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PREFACE

As constructions of social categorization which have strong contemporary significance in the ways in which we continue to view social relations, gender and race are compelling categories of historical analysis owing to the plurality of positions that each term has represented over time. Joan W. Scott argues for separation of gender and race from class analysis as their own separate areas of study specifically because of such ambiguities, noting that whilst class relations rest upon relatively well-established theories of economic relations, class and gender were, at least as of the cultural turn of the 1970s and 80s, hitherto unexplored fields. Since then, a litany of research into the lived experiences of women in history, as well as a reappraisal of gender as a socially constructed category have benefitted the broader historical discipline by encouraging re-evaluations of our assumptions about gender archetypes.

Similarly, efforts to decolonize history and construct a broader understanding through the lens of those marginalized and peripheralized by projects of colonialism and empire have benefitted from research into racial categories over time. Eric Williams traces the origins of modern conceptions of race to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, detailing the emergence of the broad recategorization of humanity as a product of the economic needs of European empires; the easiest way of rationalizing the total subjugation of one's fellow human being was to deny them their humanity by designating them ' subhuman.' (Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery, 1944) Although broadly accepted today in academia as a socially constructed phenomenon, race unfortunately continues to play a role in social relations as we continue to deal with the legacies of empire and slavery.

The portrait chosen for the cover of this issue is that of the 19th century African-American abolitionist Charlotte Forten Grimké, who worked tirelessly throughout her life to champion the causes of racial and gender equality in the United States, serving as an abolitionist activist and later an educator to former slaves emancipated by Union forces in the American Civil War. She would later be involved in the founding of the National Association of Colored Women and was a fervent advocate of women's suffrage.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hey everyone,

We hope you're all doing well and managing the stress that comes with the end of term. With Christmas break upon us, we wish you all a restful festive season with friends and family and a happy new year.

The theme of this issue is 'Race and Gender'. To begin, Maddie Walker-Moffit explores the themes of patriarchy, gender, sexuality, and morality in the seventeenth century as portrayed in the play ' The Convent of Pleasure', by writer and playwright Margaret Cavendish. Next, Yi Jie Teng examines the role of class and race in early 20th Century American Gothic literature, using H.P. Lovecraft's ' The Shadow of Innsmouth' as a case study. Iman Hafeez then provides a study of the egalitarian nature of pre-colonial Yorùbá society located in present-day Nigeria, and argues for an alternative to the currently patriarchal society introduced by European colonialism to be found in the traditional culture of the Yorùbá people. Following on, Grace Lyon covers the various roles played by women in the enactment of political change in Britain prior to the Suffragette movement, and details the different ways women interacted with politics depending on their social and economic status. Last but not least, James Yu analyses the utility of nationalism and the nation state in historical analysis.

We hope that you will find the articles insightful and entertaining, whether you're interested in engaging in rigorous academic discourse or are simply browsing through this issue to see what historians at the UCL History Society have to say.

Yi Jie Teng (Editor, History Society Journal)

MARGARET CAVENDISH: QUEERNESS AND FEMINISM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Maddie Walker-Moffit (Third year)

Portrait of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Peter Lely, 1665, Creative Commons

A play by an eccentric Duchess, staunch Royalist supporter and seventeenth century writer might not be the first place one would look to find examples of queer feminist writing. However, Margaret Cavendish's The Convent of Pleasure (1668) ticks all the boxes. In the following essay, I analyse the gender fluid character of the " Princess" : originally presenting as a woman, at the end of the play they are revealed to be a man, but not before enjoying a sapphic relationship with the leader of the convent and protagonist of the play, " Lady Happy" . This essay explores the way in which Cavendish used the character of the Princess to question patriarchy, gender, sexuality and morality.

Within the walls of Lady Happy's Convent of Pleasure, women are liberated from patriarchal dominance and the constraints of the accepted female role. For them, freedom and true happiness come from their untethering from binary and social norms. As the Princess observes, " some of your ladies do accoustre themselves in masculine-habits, and act lovers-parts" . The centre of Cavendish's engagement with this topic is explored in the character of the Princess. The sex of the Princess is fluid: at the beginning of the play, they seem to enjoy a lesbian relationship with Lady Happy; however, they describe themself using both male and female pronouns, often dresses in male clothing and adopts the male role of courtly lover.

Lady Happy similarly makes ambiguous comments as to the Princess' gender, describing them as a " princely lover" . The Princess' revelation as a man is met with seeming indifference by both Lady Happy and the Prince(ss), with stage direction " the Princess and the Lady Happy stand still together" . The play thus deals not only with concepts of homosexuality, but with gender fluidity and feminism. By escaping the gender binary the Princess not only advocates for a less rigid understanding of sex and sexuality, but arguably presents a consensual understanding of love.

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The trope of the ' courtly lover' in Cavendish's play directly challenges gender relations and concepts of ' masculinity'. As the traditional courtly lover, the man is obsessively enamoured by a cold-hearted mistress. Masochistic in his desire, he is willing to take any step to ultimately earn the love of his lady. As historian John Yamato-Wilson observes, while the male may have been humiliated, placed in a ' submissive' position through his unrequited love, his hard-hearted mistress was regarded as cruel, sadistic and ultimately held responsible for his suffering. Tellingly, Spenser's Faerie Queene (1590) describes how, " mighty hands forget their manlinesse; /Drawne with the power of an heart-robbing eye" . However, the male's subservience to his lady is a ploy; once the woman yields, traditional male supremacy is reinstated.

