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# THE CONFLUENCE

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## The Confluence

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### The Endurance of West African Textiles Through the Ages

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## Introduction

When one is asked to describe West African textiles, the image conjured up is one of brightly colored fabrics. The Kente cloth is one such fabric, popularized in Ghana. James Padilioni Jr. describes Kente cloth in his article, “The History and Significance of Kente Cloth in the Black Diaspora”. Padilioni states that, according to the local mythology of the Asante people, “it was here that great trickster Ananse the Spider, ever skillful and cunning, spun a web of intricate detail in the jungle. When Nana Koragu and Nana Ameyaw, brothers and weavers by trade, came upon Ananse’s web, its immaculate beauty enchanted them. After studying Anansi’s handiwork, the pair returned to the village and began to weave Kente.”<sup>1</sup> Origin stories like this abound in West Africa. However, these stories are just one of many significant aspects of West African textiles.

Like the textiles themselves, the topic of West African textiles is deceptively complicated. First, West Africa consists of seventeen countries, nearly a thousand square miles larger than India. Across this expanse is a range of languages and cultural differences. Within these cultural variations are artistic variations, such as those seen in West African textiles. Weaving, dyeing, patchwork, and embroidery are just some of the unique textile styles that West Africans have created. In his book, *African Textiles*, Christopher Spring notes that: “The earliest known fragments of cloth came from sites at Igbo Ukwu in Nigeria dating back to the ninth century AD, from Benin City also in Nigeria dating to the thirteenth century, and from the Tellem caves in Mali dating to the twelfth century.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Padilioni Jr., “The History and Significance of Kente Cloth in the Black Diaspora,” *AAIHS*, (May 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Spring, *African Textiles*, (New York: Crescent Books, 1989), 3.

In this paper, I will look at textiles throughout West Africa. The majority of these textiles will be a woven fabric. Additionally, I will analyze these textiles across three different time periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary times. During these time frames, I will show that textiles have changed and evolved. Yet, despite the extensive time period that covers antiquity to contemporary periods, I will show that West African textiles have continued to be a powerful mode of communication for the people. These textiles demonstrate to the modern world how art can serve as a sophisticated form of non-verbal communication while simultaneously preserving cultural heritage. Their enduring influence challenges us to look beyond Eurocentric perspectives on art and communication, showing how visual patterns and symbols can convey complex meanings and cultural values that transcend spoken language.

### **Pre-colonial**

West African textiles have a long and thriving history. Innovative methods- like using bark, leather, or flax to create fabrics- have propelled this persistence. In turn, these textiles have laid the foundation for the now widely recognized and popular African patterns and colorations. However, pre-colonial textiles were not always so flamboyant. In fact, ancient textiles have been found to be in natural, muted colors from plant dyes. Browns and blacks are a common color scheme. For example, some of the oldest West African textiles discovered in Burkina Faso and found to be made of wool, fur, and leather (figure 1). These materials naturally lend themselves to a simpler color scheme.

However, this does not mean that the textiles were simplistic. Considering that they were painstakingly created by hand, pre-colonial textiles of West Africa are astoundingly complex. Not only was there a range of materials to work with, but there was a whole way of

communication that was created using textiles. Akin to books filled with images to convey a message, so too were textiles used by West Africans. Messages of social status, politics, finances, and religious beliefs were conveyed through cloth. Textiles were used to commemorate events, carry on traditions, and for everyday life.

Interestingly, the oldest fabric from Burkina Faso was produced in the first millennium CE, which is also the same period that paper was invented in China. To put it in perspective, China and West Africa are as far apart as the American state of Texas and the West African country of Ghana. It is amazing to realize that both areas were developing sophisticated modes of communication in a relatively close time period. However, where paper has remained relatively constant in style, the textiles of West Africa have varied tremendously. Even in the ancient, pre-colonial period, different tribes created distinctive fabrics and patterns.

One of the oldest styles is the *Bogolanfini* or “mud cloth” (figure 2). Mud cloth originated in Mali as far back as the twelfth century AD. To make the fabric, men would weave and sew together plain strips of cloth, then women would decorate them using fermented mud from their local streams and ponds. The cloth would then dry in the sun for several days, after which the caked-on mud would be removed, revealing a dark pattern in contrast with a sun-bleached area. Kirstie Yu notes in her article, “African Commemorative Textiles: Glossary of Fabrics” that: “The decorative motifs on the cloth are typically abstract patterns and representations of everyday objects. A combination of motifs can express “a proverb or a song, articulate a message, or represent an historical event. The textiles are worn by both men and women, initially by performers or hunters. They are also worn during transitional periods of a person’s life. For example, a woman might wear a *bogolanfini* following childbirth or preceding a marriage.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kirstie Yu, University of Wisconsin Madison. “African Commemorative Textiles: Glossary of Fabrics”, *African Commemorative Fabrics Guide*, (2023), 5.

The widely recognized *Kente* cloth is also venerated; dating to the eleventh century, this fabric was also made by the local men (figure 3). They first use a horizontal hand loom to weave a colorful strip of fabric, then they assemble the strips to make a cloth. The dyes and patterns in these fabrics were deliberate. For example, the color yellow symbolizes fertility, the color black symbolizes spiritual awareness, and the color red symbolizes passion. Kente was originally created for royalty in Ghana. The Multicultural Affairs department at Baylor University explains that: “Each Ashanti king would create a new Kente design after close consultation with master weavers during his reign. This new Kente design had to be chosen with great care because its pattern and symbolic meaning would always be associated with this particular king... Weavers used vibrant colors and complex designs to portray the cloth's profound philosophical meaning.”<sup>4</sup> Kente cloth was, and still is, worn in a toga style. Formerly worn only by community leaders for special occasions, Kente cloth is currently found worn at graduations and weddings.

Textiles were not always worn, but were traded as well. Trade occurred between community members, communities, and overseas merchants. In the Ivory Coast of West Africa, the Baule people created what is known as the *Baule* cloth. This cloth was easily traded, as the Ivory Coast was along a prominent maritime trade route. Baule cloth was also worn for both ceremonial and day-to-day occasions. In Mona Etienne’s article, “Women and Men, Cloth and Colonization: The Transformation of Production-Distribution Relations among the Baule (Ivory Coast)”, she explains that: “The process of making cloth started with women in the community cleaning cotton and spinning it to produce thread. The women also produced vegetable dyes used to color the thread. After this, the men in the community were responsible for weaving the thread

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<sup>4</sup> Multicultural Affairs Department, Baylor University, “Kente History”, (2023), <https://multicultural.web.baylor.edu/kentehistory>, 1.

into bands and sewing them together to produce cloth. This process was symbolic of the dependency of both sexes in a marriage relationship as well as the benefits of shared labor.”<sup>5</sup>

Another textile that is both traded and utilized regularly is the *Khasa*, a thick sheep’s wool blanket (figure 5). Dating back to the twelfth century AD, it was first created by the Fulani people. The Fulani people are a nomadic, pastoral tribe spread throughout the Saharan, Sahel, and West African regions. Their thick woven wool blankets protect them from the elements, serve as room dividers in temporary dwellings, and also hold special meanings. For example, geometric patterns often represent the landscape traversed by the Fulani people. A subcategory of their blankets is their wedding blanket, known as the *Arkilla*. The *Arkilla* blanket is a large blanket gifted to a new bride on her wedding day. It is to be placed at the bedside to serve as a mosquito net and to give warmth when needed. Important symbols, like those of fertility, are included in the patterns of these treasured and rare blankets.

