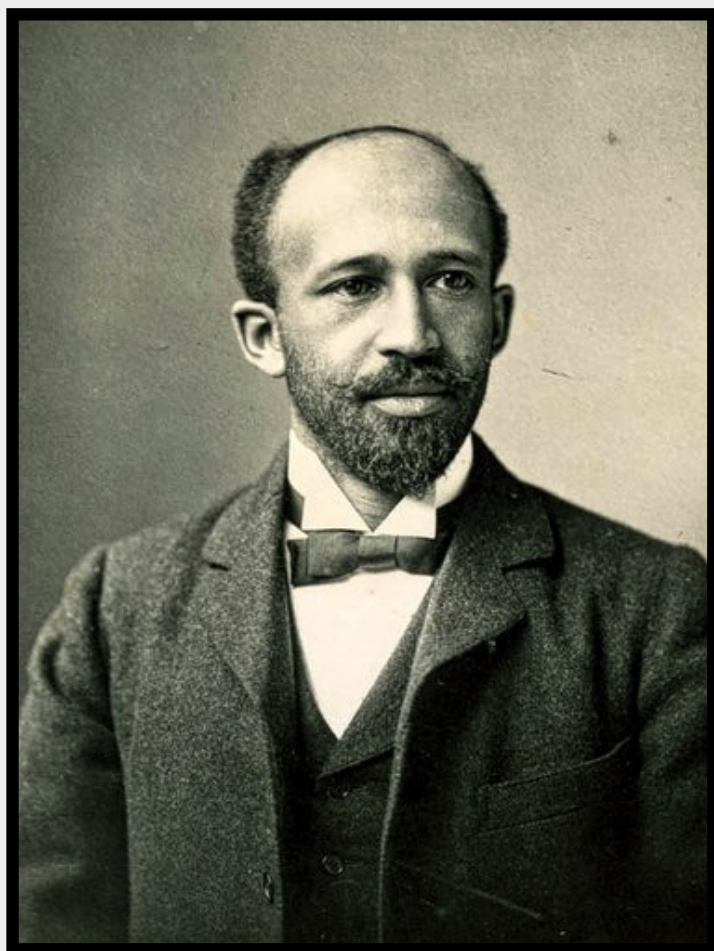# BLACK HISTORIES

OCTOBER IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH...

The history of Blackness and race has been imbued with prejudices regarding racial inferiority, hierarchy, and Eurocentrism. The history of white civilisation from the 'centre' has often been considered mainstream, marginalising the voices of Black intellectuals, women, activists, and slaves in the so-called 'peripheries. Responding to the white supremacist thinking embedded in every aspect of Western society, W.E.B. Du Bois had famously pronounced that 'the problem of the twentieth century will be that of the colour line.'

Since the 1960s, historical academia has seen flourishing literature on the history of racial oppression and, specifically, Black histories. History is no longer an exclusive sport for the privileged, as many non-white academics have delved into the archives in search of their own identities that dismantle white supremacy. In the light of the current whirlpool of racial politics, including the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests of the early 2020s, history students are pressed more than ever to contribute to an ongoing discourse to the motivations, outcomes, and longstanding legacies of racial oppression and resistance.

How can history help us understand racial inequality? Does history have a say in the racial politics of today, such as racial violence, cultural appropriation, or BLM? How might histories of race relations inform other disciplines that study history? If these questions start intriguing you, check out our selection of writings in our October issue, 'Black Histories.'

REMEMBERING BLACK HISTORY MONTH...

A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

DEAR READER,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the second issue of the UCL History Society Journal. This month, in commemoration of 'Black History month' in October, we are celebrating the history of Blackness, racial oppression, and resistance with an exploration of our second theme, 'Black Histories.' The history of Black oppression and resistance has seen a plethora of groundbreaking works in various historical disciplines, including social, cultural, and intellectual history, which undoubtedly has also influenced many of you to study the history of racial minorities and identities at university.

Our headlining article explores cultural appropriation from a historical perspective. It offers a historical insight into the racial politics of today by viewing the role that material culture played in constructing ideas of race in eighteenth-century Iberian America. We also present an admirable critique of Eurocentrism in university pedagogy in 'The Diversity Question' by third-year historian Nishika Pishu Melwani. We then wrap up our first section of 'Black Histories' with a call for historians to communicate to a wider public on cultural and political issues by Yi Jie Teng.

In our second section, we are proud to welcome some new faces to our writer's room who have expanded the variety of articles for this issue. I encourage you all to share in the hard work of our new writers, whose efforts and commitment have once again been astounding. You'll find articles approaching everything from the Russian-Ukrainian war from a historical perspective, a history of chess culture in twentieth-century Britain, and a change-over-time style account of industrialised Europe and North America.

Whether you're the type to enjoy a rigorously academic analysis of Black histories of the past or whether you prefer a keener engagement with present issues through a historical lens, or whether you're just stumbling upon this issue to find what our new first-years have got to say, I'm sure that you'll find something worth your time in this issue of the History Journal.

Anouska Jha & Jonas Lim, Editorial Officers

PART 1 - 'RACE' FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE HISTORY:
WHEN DOES CULTURAL APPROPRIATION MATTER?

Jonas Lim (Thrid Year)

After all, what's the big deal about it all? It's just a piece of clothing or a type of hairstyle right? Surely it can't have more meaning than that, right? Wrong.

The history of things reveals that material objects can acquire different meanings throughout time and space. More importantly, many historians of race since the 1970s have revealed that racism derives not from material and biological realities but from the cultural ideas that we attribute to being ' Black', ' White' or of any other race. Hence, clothing and hairstyles can attain different meanings throughout time, which can invoke certain histories of racial oppression and resistance. Appropriating a certain item from a culture to which you don't belong without understanding this context may be inconsiderate and, in some cases, offensive to the people that have been oppressed for having that same item.
In this piece, I wish to talk about how clothing and fashion can acquire different meanings throughout time (both of oppression and resistance), specifically how clothing gave agency to people of oppressed races in eighteenth-century America.

HOW 'RACE' AND 'CLASS' WERE INTERTWINED IN CLOTHING

'Class' is often associated with racial preconceptions. Particularly in the Americas, being black was often associated with poverty, since racial stereotypes amongst the white colonial population led them to associate traits in black African slaves with ' blackness' itself. In this process, clothing functioned as an identifier of one's economic status that strengthened such associations between race and class. As blacks were often assumed to be of the lower-class simply because of their perceived race, (clothing enforced in sumptuary laws on black people) Documents of court cases describe how black people were automatically accused of theft upon wearing luxurious clothing. In 1755 Lima, Peru, a black slave named Francisco Calvo was accused of theft by his owner and his neighbours for possessing luxurious clothing. Despite the fact that Calvo was a slave living outside of his owner's house and had the economic freedom to spend his salary on anything he wanted, he was subjected to intense scrutiny by the people around him, who automatically suspected that he had stolen the luxurious clothes with which he had outfitted himself and his family.

A good source that tells us of the intertwined history of class and race is ' casta paintings'. Casta paintings (Pintura de Castas, literally meaning paintings of ' caste's) are a series of artworks that aimed to document the inter-ethnic mixing in Ibero-American Colonies occurring among Spaniards, indigenous peoples, and black Africans.

Miguel Cabrera, 6. From Spaniard and Morisca, Albina Girl
(6. De español y morisca, albina), 1763

Having first appeared during the reign of Philip V (1700-1746), casta paintings became increasingly popular throughout the eighteenth century. A typical casta painting depicted a family composed of a male Spaniard, a woman of indigenous or black African descent, and their children.

Moreover, It is important to note that these casta paintings were largely fictional, depicting imagined families by white settler painters for a European audience. The obsession with the idea of ' racial mixing' by portraying a white Spaniard, a woman of indigenous or black descent, and their offspring demonstrates European concerns about preserving racial ' purity' (i.e. European whiteness) and white supremacy. Thus, keep in mind that it would be wrong to assume that casta paintings captured an objective picture of what life in the Iberian Americas looked like, especially for people of non-white backgrounds.

The painting above by Miguel Cabrera is an example of a typical family in a casta painting. Cabrera drew this painting in 1763 Mexico, depicting a white Spaniard, his Morsica wife, and their Albino daughter. The clothing of the family members portrayed in Cabrera's painting manifests the members' social class, their occupations, and the cross-cultural exchanges happening in the Iberian Americas between Indigenous American, European, African, and Asian cultures in the 18th century. The occupation of the Spaniard man is depicted in his clothing: a leather coat with red sleeves, a type of clothing worn by a group of soldiers called Dragones de Cuera. The Dragones de Cuera were charged with the mission of colonising rebellious uprisings among indigenous populations in the Sierra Gorda and the northern frontiers of New Spain. Cross-cultural references can be found in the Tobacco - a staple of the Americas in the Trans-Atlantic trade - that the man is smoking and in the clothing of the morsica woman: an Asian-motif calico skirt and a Mexican rebozo (shawl), worn over a European-style blouse with decorated lace-cuffs.