Arguably the ' gentlemen' attempting to force their way into the Convent adopt the role of courtly lover, justifying their attempts in terms of desire for the ladies inside. As M. Facil light-heartedly says of Lady Happy, " Let us see the clergy to persuade her out, for the good of the Commonwealth" , followed by the more threatening tone of M. Advisor, " Her heretical opinions ought not to be suffered" '.

Just as the gentlemen take on the role of courtly lover, the Princess also uses the language of courtly love to woo Lady Happy. Their first words in the play to Lady Happy are, " the greatest pleasure I could receive, were to have your friendship" . The Gentlemen are sexually and physically threatening in their bid to uphold male supremacy. In contrast, by their apparent femaleness the Princess escapes the need for patriarchal dominance in thier interactions with Lady Happy and is encouraged in their endeavour by Lady Happy.

In traditional courtly romances, the woman is objectified as a prize to be gained, with most of the soul searching, self-reflection and self-awareness recorded from the ' male' perspective. However, in this play such roles are thoroughly transgressed. We follow Lady Happy's rationale for creating a societal retreat for women in the Convent of Pleasure, and it is the Prince(ss) who comes across as the more two-dimensional character, endlessly relating their love to the Lady.

Conventionally, the play ends with marriage. Unconventionally for the seventeenth century society however, this is a marriage between two equals, the culmination of a mutual courtship which can take place only in Cavendish's Convent of Pleasure, an environment entirely removed from contemporaneous societal and sexual norms.

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FURTHER READING:

Further Reading
Primary sources
Margaret Cavendish, The Blazing World (1666) – one of the first science fiction books ever written, with some very strong sapphic undertones.
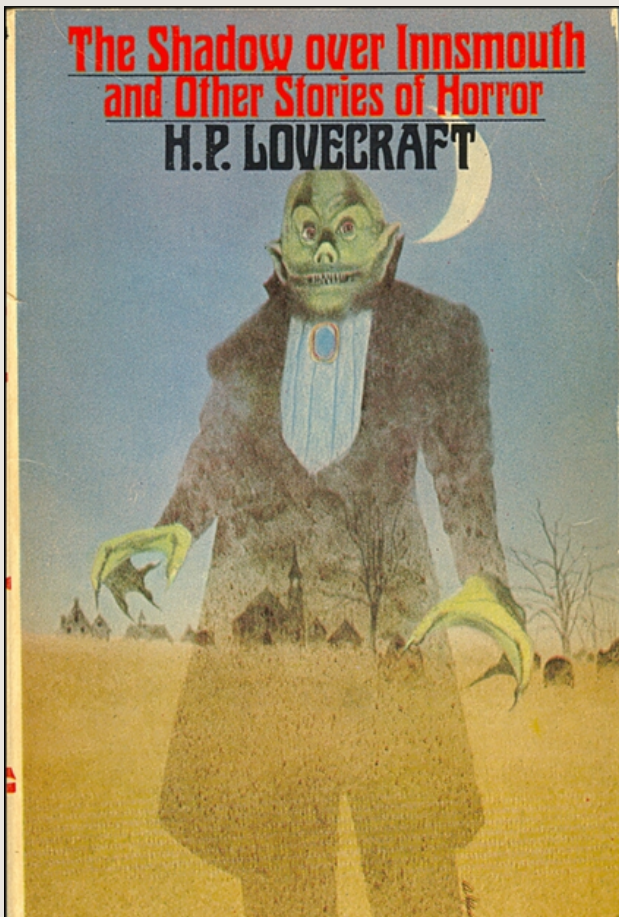Margaret Cavendish, Bell in Campo (1662) – a group of women form their own army. Need I say more?

Secondary Sources
Francesca Peacock, Pure Wit: The Revolutionary Life of Margaret Cavendish (2023: Head of Zeus) – a brilliant overview of Cavendish's life.

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THE SHADOW OVER INNSMOUTH: RACE AND CLASS IN AMERICAN GOTHIC LITERATURE

Yi Jie Teng (Third Year)

Cover of the novel as published by Scholastic Books, 1971, Creative Commons

Shadow over Innsmouth, written in 1931 American writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft, is a horror novella that stands amidst his works as being perhaps the most emblematic of the literary traditions of Gothic horror, with the novel beginning with a distinctly formulaic Gothic setting, bridging the gap between his unique brand of cosmic horror and his more conventional Gothic literary influences. The early 20th Century American Gothic novel was intimately tied to the historical context in which they were created. Common themes included the fear of the unknown, the rejection of economic and cultural modernity, psychological dread, and most importantly, consistent racial anxiety and fear of the racial other. Shadow over Innsmouth is a particularly fascinating specimen of its genre as it serves to blend elements of the more traditional Gothic horror with Lovecraft's more unconventional and outlandish brand of cosmic horror, which itself while deviating from the stylistic characteristics of Gothic fiction, displays the same features strongly suggestive of having been derived from the tradition of Gothic literature and horror first pioneered by Horace Walpole's novel, The Castle of Otranto.