### **Colonial**

The location along maritime trade routes made West Africa fairly accessible, and the discovery of plentiful raw materials made it desirable. By the late 19th century, Europeans had moved to colonize Africa. Colonization enabled Europeans to control trade routes. Robert Dupleiss explains in his book *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, And Colonization In The Atlantic World, 1650-1800*, that colonization created and

retained a principal role in the operation of these networks, even when neither producers, sellers, nor purchasers were European, as with East Indian companies’ intra-Asian trade or the cotton cloth woven and dyed under Portuguese supervision in the Cape Verde Islands for consumers on the West African mainland. Many globally traded commodities came as well from producers in Europe or

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<sup>5</sup> Mona Etienne, "Women and Men, Cloth and Colonization: The Transformation of Production-Distribution Relations among the Baule (Ivory Coast)." *Cahiers D'Études Africaines* 17, no. 65 (1977), 42

European colonies: manufactures from the former, so-called ‘colonial groceries’ (sugar, coffee, tobacco) and raw materials like indigo and cotton from the latter. Within and between networks, power was asymmetrically distributed and exercised: Europeans and free settlers typically commanded more resources, notably capital (usually in the form of credit flows), the physical assets required for long-distance oceanic transport, and relevant technologies.<sup>6</sup>

The Nigerian textile, *Adire* cloth, began as an involved process of weaving, sewing, and dyeing fabric with a signature style of blue and white colors. To produce this coloration, Nigerian women would dip tied-up cloth into large bins of fermented and crushed indigo plant, water, and baking soda mixture (figure 6). The inrush of pre-woven textiles during colonization eliminated weaving and sewing, leaving more time for innovation. This led to a more distinctive style and the *Adire* cloth became popular by the early 1900s.

Perhaps the most widely recognized textile in all of West Africa is the *Ankara*, a wax printed fabric (figure 7). It is also known to have originated in Nigeria. The wax print method used on *Ankara* cloth is known as Batik is a wax-resist technique, whereby wax is first applied to the fabric and then it is dyed. After the dye is dried, the wax is removed, showing a pattern. Originally an Indonesian method, the Dutch brought it to West Africa in the 1800s. Africans adopted this method as their own and called it “Ankara”. In the article, “Fabric Map,” the artist and researcher Mia Kora explains that: “Africans proudly used (*Ankara* cloth) as a form of silent communication between tribes, regions, and women, speaking through art on subjects that were taboo... Fabric connected people to politics, religion, and culture, which is why it became so popular so quickly and why it became known as an African Print.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Duplessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, And Colonization In The Atlantic World, 1650-1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Mia Kora, “Fabric Map,” *The Mandela Institute for Development Studies* (November 2020), 4.

Ankara cloth is just one example of the way in which Africans adapted to the constraints of European colonization. West Africa saw drastic changes in clothing style due to Christian influences. It also saw a major shift in the production of materials. Whereas pre-colonial West African textile artists had relied on the time-consuming and skilled craftsmanship of weavers, colonial textile artists could now apply patterns directly to pre-made fabrics, like cotton or silk. Additionally, dyes were often purchased instead of handmade from plants. However, West Africans' long history of ingenuity was not lost. Dupleiss adds that: "In fact, these hybrids displayed a level of sartorial creolization—the creation of a new cultural form appropriate to a new environment—that eluded most free settlers. But as a whole... the dress regimes of Atlantic indigenous peoples, enslaved men and women, and free settlers left an ironic legacy for textiles."<sup>8</sup> Ironic as this legacy might be, textile artists continue to be innovative and resourceful.

### **Contemporary**

The end of the colonial period in Africa began in the mid-20th century, as a result of World War II. However, it would be decades before all of the countries gained their independence and each struggled in their own way. Both a lack of economic stability and a deconstructed, often corrupt political system would contribute to warfare, coups, and civil wars in each country. According to the article, "Civil War in the Post-Colonial World, 1946-92", Errol Henderson and David Singer note that: "Results of logistic regression analyses corroborate previous findings that semi-democracy is associated with an increased likelihood of civil war, while greater economic development reduces the probability of civil war. (Additionally,) militarized post-colonial states are more likely to experience civil war."<sup>9</sup> Many of these countries are still coping with ongoing conflict and are feared by outsiders.

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<sup>8</sup> DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Errol A. Henderson and J. David Singer. "Civil War in the Post-Colonial World, 1946-92," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 3 (2000), 275.

From a postcolonial perspective, West Africans and their art suffers from “otherness.” In his book *Beginning Theory*, Peter Barry explains that, to Westerners (such as Americans and Europeans): “This means, in effect, that (Africa) becomes the repository or projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge (cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness, and so on). At the same time, and paradoxically, (Africa) is seen as a fascinating realm of the exotic, the mystical and the seductive. It also tends to be seen as homogenous, the people there being anonymous masses rather than individuals, their actions determined by instinctive emotions rather than by conscious choices or decisions.”<sup>10</sup> As exemplified thus far by the variations not only in textiles but in cultures, neither of these assumptions is correct. To classify West Africa, or even one of its countries, as “exotic” or “homogenous” is unjust; each is complex.

For example, the Baule people of the Ivory Coast have a long history with textiles; the Senufo people, on the other hand, do not. The Senufo people of the Ivory Coast were known more for their wooden and metal arts. Many of their works reflect their beliefs in animism, a belief in the spiritual energy of animals, plants, or objects. However, out of concern for losing their traditions to modernity, the Senufo began to apply their beliefs onto cloth; this became known as the *Korhogo* cloth (figure 8). *Korhogo* cloth is a postcolonial textile. It is a combination of *Kente* cloth’s rich pigment colors and *Bogolafini*’s mud painting. It is filled with hand-painted symbols of animism and these symbols can be combined to create a story. Common symbols on the *Korhogo* cloth include the lion, chicken, and fish. These are symbolic of royal power, maternity, and life, respectively.

Another country in West Africa with contemporary traditions is Liberia. Liberia was founded in 1847 by repatriated Africans. Though their fabrics, known as *Country Cloths*, are of a

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 186.

new design, they stay true to the venerated traditions of West African textile creation (figure 9). Uniquely, both men and women sew and embroider these cloths. They are embroidered with important symbols of their heritage and worn as a source of pride.

Much of contemporary West Africa relies on pre-made textiles instead of hand-weaving. Most of these textiles are created from cotton. In fact, the production of textiles has dropped significantly in Benin and Togo in favor of cotton production. According to the Pesticide Action Network, the country of Benin is the “fourth largest cotton producer in Africa and cotton supports 50% of its population.”<sup>11</sup> Further, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) finds that: “In West Africa, approximately 16 million people depend directly or indirectly on cotton cultivation.”<sup>12</sup> Overall, Africa exports a substantial amount of raw cotton because it is affordable for international companies to purchase and it helps support local communities. For instance, the OECD states that: “In the sparsely populated sub-humid savannahs, the appearance of cash crops has facilitated the development of animal drought cultivation, as these activities make it possible to earn the necessary income to purchase the materials and animals.”<sup>13</sup>

Another shift in textile production has been due to the establishment of textile factories. Like cotton farming, textile factories are increasing due to the inexpensive labor costs. For example, textile manufacturers such as H&M, The Children’s Place, and Under Armour have established factories in West Africa. Despite this industrialization, many West Africans honor their culture’s traditions and handmade goods have made a resurgence. In fact, Alisa LaGamma ascertains in her article “The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End” that: “The

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<sup>11</sup>Pesticide Action Network UK, “Cotton in Benin, West Africa”  
<https://www.pan-uk.org/cotton-in-benin>, (2017), 1.

<sup>12</sup> OECD/SWAC. *Cotton in West Africa: The Economic and Social Stakes*, The Development Dimension, OECD Publishing, Paris, (2006), 1.

<sup>13</sup> OECD, “Cotton in West Africa”, 14.

very textiles that animate these human arenas are one of the major commodities exchanged. Their importance as an item of trade is as apparent now as it was when the earliest commercial networks joining North Africa with regions south of the Sahara were developed in the first centuries CE. Given their portability, textiles have been the ultimate vehicle through which human creative ingenuity has traveled long distances. Their dissemination has provided a conduit for the transfer of ideas across cultures and has been the spark to renewed creativity.”<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary West African textile artists have expressed their creativity in a myriad of ways. By combining traditional styles with modern voices, inventive and visionary artists have come forth. Some artists have created new methods for making patterns, clothing, and even sculptures. Such artists include Yinka Shonibare, El Anatsui, Nike Davies-Okundaye, to name just a few. Yinka Shonibare is known worldwide as a textile artist. Raised in both England and Nigeria, Shonibare has an affinity for studying colonial history. His works are not just beautiful but political as well; they inspire the viewer to consider identity, colonialism, race, and power. He provokes the viewer through juxtaposing artistic elements. He creates and uses cheerful and brightly colored Ankara cloth (the Dutch wax print fabric popularized in the Colonial period). Then, he dresses human figures in clothes made from the textiles. These figures are often depicted in a dark or controversial moment, such as is seen in “Scramble For Africa” (figure 10). In this work, fourteen headless men surround a large table with a map of Africa in the center. The piece expounds upon 19th century African colonization. Though Shonibare prefers not to tell his viewers how to interpret his pieces, it is impossible to ignore the messages he conveys.