A curious peculiarity of this particular painting is why the child between the Spaniard and the morsica woman was depicted as an albino (i.e. devoid of colour due to lack of pigmentation). Remember, most casta paintings portrayed an imagined family by white artists (in this case, Miguel Cabrera was a Mestizo working for white Catholic patrons) with the intention to depict ideas of racial mixing for a European audience. Thus, Cabrera's portrayal of the albino child between the two parents of different races would have been largely intentional. To understand the intention behind the albino child, we must examine how people, especially white Europeans, understood albinism in relation to race, genetics, and religion in the eighteenth-century.

In present times, albinism is classified as a genetic disorder caused by a mutation in the body's pigmentation. However, in the eighteenth century, albinism was understood as a bizarre colouration in terms of so-called ' scientific' racial theories that suggested white supremacy and a fixated hierarchy between races. Ilona Katzew, a curator of Latina American art and one of the world's leading experts on casta paintings, explains that one theory in the eighteenth century argued that albinos could only be born from darker parents and was the result of the ' racial mixing' among white and non-white people. Certain, more extreme theories argued that the birth of albinos between mixed-blood parents proved that ' darker' bodies had a tendency to revert to whiter ones by some natural or divine provision. For example, in another casta painting by Miguel Cabrera (' 7. From Spaniard and Albino, Return-Backwards,' see image below), the offspring of a white Spaniard and an Albino woman is explicitly given as a ' return-backwards' to suggest that the darker-skinned child had receded in the racial pole. Such theories implied that the " natural" skin colour of mankind was white and that the racial mixing between white and non-white people caused a racial " degeneration" from what they thought as racial " purity" (i.e. whiteness).

Miguel Cabrera, 7. From Spaniard and Albino, Return-Backwards (De español y albino, torna atrás), 1763

In essence, casta paintings are documents that reinforced European notions of racial hierarchy and ideas about racial mixing towards their colonial subjects. However, even among such ideas that tried to oppress people of non-white backgrounds, sources tell us that black and indigenous people in the Iberian Americas found their own way to manipulate these cultural codes of oppression. In the next series of blog posts, we will see how clothing functioned as a primary indicator of sociocultural identity and how black-African people living in the Iberian Americas found ways in which to regain agency by actively expressing their identity through clothing.

## HOW CLOTHING GAVE AGENCY TO OPPRESSED RACES IN IBERIAN AMERICA

Attributed to José de Ibarra, From Spaniard and Mulatta, Morisca (De español y mulata, morisca), c. 1730

However, clothing was not just a reflection of the oppressive preconceptions that were imposed upon non-white people in Iberian America. Many written sources provide evidence of black people dressing in luxurious clothing, which was considered ' inappropriate' by many amongst the white population at the time. The casta painting above was drawn around 1730 in Mexico, and is attributed to (i.e. the authorship is not definitively identified) José de Ibarra. The painting depicts a Mulatta (a woman of mixed heritage between a black African and a white European), a white Spaniard, and their daughter. (classified as a ' Morisca') In comparison to other casta paintings, such as the one above, this piece is exceptional because it falls outside the conventional norms of race depicted in the majority of casta paintings. In the painting, the Mulatta woman is wearing fancy European-style clothing, which was banned by sumptuary laws against women with any ' black blood.' Moreover, the facial expressions of the family members also portray discontent, which is atypical of most casta paintings. It is also notable that this particular casta painting does not have clear authorship, indicating the possibility that the painter did not want to take responsibility for depicting a scene that implied such social discontent.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION: HOW HISTORY LIVES ON IN CLOTHING

Although sumptuary laws have long been abolished, people still project their own racial and cultural stereotypes upon those whom they consider as ' the racial other.' Compared to how white colonial settlers ' otherized' the indigenous and black African people in Iberian America, how far can we claim our own perceptions of national identity are inclusive towards people of non-white ethnicities?

Much like how white Spaniards in the eighteenth century assumed that blackness itself was associated with negative traits related to slavery and poverty, black people in the twenty-first century are associated with crime and violence based on racial stereotypes. Many people still regard skin colour and nationality in the same light and conduct hate crimes against non-white people (demonstrated by the lynching of British-Asian people in the early phases of COVID-19). Racial profiling - the act of targeting an individual based on the assumed characteristics of their racial identity than individual suspicion - has particularly been a serious issue during the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, as numerous people around the western world protested to uproot the racist perceptions that have shaped the social discourse and governmental institutions.
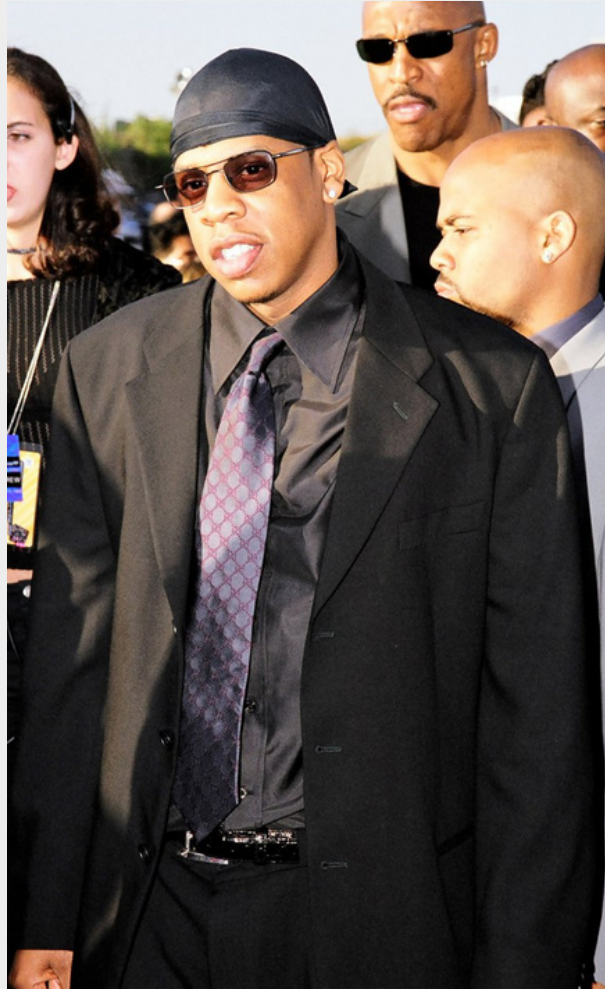
Jay Z dressed in a Gucci suit with durags on at the 1999 MTV Movie Awards
" And I come with durags to your so-called awards" (Jay-Z, in "Hova Song (Outro)")

Racism does not derive from an objective definition of different races but the subjective ways in which people perceive race and unconsciously form racial stereotypes. Our perception of race is shaped by visual aspects of race, such as skin colour, clothing, and fashion. Much like how non-white individuals in the Iberian Americas outfitted themselves in luxurious clothing and accessories to express their own identity, clothing and fashion have been actively used by celebrities, activists, artists, and individuals to challenge existing racial stereotypes through visual, material culture.

Black hairstyle is a prominent example of how black people expressed agency and identity against oppression, as many African Americans returned to natural black hairstyles such as the cornrow, the afro, or dreadlocks during the Natural Hair movement (1960s). Durags - a long piece of cloth used by black people to keep the waves or lock patterns in your hair from shifting - have become a staple of black pride in hip-hop fashion, as black music artists such as Memphis Bleek, Jay-Z or A$AP Ferg creatively combined it to their fashion codes. Against structural racism and oppression, clothing and fashion can function as an expression of agency and individual identity. As we have seen throughout the blog, clothing and fashion demonstrates a great deal about the identity of the individual, including race and gender.

.

THE DIVERSITY QUESTION

Nishika Pishu Melwani (Third Year)

The History department at UCL offers a diverse range of modules spanning across both time and geographical space. In other words, as a student here, you get the opportunity to study the histories of the majority of continents, should you wish to. At first glance, this may appear to be an incredible thing – and don't get me wrong, it has its merits – but the issue comes when we consider who gets to teach these modules. You see, like many further education institutions, especially in the West, the diversity that UCL provides in its modules is not reflected in its teaching staff.

Since this is an article about History, I'm not going to spend too long on statistics (the natural-born enemy of any humanities student). However, I think that they are still crucial to highlighting the true nature of what we're dealing with. As of 2021, it was reported that an underwhelming 0.7% of professors teaching at UK universities were Black. Although the UCL Faculty of Arts and Humanities was slightly better than the national average, with roughly 8% of staff identifying as ethnic minorities, these figures are neither comparable – given the discrepancy between Black professors and Ethnic minorities as well as the relative
sizes of the groups - nor in any way sufficient. Especially when you're teaching History. While diversity is important across the board to allow for greater opportunities to those who were previously denied basic rights, it should be a non-negotiable when it comes to studying the past, and here, I'm specifically referring to Black history. African history is an area which has all too often been overlooked due to History being written by the victors. This has led to us, as students of the Western world, having an inaccurate image of this vibrant, complex continent.

