

The University of Vermont History Review



Volume XXIX
2018-2019

The UVM History Review is an annual publication of the University of Vermont History Department. It seeks to publish scholarly essays and book reviews of a historical nature written by UVM students and alumni.

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Upon their well-deserved retirements, this edition of the *History Review* is dedicated to Kathy Carolin and Kathleen Truax. The history department faculty and students have greatly benefited from their years of service. We hope they enjoy this new chapter!



Kathy Carolin's Farewell Message:

Well, this is a bittersweet time for me. I am retiring from UVM after working here for 25 years. I have been the Department Administrator for History since 2000, so I am leaving with many fond memories. It's been a wonderful 19 years here and the faculty have been terrific. I've seen faculty get hired, get married, have children and write many, many books. It has been such a wonderful ride...

BUT, I am retiring so that I can follow my passion – working with children and animals. I would like to spend more time with my four grandchildren and volunteer more in schools. I have also approached my local veterinary hospital to inquire about volunteering there with animals as well.

Soooo, my life will not be boring! I will miss all the faculty and students, but I promise I will be back to visit!



Kathy Truax's Farewell Message:

Dear faculty, students & everyone else I have interacted with over the last 15½ years of my Administrative Career in the UVM History Department (10/2003-6/2019),

It has genuinely been a pleasure to work with everyone. The faculty in the department are amazing and have been extremely appreciative of my efforts over the years. They will forever hold a special place in my heart. The majors, minors and graduate students are absolutely the best! In addition, I have had some outstanding student employees who have helped me handle many of the multitude of tasks I tackle on a daily basis. A few student employees who worked in the department over three or more years alongside me in the main office were exceptionally invaluable; namely Kiara Day, Ryan McHale, Lily Sevin, Tonya Loveday, Skyler Bailey, Caitlin Coyne & Ivy O'Connor. I will always remember them in high regard! I will definitely miss you all! Have a great life everyone!

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

It is our pleasure to share with you the 2018-2019 *University of Vermont History Review*. This annual journal showcases exceptional historical research and writing from undergraduate and graduate students. In this volume we are delighted to present four articles and three book reviews, highlighting the strengths of UVM's history department.

Notable in this collection is the use of diverse historical approaches pertaining to culture, race, and gender history. The book reviews included in this edition complement these themes and illustrate students' engagement with the profession. Overall, this volume speaks to extensive methods of historical inquiry and reflects current trends in the field.

As the lead editors, we are grateful to have worked with an outstanding editorial board whose collaboration and efforts have produced this volume. This group worked with each author over multiple rounds of revisions in order to perfect every piece for publication. We hope the authors gained valuable experience with the publishing process. The board has gone above and beyond to carry out editorial duties, all while juggling their own course loads and busy lives. The editors' careful attention to detail can be found within the following pages.

We would like to thank both the authors and editors who made this publication possible. In addition, a special thank you to Professor Felicia Kornbluh and Professor Susanna Schrafstetter for serving as encouraging and knowledgeable faculty advisors for the *History Review*. Their input has been invaluable. Last, but not least, Kathy Carolin and Kathleen Truax have provided the continuous logistical assistance that all publications require.

Kiara Day and Samantha Sullivan, 30 April 2018

Suppressing Revolution: Allied Disarmament of Communist Resistance Organizations in Southeast Asia and Southern Europe

Alexander Ellis

The collapse of a state's civil authority during wartime engenders competition between local and external political entities to reestablish civil order through the creation of a stable state. A state's civil authority is compromised in the presence of competing legitimacies of violence, and thus, states must maintain a monopoly on the use of lawful violence to sustain publicly recognized legitimacy. One effective method of assuring such a monopoly is to physically disarm one's political adversaries, and in the final years of World War II, the Allied powers imposed a concerted disarmament strategy upon several Communist resistance organizations in both Southeast Asia and Southern Europe, in spite of their many meaningful contributions and sacrifices for the Allied war effort. Rather than rewarding these Communist organizers with political enfranchisement, the Allies guaranteed little but the reinstatement of states amenable to their own geopolitical objectives and economic hegemonies, methodically discrediting, jailing, or physically eliminating individuals or organizations with contrarian agendas and instituting Allied Military Governments (AMGOT) as tools for prosecuting such strategies. This article explores the phenomenon of Allied disarmament of several principal Communist resistance organizations in Southeast Asia and Southern Europe between 1939 and 1945 to showcase the disparity between publicized Allied foreign policy and the *de facto* Allied mistreatment of several of these Communist resistance organizations.¹

¹ This study is not comprehensive, nor does it intend to provide a complete historical narrative of the multiplicity of resistance groups across either region during World War II. The existing corpus of monographs should be referred to for detailed explanations of each respective region's resistance organizations. Due to the largely isolated nature of these monographs, resistance organizations are sometimes characterized as insular and discrete rather than intersectional and dynamic. Apart from M.R.D. Foot's

The widespread Allied disarmament of Communist insurrectionary forces in Southeast Asia and Southern Europe denoted both the physical and symbolic capitulation of the militant resisters' civil authority to the overwhelmingly powerful Allied military complex, and in effect, a political submission to Allied geopolitical objectives for the reconstruction of their corresponding states. By forcing such organizations to surrender their arms, the Allies vitiated the communists' capacity to physically resist force from the Allied military itself, other interested regional actors, or military forces of the newly established states. Such a political concession eliminated the possibility of competing legitimacies of violence after the conclusion of official hostilities and prefigured the decades of civil conflict that would ensue in these regions during the Cold War era. This transregional process of disarmament took on contrasting modes of visibility corresponding to Allied postwar plans for newly constructed or reestablished states in both regions, Allied estimations of domestic public perception, and the availability of Allied forces to prosecute disarmament campaigns.

Though the state-sponsored disarmament of organizations deemed to be politically radical remains a common historical phenomenon throughout human history, the purposes, manner, and historical contexts in which this phenomenon occurred across the globe in the mid-twentieth century as prosecuted by the Allies, demonstrate the anxieties and postwar objectives of both the disarmer and the disarmed. Indeed, such accounts offer valuable insight into the contingent nature of postwar political reconstructions across the globe following the end of the war in 1945 and the prevailing influence of Allied military forces in preventing undesired sociopolitical transformations within states with strong partisan Communist organizations.

Resistance: European Resistance to Nazism 1940-1945 (1977), Tony Judt's *Resistance and Revolution* (1989) and Patrick Zander's *Hidden Armies of the Second World War: World War II Resistance Movements* (2017), very few comparative studies have been written, and none have attempted a broad comparative study of both Europe and Asia, nor Africa or the South Pacific.

Monopolizing Force: Historicizing Allied Disarmament

According to the late nineteenth-century German political theorist, Max Weber, “a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”² Under this Weberian interpretation, the creation of any sort of feasible state presupposes some degree of control over contemporary means of physical force. The capacity of any state to establish a lasting monopoly of legitimate violence rests upon the efficacy with which it can ensure its rivals are unable or unwilling to mobilize the necessary resources to prevent its establishment. To launch such a monopoly, states generally deploy the following strategies: corporal punishment, the arresting, detainment, or killing of adversaries, or disarmament (the collecting, documenting, controlling and discarding of privately owned arms, ammunition and explosives).³ As this coercive logic and the great wealth of modern historical case studies suggest, corporal punishment frequently lends to an increased risk of escalating potential reactionary insurrection, and thus, modern states turn to both consensual disarmament and forcible disarmament as alternative solutions capable of “limiting rebels’ escalatory potential.”⁴ Consensual disarmament generally “follows a negotiated settlement or decisive military victory, with the explicit agreement of all sides. Members of the population willfully surrender arms in exchange for protection, payments, or promises thereof.”⁵ In stark contrast, forcible disarmament generally “involves the compulsory collection and disposal of privately held arms, against the will of the party being disarmed.”⁶ The Allies utilized both forms of disarmament during the middle twentieth

² See the second lecture entitled “Politics as Vocation” of a series (the first was Science as a Vocation) Weber gave in Munich to the “Free Union” of Bavaria on January 28th, 1919; Max Weber, Hans Gerth, and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 77.

³ Yuri M. Zhukov, “Taking Away the Guns: Forcible Disarmament and Rebellion,” *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 2 (March 2016): 242–58, esp. 243.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

century to fit the strategic realities of specific locales within Southeast Asia and Southern Europe, effectively rendering Communist resistance organizations incapable of self-defense and vulnerable to exploitation by the reestablished states themselves or other third-party actors.

During the war, Allied strategists recognized a select few resistance organizations already formed in Southeast Asia and Southern Europe that offered a compelling opportunity for the creation of a covert branch within their joint-military structure that could be used to disrupt Axis operations and supplement their own planned liberations of Axis-occupied territories. Resistance members in those select organizations regularly interacted with the departments, agents, and advisors of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the United States' Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—the two official Allied departments created for the purposes of coordinating espionage, sabotage, and reconnaissance activities behind enemy lines. Allied support and treatment of these select resistance organizations during and after the conclusion of official hostilities varied heavily depending on their utility for the Allies' postwar objectives, and their treatment of left-wing resistance organizations exemplified Allied post-war geopolitical visions informally agreed upon first at the Tehran Conference, in November 1943, and reiterated again at the Fourth Moscow Conference in October, 1944.⁷ Likewise, they also reflected a careful appraisal of the demonstrable conditions on the ground of each respective locality and the Allies' capacity for physical intervention (i.e., if a substantive Allied military force was available to carry out their foreign policy).

One strategy Allied military planners implemented to exert control over armed Communist resistance organizations during World War II was to use monetary or material incentives as political leverage to force such

⁷ See the informal "Percentages Agreement" signed at the Fourth Moscow Conference (October 9 – 19, 1944) between Churchill and Stalin, which outlined their postwar vision for separate spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. Albert Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin Secret 'Percentages' Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944," *American Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (April 1978): 378-381, esp. 368.

organizations to concede to Allied strategic objectives and to integrate those armed units into the official Allied command structure. In doing so, the Allies were often able to obtain favorable agreements from armed resistance organizations in accordance with their postwar visions, while at the same time retaining the legal authority to order these groups' disbanding and disarmament thereafter. This strategy helped to neutralize the threat of large armed groups of communist partisans or guerrilla fighters by stripping them of their physical means of effectively disrupting Allied forces as they reconstructed the new state according to their own postwar plans. Allied planners were therefore able to prevent the conversion of armed resistance momentum into radical revolutionary political momentum (e.g., the possibility of popular Communist or socialist revolution), by disarming those who were most likely to disrupt Allied projects for the reconstruction of their newly won world.

Malaya: From the MPAJA to “the Malayan Emergency”

In Malaya, the principal armed Communist resistance force was the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), the military wing of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The British helped to form this organization in December, 1941, training individuals through the 101st Special Training School and graduating the 1st Independent Force of the MPAJA by January, 1942.⁸ The first meeting between MPAJA leaders and British military authorities after the fall of Singapore took place over two days: December 31, 1943 to January 1, 1944 at the Force 136 camp at Bukit Bidor. The final agreement of this meeting stipulated that the MPAJA was “to pledge itself to cooperate with and accept orders and instructions from the SEAC [Southeast Asia Command] during the period of the hostilities and in the period of the military occupation thereafter...In return, if and

⁸ Ban Kah Choon and Yap Hong Kuan, *Rehearsal for War: Resistance and the Underground War against the Japanese and the Kempeitai 1942-1945* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2002), 102-3. The 101st Special Training School was a special jungle and sabotage training center constructed by the British military to help train local Malaysians to resist the Japanese occupation.

when contacts were established with India and transport was available, the MPAJA would be supplied with new arms, ammunition and explosives and they were to accept British liaison teams to train them.”⁹ The other significant clause bound the MPAJA to return all weapons supplied by Force 136 to the proper British authorities after the end of Japanese occupation.¹⁰

In April 1945, a MCP directive was issued by MPAJA/MCP leader Lai Teck that informed British authorities of an MPAJA “secret army” of hidden field units, which were “to be used not only against the Japanese but also in an armed struggle against the British ‘if a People’s Republic was not set up after the war to the liking of the MCP.’”¹¹ When the terms of demobilization of the MPAJA were agreed upon by Lai Teck and Force 136 administrators between September and October, 1945, Teck agreed to order *all guerillas* who had not collaborated with Force 136 during the occupation to disarm. The British, however, had their suspicions that only part of this “secret army” had disarmed during demobilization and that many had stored their arms and ammunition in the surrounding jungles in anticipation of the return of the British. Allied evidence confirms this suspicion, as “British troops afterwards reportedly uncovered many secret MPAJA training camps and caches of arms in one or two states of which Force 136 officers had no previous knowledge.”¹² Current evidence also corroborates this suspicion. In Chin Peng’s 2003 autobiography *My Side of History*, he stated: “All in all, our secret army units were able to stash away some 5,000 individual weapon pieces in jungle caches of which no more than 10 per cent were acquired through Force 136 air supplies.”¹³ This conservation of armaments coupled with the clear indication that the British return to Malaya was inevitable, suggested that the MCP was ready

⁹ *Ibid.*, 159–60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹¹ Boon Kheng Cheah, *Red Star over Malaysia: Resistance and Social Conflict during and after the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941-1946* (Singapore: University Press, 1983), 62.

¹² *Ibid.*, 62–3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

to contend with their former colonial masters for civil authority following the end of the Japanese occupation. The MCP had after all, “built up its armed units, extended its network of underground cells, gathered weapons, and developed the expertise in jungle warfare. The underground resistance had been a rehearsal for the state of emergency that was to come.”¹⁴ This “Malayan Emergency,” as the British termed it, would begin with British repression of a series of industrial strikes and mass protests commencing in 1948 and ending in 1960. Although the British policy of consensual disarmament in late 1945 had failed fully to disarm the MPAJA insurrectionary forces, it had, in effect, disrupted any attempts at forming a new MCP-led government by excluding them from the postwar political reconstruction of the new Malayan Union.

Burma: The AFPFL and the Roots of the Burmese Civil War

In Burma, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL)—a political coalition of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), the Burma National Army (BNA), and the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP)—faced a fate similar to that of the MPAJA organizers. The BNA or the principal military wing of the AFPFL was responsible for helping the British Fourteenth Army “liberate the country” from the Japanese, and their future following the end of official hostilities was a matter of supreme importance to both AFPFL leadership and British military authorities. Official policy concerning the BNA, according to Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of the South East Asia Command (SEAC) and his chiefs of staff prior to a meeting between General Slim, British leader of the Fourteenth Army, and Aung San, leader of the BNA, on May 23, 1945, stated, that no offer was to be made that implied the “recognition of B.N.A. as an instrument of a recognizable Government.”¹⁵ Furthermore, the British policy outlined by SEAC and the chiefs of staff stressed that it was “desirable both in and outside of Burma to play down B.N.A. activities and

¹⁴ Choon and Kuan, *Rehearsal for War*, 116–7.

¹⁵ Robert H. Taylor and Thein Pe Myint, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984), 39. Originally cited from: AMSSO to SACSEA, from chiefs of staff, May 21, 1945, IOF L/WS/1/995.

not publicise recognition accorded them.” In all events, they were not to be referred to as an “army,” but rather as “auxiliary” or “guerrilla forces.”¹⁶ The British feared that the AFPFL’s political directives could be upheld with force by the BNA if diplomatic arrangements with Aung San and the AFPFL Executive Council, collapsed. Mountbatten understood the impossibility of declaring the BNA an illegal organization after the war, and thus suggested that the BNA be used to help complete “mopping-up operations” and then shortly thereafter to be disarmed at various British holding centers.

In June, as official discussions on the question of Burma’s political future and the recognition of the provisional government continued, so too did the British plan to disarm and control the BNA. By June 22, “the British were ready to begin the disarmament phase even though many AFO guerrillas¹⁷ and BNA troops had already handed in weapons to Force 136 and regular army officers.”¹⁸ At about the same time, Aung San’s proposal to rename the BNA the Patriotic Burmese Forces (PBF) was accepted by the governor, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith and Mountbatten. On July 6 at a meeting at Twelfth Army Headquarters, British intentions to disband and dissolve the PBF were made clear to Aung San, who reportedly walked out of the meeting after the word “disbandment” was used to describe the disposal of BNA troops.¹⁹ Aung San, amongst the other AFPFL leadership, believed the British would integrate a majority of PBF soldiers into the official Burmese military once it had been established. In reality, “the British only intended to accept 25 to 50 per cent of the PBF troops,” a mere fraction of what San and other organization leaders believed they had been promised.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid., 40. First cited as Telegram, AMSSO to SACSEA, May 22, 1945, IOFL/WS/1/995.

¹⁷ The Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO) was formed in August 1944 by the leadership of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), the Burma National Army (BNA), and the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP).

¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

By August, the agreements among Aung San, Than Tun, and Mountbatten were deemed unacceptable to the AFPFL leadership, as evidenced by an enormous protest rally in Rangoon on August 19, calling for the recognition of the provisional government and a halting to the disbandment of the PBF. The final rounds of debate concluded with the September 6 Kandy Conference to determine the future integration of the Patriotic Burmese Forces into a new Burma Army under British command; At the conference, Mountbatten's plan for dealing with PBF was finally accepted. Within British circles "it was agreed that it was of the highest importance that the PBF should be disarmed and rendered harmless" and that without the PBF, the AFPFL "would in due course disintegrate."²¹ The meeting also agreed that Aung San had defaulted on his agreement with the SEAC to disband and disarm the PBF and to enroll its appropriate members into the new Burma Army.²² On September 7, an agreement was signed by the Burmese delegation and British authorities, accepting a figure of fifty-two hundred PBF men in a total force of fifteen thousand, a mere one-third of the new officially sanctioned Burmese Army. These soldiers would form the basis for three new battalions of the reconstituted army, whilst many other former PBF soldiers joined Aung San's People's Volunteer Organization, after his resignation from military life to lead the AFPFL in January of 1946.

This was not to be the end of the British's counterinsurgency campaigns in Burma—the Kandy Conference had both permitted the British a peaceable disarmament of the PBF and evasion of a general Communist revolution. However, in doing so, the British set the stage for insurgencies in 1947 and the subsequent civil war in Burma beginning in 1948. Indeed, the AFPFL's decision to pursue a "peaceful developmental line" and the nature of the British's independence offer, which Aung San accepted in September 1946, would become the key factors in the splitting of the AFPFL in 1946. With Aung San's assassination in July, 1947, and U Nu's election as the Premier of Burma, the country was plunged into a

²¹ *Ibid.*, 54-5.

