, jurisprudence, and religion in tlingit territory," *American Indian Quarterly* 33, (2009): 230-252.

<sup>2</sup> Sine Anahita and Tamara L. Mix, "Retrofitting frontier masculinity for Alaska's war against wolves," *Gender & Society* 20, (no. 3 2006): 332-353.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Kollin. *Nature's State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier*. Chapel Hill & London. UNC Press Books, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The Exxon Valdez oil spill hit on March 24, 1989, dumping 10.8 million gallons of oil into the Prince William Sound. The spill was later determined to be one of the worst oil spills worldwide in terms of damage to the environment.

various motives behind hunting in Alaska during the turn of the twentieth century, while I focus more on the culture of hunting publications.

The creation of the myth of Alaska as the final frontier serves as an integral part of the understanding of how and why American trophy hunters flocked to the region in the wake of its purchase. At the turn of the century new hunting and conservation values emerged that challenged hunting laws and culture that assumed the existence of unlimited land and wealth.<sup>5</sup> In a new effort to conserve and preserve wild game, organizations and hunters played an important role in assuring a supply of game. According to historian Thomas Dunlap, hunters appropriated their ethics from English immigrants who came to the US in the 1830s and touted ideas of sportsmanship.<sup>6</sup> Henry William Herbert, an English proponent of hunting, advocated for hunting virtues in line with English upper class practices.<sup>7</sup> Sport hunting became a mass movement in the 1870s with sportsman hunters publishing their stories in magazines like *American Sportsman* and *Forest and Stream* in order to convert Americans to sport hunting and mobilize hunters for game preservation. This is best exemplified by American sportsman hunters Andre Champollion and Henry Bannon who published accounts of their exploits in *Forest and Stream* while Kidder published his adventures in *Outing*. By the 1870s, lack of limits on sport hunting and the development of settlements had contributed to a measured decline of game in the contiguous United States.<sup>8</sup> Government and state intervention in trophy hunting, such as the federal government reserving millions of acres for national parks and forest reserves, and establishing regulating agencies, transformed sport hunting and addressed the insufficiency of game animals. A shortage of game animals prompted American trophy hunters to turn to Alaska in search of a unique and unfettered hunting landscape. In Alaska, advocates argued that new outdoor challenges existed and the otherwise mundane could live heroically through the hunt.<sup>9</sup> Insisting on a distinct Alaskan culture served as a tool of

---

<sup>5</sup> Thomas R. Dunlap. "Sport hunting and conservation, 1880-1920." *Environmental Review: ER* 12, no. 1 (1988): 51-60.

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Haycox. "Truth and Expectation: Myth in Alaska History." *Northern Review* 6 (1990), 63.

expansion for the United States, where Alaska functioned as a white, male space that reinforced traditional nineteenth century American values of rugged masculinity through exploration

Upon Alaska's new status in 1867, the territory assumed the responsibility for the nation's renewal and regeneration.<sup>10</sup> In the post Civil War era of rapid modernization and urbanization, men living in densely crowded cities turned to Alaska, the "Last Frontier," for an opportunity to express their masculinity. Tasked with revolutionizing the role of hunting in the late nineteenth century, American trophy hunters like Kidder, Champollion and Bannon documented their Alaskan adventures in order to convey a contemporary place for trophy hunters to explore. Writing in the period after 1900, Kidder, Champollion and Bannon encouraged hunting and other rifle sports along with values that centered on rugged self-sufficiency, courage and bodily strength. These writings followed the 1887 founding of the Boone and Crockett Club, which exchanged information of big game, advertised ethical ideas of hunting, popularized hunting stories and championed wildlife preservation. Hunting publications bolstered "fair chase" ethics and advocated for opening up new, public lands for hunting.<sup>11</sup> Boone and Crockett Club founder and 26<sup>th</sup> U.S President Theodore Roosevelt believed that hunting provided a primal reconnect with the "natural pre-civilized world."<sup>12</sup> Supported by the Boone and Crockett Club, trophy hunters displayed their kills by removing the hides of the animals they killed and mounting their heads for display.<sup>13</sup> American values of local autonomy allowed trophy hunters to act with free reign in Alaska, a territory which sport hunters understood as "synonymous with richness, potential and personal opportunity."<sup>14</sup> White American men imagined Alaska as an escape from a stifling civilization and familial obligations. Sociologist Raewyn Connell utilized the term

---

<sup>10</sup> Susan Kollin. *Nature's State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier*. UNC Press Books, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Dray, "How This Photo of Theodore Roosevelt in Hunting Gear Helped Jump-Start the American Conservation Movement," *Time Magazine*, May 1, 2018, New York.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas F. Thorton. *Subsistence use of brown bear in Southeast Alaska*. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Ken Coates. "Controlling the Periphery: The Territorial Administration of the Yukon and Alaska, 1867-1959." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1987): 147.

“frontier masculinity” to describe the form of masculinity built on myths of the Alaskan frontier.<sup>15</sup> Frontier masculinity created a romanticized idea of nature that aided in the construction of white, male identities rooted in the ideas of independence, bravery, masculinity and strength. When describing his hunting adventures, Kidder characterizes Alaska as “vast” and “unknown.”<sup>16</sup> Taken as fact, Kidder, Champollion and Bannon’s stories oversimplify, reimagine and omit key details, such as the fact that indigenous groups “knew” these lands quite well. Haycox argues that myths provide images of the past that reinforce values in the present; myth and memory play a large role in the construction of hunting stories framed by the constructed ideas of Alaskan wilderness.<sup>17</sup>

James H. Kidder journeyed to Alaska in 1902 in order to discover “the best big game-shooting grounds.”<sup>18</sup> Upon arrival, Kidder describes the territory as “practically unknown except to the wandering prospector and the Indian hunter.”<sup>19</sup> With the primary goal of locating big game populations, Kidder spent his first two months in the area adjacent to Fort Wrangell. His observations of the land detail the presence of black bears, goats, Sitka deer, grizzly bears and *ovis stonei*, or black sheep. Utilizing rivers for transportation and trade, trading companies supplied sport hunters with necessary provisions for hunting expeditions such as Kidder’s. Seizing on the appeal of Alaskan sport hunting, Kidder enlisted indigenous Aleuts to direct him in search of brown bears, grizzly and the glacial (blue bear). Kidder developed his narrative by chronicling the main game for which he travelled to Alaska—brown, grizzly, Kodiak and glacial, or blue bears. Following his tenure in southern Alaska, Kidder planned a June trip to the “Kadiak [sic]” Islands in search of large grizzly bears.<sup>20</sup> Arriving late in the hunting season, Kidder battled shoulder-length grass in pursuit of Kodiak bears. Kidder

---

<sup>15</sup> Sine Anahita and Tamara L. Mix, “Retrofitting frontier masculinity for Alaska’s war against wolves,” *Gender & Society* 20, (no. 3 2006): 332-353.

<sup>16</sup> James H. Kidder. *Hunting the Big Game of Alaska: Bear Stalking on the Alaska Peninsula. Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 01, 1903. 466.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Haycox. “Truth and Expectation: Myth in Alaska History.” *Northern Review* 6 (1990).

<sup>18</sup> James H. Kidder. *Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: After Bear on Kadiak Island. Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 12, 1902. 348.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

struggled not only to locate, but accurately shoot any bears that he tracked along salmon streams. From these tracks, Kidder reported the size of the Kodiak bear as larger than any bear from the North American continent by the size of the skins and the tracks left behind.

After spending the winter in southern Alaska, Kidder embarked on his quest for Kodiak bears the following spring. Kidder aimed to not only bag a Kodiak bear, he also strove to obtain specimens of Kodiak Island bear from the Alaskan Peninsula and obtain a bear specimen from any of the other islands of the Kodiak group. Kidder sought to determine if all the bears populating the Kodiak Islands originated from the same species. If successful, Kidder planned to spend the following season on the Kenai Peninsula hunting white sheep and moose. Straying from his normal routine of embarking on big game shooting trips alone, Kidder began his expedition assisted by his college friend, Robert P. Blake and two Aleut guides native to the Kodiak Islands, Fedor Deerinhoff and Nikolai Pycoon. Kidder credits these native hunters with keen senses of smell and hearing that developed from constant patrolling of the Kodiak shores. Much of the information that Kidder recites in his accounts comes from the knowledge of his guides, which in turn allowed him to successfully stalk and hunt.

Supplied with rain gear, Kidder's team sailed on a steamer from Seattle to the Kodiak Island, credited as "the garden spot of Alaska."<sup>21</sup> Following local hunting practices of hunting in large bays, Kidder and his team paddled along the shore in "skin canoes" or "bidarkas [sic]."<sup>22</sup> The baidarka provided optimal hunting transit because of their light, yet strong elastic wood frame, and seal or sea lion skin covering and binding made with sinew or stout twine. The canoe, easy to paddle, floats low in the water and holds a large amount of camping and hunting gear. The baidarka's strength derives from its gibe, which moves with every ocean and bay wave. Hunting within the "native

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>22</sup> James H. Kidder asserts that the different localities of Alaska are distinguished by the different types of canoes that they use. For example, southern Alaskans utilize large dugouts capable of holding five to twenty people. In Yakutat where trees are smaller and timber is less readily available the canoes are much smaller than their Southern counterparts. Western parts of the Kodiak utilize baidarkas made of skins to accommodate the lack of trees.

custom,” Kidder took advantage of the Kodiak bear’s hibernation schedule to optimize his hunting performance.<sup>23</sup> During the berry season and the salmon run in Alaskan streams, Kodiak bears fatten themselves for the long winter while it hibernates, waking in the spring, weak and sluggish. As the Kodiak recovers the use of its legs, it takes short walks when the weather permits, grazing on young grass, beach kelp and salmon-berry roots which provide nourishment until salmon season.

Kidder and his team preyed on Kodiak bears during their spring expedition. On April fifth, the team set sail for their shooting grounds, Kiliuda Bay, a destination they determined most likely to find bears. Contracting a third indigenous guide, Ignati Chowischpack, Kidder secured geographic insight on Kiliuda Bay. After a storm grounded the men for a week, Kidder’s team set sail for Kiliuda bay on April twelfth, with the promise of a kill in the spring air. Kidder and his team surveyed the land the morning after their arrival, paddling through streams, searching assiduously for any indication of bear tracks. Because of severe storms, wind and cold, harsh weather, Kidder recalls that he did not encounter a bear until the fifteenth of May. On this momentous day, Kidder’s hunters pointed him in the direction of tracks that led unbroken down the mountain, across the valley and extended out of sight.

Crediting his indigenous guides with the knowledge that Kodiak bears wander toward the valley that lay ahead, Kidder and his team threaded through thick alders toward the valley, pushing past a steep mountain, toward their prey. After much stalking, Kidder spotted a large, dark bear that contrasted heavily against the bright white snow. Another bear materialized, which Kidder identified “without doubt” as a lightly colored female of smaller stature.<sup>24</sup> Once the female bear left the snow to eat, the team advanced forward, studying the direction that she headed. Suddenly alarmed, she dashed toward the bottom of the valley empty save for patches in the underbrush, where Kidder cornered her and swiftly aimed for her lungs and heart. Once shot, the

---

<sup>23</sup> James H. Kidder. *Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: After Bear on Kadiak Island. Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 12, 1902. 352.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 356.

female bear let out “a deep, angry growl,” biting for the wound as she stood on her four feet.<sup>25</sup> As the bear dashed toward the thicket in an attempt to escape, Kidder maintained an overhead view from which he fired twice with “the most careful aim,” the last shot knocking her down to her feet.<sup>26</sup> Hearing the shots that Kidder fired, the male bear fled. Examining the kill, Kidder’s indigenous guides determined that she was a medium sized bear, with fur in “prime condition,” excluding a large patch of skin above her bottom that had rubbed off.<sup>27</sup> Despite the bear not measuring large in comparison to other Kodiak bears, Kidder remarks that the kill pleased him, as he had spent many days failing to bag a bear and the almost perfect fur would allow him to display his success. After this momentous kill, Kidder returned to Wood Island to prepare for a second hunt on the Alaskan Peninsula.

This second hunt began on May 31, 1902, with Kidder, his indigenous guides, a new hunting dog named Stereke, and two baidarkas stored in a chartered North American Commercial Company schooner headed toward an unidentified Alaskan Peninsula harbor. Rugged mountains encapsulated the bay, and at their base lay long meadows filled with young salt grass that bears fed on in June. Paddling their baidarks side by side, Kidder’s team detected within a mile of paddling a small black bear, which in turn noticed the team approaching as the wind carried their scent. Encouraged by this early sighting, the men continued down the bay, breaking mid-afternoon to eat. Once returning to the hunt, Kidder’s “head hunter” Nikolai located two large bears feeding on young saltgrass.<sup>28</sup> Stalking the bears for over an hour, the team came within one hundred yards of the prey. After missing the first shot, Stereke escaped Nikolai’s hold, charging toward one bear, tackling him and nipping at his heels, dodging the bear's lunges, yet unable to corner the bear.

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> James H. Kidder. *Hunting the Big Game of Alaska: Bear Stalking on the Alaska Peninsula. Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 01, 1903. 467.

At ten o'clock at night, daylight still shone high in Alaska, making hunting possible for a longer duration. Capitalizing on prolonged sunlight the next night, the Aleut guides spotted another bear in the same meadow where they hunted prior. Kidder's partner, Blake, moved within fifty yards and killed the bear with three shots, allowing Stereke to ferociously tackle the carcass. In comparison with the female bear that Kidder had previously killed at Kiliuda Bay, Blake's kill measured smaller and weighed approximately four hundred and fifty pounds according to Kidder. To Kidder, the legs seemed longer, the mane looked shorter but had a similar "tawny lion color on the back" as the female bear killed at Kiliuda Bay.<sup>29</sup>

On Friday, June 7, Kidder and Blake headed toward a "deserted Indian camp" which claimed good hunting grounds for bears, but upon arrival, the pair noticed fires, signaling that humans may have disturbed the nearby bears.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, the pair ventured back to their campgrounds, eating their first "substantial" meal of the day, as they had become accustomed to the Aleutian habit of drinking a small cup of tea in the morning and eating a piece of bread to make the start of the day easier. Around midday, as the team rested, Stereke let out a "sharp bark" as Blake shouted "Bear!" walking toward the camp and the beach, a "good-sized bull bear" approached, provoking Stereke to run toward it while Blake and Kidder reached for their rifles.<sup>31</sup> Turning away from the campground, the bear fell victim to Kidder's gun, yet uttered no cry and only bit for the wound. After firing a second hasty shot, Kidder and Blake ran after Stereke into the thick alders who had attacked the bear. Led by the sound of his barking, Kidder raced toward the bear and sunk two shots into its body; the first shot broke the bear's shoulder and cut the lower portion of its heart, however, the bear remained standing until Kidder fired the shot that killed it. The bear's prolonged death resulted in a badly torn ear and scarred skin, and after the group removed the pelt, they discarded the

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

carcass into the bay in order to mask the scent that would endanger the prospect of a future kill.