When you mention Africa, for most people, the image that springs to mind is simply the two-dimensional description of squalor and misery that they either heard in their GCSE class, saw in news channels or something similar. That is why when Africa is finally given a chance to be represented and its culture disseminated to those willing to learn, it is vital that it gets shown in a nuanced, thoughtful manner. This then begs the question, is this a task that can be undertaken by just any professor?

Honestly – as an Indian girl born and raised in the Caribbean – it's not for me to provide a definitive ' yes' or ' no' answer to that line of enquiry. Not to mention that, at the end of the day, there is no right or wrong answer since this is an incredibly nuanced subject which stretches far beyond the boundaries of a lecture hall. For now, all I can speak to is my own experience.

I'm taking an African module this year, a continuation of the one I did last year – both of which were taught by a White professor. Now, I understood going into it, as did my professor to his credit, that this was not the ideal situation. As a straight White male, he obviously had a large amount of privilege that, paired with no lived experience of being African, meant there was a level of detachment from the subject, which undeniably impacted the way he taught us.

Last year, going into his classroom for the first time, I felt as though this wasn't perfect, but it was just something that I had to accept. After all, I'd rather learn about the topic from someone who was, at the very least, qualified, and very clearly passionate about the subject than not learn about it at all. Then I had my first lesson of this year's module, which included an in-depth discussion on this very topic, and I came away from it with an entirely different viewpoint; namely, why should we have to just sit here and accept it?

The reason that I'm being taught about Africa by a White Englishman is because of our society's inherent structural racism that inhibits people of colour, especially Black people, from moving up the socio-economic ladder and entering into positions of power. That is not okay, and we shouldn't stand for it anymore. It is time for all of us to face the music and realise that if universities have the resources, time, and awareness to create these diverse modules for us to learn about, they are also more than capable of hiring numerous professors from diverse backgrounds, because let me assure you they are most definitely out there, to teach their own histories.

Does this mean that people from Asia can't teach African history? No. Does this mean that we should suddenly start gatekeeping what types of people can research and learn about what types of history? Most certainly not. Being able to learn about different types of history, no matter where you come from, is part of the beauty of the subject and helps us to become well-rounded historians as well as people.

The point that I am trying to get across is simply one of awareness and action. It is not enough to simply learn about these histories if we are not willing to help raise up the people who they have negatively impacted. As such, we need to be increasingly cognisant of who is teaching us and make an effort to have more diversity in our authority figures.

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC HISTORY: RECONCILING AGENDAS

Yi Jie Teng (Second Year)

Public history, coined by American historian Robert Kelley, continues to be one of the most pervasive modes through which historical narratives are reproduced and propagated. Involving the use of history beyond the confines of its traditional academic setting, it is consequently the primary manner in which much of the public interacts with and consumes history. The process of translating professional historical research into public history is often complicated, requiring compromise and adaptation in order to better suit the complex social, cultural and political considerations present in wider society. Often, the portrayal of certain historical events and figures can create contention among a variety of stakeholders involved in the production and reception of public history works.

Films, television shows, books, and video games have often drawn upon historical subjects to entertain audiences which may often be uninformed or have their own pre-conceived expectations and proclivities. Perceiving these tastes and preferences while keeping the integrity of the history portrayed intact is thus a challenge for producers of commercial historical products to overcome. Brian Martin argues in The Business of History: Customers, Professionals, and Money that history businesses must begin with prioritising the interests, behaviours, expectations, and values of the customer, as it is ultimately the customer who seeks to satisfy a specific desire when they consume a product. When properly capitalised upon, historical products may generate lucrative returns and leave a lasting cultural impact. Steven Spielberg's Saving Private Ryan is a prime example, releasing in 1998 to critical acclaim and smashing box office records, it went on to inspire a myriad of Second World War related media in the form of TV shows and video games such as Band of Brothers, Call of Duty and Medal of Honor. The power of history to serve as an unending wellspring of narrative inspiration well suited as the basis for artistic commodification and mass consumption is thus an indelible fixture in the modern entertainment industry.

Nevertheless, the ubiquity of historical entertainment does not negate the potential for friction stemming from the dissonance between financial interests and the desire to portray history with a deft and nuanced approach. The desire to pursue the large market shares and maximise returns on investment invariably leads to the skewing of representation within historical, relegating the stories of the underrepresented to the wayside. Efforts to address these disparities may lead to unintended consequences if not handled skilfully. For example, Peter Farelly's 2018 film Green Book received condemnation from family of African American pianist Don Shirley's family for the portrayal of his relationship with his driver in the film, claiming that the film completely misrepresented the nature of their relationship in order to, as historian Alex von Tunzelmann conveys, ' warm the cockles of a liberal white audience who want to feel good about not being racist.' (von Tunzelmann, the Guardian, 2019)
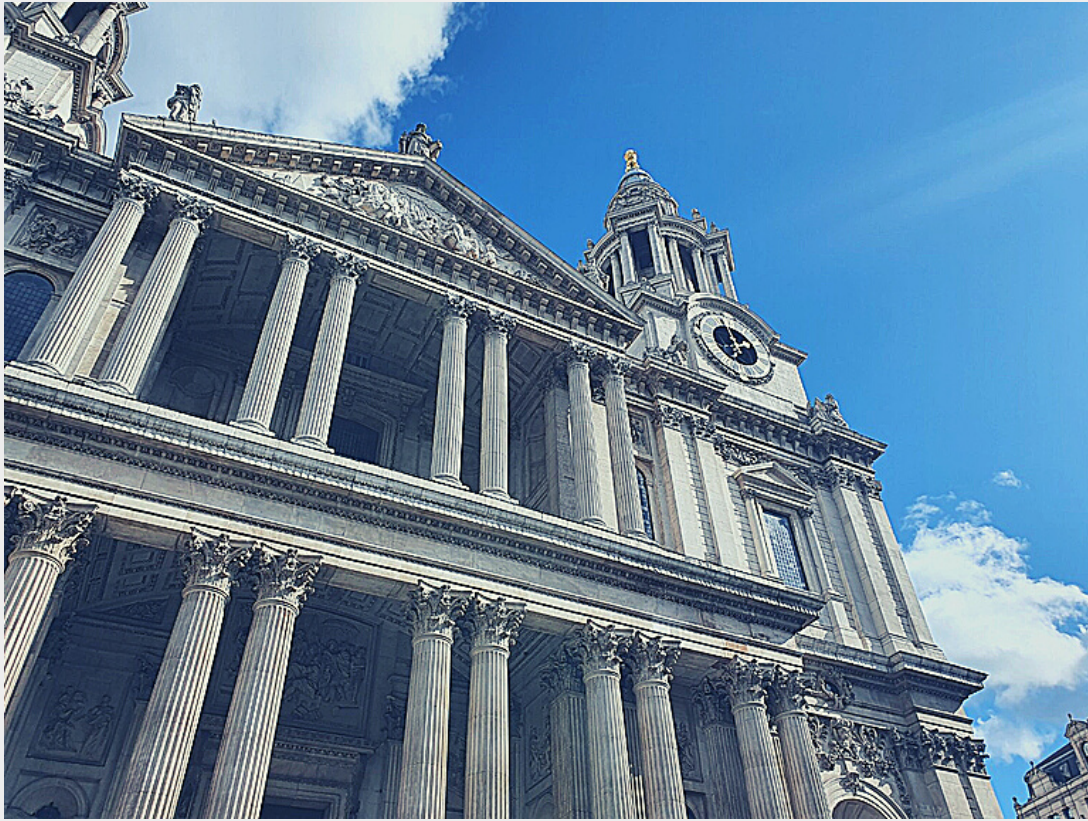
Salon contributor Daniel José Older similarly argues that the critically acclaimed film 12 years a slave marked yet another addition to a line of white saviour narratives which indulged in representing the stories of white abolitionists while neglecting to represent the stories of radical black freedom fighters who fought for their agency against an oppressive institution. (Older, Salon, 2013) Here the contentious nature of public history in the realm of commercialised entertainment is demonstrated through the pressure placed by financial incentives on the portrayal of historical narratives and the choices of which narratives to portray. Even as social and cultural norms have evolved over time, the sensibilities and proclivities of the majority audience remain privileged over a dedication to historical representation or nuance. Filmmakers and public historians involved in these endeavours are consequently made to consider the expectations of film audiences and business executives over faithfulness to historical realities.

Just as economic and financial realities often lead to contention between historians and the expectations placed on works of public history, so too do political considerations exerted by governments intrude upon the jurisdiction of public historians. Ludmilla Jordanova argues in History in Practice, that governments often play a central role in funding and supporting public history initiatives and institutions within many nations. Institutions such as museums, archives, memorials, and cemeteries, may often find themselves reliant on these public funds to augment any revenue they receive through donations and commercial activities; as the predominant stakeholder in many of these endeavours, governments thus find themselves afforded an outsized role in dictating the direction and representation of history within these places. Jordanova elaborates that public history is inherently political for two primary reasons. Firstly, the fact that public history is often the sole point of contact for members of the public and their pasts makes it subject to special considerations and influence from interest groups that hold a desire to portray the past in specific manners.