²² *Ibid.*, 55.

civil war involving the CPB and other significant ethnic minorities, such as the Karen nationalists. Although Burma would not officially become independent from the British until January, 1948, when the British did return to Burma, “whatever they were willing to offer was irrelevant as Burma’s course to independence had already been established by the actions of the AFPFL in early of 1945.”²³ By acting for themselves during wartime, the AFPFL’s resistance permitted them a voice in the reconstruction of their nation, as evinced by Aung San and U Nu’s participation in leading the official state in the years following 1945. Had Britain’s stated objectives of the 1945 White Paper come to fruition, it is reasonable to suppose that Burma’s post-1945 future could have been analogous to the Italian experience. Indeed, Burma could have been a state inextricably linked economically and militarily to British and other Western interests in Asia.²⁴

The Philippines: the Hukbalahap Disarmament and the Origins of the Hukbalahap Rebellion

In the Philippines, the Hukbalahap or “the People’s Anti-Japanese Army,” a highly successful Communist-led resistance organization operating largely in central Luzon, was forcibly disarmed by returning United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFEF) and Philippine Constabulary (PC) gendarmerie during the closing months of 1945. Like the leaders of the MPAJA and the BNA, the Hukbalahap’s leadership believed they would play a pivotal role in the reconstruction of their official state after the Axis forces were ejected from their nation. The leaders of the organization contributed a significant effort to the liberation of their country and the Huks themselves regarded the United States as their military allies. As Peregrine Taruc, a leader in the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipina* or the Communist Party of the Philippines (PKP) described in a 1970 interview,

²³ Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 71.

²⁴ Taylor and Myint, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma*, 68.

“We figured that because of the Hukbalahap’s achievements and its political strength at least in Central Luzon, the Osmeña government would have to take us into account.”²⁵ They were wrong. Neither collaboration with the Japanese or the Allied powers guaranteed their preferable postwar political ends. In reality, the fortunes of resistance organizers hinged upon “the amount of assistance they received from outsiders and the extent of support they enjoyed locally; the absence or the removal of either factor could bring about their eclipse.”²⁶ As one historian has remarked about the general state reconstruction process after World War II, “Great Power patronage was not enough to secure a party’s success, although Great Power opposition could block its progress,”²⁷ and in this case study of the Huks, the United States ensured it would be the latter phenomenon.

The reassertion of a significant Allied military force to the Philippines beginning in October, 1944, constituted an end to the Huk’s provisional governing of central Luzon begun as early as February of 1942. In fear of the radical political associations of some of the Huk guerrillas, American commanders ordered the disarming of the Pampanga squadrons and the arrest of their leaders. On February 22, 1945, Taruc, Alejandrino, de Leon, and Sergio Cayanan were thrown into jail in San Fernando, Pampanga. After their initial release, a mass demonstration protested the cavalier treatment of the Huk commanders. Taruc and his comrades were rearrested by the Counter-Intelligence Corps on April 3, 1945.²⁸

Luis Taruc and his guerrilla fighters, some of the first to offer their services to the Allied powers would end their war unrewarded, betrayed by their “allies,” and left in public disgrace. The US Counter Intelligence

²⁵ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 109. Originally cited from: Peregrino Taruc interview, 9 July 1970.

²⁶ A.J. Stockwell, “Southeast Asia in War and Peace: The End of European Colonial Empires” in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol II, the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 325-386, esp. 340.

²⁷ Stockwell, “Southeast Asia in War and Peace,” 340.

²⁸ Eduardo Lachica, *The Huks: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt* (New York: Washington, London, Praeger, 1971), 116.

Corps (CIC) offered this justification for the arrest of Huk leaders who had consistently cooperated with American forces. The Huks had “hindered the entire area from returning to a normal way of life.”²⁹ In reality, the CIC understood the radical potential of the PKP leadership within the armed Huk guerrilla groups and sought to disarm and discredit them before they could incite popular rebellion against the reassertion of the prewar elite’s monopoly over the largely agrarian economy and the institution of the Allied-supported Osmeña government. In fact, the US government took on a strikingly parallel policy to the British’s treatment of the AFPFL in Burma: disarmament of the armed forces and intentional political fragmentation. A US military study in December, 1945 reported, according to Kervliet, that by recognizing a few Hukbalahaps but excluding the vast majority, it “would cause the organization to lose the support and trust of the people backing it.”³⁰ This strategy ultimately failed. However, the interests and fears of the anti-Hukbalahap USAFFE leaders, the PC, the landed elites in Central Luzon, American and Filipino officials protecting the status quo, and those who feared a Communist revolution helped to ensure that the Huks would not be permitted a significant role in the rebuilding of the state, which sowed the seeds for the Huk Rebellion in 1946.

Italy: Averting a Socialist Republic

Like their fellow resistance organizers in Southeast Asia, the Italian partisans under the leadership of the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (CLN) and the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale per l’Alta Italia (CLNAI) experienced a similar disarmament strategy in preparation for the arrival of Allied forces. By the Summer of 1944, the Allies recognized that the popular resistance movements growing in Italy were becoming too

²⁹ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 112–3. Originally cited from: 441st CIC detachment, “Monthly Information report of activities in SWPA,” February 1945, p. 43-44 (RG 94, WWII Operations Reports, 1940-48, CIDT-441-0.2, CIC; Federal Records Center, Suitland, MD).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

great to control, and in this appraisal, the Allies began to strategize ways to reduce the power of the movement. Indeed, “the tensions surrounding the attempted partisan disarmament in Florence in early August was probably the first concrete example of this.”³¹ The official Soviet recognition of Badoglio’s government on March 14, 1944, coupled with the Italian Communist Party (PCI) leader Togliatti’s declaration on March 29,³² demonstrated Stalin’s subordination of potential radical social and political transformations in Southern Europe to the previous undisclosed agreements made with the American and British authorities at Tehran and in Moscow. Although the British and Americans had differing visions for a postwar Italy, they both desired to see “Italy transformed from a hostile country which wanted to create a self-sufficient economy, into a politically compliant free-market nation, highly dependent on foreign investment, imports, and technology.”³³ Indeed, by 1946 the United States would supply Italy with 40 percent of its fuel imports, 70 percent of its food imports and 100 percent of its imported medical supplies.³⁴ Pietro Secchia, a resistance architect and left-wing activist during the First World War remarked but two months after the liberation:

The ‘Allies’ were the real bosses, the Italian government counted for very little. Nevertheless, there was a lot of government/parliamentary bustle, and over the last year our lot were now inserted into this ministerial/parliamentary work, the horse trading,

³¹ Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies* (New York: Pluto Press, 2009), 210.

See p. 89 for full discussion of failed attempt at disarming partisans in Florence after its liberation in August of 1944.

³² Silvio Pons, “Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, (Spring 2001), 3-27, esp. 4. After Togliatti’s return from Moscow in March 1944, he delivered the so-called “Svolta di Salerno” or Turn of Salerno declaration, that not only echoed Stalin’s decision to recognize Badoglio’s government, but also called for cooperation with Badoglio to pursue a policy of “national unity.”

³³ *Ibid.*, 220.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

intrigues, ministerial entourages and their underhand dealings – all concerned with very different issues from those which made up day-to-day experience in the North...[T]his situation made me really bitter. I understood that we had been beaten for a second time.³⁵

This second beating would come as the final agreement between the Committee of National Liberation for Northern Italy (CLNAI) and the Allies, signed on December 7, 1944, at Rome's Grand Hotel. The key component pertaining to disarmament can be located in clause number four:

When the enemy withdraws from the territory occupied by them the CLNAI will exercise its best endeavors to maintain law and order and to continue the safeguarding of the economic resources of the country until such time as the Allied Military Government is established. Immediately upon the establishment of Allied Military Government, CLNAI will recognize Allied Military Government and will hand over to that Government all authority and powers of local government and administration previously assumed. As the enemy withdraws all components of the General Command of the Volunteers of Liberty in liberated territory will come under direct command of the Commander-in-Chief, AAI [Allied Armies in Italy], acting under the authority of the Supreme Allied Commander, and will obey any order issued by him or by Allied Military Government on his behalf, including such orders to disband and surrender their arms, when required to do so.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 221–22. Originally cited from: E. Collotti (ed.), *Archivio Pietro Secchia 1945-73*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 192.

³⁶ Ibid., 215.

This agreement established the Partisan fighters of the CLNAI as a legitimate force under the Supreme Allied Command, politically disarming the forces and marking the end of the possibility for a radical social revolution in the North. The partisans in the North would receive in return from the Allies a much needed “commitment to more finance – 160 million lire a month – and a supply of arms, food, and clothing.”³⁷ Following the liberation of the North, it became apparent that the CLN and CLNAI would not play a formal role in the creation of the new Italian state, marking what historian Paul Ginsborg has described as, “the substantial political defeat of the Resistance.”³⁸ Although the new Italian republic established after the 1946 constitutional referendum allotted a significant majority of governmental power to three former CLN leaders and their constituent parties, the results of the 1948 general election—only two years later—left the former Communist resistance organizers, who had governed the nation from June 1944 to May 1947, as veritable political outcasts entirely removed from Alcide De Gasperi’s Christian Democrat-led government.

Greece: The EAM and the Origins of the Greek Civil War

In Greece, the widespread left-wing popular front organization, the National Liberation Front’s (EAM) military wing, ELAS, or “the Greek People’s Liberation Army” faced a similar destiny to their counterparts across the globe. In October, 1944, the impending threat of Soviet intervention in the Balkans caused the German military to begin withdrawing their forces from Greece. In the wake of this political vacuum, an opportunity arose for the EAM (largely dominated by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE)) to seize legitimate governing authority. Despite this enticing opportunity to seize power by force, the evidence demonstrates that the KKE “decided *not* to seize power at a time when it

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 57.

could have easily done so,” most palpably observed in the peaceful “popular liberation” of Athens on October 12, 1944, prior to the arrival of British troops in the city.³⁹ In a letter to the Foreign Secretary on November 7th, 1944 Churchill wrote, “I fully expect a clash with the EAM, and we must not shrink from it provided the ground is well chosen.”⁴⁰ His expectations would foreshadow reality.

Earlier in August of 1944, EAM ministers attended the Lebanon Conference, agreeing to participate in the National Unity Government led by George Papandreou, and a month later met again agreeing to place ELAS forces under the authority of the British military governor, General Ronald Scobie.⁴¹ On December 2, 1944, the EAM ministers resigned from the Papandreou government, in response to General Scobie’s demands for the immediate disarmament and demobilization of the *andartes* and the formation of a new provisional national guard to take its place.⁴² One day later, in the heart of Athens at Syntagma Square, Greek police opened fire (for reasons unknown) on unarmed EAM demonstrators, plunging the EAM/ELAS and the British backed-Greek government into a series of violent clashes called the *Dekemvriana* or the December events (December 3rd 1944-January 11th 1945)—the opening phase of what was to become the official Greek Civil War, 1946-1949. Three days later on December 5, Churchill would offer the following instruction to General Scobie:

³⁹ Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 360.

⁴⁰ Dominique Eudes, *The Kapetanios; Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 180. Originally cited from: Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume VI: Finest Hour, 1939-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 250.

⁴¹ The Caserta Agreement of September 26th, 1944 placed ELAS forces under the legal authority of the Government of National Unity, which in turn had placed them under the command of British General Ronald Scobie.

⁴² *Andartes*, or *αντάρτες* in Greek, were armed groups of resistance guerillas who first appeared in the mountains of Macedonia in October 1941 to resist the German occupation ; Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece*, 368.

You are responsible for maintaining order in Athens and for neutralizing or destroying all EAM-ELAS [National Liberation Front–Greek People’s Liberation Army] bands approaching the city..... *Do not, however, hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress.... We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also with bloodshed if necessary.*⁴³

Bloodshed was indeed necessary and on January 15, 1945, after thirty-three days of violent confrontation with British and conservative Greek paramilitary forces, General Scobie signed a cease-fire with the ELAS in exchange for their withdrawal from Patras, Thessaloniki, and their demobilization in the Peloponnese. On February 12, 1945, the EAM signed the Treaty of Varkiza with the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, ending the *Dekemvriana* and ordering the immediate and total disarmament of ELAS forces, in exchange for the promise of free elections and amnesty for those not found guilty of common crimes.⁴⁴ In what was now a surrender, the EAM did “what it had rejected as unthinkable the previous November; it granted a monopoly of armed force to its bitter opponents.”⁴⁵ What followed can only be described as a ‘White Terror’; a right-wing backlash of violent anti-revolutionary terror, executed by the conservative anti-communist militant forces under the tacit approval of Allied authorities and the newly formed Greek government.⁴⁶

This campaign of persecution was responsible for much of the radicalization and polarization of the political climate in the country,

⁴³ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume VI, Triumph and Tragedy* (London: Cassell, 1954), 289. Emphasis added by current author.

⁴⁴ Stephanos G. Saraphēs, *ELAS: Greek Resistance Army* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981), 525.

⁴⁵ David Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (New York: Longman, 1995), 145.

⁴⁶ Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece*, 373.

leading to the formation of leftist defense troops (e.g., the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), the new military branch of the KKE), the left's boycott of the official 1946 election, and the resumption of the Greek Civil War in the spring of 1946.⁴⁷ British action had, in effect, dismantled the ability of the EAM to reconstruct a new socialist state with the military backing of a fully armed ELAS, precipitating the conditions for the second stage of the Greek Civil War, which continued openly or covertly until 1974.

Conclusion

The Allied policy of consensual and forced disarmament of Communist resistance organizations in Southeast Asia and Southern Europe was met with mixed success. In Europe, due to the strong presence of Allied occupying forces, both the CLN/CLNAI and the ELAS had little hope of prosecuting a successful revolutionary campaign. Therefore, the disarmament policy served to successfully prevent the conversion of popular resistance momentum into social revolution. In Southeast Asia the strategy varied even more heavily. The Burmese AFPFL's consensual disarmament did not ensure the reassertion of colonial authority, but rather, the disarmament agreement helped to ensure the AFPFL a role in the government postwar. In Malaya, the MPAJA's refusal of total consensual disarmament served to ensure their exclusion from the official reinstatement of the Malayan government but also guaranteed their material survival during the Malayan Emergency shortly thereafter.⁴⁸ Perhaps the most successful of all the Allied Southeast Asian disarmament campaigns was

⁴⁷ Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War*, 150.

⁴⁸ "The Malayan Emergency" was a term employed by the British colonial government of Malaya in June 1948 after the assassination of three European plantation managers in the northern state of Perak by members of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA)—a partial descendant of the MPAJA. The term is often used in the historiography of the conflict to characterize the extended period of unrest between the creation of the Federation of Malaya in 1948 until the first part of the conflict's resolution in 1960.

the forcible disarmament of the Hukbalahap in the Philippines, which ensured their exclusion from the reconstruction of the official Philippine state and inculcated many of the conditions leading to the Huk Rebellion of 1946. Despite the varying degrees of success of the Allied disarmament campaigns in both regions, the appalling treatment of former allied communist militants by the Allied powers in this period demonstrates precisely how Allied geopolitical objectives transcended Allied ethical values.

On August 14, 1941—long before the start of Allied disarmament—US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered a joint-policy statement defining Allied goals for the post-war world, later referred to as “the Atlantic Charter.” In this charter, Roosevelt and Churchill emphasized the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they would live. Four years later at the Yalta Conference held February 4-11, 1945, the Allied leadership reasserted this same commitment:

The establishment of order in Europe and the rebuilding of national economic life must be achieved by processes which will enable the liberated peoples to destroy the last vestiges of Nazism and Fascism and to create democratic institutions *of their own choice*. This is a principle of the Atlantic Charter—the right of *all peoples* to choose the form of government under which they will live—the restoration of sovereign rights and self-government to those peoples who have been forcibly deprived of them by the aggressor nations.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1941 Volume IV* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956), Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, Bohlen Collection, Document 429. Emphasis not included in the original document.

With these words “the Big Three” reasserted their empty dedication to the self-determination clause of the Atlantic Charter. Of course, actions speak louder than words, and the Allies’ proclamation at the Yalta Conference was irreconcilable with their exploitation of Communist resistance organizations during and after the war. Acting in the same manner as the very “aggressor nations” they condemned, the Allies’ transnational disarmament and outright persecution of Communist organizers served to undermine their purported altruistic internationalist doctrine. Rather, the Allies guaranteed little but the establishment of postwar states agreeable to their own military objectives and plans for a newly organized world order led by the victor nations. As brigade commander Arrigo “Bulow” Boldrini, a member of the 28th Garibaldi division wrote in a report in December 1944, “there were two concepts of how the war had to be fought: the partisan/ popular one which wanted to speed up the country's liberation and bring the war to an end through incessant, continuous and decisive action. The Allied one started from the standpoint that, for obvious political reasons, liberation had to be as little as possible the achievement of the Italian people.”⁵⁰ Boldrini’s observation transcends the historical context of the Italian partisan disarmament. The Allies’ conduct towards several Communist organizations in Malaya, Italy, Burma, Greece, and the Philippines served to not only construe or discredit their postwar historical legacies within their respective localities, but also to disparage the many honorable lives lost in their wartime struggle.

⁵⁰ Behan, *The Italian Resistance*, 210. Originally cited from: P. Secchia and F. Frassati, *Storia della Resistenza*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1965), 896.

Scripts of War: Morality, Race, and Film in the United States During the Second World War

Margaux Miller

Hollywood's film industry and World War II developed what could be called a "tight kinship": from the comfortable security of plush theatre seats, the American public could experience the horrors and thrills of the international conflict raging beyond its borders.¹ At no other time was the motion picture industry more deliberately engaged with the documentation and recreation of American history than during the war.² Hollywood could offer narratives about international conflict that satiated public curiosity and concern more completely than news or other forms of media.³ Hollywood films featured complete narratives with intriguing plot lines and characters, shaped around commonly held values, through which messages about the meaning of World War II and the United States' role within it were communicated. These films appealed to American cultural interests and couched wartime ideology within enjoyable media, and thus were more engaging and palatable than news outlets.⁴ Narratives within Hollywood film proved to be essential in reinforcing ideals upon which justification for the war rested. In framing the war as a crusade for the ideals of justice, democracy, freedom, and self determination, the United States government justified and even celebrated its role on the global stage,

¹ Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

³ Robert L. McLaughlin and Sally E. Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies: American Cinema during World War II* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

setting the context from which the myth of World War II as America's "Good War" would emerge.⁵

The following discussion aims to complicate the way in which the United States' ideological superiority was presented and accepted within the context of global conflict. An important topic carefully honed in wartime films was race representation. Through the strategic construction of race and inclusion of ethnically-specific characters, American film created the illusion of a home front unified despite difference. This contribution was essential in creating visual imagery of the war that bolstered the American war machine. The films discussed below—*Sahara*, *The Negro Soldier*, and *Blood On the Sun*—are just three of the large volume of war films released during the war years. In buttressing unity across racial difference, *The Negro Soldier* dealt directly and overtly with race in its presentation of idealized black involvement in World War II and past conflict.⁶ *Blood On the Sun*, on the contrary, aimed primarily to define clearly the nature of the evil, sinister Japanese enemy in relation to the valiance of the United States and its allies.⁷ *Sahara* employed tactics present in both *Blood On the Sun* and *The Negro Soldier*. *Sahara* aimed to bridge ethnic and racial differences to build Allied unity, while also constructing Axis characters in a light of exaggerated moral degeneracy.⁸ As evident in the aforementioned releases, film became an essential tool through which morality and racial unity were projected. Yet when one considers the reality of race relations during World War II, on-screen fabrications present a troubling and contradictory counter-truth to the moral justification upon which the good war relied. Rather than

⁵ Ted Grimsrud, *The Good War That Wasn't - And Why It Matters: World War II's Moral Legacy* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 2.