The next bear sighting came at five o'clock in the morning, however, the wind's direction proved a disadvantage to the team who could not stalk from any closer than a few hundred yards. Luck favored the group again, as two bears approached their quarters in the evening as the men rested, drinking tea. The first vanished as the second emerged from the woods. The second possessed a "dirty yellowish white" coat with a dark underbelly and legs, which Kidder described as a "comical" combination.<sup>32</sup> Still experiencing unfavorable wind, Blake and Kidder resorted to watching the bears at a distance through their "glasses."<sup>33</sup> After supper another bear surfaced in a more opportune position. Stalking from the baidarka paddled by the indigenous guides, Kidder and Blake became passengers of their guides, who paddled without noise, constantly standing up in the boat to keep a discreet gaze on the game that lay ahead, while simultaneously keeping track of the currents and breezes that could offset the boat. Carefully crawling from the boat with a rifle cocked and ready, Kidder bided his time waiting for a shot. With one shot, Kidder successfully knocked the bear to the ground, who struggled to raise its broken shoulder. Carrying the carcass to the baidarka, the men disposed of the cartridge shells to avoid leaving any trace of their scent.

Three days later, the weather brought a northeast storm. With this new weather, the group hypothesized that bears would move more freely. One of Kidder's Aleut guides maintained constant lookout over bear trails and nearby mountains, with Kidder and Blake occasionally leaving their books to join their stakeout. Nikolai eventually pinpointed a bear in the river, partially hidden from view, which Kidder fired three shots at; one pierced his lungs, another punctured his foreleg while the other broke one of his back legs. Nikolai also fired, hitting the back leg, creating a skin wound. The bear rolled over dead once Nikolai shot him through the lungs at close proximity. Kidder

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 468.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

noted that he did not permit his Aleut guides to shoot unless he and Blake had wounded the bear, but declared that they rarely followed this rule. Had Nikolai rendered the fatal shot, Kidder asserted that he would not have kept the skin. Despite the multiple shots delivered, this bear's pelt remained in "excellent condition."<sup>34</sup>

On the twenty-fourth, Kidder's team paddled their baidarkas toward the upper bay, ascending through a small river that wound through a meadow meeting the mountains. Without bears in sight, Blake and Kidder enjoyed the landscape, "basking in the sun, talking of books and people, and of many subjects of common interest."<sup>35</sup> During their occasional surveying of the outskirts of the meadow that stretched in front, Blake noticed four bears due west, though too far to capture, so they let the pair go. After breakfast, the bears remained in the same place, prompting the men to follow in their baidarkas, until they finally settled into their long wait in the woods. Kidder claimed that the duty of the first shot fell on Blake, and after his first undisturbed shot, Kidder could then fire. Two hours into their stakeout, three bears emerged—two yearlings and one larger bear, presumably their mother. Removing their boots with Stereke on his leash, the group moved silently toward their prey, the tall grass masking themselves from the family of bears. Once within one hundred yards, Blake shot the mother, causing the child that Kidder had his sights on to dash away, prompting Kidder to chase after it. Running in and out of a somersault, the bear ran from Stereke until he finally caught her, ultimately dying once Blake shot her in the lungs. Kidder believed the third to have gotten away with a wound from Nikolai. The yearlings differed in color, with one having a brown color similar to its mother's, while the other showed a "light dirty yellowish color."<sup>36</sup> Upon examination, the team found milk in the mother's breasts which the indigenous guides explained as common, since yearling cubs continue to suckle.

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 471.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 472.

After a prolonged storm broke, the men ventured back to their camp, meeting Kidder's former guide, Fedor who aimed to join them. He reported that upon his arrival, he detected three bears on the marsh, which he watched all night and ultimately shot a small black bear. Two days after Fedor's arrival, Blake began his turn to stalk in the rain. Blake, Ivan and Kidder tracked a bear into the meadow, hidden in a small clump of trees. Blake had carelessly left his coat and extra cartridges for his rifle and Ivan's, leaving the men with fewer opportunities to shoot. Blake's first shot went too high, but his second struck flesh, rolling the bear over, until he stood once more, the third shot slowed him down immensely. "Entirely against orders, Ivan now shot three times in quick succession, hitting the bear with one shot in the leg, his other two shots [missing]."<sup>37</sup> Ivan fired his last cartridge, missing. Ivan and Blake, without ammunition, watched the bear stagger and sway. Abruptly, the wounded bear "swung round upon its hind legs and gave one spring after Blake."<sup>38</sup> Blake, unable to understand the Aleutian command to not run, spurred across the marsh followed closely by the bear. As he gained ground on Blake, Ivan aimed to distract the bear by waving his arms and shouting. The bear, seeing the two hunters standing firm, charged within a few feet of the men, yet, upon seeing "their determined stand, stopped and, swinging his head from side to side, watched them for some seconds" ultimately deciding to turn toward the woods, only looking back over his shoulder.<sup>39</sup> While charging, Kidder documents that the bear's head stretched forward, ears flat, teeth clenched, lips drawn back and eyes glaring. Kidder remarks that if not for Ivan, the bear may have caused a serious accident. Kidder alleges that when following a wounded bear in thick cover, Aleuts strip completely to move with greater freedom and remain quiet; they stalk slowly and cautiously because if a bear believes hunters are near, it will attack.

In total, Kidder managed to kill seven brown bears, Blake bagged three brown bears and one black bear, while the Aleutian guides killed one brown and one black bear, accomplishing a total of thirteen kills in the span of twenty-one days. Kidder

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 473.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 474.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

ultimately sent the skulls of the brown bears to Dr. Merriam, Chief Biological Survey at Washington, providing this research a new species and subspecies to study. From this research, Kidder proudly states, Merriam determined from the bear's teeth that these varieties do not interbreed.

Having had success on the Kodiak Island and Alaskan Peninsula, Kidder attempted his third voyage with two indigenous guides, Lofka, who replaced Fedor, and Nikolai, to obtain bear specimen from "one of the outlying islands of the Kadiak [sic] group."<sup>40</sup> This journey differed from the previous, as Kidder aimed to hunt their baidarkas in the bays of the Afognak Island and along salmon streams. Blake remained in the Kodiak, as he had not yet killed a bear from the island. Toward the end of June, red salmon began to run up streams to the lake sources. During this time, the most practical way to hunt bears, according to Kidder, becomes staking out the banks of the streams. Having parted ways with Blake, who intended to meet with the group two weeks later, Kidder embarked with his two indigenous guides in their baidarka in early June. The three paddled "with a will," anxious to reach the deep bay residing on the north side of the Afognak Island.<sup>41</sup> Hunting in a country familiar to Kidder, he reflected that the Afognak Island remained "the most picturesque spot."<sup>42</sup>

Similar to his past two trips, unfavorable wind persisted. Once the wind changed course in the afternoon, the trio made their way to the salmon streams, where red salmon had arrived. Rain and the absence of bear sightings created a disappointing day, and the following day remained the same. Kidder decided to take his team to Seal Bay, however, heavy wind detained the trio in the Paramonoff Bay for a few days. Once the storm broke, the hunters made an afternoon start, sailing through the narrow straits between the Afognak and Shuyak islands. Shuyak remained uninhabited, but at times some indigenous Alaskans traveled there to hunt. Kidder documents that years ago, "white trappers" visited the island and put out poison, exterminating all the silver gray

---

<sup>40</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: III.—Killing My Large Kadiak Bear. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation* (1885-1906), 41, 1903. 748.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 749.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*.

foxes on the island; the foxes that ate the poison died, along with other animals that ate the poisoned carcasses.<sup>43</sup> The trappers only obtained one skin; the foxes died in holes and their pelts spoiled. Kidder asserts that from this act of savagery, comes a “fair example of the need for Alaskan game laws and their rigid enforcement.”<sup>44</sup> Bears and land otters inhabited Shuyak, living among lakes and salmon streams. The dangerous straits and rapids between Shuyak and Afognak tested Kidder’s nerves as the trio paddled by the shore. Watching salmon streams proved the only feasible form of hunting for the area and season. Despite a lack of success, Kidder’s indigenous guides assured him that he would soon find success as Nikolai’s palm had continued itching and “he had dreamed of blood and a big dog fighting, while Lofka’s eyelid trembled.”<sup>45</sup> Kidder’s hunters reassured him that these signs never failed.

The following day, the men began at 10, paddling with the tide as Kidder lit his pipe and conceded the work to his hunters, laying back among his rugs “half-dreaming in the charm of [his] surroundings.”<sup>46</sup> Nikolai directed the attention of the trio to his favorite hunting grounds for seals, and after asking if he might hunt for one, the group turned toward the bay. Once they started in that direction, Nikolai spotted a bear which nosed around seaweed and turned over rocks in search of food, wandering off before Kidder and his men could reach the beach. It took some time to catch up to the bear, but the group successfully tracked it in the thick moss for a mile, where Kidder caught a glimpse of the tawny brown bear. As Kidder raised his gun to shoot, the large bear darted through the underbrush. Kidder fired through the trees, and upon hearing a growl, knew one of his bullets hit. Racing ahead, Nikolai shot three times in rapid succession. As the bear struggled to rise, Nikolai and Kidder continued to shoot. Kidder’s men declared that this bear “was one of the biggest they ever had seen.”<sup>47</sup> Kidder could not weigh the bear, as the three men failed to budge the bear from the ground. After removing the pelt, the trio determined that it appeared the same size as a

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 750.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 752.

fair-sized ox. The trio struggled to skin him because he fell on his face, and only turned him over utilizing his legs as levers. They took the skin and skull, making arrangements to return months later and collect bones in order to present the entire skeleton to the National Museum.

The Aleuts loved bear meat, sitting “long into the night gorging themselves,” though Kidder, having eaten Kodiak meat before, found the taste bitter and the texture rough.<sup>48</sup> However, he remarked that the meat of Alaskan Peninsula bears tasted excellent and devoid of a strong, gamey flavor. As the men drank tea and shared stories one night, shots turned their attention to the return of sea-otter hunters gone for two months in Cape Douglas. Kidder documented the appearance of some twenty baidarkas, paddles rising and falling in unison, adding “there is nothing more graceful than one of these canoes when handled by expert Aleuts.”<sup>49</sup> In the canoe, Kidder noticed a thirteen year old boy, the chief’s son, as an expert in hunting and handling the baidarka, commenting “so is the Aleut hunter trained.”<sup>50</sup>

Similar to Kidder, sport hunters Andre Champollion and Henry Bannon published stories in sporting newspapers. Champollion began his first published journey mid July of 1903 off the east coast of Admiralty Island, Alaska. Unlike Kidder, Champollion described the land as filled with animals to shoot. Similar to Kidder, Champollion hunted with a friend and two helpers; one acted as a guide, while the other cooked and completed camp chores. Unlike Kidder’s helpful guides, Champollion struggled to find a guide skilled enough to track bears. The first guide proved incompetent, failing to rise earlier than 9 in the morning and when walking more than a few miles complained heavily of sore feet, removing his shoes and resting for lengthy periods of time. The subsequent indigenous Alaskan hired to take his place scared easily of bears, though a fine hunter, according to Champollion.

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 753.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Champollion agreed with Kidder, remarking the best way to bag a bear was to lay in wait near the salmon streams. Ultimately, having had poor luck, Champollion, along with other prospectors he met in Juneau, moved toward the mountains to hunt, while the rest of the group stayed to hunt near the salmon streams. Once there, Champollion spotted two good sized grizzly bears; one faced his direction, while the other lay flat on his belly in the tall grass, feeding from a blueberry bush. As he inched forward, Champollion lost his footing and slid nearly fifty yards down the viewing slope. With the wind blowing cross-wise, this mistake did not startle or alarm the bears who remained in the same position. Crawling through a growth of stunted timber, Champollion found himself eighty yards from the duo, and decided to kill the smaller one first with his .45-70 rifle. The first discharge struck the bear, who reared on his hind legs, pawing, growling and biting at the wound. Hidden behind small pine bushes, Champollion fired a second shot as he galloped away, hitting “the face of nature somewhere in his vicinity.”<sup>51</sup> Bannon, like Champollion, frequented the streams and mountains in search of game, journeying up the Stikine River in a canoe, propelled in part by an outboard motor. Days into his journey, Bannon remarked that “how often one sees game when it is least expected.” Having paddled down a shallow slough, Bannon’s companion whispered “Bear, bear.”<sup>52</sup> Bannon fired twice, missing the latter. Finally, the third shot hit its target, and upon recovering the bear, Bannon realized the first had paralyzed the “heavy, beautifully glossy, and blue-black” bear.<sup>53</sup> A hunter of bears, wolverines and other animals, Bannon mainly remarked on the grandeur of Alaska and the pleasure accompanied with hunting.

Hunting in Alaska proved a challenge to men like Kidder, Champollion and Bannon, who had to search the vast terrain and overcome threatening animals. Kidder’s published experiences display what Kollin asserts as Alaska as a male space and a

---

<sup>51</sup> Andre Champollion, “The Sportsman Tourist: Hunting the Alaskan Grizzly,” *Forest and Stream*, May 1908, 688.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

playground for white sport hunters.<sup>54</sup> Kidder's accounts convey the challenges that Alaska's rugged terrain posed by comparing the land to an obstacle course. He writes:

It must be borne in mind that the rivers are the only highways, for the country is very rough and broken, and on account of the almost continuous rainfall (until one has passed beyond the coast range of mountains) the underbrush of Southern Alaska is very dense, offering every obstacle to the progress of the sportsmen. All the streams are swift and by no means easy to ascend.<sup>55</sup>

Kidder's perception of Alaska points to an important cultural understanding of how American sport hunters approached the new American territory. The land presented a set of new circumstances unavailable to explore in the lower United States. These species posed an additional challenge to Kidder and his indigenous guides, with Kidder informing readers of *Outing* that one of these species had "never fallen to a white man's rifle."<sup>56</sup> Guided by the challenge of the terrain and the prospect of conquering a new feat, Kidder presented to his readers rugged masculinity and individualism against Alaska's natural backdrop. This grand representation of Alaska communicates a calling of extravagant beauty, serenity and the rejuvenation of natural resources in America. On his third published hunt, Kidder observed:

Myriads of gulls flew overhead uttering their shrill cries, while now and then the black oyster-catchers with their long red bills would circle swiftly around the bidarka, filling the air with their sharp whistles, and seemingly much annoyed at our intrusion. Many different kinds of ducks rose before us, and the ever-present eagles watched us from the lofty rocks.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Sine Anahita and Tamara L. Mix, "Retrofitting frontier masculinity for Alaska's war against wolves," *Gender & Society* 20, (no. 3 2006): 332-353.