“Scramble for Africa” is not just the name of an artwork, it is also a period of time. In the book *What is African Art?*, Peter Probst describes this historical period, stating:

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<sup>14</sup> Alisa LaGamma, “The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End,” *African Arts*, (Spring 2009), 88.

The history of African art studies begins with the massive extraction of cultural objects. In fact, the ‘Scramble for Africa’ was not only a rush to secure and explore new markets on the African continent for the rapidly industrializing colonial powers in Europe but also a ‘scramble’ for artifacts in the hopes of advancing equally rapid developments in the realm of the sciences, arts, and humanities. The extraction of natural and cultural resources went hand in hand; the growth of the African collection at the Royal Ethnological Museum in Berlin is a case in point. In 1873, when the museum was founded, the Africa collection consisted of 875 objects... Thirteen years later, in 1899, the number had increased to 25,105 objects, which constituted 48.8 percent of the whole ethnographic collection. By 1914, the start of World War I, the size of the collection had more than doubled again to 55,079 objects.<sup>15</sup>

El Anatsui is another internationally known artist. Raised in Ghana, he first began working with wood and sculpture as a way of connecting with his Ewe ancestors’ traditions. His father was a master weaver of Kente cloth. As an adult, he went on to study art, and his career slowly began to lift off. In particular, he has voiced concerns about poverty, consumerism and alcoholism. Many of his works reflect these topics. Anatsui rose quickly to fame after he created his first bottle cap textile. He continues to make bottle cap textiles, each unique and stunning. For these works, he combines his knowledge of Kente cloth with his sculptural skills. One-by-one, recycled aluminum bottle caps are sewn together with copper wire, creating a massive “fabric” (figure 11). From a distance, it glitters and shines like a fabric fit for royalty. It is not until one is up close that the individual bottle caps come into view. His use of aluminum bottle caps is “an important distinction, as the cloth series could be seen to reflect a connection with alcohol trade in West Africa... Anatsui says: "Back home we would characterize someone who is given to the pleasures of drinking and eating as someone who is ‘building the stomach’... the whole piece is talking about ‘consumption,’ or could be seen as referencing it at least.”<sup>16</sup> This brilliant juxtaposition draws the viewer in for a conversation about recycled materials, their place

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Probst, *What is African Art*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022), 22.

<sup>16</sup> Lisa M. Binder, “El Anatsui: Transformations.” *African Arts* 41, no. 2, (2008), 27.

of origin, and the reasoning behind Anatsui's bold choices. These works can be found in museums worldwide.

Nike Davies-Okundaye also spent her childhood learning the traditional textiles of her Yoruba heritage. Raised in Nigeria, and unable to pay for her high school education, her family taught her about both the adire cloth and the indigo dye method that she would later use in her art (figure 12). She did not aspire to be an artist, at first, though. Instead, she felt it was necessary to give back to her community and taught local women the textile traditions she had learned. Even though she has become a world-renowned artist with over one hundred solo exhibitions to her name, she still continues to contribute to her community. Using the money she has earned as an artist, she began a free training center for artists in Nigeria. This training center teaches traditional arts, which helps the artist gain a marketable skill-set and also keeps the traditions alive. In the article "Women of Power and 'Kindred Spirits'," Sinem Bilen-Onabanjo adds,

Once a persona non grata reported to the police countless times for empowering women by training them in this tradition art at her centers, the first of which was founded in Oshogbo in 1983 with limited personal funds, Chief Davies-Okundaye is now a national icon. Defining gender roles while drawing on past wisdom to nurture future knowledge has long become a calling for the artist who has trained over 4,000 disadvantaged women by empowering them through the discovery of their own creativity and the knowledge of the tradition art of Adire she imparts to them.<sup>17</sup>

Contemporary West African artists have embraced new methodology including pre-woven cloth, graphic design, and recycled materials. Yet, the fact that contemporary West African artists continue to use traditional methods in their works is a testament to their

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<sup>17</sup> Sinem Bilen-Onabanjo, "Women of power and 'kindred spirits'." *New African*, (January 2016), 79.

significance. From blankets to clothing to visual arts, West Africans carry on traditions, knowing that each item produced is a form of communication. Items may communicate a myriad of ideas, including love, prestige, or social commentary. The endurance of West African textiles since the pre-colonial period into contemporary times, and throughout seventeen different countries, exemplifies the magnitude of these important works.

### **Conclusion**

Textiles are like both an instrument and a song. They stand alone beautifully but can be assembled in multiplicity. Ancient West African textiles began with simple materials, such as jute or leather. Most often, these would be turned into fabrics to wear, though some were ornamental. The use of symbols began early on in the development of textiles, thereby creating a form of communication between the wearer and the viewer. Social status, wealth, and politics were commonly displayed symbols on these textiles. Spiritual and fertility symbols were sometimes seen, as well.

West Africans persisted in their artistic endeavors, even when colonization threatened them all. Their skills and imaginativeness helped textiles endure dramatic changes that occurred throughout West Africa. After the colonization period ended, turmoil would still persist. As Peter Probst states: While postcolonialism opened up discursive spaces and provided visibility and recognition for artistic expressions coming out of Global Africa, it did little to change the social and political situations for people on the ground.”<sup>18</sup> While West Africans held strong to their heritages, they also began demanding changes. As exemplified earlier, contemporary artists reflect this desire. Shonibare, for example, urges his viewers to consider beauty in juxtaposition with colonization and identity. Anatsui invites viewers to see a dazzling tapestry that, upon closer inspection, is made out of trash. Anatsui is both compelling and enticing in how he uses art to

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<sup>18</sup> Probst, *What is African Art?*, 205

begin a conversation about waste materials and social issues. Davies-Okundaye's textiles not only reflect her heritage and personal experiences, but she uses them for social good.

West African art has been resilient because of its people and its importance. As modernization and industrialization take over more and more of the world, some worry that this will diminish traditional artforms. Probst suggests that communication is as pertinent- and complicated- as ever. He states: "Of course, there is no single position, only multiple, competing ones, a fact that makes talking about African art burdened with an excess of meaning... Hence, practices of cultural translation- exemplified by the history of Dutch wax cloth, Shonibare's favorite medium- might be more fitting than the insistence on authenticity and difference. But there is a third diasporic option, an option of yearning and mourning, as it were that keeps pushing the long history of domination and violence, erasure, and extraction in the fore."<sup>19</sup> This discussion, matter how "burdensome," deserves the same respect that we attribute to these undeniably significant and timeless works of art. As Zoe Butt asserts in the article "We Are Not the Stories We Tell Ourselves," there is "an ethical responsibility to the study of *who* has spoken and that giving this voice presence matters."<sup>20</sup>

The voice of the artist is a vital component to so much of West African art, whether it is ancient or contemporary. Probst appropriately states:

As we have seen, the aesthetic appreciation of African objects was initially directed toward racially grounded practices of ignorance, omission, and denigration... It was not to overcome colonial rule, hence the distinction between 'Art' and 'World Art' as the art of the West versus the art of the Rest. Still, the distinction took time... What turned the recognition of aesthetic value into a matter of wider

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<sup>19</sup> Probst, *What is African Art?*, 225.