Resurrecting the image of the past as a surrogate for present fears is a feature characteristic of Gothic literature. Jerrold E. Hogle argues that the Gothic and the visage which it conjures have persistently been utilized to serve as a vessel in which present anxieties and fears which pervade contemporary society are cloaked and delivered to audiences. Among the most immediately recognizable of these fears which factor heavily into Lovecraft's narratives is the fear of the other who has been made frightful to the audience through their alienation by race and class. The Shadow over Innsmouth begins with the protagonist, a young, amateur antiquarian, embarking on a journey through the New England countryside in search of his genealogical roots, but soon discovers that the town is home to a terrible secret. Bernice M. Murphy explains that the othering of the rural poor into a savage ' monstrosities' meant to be feared serves to transform Jeffersonian ideals of the ' pioneer' spirit and rugged individualism into ' signifiers of resentfulness and savagery'. The othering of rural poor in American Gothic, which often capitalizes on cliches and stereotypes surrounding the ' white trash' of the post-Civil War south to evoke dread and disgust towards perceived degeneracy and backwardness.

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In spite of the setting's geographical distance from the post-bellum south, the first chapter sees the protagonist detailing a similar process in which the town degenerated from its antebellum peak through a period of prolonged de-industrialization and economic decline. Later on in the novel, the protagonist finds himself face to face with the inhabitants of the deteriorated settlement on the bus ride to Innsmouth, and is taken aback by their uncanny and horrific visage, with their features described as being neither ' Asiatic, Polynesian, Levantine, or negroid' but instead possessing the traits of ' biological degeneration'. This motif is repeated throughout the novel; the town's inhabitants become increasingly monstrous, a state which is revealed to be the result of interspecies miscegenation. Notions of racial and biological hierarchy, particularly anxieties surrounding the dilution of ' pure' blood strongly informed Lovecraft's worldview. According to Leslie Ginsburg, the writings of Edgar Allan Poe were profoundly shaped by his experiences growing up in the antebellum South, being ' fraught with the psychological temptation' to assume the prevailing attitudes toward race and slavery, whilst linking the ' psychological machinery of the American gothic to the political machinations of American racism.' That Poe's works served to play a key role in influencing Lovecraft's style and literary outlook may explain this similarity in outlook. Robert K. Martin draws similar associations between the stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Faulkner and the complex racial history of the United States, particularly pertaining to slavery and the Jim Crowe era. Lovecraft's use of the past to illustrate fear of the other represent the racialized tensions of post-Civil War American society and its literary manifestations.

Beyond the fear of the racial other, resentment of modernity features heavily into Lovecraftian horror. Particularly, The Shadow over Innsmouth and From Beyond represent several responses to modernity and its perceived failings which are particularly pertinent to the historical context in which they were written; the failure of industrial capitalism to fulfil the promise of utopian wealth and the fear of cultural dissolution. In Shadow over Innsmouth, the dark secret which haunts the town is eventually revealed to be an unholy pact made between the wealthy Merchant Obed Marsh and a race of sea-dwelling creatures known as the Deep Ones. In exchange for continued wealth, Marsh established a cult which performed ritualistic sacrifices in accordance with the wishes of the Deep Ones, eventually leading to the town's enslavement. A further revelation that the practices of the cult originate from a far-flung Pacific-island draws deeper parallels between Lovecraft's tale and the perceived onslaught of non-White migrants against America's racial purity. Innsmouth's descent from prosperity to spiritual and physical damnation closely parallels the course of Lovecraft's life, which began in relative prestige and wealth, but soon descended into ill health and poverty, whilst by extension representing an unease over the perceived course of societal change which accompanied modernity. James Kneale argues that Lovecraft represented the ' outsider' which he often sought to depict in his stories, a being both out of time and out of space, longing to return to an earlier time of simplicity. Timothy H. Evans expresses a similar view, arguing that Lovecraft's antiquarian pursuits and obsession with tradition was spurred on by a wholesale rejection of modernity and its perceived shortcomings of commercialism, immigration, and mass culture. In the economic, cultural, and biological decay of Innsmouth, Lovecraft illustrates an allegory for the evils wrought by modernity in moral and social dimensions. Specifically, the prosperity and stability of Innsmouth is strongly correlated to the colonial and antebellum era of American history, whilst the lust for wealth conversely brought about the town's downfall and damnation by allowing foreign and alien influences to corrupt its purity.

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According to Kneale, the traumas which Lovecraft sought to convey through his works were as much personal as they were social traumas reflective of common zeitgeists which existed throughout 1920s and 30s America. For example, the passing of the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, motivated by fears that the cultural and racial homogeneity of the United States were under threat by the relatively free movement of peoples across borders, severely dampened the flow of migrants into the United States, and was particularly aimed at stemming the migration from East Asian nations. Moreover, Lovecraft's rejection of modernity as manifest in industrial capitalism is made evident in the political transformation he undertook in his later years. As Lovecraft came to experience significant disillusionment with the economic status quo in the aftermath of the Great Depression, going from a Republican to an ardent supporter of the economically progressive Franklin D. Roosevelt, although never relinquishing his aristocratic outlook of cultural chauvinism. In both Lovecraft's worldview and the greater context of the interwar United States, the failure of modernity is represented by economic devastation and the decline of cultural homogeneity. Consequently, Lovecraft utilizes the conventions of Gothic fiction for an interwar American context, suffusing his narratives with a deep yearning for a long-gone past and instinctual revulsion towards the change represented by modernity.