<sup>55</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: After Bear on Kadiak Island. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 12, 1902. 348.

<sup>56</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: After Bear on Kadiak Island. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 12, 1902. 348.

<sup>57</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: III.—Killing My Large Kadiak Bear. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 41, 1903. 751.

This description not only delineates the fascinating environment that Kidder and his team encountered, but also how Alaska remained inherently different from the rest of the United States. Kidder's account emphasizes Alaska as an undisturbed, pristine environment where men like him could spend days "basking in the sun, talking of books and people, and of many subjects of common interest."<sup>58</sup> Amidst the stalking and hunting, American tourists in Alaska, could appreciate the natural beauty of the Alaskan frontier. Through hunting, Kidder's writings document an appreciation for nature in a very detailed manner. His writings highlight Alaska's uniqueness and in so doing separates and elevates the territory from the American mainland. Commenting on the beauty of Alaska, Kidder chronicles that:

Some forty miles across Shellicoff [sic] Straits was the Alaskan shore. The rugged, snow-clad mountains seemed to be softened when seen through the hazy blue atmosphere. One white-capped peak boldly pierced a line of clouds and stood forth against the pale blue of the sky beyond; while the great Douglas Glacier, ever-present, wound its way down—down to the very sea. It was all grandly beautiful, and seemed in keeping with the day.<sup>59</sup>

Kidder demonstrates the splendor and magnificence of Alaskan nature, promoting Alaska as a hunting ground. Kidder's descriptions exhibit Alaska as a playground for white, male trophy hunters. Descriptions such as these suggest an imagined "last frontier" and a separate, natural entity capable of reviving the image of the United States as a place for rugged individualists.

The appeal of bear hunting in Alaska lends to the difficulty of hunting bears which includes extensive hours and grueling conditions. For white American hunters in Alaska, bears maintained a certain status and reputation that added to their value as prey. Champollion conveys this notion in his writings, commenting:

---

<sup>58</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Alaska: Bear Stalking on the Alaska Peninsula. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation* (1885-1906), 01, 1903. 471.

<sup>59</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: III.—Killing My Large Kadiak Bear. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation* (1885-1906), 41, 1903. 752.

The grizzly bear has a well-deserved reputation for irascibility and vindictiveness, not only among the aborigines, but also among the white men, most of whom are prospectors and therefore continually exposed to danger of attack from *Ursus horribilis*. She-bears with cubs are especially to be feared. We heard one man sum up his feelings in the terse phrase, “You may never need a gun, but when you do, you need it badly!”<sup>60</sup>

This description points to the way in which men viewed bears and thereby viewed their hunting capabilities as exerting courage and displaying American rugged masculinity. For these writers, exposure to danger made the stalking and hunting of bears worthwhile. Bear hunting transformed into a symbol of power. Within the context of American colonialism and expansionism, bear hunting represents a configuration of power that reflects the changing power dynamics of Alaskan politics and social life. In this way, bear hunting became a mode for trophy hunters to assert and reenact their dominance over the land, animals and people. American men valued bears as kills and as trophies. The ferocity displayed by bears posed a challenge that sport hunters willfully took in order to achieve their valuable hides and mountable heads. A 1992 Alaskan Department of Fish and Game Report that studied the history of bear hunting in Alaska claims that hunters regarded the brown bear as the “ultimate challenge” because the brown bear represented the “embodiment of wilderness” and the master of the forest.<sup>61</sup> Taking on this challenge, Kidder leans into this idealization of bear hunting by personalizing the experience for his readers. He described the tawny yellow and brown female bear that he stalked on his first published Alaskan trip: “As she made her appearance, I could not help being greatly impressed by the massive head and high shoulders, on which stood the pronounced tuft of hair.”<sup>62</sup> Presenting bears as ferocious brutes of Alaskan nature affixes worth and desirability to their prey as valuable trophies. In order to resonate this sentiment with his readers, Kidder stresses to his

---

<sup>60</sup> Andre Champollion, “The Sportsman Tourist: Hunting the Alaskan Grizzly,” *Forest and Stream*, May 1908, 688.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas F. Thorton. *Subsistence use of brown bear in Southeast Alaska*. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, 1992.

<sup>62</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: After Bear on Kadiak Island. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 12, 1902. 357.

readers that in the face of danger, his men remained strong and fearless. Without bullets, the men, forced to face a bear weaponless, stood firm, with a “determined stand”, resulting in the bear ultimately deciding to leave his hunters behind, unharmed.

<sup>63</sup> Including this image in his story accentuates the bravery that Kidder believes he and his men effectively exhibited by showing aggression toward the large mammal.

Kidder and others emphasized that Alaskan bears display intelligence and cunning in addition to ferocity and viciousness. He remarked: “it is curious to note that often when game is being stalked it becomes suspicious, although it cannot smell, hear, or see the stalker—instinct, perhaps; call it what you will.”<sup>64</sup> Kidder’s representation lends to the exoticism of Alaskan nature and wildlife, as he encourages other sport hunters to join in the pursuit of glory. For non-native sport and trophy hunters, bear hunting provided an opportunity to match wits against and prevail against nature’s ferocious predators.<sup>65</sup> Trophy hunters like Kidder concerned themselves with harvesting the largest of species for other scientific purposes as well. He recorded the specific measurements of the bears he killed, meticulously documenting his successes to *Outing* readers. Kidder’s writings underscore the idea that Alaska presented a reality and an environment so different and distinct from the rest of America that paradoxically, the bears differ and maintain a miraculous mystique.

With this heightened sense of value on bears, bear hunting proclaims importance in American men’s construction of their identity. Alaska’s image as the “last frontier” engineered a romanticized ideal of bear hunting that promoted masculinity, rugged self-sufficiency, bodily strength and courage. Hunting provided a means for “old stock” Americans to reinforce and validate values of their culture.<sup>66</sup> Kidder differentiates the type of hunting as more masculine and sportsmanlike, arguing that “when the salmon come it is not so difficult to get a shot, but this lying in wait at night

---

<sup>63</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Alaska: Bear Stalking on the Alaska Peninsula. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation* (1885-1906), 01, 1903. 474.

<sup>64</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Alaska: Bear Stalking on the Alaska Peninsula. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation* (1885-1906), 01, 1903. 469.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas R. Dunlap. "Sport hunting and conservation, 1880-1920." *Environmental Review: ER* 12, no. 1 (1988): 51-60.

by a salmon stream cannot compare with seeking out one's game on the hills in the spring and stalking it in a sportsmanlike manner."<sup>67</sup> This notion of a more masculine type of hunting arguably solidifies the growing popularity of sport hunting in response to the fear of American culture feigning weakness, displaying how sport hunters began to reconnect with nature and their own power. For sport hunters, showing emotion, such as sympathy for animals, implied unmanly virtues and shortcomings.<sup>68</sup> Sport hunter Champollion succumbs to this pressure, admitting that the idea of killing two bears that grazed before him scared him, though the idea of admitting this feeling to others frightened him far more:

It must be confessed that I faced the idea of attacking those animals alone with a good deal of apprehension, but knew that on returning to camp it would be impossible for me to refrain from speaking then ask me what I had done. I could already see myself sheepishly acknowledging that I had done nothing, and the whole mining camp roaring, so I chose danger as an evil less to be feared than ridicule, and started down the mountain toward the bears.<sup>69</sup>

American trophy hunters yielded to the idea that they had to conquer danger without showing mercy. When hunting, the men fired bullets that killed and caused immense suffering to the bears as most of their prey growled in pain once shot. Sport hunter's practices legitimized American men's dominant position in society and justified their subordination of indigenous Alaskans. Bear hunting reflects a changing Alaskan cultural dynamic in which American trophy hunters claimed and sustained a leading and dominant position in Alaskan culture by recruiting indigenous guides to assist them in their quest. This culturally idealized form of manhood conveys how Alaska played into a gendered scheme of practices that reinforced American cultural norms of masculinity. By hiring indigenous Alaskans as guides, bear hunting in Alaska

---

<sup>67</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: After Bear on Kadiak Island. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation* (1885-1906), 12, 1902.

<sup>68</sup> Sine Anahita and Tamara L. Mix, "Retrofitting frontier masculinity for Alaska's war against wolves," *Gender & Society* 20, (no. 3 2006): 332-353.

<sup>69</sup> Andre Champollion, "The Sportsman Tourist: Hunting the Alaskan Grizzly," *Forest and Stream*, May 1908, 688.

represented a victory of American culture and expansionism over nature and indigenous Alaskan culture.

Publishing their writings in sport and hunting magazines, American trophy hunters like Kidder, Champollion and Bannon glorify and promote travel to Alaska in search of bears as prey and exploitation. These trophy hunters documented their adventures in Alaska in order to convey a contemporary place for trophy hunters to explore and connect with new terrain. Their hunting publications bolster Alaska as the quintessential place for bear hunting. Historian Thomas R. Dunlap asserts that sportsmen found magazines as a medium to convert Americans into sport hunting and to mobilize sport and trophy hunters for game preservation.<sup>70</sup> In this way, Kidder, Champollion and Bannon's publications serve as a justification for sport hunting that aimed to bring new hunters into the fold. More than Kidder and Champollion, Bannon endorsed sport hunting as a hobby and pastime for men that fulfilled men's needs. Bannon writes: "Sane and happy is the man who is engrossed in normally changing diversions...If you are skeptical about regarding hunting as a hobby, weigh the enthusiasm bestowed by sportsmen upon the chase and the implements of the chase."<sup>71</sup> Proclaiming hunting as his most favorable hobby, Bannon declares that "hunting has brought me the beauties and wonders of Nature and I have rejoiced."<sup>72</sup> Moreover, game and fishing magazines and newspapers promoted hunting through published narratives and advertisements (Fig.1).

---

<sup>70</sup> Thomas R. Dunlap. "Sport hunting and conservation, 1880-1920." *Environmental Review: ER* 12, no. 1 (1988): 51-60.

<sup>71</sup> Henry Bannon, "Bear Hunting on Northern Rivers: Sane and Happy is the Man Who Each Year Cleanses his Spirit by Close Contact with the Primal Forces of Nature," *Forest and Stream*, December 1921, 538.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

*Resorts for Sportsmen.*

---

**BRITISH EAST AFRICA BIG GAME HUNTING**

As pioneers in equipping Big Game hunting parties, NEWLAND, TARLTON & CO, LTD., confidently invite inquiries from all who think of visiting the "most attractive playground in the world." These words are applied by Colonel Theodore Roosevelt to British East Africa, and the fact that NEWLAND, TARLTON & CO., LTD., have been honored with all his arrangements is a guarantee of their ability to do things well, and an acknowledgment of their long experience. Write for booklet to their London Office. NEWLAND, TARLTON & CO., LTD. (Head Office: Nairobi, B. E. Africa), 166 Piccadilly, London. Cables: Wapagazi; London. Codes: A B C 5th Edn. and Western Union.

---

**HUNTING IN AFRICA**

Shooting parties outfitted and guided in Rhodesia. Best English and American references. Abundance of Big Game. Address  
**WILLIAM FINAUGHTY, JR.,**  
Bulawayo, Rhodesia.

---

**HUNTING IN FLORIDA.**

Birds, Turkey, Cat, Fox, etc., on plantation. Not far from Duck, Deer and Bear. Good board and beds, open fires; horses and vehicles; pure water; good R.R. and telegraph facilities.

WOODLAND PLANTATION, Lloyd, Fla.

---

**NEWFOUNDLAND**

Excellent Salmon and Trout Fishing; also Caribou shooting. Tents, guides, boats provided. Write  
BUNGALOW, Grand Lake, Newfoundland.

---

**DUCK SHOOTING.**

Guides, Boats and Decoys on Great South Bay. Best accommodations at Bay Side Hotel, Eastport, L. I. Best Duck shooting in 20 years. H. J. ROGERS, Prop.

---

**EXCLUSIVE HUNTING ON 25,000 ACRES.**

Furnishing first-class accommodations, guides, livery, hunting lands and trained dogs for the hunting of quail, wild turkeys and deer. Northern references. Special attention to parties containing ladies. Trained and untrained quail dogs for sale.

Dr. H. L. ATKINS, Boydton, Va.

---

**SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA**

Brown, Black and Glacier Bear Hunting. Write early for spring of 1910.

A. HASSELBORG - - - Juneau, Alaska

---

**CAMP & TRAIL** A New 16-32 Page  
WEEKLY  
Devoted to HUNTING  
and allied topics. Sample 5 cents. Yearly \$1.50  
A. R. HARDING PUB. CO. Box 849, Columbus, Ohio. t

---

Figure 1. Hunting advertisement posted in *Forest and Stream's* February 1910 issue.

This advertisement from *Forest and Stream's* February 1910 issue promotes hunting opportunities in various, worldwide locations. Of the locations listed, the Southeastern Alaskan advertisement touts brown, black and glacier bear hunting, asking inquirers to write early to begin their hunting trip for the spring of 1910. Advertisements such as this indicate a demand and market for hunting expeditions in destinations inside and outside of the United States. The title of the advertisement communicates that trips like these were desirable and appealing to readers of the magazine, as hunting trips ranged from Africa, Newfoundland and Florida. This advertisement exemplifies the popularity of hunting trips and the publication of hunting adventures. One advertisement characterizes American trophy hunters as “pioneers” exploring “the most attractive playground in the world” touting numerous spaces for men to hunt and in turn, share their stories. This specific advertisement commodifies indigenous Alaskans, publicizing guides alongside boats, animals and railroad and telegraph facilities. This type of language displays how American trophy hunters engaged in places them in a dominant position, benefiting from the expertise and knowledge of indigenous guides. What this advertisement entails is how sought-after and influential hunting trips and stories were in twentieth century American culture. For Kidder to have published over six different accounts of his travels reflects the significance and prominence of trophy hunting stories. The trend of these writings exhibits a niche community that consumed and appreciated hunting stories in United States territories and outside areas. Published sport hunting writings allowed for an exchange of writing forms between American trophy hunters and subscribed readers, allowing for readers to gain an understanding of indigenous hunting practices and Alaskan wilderness.