Secondly, works of history inevitably view the past through certain vantage points, when these perspectives are disseminated to the public, the portrayal of winners and losers, political factions, as well as religious and ethnic groups inevitably become politically contentious. This is well demonstrated by the 1776 commission established by former US President Donald Trump in 2020 for the promotion of ' patriotic education' in the light of what was perceived by conservatives to be a decline in promotion of patriotic values within the American public education system. Widely panned by American historians for being ahistorical and condemned by the American Historical Association as written ' without any consultation with professional historians of the United States', the commission nevertheless exemplifies the schisms which result when the political agenda of an incumbent government contradict scholarly convention and established academic consensus. As public historians are often required to collaborate with the state in the dissemination of their works through engagement with the public, such conflicts are a distinct reminder that public history frequently entails a careful balancing act in which political considerations are but one amidst numerous factors influencing the portrayal of history.

Finally, cultural signifiers represented within the public memory that contribute to a sense of continuity with the past often generate controversy when a misalignment between public expectations and scholarly judgement over the portrayal of history occurs. Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhart observe in History wars: the Enola Gay and other battles for the American past that cultural artifacts relating to the Second World War hold significant value for American veterans who participated in the conflict. Specifically, outrage was expressed by this community towards the decision by museum planners at the National Air and Space Museum to supposedly besmirch the legacy of the B-29 bomber that carried out the atomic bombing of Hiroshima by questioning the necessity of the attack and portraying the Japanese who suffered its effects as victims. This demonstrates that public history often possesses the capacity to be contentious when handling issues of special sensitivity to a community's sense of identity. In these situations, the duty of historians to treat the past critically and avoid the unquestioning acceptance of preconceptions as self-justifying come into conflict with members of the public who ascribe sentimental value to parts of their history. In this regard, there can at times be no compromise between the two perspectives, either historians must submit to external communal pressures to alter their work or proceed in defiance of protestations from the public.

Public historians may often find themselves at odds with the pressures posed by the various external agents involved in the growing tapestry of public history works. As historians continue to expose themselves to wider society through greater involvement in public history initiatives, opportunities for conflicts and disputes to arise appear to be an inevitability. Pressures emanating from financial concerns, state involvement, and public perception are causes for consideration within the sphere of public history. Nonetheless, these challenges do not nullify the benefits of greater public engagement by historians. The maintenance a forum of exchange between the realm of professional academic history and broader society provides a means for the upkeep of a more educated and well-informed public in touch with the past and conscious of its connections to contemporary social, economic, political, and cultural phenomena.

.

RUSSIA, POWER STRUCTURES, AND THE WEST

Max Mihailovici (Second Year)

We bear witness to extraordinary times. Many leading geopolitical thinkers have likened the strategic aftermath of the Russo-Ukrainian War to a fork in the road, one which bears increasingly little resemblance to the world of old. I wish to examine this complete rift in the West's strategy concerning Putin's Russia and what the future bodes after his departure through a historical lens in an effort to best gauge motives and effectiveness.

The invasion of Ukraine marks a turning point in Western Grand Strategy – a turn from deterrence (although not the terribly active kind), to pre-emption. The West is no longer just reacting to Russia's moves, rather, it is taking initiative into its own hands. This is designed not merely to weaken Russia as a whole but to destabilise the very power structure upon which Putin relies. As history has shown, weak autocrats are scarcely tolerated in Russia – think Peter III, deposed in a coup by his wife Catherine the Great, or the Time of Troubles, following the Polish-Lithuanian occupation of Moscow. Just like in the times of the Rurikids, Romanovs, or Soviets, it takes a strong, revered and respected hand to successfully tame the powerful elites and prevent costly medieval-esque infighting. Therefore, any loss incurred by Putin is a loss both to his prestige among his elites and to their strategic and financial interests. Strategically, the West's decision to woo Finland and Sweden into joining NATO spells humiliation for the Kremlin. Not only does Finland share a crucial border with Russia, threatening the only supply route to Russia's Arctic Fleet and Nuclear Arsenal in Murmansk Oblast, but it also makes a blockade of St Petersburg possible. Financially, Russian elites have seen their wealth confiscated and opportunities for money laundering reduced.

What is the point in proactively targeting the Russian power structure? It is rooted in a fact of Russian history, namely that Russian autocracy is only as strong as its support among the powerful—yesterday's Politburo now stands replaced by today's oligarchs. For the first time since 1999, Putin's aura of competence is beginning to shatter – never before has he dealt with this many crises in many ways of his own making. To counter this, he has, as of late, surrounded himself with more and more ' yes-men'; cronies who are merely loyal out of a burning desire for power. It is a nepotistic structure, even by Putin's standards, which embitters former allies of the regime, especially those who have stood to lose from recent actions. Make no mistake – Putin's ' yes-men' are loyal to the power he provides more so than they are to Putin himself. After Gorbachev lost control of the USSR, he found himself in complete isolation as former followers flocked to the new poles of power. So too, did Nicholas II in February 1917, when his very advisors pressured him into abdicating. A good amount of Putin's associates, former and present, have voiced their displeasure in public, with many more likely sharing these thoughts in private. This isn't so much because they had their Biblical revelation about democracy but rather because their interests no longer align with Putin's new undertakings. We have evidently emerged past the stage of questioning Putin's odds of surviving. The domestic climate within Russia, combined with his alleged poor health, set this to rest. Instead, let us then think beyond, into what a post-Putin Russia could look like.

The present power structure in Russia is too deeply entrenched to permit a radical change, so the question undoubtedly lingers: who will come next? My hypothesis is that it is most likely to come from the same kind of cohort. Those connected with the establishment oligarchs, and the United Russia party machine, are the people who wield the power necessary to get rid of Putin and successfully impose a successor. Ultimately, those who might wish to see Putin removed belong to one of two camps: the reformers, who preferred things pre-invasion, or the hardliners, who at the very least agree with Putin's increasing aggression, if not advocate for more. What they both share in common is the opinion that Putin has created a mess which needs undoing, like how Putin came in to undo Yeltsin's. Both see Putin as unable to uphold their respective interests, which is why they could see the risk of removing Putin from office as being smaller than the consequences of letting him remain. Both see more benefit in retaining kleptocratic power structures insofar as their interests are concerned. The difference lies in how they see Russia's future.

The hardliners, whether in support of a coup or not, are likely to retain strong anti-Western sentiment, seeing it as the pitfall of Putin. They would favour someone who wouldn't be afraid to go to greater lengths to deter the West, someone who would more ruthlessly deal with rebellion in Russia's so-called ' post-Soviet sphere of influence', someone who wouldn't appear weak. The reformists, however, have shown themselves to be shrewder. In general, it can be said that they support economic cooperation with the West where it directly benefits their interests. One could draw parallels to Kazakhstan, or to some extent Ukraine, who both opted for Western capital inflow over Western-style democratic and institutional reforms. Either way, a front of oligarchs united against Putin is the only option in ensuring a stable transition of power and avoiding another Libya, Iraq or Afghanistan, where dictators were toppled, but a dangerous power vacuum was created. Russia is a nuclear power, and the West shouldn't rest until this risk is minimised as much as possible.

What then is a tangible course of action? How can Russia escape the vicious circle of its authoritarian past? The most important thing to realise about Russia currently is that it isn't just about Putin – rather, it is about the very system which enabled people like him to rise to prominence. Putin rose to power as a direct consequence of the existing power structures within crumbling institutions, dominated then, as is the case historically, by a select few. The little power that the public held in elections slowly eroded, replaced by " constitutional reforms". As during the time of the Rurikids and Romanovs, the Russian people alone do not possess the means necessary to bring about lasting political change. The only remaining checks on Putin's power are the few institutions which operate shakingly, and the oligarchs – his power structure.

Taking cues from history is the only reliable course of action in such murky waters. Both the Russian and Soviet empires collapsed primarily from within – the bastions of power opposed the existence of these entities, to the point where change was preferable to their interests. This is why the August coup failed in the USSR, and why the Bolsheviks faced little opposition in November 1917. When we think of what the West should support for Russia, we think of opposition activists like Navalny. The West must realise that it is one thing to be an activist and a completely different thing to be a leader. s history proves, leadership in Russia requires powerful backing. This is a key concept in understanding why Putin faced no serious opposition: the poles of power within Russia consistently favoured him over the opposition. Provided the conditions for Putin's removal as set out above exist, it is very likely a coup will at least be attempted. In the initial stages, the strongest and most possible solution is a united front of hardline and reformist oligarchs taking charge. They are far less likely to

succeed by themselves – divide and conquer –, which is why it is preferable to merely backing one faction. It is imperative, however that reformist elements are strengthened so that they can later dictate the destiny of a post-Putin Russia.