Lovecraft makes clear the roots of his literary inspirations, particularly, the genre of weird fiction popularized by writers such as Edgar Allan Poe. Ties to the Gothic genre are evident in the literary and stylistic choices made in The Shadow over Innsmouth, from Lovecraft's use of a monstrous imagery as a representation of a racialised other, to the manifestation of his deep-seated fear of modernity. Grounded in the historical context of the interwar United States, Lovecraft's works carry on the tradition of Gothic literature in a manner which is distinctly American, drawing upon American folklore and socio-cultural fixtures. In Shadow over Innsmouth, the alien monstrosities inhabiting the town are proxies for the perceived social and moral decay of the United States, the sheer dread and horror invoked by their inhuman appearances standing in for the various marginalized racial groups in American society which Lovecraft and his contemporaries feared would pollute the purity of the White Anglo-Saxon. The decrepitude of Innsmouth itself meanwhile is representative of the material failings of modernity and its inability to deliver on the promises of utopian abundance, tinged with feelings of class and racial prejudice. Decades on, Lovecraft remains a controversial figure. His works have gone on to inspire all manner of science fiction and fantasy media, and have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity he could only have dreamt of during life of chronic destitution and poverty. Whilst the appreciation of the aesthetic and trappings of cosmic horror may be relatively innocuous in contemporary popular culture, it is nevertheless important to remember the troubling context in which early American Gothic literature emerged.

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YOUR GENDER IS NOT MINE: A YORÙBÁ CASE STUDY

Iman Hafeez (First Year)

Around the world, we are increasingly coming to the realisation that there is no universal notion of gender. Inevitably, cries of horror can be heard when this is discussed. Many see the concept of there being no gender, or at least, there is no one definition of gender, as a solely contemporary one. Such a concept is looked at by some with disgust, or fear. It is seen as a dangerous idea, one that is wreaking havoc over Western society and brainwashing our children. In reality, this is something our ancestors had already figured out. Well. Not our Western ancestors.

Yorùbá, now modern-day southwestern Nigeria, is a fantastic example of this. Before Western colonial rule in the 1800s, the Yorùbá people had vastly different ideas of gender. In fact, the indigenous Yorùbá society used to be an almost gender-neutral one. It had complementary gender roles, meaning that while women and men were seen as two different genders, they were viewed as equals. The welfare of the individual was seen as being entirely reliant on the well-being of the community. Thus, competition was not encouraged between men and women - so unlike pre-1800s England, Western patriarchy did not exist.

This was seen throughout Yorùbá society in a multitude of ways.

Language reflects its people, and significantly, Yorùbá language does not have gender-specific language. The same word, omo, is used for male and female offspring, and the only differentiation made between siblings is of their age. Egbon refers to a younger sibling, while aburo refers to the older one. So, not only was Yorùbá a gender-neutral society, but one that had an age hierarchy. Gender was a secondary social relation, with age being the primary one. Proverbs also indicate how the Yorùbá people saw gender. Women being complementary to men, not subordinate, was reflected in popular sayings such as ọba tí kò ní olorì – no pride for a king without a queen. Women's value within society is also apparent, considering at the beginning of the new year, a common wish made was odun a ya abo, meaning ' may this year be female for us'. This was because femininity was associated with coolness, ero, while masculinity was associated with toughness, lile.

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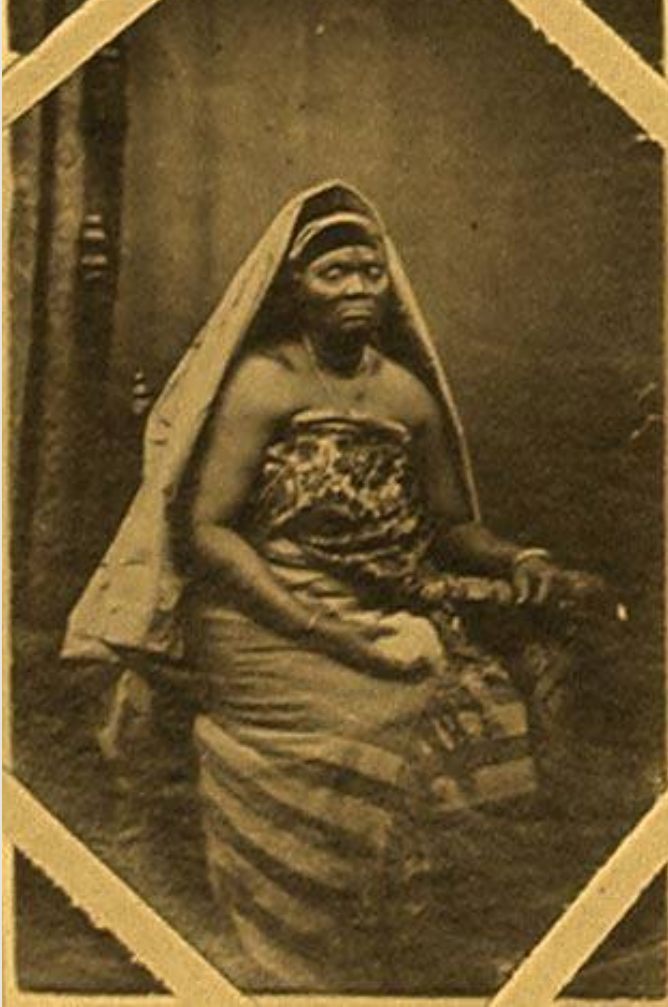
Tinubu of Abeokuta, Unknown photographer, 1886,
Creative Commons

The value seen in women was also clear within the military structures of pre-colonial Yorùbá land. Women had active roles during war, leading long- and short-distance trade, large political entities, and even wars themselves. They participated in meetings that deliberated on whether Yorùbá should go to war at all. Notable figures include Madam Tinubu of Abeokuta and Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan. Both women had large influence in their respective towns and used their financial wealth as well as their labour force to help in the war effort.