<sup>20</sup> Zoe Butt and Lee Weng-Choy. "We Are Not the Stories We Tell Ourselves: Weaving Differing Registers of Memory in the Arts," *American Historical Review* 127, no. 3 (September 2022), 1299.

public commercial interest was the involvement of artists and critics.<sup>21</sup>

The study of West African textiles would benefit from further archaeological studies in ancient works. It would also benefit from recovering more textile works from the colonial period, as much evidence has really only been brought into the academic and global awareness. Finally, the contemporary period would benefit from supporting, learning, and listening to all West African voices about their experiences. Much can still be learned from West African textiles and their artists as they continue to be a powerful mode of communication for the people. This knowledge helps preserve and validate an important form of cultural communication and artistic expression that might otherwise be dismissed as merely decorative. By understanding West African textiles as a sophisticated language system and art form, it challenges Eurocentric views of cultural expression, enriches global understanding of diverse communication methods, and helps ensure these valuable cultural practices and their deeper meanings are recognized, respected, and maintained for future generations.

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<sup>21</sup> Probst, *What is African Art?*, 39.

## Illustrations

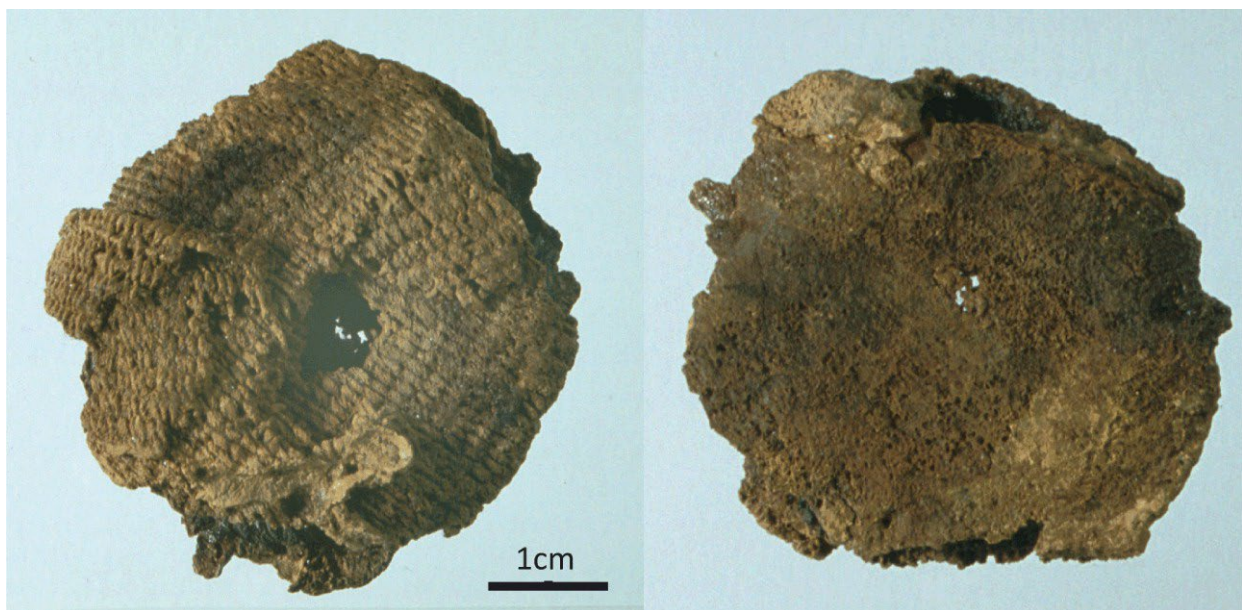


Figure 1. Woolen textile, 1000 CE, Burkina Faso, Kissi archaeological site.



Figure 2. Bogolanfini (Mud cloth), Mali.



Figure 3. Kente Cloth, Ghana.



Figure 4. Baule Cloth, Ivory Coast.



Figure 5. Khasa blanket, West Africa.

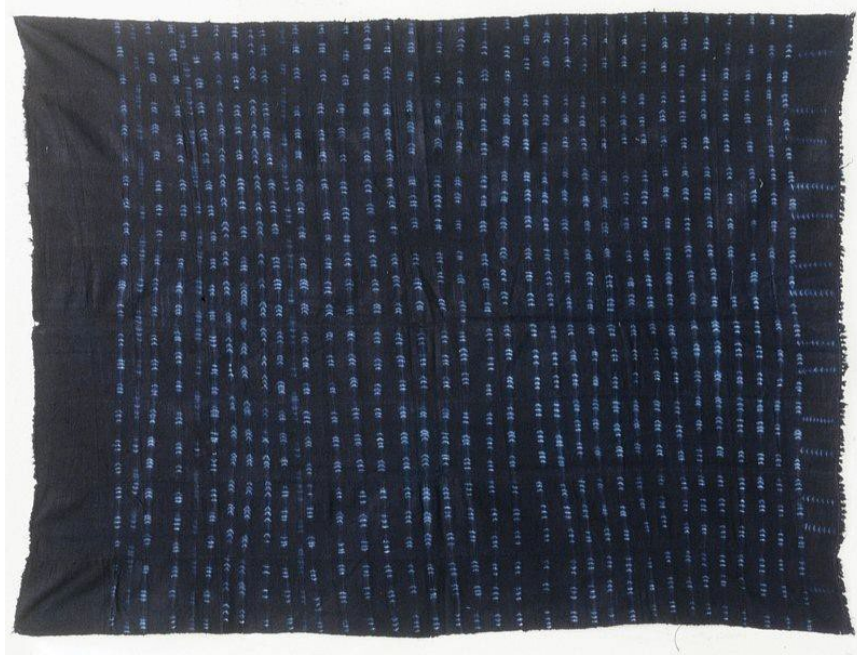


Figure 6. Adire cloth, Nigeria.



Figure 7. Ankara cloth, Nigeria.



Figure 8. *Korhogo* cloth, Ivory Coast.



Figure 9. Country Cloth, Liberia.



Figure 10. Yinka Shonibare, *Scramble for Africa*, 2003. 14 life-size mannequins with chairs, table, and Dutch wax print cotton. Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, North Carolina.



Figure 11. El Anatsui, *Dusasa II*, 2007. Found aluminum, copper wire, and plastic disks. 599 x 731 x 5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 12. Nike Davies-Okundaye & Tola Wewe, *Heritage Revisited*, 2001. 19 x 22 Inches, Pen and Ink On Canvas.

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## The Confluence

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# Cybersecurity and Global Threats: A Comparative Analysis of Estonia and Russia's Policies

María Paula Morales Palacios

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## Introduction

In an increasingly technological world, cybersecurity and digital privacy have become critical global challenges. In 2022 alone, over 422 million individuals were affected by data breaches, leaks, or exposure in the United States, and global cybercrime is projected to cost the world \$10.5 trillion annually by 2025 (Cybersecurity Ventures, 2022). From ransomware attacks shutting down hospitals, to coordinated efforts targeting critical infrastructure, the threat is now global and growing. However, the way that different countries have answered to the threats are based on various reasons, such as political systems, historical contexts, and international roles. A notable example is the 2007 cyberattacks on Estonia, which paralyzed government websites, financial systems, and media outlets, marking one of the first major instances of a politically motivated digital assault. Similarly, in 2016, Russia was targeted by large-scale cyber intrusions believed to be in retaliation for its offensive cyber activities, highlighting that no nation is immune to these digital battles. These two nations serve as compelling case studies due to their significantly different governance structures and their active roles in global security. By comparing their approaches, this analysis highlights the impact of political systems on cybersecurity governance.

This comparative analysis will focus on the research question: *how do Estonia's and Russia's differing political systems shape their respective approaches to cybersecurity and digital privacy?* Addressing this is vital for understanding how governance frameworks impact the balance between state security and individual freedoms in this technology-driven world and how political systems can influence policy design in an increasingly digital world. Preliminary findings suggest that Estonia's democratic governance fosters trust, collaboration, and connection to international norms, while Russia's centralized system leverages control and cyber capabilities for geopolitical strategy, therefore providing valuable insights into the broader implications of cybersecurity governance on global stability and human rights.