⁶ *The Negro Soldier*, directed by Stuart Heisler, produced by Frank Capra (United States War Department, 1944).

⁷ *Blood On the Sun*, directed by Frank Lloyd, (United Artists, 1945), performed by James Cagney and Sylvia Sidney.

⁸ *Sahara*, directed by Zoltan Korda, (Columbia Pictures, 1943), performed by Humphrey Bogart, J. Carrol Naish, Rex Ingram.

showcasing the United States as a sentry to justice, portrayals of race in film reflected deep strains and anxieties that characterized American race relations.

Enforcing Moral Superiority and Constructing National Identity

The Second World War is largely perceived as “the Good War,” the last time Americans felt that their global presence and actions were overwhelmingly innocent and moral.⁹ This mythology was cultivated through perceptions of international engagements as well as real change on the home front. World War II *was* a time of great transformation in the United States: wartime economic stimulation effectively ended the lingering Great Depression, pro-war rallying developed an elevated level of a certain kind of social harmony, and the basis for an affluent American society was established.¹⁰ The war fundamentally changed American presence on the international stage in lasting ways that were felt within US borders. The good war was understood as a conflict in which the United States, as a force of good, defeated clear evils, based on the belief that the United States was involved in order to defend an American ideological way of life.¹¹ Emboldened by this perspective, America emerged from World War II with a heightened sense of dominance. Beyond providing immediate justification for stepping away from American isolationism, the good war narrative also set the tone for generations to come that America’s ongoing military actions were “in continuity with the Good War.”¹²

Despite the widespread, multilayered ways in which the war positively benefited Americans, the idea of World War II as “the Good War” is in fact a myth, a belief that has required active work to maintain. Regardless of the truths the mythology may refer to, its construction also

⁹ Neil A. Wynn, "The Good War: The Second World War and Postwar American Society," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 3 (1996), 464.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 464-5.

¹¹ Grimsrud, *The Good War That Wasn't*, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

contains fabrications that demand examination. During wartime, the United States fundamentally contradicted the moral values that had justified its internationalism and involvement in the war, both in the way it fought abroad and in the way in which social relations were managed at home.¹³ Through this discussion, I aim to draw attention to the latter of referenced contradictions. War involvement was rooted in the defense of ideals including, but not limited to, freedom and self-determination, justice and democracy. As the pacifist theology theorist Ted Grimsrud explains, “in making moral appeals for certain actions and responses, [the US made itself] accountable to the values and convictions [America based] those appeals on.”¹⁴

Crucially, race relations became a site through which the aforementioned ideals were reasserted in order to strengthen pro-war support. Furthermore, American moral superiority was reinforced, in part, using the construction of racial unity within US borders as an essential building block. Likewise, just as Allied characters were portrayed as particularly noble and valiant, portrayals of Axis characters were subjected to racialized stereotypes and exaggerated corruption. In this way, wartime Hollywood boosted the American war effort from a variety of angles. Hollywood production and film were an avenue through which morality could be shown with skin color. Messages about national identity, unity, and opposition of the enemy could be broadcast through film, a medium that reached massive audiences of roughly 90 million people per week.¹⁵ Within such strategic filmmaking, constructions of race, racial unity of Allied forces, and racialized degeneracy of Axis enemies were a particular focus.

¹³ Grimsrud, *The Good War That Wasn't*, 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 9.

American Ideology: Intersections of Wartime Justifications and Hypocritical Contradictions

Upon examination of race relations, particularly those between whites and blacks, in the years during and leading up to World War II, it becomes clear that certain facets of such relations were fraught with tension and unease. Despite the rosy picture Hollywood created to sustain morale on the home front, wartime was a period in which race relations were an arena of frenzied activity. In many ways, the war exacerbated social tensions and “posed a special test of the ability of American culture to accommodate its inherent pluralism.”¹⁶ Obviously, some groups did not experience the benefits of war or suffered more acutely due to their minority status.¹⁷ Racial identity shaped one’s reality of war in very meaningful ways. To be a brown or black person in the United States during a time when self-determination and justice were lauded as keystones of American identity was undoubtedly a dissonance-producing experience. The war years, long deemed “the Forgotten Years of the Negro Revolution,” are now aptly recognized as a period during which black American activists took advantage of national turbulence and shifting identity to fight for their full rights. The war was a catalyst that marked a turning point in the struggle for equality.¹⁸

While there was *some* buckling and shifting of ethnic, religious, and gender biases, racism proved to be much more resilient.¹⁹ As mentioned above, activism ignited during World War II helped facilitate the consciousness of the Civil Rights Movement, but this struggle was still decades away. That being said, great numbers of black Americans lived within the restrictions of Jim Crow legislation and coped with daily threats to their lives. Segregation was the dominant social policy nationwide.²⁰ Within the military, servicemen were segregated by race and black units

¹⁶ Wynn, “The Good War,” 474.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 470.

¹⁸ Wynn, “The Good War,” 471.

¹⁹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 203.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

were overwhelmingly placed in service and support roles, stripping them of what some would call the manly glory of active combat that silver-lined war's depressed gloom.²¹ This segregation was more than skin deep; the Red Cross actually classified blood plasma not only by blood type but by race as well.²²

It was within this culture that racial activists went to work. There was a general trend of black Americans demanding more: expanded economic and education opportunities, justice in law, and access to voting.²³ Some of these efforts were in fact fruitful; as historian Neil Wynn points out, "rising black hopes were encouraged by real economic progress, increased expressions of white support, and significant shifts in federal policy during and immediately after the war."²⁴ Specifically within the realm of film production, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) capitalized on American ideology of equality and emphasis on anti-Hitlerism to advance their cause and push for increasing black representation on screen, forcing the American race dilemma to be a responsibility of Hollywood. On January 10, 1945, *Variety* Magazine cited the actions of black actress Lena Horne, who put on a show at a military base in Arkansas at which white officers and, allegedly, Nazi war prisoners were in attendance, yet black GIs were barred from attending. Furious with the hypocritical treatment of her racial peers, Horne stormed out in protest.²⁵ Though it will be explored more deeply at a later point in this discussion, Hollywood's standard reaction to race tensions was to promote colorblind unity, regardless of the reality of segregation on the ground.²⁶

Though some victories could be claimed, racial activism was also met by active and, sometimes deadly, resistance. In 1943 alone, more than

²¹ Ibid., 205.

²² Ibid., 206.

²³ Wynn, "The Good War," 472.

²⁴ Ibid., 474.

²⁵ "Nazi Prisoners Allowed to See USO Show, So Lena Horne Walks in Huff," *Variety*, January 10, 1945, 1.

²⁶ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 205-6.

240 racial incidents in 47 cities occurred, ranging from full-scale riots in Detroit, Harlem, and Los Angeles, to industrial conflicts and “hate strikes” in production capitals, to lynchings in a number of different states.²⁷ Race riots caused such a concern in American consciousness that Eleanor Roosevelt felt compelled to make a statement calling for “both white and colored people of goodwill and common sense” to take measures to prevent such riots. Interestingly, despite her charitable words, the First Lady canceled a trip to Detroit, citing vague schedule conflicts, right after such rioting occurred.²⁸ Incidents of rioting predominantly involved whites attacking blacks, though others were a product of focused black anger.²⁹ Although the immediate causes of such incidents were unique to each situation, the underlying theme uniting them was the sense of change brought out by the war. Dubbed the closest thing to a social revolution that America has ever seen, due to wartime change, World War II was truly a time of mobilization, protest, and contradiction for people of color in the United States; yet in the name of American war ideals, Hollywood projected an image of racial unity.

Hollywood at War

The way that Hollywood swooped in to fill the particular role of centrally informing American conscience about the war and its implications for the home front certainly was not a given. Negotiating the degree to which Hollywood worked within government-stipulated war measures proved a strain to all parties involved. At the outset of the war, motion pictures were the contemporary mass medium of choice, pulling tens of millions of people a week to the box offices.³⁰ The broad appeal of Hollywood garnered it great potential in reaching massive numbers of the American public. In the interwar years, Hollywood comfortably drew on themes of

²⁷ Wynn, “The Good War,” 472.

²⁸ “First Lady Talks on Race Rioting,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1943.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 9.

vengeance and revenge against World War I enemies, which helped lay the groundwork for films that would be produced two decades later.³¹ A common theme in interwar years film—and one around which many WWII films would center their plots—was the reduction of conflicts to the framework of clear good versus clear evil. This tactic appealed to the emotions of audiences while defining the nature of the enemy.³² Films of the 1920s and '30s overwhelmingly swept American audiences up with easily comprehensible moral plots and endings trimmed with happiness, enabling a “forget and enjoy” mindset once the lights of theatre dimmed.³³

The trend of sterilized bliss in film was reinforced by the Production Code Administration (PCA), also known as the “Hays Office,” administered by the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America (while its name suggests otherwise, the Hays Office was overseen by a Joseph I. Breen).³⁴ The Code was used to circumvent the threat of national censorship of film and assert wide-reaching, lawful, moral authority according to certain values.³⁵ According to the Code, “national feelings” and wholesome American content were the prescribed focus and, notably, propaganda was strictly forbidden.³⁶ Though film regulation through the PCA was voluntary, no Hollywood film escaped it: a seal of approval from the Hays Office was the best certification of classical Hollywood status.³⁷ While Hollywood pumped out “wonderful escapist fare” to massive audiences in the prewar years, conflict in Europe and Asia inched slowly closer to the United States.³⁸

Hollywood films lambasting Adolf Hitler and making a fool of the Nazi Party slowly seeped out as American involvement dawned. The attack

³¹ Robert Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 5.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 7.

³⁴ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 36.

³⁵ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 37.

³⁶ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 7-8.

³⁷ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 37.

³⁸ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 8.

on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 changed everything; like nearly every other facet of American culture, the motion picture industry was pulled into the fight against the Axis powers.³⁹ Following the Warner Brothers' lead with their anti-fascist and anti-Nazi hit *Confessions of Nazi Spy* (1939), Hollywood studio leads began to shift to outright patriotism through production of, admittedly, soft propaganda.⁴⁰ At the outset of the war, PCA crusader Joseph I. Breen stated: "The War simply does not affect the code or its application... It has raised no issues or questions that were not present and covered by the code in peacetime... The function of the Code is not to be patriotic; it is to be moral."⁴¹ Yet this statement did not refute the notion that filming could be (and was) manipulated by agents operating outside of Hollywood for the sake of national security. Likewise, right after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt acknowledged the power Hollywood held in informing public opinion, which largely developed in the interwar years, and then promised that there would be no formal government censorship of what he hoped would be a continuous stream of films released during wartime.⁴²

While the formal relationship between Hollywood and the federal government was non-collusive, as articulated by President Roosevelt, there was a clear concern adopted by Hollywood for the happenings of the war. In nearly every weekly issue of *Variety*, the all-things-show-business popular magazine, a portion was dedicated to "War Activities," including a subsection called "Uncle Sam's Callboard" that catalogued American stars in their various involvements in military service, connecting Tinseltown to the broader environment of war.⁴³ Furthermore, by the end of 1942, the Office of War Information, headed by Elmer Davis, had become the official watchdog of the film industry and issued covert, yet

³⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁴¹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 37-8.

⁴² Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 9.

⁴³ *Variety*, September 1943 to May 1945.

elaborate, guidelines to ensure a relative level of conformity in every war film.⁴⁴

Though Breen was able to use his industry know-how to lead and guide others around him in maneuvering censorship and producing quality films during wartime, government influence became inextricably tied up with film production during the war years.⁴⁵ It is important to note that the exact nature of government involvement in the motion picture industry is difficult to locate, despite copious numbers of interactions between studios and government agents. Historian Thomas Patrick Doherty notes that this sort of loose command centered around a fuzzied locus of power suited the purpose of the government and the film industry alike.⁴⁶ Both parties wanted to avoid outright censorship; Hollywood heads preferred suggestive cues rather than outright directives and limitations, although this request was not always respected.⁴⁷

Washington quickly created the agencies and bureaucrats it needed to mold Hollywood into the producers needed during wartime. For home-front movie-goers, Hollywood's motion pictures provided the fodder from which morale was sustained during loss and defeat, and acted as a champion of celebration when national armed forces were victorious.⁴⁸ The central government influence from which film directives were voiced was the Office of War Information (OWI). Prior to war, the United States had begun to strengthen its defenses, and created the Motion Picture Committee Co-operative for National Defense through the OWI, which was later reconstituted as the War Activities Committee (WAC). WAC appealed to the government to garner Hollywood support, which the Committee deemed essential to the war effort. The government responded with the creation of the Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP), an office within the

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 53.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 43.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 45.

⁴⁸ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 162.

structure of the OWI.⁴⁹ Roosevelt appointed Lowell Mellett, former director of the Office of Government Reports, to head the bureau.⁵⁰ His office, known infamously as “Mellett’s Madhouse,” acted as the main liaison between Washington and Hollywood until 1943 when its funding was massively slashed.⁵¹ Another major influencer was the military, which needed Hollywood to help disseminate their messages and attempted to exert tight control over production, going so far as to establish a *quid pro quo* relationship in which Hollywood could access military armament needed for production only when the military approved of the scenes in which gear was being used.⁵² In early 1941, the Joint Army and Navy Public Relations Committee attempted to harness and control the power of the film industry, calling for “complete censorship of publications, radio, and motion pictures” within the country.⁵³ The proposal was rejected by the President, and a more cooperative relationship was established between the War Department’s Bureau of Public Relations (BPR) and Hollywood studios. Film submission to the Board of Censorship (an entity separate from the purview of the OWI) *was* required specifically to ensure that filmmakers were not releasing military secrets. Throughout the war, the military continued to promote a positive presentation of the army (as a tool for recruitment) and vetoed the production of films that suggested anything that could sour its reputation.⁵⁴ The military also made use of the dream factory’s outputs overseas. Military officials took great pains to travel overseas armed not only with munitions, but also with film rolls and projectors. Motion pictures, shown shockingly close to frontlines, were recognized as one of the most important factors in keeping fighting men in

⁴⁹ McLaughlin and Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies*, 21.

⁵⁰ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 46-7; Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 10.

⁵¹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 43.

⁵² McLaughlin and Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies*, 19-20.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

shape.⁵⁵ "Movie therapy," which entailed screening motion pictures for American combatants, was seen as helpful by the military and Hollywood executives alike to ease men out of the shock of the battle and remind them, through strategic imagery playing on American identity, "what they are fighting for."⁵⁶

Though the function of the OWI was advisory, its influence grew as the war dragged on.⁵⁷ Some studios begrudgingly cooperated or outright resisted seeking approval from the OWI. While studios wanted support from the agency, they resented having to incorporate heavy-handed messages about anti-fascism, the Four Freedoms and Allied goals, viewing such content as dull propaganda capable of ruining a sound plotline.⁵⁸ After the influence of the BMP was toned down in 1943 due to Senate Republicans' concern with the number of liberals in the OWI, most film reviewers moved to the Overseas Branch under Ulric Bell. Bell convinced the Office of Censorship to refuse export licenses to films not approved by the OWI; this threat to profits from considerable foreign markets essentially ensured that the filmmaking community would have to seek approval from the OWI.⁵⁹

This multitude of federal voices also interacted with the Hays Office in order to control and insert particular messages into films. While producers still sought to create genuinely good films, they also knew the tremendous profit potential in making films that appealed to Americans' sense of national identity, and also presumably felt the pressures of the many government administrations cornering them. Frustration of producers stemmed from the government's claim to control production and was amplified by the ambiguous terms through which such control was

⁵⁵ "Films Made Part of Front Line Equipment; Beachhead Showings Within Range of Jap's Gunfire," *Variety*, March 1, 1944, 4.

⁵⁶ "'Movie Therapy' Helps Ease Shock of Battle Of U.S. Troops, Sez Coe," *Variety*, May 24, 1944, 6.

⁵⁷ For a complete list of questions the OWI implored studios to consider in filmmaking, see MacLaughlin and Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies*, 21-22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-3.

exerted. A multitude of government agencies concerned themselves with monitoring various components of film production and distribution, crowding the industry and often sending a multiplicity of mixed messages and crossed signals.⁶⁰ On the flip side, government agencies often struggled themselves with exactly what demands needed to be articulated; being out of touch with the actualities of the movie-making process, government officials forced Hollywood moguls thin on patience to sift through a plethora of instructions in order to comply with federal directives.⁶¹

Federal influence did not go unquestioned. Critics were deeply concerned with the nature of wartime films being made in a style alarmingly similar to outright propaganda. In September 1943, a Congressional committee was called to determine if the film industry had been used for political purposes and was under pressure to make propaganda films (the outcome of which I was unable to locate).⁶² The OWI was accused of not only being afraid to tell the real story of the war, but also being severely restricting in its work.⁶³ *Variety* released a scorching critique of government interference in film, voiced by Mrs. Edna R. Carroll, chairwoman for the Pennsylvania Board of Motion Picture Censors. Carroll attacked federal influence as “part of a pattern of regimentation which is diametrically opposed to representative, free government” and a trend potent with danger. “Distortion of fact, reversion of chronological events, and even the inclusion of matters never accomplished on the historic visit might be forgiven as theatrical license. But the phony purge trials [referring to the Congressional committee] and the humiliating whitewashing... never should have been presented,” she strongly proclaimed.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 45-51.

⁶¹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 46-7.

⁶² "Mo. Congressman to Probe Films' 'Political Propaganda' Alliance," *Variety*, September 1, 1943, 11.

⁶³ "OWI Afraid to Tell Real Story of War," *Variety*, April 5, 1944, 1-2.

⁶⁴ "'Films Ceased to Entertain, Now Propaganda'--Pennsy Censor Head," *Variety*, August 4, 1943, 3-37.

Despite such dissonance, Hollywood – the most American of institutions – became a “compliant part of the war machine.”⁶⁵ Hollywood happened to be one of the only recipients of surplus spending. This certainly softened the blow of ideological monopolization in wartime films and Hollywood’s acceptance of the claim that such monopolization *benefitted* the American public, so long as the war was won.⁶⁶ Executives told themselves they did not want to pull wool over the eyes of American publics, but rather that they offered well-intentioned and democratic, if not entirely honest, information about the war.⁶⁷ In this way, film producers walked an uneasy line between submitting to government requests, acknowledging and questioning fabrication in their films, and buying into such fabrication and supporting such claims themselves.

Constructing Togetherness: Race in Film

Creating the image of cross-racial unity was a central focus of Hollywood productions during the war years, largely between different racial groups in the United States, but also between Allied nations of different ethnic identities.⁶⁸ One response to Nazism was a rejection of the long-standing class, ethnic, religious, and race divisions that plagued American society. For the sake of buttressing national unity and the appearance of solidarity, the official position of the government in the negotiation of race relations became “Americans All.”⁶⁹ America’s “strength-in-heterogeneity” was credited as the ideal opposition to Hitler’s master race eugenics.⁷⁰ In American film, strategic casting involved the relative expansion of ethnic representation to incorporate groups that were traditionally absent from the big screen in an attempt to bridge the gaps between various identity factions. Despite the tangible tension on the ground between different

⁶⁵ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 34.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 139.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

identity groups, unity across difference became essential in rallying support for the war, building a united front, and asserting unrelenting moral righteousness.