Arguably the most revealing facet of Yorùbá society in terms of gender relations was religion. Female aesthetics feature within the four major sections of Yorùbá religious traditions: cosmology, the goddess tradition, ancestral performance, and divination.

Within cosmology, the Yorùbá religion's creation story features gender complementary relations. The creation story follows that Olodumare, God (who is androgynous), delegated Orisanla, the most senior divinity, the task of creating the landscape and humans of this world, and Oduduwa to accompany him. Orisanla went on to mould the physical figure of humans, and Oduduwa created the physical surroundings.

Interestingly, Orisanla is often depicted as male and Oduduwa as female. Thus, the creation of the universe was a joint task between a man and a woman, reflecting the gender balance witnessed in Yorùbá. Gender-complementary social relations were rooted within religion. It was the word of God that men and women were there to support one another.

As well as this, ancestral performance made up a big part of the Yorùbá religion. There was a big link between the ancestors and humans within Yorùbá society. Ancestors were believed to relocate from the physical world to the world of the deceased, however were still able to have a close relationship with the living, often visiting as masqueraders. Such belief manifested into the Egungun Masquerade culture, an annual celebration that welcomed the presence of the ancestors of the Yorùbá people. This was known as the egungun ancestral practice and originated from women's religious experience. As a result, women sustained the Egungun practice. Not only this, but women also served as custodians of the Iya Mi group and àjé in Yorùbá. Iya Mi is a group of powerful women used by the goddess Osun, while àjé is a special power held by some women, believed to make them more powerful than any other Yorùbá deity. Because all other sectors of society were rooted within religion, rulers in Yorùbá were unlikely to succeed without the support of these women. Clearly, women were included in positions of power that had huge influence over the people in Yorùbá land.

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Yorùbá gender-complementary roles were forever altered following the imposition of patriarchal and heteronormative practices via Western colonial rule in the 1800s through to the 1960s. Yorùbá society systematically and gradually became gendered following British presence. Colonial settlers sought to ' civilise' the Yorùbá people. This occurred through the changes made to land ownership, education, religion, and leadership. Prior to colonial rule, land in Yorùbá society was a free commodity, and individuals were able to grow cocoa on it. However, Western forces commercialised the land, and viewed cocoa as a high value commodity, deeming it a monopolistic market exclusively for men. Women were seen as too unfit to own land, much less to grow cocoa. Missionary activities, in particular, formed the genesis of the gender binary in Yorùbá society, providing men with missionary education to become evangelists and pastors, while offering women education to became good wives to said evangelists and pastors. All these systems enhanced female subjugation and empowered male family heads and traditional rulers to continue this domination, as they benefitted so greatly from it.

Pre-colonialism, women had a place in every grouping within Yorùbá society. This included: Ìyálóde (woman king subject), Ìya Àbíyè (female midwife), Ìyá Lójà (female market leader) and Erelú (female overall leader). The colonial administration, however, created a hierarchy of four, with Men (European) at the top, followed by Women (European), Native (African men), and finally Other. African women formed the unspecified final category of the Other in this hierarchy. The West led through decentralised despotism, only recognising men as rulers. Women were not seen as capable in any capacity. This prevented them from participating in their former enviable leadership positions completely, while rewarding tyrannical behaviour from the male chiefs.

Today, Yorùbá society is a patriarchal one. Men are afforded privileges within higher education, employment, and social opportunities that women do not have access to. The West's settlement within Yorùbá land destroyed the complementary gender roles seen within the indigenous community. It is important to note that a Western feminist approach cannot be taken to remove patriarchy within Nigeria today. Instead, as black feminist scholars have argued, there should be increased recognition of women in line with what Yorùbá tradition had constructed. A woman's place in society should be built on her status in indigenous Yorùbá land. Western feminism should not be taken as a universal solution to patriarchy, instead, West Africa's construction of gender should.

Evidently, we must look back in order to move forward.

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"FACILITATORS, CAMPAIGNERS AND RADICALS": THE TRADITION OF BRITISH WOMEN AND POLITICS BEFORE 'VOTES FOR WOMEN'

Grace Lyon (Third Year)

There is a common public misconception that women's participation in the political sphere, or rather politics, began with the Suffragettes and the campaign for ' Votes for Women' in the twentieth- century. In Britain, and most other European countries including Germany, France and Russia, there was already an established long-standing tradition of women in political sphere. It should be said that the feminine tradition was not nearly the same as the masculine tradition—most men by 1900 (except for working-class men) had the vote, they had operated in government for centuries and acted with a political agency not offered to their female counterparts. However, male dominance in ' official' politics did not mean female exclusion from the whole political realm. Women of every class before 1900 had some involvement in the political sphere despite not having the right to vote or stand for election. This article aims to place women back in the public narrative—to tell their story as facilitators, campaigners, and radicals in their own right.

"FACILITATORS"

Elite women have perhaps had the most access to the political realm historically, and arguably had the most influence especially before nineteenth-century. Whether wives of politicians, mothers of kings and lords, or queen themselves; elite women have always had a front-row seat to British politics. Their proximity to the crown and to parliament defined their involvement in the political sphere. Elite women operated in what historian Elaine Chalus calls ' socio-politics', they used patronage (devoting their families' support to a political cause), hosted dinner parties and balls in which politics was a main feature of, and even acted as political agents themselves—they were the ' facilitators' of the political world.