This paper will examine the problem through three main points. First, it will analyze the nature of cyber threats and the incidents that both countries experienced. Second, it will analyze how Estonia's parliamentary democracy promotes transparency, shaping its defensive cybersecurity strategies. And finally, it will explore how Russia's semi-authoritarian system prioritizes offensive strategy, reflecting its historical emphasis on sovereignty and security. The thesis of this paper states that Estonia and Russia's different cybersecurity policies reflect their differing political systems: Russia prioritizes state sovereignty, security, and offensive capabilities and, in contrast, Estonia prioritizes transparency, international collaboration, and digital rights. The findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of global cybersecurity governance and its implications for international relations.

### The Problem: Cyber Threats Understanding the Problem

Cyber threats represent one of the most difficult global challenges in the 21st century. They encompass a range of malicious activities, some examples being hacking, data breaches, ransomware attacks, and cyber warfare. These threats target everything with an internet connection, from individuals to organizations and governments, and as society relies on technology, the vulnerabilities that come with it grow as well, making cybersecurity a critical issue worldwide (Das et al., 2013).

Cyber threats are not limited by borders, amplifying their complexity. Nations must address hackers, organized crime groups, and states that employ advanced tactics to exploit vulnerabilities, in addition to emerging technologies that help enhance cyber actors' defensive and offensive capabilities. One of the main difficulties in cybersecurity policy is balancing national security and individual privacy. Some nations, in this case, Estonia, emphasize protecting digital rights. Others, like Russia, prioritize state sovereignty and control at the expense of privacy.

### Cyberattacks on Estonia (2007) and Russia (2016)

Cyber threats encompass various malicious activities, including hacking, data breaches, ransomware attacks, and cyber espionage. Governments, financial institutions, and critical infrastructure are frequent targets of cyberattacks, making cybersecurity a fundamental aspect of national defense. Estonia and Russia have both faced major cyber incidents that shaped their national policies.

In 2007, Estonia experienced one of the first large-scale cyberattacks targeting a

nation's digital infrastructure. It all happened following a political dispute over the relocation of a Soviet-era statue in Tallinn, Estonia faced a series of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks that crippled government, media, and financial systems for weeks. DDoS attacks overwhelmed servers, rendering websites inaccessible, and although the attacks were widely attributed to Russian actors, definitive state sponsorship was never proven. The attacks exposed vulnerabilities in Estonia's highly digitalized society and prompted the government to overhaul its cybersecurity framework. This event catalyzed Estonia's rise as a global leader in cybersecurity, leading to the establishment of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn and its integration into NATO's collective defense strategy (2007 Cyberattacks on Estonia, 2007).

On the other side, even though Russia has not had a cyber threat as big as Estonia had in 2007, they have had several incidents targeting Russian entities, such as the 2016 Russian Banks Cyberattacks, where several banks reported disruption that affected their online services that was later discovered to be due to botnets that compromised devices globally and caused service interruptions. Until today, the origin of the attack remains unclear, but it is believed to be criminally motivated rather than state-sponsored. In response, the Russian government intensified efforts to secure its digital systems. This included measures to strengthen the cybersecurity frameworks of financial institutions and broader legislative efforts to ensure control over the nation's digital infrastructure. For instance, the 2019 Sovereign Internet Law, which allows Russia to isolate its internet from the global web during perceived threats, reflects the state's prioritization of cyber sovereignty over integration with international networks (*Russia: Hackers Target Financial Sector*, 2022).

### **How Estonia's Democratic Governance Shapes Cybersecurity Policy?**

Estonia's cybersecurity policy is shaped by its democratic values, prioritizing transparency, public trust, and international collaboration. Following the 2007 cyberattacks, Estonia redefined its digital security framework, integrating cybersecurity into its broader national defense strategy. The country prioritizes digital resilience by fortifying its critical systems and educating citizens about cybersecurity risks. Through its "e-Estonia" initiative, Estonia has built a highly digitalized society where 99% of public services are accessible online, making it a global leader in digital governance. To protect this infrastructure, Estonia focuses on defensive strategies, reinforcing public trust in its systems. International collaboration also defines Estonia's cybersecurity policy. The country views cyber threats as global challenges requiring cooperative solutions. Estonia contributes to collective defense strategies, demonstrating its commitment to international security, and it also fosters shared responsibility among member states of the European Union (OECD, 2019). Citizen participation is another key feature of Estonia's cybersecurity approach. The government promotes public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about online risks, ensuring that individuals actively maintain national digital security. Investments in cyber hygiene education and partnerships with private companies further enhance the country's resilience. These policies illustrate Estonia's commitment to democratic values, leveraging transparency, collaboration, and innovation to enhance cybersecurity without compromising individual freedoms (OECD, 2019).

### **How Russia's Semi-Authoritarian System Shapes Cybersecurity Policy?**

Russia's cybersecurity approach is shaped by its centralized governance, which prioritizes state sovereignty, control, and offensive cyber capabilities. Unlike Estonia, Russia views cyberspace through the lens of national security and geopolitical strategy. Cybersecurity in Russia often serves dual purposes: protecting critical infrastructure and reinforcing state control. For example, the Sovereign Internet Law, enacted in 2019, allows the government to isolate the country's internet infrastructure from the global web during crises. This policy underscores Russia's focus on cyber sovereignty and its belief that state control is essential to securing its digital systems. Unlike Estonia, Russia places significant emphasis on offensive cyber capabilities. The country has been accused of using cyber tools to engage in espionage and influence operations, targeting foreign elections and critical infrastructure to further its geopolitical goals. These offensive strategies reflect Russia's approach to cyberspace as a domain for projecting power and deterring adversaries.

Additionally, Russia's centralized governance facilitates extensive surveillance and regulation of internet usage. The government maintains tight oversight of online activities by controlling internet service providers and restricting access to foreign information. While designed to

protect against external threats, these measures often come at the expense of individual privacy and freedom of expression. Russia's cybersecurity framework illustrates how its semi-authoritarian system prioritizes state interests over democratic principles, using control and surveillance as tools to address cyber threats.

### **Conclusion**

The comparative analysis of Estonia's and Russia's cybersecurity policies highlights how political systems, governance structures, and international roles shape national approaches to addressing cyber threats. This paper sought to answer the question: *How do Estonia's and Russia's differing political systems shape their respective approaches to cybersecurity and digital privacy?* The goal was to examine how these governance frameworks impact the balance between state security and individual freedoms in an increasingly digital world. By analyzing both countries' strategies, the research has demonstrated that political culture and values profoundly influence the design and implementation of cybersecurity policies. The research reveals both similarities and differences between the two nations. While both countries recognize cybersecurity as critical to national security and take steps to protect their infrastructure, their methods reflect contrasting priorities. Estonia fosters public-private collaboration and international partnership, whereas Russia employs centralized control and offensive capabilities. These strategies reveal that while cyber threats are universal, responses to them are deeply contextual, and shaped by each nation's political and cultural landscape. At the same time, and despite their strongly different governance systems, Estonia and Russia share similar cybersecurity approaches. As mentioned earlier, both nations recognize the critical importance of protecting infrastructure from cyber attacks, and they acknowledge cyber threats as central to national security. Both countries have implemented robust policies to safeguard their systems, although the motivations and methods differ. These areas of convergence highlight the universal nature of cyber threats and the necessity of coordinated efforts to address them (OECD, 2019).

Future research could explore the long-term effectiveness of these differing strategies. For instance, how sustainable is Estonia's approach in the face of increasingly sophisticated threats? Can Russia's reliance on centralized control and offensive tactics maintain national security without significant blowback? Additionally, examining cybersecurity policies in other political contexts - such as authoritarian regimes like China or hybrid systems like Turkey - could provide deeper insights into the relationship between governance and cyber resilience. As the global digital landscape evolves, understanding these dynamics will be critical for creating effective and suitable cybersecurity solutions.