One tremendously successful blockbuster that centered around the theme of the melting pot was *Sahara*, released in the fall of 1943.⁷¹ Set in the deserts of Libya after the 1942 fall of Tobruk, the film follows the retreat of a handful of straggling Allies as they pick up a motley crew of survivors and travel onward in the restored American tank, Lulubelle.



Sergeant Gunn, played by Humphrey Bogart, addresses his comrades in the Libyan desert. "Sahara," 1943, directed by Zoltan Korda, IMDb, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0036323/mediaviewer/rm3726728704>.

⁷¹ *Sahara*, directed by Zoltan Korda, 1943.

Their central concerns are advancing German units and securing water in the parched landscape. Within the band, a handful of Brits, Americans, a Frenchman—all of whom are white—and a Sudanese represent the Allied cause; Axis presence is signified by a German and an Italian POW. Despite the odds of their situation and the differences between their national and racial identities, a majority of the Allied soldiers are able to stay alive and even outwit and kill large numbers of advancing Germans. The character of the Sudanese man, Tambul, who is black and fighting on behalf of colonial British presence in Africa, is especially important. His presence is a nod of support to Britain's colonial armies and also the physical embodiment of a bridge across the white and black races that the war had brought.



Tambul, played by Rex Ingram, sits atop the Allied tank Lulabelle alongside Sergeant Gunn. "Sahara," 1943, directed by Zoltan Korda, Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/626422629397478116>.

One crucial scene furthering the idea of racial unity in the film is the defense Gunn takes on behalf of Tambul. When the German POW expresses his contempt at being searched by Tambul, whom he sees as an inferior race (his words are translated by a German-speaking Allied man in the group), Gunn impatiently rejects the notion as banal, saying "...[his blackness] won't come off on his pretty uniform," before commanding the search to happen. Later, Tambul is collecting water from an unearthed well when he shares a conversation with an American soldier. The American remarks to Tambul on him being a black African, "You fellas feel differently about marriage... you'll have as many as three hundred wives." Tambul responds cordially and calmly, not denying the statement, but rather saying his one wife would not like it if he had more. This interaction is a show of similarity between the men despite the American's projection of the African tradition of polygamy, an idea most Westerners find bizarre. Through his response, Tambul is seen as the ideal black man, a level-headed colonial servant who respects the white rule he is under and even identifies with the Westernism that has seeped into his life.

An Office of War Information script review of *Sahara* while it was under wraps reveals the careful construction of Tambul's character. A suggestion made to Columbia Pictures in the review is as follows: "There is great opportunity in the character of Tambul to show the heroic role of dark-skinned soldiers in the war, and the comradeship of all our fighting forces, both with the Native African soldier, and by implication, the American Negro."⁷² The critique continues, calling for a reshaping of Tambul's presentation: "He is made unnecessarily heroic, and a little simple, thus failing to fully convince us."⁷³ The reviewer was clearly calculating in judging Tambul's character and sought to create the most positive representation of him while balancing what she thought of as realistic for an audience. Other themes in the review are expressed support (but detectable superiority to) Britain's fighting forces by Americans, and

⁷² Script analysis, OWI Bureau of Motion Pictures, 2 February 1943, Record Group 208, Entry 567, Box 3524, NARA.

⁷³ Ibid.

the sense of brotherhood and sharing among Allied men. From the script review, one can glean hints of ideology made to be emblematic of the nation. The joining of an ethnically diverse group of men invoked common goals and similar identities. This sparked an imagination in American audiences that they themselves were the ones fighting as brave and free citizens of a great nation for democracy and freedom through their daily actions, taking on the importance and bravado of war from the comfort of the theatre.⁷⁴

Also at play in *Sahara* is the characterization of the enemy. Producers and writers played on ethnic stereotypes and genuine perspectives held by the US military to create a hierarchy of evilness that American morality stood up against. The industry developed a protocol through which it handled the (European) Axis powers in film, centered around representation of Italians as “warm-blooded” and “redeemable” and Germans as “cold-blooded degenerates.”⁷⁵ Giuseppe, the Italian POW captured by the Allied Sudanese soldier Tambul, is cast in a non-intimidating light: he desperately begs Gunn to take him along in Lulubelle, renouncing his duties as an Axis soldier in what could be seen as an effeminate way, he appears visibly shorter and perhaps slightly older than the other men traveling in the tank, he sings joyfully, and he openly emotes, crying for his wife and daughter. He even admits to Sergeant Gunn that he does not view Mussolini as any kind of god, despite his service in the Italian army, and pledges his servitude to the Allied cause under Gunn. His impassioned rejection of Mussolini and Italian fascism demonstrates his conversion to the “good side,” showing to American audiences not only that there are “good” Italians living in Mussolini’s Italy that reject his ideology, but also that they seek the change and the democracy America eventually “installs” through occupation.

On the contrary, the unnamed German POW taken by the squad, whom they call “Fritsy,” is young, arrogant, and conniving. His smug

⁷⁴ McLaughlin and Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies*, 138.

⁷⁵ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 132.

posture is evident even after his plane is shot down, and he hides his ability to speak English from everyone on the Allied side. In the latter half of the film, the German tries to recruit Giuseppe to stage an offensive on the Allies holding them prisoner at the abandoned desert stronghold. In one of the most telling scenes of the film, Giuseppe rejects the German and states that he has no hate for the Allied men. This again showcases Italians as inherently less angry, violent enemies and paving the way for American occupation in Italy that was underway during the film's release. When Giuseppe lambasts the Fuehrer, the German ruthlessly stabs him, essentially martyring him in the eyes of audiences. Importantly, Hollywood whitewashed the war in Europe; focusing almost exclusively on Germany as an enemy and Italy as a non-belligerent nation; events in Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, and Romania received little attention. This sort of technique represents a basic tenet of propaganda production; emphasizing simplicity and avoiding complex issues enabled quick comprehension by audiences.⁷⁶ Undoubtedly, *Sahara* succeeded at disseminating this information. Racking in \$2.3 million in just months after its release, it was the most lucrative film Columbia released in 1943 and one of the top-grossing films of the season.⁷⁷ Such incredible profits point to the vast audiences that sat before it on the big screen, passively and happily swallowing the myth of cross-racial unity in the film as Humphrey Bogart heroically triumphed over the Axis powers in the deserts of North Africa.

Negotiating Race in Hollywood

Despite the projection of racial unity, public perception—especially by people of color—of race relations was certainly a concern of Hollywood's during World War II. While racial unity and blindness about difference remained the central position taken, it is evident that underneath the glowing picture Hollywood created, deep tensions and anxieties in

⁷⁶ Ibid., 101.

⁷⁷ "'Sahara' Torrid \$34,000, Top Entry in Philly; 'Pursuit' Fancy \$25,500," *Variety*, December 1, 1943, 1; "Top Grossers of the Season," *Variety*, January 4, 1944.

Tinseltown existed across racial lines. Hollywood was particularly concerned with African American audiences because of the national ideological need for multiracial support for the war and the profit potential held by possible black moviegoers. Increased income into black communities due to wartime economic growth enabled many black families to attend the movies for the first time; this new market caught Hollywood's attention and in 1943 a focus was channeled specifically on black audiences through budgets allocated to predominantly black productions.⁷⁸ Furthermore, domestic pressure on national government to cater to black communities was amplified by the international situation: "The knowledge that moviegoers overseas might be offended by Jim Crow America was an Allied impetus to reform—as was the squirming discomfort many white Americans felt when viewing stateside Sambo caricatures from foreign soil."⁷⁹

In most films up until the war, people of color were simply left off the big screen, even when a given film sought to address race. This intentional act of erasure crafted the American experience through film without prominent acknowledgement of entire racial groups.⁸⁰ Historic black representation that *did* exist in film was largely problematic. Of the limited number of black roles that did exist, most were based on a small cadre of stereotypes (such as an Uncle Tom or Aunt Jemima type), if not outright racist or negative.⁸¹ This informed many Americans' understanding of the place of the black actor or actress in film, as well as the broader place of African Americans in society. Iconic to race relations in film is the 1915 hit *Birth of a Nation*, in which a white woman is depicted as preferring to commit suicide than interact with the black man (played by a black-faced white man), who is allegedly coming to sexually assault her.

Obviously, despite fabricated claims to unity within difference, racism was not dismantled during the war. However, there was increased

⁷⁸ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 208.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 207.

⁸¹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 207.

anxiety surrounding its overt nature by certain Hollywood and government sectors. Anxieties culminated in some tangible action at different points in the war. Seemingly committed to the issue of racism throughout the course of the war, the Writers' War Board launched the most comprehensive survey to date aimed at exposing "racial stereotypes" in its tolerance campaign because of "the need to break down home-front intolerance and prejudices in order to speed the victory, [with the awareness] that such writers-editors...are helping to foster such prejudice."⁸² A meeting of the Entertainment Industry Emergency Committee led contributors to call for "treating the Negro problem in full truth with full seriousness" and greater support for work that addressed African American issues.⁸³ Events such as the "Inter-Racial Amity Pageant" were spearheaded to "break down the economic and social discrimination and barriers from which stemmed [recent] race riots."⁸⁴

The Office of Censorship lent compulsive force to change by setting prohibitions on poor or derogatory representations of nationals in the United Nations, which worked to benefit the representation of American blacks, much to the chagrin of certain filmmakers who were deeply comfortable with comical and stereotypical (albeit racist) roles given to blacks in film.⁸⁵ All-black musicals, such as *Stormy Weather* (20th Century Fox) and *Cabin in the Sky* (MGM) were financed and performed to create more positive black representations.⁸⁶ Triumphs of black characters, such as in *Sahara* when Tambul (an Allied Sudanese soldier) personally chases down and kills an openly racist German POW in the deserts of Libya, were well received by black audiences. Roy Wilkins, on behalf of the NAACP, publicly commented in *Hollywood Reporter* that *Sahara* was an "outstanding contribution" in recognizing African-

⁸² "Gear Show Biz vs. Race Bias," *Variety*, January 10, 1945, 1, 18.

⁸³ "Show Biz Endorses Negro 'Principles'," *Variety*, May 24, 1944, 1, 32.

⁸⁴ "Marian Anderson, Lawrence Tibbett May Head Inter-Racial Amity Pageant," *Variety*, August 11, 1943, 1.

⁸⁵ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 208.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 209-10.

American efforts in the war.⁸⁷ Ironically, though Tambul's racial identity is employed in part as a representation of the black race, he is not African-American. Tambul's role does not actually represent contributions of African-American soldiers. Clearly, support for African Americans had its limit. More ironic still, black-centric productions were performed for either all-white or all-black audiences; segregated America could not yet handle the actual integration of black and white in casting *or* in the viewing experience.⁸⁸

Much like the historic lack of black representation in film, African-American combat contributions were not a focus of mainstream reporting on the war's happenings. The Writers' War Board calculated only three newsreel clips of African American troops in service in 1943 and only eighteen in 1944.⁸⁹ The Writers' War Board also issued a statement in the spring of 1944 publicly complaining that sacrifices of African Americans in the war effort were "getting the Hollywood brushoff."⁹⁰ In 1942, the NAACP secretary and chief executive office held a convention in LA to lobby the film industry to include black characters, citing the deep harm done to the black community by the inaccurate portrayal of black experience in wartime film.⁹¹ That being said, the film *The Negro Soldier* was a huge feat in the eyes of both the government and African-American audiences.⁹² Released on April 10, 1944, the War Department-produced short was distributed to commercial theaters through the War Activities Committee.⁹³ *The Negro Soldier* was meant to bolster African-American support and ease criticism about the lack of representations of black contributions to the war through the glorified imagery showcasing black servicemen and-women's roles.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 211.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 209-10.

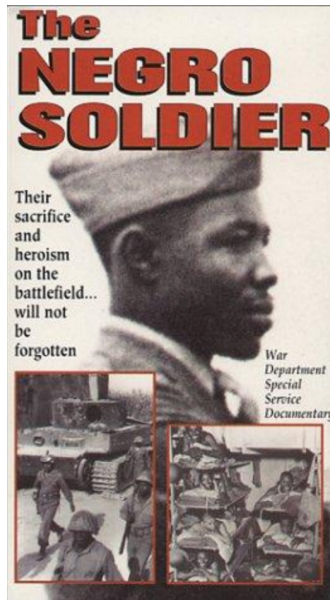
⁸⁹ Ibid., 220-221.

⁹⁰ "Negroes' War Efforts Get H'Wood Brushoff; Writers Complaining," *Variety*, March 15, 1944, 1, 32.

⁹¹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 208.

⁹² *The Negro Soldier*, directed by Stuart Heisler, 1944.

⁹³ "'Negro Soldier' Short Going Out April 10," *Variety*, April 5, 1944, 6.



A advertising poster for the 1944 release.

"The Negro Soldier," 1944, directed by Stuart Heisler, IMDb,
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0139491/mediaviewer/rm795384832>.

The film is nothing short of bizarre in its grandiose character. The setting is within a church, featuring a male preacher addressing an exclusively black congregation about the contemporary state of war. He begins his lecture stating that war is a fight between “nation and nation... to determine which way of life shall survive, their way or our way” and then goes on to say “...the stakes this time are the greatest men have ever fought for...the liberty of this whole earth depends on the outcome of this contest.” He reads from *Mein Kampf* and emphasizes the lengths to which the Nazis will go in order to exterminate “threats,” indirectly nodding at the race war playing out in Europe and the presumed value of the lives of non-whites in the eyes of the Nazi Party.

The Preacher rolls through monumental moments of American history (including the battles of the Revolutionary War and the Spanish-American War, industrialization, and expansion of global knowledge in the arts and sciences), attesting to the roles named African Americans played in such events. Meanwhile, the polished congregation listens contentedly. Notably, the preacher does not talk at all about the institution of slavery and only scantily references the Civil War, before imagery on the screen passes to a cheerful young black couple from the 1860's—apparently liberated—driving a wagon. That American slavery is invisible is entirely unsurprising, considering the film was so clearly aimed at shoring up black communities' national identity with the country in which they lived. The preacher refers to the much-hailed American ideal of freedom: "The tree of liberty has born these fruits. It's a mighty tree, with roots deep in the ground of America... men of every faith, color, and talent have helped to nourish it... all men stand in Admiration of it, except for the Nazis, the Fascists, and the Japanese militarists." When the preacher comments, "[t]here are those that argued Japan is the savior of the colored nations," which is followed up by a shot of Japanese aerial bombing campaigns, the anxiety of the filmmakers of blacks potentially identifying with a non-white race—and their attempt to dismantle this potential—is made apparent. The film also features a significant monologue of a middle-aged black woman, proudly reading a letter from her son in service. The letter details the military in an overwhelmingly positive light and discusses a whole range of topics, from paternal military leaders, to Sunday services, to character building in training, to mingling with coeds of the Women's Army Corps.

The film was essentially a militarized history of African-American identity. Drawing on themes of justice, faith and community, and triumph and glory, it portrays a noble history of African-American military service. The reality of Jim Crow laws in the south and widespread segregation and inequality is simply untouched in the film. GI films such as *The Negro Soldier* reminded Americans about the wholesomeness of U.S. Army life,

often obstructing the reality of Army life dramatically.⁹⁴ The main barrier to equal treatment of blacks in combat films was their unequal treatment in military service. *The Negro Soldier* skirts over this, showing fabricated interracial mingling of young servicemen and amicable, mutually respectful relationships between black GIs and their all-white officers.⁹⁵ Yet it is known that the Armed Forces upheld unique variations on racist exclusion despite official War Department policy being “segregation without discrimination.”⁹⁶ The Navy relegated all blacks enlisted to the Stewards Branch, the Marine Corps refused to commission a single black officer, and the Air Force denied black membership in bomber crews.⁹⁷ Despite these truths, the War Department cracked into the film industry to produce an artful piece of propaganda. Egalitarian impulses from Hollywood and the government, whatever their goals may have been, came up against sharp resistance from Jim Crow supporters, often leading to selective editing for southern audiences.⁹⁸ While black audiences may have been appreciative of the rightful nod to their contributions—an expression of gratitude that rarely came from upper echelons of government—this did not change the reality of racist practice on the ground.

Race as a Tool to Reinforce Moral Superiority

Another way in which constructions of race were strategically manipulated to serve national goals was through the projection of morality as it correlated with racial identity. This is particularly true regarding the way in which the government and Hollywood managed projections of the Japanese enemy in relation to the American hero. For the film industry, the attack on Pearl Harbor meant “a shift in emphasis from a European enemy to an Oriental foe, a belligerent that, because of the size, pigmentation, and

⁹⁴ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 150, 158.

⁹⁵ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 211.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 221-2.

facial differences, lent itself to caricature” in accordance with racist tropes.⁹⁹ The Japanese were easy to identify as an “other” for a whole range of reasons: the notable differences in their appearance compared to that of the white American (especially notable when thinking of European-American similarities in appearance in relation to the European enemy), pre-existing prejudices against them, and the distance from which Americans experienced Japan.¹⁰⁰ Japanese characters became a scapegoat of sorts. While portraits of Nazis interwove a certain respect with a sense of ultimate triumph over them, Japanese portrayals were not awarded such an honor and revolved around racism and xenophobia.¹⁰¹ Hollywood churned out dozens of films characterizing the Japanese foe as a senseless, two-dimensional “other” incapable of feelings or thoughts. Propaganda was not only outwardly racist, but denied the humanity and capacity for empathy in the Japanese.¹⁰² As enemies in war, Japanese characters were the antithesis of the white American hero: spineless, morally-absent, small, and deviant.

The film *Blood on the Sun* (1945) is an iconic portrayal of two-dimensional Japanese characters that were created from racialized tropes and juxtaposed with white American morality.¹⁰³ The film follows the dashing, quick-witted, yank Nick Condon (James Cagney) in 1930’s Tokyo, where he writes for the American publication *The Tokyo Chronicle*. Consistently one step ahead of both his enemies and friends, Condon controversially (albeit vaguely) reveals the extent of Japanese imperial action and violence in China. His article makes him an enemy of the Japanese state. Nick spends final weeks in Tokyo (the U.S. Embassy decides it is no longer safe for him to be in Japan) trying to get his hands on key military documents that outline what is implied to be the imperial nexus Japan eventually strikes from in the war with China and in the Pacific

⁹⁹ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 31.

¹⁰⁰ McLaughlin and Parry, *We’ll Always Have the Movies*, 123.

¹⁰¹ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 133.

¹⁰² Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 69-71.

¹⁰³ *Blood On the Sun*, directed by Frank Llyod, 1945.

War. Throughout the film, Japanese military and government officials are portrayed within the tropes of “inscrutable orientals, sinister warlords, or two-faced servants.”¹⁰⁴ Turning to secrecy, bribery, threats, and shameless killing, the film’s Japanese characters are devoid of morality and appear to operate without the slightest empathetic concern. On the contrary, Nick chooses continually to risk his life to learn more about the government’s imperial plans; committed to the dangerous but critical cause, Nick reinforces American independence and selfless bravery in the face of challenge. Furthermore, a huge motivation for Nick in unearthing imperial plans is to save China. Thus, China is seen in a sympathetic light, while also rendered a noble cause at the mercy of America in order to be saved.