' Family politics' and patronage were core features of the eighteenth and nineteenth century political worlds— arranging marriages into wealthy and influential families, being invited to the most well-connected ladies' balls, securing support for one's own political cause or party was essential to that of a contemporary politician.The up-and-coming politicians had to win over the elite women before anyone else; and elite women were more than able to facilitate their rises—and their falls. The balls and dinners they hosted were of their invitation only, and the political conversations men had been at their bequest. Certain women would also display their own political opinions at these events in a both more obvious and subtle way. During the Regency Crisis of 1788, in which Queen Charlotte and her son the Prince Albert (later George IV) were both vying for the regency of George III, elite women would declare their support for a candidate by the colour of their dress or the use of their fans. While not stating their endorsement outright in conversation, they were nonetheless exhibiting it openly to all those in attendance.

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More than just hosts or organisers of marriages, elite women were also in some rarer cases political agents in their own right. The most famous case in this regard is arguably that of Georgiana Cavendish, the Duchess of Devonshire and her involvement in the general election of 1784. Devonshire was one of the most influential women of her time, although a scandalous figure, she had incredible political connections with the Prince of Wales, Marie Antionette, and Charles Grey (who would later become Prime Minister).

Her advocacy of the Whig Party and the candidate Charles James Fox put her at the face of political activism; and Fox's success was largely due to her crucial involvement in his campaign. Additionally, less publicised but still of importance, politicians would often use their wives to carry out back-door or 'unofficial' political deals. Lady Rockingham was asked to 'court' the controversial William Pitt the younger for her husband Lord Rockingham in order to secure a political alliance with his supporters. Both cases of the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Rockingham show elite women to be political collaborators with their husbands, trusted in elite political circles, and both facilitators and, as Elaine Chalus states "functioning members of a political world where social situations were frequently used for political ends." Thus, elite women were key facilitators and agents of British politics, and establishing a substantial tradition of women and politics much before the turn of the twentieth-century and the time of the Suffragettes.

Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, 1783, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

"CAMPAIGNERS"

As we have already seen, women were more than capable of being effective political campaigners in the period before 1900. However, the most successful female political campaigners would come from the middle classes in the nineteenth-century. Middle-class women (or women of a 'middling class' as they were referred to before the 1830s)—much like their elite counterparts—used their social situations, family connections and images of domesticity to advance their political causes. However, instead of promoting political candidates or parties, they instead used their positions to further what they saw as 'moral' causes in society that needed to be rectified—the most notable in the nineteenth-century being the Abolition of the Slave Trade Movement.

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Portrait of English abolitionist Hannah More, Henry William Pickersgill, 1821, National Portrait Gallery

Middle-class women transferred themselves from the private sphere of the home to the public sphere of politics all the while maintaining their images of domesticity within the campaign for the abolition of slavery. They initially, in the eighteenth-century, framed their involvement as a moral quest curing a grave societal evil rather than a political one—middle-class women staged themselves as ' influencers' rather than political activists writing poems and short stories about the immorality of slavery particularly regarding female slaves being abused and separated from their children. One of the most famous of these writing was a 1788 poem by Hannah More entitled ' Slavery, a Poem.' By 1788 the Abolition of Slavery Society had 206 female members across Britain, mainly of ' middling-class' and an Evangelical Christian background. The female members had organised a boycott of West-Indian sugar made using slave labour in which 300,000 people took part. Middle-class women may not have seen themselves as political campaigners, but they were nonetheless campaigning in a political sphere.

By the nineteenth-century, however, when the focus of the movement shifted from curtailing direct British involvement in the slave trade to abolishing it in British colonies, middle-class women became the face of the political campaign and were more directly involved in politics. In Birmingham in 1825, the first women-only society was formed in order to specifically campaign to abolish slavery across the globe, while other already formed Women's Societies across Britian added the mandate of immediate abolition to their agendas by the 1830s. Nearly 25% of all the signatures on the anti-slavery petitions in 1833 were that of middle-class women, and by the 1850s women's anti-slavery societies had come to outnumber men's. Middle-class women were incredibly successful in their campaigns: they were influential in the 1807 Abolition Act and instrumental in the destruction of colonial slavery by 1840s, not to mention continuing to campaign for worldwide abolition right through to the suffrage movement in the twentieth-century. They were also active in the campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws of 1815 and the Prison Reform Movement through individuals like Elizabeth Fry, showing very clearly that women were active and thriving political agents before the time of the Suffragettes.

'RADICALS'