American trophy hunters and indigenous Alaskans exchanged cultural forms through their hunting voyages. This is most evident though Kidder's relationship with his guides, such as his remark that the “Aleut mode of hunting is to study the direction in which your game is working.”<sup>73</sup> Hunting within the boundaries of what Kidder refers

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 352.

to as the “native custom,” Kidder begins to adapt his method and technique of hunting to Aleut procedure.<sup>74</sup> This modification allowed for Kidder and his team to successfully hunt the Alaskan frontier. Similarly, Kidder’s guide Nikolai proves integral to helping Kidder locate and track the specimen of bear for which he came to Alaska. Of the indigenous Alaskans that he encountered, Kidder writes that:

[they] seemed to show traces of Japanese descent, for they resembled these people both in size and features. I found them of a docile disposition, remarkable hunters and weather prophets, and most expert in handling their wonderful canoes, with which I always associate them.<sup>75</sup>

In order to communicate with his guides, Kidder and his crew had to overcome language barriers that hindered them from speaking freely. Kidder and his friend understood the Aleut guides, despite knowing little Russian or Aleut dialects, by use of “expressive gestures.”<sup>76</sup> Living in close proximity and spending weeks together, American trophy and sport hunters adapted their hunting styles to the indigenous practices of bear hunting. The process of bear hunting created a cultural composite in which the group shared successes and benefited mutually—American trophy hunters procured skins and heads that they displayed, while indigenous Alaskans accompanied white travelers for a price. Kidder recounts a payment dispute between his friend Blake and the indigenous guides that Blake had contracted, writing:

He had been extremely good to his men, and in settling with them on his return from the Alaska Peninsula Peninsula, had good naturedly paid the excessive demands they made. The result was that his kindness was mistaken for weakness, and just as he was about to leave his hunters struck for an increase of pay... A sportsman going into a new country owes it to those who follow to resist

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 353.

firmly exorbitant demands, and at the same time to be firm and just in all his dealings.<sup>77</sup>

These negotiations demonstrate how indigenous hunters re-appropriated hunting and the expectations placed on them by capitalizing off of their learned abilities.

Indigenous hunters and American trophy hunters hunted for different reasons and learned from one another. Historian Caskey Russel argues that American settlers and indigenous Tlingits held different and potentially conflicting views of cosmology, jurisprudence and religion.<sup>78</sup> This argument demonstrates how mediation between conflicting cultures created a cultural hybridity of hunting forms in the midst of American appropriation, colonization and imperialism.

Bear hunting demonstrates how indigenous Alaskans resisted American trophy hunters' seizure of power and reclaimed segments of power and authority over land and activities. Indigenous Alaskans aided white trophy and sport hunters in constructing their rugged masculinity by acting as guides. In this way, indigenous actors provided white trophy and sport hunters the ability to locate, track and kill Alaskan bears due to their expansive knowledge of the terrain and species. Bear hunting in Alaska represents a cultural composite of indigenous Alaskan needs and American trophy hunters' desires.

As white trophy hunters flocked to Alaska for sport hunting opportunities, they brought with them their culture and found a journalistic space to retell their accounts. These accounts indicate and reflect a burgeoning practice of documenting sport hunting for white males. Kidder, Champollion and Bannon wrote at a time where hunting was prevalent, creating a cultural framework for sport hunting to maintain relevance within American society and literature. This glorification of Alaskan hunting succeeds the American Civil War and the systematic eradication and removal of the native population in the contiguous United States, in which Alaska became the last and

---

<sup>77</sup> James H. Kidder. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: III.—Killing My Large Kadiak Bear. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 41, 1903. 748.

<sup>78</sup> Caskey Russel, "Cultures in Collision: Cosmology, jurisprudence, and religion in tlingit territory," *American Indian Quarterly* 33, (2009): 230-252.

final frontier. While white males utilized indigenous Alaskans in order to navigate Alaska's backcountry, indigenous Alaskans capitalized on their strengths in exchange for compensation. In this way, they regained some of the power lost or compromised through imperialism and colonization. Despite different and potentially conflicting views of animals, each group gained a different type of power from hunting. Trophy hunters received glory, and domination over animals, while indigenous Alaskans resisted assimilation by reclaiming the power structure imposed on them by American settlers, and in turn by American trophy hunters. In the realm of hunting, the power structure shifted continuously based on knowledge and the circumstances. In situations of stalking a bear, Kidder and his team did not allow his guides to shoot first, however at times the indigenous guides disobeyed this rule. When it came to knowledge of hunting sites and techniques, indigenous hunters maintained the upper hand. Given the power structure derived from Russian and American imperialism, indigenous hunters reclaimed some semblance of dominance over trophy hunters based on their superior knowledge of the terrain and bear tracking. These subtle negotiations point to the significance of trophy hunting in American culture during a period of threatened masculinity and imperial expansion.

## Works Cited

- Anahita, Sine, Tamara L. Mix, "Retrofitting Frontier Masculinity for Alaska's War Against Wolves," *Gender & Society* 20, (no. 3 2006): 332-353.
- Bannon, Henry. "Bear Hunting on Northern Rivers: Sane and Happy is the Man Who Each Year Cleanses his Spirit by Close Contact with the Primal Forces of Nature." *Forest and Stream*, December 1921, 538-542.
- Coates, Ken. "Controlling the Periphery: The Territorial Administration of the Yukon and Alaska, 1867-1959." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1987).
- Champollion, Andre. "The Sportsman Tourist: Hunting the Alaskan Grizzly." *Forest and Stream*, May 1908, 688.
- Dray, Philip. "How This Photo of Theodore Roosevelt in Hunting Gear Helped Jump-Start the American Conservation Movement," *Time Magazine*, May 1, 2018, New York.
- Dunlap, Thomas R.. "Sport hunting and conservation, 1880-1920." *Environmental Review: ER* 12, no. 1 (1988): 51-60.
- "Advertisement 32-- No Title," *Forest and Stream*, February 26, 1910, 358.
- Haycox, Stephen. "Truth and Expectation: Myth in Alaska History." *Northern Review* 6 (1990).
- Kidder, James H.. Hunting the Big Game of Alaska: Bear Stalking on the Alaska Peninsula. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 01, 1903.
- . Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: After Bear on Kadiak Island. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 12, 1902. 348.

---. Hunting the Big Game of Western Alaska: III.—Killing My Large Kadiak Bear. *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*, 41, 1903. 748.

Kollin, Susan. *Nature's State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier*. Chapel Hill & London. UNC Press Books, 2001.

Russel, Caskey. "Cultures in Collision: Cosmology, Jurisprudence, and Religion in Tlingit Territory," *American Indian Quarterly* 33, (2009): 230-252.

Thorton, Thomas F.. *Subsistence use of brown bear in Southeast Alaska*. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, 1992.

# The Chinese Trinity: Protestantism, the Reimagination of Womanhood, and the Modern Nation-State

*Pamela Liu*

## **Introduction**

As a rising global superpower, China is often conceived of by the West as a secular Communist state, where Confucian values remain dominant in every aspect of society. However, Christianity, through the works of Protestant institutions, has become one of the major forces of social transformations in modern Chinese society. This paper examines numerous first-hand scholarly, religious, and political conversations on the question of womanhood in the light of China's encounter with the West and her engagement with Protestantism. Through the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Protestantism, by continuously engaging with various reimaginings of womanhood in the modern Chinese nation-state, advances its integration into Chinese society. Chinese society in turn innovatively reinterprets Protestant beliefs and initiates new religious movements that reflect the aspirations of distinct groups of women in the modern Chinese nation-state.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western culture and missionaries that flooded into China empowered earlier feminists in their efforts to defy the officially prescribed gender role of a 'gentle wife and good mother.' Later, in the first half of the 20th century, in order to bring China under the Protestant religion, missionary-affiliated societies and institutions, including the Heavenly Foot Society and Ginling Women's College, advanced on the course of women's liberation. Protestant churches' engagement with the question of women continued after the Communist takeover. In the 1980s, Protestant churches continued to be incorporated into Chinese society according to

various needs of its female populace: by identifying with the official political vision of a female citizen and by synthesizing with existing female-oriented folk traditions. Both, by overturning the Confucian ideal of womanhood, have echoed aspects of early Chinese feminists' vision of modern Chinese womanhood: women are not only "out in the public" but are also leaders who actively generate and disseminate religious insights to the general congregation. Thus, from missionary programs in the late 1800s to the indigenous churches' representations of women in the late 1990s, one could see the mutual construction of Chinese Protestant Christianity and a modern womanhood in the newly-established nation-state, as the transformation of womanhood occurred simultaneously with Protestant churches' gradual Sinicization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Theoretical Framework: Peter Berger's Sociological Theory of Religion**

Peter L. Berger was a prominent American-Austrian sociologist who has written extensively on the sociological construction of religion. His theory, rather than emphasizing the vulnerability of an individual or a society by attributing their constructions solely to its surroundings, proposes that everyone can simultaneously be an active creator of its environment. The aspect of mutual construction in his theory grants each participant in the collective the agency to reinterpret established values and instigate changes to their surroundings. Berger stresses the reciprocal nature of the production of the religio-social reality in *The Sacred Canopy*, in which he argues:

Society is a dialectical phenomenon in that it is a human product...that yet continuously acts back upon its producer...There can be no social reality apart from man. Yet it may also be stated that man is a product of society.<sup>1</sup>

Berger points out that the construction of social reality is never one-way, as otherwise no change could ever occur within a society. Berger views this dialectical process as

---

<sup>1</sup> Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Book, 1990), 3.

three-fold: externalization, objectivation and internalization.<sup>2</sup> “Externalization” is the process of the individual actively participating in the construction of the social and cultural world; “objectivation” is the process where that which has been externalized become independent of its creator and is integrated into the established social consensus, while “internalization” takes place when the objectified reality imposes its logic onto its participants and perpetuates further externalization process.<sup>3</sup> According to Berger, religion most accurately reflects this frame; individual participants, being subjects to the established religious traditions, in turn contribute their religious insights to perpetuate renewals to the religion so as to maintain its relevance in the contemporary world.

This dialectical process is especially useful in guiding the investigation of Protestant reimagination of womanhood in modern China. Many assume that in the construction of modern Chinese womanhood, Protestantism has been playing an active role while China and its female populace are predominantly receptive of the social and cultural changes it brings about. However, Protestant values also undergo alterations as Chinese Christians attempt to come to terms with them in the light of their immediate cultural and social environments; this is a theme that will echo throughout this paper. Thus, Berger’ s theory of the dynamic relationship between conventionally oppositional entities – male versus female, conceptual versus practical, political versus popular, East versus West – is useful in guiding the subsequent discussion by addressing the issues of change, agency, synthesis and reciprocity.

Before I delve into the investigation, I would like to make a few notes on the discussion itself. Firstly, it is difficult to define terms such as Protestantism – could it represent a distinctive set of religious tenets, a communal belief, or an established social or cultural tradition and practice? In this paper, I employ the term as a placeholder for all above: as a synthesized religious, historical, cultural and social

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 7-9.

phenomenon that instigates and undergoes constant changes. Secondly, I begin each section and their subsections with a brief background introduction in an attempt to situate my primary sources in the broader social transformations. One will also notice that for each section, I employ at least a pair of primary sources from different perspectives in order to demonstrate not only the extent and the variety of the transformation of womanhood in each historical phrase, but also how they resonate with the Bergerian theory of a mutual religio-social construction, among themselves and with their predecessors and successors.

### **Early Feminist Awakenings in the Contact with the West**

The presence of Christianity in China has a surprisingly long history; records of Nestorian Christians could be found on various artifacts, including the famous Nestorian Stele in Xi'an, dated to as early as 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>4</sup> However, Christians did exert significant influences over Chinese society until the middle and late Qing Dynasty, during which a few Roman Catholic missionaries held high offices and served as imperial advisors to Kangxi Emperor. Meanwhile, after Kangxi Emperor's death, Christian churches faced severe persecutions for his successor, Yongzheng Emperor, and remained under suppression until the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1911 and the subsequent series of Western invasions<sup>5</sup>.

The Western colonists who flooded into the various concessions in China during this turbulent time were returning Chinese students who were sent overseas to Europe and Japan to receive a Western education. As these students, including men and women, witnessed the social and cultural revolutions that took place overseas, they became

---

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Scott, Latourette, "Christianity in China," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 152, (Nov., 1930): 63.

<sup>5</sup> Antonio Vasconcelos de Saldanha, "The Last Imperial Honors From Tomás Pereira to the Eulogium Europeorum Doctorum in 1711," in *In the Light and Shadow of an Emperor : Tomas Pereira, SJ (1645-1708), the Kangxi Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China*, by Artur K Wardega and Antonio Vasconcelos de Saldanha (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 158.

determined to elevate China from its current technological, social and cultural “backwardness”, and modernize China so that she could face the challenges and drastic changes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this process, Confucianism and its traditional values were harshly criticized by literature giants and reformers such as Qichao Liang and Lu Xun (Shuren Zhou) as the primary impediment to China’s progress in the modern world<sup>6</sup>. What came along with this critical reflection on the Chinese social and cultural crises was the rise of feminism.

*Qichao Liang: Women’s Education and the Construction of a Modern Nation-State*

As a fervent advocate of constitutional and social reforms, Liang contemplated on the reasons of China’s incompetence in defending herself against Western invasions and concluded that women’s education was necessary to enhance China’s competitiveness in the global stage. As early as 1897, a year before he fled to Japan due to the unsuccessful “Hundred Days Reform”<sup>7</sup>, Liang expressed his thoughts on women’s education in relation to a nation’s strength in “On Women’s Education”:

...when I seek out the root causes of national weakness, I find that they inevitably lie in women’s lack of education.<sup>8</sup>

Liang then expounds on this seemingly radical idea by referring to the problem of the disproportionate labor and consumption:

...considering the nation’s labor force and material production as a whole and as they relate proportionally to national profit...among [women] are consumers, and none are producers...[being confined to homes and] without education, it was not possible for women to have occupations [and become producers]. How can a country become strong [and] wealthy? They will be [strong and] wealthy

---

<sup>6</sup> Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, “The Historical Context: Chinese Feminist Worlds at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, ed. by Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 29.

<sup>7</sup> Keiko Kockum, “Liang Qichao: The Japanese Years,” *Cina* 1988, no. 21, (1988): 195.

<sup>8</sup> Qichao Liang, “On Women’s Education,” in *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, ed. Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 190.

when everyone can support himself or herself...If the number of employed people doubles in a country [ when women participate in production], then the amount of the local products and goods produced will quickly double as well.<sup>9</sup>

Liang regards the millennia-long Confucian perception of ‘a virtuous women is without talent’<sup>10</sup> and its subsequent practice of confining women to a domestic setting incompatible with China’s contemporary economic and social needs. Women, who were uneducated, unemployed, and ultimately dependent on their husbands, constituted a grave waste of labor resources, which in turn caused China’s inadequate development. Liang then strengthens his argument for women’s education with another argument, which is based on women’s ability to expedite social evolution by educating a society’s future generations:

... [because children are naturally closer to their mothers,] if the mother is a good teacher, it is easy for the child to grow upright...there are gradual changes that...cause the species to develop...from a savage and backward species to a civilized and noble one. It is for this reason that Western scholars who study the science of race have taken prenatal education as a top priority. They have given much thought to the various ways of improving their own species.<sup>11</sup>

Women’s education is crucial, according to Liang, when they become mothers and take on the responsibility of educating the future generations of the nation. As a firm believer in social Darwinism, Liang establishes an analogy between the evolution of a species and that of a society; only the best individual are able to contribute to the betterment of the collective, and in the case of women, education is essential to the individual due to its long-lasting benefit to the society.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 190-192.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 193-195.