The distressed Iris Hilliard is reprimanded by a sinister Japanese enemy. "Robert Sidney Photos Stock & Des Images," "Blood On the Sun," 1945, directed by Frank Lloyd, Alamy, <https://www.alamyimages.fr/photos-images/robert-sidney.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 133-4.

The character of Iris Hilliard (portrayed by Sylvia Sidney) further shows the way in which ethnicity was used strategically to suggest morality. Hollywood was extremely wary of keeping “yellow perils” distinct; Chinese and Chinese Americans were sharply distinguished from the Japanese enemy.¹⁰⁵ Iris, though dangerously entangled with Japanese imperialists, is herself half Chinese, half European, and white presenting. As her and Nick’s romantic relationship develops throughout the film, her racial identity is something she believes to be an issue. Yet when she brings it up amidst their declaration of feelings for each other (“But... I’m Half-Chinese...”) Nick cites his own heritage as half Irish and half Norwegian. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, though the film is set in Japan, the “Asian” love interest is supposedly a woman of partial Chinese heritage. *Never* would Hollywood have made Iris Japanese, and more importantly, the Allied connection is stressed through their love connection. Second, Iris is not *too* Asian. She has just enough European blood in her to make her relatable and likable to audiences (of course, Sidney herself is not an Asian actress). Third, Iris’ eventual realignment to the “good side” with Nick displays her morality and her difference from the Japanese with who she had coercively collaborated with, pragmatically representing cultural differences between the Chinese and the Japanese. Finally, Nick’s statement about his exclusively European heritage, when brought up in his and Iris’ conversation about their ethnic difference, is a reminder to American audiences that perhaps perceived differences of the Chinese (compared to Americans) really are not significant in the environment of war. As in *Sahara* and *The Negro Soldier*, race and ethnicity were strategically presented to strengthen Allied morale across racial differences and to define morality within the broad global conflict.

¹⁰⁵ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 141.

Recognizing the Erasure of Experience, Critically Engaging with Good War Mythology

World War II stands as one of the most well-documented events in human history. Through war films, Hollywood shaped the motion picture record and understandings of conflict during the war years.¹⁰⁶ As has been shown, the way in which film was strategically produced was in direct response to anxieties surrounding race relations apparent in Hollywood, as well as the rest of the country. Furthermore, portrayals of race relations pushed specific agendas creating the image of unity, conflating moral superiority with certain skin tones, bolstering popular support for the Allies, and garnering patronage for the war effort from target communities. Though the establishment of Hollywood's role in the development of these discourses caused critical concern by industry heads wary of propaganda, the negotiations of federal influence in film production leaned generally in favor of national government and its prerogatives, especially as the war's end drew nearer.

In contrast to the idyllic picture that was constructed, race relations, and the reality of being a person of color in America, was often an experience defined by limitation and social prejudice. That being said, the projection of American morality as unflawed and racially blind is deeply problematic. Moreover, accepting American morality within the guise of the "good war" fails to recognize critically the ways in which the justification for the war (both then and now) was essentially contradicted within US borders. When thinking of the myth of "the Good War," the following statement by Ted Grimsrud is particularly relevant: "Part of the effectiveness of this myth... stems from its invisibility as a myth... we are not self-aware about the faith-dimension of our violence... We don't realize that, instead, we operate in the realm of belief, of mythology, of religion, in relation to the acceptance of violence."¹⁰⁷ What he calls "violence" can be understood as the experience of racism. His words speak to the pervasive

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁷ Grimsrud, *The Good War That Wasn't*, 13.

nature of accepting ideas that cater to a specific, and often privileged, entity. Central to the myth of “the Good War” was the perpetuation of widespread equality, unrelenting justice, and universal self-determination for all Americans; ideals that would be disseminated from the great arms of the US to Axis and occupied peoples. Accepting this myth contributes to the ongoing erasure of the experiences of people of color in America, and the politics of racialization that definitively shape black and brown peoples’ lives much more than the pillar of freedom does. For Americans in the immediate postwar years, “...the visions of the present and expectations for the future would be filtered through the wartime motion picture record.”¹⁰⁸ The filtering done onto American racial experience thus demands examination by anyone abiding by “the Good War” narrative. Though this narrative accurately speaks to prolific national accomplishments in the face of astounding challenge, its mythological components align with the broad historic vein of America’s hypocritical racism, and within that vein it must be considered.

¹⁰⁸ Doherty, *Projections of War*, 5.

The Eroticism of Humanated Christ: Sexuality of the Body and Female Christian Mysticism in Medieval Europe

Courtney Smith

“She told me, brother scribe, that on that same day, while in ecstasy, she was in the tomb with Christ. She said that first she kissed Christ’s chest, and saw that He lay there with His eyes closed, as He did in death; she next kissed His mouth from which she received a wonderful and indescribably delightful odor breathing forth from His mouth... Next she placed her cheek on Christ’s and He placed His hand on her other cheek and held her tightly; then Christ’s faithful one heard these words: ‘Before I lay in this tomb, I held you this tightly.’”

--Angela of Foligno’s *Memorial*¹

Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a movement of religious fervor and Christian mysticism flourished across Europe. Profoundly experiential and affective, this medieval Christian mysticism was characterized by a heightened awareness of the presence of God and spiritual union with the divine. In the High Middle Ages, this emerging type of religious expression became especially popular among women and provided new opportunities of spirituality and quasi-religious lifestyles for female mystics.² In fact, according to preeminent historian Caroline

¹ Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, ed. Cristina Mazzoni, trans. John Cirignano, Library of Medieval Women (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 59-60.

² For an investigation of this proliferation of mysticism in the High Middle Ages, see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links Between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women’s Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, vol. 3, *The*

Walker Bynum, “for the first time in Christian history, we can identify a women’s movement (the beguines) and speak of specifically female influences on the development of piety.”³ Inspired by the same ideals of apostolic poverty as the Franciscans and Dominicans, female mystics adopted the lifestyles of either beguines or tertiaries. While beguines lived in communal houses—sustaining their communities through menial work—and practiced the devotional doctrines of chastity, obedience, and poverty without belonging to any particular monastic order, the tertiaries were affiliated with one of the mendicant orders but continued to reside in their own homes, sometimes even as married women.⁴ Both beguines and tertiaries remained uncloistered and occupied the secular world, often referring to themselves as “brides of Christ” (*sponsae Christi*).⁵ These women’s religious expression included intense physicality and somatic qualities that were unique to female mysticism, such as deep trances, intense visions, uncontrollable weeping, extreme fasting, reception of the stigmata, and fixation on the humanation and eroticism of Christ. This paper aims to suggest that the eroticism of Christ in medieval female Christian mysticism constituted a form of sexual expression which these women experienced physically, although this sexuality transcended biological gender.

Other scholars have only treated this eroticism as being representative of something else—sublimated heterosexual or homosexual desire, “lesbian-like” behavior, or a metaphor for maternal instinct and nourishment—and have not explored it as genuine physical and sexual experience in and of itself. Yet the sexual ecstasy described by female

Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350) (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998).

³ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 14.

⁴ Frank Tobin, introduction to *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* by Mechthild of Magdeburg (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 1-2; Cristina Mazzoni, introduction to *Memorial* by Angela of Foligno (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 6-7.

⁵ The history of the broader trend of bridal mysticism is explored in detail in Dyan Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

mystics, when treated as a corporeal phenomenon, is characteristic of a broader trend of physicality within medieval female mysticism. Female mystics generally integrated the bodily senses—vision, hearing, touch, and even taste and smell—into spiritual experiences, and the spirit was believed to occupy a physical place within the body, controlling somatic functions such as breathing. Therefore, religious devotion was often manifested as physical sensations, and eroticized union with Christ could generate genuine physical pleasure.

Furthering this physicality of devotion, medieval mystical texts frequently utilized themes of love as bodily injury and suffering. In their religious writings, women fixated on Christ's humanity and corporeal flesh, and described their own painful, burning passion for the divine that consumed their whole bodies. Female mystics thus experienced Christ both in body and in spirit, culminating in sexual ecstasy and enlightenment. By fixating on Christ's wounds and his mortality, these women were humanating and then eroticizing and sexually experiencing Christ. This eroticism of Christ then constituted an identification with and celebration of Christ's human nature. Additionally, certain thinkers such as Mechthild of Magdeburg held that women—who were traditionally associated with the human and the material world (while men belonged to the spiritual)—*were* the flesh of Christ. According to this ideology, Christ's corporeal body represented womanhood, and the eroticism of humanated Christ, by extension, could have also been an appreciation of the female sex and the woman's own body. Ultimately, this paper endeavors to suggest that this eroticism of Christ allowed religious women to express themselves sexually while experiencing both an intensified intimacy with the divine and heightened awareness of their own corporeality.

Historiographical Discussion

Despite the explicit language found in the writings of these female mystics, historians have frequently interpreted this eroticism of Christ only as representative of alternative desire. For instance, in "Mystical Acts, Queer

Tendencies,” Karma Lochrie argues that this eroticism represented same-sex affection. Lochrie cites images of Christ’s side wound (such as the ones featured below) that were prevalent in medieval religious culture and appear to resemble female genitalia, proposing that eroticism of Christ and fixation on his wounds in female devotional literature indicates a sublimated same-sex desire.⁶ According to Lochrie: “Religious instruction and devotional texts for women explicitly invite them to touch, kiss, suck, and enter the wound of Christ,” thereby creating a cultural framework by which the wound of Christ could be identified with the female vulva or vagina and was then venerated as such.⁷ Yet it is more likely that the veneration of Christ’s wound was just that—an appreciation of Christ’s human capacity for injury and suffering. Specifically, female mystics were eroticizing Christ’s human form.



Man of Sorrows and Wound (ca. 1375). The Piermont Morgan Library, New York, M. 90, fol. 130. Cited in Lochrie, “Mystical Acts,” 191.

Wound of Christ, Psalter and Prayer book of Bonne Luxembourg (1345), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Cloisters Collection, 69.86, fol. 331r.

⁶ Karma Lochrie, “Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies,” in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 180-200.

⁷ Lochrie, “Mystical Acts,” 190.

In contrast, in “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianism,” Judith M. Bennett proposes a new framework by which these women might be considered “lesbian-like”—as opposed to simply lesbian—because medieval society did not possess the same conceptions of lesbianism as are understood in modern culture. According to Bennett, many medieval female mystics were “lesbian-like,” meaning that they rejected heterosexual norms and opted instead to foster relationships with other women, allowing themselves additional opportunities for same-sex love.⁸ Therefore, Bennett is cautious to apply the label of lesbian to these religious women, but nonetheless interprets their sexual experiences as relating to something other than what they themselves expressed it as—that is, an erotic and ecstatic intimacy with the divine and a fixation on Christ’s human nature.

Caroline Walker Bynum, on the other hand, dismisses the notion that these texts were the products of female mystics’ sublimated sexual desire.⁹ Instead, Bynum argues that the erotic language in these texts represented maternal metaphor rather than sexual experience. For instance, where Lochrie sees vaginal imagery in Christ’s side wound, Bynum argues in *Fragmentation and Redemption* that medieval theologians viewed this wound as a breast and its bleeding as lactation which nurtured Christ’s faithful. In this way, Bynum interprets female mystics’ fixation on Christ’s fleshly body as an expression of the idea that Christ symbolically nourished and fed humanity by dying for its sins, and that Christ thus fulfilled a motherly role. However, the religious women whose texts are considered here explicitly rejected the idea that Christ should be a mother, preferring instead to cast him as their lover; for instance, in her theological treatise *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, when considering that Christ may nourish her maternally, Mechthild of Magdeburg exclaimed, “That is

⁸ Judith M. Bennett, “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianisms,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 1-2 (January/April 2000): 9-10.

⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 133-134.

child's love, that one suckle and rock a baby. I am a full-grown bride. I want to go to my Lover."¹⁰

This paper aims to treat this eroticism of Christ as sexual experience in and of itself—as the female writers themselves depicted it—and not as representative of something else. While these women's depictions of Christ's body exhibited some female characteristics, particularly in the representation of his wounds that depicts him as open to penetration, these traits served more to humanate him and allow the women to identify with him rather than to sexualize him as female. The women gendered themselves distinctly as female, and this gendering impacted their own experiences of Christ's body, but in terms of their eroticism of Christ, this sexual attraction was neither same-sex nor opposite-sex, and in fact was a sexuality that transcended the gender of its focus.

Classification of Sources and Methodological Discussion

Medieval religious texts regarding female mystics are typically classified according to three categories of authorship: those written by the women themselves, those dictated by the women and transcribed by men (typically male confessors), and sources such as *vitae* or hagiographies written about the women by male authors. The male-authored texts within this third category are most abundant, but modern scholars such as Bynum and Catherine M. Mooney have effectively demonstrated that male biographers and autobiographical female authors differed in their perceptions of female spirituality and, fundamentally, in their ideas about women themselves; this means that much of the available source material is potentially less representative of religious women's lived experiences. For instance, in their own writings religious men utilized images of liminality—an inversion or reversal of the ordinary—to depict themselves as inferior and weak, or in other words, to depict themselves as what they conceived women to be. Because men considered women liminal, they saw women

¹⁰ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 61.

as separate from ordinary society and highlighted withdrawal from the world as an aspect of female spirituality. As a result, these male-authored texts tend to emphasize religious women's detachment from their corporeal bodies, whereas in their own writings female mystics relied on images of women's regular experiences and used their physical bodies to express themselves spiritually.¹¹

This paper will therefore utilize texts either authored or dictated by women themselves in an effort to preserve these women's lived experiences, and will focus specifically on three well-known sources, noted for their use of erotic language. The first of these is *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* by Mechthild of Magdeburg, a thirteenth-century German beguine. Mechthild authored her *Flowing Light* herself in the Middle Low German vernacular. The second source is a collection of poems, visions, and letters by Hadewijch of Brabant, a thirteenth-century Flemish beguine. Like Mechthild, Hadewijch also composed her own writings, predominantly in Middle Dutch. Finally, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), an Italian Franciscan tertiary, dictated her *Memorial* to her male confessor, "Brother A," who transcribed the work in Latin and included a statement claiming to have preserved Angela's own words to the best of his ability.

Mechthild of Magdeburg

Mechthild of Magdeburg (c. 1208-1282 or 1294) is especially well known for her use of erotic imagery and courtly love language in her writings recounting her religious experiences and union with Christ. Mechthild joined a beguine community in Magdeburg in approximately 1230, by which time the beguine movement had spread into Germany from the urban centers of the Low Countries.¹² There she composed the first five books of *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, and she continued her work after

¹¹ Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 32-37; Catherine M. Mooney, "Voice, Gender, and the Portrayal of Sanctity," in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine M. Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 3-11.

¹² Tobin, introduction to *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 1-2.

retiring to a community, Helfta, where she wrote the sixth and seventh books. The original Middle Low German version of the text is no longer extant, but scholars have been able to rely on a Middle High German translation created not long after Mechthild's death.¹³

Mechthild expresses her eroticism of the divine through prose, verse, and dialogue. For example, in a dialogue between her soul and God, God bid the soul to "Take off your clothes," and when the soul replied "Lord, what will happen to me then?" God told her "Lady Soul, you are so utterly formed to my nature // That not a slightest thing can be between you and me."¹⁴ God promised to fulfill the soul's "boundless desire" and the soul addressed God, "Lord, now I am a naked soul // And you in yourself are a well-adorned God," then "He surrenders himself to her // And she surrenders herself to him."¹⁵ Later, God's intimate relationship with the soul moved beyond dialogue when "He kisses her passionately with his divine mouth." Then "He caresses her, as well as he can, on the bed of love. Then she rises to the heights of bliss and to the most exquisite pain when she becomes truly intimate with him."¹⁶ In its essence, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* is a story of Mechthild's quest for intimacy and eroticized union with the divine.

But this intimacy is not expressed exclusively in spiritual terms, as Mechthild also describes a physical eroticism between Christ and her own body. Although Mechthild initially struggled with the role of her body in her religious expression—even referring to the body as the bride of Christ's "beast of burden" that "is bridled with worthlessness"—she ultimately embraced her physicality as a means for experiencing intimacy with the divine.¹⁷ It was through her physical body that Mechthild was able to praise Christ, and when in Book VI she began to reflect on her own death, she worried that without her body she could not experience or serve

¹³ Ibid., 4-8.

¹⁴ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 62.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 88-89.

¹⁷ Ibid., 64.

him: “When I consider that my body shall so fade away at death that I shall no longer suffer or praise my beloved Jesus, then I feel such pain that I desire, if that were possible, to live till the last day.”¹⁸ Mechthild’s concern about her capacity for divine union without a corporeal body suggests that she envisioned this union as involving her own flesh and blood and ultimately came to appreciate her human body’s ability to become close to Christ.

This intimacy with Christ had physical effects. For example, Mechthild thanked Christ “for your visible favor with which you constantly touch me, which cuts through all my bones, all my veins, and all my flesh...when you touch me with your most sublime sweetness that permeates my body and my soul utterly.”¹⁹ She describes her love for Christ as a “burning sensation in soul and body,” revealing that her body and soul were intrinsically linked and that the eroticism expressed in the dialogues represented a sexuality that Mechthild also experienced in her corporeal body.²⁰ Furthermore, Mechthild reflected not just on her own humanity, but also emphasized the humanity of Christ. For example, she claimed to have seen “with the eyes of my soul in heavenly bliss the beautiful humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.”²¹ In fixating on this humanity, she also saw that Christ’s “pure humanity united itself to me.”²² Through her own physical body, Mechthild was able to fully experience and unite with the humanity of Christ, a union that was similarly expressed by other female mystics, such as Hadewijch.

Hadewijch of Brabant

Hadewijch of Brabant was a thirteenth-century Flemish beguine whose writings consist of a collection of prose letters, poems composed in both stanzas and couplets, and accounts of her visions. Very little is known

¹⁸ Ibid., 241.

¹⁹ Ibid., 320.

²⁰ Ibid., 158.

²¹ Ibid., 140.

²² Ibid., 122.

about Hadewijch's life except that she was the leader of a beguine community in the Low Countries.²³ Hadewijch wrote mostly in Middle Dutch, frequently quoting the Vulgate as well as other Latin texts by notable figures such as Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux. Her letters serve to instruct young beguines on good works and love for God, while her poems use more secular and allegorical language to speak of Love, and Hadewijch's visions offer an account of her revelations most explicitly addressing her union with Christ. While these works were known in the century after Hadewijch lived, by the sixteenth century they had fallen out of circulation and were not rediscovered until the nineteenth century, when a collection of fourteenth-century manuscripts copied in Middle Dutch were found in Brussels.²⁴

For Hadewijch, Christ "is Love itself," and she explains that she was ten years old when she was first "so overwhelmed by intense love that I should have died."²⁵ Through this love, Hadewijch experienced union with Christ, and they "penetrate each other in such a way that neither of the two distinguishes himself from the other...[and] they abide in one another in fruition, mouth in mouth, heart in heart, body in body, and soul in soul."²⁶ Hadewijch often describes this eroticized union in terms of tasting and eating; for example, Hadewijch wrote that "in the intimate exchange between him and me...what is most experienced is the close feeling of one another, when they relish, devour, drink, and swallow up each other."²⁷ Thus, by tasting and eating Christ—for instance, through the Eucharist—Hadewijch was able to most intimately receive Christ into herself. But Hadewijch herself was also consumed, resulting in mutual reception of the

²³ Mother Columba Hart, introduction to *Hadewijch: The Complete Works* by Hadewijch (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 1-4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ Hadewijch, "Poem in Couplet 16: Love's Seven Names," in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 353; eadem, "Letter 11: Incidentally about Hadewijch," in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 69.