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# Adverse Cognitions: The Effects of Childhood Trauma on Brain Development

Faith Salamone

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## **Introduction**

The impact of adverse experiences in childhood have been known to create lasting difficulties in physical and mental health, even in adulthood. While it can be hard to determine the effects of childhood trauma on the brain, many studies have identified areas that appear to be negatively impacted by these adverse childhood experiences. This paper is a review investigating the effects of childhood trauma on the developing brain. These articles are specifically investigating the effects of childhood physical and/or sexual abuse. The areas of focus for this review are the prefrontal cortex, corpus callosum, and limbic system, amygdala and hippocampus.

## **The Prefrontal Cortex**

The prefrontal cortex, or PFC, is the front most area of the brain. This specific region is the last to reach full maturation in human brain development (Weems et al., 2019). The PFC is known to control executive function, such as attention, impulse control, planning, emotional reactions, and the coordination that allows for complex behaviors to be adjusted (Johns Hopkins Medicine, n.d.). Executive function, or cognitive control, is the set of skills that an individual develops in order to function effectively in society (Weems et al., 2019). These skills, such as self-control, emotional regulation, and the ability to make decisions, are considered vital for adults to function properly (Weems et al., 2019). In adolescence, this area is functioning below the adult capacity, leading to the impulsive actions many adolescents are known for. This functioning level, in part, is due to the number of synapses in the brain. As an individual ages, the neurons in the PFC continue to be pruned, or removed, which allows for better communication to other parts of the brain (Moyer, 2016).

The PFC is split into areas, such as the medial prefrontal cortex, the orbital prefrontal cortex, and the lateral prefrontal cortex (Moyer, 2016). Each area controls a specific part of executive function. The medial prefrontal cortex focuses on motivation and controlling emotional responses (Rinne-Albers et al., 2013). Lesions in this area have been known to have negative impacts on an individual's ability to focus, be empathetic, and effectively start or stop a task. Alongside the medial PFC, the orbital PFC keeps impulses in check, allows individuals to follow socially acceptable emotional regulations, and works to ignore distractions (Dolan, 2007). The lateral PFC, while also contributing to an individual's ability to focus, is known for the ability to create and execute plans. These sequences can be negatively impacted when this area is injured. An individual with lesions or injuries in the lateral PFC may be dysfunctional when it comes to rules and switching tasks (Weems et al., 2019).

Utilizing magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, multiple studies have identified differences in the PFC of individuals reporting childhood trauma compared to those who did not. These changes include a decrease in gray matter of the medial PFC, as well as lower activation of the PFC (Moyer, 2016). The lack of activation in the PFC not only affects the PFC, and its ability to effectively regulate an individual, it also leads to a decrease in the amygdala's restraint (Moyer, 2016). The less effective the PFC is, the less connectivity between other areas of the brain there are (Weems et al., 2019). This decrease in executive function leads to problems with impulse control, emotional regulation and identification, as well as other areas decreasing in their respective functional abilities (Edwards, 2018).

### **The Corpus Callosum**

The corpus callosum is the communication center of the brain. It is a thick band of white matter and nerves that is found between the cerebral hemispheres (Emfietzoglou, 2024). This c-

shaped structure found in the center of the cerebrum allows for the hemispheres to communicate, as well as contributing to other cognitive functions like comprehension, movement control, and perception (Rinne-Albers et al., 2013). When an individual severely injures the corpus callosum, there is no cure that can regenerate the connection (Emfietzoglou, 2024). This dysfunction, if completely severed, can lead to a condition called split brain, where the hemispheres are unable to communicate. While this dysfunction can be a partial or total loss of communication, this type of injury causes multiple problems stemming from the brain's inability to communicate with the other side.

In individuals who have developed PTSD in childhood, several studies have identified reductions in the corpus callosum (Carrion et al., 2013; Edwards, 2018; Milani et al., 2017; Moyer, 2016). These reductions, seen through neuroimaging studies, are found in the total volume of the corpus callosum, the cortical thickness, and the gray matter present (Carrion et al., 2013; Edwards, 2018; Milani et al., 2017). Specifically, childhood sexual abuse has been linked to a decrease in the cortical thickness of the regions that process emotions, as well as a decrease in grey matter of the corpus callosum (Edwards, 2018). These studies did note a connection to the overall occurrence of the trauma and the intracranial volume of the subjects (Milani et al., 2017). Those who experienced repeated exposure to traumatic events over a long period of time, or consistent exposure for multiple years, were found to have decreased intracranial volume (Milani et al., 2017).

### **The Limbic System**

The limbic system is comprised of multiple brain structures, connected through neural pathways, and is in charge of regulating multiple aspects of emotion, memory, motivation, and other pieces of human behavior (Guys-Evans, 2023d). The limbic system is best known for its

role in the fight-or-flight response, as well as controlling other stress responses. This system is located below the temporal lobes, within the cerebrum, under the cerebral cortex, and encompasses multiple structures within the brain (John Hopkins Medicine, n.d.). Structures such as the thalamus and hypothalamus, cingulate gyrus, basal ganglia, amygdala, and the hippocampus are included in this system. Collectively, all these systems work together to manage survival instincts, emotional responses, and other things like memory consolidation (Guys-Evans, 2023d).

Through the structures included, the limbic system regulates body temperature and emotions, controls memory, attention, hunger, thirst, and sleep patterns, while also being connected to the endocrine and autonomic nervous systems (Guys-Evans, 2023c). Damage to this system, as well as any of the structures on their own, could lead to damages in basic human functioning (Guys-Evans, 2023d). Issues that could occur are, but not limited to, problems with memory, emotional processing, motivation, and the regulation of the physiological functions that make up the human body, such as hunger, reproduction, or stress responses (i.e., fight-or-flight).

The structural connectivity of the limbic system structures, as well as the ability to communicate with other brain areas like the frontal cortex, have been found to be reduced in individuals with childhood trauma (Weems et al., 2019). Alongside this general finding, one study noted a specific link to childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and structural and functional deficits of structures in the limbic system (Cassiers et al., 2018). This particular study found that the period of life was an important piece of this puzzle. Through comparing those who experienced CSA and those who did not, researchers found decreased hippocampal volumes in adults who experienced CSA before or during the beginning stages of puberty (age 3-10 years; Cassiers et al., 2018).

## The Amygdala

The amygdala, an almond-shaped structure in the brain, is a vital part of the limbic system (Dannowski et al., 2012). This structure sits next to the hippocampus and works to regulate emotions and attach emotions to memories (Guy-Evans, 2023a). The amygdala decides what memories to store, pairing strong emotional components to specific memories which better encodes them, allowing for easier retrieval (Dolan, 2007). These emotional ties, specifically with fear, are what links the amygdala to the fight-or-flight response. The amygdala, with regulating emotions, is also in control of reward processing and aids decision making.

In individuals with damaged amygdalae, there are known difficulties in understanding, recognizing, and producing the correct emotion (Guy-Evans, 2023a). This type of injury can lead to increases in aggression and irritability while having decreases in shame reactions to breaking social rules. Alongside these emotional difficulties, individuals with harmed amygdalae have difficulties with identifying fear in themselves and those around them (Guy-Evans, 2023a).

Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) was found to be associated to specific deficits in the amygdala (Cassiers et al., 2018). These deficits range from decreases in volume to structural deficits, and even to reductions in connectivity between the amygdala and other brain circuits (Cassiers et al., 2018; Chiasson et al., 2022; Edwards, 2018; Milani et al., 2017). Alongside individuals with a history of CSA, the amygdalae of individuals with childhood PTSD were found to have decreases in volume when compared to controls (Weems et al., 2019). One study noted that the right amygdala in individuals with childhood PTSD showed a decreased connectivity with the prefrontal cortex, while the left amygdala had an increased connectivity (Weems et al., 2019). These findings also depended on the age of the adolescent when the trauma occurred. The younger the individual, and therefore the brain, the larger the amygdala volume

appeared to be (Weems et al., 2019). In contrast, the opposite effect was observed with individuals who were older, with decreased amygdala volumes observed (Weems et al., 2019).

### **The Hippocampus**

The hippocampus, like the amygdala, is a structure in the limbic system that is sensitive and highly reactive to stress (Dannowski et al., 2012). There are two hippocampi in the brain, with one in each hemisphere. The hippocampus is not only a site of neurogenesis, or the production of new nerve cells, but it also forms and files episodic memories (Guy-Evans, 2023b).