Liang, drawing on his observation of the West, concludes that nations which rise to dominant positions in the global stage all have been promoting women's education and subsequent involvement in society:

Today, education is considered the foundation of successful governance...We may therefore conclude that a country with the best women's education is also the strongest. Such a nation can "win a war without a fight," such as America has done. What follows [on both their strength and their promotion of women's education] are England, Germany, and Japan.<sup>12</sup>

According to Liang, the extent of women's education within a nation inevitably leads to the nation's prosperity by contributing to its labor force and the process of the nation's evolution toward civilization. Although a pioneer in promoting gender equality, Liang nevertheless approaches the question of women from a male's perspective; women are still regarded as material resources to be exploited and tools to achieve a practical end in a fundamentally patriarchal society. Meanwhile, there is a Bergerian moment of internalization and re-externalization, as Liang's conclusion is drawn from his observation of the Western nations. Liang's engagement with the outside (Western) world facilitates his own externalization, one of China's earliest feminist theories, which will serve as a theoretical foundation of future generations' engagement with the issue of women's identity as history progresses.

*A Woman's Gaze: Zhen He-Yin and the Individual Cultivation of Womanhood*

Unlike Liang's eager promotion of women's education for the collective good, Zhen He-Yin viewed the question of womanhood from the perspective of an individual woman. He-Yin was a prominent radical feminist and anarchist who pursued a Westernized education abroad and established Women's Rights Recovery Association in Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>. In "On the Question of Women's Liberation", first

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 201-202.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Zarrow, "He Zhen and Anarcho-Feminism in China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (Nov., 1988): 800.

published in a feminist journal *Tianyi* in 1907, He-Yin examines the current cultural expectations imposed on her fellow Chinese women and laments on their inferior status in a Confucian society throughout history:

The social system in China has enslaved women and forced them into submission for many thousands of years... The Han dynasty Confucian scholar Zheng Xuan wrote, “[A]<sup>14</sup> woman should not concern herself with the outside world...Unfortunately, this [belief] has led to a situation where a woman’s lifelong responsibility has been restricted to the double task of raising children, managing the household, and nothing else.<sup>15</sup>

He-Yin underlines the systematic oppression of women in China, and poses questions similar to that of Laing’s: why should any social system confine women at home, and forces them to tend to their husband’s needs, while these husbands are able to venture out into the world? Although she appreciates her contemporary male reformers who advocated for gender equality, He-Yin reminds her fellow women that the burden of women’s liberation ultimately lies on the individual women:

Today, Chinese women still expect men to come to set them free; we are content with playing a passive role...I argue that we women must rely on ourselves to find the joy of liberation and should never expect men to be our liberators..<sup>16</sup>

Here, He-Yin enters into a conversation with, and pushes back against the traditional image of an obedient domestic female, an image which is still assumed even by intellectuals such as Liang. True gender equality, argues He-Yin, can only be achieved by “active calls on freedom”, which she defines as “the ones initiated by women themselves as they struggle to free themselves...the joy of liberation lies in the

---

<sup>14</sup> Original modification.

<sup>15</sup> Zhen He-Yin, “On the Question of Women’s Liberation,” in *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, ed. Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013) 53-54.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

development of the character of women and that this will in turn help us win rights to change society.”<sup>17</sup>

Instead of arguing for women’s equality from a collective utilitarian perspective,<sup>18</sup> He-Yin frames her argument by emphasizing on women’s intrinsic right and duty to freely initiate self-improvement for their own sake. In addition to this, He-Yin again reassures her fellow women of their inherent power to achieve equality by examining numerous precedents of the West:

Finnish women, for example, are renowned for their courage and fearless acts. They established the Finnish Women’s Association (Suomen Naisyhdistys) in 1884 to mobilize efforts for women’s participation in politics...Next to Finnish women are women of Norway, where the feminist struggle has focused on universal suffrage...<sup>19</sup>

Exposed to Western social changes and pioneer feminist thoughts from Chinese intellectuals, He-Yin passionately believes that women, just like men, possess the potential to facilitate social changes when they unite under one vision. Although idealistic, her imperious pleading of individual Chinese women taking up the responsibility for their self-liberation from the life-long ‘imprisonment’ in a Confucian ideal of womanhood marks the awakening of Chinese women’s self-consciousness, as revolutionary ideas which accompanied these returning international students spread across the war-torn China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 59; 63.

<sup>18</sup> Xiaofei Kang, “Women and the Religious Question in Modern China,” in *Modern Chinese Religion II: 1850 – 2015*, Volume 32 of *Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 4 China*, ed. Jan Kiely, Vincent Goossaert, and John Lagerwey (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 510.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 64.

## Protestant Missionaries and Chinese Woman's Citizenship

### *Anti-Foot-Binding Societies as a Means to Convert China*

While individual intellectuals who experienced a Western education voiced their visions of social and cultural reforms regarding gender equality in China, it was the Protestant missionaries, seeking to integrate Protestantism into the Chinese society, who steadily transformed women's social roles by launching innumerable programs, liberating ordinary women from what they saw as 'heathen cultural practices', providing education and employment opportunities for them outside of their household. Upon arriving in China in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, female Protestant missionaries who were determined to convert the Chinese populace to Christianity found themselves being caught up in a culture of odd customs and exotic traditions, with which they have difficulties comprehending and identifying with<sup>20</sup>. Among these was the custom of foot-binding, a traditional Chinese practice, and a symbol of women's chastity, which purposefully distorted women's foot from a young age to make women's physical labor or long-distance travel nearly impossible. Among other torturous customs present in China, foot-binding was objectified, in a Bergerian sense, as the hallmark of the problematic pagan Confucian way of life that was incompatible with Christianity and its ideals. These customs were even taught as *the* Chinese torture of women to young European children through various performances in order to plant the seed of "...a responsibility to improve the lives of these [young girls] in faraway lands."<sup>21</sup>

Many saw an initiation to solving this problem as an opportunity to proselytize Chinese by attracting the female population of China; they begin to adjust their missionary works to accommodate the needs of Chinese women as they see fit – a

---

<sup>20</sup> Angela Zito, "Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding in China: Missionary and Medical Stagings of the Universal Body," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 1 (2007): 15.

<sup>21</sup> Shih-Wen Sue Chen, "Paradoxical Performances: Cruel Constraints and Christian Emancipation in 19–20th-Century Missionary Representations of Chinese Women and Girls," in *Divine Domesticities: Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Hyaewool Choi and Margaret Jolly (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), 348.

process of Bergerian externalization which proceeds objectification. While some missionary-affiliated schools stood up against this inhumane cultural practice by admitting only those who have natural feet, missionary organizations were established with an objective to emancipate Chinese women from the practice of foot-binding.<sup>22</sup> The earliest and one of the most notable is the Heavenly Foot Society, initiated by the London Missionary Society in 1874. Its founder, John Macgowan, recorded the shifting attitude among Chinese women towards foot-binding and Christianity as the Society wages anti-foot binding campaigns in his propagandic book *How England Saved China*. The first story narrates his wife's encounter with a Chinese woman when she was binding her daughter's feet for the first time, a moment which inspired the subsequent establishment of the Society:

A little girl, about seven years old, was lying back in a chair whilst her mother firmly gripped one of her ankles and with a long cotton bandage was winding it tightly round her foot so as to compress it into the narrowest possible limits...my wife [stepped up and] said "I have come...to entreat you to stop this torture that you are inflicting upon your daughter. I have been so distressed with hearing her cries..." [to which the women responded] "You think I do not love my girl, but I do, just as much as you do yours; but you are an Englishwoman and you do not understand the burden that is laid upon us woman of China...[and] this foot-binding is the evil fortune that we inherit from the past...there is no one in all this wide Empire of ours that can bring us deliverance."<sup>23</sup>

The contrast between the apparent cruelty of foot binding and the women's "love" amplifies, for its Western readers, the powerlessness of the individual Chinese women against the overarching 'heathen' cultural expectation of foot-binding. As the practice remains vital to determining the young girl's future marriage, the mother has no choice but to perpetuate this vicious tradition. On top of this, the Chinese woman reveals her

---

<sup>22</sup> Alison R. Drucker, "The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-Footbinding Movement 1840-1911," *Réflexions Historiques* 8, no.3 (Fall 1981): 187.

<sup>23</sup> John Macgowan, *How England Saved China* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913), 25-26.

suspicion of a Western presence in solving a problem specific to Chinese women. Witnessing this, Macgowan “propounded [his] scheme of forming a society for united action against the mighty powers of heathenism...‘The Heavenly Foot Society’”, about which he envisions that,

It will now be the work of the Society...to drive out from every Chinese home the cruel custom of foot-binding, and to restore to women the Divine conception that God at first conceived for her in His creation of her.<sup>24</sup>

Macgowan’s inherent missionary prejudice is evident in his emphasis on the dichotomy of ‘Christian’ and ‘heathen’. Meanwhile, it is clear that by establishing the society, the Macgowans act on their belief that curing China of its “heathen disease” play a critical role in spreading Christianity: “The preaching of the gospel and the healing of man’s [physical and cultural] decease are always intimately associated.”<sup>25</sup>. After problematizing the practice of foot-binding, the Macgowans proposed the Society as a solution to facilitate changes to reinvent Chinese society according to Protestant values. Sharing their visions, numerous female missionaries joined the societies, as women comprise the majority of its membership and were in various leadership positions.<sup>26</sup> According to Macgowans, their efforts were proven successful in both waking up Chinese women to the inherent injustice of the practice and attracting women to Christianity, which was evident in one of the conversations between Mrs. Macgowan and a Chinese woman from a native church:

“...I have been led seriously to consider that there is one very important thing that I have not yet given to [Christ,]” [said the Chinese woman],

“And what many that be?” asked my wife, with a look of wonder in her eyes.

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 64-65.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>26</sup> Drucker, “The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-Footbinding Movement 1840-1911,” *Réflexions Historiques*, 189.

It is my feet...These are not the feet...that God gave me when I was born. They have been tortured and mangled out of all shape in obedience to a cruel custom that was imposed upon the women of China many years ago. It seems to me that we Christian women should refused to be bound by a heathen custom; Christian has set us free from many fears that used to oppress us when we worshiped idol...<sup>27</sup>

This serves as an illustration of the reciprocal relationship between Protestant indigenization and women's liberation: missionary works on improving Chinese society would in turn help incorporate Christianity in Chinese people's lives. The passage notes an emerging spontaneous resistance among Chinese women against the tradition of foot-binding alongside with their internalization of Christian ideals. Compared to the previous woman who refutes Macgowan's advice and unwillingly binds her daughter's feet, this Chinese woman not only internalized the Christian detestation of foot-binding but also publicly discusses her dissent and attributes her empowerment to Christianity.

Overall, the Heavenly Foot Society set a precedent of organized missionary effort in combating the custom of foot-binding, but also of a social space led by female leaders. Women empowered one another across linguistic and cultural boundaries under the name of Christianity. The society subsequently inspired the initiation of similar organizations, one of the most prominent being the Natural Foot Society, established by Mrs. Archibald Little, who worked closely with the Macgowan couples in organizing of the Heavenly Foot society. While the progress of achieving gender equality in modern China remained incipient at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese women, who had internalized new ideals about womanhood from missionaries, gradually began to take initiative in reshaping their own identity in a rapidly changing society.

---

<sup>27</sup> Macgowan, *How England Saved China*, 81-82.

## *Ginling Woman's College and Women's Participation in Social Works*

Alongside these missionary Societies' effort for Chinese women's liberation were those of missionary-founded colleges, in which Chinese women received Christian education, acted on the belief of "social gospel" and instigated social works during and after World War II. Protestant organizations deemed the notion of the 'social gospel', which represented an effort to advocate modern citizenship, responsible government and a variety of social welfare, as an effective way of integrating Protestant values in Chinese society; it thus became the primary concern of missionary works in China.<sup>28</sup> Among those efforts was one of the most prominent missionary-affiliated educational institutions, Ginling Women's College, which was established in 1915 in Nanjing by an American-based missionary board. With an outlook which resonated with the notion of the social gospel, the College sought to produce independent female Christian citizens who would actively participate in the construction of modern China<sup>29</sup>. This is made clear by a faculty member's discussion of an ideal college women in the *Ginling College Magazine* of 1926:

College education will train women to get such things as power, knowledge and real personality... An ideal college woman must be broad in point of view and be interested in outside things...have creative power...be ready to serve [and] be active and enthusiastic. She should be independent.<sup>30</sup>

Here, one could identify recurring themes which echo the image of an ideal woman that He-Yin previously proposes. Both completely overthrow the Confucian ideal of a traditional housewife who is under the control of the broader cultural traditions and their male counterparts, and stress on the agency that women possess, and ought to make use of, for the betterment of oneself. Meanwhile, these characters are often

---

<sup>28</sup> Schneider, "Raising the Standards of Family Life: Ginling Women's College and Christian Social Service in Republican China," 116.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Tze Ming Ng, "A New Form of Christian Presence: The Case of Christian Higher Education in China in Recent Decades," *Journal of World Christianity* 7, no. 2 (2017): 127.

<sup>30</sup> Yang, Hsiao-rang. "Ideal College Women." In *Ginling College Magazine*, 1926. Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/391#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>.

discussed in association with the student's Christian identity. This is reinforced by En-Lan Liu, who served as the Acting Secretary in the administrative committee, by urging students to devote themselves to the service of the nation which will ultimately "...make you feel equal to our name as a Chinese citizen and a true follower of Christ."<sup>31</sup> Here, Liu reminds her fellow faculty members, students and alumni that their Chinese citizenship is inevitably associated with their Christian identity. By repeatedly associating the two, the College attempted to incorporate Christianity into both the collective effort of state-building and the individual student's identity construction, thus reinforcing the missionary effort of rendering Christianity an integral part of Chinese life: while China became more Christian, Protestantism became more Chinese-oriented.

The College's endeavor in advancing women's social services alongside their introduction of Christianity to a wider community of Chinese people continued during WWII. Supported by both Western missionary organizations and the Nationalist Party, Ginling Women's College provided refuge for Chinese women during Japan's occupation of Nanjing while extending its social service programs to the rural regions of China. As the Japanese Imperial Army marched on Naging in 1937 and launched the horrendous massacre later known as the "Rape of Nanjing", the city was devastated, and its residents rendered homeless. In this time of turmoil, Wilhelmina (Minnie) Vautrin, an American missionary who served as the head of Department of Education in the College throughout wartime, opened Ginling Women's College to thousands of refugees.<sup>32</sup> The College became the last safe haven for many, and continued to provide education to Chinese women. This is shown in a letter correspondence about Vautrin's works in 1938:

---

<sup>31</sup> En-Lan Liu, "Private Letter from Liu En-lan to Faculty, Alumnae, and Students of Ginling," 1927. Accessed November 19, 2020. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/203#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>

<sup>32</sup> Peter Tze Ming Ng, "A New Form of Christian Presence: The Case of Christian Higher Education in China in Recent Decades," 129.