In such a situation, the west must employ effective economic sanctions. The foundation of oligarch interests and loyalty revolves around money, and sanctions progressively tighten the noose around how much can be used for bribes and the consolidation of power. The West must utilise this trump card to its fullest in order to ensure the mistakes of the 90s are not repeated. As opposed to other ex-communist countries in Eastern Europe, Russia never quite created institutions capable of curtailing the rise of an oligarch class. The reformist class of the Gorbachev era later ended up supporting oligarchic autocracy as their power rose and their interests in maintaining it grew. The west can therefore use sanctions to steer Russia towards institutional reform and democratisation, preventing the rise of another strongman. Even if the oligarchs initially dominate the political scene, much like in Eastern Europe, their power will be curtailed, provided institutions remain functional. Through their potential newfound freedoms, the role of the Russian people will be crucial in ensuring accountability. Lessons learned in statecraft, particularly from Eastern Europe, must be applied to the process of the distribution of power in a new Russia. Only when the West examines history can it begin to implement lasting change.

.

CONSTRUCTING CHESS CULTURE IN 20TH CENTURY BRITAIN

Lan Yao (MA History Education)

Objects possess their own stories and can represent time and space. Chess related objects collected by Penrose family, a prestigious chess family in Britain, are useful in constructing chess culture in 20th century Britain. I have studied three objects featured in Penrose papers about chess in UCL Library Special Collections. In this article, I am going to explore the significance of these objects to Penrose family, and how they reflect chess culture in 20th century Britain through their connections with Penrose family.

1. CHESS, NOBLE CULTURE, AND FAMILY BOND

The first object I have studied is the chess player's notebook.
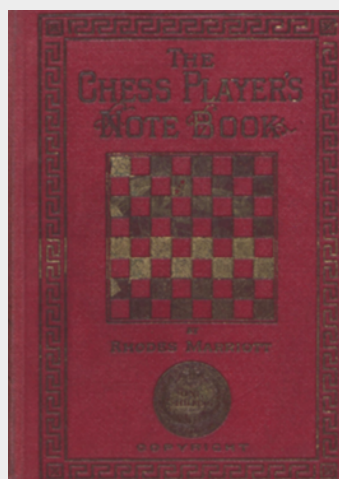
The notebook was produced by Manchester Chess Club, and from the preface, we know that it was redesigned in order to meet the increasing demand for the notebook.
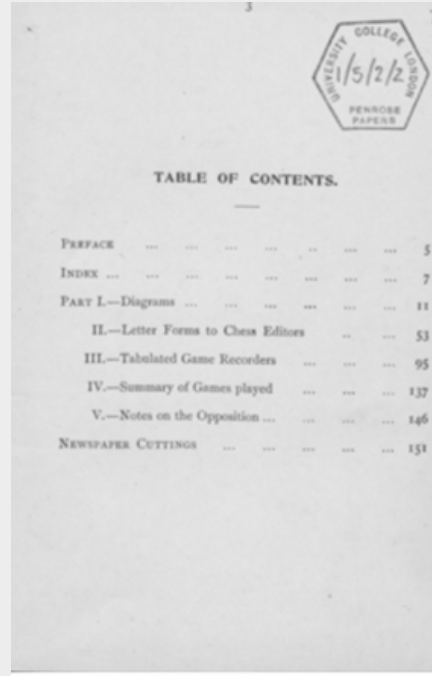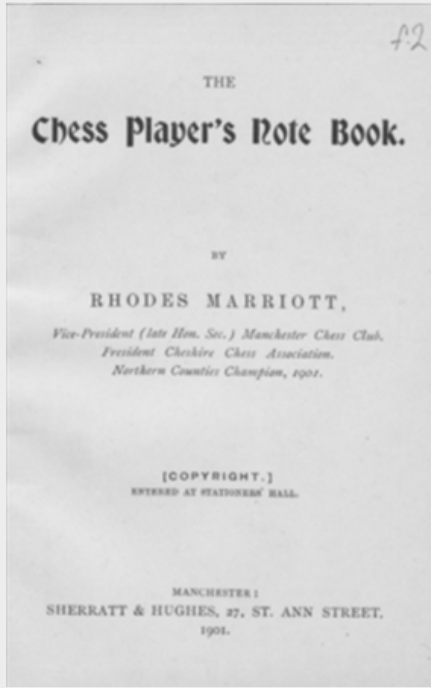
This reveals that chess was becoming more popular in early 20th century Manchester, as more players bought chess notebooks to make game records and study chess. There is little information about Manchester Chess Club in the 19th century and early 20th century. However, Manchester and District Chess Association was founded in 1890, which was among the earliest chess associations established in Britain. In fact, from 1880 to 1900, chess associations were founded successively in many regions of Britain, creating a competitive atmosphere. This demonstrates the regional influence on each other and increasing popularity of chess in early 20th century Britain.

It is notable that the cover of the notebook was exquisitely designed, similar to valuable manuscripts from early periods. It is reasonable to speculate that this notebook was expensive to produce, especially compared to chess notebooks of the 21st century designed with simplicity. This might possess a correlation with the fact that chess had been a noble mind sport since the Renaissance, and was an important entertainment for aristocracy and wealthy people. Therefore, the design of the notebook was exquisite and with good quality, reflecting the permeating influence of noble culture in chess in the early 20th century Manchester. This is probably an important reason for Penrose family to preserve this notebook. It symbolized nobility, and became rare in the late 20th century as chess began to gain popularity among more people.

This notebook appears to be owned and used by Alexander Peckover (1830-1919), a wealthy banker and a chess player.

There are records of a few puzzles and games, but most pages of the notebook are left blank. It seems that Mr. Peckover was an amateur chess player who only took chess notes from time to time. However, a notebook of 1884 owned by Mr. Peckover was full of chess games and puzzles, indicating that he was an enthusiastic chess player who devoted plenty of time studying chess in his earlier years. In fact, in the 19th century and the early 20th century, chess was still not widespread as today, and the majority of people played chess for entertainment rather than for tournaments and bonus. It is possible that Mr. Peckover was not a professional chess player, but he spent more time playing and studying chess than did the majority of chess players in his era, thus demonstrating his passion for chess.

The notebook was probably passed from Mr. Peckover to his grandson Lionel Sharples Penrose, a professor of human genetics at UCL.

It is possible that the notebook came into UCL through the donation of Lionel. Lionel was also a chess theorist. Though he had no official chess ratings, he was well-known for creating interesting chess puzzles. I have tried to solve some of his puzzles. I feel that his puzzles were designed with careful consideration, and they were difficult even for professional chess players today.

This indicates that Lionel had spent time digging deep into chess and he possessed considerable skills in chess. Lionel's passion for chess was derived from his family tradition. In Penrose family, reason and logical thinking was promoted, while demonstration of strong emotions was discouraged; indulgences to music, theatre and novels were forbidden. However, mind games such as chess were allowed. To young Lionel, chess was an indispensable part of his life, a matter as important as science and mathematics. Therefore, his grandfather's chess notebook carried special meanings for Lionel. Whenever he saw this notebook, he might reflect upon the time with his grandfather and his experience of studying chess in his youth hood. In this way, the notebook illustrates that object can hold memory and lead to very personal stories. It constructed the connection of the family's past, and became the " precipitates of re-memory" . Such process of re-memory generates power, which lies in the strong family bond and the transmission of the love for chess from grandfather to son.

The notebook also demonstrates how the meaning of an object changed through geographical space and accumulated through time. In Manchester club, it was a product of chess culture for sale. After it was bought by Peckover, it became a useful tool for chess study. When it was passed to Lionel Penrose, it became a valuable treasure from his grandfather, which embodied his passion for chess. In UCL, the notebook becomes a precious heritage of the Penrose family, which witnesses chess cultures of 20th century Britain, and is loaded with the stories of Penrose's family with chess.

2. CHESS, CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

My second object is a collection of Letters from The Turnstile Press.

The letters are about the compilation of a book on World Chess Championship Match in 1951 between Mikhail Botvinnik, the 6th World Champion from the Soviet Union, and his challenger David Bronstein. These Letters show that Penrose served as the president of Anglo-Soviet Chess Circle, and played a significant role in the program of compiling the chess book. In several letters, international chess master William Winter, who also engaged in compiling the book, asked Lionel for advice. This presents Lionel's prestigious status in the British chess world. In addition, the name of "Anglo-Soviet Chess Circle" and the book portraying Soviet chess players placed chess culture in a trans-geographical context demonstrated by the connection of Britain and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was a "chess empire," which produced many world champions and top players, and dominated the chess world for more than forty years. This was the reason why British chess world longed for engaging in Soviet chess culture and writing about Soviet players and events.
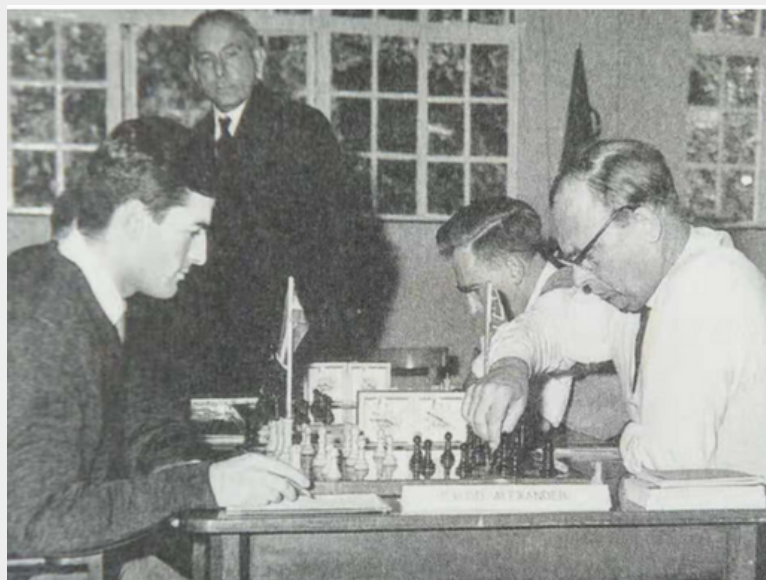
These Letters also include the comments from one of the readers of the book proposal. The advice of the reader on the proportion of chess games, chess history and typesetting suggests that this person was an enthusiastic chess player, who had studied the history and games of the past World Championships thoroughly and read chess books frequently. The response from the reader demonstrated the idea of a contact zone.