Alongside memories, the hippocampus is vital in an individual's spatial navigation and emotional responses. This curved-shaped structure works hand in hand with the amygdala to strengthen memories through emotional connections, especially with fear.

Individuals who experience injury to their hippocampus may find they have problems with memory, such as memory loss or an inability to form new memories, but old memories are still intact (Guys-Evans, 2023b). Individuals may also have issues with spatial navigation and speech related memories (Guy-Evans, 2023b). These problems range from an inability to remember familiar locations or directions, as well as being unable to memorize information that is newly presented, such as a speech.

Researchers have found volume reductions in the hippocampi of individuals with childhood trauma exposures (Carrion et al., 2022; Edwards, 2018; Milani et al., 2017). Alongside these reductions, there is also evidence that exposure to adverse experiences will lead to decreased connectivity between the structures that communicate within and to the hippocampus (Weems et al., 2019). One study noted an interesting finding that depended on the timing of the trauma. With childhood sexual abuse, there is a brief increase in volume, attributed to an increase in gray matter, that can occur in the hippocampus shortly after the trauma. (Edwards, 2018). The

growth spurt, however, is short lived. As time continues and the brain matures, the hippocampus shrinks again (Edwards, 2018).

### **The Lasting Impact**

Exposure to abuse and adversity in childhood is associated with negative outcomes in adulthood (Brietzke et al., 2012). The functionality in the brain, as shown above, has been found to change throughout the years, increasing the risk of detrimental effects on physical and mental health, as well as overall life outcomes to occur (Mantovani & Smith, 2021). Researchers have found that individuals who have experienced abuse in childhood are more likely to participate in health-harming behaviors, such as substance and alcohol misuse, suicidal ideation and attempts, and high-risk sexual behaviors (Mantovani & Smith, 2021). The negative impact of childhood abuse bleeds into adulthood and can create issues in an individual's physical and mental health, social and behavioral outcomes, as well as occupational and educational paths (Mantovani & Smith, 2021).

The aforementioned differences in cognition and brain structures can account for some of the difficulties that arise in those who are impacted by childhood abuse. Adults who experienced physical or sexual abuse in childhood are more likely to report an overall decreased life satisfaction (Storrie et al., 2022). This dissatisfaction is often paired with a decreased IQ and self-esteem, higher levels of depression, PTSD, and poverty (Storrie et al., 2022). Alongside higher rates of poverty, adult survivors of chronic traumatization in childhood often struggle to finish school, get employed, or stay employed (Storrie et al., 2022). These occupational difficulties can exacerbate existing psychiatric problems and may lead to developing mood and anxiety disorders, personality disorders, major depressive disorder, or alcohol/substance use disorders (Mantovani & Smith, 2021).

The structural and functional changes seen in the brain are reflected in the behavior that is produced by individuals who experienced childhood abuse. Unfortunately, the negative behaviors that may arise increase the likelihood an individual will struggle with employment, experience poverty, and have little to no social support through friends or family (Mantovani & Smith, 2021). The lack of impulse control, as shown in the abnormalities in the PFC, can be directly associated with the risky behaviors, such as substance/alcohol misuse, self-harm, and high-risk sexual behaviors, that are more likely to occur if someone has experienced childhood abuse (Mantovani & Smith, 2021). While not all survivors will fit this mold, childhood traumatization through physical and/or sexual abuse is associated with negative physical and mental health, increased time to respond to treatment, problems with occupational and social outcomes, and an overall negative outlook on one's own life (Brietzke et al., 2012).

It is important to note that while these areas have been found to have alterations in individuals who have experienced childhood trauma, the associations discovered vary from study to study (Rinne-Albers et al., 2020). These articles had inconsistencies between the findings, with the aforementioned pieces being the most consistent. Some of these inconsistencies may be due to the age of the sample populations, with the majority of them being well into adulthood before being tested. There could also be differences in the number of traumas experienced, leading to differences in the overall brain development.

It is also difficult to understand if these inconsistencies would continue to stand if the population being studied was children, rather than adults who experienced adverse childhood experiences. Children are difficult to study, due to their status as a protected population, which makes it hard to determine timing on these differences. It is hard to be certain that these differences in brain structures are due to childhood trauma itself, rather than the possibility of

other life traumas contributing. Without being able to study children themselves, we will never know if these pieces are caused by childhood trauma and childhood trauma alone. Humans do not live in a vacuum and the negative consequences seen in the brain imaging studies, as well as the life outcomes, of those who have experienced childhood abuse cannot be completely isolated. That being said, the information presented above supports the conclusion that there are differences that occur in the brain when someone experiences trauma early in life. This research is in the beginning stages, with much more that needs to be done.

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## The Confluence

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### Diverse Minds: Exploring Individual Differences in Visual Imagery and Special Cases

Kay DeKock

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### **Diverse Minds: Exploring Individual Differences in Visual Imagery and Special Cases**

Visual imagery, described as the ability to imagine scenes or objects in the "mind's eye," plays a vital role in human cognition. The process of mental imagery involves the creation of a mental representation of a previous experience, utilizing all human senses without the need for direct sensory input (Pearson, 2019). This paper will focus on the visual aspect of mental imagery, called visual imagery, and the spectrum of vividness. The phenomenon of visual imagery is experienced in different ways depending on the individual. Some are completely unable to create visual images, such as within the condition of aphantasia; whereas for others with hyperphantasia, visual imagery comes as vividly and easily as seeing through the human eye (Milton et al., 2021). The spectrum of visual imagery is broad, and not fully understood. This paper aims to inform through the exploration of visual imagery and individual differences on a spectrum, with a special focus on aphantasia and hyperphantasia, by examining current research, implications, and perceived impacts on daily life.

#### **Understanding Mental Imagery**

Before grasping the concept of individual differences within mental imagery, it is important to understand what exactly mental imagery is and what it entails. Mental imagery is an internal recreation of experiences without external sensory input (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). Among mental imageries involving different modalities, visual imagery is the primary focus of research and discussion. Visual imagery, which is a type of mental imagery, involves the visual representation of events or objects without experiencing them directly at the time of imagination. Although visual imagery is typically less clear than seeing through the eyes, most people experience it as a type of "seeing" within the mind's eye, allowing for mental recreation with a certain level of clarity (Milton et al., 2021). This is why there is much discussion when individuals whose ability to visualize deviates from the norm by their lack of ability to create visual images, or by their superior ability to visualize.

The dominance of visual imagery studies within the field is likely due to human's inherently visual nature, with a generous portion of the brain's cortical tissue dedicated to assessing visual information as compared to the other human senses (Pearson, 2019). There are other types of mental imagery, encompassing the other human senses, though they are not nearly as studied as visual imagery. While the emphasis on visual imagery is somewhat well placed, it is still important to study the other types of mental imagery; Unfortunately, little research exists regarding these other types. Out of the available studies assessing auditory imagery, another type of mental imagery, most are unable to provide proper evidence that auditory imagery was provoked throughout their procedures, and very little has been found regarding what exactly auditory imagery entails (Hubbard, 2010). What is known from past research is that auditory imagery is usually described as the internal recreation of sound, drawn from memory without external stimuli (Hubbard, 2010). Regarding the other types of mental imagery, even less is known. Regardless of the lack of research on the other types of mental imagery, all are important cognitive facets that support the remarkable ability of human minds to generate sensory experiences internally.

Previous research has established connections between visual imagery and a range of other cognitive processes, including different types of memory, learning, decision-making, problem-solving, and more (Pearson, 2019). Among these processes, the most studied in relation to mental imagery is working memory. The vividness of visual imagery relies heavily on a good working memory, as the role of processing helps extensively in the recall needed for visual imagery. Both mental imagery and working memory work together to pull information from

long-term memory to create visual images (Bywaters et al., 2004). Moreover, mental imagery helps within sensory processing, acting as a weaker version of perception, in turn helping in the processing of working memory (Pearson, 2019). There is evidence that visual imagery plays a role in autobiographical memory, as some disorders affecting visual imagery have also been linked to impaired autobiographical memory. Otherwise, the vividness of an individual's mental imagery is known to be positively associated with the clarity of their autobiographical memory (Milton et al., 2021).