The work Minnie (Vautrin) continues to carry on now at Ginling is thrilling. She has taken 100 of the most destitute women...and has them on the campus in what she calls an Opportunity School... They are taught how to prepare good, balanced meals at a minimum cost... they have been taught gardening... They have classes in sewing to teach them to make their own clothes... they have set up rooms and are teaching them weaving and later they hope to make cloth... Ginling is anxious to get any kind of small industry going so that they can eventually be self-supporting.<sup>33</sup>

The variety of classes that Ginling Women's College offered were not only open to all refugees, but also aimed to provide practical skills for women to become self-reliant during and after this unprecedented tumult. By providing education, Ginling Women's College transformed Chinese women into "producers" – just as what Liang hoped for – and the spirit of independence and the vision of vigorous engagement with the outside world were gradually realized among women in China.

Furthermore, the empowerment of Chinese women was not limited to the Nanjing campus alone. As missionaries understood that in order to perpetuate the continuation of such social works, well-educated Chinese Christian women had to take up the burden of leadership themselves<sup>34</sup>. Faculty members thus encouraged their students to initiate their own social projects while they gradually retreated to a secondary role. Prior to the Japanese occupation of Nanjing, Ginling Women's College was already launching programs in which Ginling students committed themselves to educate underprivileged women and children from the surrounding rural area. For instance, Vautrin collaborated with American sociologist Mareb Mossman in the overseeing numerous programs that were carried out by Ginling students, such as

---

<sup>33</sup> Daniels, Helen. "From Letter of Mrs. Horton Daniels, Nanking – 4 November 1938." 1938. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/891#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>. See appendix I.

<sup>34</sup> The notion of Protestant Church's Sinicization effort is an important point which will be elaborated in the discussion in the next section.

distributing mosquito nets and inform women and children on method of preventing the spread of malaria<sup>35</sup>.

These social services programs expanded westward during wartime as the College was forced to relocate to Chengdu, Sichuang. Similar to the commitments which Vautrin dedicated to the refugees on the original campus, “students and faculty planned and carried out social education programs like literacy training...citizen’s education...health education...pre- and post-natal counseling for mothers, and a playground for children; production education...conducted interviews with soldiers’ families...”<sup>36</sup> These efforts remained to be a major part of Ginling’s social commitments even after Ginling Women’s College moved back to Nanjing in the postwar period. This can be seen in a pamphlet distributed in 1947, which aimed to recruit more staff and gather funds for the Rural Service Station in Shwen Hwa Cheng:

The Rural Service Station, Shwen Hwa Cheng, China Needs Your Support...supported by the Universalist Women... A new Station at Shwen Hwa Cheng was opened in September, 1946...[and] started a feeding station; milk and cod-liver oil were provided by CNNRA for children, nursing and expectant mothers.<sup>37</sup>

Collaborating with missionary organizations, Ginling’s rural social services not only established for Ginling students a platform to advance their studies by learning from service experiences, but also provided unprecedented practical support and networks to rural women’s communities in the name of Christianity. This resonated with He-Yin’s vision of women collectively participating in their self-liberation. However, while earlier feminist theorists and missionary societies provided theoretical visions and frameworks for potential transformations of women’s identity, in missionary schools such as Ginling Women’s College, educated women could truly apply the theories they

---

<sup>35</sup> Schneider, “Raising the Standards of Family Life: Ginling Women’s College and Christian Social Service in Republican China,” 120.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>37</sup> Association of Universalist Women, “The Rural Service Station Shwen Hwa Cheng, China Needs Your Support, 1947.” 1947. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/319#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>. See appendix II.

studied into solving real-world problems, and eventually took initiatives in constructing a wider community of their own, devoted themselves to the works they are passionate about and spread Christianity to places beyond the reach of Western missionaries.

### **Sinicizing and Synthesizing Christianity in the Ongoing Reimagination of Womanhood in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

*Protestant Indigenization by Identifying with the State's Modern Chinese Womanhood: the Case of "Sister Martha"*

While the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed how Western ideas and missionary efforts facilitated the development of women's liberation by emancipating women from both physical and social constraints of the officially-prescribed Confucian gender roles, in the latter half of the century, Chinese Christians in turn actively reinterpreted different Protestant beliefs to construct a modern Chinese womanhood in their initiation of new Protestant movements within a Chinese religio-political context.

Before delving into Christianity's Sinicization through the construction of a woman's image under the structure of State churches, I intend to briefly touch on the origin and establishment of what is commonly known as "Chinese State Churches." The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) is Chinese Christians' attempt to Sinicize Christianity and has been both similar and different from the missionary effort discussed earlier. Emerging in the 1920s, its initial circle included those who are affiliated with Western institutions such as Chinese YMCA, Chinese Episcopal Church, St. John's University located in Shanghai, not to mention New York City's Union Theological Seminary.<sup>38</sup> Although rooted in missionary schools and churches across China, these students often interpreted Christianity through a nationalistic lens and desired to rid Christianity of its 'imperialist' legacies. Gathered together after the Communist takeover of mainland

---

<sup>38</sup> Yihua Xu, "Patriotic" Protestants: The Making of an Official Church," in *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, ed. Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin (Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 107.

China, these pastors, scholars and intellectuals signed a document titled “Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China”, which was later published in *People’s Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), on September 23, 1950<sup>39</sup>. The title of the cover page made clear that the agenda of the TSPM is to indigenize Christianity under the guidelines of the 10-month old People’s Republic of China: “In Order to Prevent Imperialism from Exploiting Religion to Harm the People of China, The Circle of Chinese Christian Leadership Has Published a Declaration.”<sup>40</sup> The terminology used here, namely “imperialism” and “harm”, denounces those churches which have been affiliated with the West while establishing the TSPM as the true Chinese Christianity that will bring about benefits to its people. The indigenization is further evident in its three “selves”:

1. Self-support, i.e., having financial independence and not accepting foreign aid;
2. Self-propagation, i.e., propagating the Gospel solely with the help of local Chinese personnel;
3. Self-management, i.e., administering the Church in China independently, without foreign influence.<sup>41</sup>

The creation of TSPM thus was similar to the missionary institutions mentioned above in its vision of integrating churches and Christian values into the newly established state, while, in this instance, it is the Chinese Christians who contributed to a new form of Protestant presence in China.

Indeed, religious traditions, including but not limited to Christianity, suffered severe destruction during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>42</sup> However, this does mark the end of

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>40</sup> “Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China.” *People’s Daily*. September 23, 1950. See appendix III.

<sup>41</sup> Roman Malek, “Christendom and its Manifestations in China Today,” *Religion in China: Major Concepts and Minority Positions*, ed. Max Deeg and Bernhard Scheid (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2014), 119.

<sup>42</sup> Kang, “Women and the Religious Question in Modern China,” 531.

Christianity in partaking in the paradigm shift of modern Chinese womanhood. In the post-Maoist Reform Era, the TSPM was restored in the 1980s in conjunction with the founding of China Christian Council (CCC), and resumed the indigenization process of Protestantism by deliberately utilizing motifs from the Cultural Revolution to advocate for women's participation in the church community. This is evident in a speech delivered by Chen Meilin, who served as an executive associate general secretary of the China Christian Council, as she comments on the changes brought about to women's identity in modern China:

We may say the tremendous change in women's status in the church in China [as] a reflection of the improvement in the social status of women in Chinese society as a whole. There are two sayings which vividly describe opposing views on the status of women in society. One is "women without talents are virtuous," the other is "women hold up half the sky... After several revolutions in China, women's social status has now changed drastically...Over 75% of Christians in China are women [and that] There are over 400 ordained women pastors in China, Among the leadership of the National Committee of the TSPM and the China Christian Council, three are women, including the president of the CCC.<sup>43</sup>

By referencing the church as a mirror to the wider social reality, Chen echoes both the missionaries and the TSPM in their vision of identifying the values of Protestant church with that of the Chinese state and culture on the representation of women's identity. Notice the two sayings she presents in the beginning of the speech; the former one is a well-known Confucian definition of womanhood, which has also been fervently attacked by Liang and He-Yin. The latter one, a well-known propaganda slogan during the Cultural Revolution, is starkly juxtaposed against the former one with its egalitarian vision: women, holding up half the sky, are on equal terms with men and share the same responsibility in constructing the nation-state of modern China. The use of this

---

<sup>43</sup> Meilin Chen, "The Status and Role of Women in the Growing Church of China," *Chinese Theological Review* 17, (2003): 99.

political slogan in relation to the statistics of its overwhelming female population reinforces the fact that a collaboration with the political creation of Chinese womanhood is an important way to ensure the proliferation of Protestantism in China.

This empowerment of Chinese women from the church community stimulated the rapid development of feminist theology under state-sanctioned churches and theological seminaries, as more female pastors participated in the TSPM's vision of reinterpreting Biblical womanhood from an egalitarian perspective that became more relevant to Chinese women. For instance, Jing Zhang reads against the grain of the Biblical narrative of Christ's encounter with the Canaanite woman in the Book of Matthew chapter 15, and argues that the woman actively utilizes her wit to refute Jesus' disdain of her cultural and social identity to achieve her own redemption. Zhang acutely points out that, "The power of the Syrophoenician woman lies in her culture and her own mind..."<sup>44</sup> and reflects on the importance of indigenizing Protestantism for Chinese' women's liberation:

Chinese women have been dependent on western missionaries...to 'speak out' about their miserable situation and suffering...They cannot depend on others to save them or grant them 'grace,' but need to discover the strength in themselves that has been planted by God in our minds.<sup>45</sup>

While the story is conventionally interpreted from the perspective of the universality of God's grace, Zhang examines the narrative from the eyes of the gentile woman who takes initiatives with her wit to gain her own salvation, a feminist awakening which He-Yin has prophesied. While echoing the missionary's effort of implementing Christian values to the advancement of social welfare, Zhang's argument also explicitly associates the achievement of Chinese women's liberation with ridding the western influence from Chinese churches, an outlook shared by TSPM. Again, in Zhang's argument, we are able to detect themes that have been reiterated throughout the paper:

---

<sup>44</sup> Zhang, Jing. "Beyond What She Said: On the Syrophoenician Women." *Chinese Theological Review* 20, (2007): 125.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

women should not only be emancipated from traditional cultural constraints but also become active participants in their social and cultural environment, and both the church and the State partake in, and are subsequently transformed by, the advancement of women's liberation.

After establishing a correlation between Protestant's resonance with the State's propagation of a modern womanhood and its revival, the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I would like to conduct a case study on a fascinating cultural phenomena which stems from this. The subject of this analysis is a cartoon series first seen in 1997 and continued for around a decade on *Tianfeng*, the official periodical of the TSPM. Its protagonist consists of a woman known as "sister Martha," a leading figure in the church community. The image of sister Martha represents Protestantism's Sinicization through adhering to China's political vision of a female citizen by being a synthesis of both.

To begin with, the appearance of sister Martha evokes the image of a typical Communist woman during the Maoist regime with the combination of an appropriately short hair and a Maoist coat. Meanwhile, her zealous participation in public affairs, her rejection of outdated Confucian practices and her spiritual leadership in the church community are reminiscent of the focus on social services which earlier missionaries devoted themselves to in an effort to spread the gospel. Martha's name – identical to the Biblical Martha who hosts Jesus at her home<sup>46</sup> – is a deliberate choice, which coincides with the renewed vision of a modern Chinese woman: refusing to sit quietly and listen to what men have to preach to her, Martha takes up the responsibility of the community and actively maintains social connections. This vision, originated from early missionary works, has become a major theme in TSPM's circle of feminist theology. Rev. Yang Gao, who is an ordained pastor and a feminist theologian, argues

---

<sup>46</sup> Emily C. Dunn, "Cult, Church, and the CCP: Introducing Eastern Lightning." *Modern China* 35, no. 1 (Jan., 2009): 111.

for the superiority of Martha over Mary in representing a feminist awakening, and urges all Chinese Christian women to follow her example.<sup>47</sup>

This synthesis between Protestant womanhood and a Communist citizen is respectively shown in different episodes. For instance, in “Ai Xin Dao Jia” and “Ai Zuo Yi Gong” sister Martha prioritizes her individual spiritual calling over her family duty by taking care of the church community before she tends to her own family<sup>48</sup>. Meanwhile, the people who she helps consist of farmers and workers, whose classes are of self-evident importance to the Communist Party; thus, for an ideal Christian woman, serving God and serving “Caesar” should be simultaneous. This is further elucidated in “Ying Xin Chu Jiu” and “Po Chu Mi Xin,” where sister Martha assumes authority and reminds church members against practicing Confucian sacrifice, with both early missionary and the CCP highly applaud<sup>49</sup>.

Two of the most interesting episodes which sister Martha embodies an ideal Chinese Christian woman is “Qie Wu Qing Xin,” and “Di Zhi Xie Shuo,” in which sister Matha, again assuming an authoritative position in church, denounces “evil cults” and assures the congregation on the spiritual orthodoxy and personal safety provided by the State Churches<sup>50</sup>. There are several layers to these episodes. First, sister Martha is an ideal modern woman who takes initiatives outside of a domestic setting and assumes leadership when necessary for the good of the society. Second, she is an ideal Christian, who possesses spiritual insights and upholds Christian truth against heterodoxy. Third, and most importantly, she is an ideal Chinese citizen who is patriotic<sup>51</sup> and puts faith only in State institutions, while denouncing what the State censures, the ‘evil cults’ – a term coined by the CCP against movements that could cause potential political and

---

<sup>47</sup> Ying Gao, “Martha and Mary’s Relationship with Jesus from a Feminist Perspective, Lk 10:38-42, Jn 11:2-28,” *In God’s Image* 13, no. 1 (1994): 62.

<sup>48</sup> Songen Mao, “Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 10: Ai Xin Dao Jia,” *Tianfeng*, March, 1997, 21. Songen Mao, “Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 16: Ai Zuo Yi Gong,” *Tianfeng*, December, 1997, 36. See appendix IV.

<sup>49</sup> Songen Mao, “Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 11: Po Chu Mi Xin,” *Tianfeng*, April, 1997, 39; Songen Mao, “Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 8: Ying Xin Chu Jiu,” *Tianfeng*, January, 1997, 39 See appendix V.