The audience, including chess professionals as well as amateur chess lovers, was geographically separated, but they were able to raise response for a chess book and engage in the process of editing the book. Ongoing relations existed between chess authors and audience, revealing the dynamics of chess culture. Therefore, chess culture in the mid-20th century Britain was constructed in an open community, where every chess lover had the chance to involve in important chess events and give advice to authors of chess books.

3. CHESS, CULTURAL COMMUNITY, AND THE POWER OF IDOLS

My third object is a collection of British Press Cuttings about chess.
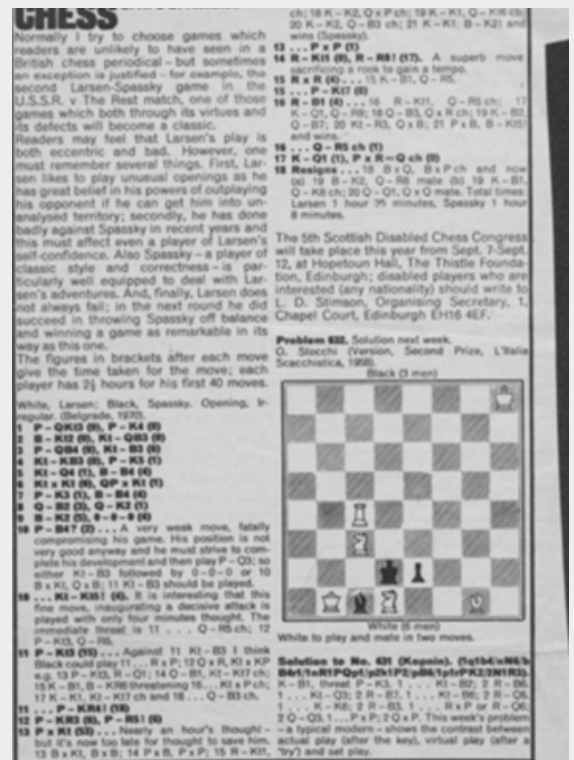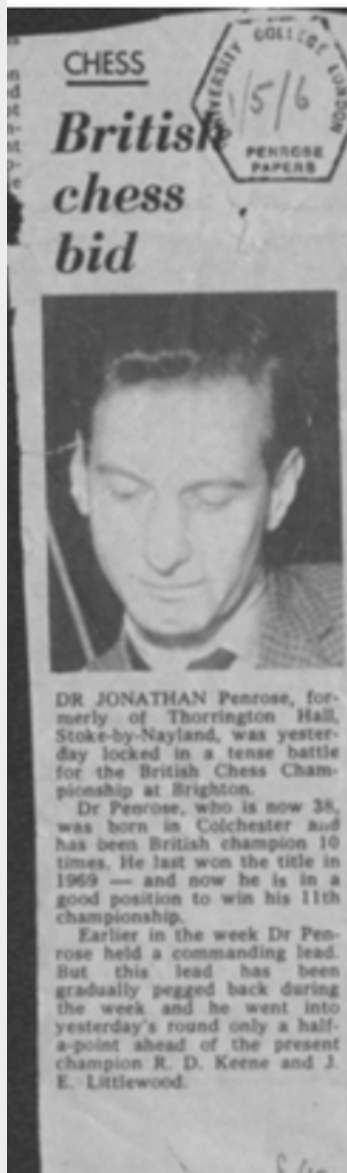
Press can be considered as a public site. The audience of the press constituted the public as they read and respond to the press. Michael Warner argues that a public does not exist unless it is addressed. For the media, addressing public means addressing people who do not know each other, creating " a relation among strangers" . Accordingly, the chess press addressed the public by assuming that their audience as chess enthusiasts existed and they would enjoy reading chess news and games. The press also provided the audience a platform to study the latest games played by world top players, and expected the audience's emotional response to players and games they liked or disliked. For the audience, the significance of reading the press is that they established their identity as chess lovers, and imagined themselves belonging to such a chess community.

The Press Cuttings were consisted of six reports of several games, some of which were played by top Soviet chess players, and the descriptions of these players. This presents the idea of " hybridity" , for it is an English press presenting chess players from the Soviet Union. It is true that it was the period of the Cold War, and the communist Soviet Union had an extreme tense relation with western capitalist countries. Therefore, countries like the United States tended to present Soviet players in a negative way. For example, American reports of 1960s frequently accused Soviet chess players of cheating and manipulating the results of tournaments. However, in contrast, the British press portrayed Soviet players in a positive way. It presented Soviet players as admirable for their extraordinary level in chess and praised their beautiful games. Admittedly, another possible reason the press showed the games of Soviet players was that British chess players could study these games so that they might come up with the strategy of how to play against Soviet players. However, these Press Cuttings were only a small part of the whole newspaper, and did not tell the whole story. It is likely that other sections which include negative portrayals of Soviet players were deliberately excluded from Penrose's collection.

The Press Cuttings also include several games played by Lionel Penrose's son Jonathan Penrose, and one photo of him. Jonathan was a prestigious grandmaster who had won the British Championship for ten times, and was the first British chess player who defeated a world champion, Mikhail Tal, since the 20th century.

It is interesting that one of Jonathan's games was mentioned together with the top ten players. The purpose here is to present Jonathan as a great chess player comparable to world top players. In this sense, the press possesses power. Reading about a prestigious British player with excellent strength, the audience would feel proud of Britain's achievements in chess. For Penrose family, the Press Cuttings also generate power, as they record the glory of Jonathan in chess and represent the pride of the family. They are also the motivation for later generations to work hard and achieve great. Here, British chess press can also be seen as a contact zone. British chess lovers, who had different backgrounds and levels in chess, were connected by the similar feeling of admiration and pride to a prestigious person of their own country.

To conclude, the three objects I have studied reveal Penrose family's experience and engagement in chess, and demonstrate the importance chess as a traditional mind sport to Penrose family. These objects also express the cultural pattern that chess was becoming more popular in the 20th century Britain, and there was increasing popular engagement in chess media and connection with the Soviet chess world. My personal analysis of these objects makes me realize that chess is not only a mind sport for competition, but is also a traditional noble culture valued by respectable people, a platform for communication and cultural exchange, and can be the spiritual bond of a family.

HOW THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION CHANGED EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

Patrick Gale (First Year)

The industrial revolution that began in Europe, specifically Britain, and gradually proliferated worldwide is widely debated in modern academia. Some academics take issue with the term revolution, as it implies a sudden, unprecedented change in the current state of affairs; instead, they adopt the view that industrialisation was a gradual process. However, regardless of how industrialisation came about, most likely agree that industrialisation had four characteristics: the first is a division of labour with greater emphasis on specialisation, second is the ubiquity of technology both in homes and in the workplace, third is the mass production of goods, and fourth is moving away from water as a prime mover to fossil fuels to generate mechanical energy (Headrick, 2009). This essay's primary focus is not to discuss how industrialisation came about but the opposite; it aims to examine industrialisation's economic, social, and political changes, particularly throughout Europe and the United States (US). This piece attempts to avoid a common reduction of cordoning off these themes; it accomplishes this by examining social and political spheres within the context of overarching economic transformation.

  The economic factors that provide the background for the subsequent social and political changes are the emergence of the energy economy and the concurrent development of institutions to facilitate investment in technology, particularly railways, to further economic growth. Within this economic backdrop, a range of interconnected social changes took place; most important were urbanisation and changes in family structure. The ripples of these economic changes were felt in the political scene, with a decline, or lack thereof, in European aristocracy and greater US territorial expansion in North America.

 It is important to note that although the periodisation for the industrial revolution is set from 1750 to 1850, there is a high degree of variation within Europe. Thus, there are generally three waves of industrialisation: The first took place from the 1750s to 1820s, the second peaked between the 1840s and 1870s, and the final wave occurred in the early twentieth century before the First World War (Trebilock, 2000). The industrialisation of the US began in earnest after the Civil War, when it was forced to transition away from a slave-based agricultural economy in 1865 (Sachs, 2020). Yet, there were signs of industrialisation in the US before 1865, which will also be examined.