²⁶ Hadewijch, "Letter 9: He in Me and I in Him," in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 66.

²⁷ Hadewijch, "Letter 11: Incidentally about Hadewijch," 69.

human lover and divine Beloved: “I saw myself swallowed up. Then I received the certainty of being received, in this form, in my Beloved, and my Beloved also in me.”²⁸ Christ thereby surrendered himself to her, promising to ““give myself to you secretly, dearest beloved, when you desire to possess me... Thus you shall have fruition of me.””²⁹ But Hadewijch could never be entirely satiated, and describes a simultaneous hungering for love and a fullness of it, representing her unending physical yearning for Christ.³⁰

Hadewijch related this yearning both to her own physical humanity and to Christ’s, describing how she “desired that his Humanity should to the fullest extent be one in fruition with my humanity” through “sweet love, embraces, and kisses.”³¹ Furthermore, when Hadewijch finally received this union with Christ through reception of the Eucharist, the satisfying intimacy she experienced was not only spiritual, but also physical, as she explains in her seventh vision that Christ “came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt his in full felicity, in accordance with the desire of my heart and my humanity... Then it was to me as if we were one without difference.”³² As Hadewijch’s spiritual union with the divine culminated in an intimacy between Christ’s humanity and her own—permeating each limb of her corporeal body—she describes a physical, potentially sexual experience. The physical nature of divine love such as this is expressed even more explicitly in Angela of Foligno’s *Memorial*.

²⁸ Hadewijch, “Vision 12: The Perfect Bride,” in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 296.

²⁹ Hadewijch, “Vision 1: The Garden of Perfect Virtues,” in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 270.

³⁰ Hadewijch, “Poem in Stanza 33: Hunger for Love,” *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 221-223.

³¹ Hadewijch, “Vision 7: Oneness in the Eucharist,” in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 280-281.

³² *Ibid.*, 281.

Angela of Foligno

Angela of Foligno was an Italian Franciscan tertiary who lived from 1248 to 1309. She began her spiritual journey around 1285, at the age of thirty-six, and became a tertiary as a married woman, although her husband died soon after. Angela continued to live at home with a female companion, rather than join a convent as was more customary for religious women. As was expected of a tertiary, she attended Mass regularly and had a male confessor—a Franciscan friar named Arnolfo, who is also believed to have been her uncle and the “Brother A.” who transcribed her *Memorial*. The composition of Angela’s *Memorial* was begun in the early 1290s and Cardinal Giacomo Colonna ecclesiastically approved the text in 1296 or 1297. This process began, as Angela says, when “the fire became so great that if I heard any talk of God, I would start screeching;” Brother A., witnessing this screeching in the Church of Saint Francis, was at first ashamed of her behavior but later decided to inquire about the reason for her screeching.³³ Angela then “began to reveal her divine secrets” to Brother A., who wrote the words down in Latin.³⁴

The *Memorial* transitions between the authorial voices of Brother A. and Angela herself. Identifying himself as “an unworthy scribe,” Brother A. expressed his concerns about accurately capturing Angela’s words but was determined to try his best to capture her experiences exactly as she recounted them; he explains that he “tried to use her own words... so that I would not use even one word which she had not really spoken. That is why I always reread to her what I had written, repeating it many times, so that I would use only her very own words.”³⁵ In her introduction to the English translation of Angela’s *Memorial*, Cristina Mazzoni also argues that the syntax of the Latin transcription discernibly reflects the spoken word.³⁶ Therefore, given the scribe’s dedicated effort to writing only what Angela said, and the fact that the written words reflect unembellished verbal

³³ Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, 32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁶ Mazzoni, introduction to *Memorial*, 10-11.

speech, it seems likely that at least some of the *Memorial* accurately conveys Angela's "divine secrets."

Angela's *Memorial* recounts her progress toward divine union through thirty steps. The first seven steps were characterized by pain and bitterness, but at the eighth step, Angela "was given such a fire that, as I was standing near the cross, I stripped myself of all my clothes, and offered myself completely to Him."³⁷ This particular episode encapsulates not only Angela's passion, but also the physicality of her religious experience; for Angela, her physical body was the primary means by which she could experience the divine, and thus it was important to her whether or not that body was clothed. Shortly after this experience, Angela began to have visions of Christ in which he revealed his wounds to her. This fixation on Christ's wounds culminated in the fourteenth step, when "He summoned me and told me to place my mouth at the wound in His side; and it seemed to me that I was seeing and drinking His blood as it was freshly flowing from His side... And here I began to have great joy."³⁸ Here Angela vividly experienced Christ's humanity by witnessing—and consuming—his mortality, and her relationship with this humanated Christ became more intimate. For example, Christ referred to her as "my sweet bride," and told her repeatedly that "I love you more than any woman in the valley of Spoleto."³⁹ Christ thus explicitly singled Angela out as the object of his passion, demonstrating that his love for her was personalized, focused on her specifically. In this way, Christ related his love to a specific geographic region and directed his affection toward the real Angela who occupied actual, physical space; Angela's experiences of Christ's love were therefore uniquely intimate and based in the material world.

Angela achieved this intimacy through a perceived physical closeness to Christ. For instance, Christ told her in a vision, "I will hold you this closely, even closer than the eyes of the body can see."⁴⁰ This

³⁷ Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 41, 56.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

closeness culminated in spiritual penetration, and Angela describes the sweetness she experienced when she was penetrated by the Godhead. The pleasure Angela received from this penetration permeated her physical body, as she claims that “suddenly a voice entered my soul saying, ‘You are filled with God.’ And right then I truly felt every part of my body filled with delight in God.”⁴¹ Angela’s intimate relationship with the divine thus clearly transcended the divide between the spiritual and the physical, resulting in her own bodily pleasure and suggesting a sexual manifestation of this mystical union.

Interestingly, Angela even assumed the penetrative role herself, as she describes entering Christ’s body: “At times it seems that my soul joyfully and delightedly enters into Christ’s side...[as] I lay there speechless, and without the use of my limbs. It was then that my soul seemed to enter Christ’s side—and...my joy was so great that it can’t be described.”⁴² Here the focus on Christ’s side wound—representing, of course, his mortality—again served to humanate him. Furthermore, Angela’s pleasurable penetration of Christ and the subsequent reversal of male and female sexual roles indicate that this eroticism was not confined to heteronormativity. Thus, Angela’s sexual expression was not necessarily heterosexual, and in fact transcended biologically gendered boundaries altogether. According to Angela, this was God’s will, as he told her “‘Now that I have settled and come to rest in you, just settle yourself in me and be at peace in me.’”⁴³ Through this mutual penetration Angela became totally united with Christ in love, and this union had explicitly sexual effects. For example, Angela explained that—among other physical effects—she experienced “such a fire in the three shameful parts that I used to apply a hot flame to them, in order to extinguish that other fire.”⁴⁴ Although Angela’s exact meaning here is somewhat ambiguous with reference to the “three shameful parts,” it is nonetheless overtly clear that she has

⁴¹ Ibid., 47-48.

⁴² Ibid., 57-58.

⁴³ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 66.

experienced distinctly sexual arousal as a result of her eroticized union with Christ.

Physicality of Medieval Female Mysticism

This sexual experience might be regarded as physically manifested and therefore as an aspect of sexuality, especially when broader bodily trends of medieval female mysticism are taken into account. In the Middle Ages, female Christian mysticism was uniquely characterized by intense physicality and somatic qualities. For instance, in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, Bynum demonstrates the unique primacy of Eucharistic devotion in medieval women's religious expression. By fixating on the Eucharist—and also by practicing extreme fasting—religious women were inherently preoccupied with the body and blood of Christ and were manifesting their spirituality physically through regulation of food. Food, either by its consumption or absence, informed women's religiosity; for example, Angela “experienced such delight in prayer that I forgot about eating. And I wanted not to need to eat, so I could remain in prayer.”⁴⁵ Themes of eating and tasting also functioned more broadly, as Angela vividly recounts drinking water that she had used to wash lepers' hands and feet, swallowing a scab which became lodged in her throat, and tasting “intense sweetness...just as if I had received Holy Communion.”⁴⁶ Angela's religiosity thus manifested in the bodily functions of ingestion. Hadewijch's descriptions of hunger and satiety have been demonstrated, and according to Mechthild, “Nothing tastes good to me but God alone,” referring to an incorporation of the divine into her physical sense of taste.⁴⁷ Angela even incorporated her sense of smell in her experience of Christ, as she comments on the “wonderful and indescribably delightful odor breathing forth from His mouth.”⁴⁸ Thus, combined with the proliferation

⁴⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁷ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 153.

⁴⁸ Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, 60.

of ecstatic visions and auditions of divine voices, female mystics utilized their senses of sight, hearing, taste, and smell, and so when they describe phenomena relating to their sense of touch, it seems plausible that these too were experienced with the same genuine physicality.

Female mystics totally incorporated religious devotion into their human existence, and spiritual experiences became physical sensations. For example, Angela explains that when Christ embraced her “with the burning fire and pleasure of love...all the parts of my body feel the greatest delight, and I wish I could always be in that state. And my body parts make a noise when they are disjointed...[and] my hands are disjointed and opened.”⁴⁹ In addition to this noisy dislocation of Angela’s joints which clearly indicates a very physical manifestation of her spirituality, when God told Angela that he was “placing the cross and the love of God within you as a sign that will remain with you forever,” she claimed that she “felt that cross and love within my soul; consequently, I could feel that cross within my body.”⁵⁰ Therefore, Angela perceived a direct correlation between spiritual and bodily experience. Indeed, the Latin word used for spirit, *spiritus*, also connotes somatic functions such as breathing, breath, and life, and as Nancy Caciola points out in her *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, medieval thinkers believed that the spirit occupied a material space in the corporeal body.⁵¹ As Bynum argues in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, the spirit was viewed as a physical component of the corporeal self and its existence rather than an entirely separate entity from the body.⁵² Thus, spiritual experience was treated as physical sensation, and union with the divine was able to create genuine physical pleasure, such as Mechthild, Hadewijch, and Angela describe in their own accounts of their experiences.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 43-44.

⁵¹ Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 176-222.

⁵² Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 239-298.

Anatomization and Humanization of Christ

When describing these physical effects of their erotic relationship with Christ, Mechthild, Hadewijch, and Angela demonstrated that they were referring to their specific, corporeal bodies—rather than abstract linguistic devices—by anatomizing each individual body part. For instance, Hadewijch explains that upon receiving the Eucharist, “My heart and my veins and all my limbs trembled and quivered with eager desire” and the longing plagued her “so fearfully and so painfully [with] desirous love that all my separate limbs threatened to break and all my separate veins were in travail.”⁵³ These references to separate limbs and individual veins emphasize the intensity with which Hadewijch experienced this passion within her physical body. Similarly, having been driven by burning passion to strip herself of all her clothes and offer herself to Christ, Angela swore “not to offend Him with any part of my body. I also accused every part of my body, one at a time, before Him,” once again anatomizing the individual body parts affected by ardor for the divine.⁵⁴ Angela also anatomized Christ in her *Memorial*, as he appeared to her in visions and told her “that I should look at His wounds. And...[He showed] all His wounds from His feet to His head. He even showed me the hairs of His beard, eyebrows, and head, which had been plucked out; and He counted every blow of the whip, pointing to each one.”⁵⁵ This anatomization of Christ’s wounds—individualizing each physical aspect of his body—not only highlights his human nature and capacity for suffering, but also demonstrates that the subject of Angela’s erotic relationship was specifically this humanated Christ, whose separate body parts each fulfilled a particular function in loving her.

The prevalent themes of suffering—both the suffering of the female mystics and the emphasis on the suffering of Christ—was characteristic of a distinctly “Ovidian” expression of love and passion. In

⁵³ Hadewijch, “Vision 7: Oneness in the Eucharist,” 280-281.

⁵⁴ Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, 26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

her book, *God and the Goddesses*, Barbara Newman distinguishes between “Ovidian” and “Augustinian” love within accounts of Christian love and religious passion. While Augustinian love was allegorical and emphasized love through charity and good works, Ovidian love was used more frequently by female mystics, was inherently erotic, emphasized physical suffering caused by love, and personified love as a violent hunter and conqueror. Such Ovidian themes are echoed, for example, in this passage from Mechthild’s *Flowing Light*, in which Lady Love spoke to her:

[Love:] That I hunted you was my fancy.
That I captured you was my desire.
That I bound you made me happy.
When I wounded you, you were joined to me.
When I cudgel you, I take you into my power.
...How do you, vile worm, expect to survive
before me? ⁵⁶

Although clearly metaphorical, these allusions to physical violence suggest that Mechthild characterized love by pain and suffering.

Hadewijch’s works offer perhaps an even more striking resemblance to Ovid’s love poetry, including the woe and burning of a lover, the torment of love in the night, and the willingness to vigorously pursue love. In his own love poetry, Ovid himself lamented that “thin arrows stick in the heart // And savage Love stirs the occupied heart.”⁵⁷ Hadewijch’s poems include similar imagery: “As Love’s arrows strike [the soul] // It shudders that it lives. // At all time when the arrow strikes // It increases the wound and brings torment.”⁵⁸ And while according to Hadewijch, “Love is truly a chain, because she binds // And grasps everything in her power... Her chains encircle me within so tightly // That

⁵⁶ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 42.

⁵⁷ Ovid, *Amores* 1.2, from The Latin Library, [my translation].

⁵⁸ Hadewijch, “Poem in Stanza 14: School of Love,” in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, 162.

I think I shall die of pain,” Ovid exclaimed that “I myself, the fresh plunder, will have the recently made wound // And I will bear the new chains with a conquered mind.”⁵⁹ Hadewijch’s personification also wielded arrows, striking, wounding, and tormenting, and injured with fire, just like Ovid’s depiction of love. Thus, as all three women describe their love for Christ in similar terms of both emotional and physical suffering and bodily injury, their eroticism of the divine clearly belongs to this Ovidian tradition.

Because this Ovidian love—as it has been adopted by these women—is characterized as injury, images that emerged at the same time as the height of Christian mysticism, such as the one featured below, may be interpreted according to this model of love. This image features a flock of women, each ascribed with a particular virtue, surrounding Christ on the crucifix, and a woman labelled “sponsa”—likely referring to a *sponsa Christi* or “bride of Christ”—is shown physically stabbing Christ as he hangs on the cross. Thus, Christ’s ability to be penetrated and injured by his bride, as depicted in this image, perhaps is meant to represent Christ’s reciprocated love for the female mystic.



Christ crucified by the Virtues,
Lectionary, Convent of the Holy
Cross, Regensburg. Oxford, Keble
College Library, ms 49, f 7r. Cited
in Newman, 162.

⁵⁹ Hadewijch, “Poem in Couplet 16: Love’s Seven Names,” 352-354; Ovid, *Amores* 1.2.

Images like this one also serve to further demonstrate Christ's humanity. Humanation plays a significant role in the eroticism of Christ. In particular, Christ is humanated through contemplation of his wounds, flesh, and mortality, as Mechthild describes: "On the right hand of our Lord stands Jesus, our Redeemer, with his open wounds bloody and unbandaged."⁶⁰ Despite such gory detail, the humanization of Christ is also beautiful, as Mechthild "saw with the eyes of my soul in heavenly bliss the beautiful humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶¹ She rejoices further: "When I reflect that divine nature now includes bone and flesh, body and soul, then I become elated in great joy."⁶² Angela similarly praises Christ's humanity: "I am in this God-Man [humanated Christ, *Deum humanatum*] almost continually... From that time on there has not been a single day or night when I have not continually experienced the joy of Christ's humanity."⁶³ And when Hadewijch describes her union with the humanated Christ, she emphasizes his appearance and human form: "With that he came in the form and clothing of a Man, as he was on the day when he gave us his Body for the first time; looking like a Human Being and a Man, wonderful, as beautiful, and with glorious face, he came to me as humbly as anyone who wholly belongs to another."⁶⁴ The focus of these women's sexual expression, then, is not an abstract divinity, but a distinctly humanated Christ, the sexual appeal of whom is grounded in neither male nor female gender, but in the fact of his humanity.

Sexuality of the Medieval Female Body

Ultimately, by humanating and then sexually experiencing Christ, Mechthild, Hadewijch, and Angela were identifying with and celebrating Christ's human form. In doing so, these women were also formulating their sexual expression within the cultural context of the prevailing medieval

⁶⁰ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 71-72.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 157.

⁶³ Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, 70.

⁶⁴ Hadewijch, "Vision 7: Oneness in the Eucharist," 281.

notion that while men embodied the intellectual and the spiritual aspects of the world, women were associated with the physical and the flesh. This tradition traces back to Aristotelian physiological theory, whereby the mother created the human matter of a child, while the father contributed the child's mind and soul. Medieval thinkers held this to be especially true of Christ's flesh, because Christ did not have a human father, and therefore the entirety of his human form had necessarily been derived from the body of his mother Mary.⁶⁵ Thus, when Mechthild emphasized Mary as Christ's "glorious vessel," she was highlighting the link between Christ's flesh and the female body.

Furthermore, ancient biologists held that the mother's blood was the primary substance of an infant's nourishment, both when the infant was still within the mother's womb and after its birth, when the mother's blood was transformed into breast milk. Therefore, the woman's physical body, characterized by its blood, literally fed and sustained human life. According to Bynum, this function of the female body was often compared to Christ's bleeding on the cross and his capacity for nourishing human souls.⁶⁶ This imagery of Christ's body and blood feeding humanity was especially realized through Eucharistic devotion, and such a parallel between the nourishing qualities of humanated Christ and women's bodies was obvious to female mystics, as Hadewijch claims that Christ showed her:

That love's most intimate union
Is through eating, tasting, and seeing interiorly.
He eats us; we think we eat him,
And we do eat him, of this we can be certain.⁶⁷

In fact, it is through this mutual consumption that Hadewijch achieved ecstatic union with Christ; Hadewijch was celebrating a sameness with

⁶⁵ Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 98-101.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶⁷ Hadewijch, "Poem in Couplet 16: Love's Seven Names," 353.

Christ, brought about by the sharing of qualities traditionally associated with the female body.

Consequently, some female thinkers drew connections between their own female bodies and Christ's flesh. For example, Mechthild remarked, "Lord Jesus Christ, you are my body."⁶⁸ According to Mechthild then, the humanated Christ is an embodiment of womanhood. This is not to say that these women sexualized Christ as female, and that their sexual experience was therefore a sort of lesbianism, but rather that by eroticizing and sexually celebrating the humanated Christ, these women were, by extension, intimately experiencing their own bodies and appreciating the female sex. The eroticism of and sexual attraction to Christ may have also represented a sexuality of the medieval female body.