<sup>50</sup> Songen Mao, “Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 21: Qie Wu Qing Xin,” *Tianfeng*, May, 1998, 29; Songen Mao, “Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 31: Di Zhi Xie Shuo,” *Tianfeng*, September, 1999, 22. See appendix VI.

<sup>51</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, “Christianity and Women in Contemporary China,” *Journal of World Christianity* 3, no. 1 (2010), 7.

social instabilities – such as FaLun Gong, one of the organizations that sister Martha explicitly opposes<sup>52</sup>. The cartoon series touches on every aspect of spiritual, political, and social commitments, and presents Sister Martha as the embodiment of the close-knit trinity of Church, State and womanhood. Thus, the image of sister Martha is an evidence of the Bergerian mutually constructive process of womanhood and Protestant ideologies in the modern Chinese nation-state.

*Protestant Engagement with Chinese Folk Heritage: The Church of Almighty God and Its Female Christ*

While in the hands of the intellectuals, Protestant Sinicization takes the form of the institutionalization of official Protestant churches, Protestant beliefs are simultaneously reimagined by the Chinese populace in terms of the established folk traditions to its beliefs and practices. When rural projects, such as those of Ginling College, exposed rural China to Protestantism, the rural population, mainly composed of elderly people and illiterate women, made sense of this foreign religion by understanding it the frameworks of existing cultural languages and in turn created the “Christian folk religions”.<sup>53</sup> For instance, many local churches had and still have, a Pentecostal leaning due to its similarities to local traditions such as spiritual possessions, miracle-healing and charismatic leaderships<sup>54</sup>.

Alongside with the state church’s resurgence in the Reform era, various grassroots movements began to emerge. When the State institutions fail to integrate these scattered rural Churches under the umbrella of TSPM or the CCC, they label them as ‘superstitious’ if not ‘evil cults,’ the very practices with sister Martha, the ideal Communist Christian woman, fervently opposes.<sup>55</sup> Among these ‘heretical’ indigenous churches, one of them – The Church of Almighty God – stands out with its belief in a

---

<sup>52</sup> Malek, “Christendom and its Manifestations in China Today,” 114.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>54</sup> Karrie J. Koesel, “The Rise of a Chinese House Church: The Organizational Weapon.” *The China Quarterly*, no. 215 (September, 2013): 578.

<sup>55</sup> Tse-Hei Joseph Lee, “Christianity in Contemporary China: An Update,” *Journal of Church and State* 49, no. 2 (SPRING 2007): 296.

female Christ. While claims of female Christ are far from being rare across temporal, spatial and cultural boundaries, the female Christ of the Church of Almighty God still represents a captivating case study of an alternative approach to Prostatism's Sinicization through its discussion on womanhood: rather than identifying with the ideology of a modern Communist woman, Protestantism have also advanced its indigenization process by absorbing traditional folk elements, namely, female deities, which has empowered Chinese women for millennia.

The Church of Almighty God, also known as Eastern Lightning, is a Chinese Protestant grassroot movement founded by a physics teacher Weishan Zhao between 1990 and 1991. The Church of Almighty God's core tenet is that Christ has reincarnated as a Chinese woman whose Earthly identity the church refuses to reveal, and *The Word Appears In The Flesh* is a collection compiled of the teachings of this alleged female Christ.<sup>56</sup> According to this scripture, the mission of the female Christ is to initiate the last Stage of the "Six-Thousand-Year Management Plan" which was said to echo the six days of creation in Genesis<sup>57</sup>: God's six-thousand-year management plan is coming to an end, and the gate of the kingdom has been opened [by the female Christ] to all those who seek the appearance of God."<sup>58</sup> The Church of Almighty God believes that history is threefold, with the Godhead manifesting in each stage under different forms. In the "Age of Law" God presents Itself as "Yahweh"; in the "Age of Grace", God has become Christ, while in the "Age of Kingdom," God is revealed as the Almighty God – the Female Christ.<sup>59</sup>

The millennialist characteristic, the three-fold conception of time, along with the figure of a female Christ, reminds one of folk sectarian movements venerating bodhisattva Guanyin, a female Buddhist deity who is venerated by women for fertility, and that of the Eternal Mother, a female folk deity who would manifest at the end of the

---

<sup>56</sup> Dunn, "'Cult,' Church, and the CCP: Introducing Eastern Lightning," 97.

<sup>57</sup> Emily Dunn, *Lightning from the East: heterodoxy and Christianity in contemporary China* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 91.

<sup>58</sup> *The Word Appears in the Flesh*. n.d., ca. 2014, (n.p.:The Church of Almighty God), viii. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/TheWordAppearsInTheFlesh-book/page/n2097/mode/2up>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 798; 838; 841.

third and last stage of history and complete her redemptive missions on earth.<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to point out that these traditional practices of Chinese female-deity worship were some of the rare occasions in which women from the past assumed leadership, constructed their own religious and social networks and collaborated with male members on equal terms.<sup>61</sup> Scholars on Chinese religions have reached a general consensus that the Church of Almighty God, whose structure and beliefs display many of these folk elements, is one of the ‘Christian folk religions’ which was created as a synthesis between Christianity and Chinese female deity worship<sup>62</sup>.

I would like to shift the discussion back to the Church’s representation of womanhood by examining its depictions of the Female Christ. In *The Word Appears in the Flesh*, the question of a divine female incarnation is explicitly framed as a discussion on the spiritual significance of achieving gender equality. This is extensively preached in the chapter “The Two Incarnations Complete the Significance of the Incarnation”:

They continued saying that... “man is the head of woman, and woman must obey her husband.” Moreover, they kept the traditional conception that “sisters cannot preach, and they can only obey.” If such a manner of leadership continued, then the Holy Spirit would never be able to carry out new work, set men free from doctrine, or lead men into a realm of freedom and beauty...

Before this, all humanity believed that God could only be male and that a female could not be called God, for all humanity regarded men as having authority over women, They believed that no woman could take on authority, only men.

---

<sup>60</sup> Sébastien Billioud, “The Hidden Tradition: Confucianism and Its Metamorphoses in Modern and Contemporary China.” In *Modern Chinese Religion II: 1850 – 2015, Volume 32 of Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 4 China*, edited by Jan Kiely, Vincent Goossaert, and John Lagerwey, 788.

<sup>61</sup> Kang, “Women and the Religious Question in Modern China,” 531.

<sup>62</sup> Kang, “Women and the Religious Question in Modern China,” 554; Dunn, *Lightning from the East: heterodoxy and Christianity in contemporary China*, 89.

[Witnessing God's incarnation as the Female Christ] Do you still dare say that "woman shall always obey man and may never manifest or directly represent God"?

If [one clings on the masculine nature of God], then is it not true that all women created by Jehovah...would never have the opportunity to be saved? ...And would no women perish for eternity?

... so much work has been done in the China mainland—work of such great scale [and] in the future, it will spread to all nations; what is done in China will spread to all nations.<sup>63</sup>

It is clear that the Female Christ's redemptive mission is inseparable from overturning the long-held cultural and religious belief of male superiority, which claims that divinity is exclusive to masculinity. This egalitarian approach is framed in the Christian narrative of "setting men free from doctrines," a major component to Christ's teaching as he defies conventional social boundaries of his time. The Female Christ empowers women by stressing the fact that women are equal to men in their possession of a divine nature, and her presence on Earth is in fact the evidence of women's direct connection with the Godhead and the possibility of women's spiritual self-redemption. Not only that, the scripture frames this redemption in relation to the creation of China's spiritual identity; different from the TSPM's political promotion of a good Chinese citizen, the scripture argues for the uniqueness of Chinese women (just like that of the traditional female deities) as a vessel to the unfolding of God's redemptive world, which will eventually reach "all nations."

With this feminist approach to religion, the Church of Almighty God claims to have attracted over a million followers in China, most being women of a rural background.<sup>64</sup> Although more likely to be a romanticization of the religion, one can speculate, after

---

<sup>63</sup> *The Word Appears in the Flesh*, 861, 900; 902, 903 and 951.

<sup>64</sup> Dunn, *Lightning from the East: heterodoxy and Christianity in contemporary China*, 57.

comprehending the importance of Christ's female reincarnation as outlined in the scripture, that the anonymity of the female Christ, which have drawn various skepticisms from Chinese Christian communities, has a bold implication. By refusing to identify the particularity of the female Christ, the church facilitates a belief that *any, if not all* women potentially would possess a divine nature that is equal to the traditional masculine representation of the Godhead. More importantly, similarity among this scripture, He-Yin and Chen's speech is striking; all defy the image of a docile and passive woman while envisioning their works as a contribution to women's liberation within their respective realms. This is especially true when the scripture is viewed side to side with Chen's assertion on female participation and leadership: though they belong to oppositional church structures, both cases reflect Protestantism's engagement with the question of womanhood in its varying forms of its indigenization process in late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the end, in this Bergerian cultural and social dialectical process, Protestantism and the Chinese female populace both have undergone radical changes, whose creation processes one another is a crucial component of.

### **Conclusion and Opportunities for Future Research**

Examining numerous Chinese accounts that partake in the discussion and reimagination of womanhood in the broader context of drastic social and cultural changes in modern China, it is evident that Protestantism, as a foreign religion, advances its indigenization process by constantly partaking in the reimagination of womanhood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the missionaries to the TSPM and grassroot churches, Protestants have conducted transformations to the traditional Confucian image of a submissive women by promoting women's physical, ideological and spiritual liberation. In this process, Protestantism, too, undergoes a variety of paradigm shifts in its organization and beliefs to better suit Chinese culture and society.

The reciprocal relationship between the two complicates the overall discussion as it does to the very dichotomy of “the East” and the “West.”

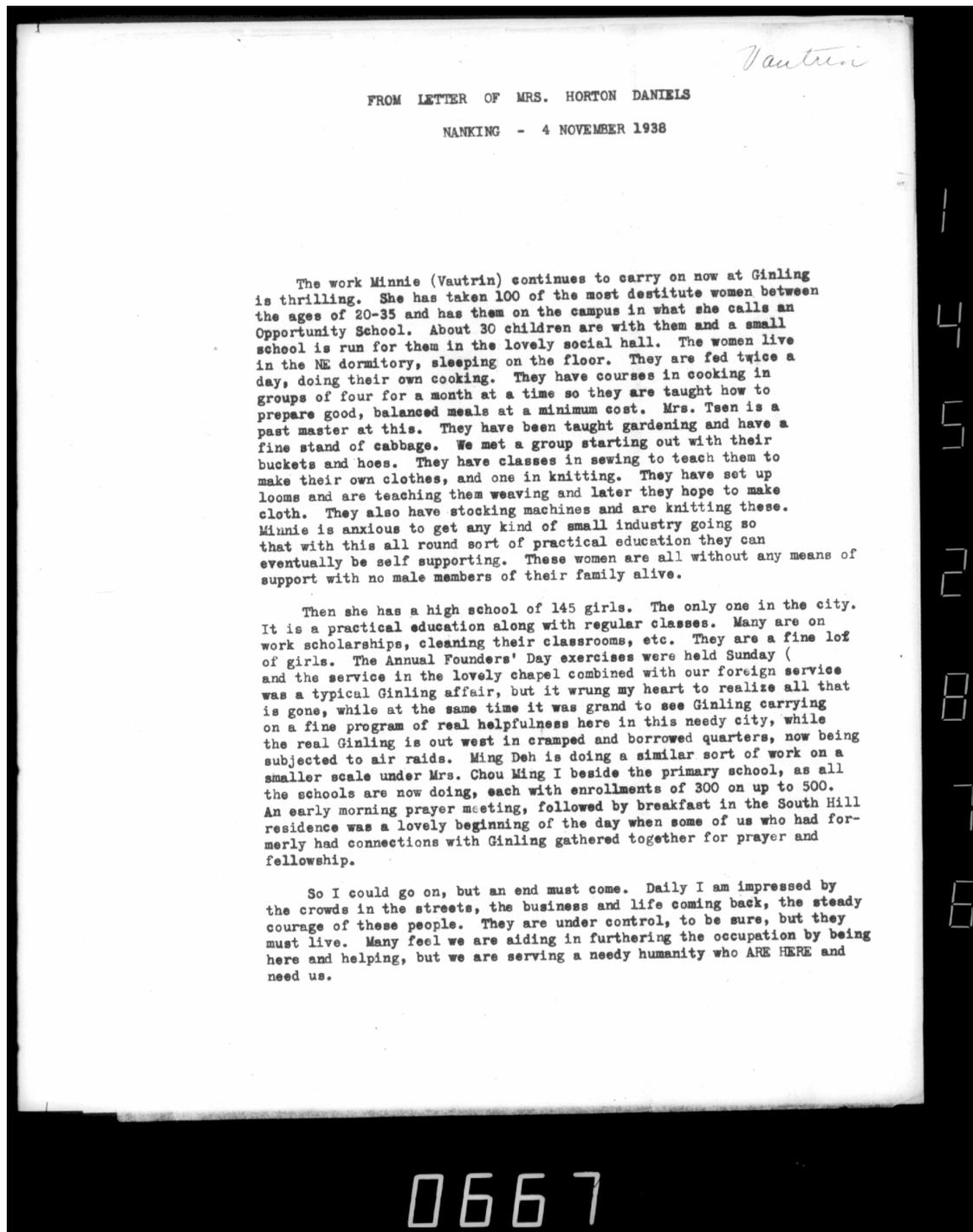
Furthermore, in this research, many primary sources, as one would have noticed, become the theoretical frameworks I attempt to set and the primary subject of my analysis. The breaking of the boundary between primary and secondary account hopefully will bring about a sense of verisimilitude to the black letters on white papers – these, rather than just being empty theories, are shadows (or ghosts) of the lived experiences of the individual women in the past. This complication of established categories can also be seen in my attempts to establish points of similarity and contrast through discussing themes that recur throughout these primary sources which are often temporally and spatially set apart. I hope this entanglement not only base itself on but also performs Berger’s theory of a mutual construction between different cultural and social entities, in this case, Protestantism and Chinese womanhood.

As this paper primarily concerns Protestantism in China, In future research, I intend to explore the Chinese Catholic view of women, especially having in mind the importance of virgin Mary in Catholic beliefs, Catholicism's longer presence in China and the Chinese political entanglement with the Vatican. In the end, I intend, by doing this research, to explore how the East and West engage in a continuous conversation and a mutual transformation in a globalized world.