The industrial revolution sparked a major energy transition with the substitution of water as a prime mover to coal and other fossil fuels. The shift from an organic economy to an energy economy can largely be attributed to the diffusion of the Watt steam engine. Due to its additional boiler and ability to turn steam into movement, it was more efficient and, therefore, more economical than its predecessors (Sachs, 2020). The widespread adoption of the steam engine and fossil fuels led to total energy consumption rising by 124 per cent in the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain, and by the first half of the nineteenth century, energy consumption had increased by 255 per cent. It mechanised previously labour-intensive tasks and led to cost reduction in certain sectors of the economy. The lower cost of production and greater efficiency that mechanisation enabled led to a rise in per-person output in Britain from 0.26 per cent between 1700 and 1820 to 1.04 per cent in the following three decades.

The adoption of the steam engine was not limited to Britain, as it quickly spread to Britain's neighbours, with France experiencing a period of growth in the early nineteenth century. The steam engine would eventually reach the US, where it was modified and improved upon in the early 1800s. After the Civil War, these improvements allowed American industry to soar; by 1872, its GDP had overtaken Britain. The move to energy is an integral piece of context as it shaped many other changes brought about by the industrial revolution.

The industrial revolution sparked a major energy transition with the substitution of water as a prime mover to coal and other fossil fuels. The shift from an organic economy to an energy economy can largely be attributed to the diffusion of the Watt steam engine. Due to its additional boiler and ability to turn steam into movement, it was more efficient and, therefore, more economical than its predecessors (Sachs, 2020). The widespread adoption of the steam engine and fossil fuels led to total energy consumption rising by 124 per cent in the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain, and by the first half of the nineteenth century, energy consumption had increased by 255 per cent. It mechanised previously labour-intensive tasks and led to cost reduction in certain sectors of the economy. The lower cost of production and greater efficiency that mechanisation enabled led to a rise in per-person output in Britain from 0.26 per cent between 1700 and 1820 to 1.04 per cent in the following three decades. The adoption of the steam engine was not limited to Britain, as it quickly spread to Britain's neighbours, with France experiencing a period of growth in the early nineteenth century. The steam engine would eventually reach the US, where it was modified and improved upon in the early 1800s. After the Civil War, these improvements allowed American industry to soar; by 1872, its GDP had overtaken Britain. The move to energy is an integral piece of context as it shaped many other changes brought about by the industrial revolution.

Chief among these changes is the rapid development of economic institutions to keep pace and provide capital to improve industrial technology and further economic growth; the most important was the investment in a modern railway network. France, in the 1850s, was at the forefront of financing railroads with new financial institutions such as Crédit Mobilier, which launched in 1852. The bank represented a marked change from France's conservative economic policy, as it lent capitalists vast sums of capital to embark on infrastructure projects (Trebilock, p.65). Greater access to capital by infrastructure capitalists saw an upsurge in railroad construction. At its peak, it constituted 7.2 per cent of France's gross industrial product and the opening of lines between Marseilles to Paris and from Paris to other parts of Europe. Germany, too, experienced a period where financial institutions were essential to industrial economic growth. Unlike France, however, German banks played a more direct role in railway companies, often purchasing shares of these companies, thereby exercising greater control over Germany's railroad development. Such an arrangement was so effective that when the demand for railway capital fell in the late 1860s, German bankers did not need to look elsewhere for a source of capital, thereby nullifying the effects of local businesses looking outside of Germany for investment.

A similar approach of making sure railroad capitalists did not look to foreign powers for funding is seen in the US, where US banks provided easy access to funding while the federal government placed heavy tariffs on imported goods such as steam engines in the 1830s. This scheme was so successful that by the 1870s, the US had around 53,000 miles of railroad, which surpassed Britain and Germany (Headrick, 2009). The industrial revolution fostered a new relationship between banking institutions and technological progress. It was perhaps one of the most critical industrial-era economic changes, as its precipitating effects are evident in changes in the social spheres in both Europe and North America.
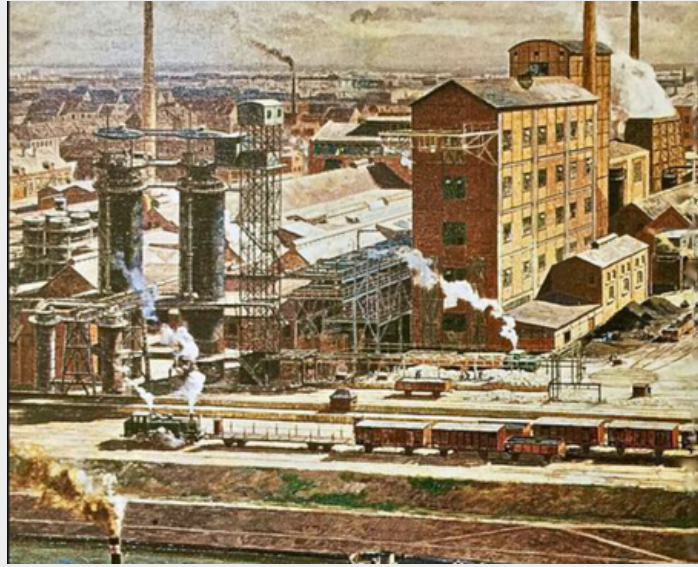
Amidst the economic backdrop of a growing railroad network and an economy that no longer depended on water for energy came mass migration from rural areas to production centres, which sparked a period of unprecedented urbanisation. The railroad provided a cheap and quick means of transportation, reducing relative distances between up-and-coming industrial centres and rural villages; this incentivised workers to make the journey in search of better job opportunities. Across Europe, towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants doubled during the eighteenth century, and by the 1870s, town populations had doubled again (Lees, 2015). The US experienced a similar pattern where, by the 1910s, the country was 46 per cent urbanised (Sachs, p.161). From this, the industrial city was birthed.

These new urban environments spawned two social changes. First, the lack of proper sewer systems paired with large numbers of people in closely confined spaces led to an outbreak of diseases such as cholera (Harrison, 2015). Conditions were so poor that many urban dwellers' life expectancy was usually ten years shorter than their rural counterparts (Allen, 2017). Moreover, with investments in a nationwide railroad and oceanic trade networks, diseases could travel between populations at an alarming rate. Not until the late 1800s did urban life improve as European governments became aware of the linkage between cholera deaths and sewerage-laden water, thus funding public work projects to provide citizens with better access to clean water (Lees, p.47).

The second was the change in family dynamics, as the stressful conditions placed on workers by the squalid conditions of the city and the appalling work environment led to an uptick in family abandonment and an increased separation between work and family (Stearns, 2015). Not only did working men spend less time at home, but they now received the status of breadwinner within the family, where their spouse and children were, for the most part, entirely dependent upon him for their livelihoods. These unfortunate circumstances were captured rather poignantly by eighteenth-century writer Mary Wollstonecraft who proclaimed that " [women] must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life or support after his death." Hence, the industrial revolution gave rise to the new social challenge of urbanisation, which further spawned changes in family structure and new means for disease to spread.

With the industrial revolution came a new class-based society, where society was divided along economic lines that replaced the old society grounded on duty; an example would be the Three Estates in the Ancien Régime. This social trend had political ramifications, chief among which was the supposed decline of the nobility and the rise of a new upper-middle class. However, extending this trend outside of France is somewhat problematic. In other parts of Europe, the nobility adapted to the new political climate and engaged with the new economic order or used their political clout to ensure their hold on power continued. A paradigm of the first was Britain and the emergence of an entrepreneurial noble class. The landed nobility, whose basis of wealth was predominantly land, welcomed the Industrial Revolution. They used the wealth they had previously accrued to invest in improvements in technology, thus diversifying their investment portfolios. The latter case applied to landed and staunchly conservative Junkers in the Elbean plains of Prussia. Their families were tied with the Prussian military and civil service to such an extent that they could threaten to restrict recruitment for the military, withhold taxes, or delay the progress of the emerging Prussian navy. Many politicians had no choice but to acquiesce to their demands and retract policies, such as tariff reduction efforts in the 1890s, that benefited the modern sector. It would seem that regardless of the new social conditions that emerged during the industrial revolution, money was still a guarantee of power, irrespective of whether it was new money or from pre-industrial sources.

The critical political change in the US was the emergence of a new justification of expansion over the rest of the continent based not solely on the God-given mandate to spread the virtues of capitalism and democracy but also on American technological supremacy. This idea was aptly referred to as the United States Manifest Destiney. The industrial revolution helped provide further grounding for this form of American exceptionalism, as the US was now a mechanised power. Therefore, the United States had the right to continue expanding as it was an industrial power that could better exploit natural resources than the societies currently living off them.