Working-class women and their relationship with politics is arguably the most interesting of the three. Due to not having the proximity to the crown, government or ' respectable' social circles, working women could not operate in the political sphere in similar ways to that of middle-class or elite women. Instead, they largely shared the working-class masculine tradition regarding politics: direct action (using physical force to achieve goals). Of all the different classes of women, working-class women were the most similar to their male counterparts with their engagement in the political sphere as none of the working-classes had the vote at any point in this period (working-men did not receive the vote until 1918). While there was undoubtedly scepticism and discrimination in working-women placing themselves on a political platform, they still manage to construct a significant radical tradition of direct political action as both rioters and radicals in much the same way their male counterparts did. In terms of working-class women as rioters, there are heated historical debates between social historians like EP Thompson and John Boleshedt as to how extensive women's role in food riots was in the eighteenth-century (although it is very much established by both that women took part in rioting). However, most convincing and captivating of working-women's involvement in politics in this period is the case of radicalism especially in regard to Chartism (the campaign for working-class and equal suffrage).
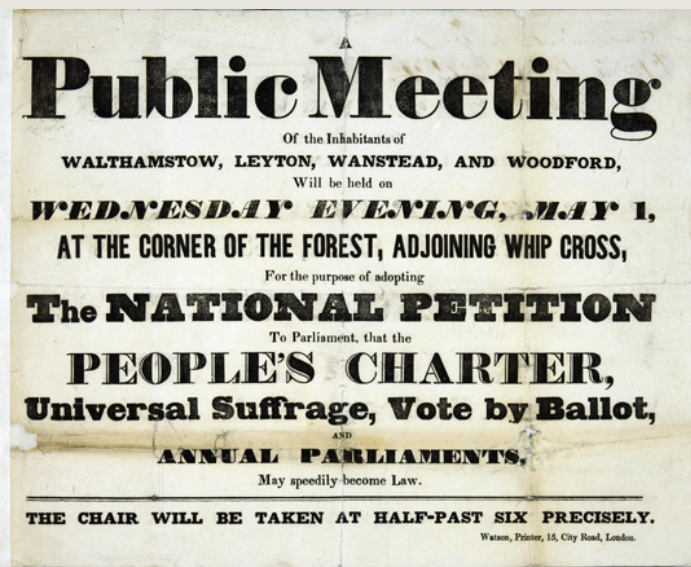
Chartist poster calling for a meeting to demand Universal Suffrage, National Archives UK

In relation to Chartism, working-class women were active both in the production and consumption of radicalism: they organised the meetings and rallies, formed their own societies within the cause like the Sheffield's Women Rights Association, and signed the mass petitions which were presented to parliament demanding the working people's right to vote. Working-class women had a created a place for themselves in radicalism and protest, within the political sphere. Matthew Roberts argues that the historical question should not be whether women were involved in radical politics, and politics in general, but to what extent they were.

 In an 1839 edition of the Chartist Newspaper ' the Northern Star' which had a mainly male readership and body of writers, women had written excerpts calling for their ' sisters' to " emancipate [their] husbands and children, and ourselves from domination of tyrants." There is no doubt that working-class women were not involved in the Chartist political campaign to the extent that men were—however, they produced a female radical political tradition that later would be expanded upon by the Suffragettes. The case of Chartism and working-class women proves very definitively that women were an integral part of the political sphere as radicals and participators in direct action before the Suffragettes.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is very clear to see that women of all classes had a significant role in politics before the Suffrage Movement ever came into play in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whether as facilitators, campaigners or radicals. Elite women facilitated the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century political worlds with family politics, hosting and being active political agents themselves. Middle-class women were successful and effective political campaigners with a multitude of causes which did not compromise their devotion to the private sphere and domesticity.

Working-class women participated in direct action more associated with their male counterparts, whether rioting or producing and consuming radicalism, they built a tradition of political agency before they had achieved their vote. It is also important to point out that while I have split each class into the above groups for the purpose of this article, there are many crossovers in each category—no class of women was exclusively reserved for any one role in politics. Women of all stations were political agents in a male-dominated political world. Female political agency did not begin with the Suffragettes, but rather the Suffragettes became the moment in which women began to claim an equal political agency offered to men.

This article, and this particular period, shows the need for gender history as category for historical analysis rather than just ' the history of women.' Gender history refers to the study of the relationship between masculinity and femininity rather than just women alone. ' The history of women' would have largely ignored the examples I have used above as these are women operating in a minority, in a male-dominated sphere, not significant movements for women exclusively. Women were not the organisers, the politicians, or the dominators in the political arena, but they were the facilitators and the campaigners and the radicals—and they deserve to be regarded as such. They deserve to be remembered in the public narrative as active and successful political agents...because they were.

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PROBLEMS OF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: NATIONS AND NATIONALISM

James Yu (Second Year)

The concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' have proven themselves to be divisive and illusive to both historians and social scientists. Both terms are increasingly difficult to define as any attempt at describing any of these terms is met with contention by scholars of multiple disciplines. A single, precise, and simple definition cannot be found without significant scrutiny from those both within the discipline and without. Yet, it is simultaneously true that these concepts have been of importance to a range of historical scholarship. Thus, it will be argued that the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' have been problematic for historians mainly on the basis that their definitions have been difficult to precisely define in a universally accepted manner, and that the application of these terms in historical scholarship has also been scrutinised as a result. Nonetheless, nationalism had proven to be a significant driver of change throughout modern history, and remains a powerful factor in politics and geopolitics today.
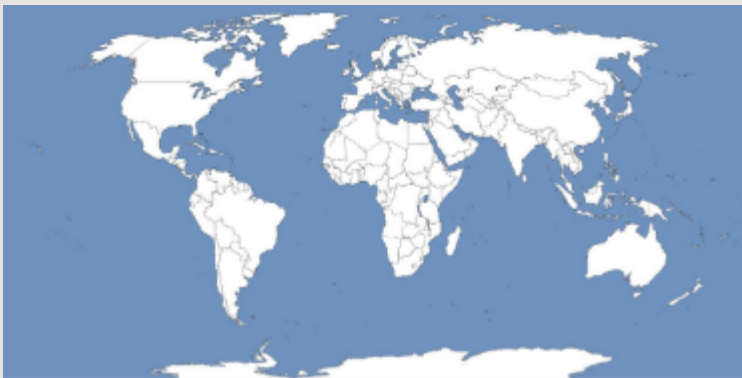
World maps are often depicted with discrete and cleanly delineated borders, Creative Commons

Firstly, a definition of the concept of a 'nation' is difficult to attain. The question of 'what is a nation?' is largely still open to a range of interpretations, despite the widespread usage of the term in historical scholarship. An example may be provided by Benedict Anderson, author of Imagined Communities (1991), where he argues that the 'nation' is an "imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". He argues that the nation is a conceptual idea which exists only in the minds of individuals, and faces numerous constraints, including size and boundaries.