## Appendices

### Appendix I:

*Helen Daniel's Letter Correspondence regarding Vautrin's Work during the Japanese Occupation of Nanjing*



FROM LETTER OF MRS. HORTON DANIELS

NANKING - 4 NOVEMBER 1938

The work Minnie (Vautrin) continues to carry on now at Ginling is thrilling. She has taken 100 of the most destitute women between the ages of 20-35 and has them on the campus in what she calls an Opportunity School. About 30 children are with them and a small school is run for them in the lovely social hall. The women live in the NE dormitory, sleeping on the floor. They are fed twice a day, doing their own cooking. They have courses in cooking in groups of four for a month at a time so they are taught how to prepare good, balanced meals at a minimum cost. Mrs. Teen is a past master at this. They have been taught gardening and have a fine stand of cabbage. We met a group starting out with their buckets and hoes. They have classes in sewing to teach them to make their own clothes, and one in knitting. They have set up looms and are teaching them weaving and later they hope to make cloth. They also have stocking machines and are knitting these. Minnie is anxious to get any kind of small industry going so that with this all round sort of practical education they can eventually be self supporting. These women are all without any means of support with no male members of their family alive.

Then she has a high school of 145 girls. The only one in the city. It is a practical education along with regular classes. Many are on work scholarships, cleaning their classrooms, etc. They are a fine lot of girls. The Annual Founders' Day exercises were held Sunday (and the service in the lovely chapel combined with our foreign service was a typical Ginling affair, but it wrung my heart to realize all that is gone, while at the same time it was grand to see Ginling carrying on a fine program of real helpfulness here in this needy city, while the real Ginling is out west in cramped and borrowed quarters, now being subjected to air raids. Ming Deh is doing a similar sort of work on a smaller scale under Mrs. Chou Ming I beside the primary school, as all the schools are now doing, each with enrollments of 300 on up to 500. An early morning prayer meeting, followed by breakfast in the South Hill residence was a lovely beginning of the day when some of us who had formerly had connections with Ginling gathered together for prayer and fellowship.

So I could go on, but an end must come. Daily I am impressed by the crowds in the streets, the business and life coming back, the steady courage of these people. They are under control, to be sure, but they must live. Many feel we are aiding in furthering the occupation by being here and helping, but we are serving a needy humanity who ARE HERE and need us.

0667

Appendix II: “The Rural Service Station Shwen Hwa Cheng, China Needs Your Support, 1947”

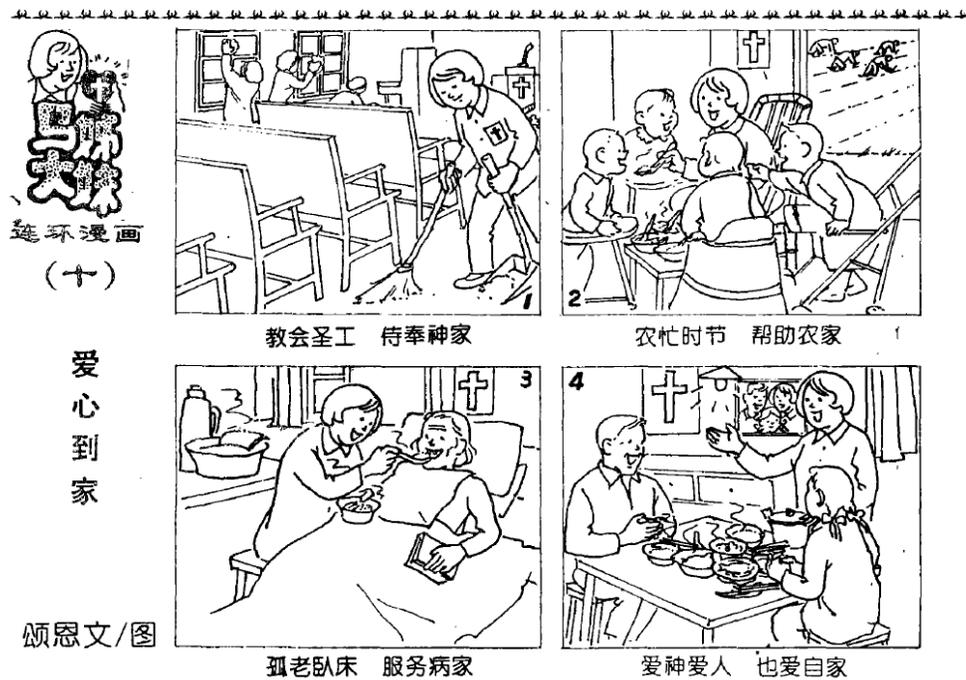
†



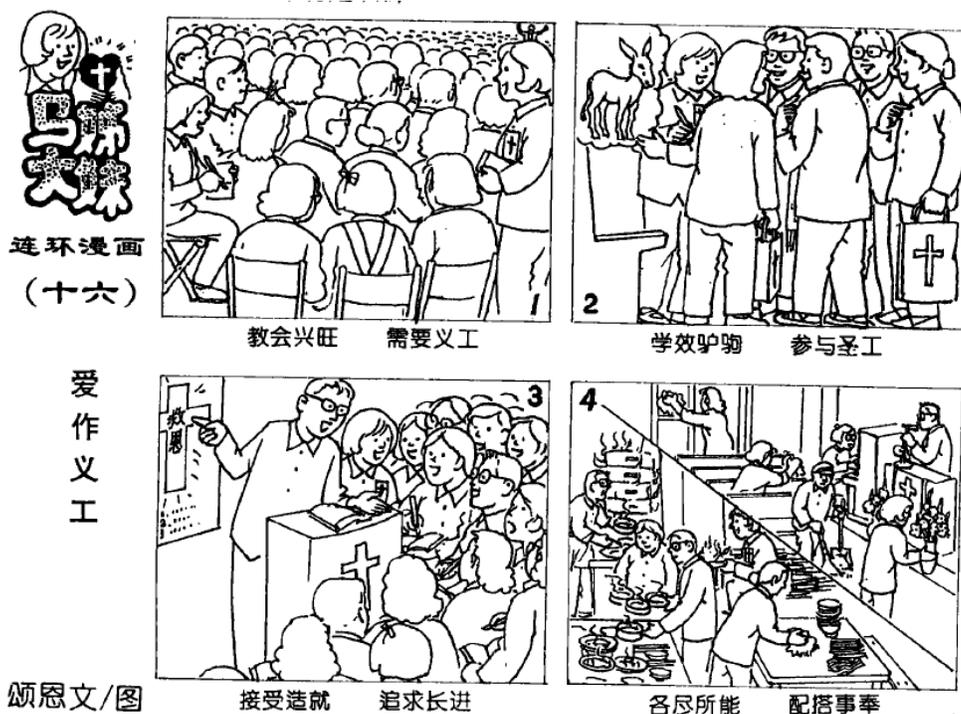
Image retrieved from:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Christian\\_Manifesto#/media/File:The\\_Christian\\_Manifesto.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Christian_Manifesto#/media/File:The_Christian_Manifesto.jpg)

Appendix IV: Ma Da Zi Mei Sister Martha Comic Series 10 and 16: "Ai Xin Dao Jia"(up) and "Ai Zuo Yi Gong" (lower)



21



45

Appendix V: Sister Martha Comic Series 8 and 11: "Ying Xin Chu Jiu" (top) and "Po Chu Mi Xin"(bottom)



Appendix VI: Sister Martha Comic Series 21 and 31: "Qie Wu Qing Xin." (top) and "Di Zhi Xie Shuo."(bottom)



连环漫画

(廿一)

切勿轻信

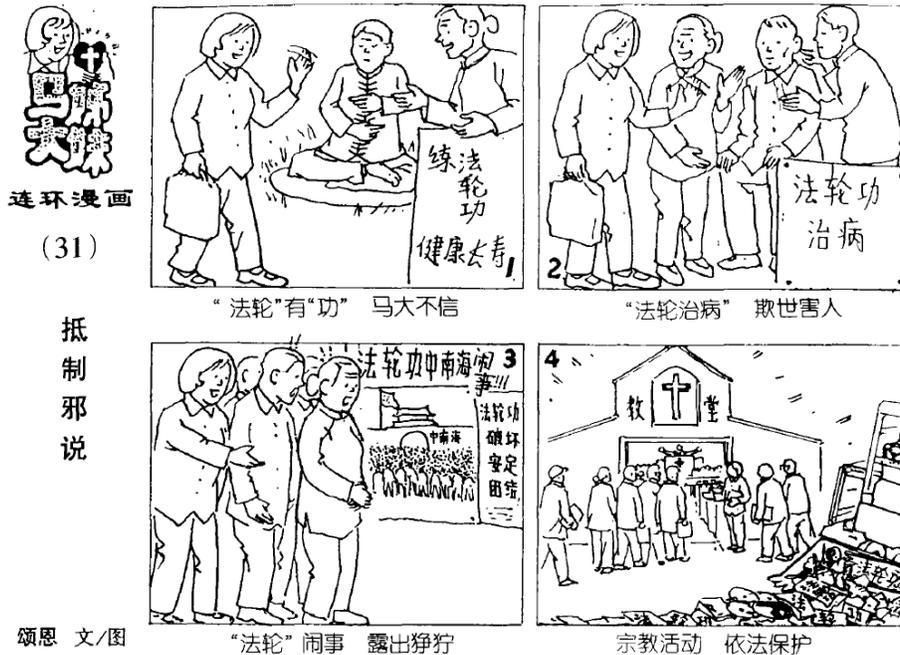
颜恩文/图

主来何日 不信人说

主降何地 不信人定

谎称教主 不信异端

主早告诫 警醒等候



连环漫画

(31)

抵制邪说

颜恩文/图

## Works Cited

- Association of Universalist Women. "The Rural Service Station Shwen Hwa Cheng, China Needs Your Support, 1947." 1947. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/319#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>.
- Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.
- Billioud, Sébastien. "The Hidden Tradition: Confucianism and Its Metamorphoses in Modern and Contemporary China." In *Modern Chinese Religion II: 1850 – 2015, Volume 32 of Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 4 China*. Edited by Jan Kiely, Vincent Goossaert, and John Lagerwey, 767-805. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Chen, Meilin. "The Status and Role of Women in the Growing Church of China," *Chinese Theological Review* 17, (2003): 98-103.
- Chen, Shih-Wen Sue. "Paradoxical Performances: Cruel Constraints and Christian Emancipation in 19–20th-Century Missionary Representations of Chinese Women and Girls." In *Divine Domesticities: Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly, 345-366. Canberra: ANU Press, 2014.
- Daniels, Helen. "From Letter of Mrs. Horton Daniels, Nanking – 4 November 1938." 1938. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/891#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>.
- "Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China." *People's Daily*. September 23, 1950.
- Drucker, Alison R.. "The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-Footbinding Movement 1840-1911." *Réflexions Historiques* 8, no.3 (Fall 1981): 179-199.
- Dunn, Emily C. "'Cult,' Church, and the CCP: Introducing Eastern Lightning." *Modern China* 35, No. 1 (Jan., 2009): 96-119.

- Dunn, Emily. *Lightning from the East: Heterodoxy and Christianity in Contemporary China*. Boston, MA: Brill, 2015.
- Gao Ying. "Martha and Mary's Relationship with Jesus from a Feminist Perspective, Lk 10:38-42, Jn 11:2-28." *In God's Image* 13, no. 1 (1994): 60-63.
- He-Yin, Zhen. "On the Question of Women's Liberation." In *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*. Edited by Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, 53-71. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Kang, Xiaofei. "Women and the Religious Question in Modern China." In *Modern Chinese Religion II: 1850 – 2015, Volume 32 of Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 4 China*. Edited by Jan Kiely, Vincent Goossaert, and John Lagerwey, 491-559. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Kockum, Keiko. "Liang Qichao: The Japanese Years." *Cina* 1988, no. 21, (1988): 195-203.
- Koesel, Karrie J. "The Rise of a Chinese House Church: The Organizational Weapon." *The China Quarterly*, no. 215 (September, 2013): 572-589.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. "Christianity in China." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 152, (Nov., 1930): 63-71.
- Lee, Tse-Hei Joseph. "Christianity in Contemporary China: An Update." *Journal of Church and State* 49, no. 2 (SPRING 2007): 277-304.
- Liang, Qichao. "On Women's Education." In *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*. Edited by Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, 189-202. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Liu, En-Lan. *Private Letter from Liu En-lan to Faculty, Alumnae, and Students of Ginling*. 1927. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/203#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>.

- Liu, Lydia H., Karl, Rebecca E., and Ko, Dorothy. "The Historical Context: Chinese Feminist Worlds at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." In *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*. Edited by Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, 28-50. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Macgowan, John. *How England Saved China*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913.
- Malek, Roman. "Christendom and its Manifestations in China Today." *Religion in China: Major Concepts and Minority Positions*. Edited by Max Deeg and Bernhard Scheid, 113-141. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2014.
- Mao, Songen. "Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 8: Ying Xin Chu Jiu." *Tianfeng*, January, 1997, 39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 10: Ai Xin Dao Jia." *Tianfeng*, March, 1997, 21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 11: Po Chu Mi Xin." *Tianfeng*, April, 1997, 39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 16: Ai Zuo Yi Gong." *Tianfeng*, December, 1997, 36.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 21: Qie Wu Qing Xin." *Tianfeng*, May, 1998, 29.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 30: Du Jing Shi Zi." *Tianfeng*, May, 1999, 34.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mada Zimei Lianhuan Manhua 31: Di Zhi Xie Shuo." *Tianfeng*, September, 1999, 22.
- Ng, Peter Tze Ming. "A New Form of Christian Presence: The Case of Christian Higher Education in China in Recent Decades." *Journal of World Christianity* 7, no. 2 (2017): 123-139.
- Pui-lan, Kwok. "Christianity and Women in Contemporary China." *Journal of World Christianity* 3, no. 1 (2010), 1-17.

- Saldanha, Antonio Vasconcelos de. "The Last Imperial Honours From Tomás Pereira to the Eulogium Europeorum Doctorum in 1711." In *In the Light and Shadow of an Emperor : Tomas Pereira, SJ (1645-1708), the Kangxi Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China*, by Artur K Wardega and Antonio Vasconcelos de Saldanha, 144-226. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.
- Schneider, Helen M. "Raising the Standards of Family Life: Ginling Women's College and Christian Social Service in Republican China." In *Divine Domesticities: Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by Hyaewool Choi and Margaret Jolly, 113-139. Canberra: ANU Press, 2014.
- Xu, Yihua. "Patriotic" Protestants: The Making of an Official Church." In *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*. Edited by Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin, 107-121. Brookings Institution Press, 2004.
- Yang, Hsiao-rang. "Ideal College Women." In *Ginling College Magazine*, 1926. Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://mct.barnard.edu/home/item/391#?c=&m=&s=&cv=>.
- Zarrow, Peter. "He Zhen and Anarcho-Feminism in China." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (Nov., 1988): 796- 813.
- Zhang, Jing. "Beyond What She Said: On the Syrophoenician Women." *Chinese Theological Review* 20, (2007): 102-136.
- Zito, Angela. "Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding in China: Missionary and Medical Stagings of the Universal Body," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 1 (2007): 1-24.



VIRGINIA JOURNAL OF  
GENDER STUDIES