The Industrial Revolution's impact on the economic, social, and political spheres of Europe and North America is undeniable. It led to the rise of an energy-based, technology-focused economy spurred on by new banking policies that made capital easy to acquire for entrepreneurs. The widespread use of technology allowed mass movements of people from a rural environment to ever more concentrated production centres. This trend of urbanisation and the accompanying diseases facilitated a host of changes in the social sphere, one of which was a change in family dynamics and the conception of the male breadwinner. Finally, although the nobility declined in France, it is important to note how post-industrial forces preserved their power over politics in other parts of Europe, either through investment or coercion. The predominant political change for the US was a new grounding for American Exceptionalist ideology based on technological factors as opposed to abstract notions of capitalism and democracy.

CHESS ELEMENTS IN PAINTINGS: SYMBOLS, EMOTIONS AND STORIES

Lan Yao (MA History Education)

Chess can contain symbols, represent emotions and tell stories, and can be a crucial element of artworks. The significance of chess also varies in paintings from different period.

1. THE RENAISSANCE

During the Renaissance, chess began to be considered as an art itself and was gradually gaining popularity. Chess elements also appeared frequently in artworks. In paintings, chess was endowed with symbols and represented morality. For example, a lot of paintings from the Renaissance use chess elements to tell the moral value of love, nobility, and the victory of virtue against evil.

The painting The Game of Chess is an example of using the element of chess to demonstrate the virtues of women.

This painting depicts three sisters of an adorable family playing chess. The three sisters around the chessboard are demure and dress in an aristocratic fashion, which is in clear contrast with the housemaid observing the game. This reveals that during the Renaissance, chess is the symbol of nobility. The tone of the painting is brisk, and the color of light red constitutes a large proportion of the painting, which reflects a delight atmosphere. Though chess is a competitive activity, the vibrate colors and the smile in the women's faces eases such competitiveness but illustrates harmony among the three sisters.

In this way, chess symbolizes family bond and represents the solidity of family relationships.

On the other hand, it is not common for Renaissance paintings to portray women playing chess. In the Renaissance, chess was still men's game and women were not expected to learn about chess. But women gradually gained more rights in political and social lives, and began to try men's games, where the chess piece queen's power also increased significantly during the Renaissance. Thus, the painting praises the women's intelligence demonstrated through chess, and portrays chess as an essential humanistic education for both men and women.

2. EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Chess in artworks of the early modern period often tells stories and portrays the lives of prominent people. Themes such as games between two famous chess players, nobilities, or politicians are common in chess paintings during this era.

The painting The Chess Players uses chess elements to tell the story of three respectable people.

Thomas Eakins, *The Chess Players*, 1876

It should be noted that the three figures in the painting existed in the real life and were important father-figures to the painter Eakins. The two players are elderly Bertrand Gardel (at left), Eakins' French teacher, and younger George Holmes, Eakins' first art teacher. The one who is observing the game is Eakins' father Benjamin.

The element of chess in this painting creates an ongoing relationship among the three people and the painter. The chess set is placed in the most conspicuous position and is illuminated, which emphasizes the importance of chess in the narrative. It seems that Holmes with black pieces is winning, as he has taken the queen of his opponent, and his queen is positioned in the center of the chessboard.

This might indicate the different social statuses of the two players, or Eakins' different attitudes towards the two teachers.

In addition, Eakins placed his father Benjamin in the center of the painting and made him observe the game from a commanding position, which reveals Eakins' high respect to his father.

Yet the father's face was obscured by shadow, and the title of the painting "The Chess Players" seems to deliberately exclude the father from the narrative, which somehow shows the painter's ambivalent attitude towards his father.

3. WARTIME CHESS

Paintings during World War I and II began a new style: cubism, in which objects are broken up and reassembled in an abstracted form. Chess elements are also deformed in such paintings, portraying the brutality of wars and reflecting people's mood during wartime.

The painting Soldier at a Game of Chess illustrates such mood triggered by World War I.

Jean Metzinger, *Soldier at a Game of Chess*, 1914-15

It should be noted that the painter served the military and served as a medical orderly during World War I. Thus, the painter had witnessed the ravages of the war and presented his mood during the war in his artworks.

In this painting, the soldier's face is distorted and is covered with chunks of red and green, probably illustrating that the soldier is suffering terribly from the war.

The chessboard the soldier holds might be an allusion of the battlefield. The chessboard is also distorted, with pieces placed at random, which might reflect the disorder and the rage of the war.

In addition, blocks of contrasting colors in the painting give people a feeling of anxiety and depression.

Another possible interpretation of this painting is that chess was a common recreation for soldiers as well as captives during World War I. Thus the soldier in the painting uses chess to relieve his depression and grievousness from the war.

Soldiers playing chess

If you are a chess player, you will appreciate these chess paintings, as the exquisite chess element will immediately attract your attention and take you to explore the stories behind the paintings.

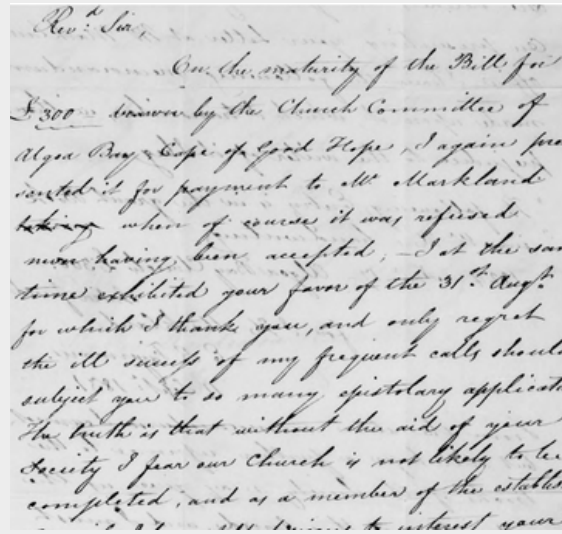# BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT THE BRITISH ONLINE ARCHIVES

Anouska Jha (Third Year)

This issue's collection of choice at the British Online Archives is entitled ' Accounts of South Africa from the first missionaries from 1820-1900. It is a vast database of correspondence papers, narrative accounts, and letters in the context of the United Society Partners in Gospel (USPG). This was an Anglican missionary group operating from the 18-20th centuries, with the aim to establish the spread of Christianity in Africa.

I believe this is an important contribution to the theme of Black History Month, as the reverberations of colonial rule across the Global South and its impact on contemporary African national and ethnic identity is significant. This archive is a major contribution to the existing scholarship of British colonialism in South Africa, which was first occupied in 1795, colonised in 1806 and declared a dominion of the empire in 1910. British Christian missionary groups such as the Free Church of Scotland among the Zulu aimed to indirectly explore areas of national economic interest and religious fidelity through involvement in local agriculture and community life. Christian evangelists were intimately involved in the colonial processes of South Africa, instilling an imprint of capitalist culture and giving rise to protest and resistance. They were vital elements of the colonial encounter and shaped not only religious outlook but politics, medicine and social relations.

The archives themselves cover the regions of Capetown, Zululand, Natal and Grahamstown. The unique feature of this archive and its potential interest for researchers is its cross-disciplinary reach; it covers, for example, statistical documents detailing how effectively missions were drawing in worshippers in Capetown, records of the expansion of dioceses of St Johns in Kaffraria, and the tactics of missionaries to allure distrusting chiefs of Zululand and Swaziland.

A particular source of interest is taken from the Archive's ' Capetown' collection (C/AFS/L). This document contains letters of exchange between British missionary individuals such as E.Burrow, C.Maynard and John Heavyside.

Capetown, C/AFS /L

A letter from Charles Maynard (17 September 1831) to Hamilton, likely a local chief in Algea Bay in Cape of Good Hope, On the Finances of Church at Fort Elizabeth), is exemplary of the economic and cognitive underpinnings of missionaries. The first line of the letter talks of the ' maturity of the Bill for £300, drawn by the Church Committee of Algae Bay'. This largely factual statement is then followed by claims of the missionaries' gradual lack of confidence in their work. Maynard states ' the truth is that without your society, I fear our Church is most likely to be exempted'. An earlier letter dated to 11 September similarly talks of the need to ' further enforce the Books of this Society which may give us the advantages of this fund'. Even those with little prior knowledge of the missionary objective in South Africa can detect a sense of fear and wavering authority in Maynard's words. That he had to secure funding from local church networks, and regularly maintained contact with the Church of the Cape of Good Hope, invites research into the relations between British missionaries and Africans who accommodated and funded their aims. Moreover, the fearful tone evoked by Maynard's frequent apologies of his ' troublesome' letters suggests a degree of agency of the South African periphery; did local chiefs welcome missionaries due to their usefulness in secular spheres such as diplomacy and technology? Does Maynard's tone further suggest caution against resistors of missionary elites? As with all sources on the British Archives, these primary documents reveal much about the individual correspondances of colonial elites, colonial subjects, and their intersecting aims.

 I invite all historians to browse this archive; it is a rich collection of letters and statistics which are useful to historians of colonialism, economic history and social histories!

Coming up for our November issue...

"Conflict and Heritage"

Join our group of writers now!

To join, contact Jonas (ig: green_ideology)
or Anouska (ig: anouska.j)