To this end, Anderson supports the idea that the nation is a purely imagined concept; yet acknowledges the strength of nationalism in shaping society, politics, and international relations. This is juxtaposed by the positions of Ernest Gellner, author of "Nations and Nationalism" (1983); he argues that the nation is not merely a conceptual idea but a contingency - nations exist as a consequence of circumstances, based upon commonly-shared cultural identities, and mutual solidarity with those of shared identities. Where Anderson calls upon an invented political community, Gellner invokes the concept of shared culture and mutual solidarity of peoples of the same culture. Within this chasm of politics versus identity, imagined versus real, a commonly agreed definition for 'nation' cannot be found; yet, historians continue to use the term widely. Peter Mandler in What is National Identity? (2006) highlights the discrepancy between historians and social scientists in the use of 'nation'; while historians use the term 'national identity' widely, they fail to consider the importance of that categorisation precisely. Social scientists, by contrast, have failed to specify the uniqueness of the concept of 'nation' as a group identification (278). The conceptual 'gap' of the 'nation' exists not only in the discipline of history, but in other social sciences as well.

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The ' nation' is a highly alluring concept, as it is a common and significant system of organisation for humans; yet, the inability of such a wide range of academic disciplines to decide upon a singular definition for a concept as significant as ' nation' without debate and scrutiny has made the term problematic for historians.

Secondly, the concept of ' nationalism' similarly evades precise definition. Nationalism may have many meanings - a concept which refers to a zealous political ideology, a general belief in the existence of a nation-state, an ideological movement which may create nations, and far more than can be mentioned here. Similarly, it retains historical importance as historians frequently write of ' nationalist movements' and the formation and rise of ' national identity'. From Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo, Mussolini in Italy, or Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore, this concept of ' nationalism' is unavoidable in scholarly discussion. Yet, similar to the concept of the ' nation', historians do not hold a unified definition for the concept of nationalism, with the word itself containing any of the aforementioned definitions, and more. Ernst Gellner, for example, argues that nationalism is primarily a political principle, which argues that the state and nation should be in unity or harmony, while simultaneously conceding that nationalism, and the doctrine which nationalists preach, are highly abstract and vary according to various conditions. Anderson, similarly, highlights these contradictions within nationalist ideologies - nationalists use rhetoric which suggests the nation is antiquated when it is modern, or suggests the uniqueness of nationality while stating nationality is universal. He additionally notes that nationalism as an ideology has produced no profound philosophical creations or thinkers - there is no nationalist equivalent to Hobsbawm or Weber. ' Nationalism', like the ' nation', is a category of analysis which historians frequently rely upon without definition; nationalism lacks thorough philosophical backing while simultaneously being politically profound. As a history-adjacent discipline, sociology has also run into the challenges of defining nationalism. Distinctions over civic, cultural, and ethno-nationalism - and their effects on politics and society - remain an important part of scholarship and debate, and highlight the multi-disciplinary challenge that nations and nationalism has posed to the social sciences.

Nationalist movements had been significant drivers of change in the 19th and 20th centuries, some created internally and some imposed. An internally developed nationalist movement - such as the Serbian nationalist movement which had kickstarted the First World War with an assassination in Sarajevo - bears the same label as a government-engineered nationalist movement fostered in Singapore, in wake of its 1965 expulsion from the Federation of Malaya. Of distinct origins and dissimilar practical manifestations, the two share a common label - highlighting a potential problem with this terminology; the nationalist label may be applied to a range of events, movements, or phenomena that may in fact have little in common with each other.

The study of nationalism and nationalist movements has been a significant part of historical scholarship of the last century. Yet, the broad-tent concept of ' nationalism' remains problematic in historical scholarship. As a history-adjacent discipline, sociology frequently runs into this challenge; distinctions over civic, cultural, and ethno-nationalism - and their effects on politics and society - remain an important part of scholarship and debate.

RACE AND GENDER

Lastly, it is worth considering the necessity of nationalism in historical scholarship pertaining to nations themselves. UCL's very own Axel Körner highlighted the importance of the lens of transnationalism, as opposed to nationalism, in historical study. Especially following industrialisation, the increasingly interconnected world saw people, ideas, goods, and culture transcend national boundaries. Even prior to the industrial revolution, national boundaries had sometimes been proven more porous than initially imagined; as such, a study of transnationalism, as opposed to pure focus on the nation or nations as individual units of study, may reveal truths hitherto uncovered. Perhaps the debate on nations and nationalism may be made redundant after all if a more global or multinational approach to historical research is embraced over nationalism.

In conclusion, nations and nationalism have been of at least some degree of significance in the study of history, but common-acceptance of a definition both within and without the discipline have proven to be extremely difficult, which has proven itself to be problematic for historians. The idea that the nation should remain the main focus of study, simultaneously, has also been called into question itself. Nonetheless, nationalism and the nation are still problematic terms for historians, and terms that will likely continue to be used in scholarship for at least some time.

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