Conclusion

Thirteenth and fourteenth-century women like Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Brabant, and Angela of Foligno who wrote or dictated their own religious experiences offer readers vivid descriptions of erotic encounters with Christ that affected them both spiritually and physically. Given the general bodily trends and intense physicality of medieval female Christian mysticism, and medieval ideas regarding the somatic functions and corporeal nature of the spirit, it is clear that spiritual experiences were manifested as physical sensations, sometimes in the form of sexual pleasure and ecstasy. Therefore, this eroticism of Christ constituted genuine sexual experience as an aspect of religious women's sexuality. Furthermore, these women were fixated specifically on Christ's human nature, and humanated him in their writings by emphasizing his fleshly wounds and mortality. This eroticism and celebration of Christ's human form, which was typically associated with the female body, was also an appreciation of the female sex and the woman's own body.

⁶⁸ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 186.

***Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards:
Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity***
By Afsaneh Najmabadi
Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005

Reviewed by Sophia Trigg

Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards by Afsaneh Najmabadi is an in-depth exploration of changing sexual and gender norms during the Qajar period in Iran (1785-1925). Through attempting to prove that changes to the concept of gender are a result of the country's transition to modernity, Najmabadi discovers that gender is in fact a product of changing sexual mores. Throughout the book, Najmabadi explores representations of gender and sexuality through visual arts, poetry, national iconography, the use (or not) of women's veils, court grievance records, newspaper articles, marriage contracts and travelogues. She remains impartial and yet imbues each source with a historical dignity and importance not often afforded to records of sexuality and gender. Najmabadi augments her study with adjacent discussions of national pride, homeland symbolism, and education.

The first part of the book explores the gender and sexual norms of the early Qajar period, approximately 1785-1800. Najmabadi begins by explaining the linguistic characteristics of this period. Adjectives describing beauty were equally used for both men and women, and there were more than two categories used to describe a person's gender: men, women, *amrads* (beautiful, beardless young men), and *amradnumas* (adult men who shaved themselves to look like younger men and attract same-sex

desire).¹ Najmabadi also establishes that pre-modern Islamic literature considered gender to be irrelevant to love, but there were still categories used to define types of desire on a short-term basis; they were not life-long orientations. Najmabadi notes that heterosexual intercourse within marriage was largely for procreation and that sex with *amrads* was a perk of social status.² This first section helps prepare the reader for the changes in sexuality and gender roles that occur in the later part of the Qajar period (post 1800).

Changes in the style of visual art resulted in a clearer differentiation of gender; females had more distinct faces and bodily features and gender-ambiguous couples seen in the pre-modern era disappeared. The author explains that beauty underwent feminization concurrently with the increased use of the outward gaze, inviting the male viewer to participate. Najmabadi also makes note of the infiltration of European observations of the Iranian culture. To the European eye, *amrads* appeared to emulate women, and thus were negatively categorized as effeminate and homoerotic. As Europeans demonized “homosexual” practices, *amrads* began to be associated with sin and the degradation of women. The author posits that the repetition with which the Europeans wrote about these supposed sinful acts affected the Iranians and eventually contributed to the heteronormalization of male sexuality in Qajar Iran.³ Najmabadi also uses this chapter to discuss the increased prevalence of women as the object of male desire and the limitation of homosocial relationships: “To desire to be desired by a man, or to desire a man, both became positions that could be occupied exclusively by women. Homoerotic desire became derivative, a substitute for heterosexual desire.”⁴ The author notes that since the *amrads* were relegated to the

¹ Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 15-16.

² *Ibid.*, 20.

³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

outskirts of society, *amradnumas* were left as the only depiction of homosexuality readily acknowledged.

Najmabadi uses a study of the lion-and-sun emblem, adopted by the Iranian state as an official mark in 1836 by Muhammad Shah Qajar, to trace the progressive erasure of the sun as female. According to the author, when the Safavid Empire used the emblem, beauty was genderless; the sun represented royalty while the lion represented God. In the Qajar period, a crown was added to the emblem thereby displacing the sun as the symbol of monarchy. The sun was instead associated with its astrological meaning: desire. This process, says Najmabadi, coincided with the feminization of beauty in the late 18th century and the sun icon, stripped of its monarchical association, gained feminine features that contrasted with the masculine features of the lion and sword.⁵ The subsequent defeminization of the sun symbol occurred because of the growing discomfort of public depictions of male desire and the streamlining that accompanied mass production in the later 20th century.⁶

In chapter four, Najmabadi shifts her focus to the concept of *vatan* (homeland) as “mother” or “female object of desire.” In the increasingly geopoliticized world of the late 19th century, the author posits that viewing *vatan* as a mother-figure helped unite men into a national brotherhood aimed toward defending the mother’s honor and bodily integrity (borders).⁷ The casting of *vatan* as mother also left room for the women of Iran to unite, develop homosocial bonds, and get more involved in politics and patriotism during the end of the Qajar period.⁸ In the early 20th century, Iran’s women worked together to create and maintain schools for young girls. According to Najmabadi, women expanded their sense of “domestic duty” to include service to the nation; creating a stronger, more educated generation.⁹

⁵ Ibid, 83.

⁶ Ibid, 94.

⁷ Ibid, 115.

⁸ Ibid, 124.

⁹ Ibid, 206.

Europeans viewed the woman's veil, says Najmabadi, as a symbol of "backwardness" and a marker of gender separation.¹⁰ In order effectively to modernize Iran, Constructionists believed the veil needed to be removed.¹¹ The author also posits that alongside the veil, homosocial and homoerotic practices were also considered 'backward' both by the Europeans and increasingly, the Iranians. The hetero-normalization of gender-relations was also considered an important step toward "achieving modernity."¹² In chapter six, Najmabadi explores romantic marriage, its links to modernization and the problems it caused within marriage contracts. According to the author, once love (and a supposedly equal partnership) was introduced into marriage, women's independence and social bonds were restricted. New social norms were pressuring females to place all their "affective eggs in one man's basket" while a man retained the right to leave his wife at will.¹³

The book also goes on to discuss women's education and its value to society. Najmabadi uses primary source works from Muslim philosophers to illuminate how education for women emerged from a belief that education of children began in the womb and that if a woman was educated and had good morals, so too would her child.¹⁴ Educated children were attractive to a nation striving to recreate European modernization. Najmabadi connects the transformation of the womb into a school with the transformation of women from "of the house" to "manager of the house."¹⁵ This change also affected female homosocial bonds because mothers were no longer encouraged to befriend their household staff and create a community within their own domain. Najmabadi posits that this is yet another method of disconnecting women from other women.¹⁶

¹⁰ Ibid, 150.

¹¹ Ibid, 133.

¹² Ibid, 146-47.

¹³ Ibid, 174.

¹⁴ Ibid, 184.

¹⁵ Ibid, 194.

¹⁶ Ibid, 195.

In the final chapter, Najmabadi wrestles with the paradoxes that emerge between the two definitions of women as full participants of society and as a class that must be protected by the men of the nation. This, the author proposes, is evidenced by the fact that women, under the legal guardianship of their husbands/fathers, were not eligible to vote, yet were expected to educate and raise the children of the nation.¹⁷ In her estimation, although willing to air grievances and use their collective voices in the spheres of education and charity, most Iranian women did not want to heterosocialize fully for fear of losing their traditional homosocial bonds.

One of the few shortcomings of this work is the lack of source material on women's homosocial and sexual relationships. Najmabadi mentions that there is little evidence about women-only gatherings.¹⁸ This silence may exist because of the low number of literate Qajar-period women and the reluctance to share the intimate details of female homosociality with men. In social spheres divided by biological sex, males could neither witness nor record female homosocial gatherings. The lack of discussion on the effects of class on gender behaviors during the Qajar period is another shortcoming. Did poorer Iranians behave differently in homosocial and homoerotic relationships than their wealthier counterparts? Were there women who had to leave the home for work? What happened to a woman and her children if a man divorced her during the early Qajar period? The late Qajar period? These questions, if addressed, would add depth to the discussion of modernization and its effect on women and *amrads*.

In the epilogue, Najmabadi effectively brings back her original goal of distinguishing changes in gender in the Qajar period within overarching changes in sexuality. She makes this observation about the early Qajar period: "The nineteenth-century distinction of woman, *amrad*, *amradnuma*, and man meant that gender differences were not read through the template of sexuality, and that sexuality was not read through the

¹⁷ Ibid, 211.

¹⁸ Ibid, 1; Ibid, 6.

template of gender.”¹⁹ Najmabadi ends the book on a surprising note of nostalgia for the pre-modern Iranian concepts of gender and sexuality. In an effort to include authenticity to her argument, she attempts to relate her discussion to today’s concerns.²⁰

Overall, this book is a great accomplishment for the author and for the field of gender and sexuality history. Not only does it bring to light the historical nuances of a culture that Western media often depicts as homophobic and anti-feminist, it also effectively highlights the speed with which societies can change under outside pressure. The expectation of modernization caused Iran to use a new European lens to view gender and sexuality in their own society. By documenting the subsequent shifts in social structure and policy, Najmabadi adds to the discourse of Iranian gender and sexuality history in a way that is accessible and recognizable to a wider audience.

¹⁹ Ibid, 237.

²⁰ Ibid, 244.

***Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination
in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco***

By Clare Sears

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015

Reviewed by Michael Diambri

Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco dissects the history of cross-dressing laws in nineteenth-century San Francisco. Contextualized within the longer history of gender and sexuality nonconformity in San Francisco—including the legacy of the Gold Rush and the city’s unstable early government—Sears illuminates a law, passed in 1863 mandating adherence to sex-specific clothing in public. Sears places San Francisco’s anti-cross-dressing law within the context of over forty US cities passing similar laws from the 1850s until WWI. These laws exemplified both the local and federal government’s increasing concern with what Sears describes as ‘problem bodies,’ or the various corporeal forms the United States was perceiving as problematic. During the nineteenth century, these problem bodies, including those bodies that were gender nonconforming, non-white, and disabled, became increasingly targeted for intervention.¹ By establishing this, *Arresting Dress* suggests that San Francisco’s cross-dressing laws aimed beyond proscribing and policing certain gender presentations but also represented a distinctive government strategy to exclude specific groups of people from public life.²

Arresting Dress traces the legacy of cross-dressing law in San Francisco alongside the bodies of individuals and groups the law identified as aberrant. The book’s first two chapters explore the emergence of San

¹ Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 10.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

Francisco's 1863 cross-dressing law. Chapter one explores the meanings and contexts of cross-dressing in Northern California while chapter two places the emergence of these laws in relation to historic anti-prostitution and indecency laws. These chapters give readers necessary background about the queer history of San Francisco by, for example, considering the gender and sexual legacies of the Gold Rush as well as the themes of 'vice,' the West, governance, and economics. This effectively sets up chapters three and four, in which Sears focuses on the effects the 1863 law had on cross-dressing representations and practices. These chapters establish the law as both enabling and debilitating both urban and national belonging. Likewise, Sears uses these chapters to showcase the increasing concerns about the prevalence of non-white populations and gender non-normative individuals in San Francisco's public sphere. Following this, the fifth chapter analyzes connections that existed between cross-dressing and entertainment. The sixth chapter then examines converging sites between cross-dressing laws and the federal immigration control that were developing during the turn of the twentieth century. Sears concludes *Arresting Dress* by revisiting her main arguments and considering how certain individuals effectively resisted cross-dressing laws. Here, Sears asserts that the long-tradition of United States cultural investments in creating normative gender among its citizens is bound to the discriminating legacies of race and ability. Powerfully, *Arresting Dress* ends with the note that "San Francisco's cross-dressing law put in motion new presumptions of cross-gender criminality and a gender-normative public that continue to haunt us today."³

The most successful historiographical contribution of this book is its examination and conceptualization of the history of cross-dressing laws, figures, and practices. Little historical attention has been paid to the fact that most US cross-dressing laws enforced during the twentieth century originated in the nineteenth-century. In this vein, Sears posits that *Arresting Dress* is the first in-depth study focusing on one US city's cross-dressing

³ Ibid., 147.

laws from the mid-1800s until WWI.⁴ Although focusing on San Francisco, Sears' book elaborates on the idea that the policing and production of gender norms was synergetic with nation-building, changing social spheres, and US imperialism. In viewing the production of gender in San Francisco, Sears posits the importance of studying varying cross-dressing representations spanning from female impersonation to genuine trans-embodiment. The most crucial implication of Sears' work is for future scholars to look at and dissect various queer and trans representation held in relation to the law and to see whether these representations were proscribed, overlooked, policed, or ignored.

Distinguishing *Arresting Dress*' methodology and standpoint are crucial to understanding the book's purpose as a history of cross-dressing in nineteenth-century San Francisco. Methodologically, Sears relies on legal documents such as codebooks, police photographs, arrest records, and court reports alongside cultural texts such as newspapers, publicity documents, and other texts representing cross-dressing outrage and fascination. Sears recognizes the limits of her archival engagement due to various restraints including the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, which destroyed an incredible number of local government documents.⁵ Sears also reflects on the fact that silences exist due to the texts she engaged with being recognized as something someone deemed worthy of preserving and hence often reflect the voices of select, usually elite people.⁶ Regarding its standpoint, *Arresting Dress* takes an approach influenced by queer and transgender studies. In heavy conversation with transgender studies, Sears advances a fresh, theoretical framework for studying cross-dressing history called 'trans-ing analysis'. Sears frames trans-ing analysis as intentionally focusing on "the historical production and subsequent operations of the boundary between normative and nonnormative gender."⁷ Sears believes that utilizing this type of approach allows for a careful

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Ibid., 9.

engagement with both the types of specific practices *and* representations of cross-dressing that are both obvious and ambiguous in meaning. Trans-ing analysis allows for a scholar—who is equipped with a theoretical repertoire—to engage with histories and decipher the queerness, regulation, proliferation, and presence of historical subjects as both ‘representing’ and ‘practicing’ a queer phenomenon.

The strongest chapter of *Arresting Dress* is “Problem Bodies, Nation-State.” This powerful chapter looks at the experiences of immigrant populations and the way cross-dressing laws intersected with federal immigration laws to police national belonging. As Chinese—and other immigrant—authorities already perceived these bodies as problematic, the ability to police variant gender practices abetted the process of preventing the entry of many people into the US and also the subsequent marginalization and abject treatment of San Francisco’s migrant communities. In this chapter, Sears shares several powerful stories including that of Wong Ah Choy who in 1910 “sailed into San Francisco Bay wearing men’s clothes on a body the law deemed female,” and other bodies that immigration authorities found to be problematic due to their gender presentation(s).⁸ Crucially this chapter engages with other writings on the confluence of the history of immigration and gender and sexuality. Sears points out that Margot Canaday in *The Straight State* posits that “the federal response to gender nonconformity was sluggish, as the government lacked a clear framework to conceptualize these bodies,” yet Sears established that when problem bodies became objects of scrutiny for immigration officials these people were frequently expelled from the United States.⁹ Crucially, cross-dressing laws became a tool to establish gender normativity as an integral aspect of national belonging therefore controlling transnational movement across borders onto US soil.

Although it is a very successful text, *Arresting Dress* does have some minor shortcomings. Historiographically, Sears does not clearly

⁸ Ibid., 121-122.

⁹ Ibid., 138.

specify what she believes she is adding to the field of history. This lack of clear presentation of historiographic contribution may be an unfortunate side effect of the book's heavy interdisciplinary emphasis. An additional potential shortcoming that can be attributed to its interdisciplinarity is that, although readers with rich understanding of the connections between gender and national belonging will understand their essential connection, perhaps the average undergraduate student engaging with this book will not be convinced by this initial portrayal. Some of these faults could have been rectified if Sears spent more time engaging with the historiography and describing its trends. Perhaps unaware of queer historiographies intense bias toward urban places like San Francisco, this type of scholarship leaves one wondering about cross-dressing in the *rest* of the West Coast, including in rural areas, where similar laws were developed. Surely, cross-dressing practices and representations were not bound to the city.

These few shortcomings aside, Sears' book should be carefully read by historians and other scholars. It is a powerful inquiry into the 'queerness' of cross-dressing and the ability of historians to analyze and interpret cross-dressing as a phenomenon. *Arresting Dress* accomplishes its goal of sharing the history of cross-dressing in San Francisco and has done so in a way that powerfully recognizes the importance of bodily subjectivity and the various representations of queerness. Moreover, this book reminds readers to look at the various legacies impacting queerness in the spaces in which it emerges—in this case, in context of events like the Gold Rush—while positing that reactions to queerness were used to control the public sphere in US history during the nineteenth century.

Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference

By Dipesh Chakrabarty

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008

Reviewed by Megan N. Gamiz

Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* seeks to educate readers on the complexities surrounding historicism, capitalist transition, political modernity, and European thought and influence over various other non-European areas of the world. Situating himself within the subaltern studies group of historical studies, Chakrabarty challenges modern historicism – which he admittedly defines poorly, if at all – and the notion that historical studies originating within Europe – again, broadly and vaguely defined – need not engage with or consider writings or studies from non-European parts of the world. This “first in Europe, then elsewhere” mindset prevalent among nearly all modern historians must simultaneously be acknowledged and challenged and moved past. This is the only way, Chakrabarty argues, that “Europe” may be provincialized by the historians of today and tomorrow.

Part one, titled “Historicism and the Narration of Modernity,” centers around Marxist thoughts and ideas about the study of history and deals almost exclusively with the strand of thought the author calls “historicism.” The first chapter addresses the approach by *Subaltern Studies* in studying the history of India and the problems associated with native Indians representing themselves in history. Chakrabarty argues that “Europe” remains the sovereign and theoretical subject of all histories, including Indian, and that Indian history itself is merely a subaltern variation of the dominating history of “Europe.”¹ This chapter also explores what Chakrabarty calls the politics of despair and how Europe can

¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton, NJ: Univ. Press, 2008), 27.

never truly be provincialized within the institutional site of the university because the “globality of academia is not independent of the globality that the European modern has created.”² The second chapter is devoted to Marxist historical thought and explores how Marx utilizes the combined abstract human of the Enlightenment and the idea of history in understanding the capitalist mode of production and modern European imperialism.³ Chakrabarty argues that Marxist writings on the topic were of critical importance in the history of anti-imperial thought in India, and he uses the remainder of the chapter to stress the relationship between postcolonial thinking and the intellectual legacies of post-Enlightenment rationalism, humanism, and historicism. Further, this chapter introduces Chakrabarty’s History 1 and History 2, histories posited by capitalism and histories not belonging to capitalist processes, respectively.

The third chapter of *Provincializing Europe* discusses the relationship between traditionally secular histories of South Asia and histories involving divine or superhuman presences. Chakrabarty states that secular histories usually ignore otherworldly topics such as divinity but when discussing labor in the context of India, one must recognize that the act of producing was rarely an exclusively secular event.⁴ Chakrabarty’s conclusions within this chapter center around an analysis of the works of Gyan Prakash and Gyan Pandey, as well as previous research conducted by the author himself, which seek to explain the capitalist transition in India. Finally, the fourth chapter explores the relationship between subaltern studies and minority histories that emerged in the 1960s. He explains that minority histories, or postmodern critiques of grand narratives, have since been used by people to question any single narrative of a given nation. He argues also that historians play a key role in determining which histories are considered minor and that the historian’s capacity to historicize “depends on his or her ability to participate in

² Ibid., 46.

³ Ibid., 47.

⁴ Ibid., 72.

nonmodern relationships to the past that are made subordinate in the moment of historicization.”⁵

Part two, titled “History of Belonging,” is organized around the historical thoughts of Heidegger, presenting certain universal themes in the political modernity of literate upper-caste Hindu Bengalis. Chakrabarty’s choice to focus on the middle-upper class is peculiar considering the previously subaltern approach in earlier chapters, but Chakrabarty defends his choice by stating that he needed to look at a group of people who had been consciously influenced by the universalistic themes of the European Enlightenment in order to provide an adequately detailed historical examination.⁶ The first chapter in this section explores the concept of compassion in Bengali history and problems associated with drawing a line of history to its origins. Chakrabarty identifies two problems associated with the Bengali adoption of a natural theory of compassion: first, by making human sentiments natural and universal, it consumed with reason alone what would later be regarded as the space of human subjectivity; second, it was unclear where answers were to the question of where compassion truly originated in Bengali history. Chakrabarty concludes this chapter by stating that a historical account of the origin of Bengali modernity could not be constructed without reproducing at least some aspects of European narratives on the subject.⁷

The next chapter places a discussion of the words “imagination” and “nationalism” within the framework of a literary debate in Bengal in the early 20th century. He notes that imagination has remained an understudied category in social science writings on nationalism and, through this chapter, seeks to spark further discussion on how intimately the word “imagination” intertwines with modern heterogenous practices of seeing. Finally, this chapter builds upon critiques of the idea of imagination by arguing for a non-totalizing conception of the political.⁸ Next,

⁵ Ibid., 101.

⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁷ Ibid., 148.

⁸ Ibid., 149.

Chakrabarty examines the social practice of *adda* in the city of Calcutta and the struggle to be at home in modernity in his chapter titled “*Adda: A History of Sociality*.” He defines *adda* as “the practice of friends getting together for long, informal, and unrigorous conversation.”⁹ Through this chapter Chakrabarty examines the world and culture of 20th century Bengali literary modernism and how the practice of *adda* may be understood through this medium. Despite the author’s clear nostalgic pull towards times when practices of *adda* were more regular, this chapter may be the strongest and most successful because of its extensive utilization of primary source materials and its approach to combining narrative and analytical discussion. The final chapter in the section explores Bengali modernity in the context of family life, fraternity, and salaried labor (or *chakri*). Chakrabarty engages with differing reasons for why Bengali modernity inherently implied a capitalist order absent of hegemonic bourgeois thought.¹⁰

Chakrabarty concludes his book by discussing how it may be possible to engage with both secularist-historicist and non-secularist and non-historicist takes on the history of the modern world. He argues that historians must acknowledge the “political need to think in totalities while all the time unsettling totalizing thought by putting into play nontotalizing categories.”¹¹ Unfortunately, readers seeking a satisfactory conclusion and synthesis of Chakrabarty’s arguments within the previous 236 pages will be left thoroughly disappointed. It is clear in the epilogue, and throughout the preceding eight chapters, that Chakrabarty believes in what he is arguing, but he ultimately fails in relaying that same sense of assurance to his readers. His prose is dense, circumlocutory, and demeaning to audiences of European origin, as he persists with the belief that non-Indian scholars are incapable of understanding or retelling the history of Indian societies. His attempts at convincing readers that his unique cultural background provides him with a superior lens through which to study this

⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

subject merely come across as condescending. Beyond the criticisms relating to prose, an additional criticism lies in the author's inability to define the terms he uses to construct his arguments. His entire thesis centers around the themes of modernity and historicism, yet he never truly defines these terms, at least not consistently. When he does attempt to define them, albeit briefly, his definitions seldom align with those used by other historians in the field. This inconsistency and failure on his part only serves to confuse readers and distracts from any potential for someone to follow along with his overall arguments in the book. The historical and philosophical discussions in Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* may be valid and worthy of further discussion among scholars, but for those unable to fully digest or comprehend Chakrabarty's arguments and prose, such discussions will be extraordinarily limited for the time being.

2019 Phi Alpha Theta Inductees, UVM Chapter, Alpha Alpha Psi



Louis D. Augeri
Katherine K. Becker
Morgan D. Boes
Thomas Joseph Butcher
Rachel Lauren Byrd
Cameron Douglas Carlin
Emily C. Cashman
Owen R. Churchill
James Robert Dancho

Daniel F. Dedomenico
Charity Ann Dugener
Christopher Joseph
Haines
Elena A. Kirillova
Emma E. LaRose
Jacob N. LeVan
Margaret Ann Mahoney
Peter B. McDonald
Margaux L. Miller

Daniel Amadis Ortiz
Bailey I. Parker
Marie Faith Russ
Evan G. M. Smith
Juls Robert Sundberg
Claire Marie Theoret
Jared P. Trombley
Christian A. Zarkades

Phi Alpha Theta is a professional society, established in 1921, whose mission is to promote the study of history through the encouragement of research, good teaching, publication, and the exchange of learning and ideas among historians. There are 860 chapters nationwide and a membership of 350,000. A national biennial convention and thirty-five annual regional meetings held each spring provide a forum for undergraduate and graduate students to present papers and exchange ideas. In addition, over twenty-five scholarships and prizes are awarded annually to both undergraduate and graduate students. The society publishes *The Historian*, one of the most widely circulated scholarly historical journals published in the United States.

Our chapter at the University of Vermont, Alpha Alpha Psi, was chartered in 1982. Undergraduate students who have completed at least fifteen credit hours in History courses at UVM, with a 3.6 grade point average and an overall GPA of 3.4 are eligible for membership. History master's students are required to maintain a 3.75 GPA in their graduate studies. Induction ceremonies are held annually in April.

History Department Faculty News



History Department Faculty and Staff
November 29, 2017



Senior Lecturer Andrew Buchanan was invited to present a paper entitled “World War, Worldwide Mobilization: How Global History Complicates World War II” to the Second World War Research Group conference in London. The paper was then edited for inclusion in a forthcoming collection provisionally titled *Revisiting the People’s War: The Second World War in Socio-Political Perspective*. Over the summer Buchanan completed editing work on his new book, *World War II in Global Perspective, 1931-1953: A Short History*, which was published by Wiley in April 2019. Buchanan already had a number of opportunities to present papers based the new book, including to a symposium on “World War II in the Mediterranean in Global Context” organized at the University of Naples Federico II, at a guest lecture at the British military’s Joint Services Command and Staff College, and at a seminar jointly sponsored by the History of War program and the Center for Global History at Oxford University. Buchanan just started working on a new book project, (very!) provisionally entitled “American Century: the Wartime Foundations of American Hegemony at Home and Abroad.”



Professor Erik Esselstrom's new book, *That Distant Country Next Door: Popular Japanese Perceptions of Mao's China*, will be published by the University of Hawaii Press in May 2019.



Professor Sean Field had the honor of being named a University Scholar for 2018-2019. In fall 2018 he co-edited a volume (with Professor Michael Bailey, Iowa State) entitled *Late Medieval Heresy: New Perspectives. Studies in Honor of Robert E. Lerner* published by York Medieval Press. In May 2019 his new monograph, *Courting Sanctity: Holy Women and the Capetians*, will come out with Cornell University Press.



Associate Professor Jonathan Huener has spent the academic year completing his book manuscript *The Polish Catholic Church under German Occupation: The Reichsgau Wartheland 1939-1945*, under contract with Indiana University Press. In November 2018 his essay “Polityka Niemiec wobec Kościoła i polskiego Kościoła katolickiego w diecezji Kraju Warty i łódzkiej” appeared in Tomasz Toborek and Michał Trębacz, eds., *Łódź pod okupacją 1939-1945: studia i szkice* (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Komisja ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Łodzi, 2018), pp. 311-339. In June of 2019 he will be participating in a conference in Poland on the theme “Recovering Forgotten History—The Image of East-Central Europe in English-Language Academic and Text Books,” and will begin the editorial work associated with the volume emerging from the Eighth Miller Symposium, “Poland under German Occupation, 1939-1945,” sponsored by the Miller Center for Holocaust Studies in October 2018. Huener has also served as director of the Miller Center during the 2018-2019 academic year.



Professor Felicia Kornbluh published a major co-authored book, with political scientist Gwendolyn Mink, *Ensuring Poverty: Welfare Reform in Feminist Perspective* (University of Pennsylvania Press) in November 2018. Based on her book research, she spoke across the country to the following audiences: the staff of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities think tank, Washington, D.C.; the Economics Department faculty and graduate students (in their political economy series) at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst; the Vermont Senate Committee on Health and Welfare (considering changes to the state Welfare, or “Reach Up,” program); the Institute for Humanities at the University of California-Santa Barbara; a scholarly and popular audience at Roosevelt House in New York City; economists and other policy researchers at the Institute for Women’s Policy Research and American University Economics Department Feminist Policy Research Conference; audiences at the American Society for Legal History and the Organization of American Historians; and soon at the Law and Society Association. Kornbluh also received a nationally competitive fellowship at Princeton University’s Program in Law and Public Affairs for 2019-2020 to pursue research on her new book *How to Fight a War on Women: My Mother, Her Neighbor, and the Fight for Reproductive Rights and Justice in Modern America*.



Professor Dave Massell began researching to prepare a report as an expert witness for the Pessamit Innu Band of Quebec. The band is engaged in a lawsuit against the Province of Quebec and the nation of Canada for damages to their homeland due to hydroelectric dam building in multiple river valleys from the 1950s-1970s.

Associate Professor Nicole Phelps commented on the legacies of World War I at the annual conferences for the Society for Military History and the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, as well as on “The World of the Early Republic” at the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic annual conference. She developed and presented workshops on pedagogy and held one-on-one consultations with faculty members from across the university in her role as faculty fellow for UVM’s Center for Teaching and Learning. She continues to work on a textbook titled *Americans & International Affairs, 1776-1945*, which is scheduled to be published in 2020, and a monograph and digital history project on the US Consular Service in the long nineteenth century.



Professor Susanna Schrafstetter spent the fall 2018 semester in Washington, DC, where she held the Judith B. and Burton P. Resnick Invitational Fellowship for the Study of Anti-Semitism at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. She conducted research in the vast archival collections of the museum and presented her current research project about German Jews who tried to survive the Holocaust in Fascist and German occupied Italy. She also spoke at the 15th biannual *Lessons & Legacies* Conference in St. Louis MO, in November 2018, presenting a paper about Jewish refugees who tried to reach Palestine from Italy. The paper, titled “Stranded in Northern Africa: The Failed Aliyah Bet of the ‘Benghazi Group’ (1939/40),” is now being revised for submission to *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. She published an article titled “Between Skylla and Charybdis: Jews from Munich in Italy, 1933-1945,” in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, and her chapter “The Geographies of Living Underground: Flight Routes and Hiding Spaces of Fugitive German Jews, 1939-1945,” is forthcoming in the volume *Lessons and Legacies 14: The Holocaust in the 21st Century: Relevance and Challenges in the Digital Age* edited by Tim Cole and Simone Gigliotti.



Professor Alan E. Steinweis spent the Fall 2018 semester at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, where he was the Ina Levine Senior Invitational Scholar. At the Museum, he continued work on a general history of Nazi Germany, and initiated work on a project about Georg Elser, a German cabinet maker who attempted to assassinate Hitler in November 1939. In December 2018, Steinweis delivered the Museum’s annual Ina Levine lecture, titled “‘The Idea of Eliminating the Leadership Would Not Let Me Rest’: Georg Elser’s Attempted Assassination of Hitler in November 1939 and Its Aftermath.” Steinweis also gave two invited lectures in Germany in November 2018: “Der Novemberpogrom 1938 in vergleichender Perspektive: Ausgrenzende Gewalt der Zwischenkriegszeit in Deutschland und der USA,“ at the Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin; and “Die NS-Judenforschung im Zuge des Novemberpogroms 1938,“ at the Fritz-Bauer-Institut, Frankfurt.



Professor Amani Whitfield was invited to give several presentations including: the W. Stewart MacNutt Distinguished Lecture, “Slave Lives Matter: Putting Biography at the Center of Atlantic Canadian Slavery Studies” at the University of New Brunswick, the Riley Distinguished Lecturer in Canadian History, “Runaway Slave Advertisements in the Maritimes” and “The Meaning of Slavery in the Loyalist Maritimes” both presented at the University of Winnipeg, “Slave Lives Matter” presented at University of King’s College, and the College of Arts and Sciences Full Professor Lecture, “Do Slave Lives Matter: Short Biographies of American Slaves in the Canadian Maritimes” presented at the University of Vermont. In 2018 his book *Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents* was published with Broadview Press. He also has two forthcoming projects: “Runaway Advertisements and Social Disorder in the Maritimes: A Preliminary Study,” Unrest, Social Violence, and Social Disorder (Forthcoming, University of Toronto Press, 2019) and *Enslaved Blacks in the Maritimes: A Biographical Dictionary of African and African American Slaves in Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island* (Forthcoming, Acadiensis Press, 2020).



Professor Steve Zdatny has had an interesting and productive year. His latest article, “The Old Regime in Hygiene: Life in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside,” appeared this month in the journal *Rural History*, while he continues the process of co-editing a special number of *French Historical Studies* on the history of French Fashion. He also published book reviews in H-France and in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, gave talks at the 2018 and 2019 meetings of the Society for French Historical Studies and in Lille, France, at the Université de Lille-Skema Business School. He has been invited to join the *comité scientifique* of the Association pour l’Histoire du management et des organisations and to participate in the final phase of review for the National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship program. In the Fall 2018 season, his team, the Ice Pack, won the Full Stride League Ice Hockey Championship (D4)—by far and away the year’s most important accomplishment.

Author Biographies

Alexander Ellis is a graduate student completing his accelerated MA in history this coming May. His academic interests range from nineteenth-century American print culture to global historiography and everything in between. Alex plans to pursue a curatorial career at an academic museum in the future and can be found working as a Curatorial Research Fellow at Fort Ticonderoga, NY this summer.

Megan N. Gamiz is a first-year candidate for a Master of Arts in history. Although past research has been diverse – from examining the historiography of the French Wars of Religion to analyzing the legacy of Claude Lanzmann’s 1985 film *Shoah* in postwar France – the areas in which Megan is most passionate are modern French history and the Holocaust. She plans to devote the remainder of her time at UVM to exploring French involvement in the Holocaust and, especially, the memory of the Holocaust in France. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in History from Christopher Newport University in 2015, and working in higher education for three years, Megan is excited to be back in the classroom and working with the faculty here at UVM.

Margaux Miller hails from the northern suburbs of Chicago and has found a home in Burlington during her undergrad at UVM. She graduated this spring with a BA in history, with a concentration in the Americas, and Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. Her academic foci reflect passions that shape her daily life. In her free time, Margaux enjoys spending time outside, cooking and sharing meals, painting, reading, and listening to podcasts. Margaux is extremely grateful to have built relationships with UVM faculty that have both challenged and nurtured her as a learner.

Courtney Smith is an MA candidate in History, specializing in medieval European history. She graduated from Plymouth State University in 2017 with degrees in History and Philosophy and minors in Medieval Studies and Psychology. After completing the M.A. program at UVM, she will be entering the History PhD program at Princeton University, where she intends to focus her studies on religious women in thirteenth and fourteenth-century France.

Sophia Trigg is a graduate student in history originally from Williston, Vermont. She earned her undergraduate degree in secondary education with a concentration in social studies from the College of Education & Social Services at UVM in 2014. Since then, she has worked in local news media, with the Center for Research on Vermont, and with UVM's College of Arts & Sciences creating internship opportunities for undergraduate students. She plans to complete her Master's degree with a focus on British cultural history during the Georgian and Victorian eras.

Editor Biographies

Kiara Day received her BA in history with honors at UVM in May 2018. She continues her studies as an MA candidate, specializing in the Holocaust, modern Germany, and 20th century United States. Her thesis is about American journalist and activist Dorothy Thompson, the first reporter to be ousted from Nazi Germany in 1934 due to her persistent condemnation of Jewish persecution. As someone with interest in integrating women's stories more fully into standard Holocaust narratives, her other current research looks at Jewish women couriers as part of the underground resistance in occupied Poland. This summer, Kiara looks forward to being an Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellow. The graduate fellows will take part in an intensive travel program to explore Holocaust history in the Polish context, including topics such as pre-war Jewish life, Polish-Jewish relations, collective memory, and commemoration.

Samantha Sullivan graduated with her BA in history and political science in May 2019. During her senior year she wrote a thesis under Professor Zdatny's stellar mentorship on the conflicts of personality and interest between Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle from 1940-1941. Samantha is deeply interested in all things French. In the fall she will become an English teaching assistant through the Teaching Assistant Program in France (TAPIF). She looks forward to eating copious amounts of bread and cheese and, in typical French fashion, finding something to protest. In the meantime, she will enjoy her last summer in Burlington, where you might find her soaking up sunshine at North Beach.

Kaleigh Calvao is a junior studying history and political science from Trumbull, Connecticut. Her areas of concentration are European and Middle Eastern history and international relations. While she plans to obtain her Master's in public policy and pursue a career regarding health care reform after her undergraduate education, history has always been a

strong passion and interest. She is excited to be a part of *UVM History Review* Editorial Board, alongside talented students.

Michael Diambri is a first-year graduate student in the history department. Michael's research interests are at the intersections of gender and sexuality and the law in United States history. At UVM Michael works as a research assistant for Dr. Felicia Kornbluh and has also served as a graduate teaching assistant under Dr. Nicole Phelps. Before attending UVM, Michael earned his BA in history at Pacific Lutheran University where he also studied literature and gender studies. In 2018, Michael was awarded the Thomas S. Morgan Scholarship from Phi Alpha Theta and received the History Scholar Award from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

Jason Goldfarb is a junior from San Diego studying history and political science, concentrating on the early republic era and political theory. In addition to serving as an editor for the *Review*, he is a Lead Student Admissions Representative and a co-director of Student Legal Services at UVM. He is currently pursuing research in the history department studying the experiences of African American soldiers in the Continental Army. Next year, he will be writing a thesis on the relationship between social media and American democracy.

Drew Harrington is a second year undergraduate history student currently spending the semester in Leeds, England. In addition to history, he also majors in political science. He comes from Cape Elizabeth, Maine and will return to the University of Vermont in the fall to continue his studies.

Madeline Hunter received her BA in history at New York University. She is a graduate student studying American military and social history. She devotes most of her free time to working on her graduate thesis and learning to cross stitch.

Alice Matthews is an art history major and history minor finishing her last year at the University of Vermont. Her research interests lie in the relationship between class and aesthetic values, the diversity of art making practices in the 20th century, and the methods and theories of art history. Her senior thesis looks at the intersecting trajectories of drug use, pharmaceutical company growth, and postmodern art. She will begin her graduate degree in art history in the fall.