Visual imagery also serves as a crucial tool in the learning process, aiding in both the recall and encoding of information (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). For example, when trying to recall a piece of information learned in class, one may visualize the place in which information was learned through visual imagery. Either way, mental imagery plays a key role in these processes. In the realm of creativity, individuals may use mental imagery to conceptualize different scenes or ideas (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). Within decision-making processes, mental imagery may facilitate a visual representation of different outcomes or decisions, possibly allowing the individual to weigh options before coming to a decision. Essentially, mental imagery is a powerful tool within cognition, improving memory, creativity, and the learning environment by allowing interaction with the inner workings of human minds.

### **Visual Imagery and the Brain**

Visual imagery, being a broad cognitive process, utilizes multiple parts of the brain for more thorough functioning. The regions used for visual imagery are sometimes called the “visualization network,” including the frontal lobe, occipital lobe, temporal lobe, and other areas involved in the memory process, depending on the type of imagery (Milton et al., 2021). The frontal lobe is tasked with an executive, organizational role in the mental imagery process. The frontal lobe does not necessarily hold any imagery content, although it still appears as an active area when mental imagery is examined through functional magnetic resonance imaging (Pearson, 2019). More specifically, the frontal lobe is responsible for the control, planning, and execution of the mental imagery process, such as when actively choosing to imagine something. Functional magnetic resonance imaging scans have revealed stronger connectivity between the temporal and occipital lobes within individuals with more vivid mental images, implying that connectivity between the two lobes may be linked to the vividness of mental imagery (Milton et al., 2021).

When considering the relationship between visual imagery and memory, research has revealed that the hippocampus is one section of the brain that is activated during the visual imagery process. The hippocampus' exact role is not entirely clear, though there is evidence suggesting it plays some active role in mental imagery (Pearson et al., 2013). Pearson (2019) has found that during mental imagery, a blood oxygen level-dependent reaction occurs, in which the cells of the hippocampus respond to the formation of mental images. Individuals who have experienced damage to their hippocampus show impairment in constructing vivid mental images, further solidifying the link between the region and mental imagery (Pearson, 2019).

The visual cortex, including the occipital lobe and related visual cortices, plays a vital role in mental imagery and has been a primary focus in the study of visual imagery processes for many years. Although mental imagery does not directly involve the eyes, it does involve the recall of information that has been seen previously through the eyes. Many studies show that the visual cortex can decode mental imagery and that it is active during the process of visual imagery (Pearson, 2019). Milton and colleagues (2021) have explored the potential link between the surface area of the visual cortex and how that relates to the vividness of visual imagery and have found evidence of a possible inverse relationship between these two aspects. That is, a smaller

visual cortex could mean more vivid visual imagery, while a bigger visual cortex could mean less vivid visual imagery. A positive relationship may be present between vividness and the area of the frontal regions, meaning bigger frontal regions lead to more vivid imagery, while smaller visual regions lead to less vivid imagery (Milton et al., 2021). Overall, the exact parts of the brain responsible for the process of mental imagery are not yet perfectly defined, but research in recent years has provided a base idea of what mental imagery in the brain looks like.

### **Assessment and Measurement of Visual Imagery**

When measuring visual imagery, vividness, by far, is the most frequently measured to test visual imagery ability, though some researchers also test in terms of clarity. Vividness is measured in how similar the experienced visual imagery is to the actual perceived experience. Clarity often relates to the brightness of colors and the sharpness of details and shapes (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). In past research, vividness has been studied most typically through first-person reports. Of course, what is seen through the mind is an entirely personal experience, and it is not yet possible to see through another person's mind. For this reason, self-report tactics dominate the measurement of mental imagery (Milton et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, these methods of measuring mental imagery today are questionable at best, leading to many threats to accuracy in current mental imagery research. Most typically in self-report methods, researchers will ask the participant to imagine something that is not physically there, and due to that, which is the main threat to validity (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). However, there is not necessarily a new or better way to measure such abilities, leading self-report methods to still be primarily relied upon. Self-report methods are still useful, but it is hard to fully accept evidence that is only based on self-report (Milton et al., 2021). For this reason, many researchers have also worked to employ performance-based measures of imagery, such as spatial abilities tests, to check the accuracy of self-report measures (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). These objective measurement options may provide more accurate measurement of visual imagery otherwise impossible through self-report methods (Milton et al., 2021). In research utilizing self-report and performance-based measurement, much more accurate outcomes may be defined, which is why most researchers in the field opt to use both forms of measurement if possible (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023).

Self-report methods are the most susceptible to individual differences, causing a major threat within the research of mental imagery. Many observed individual differences could be nothing more than a difference in metacognition rather than actual differences in vividness (Milton et al., 2021). The lack of understanding of the human mind makes it difficult to accurately state individual experiences, which is why the differences potentially lying in metacognition are considered.

### **The Spectrum of Visual Imagery**

Within psychological research, individual differences have been regarded as something to always be aware of when collecting evidence. When testing a treatment, for example, the outcome must always come with the consideration of how the participants differed from each other in a way that is not controllable by external forces. Like many aspects of human cognition, visual imagery lies on a spectrum. We know that the line of individual differences is vast, including a wide range of experiences between everyone (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023).

Within the spectrum of visual imagery, on one end, there is aphantasia, in which there is no mental imagery at all, and on the other end, hyperphantasia, in which there is extremely vivid mental imagery. Unfortunately, little research has gone towards defining individual differences beyond the extreme ends of the spectrum. Nonetheless, it is understood that differences in mental

imagery, even in the realm of typical imagery, may impact various aspects of cognition, such as memory and creativity (Pearson et al., 2013).

Many personal traits are linked to mental imagery. Specifically, gender differences within mental imagery are a controversial topic in the field. Some studies suggest that women tend to have more vivid visual imagery than men do, as indicated by higher self-reported visual imagery scores by women (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). Personality traits also relate to visual imagery, with extraverted individuals exhibiting more vivid mental imagery as compared to introverted individuals (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). Emotion also plays a role in mental imagery and its vividness. Research has demonstrated a connection between the ability to access emotional past information and the ability to create mental imagery, in which the lack of visual imagery ability would lead to difficulty recalling emotional memories (Ganczarek et al., 2020).

### **Aphantasia: The Absence of Visual Imagery**

At one extreme end of the visual imagery spectrum is the condition known as aphantasia, a complete absence of visual imagery (Ganczarek et al., 2020). Although discussion about aphantasia has been present for years, the term was coined as recently as 2015 (Furman et al., 2022). Despite the recent introduction of the term, the study of this lack of visual imagery is not at all new. In fact, it dates to 1880 when one researcher, Galton (as cited in Furman et al., 2022) administered the “breakfast table survey” which studied visual imagery, in which some were described as having none.

Most people with aphantasia are born with it, although it is also possible that it can be acquired following some form of head trauma or a brain lesion, referred to as acquired aphantasia (Furman et al., 2022). The prevalence of the condition remains a subject of debate, though it is mostly agreed upon that about 2-5% of the population experience aphantasia (Furman et al., 2022). Since it is an uncommon condition, many misunderstand the true meaning of what it is like to have aphantasia. Within the spectrum of visual imagery, some individuals may simply have an impairment in visual imagery and have weak, unclear mental representations, whereas others, with aphantasia, cannot create visual images at all (Furman et al., 2022).

Measuring aphantasia poses a significant challenge in research, due to the typical methods of which it is measured. Some researchers argue that individual differences within visual mental imagery are simply differences in metacognition rather than a genuine inability to create visual imagery (Furman et al., 2022). Since most studies revolving around mental imagery utilize self-report methods, their true validity cannot be assessed. However, that said, research does indicate that aphantasic people do not appear to utilize imagery-based priming, meaning that aphantasia simply involves truly little sensory imagery rather than impaired metacognition (Furman et al., 2022).

Aphantasia, being a form of visual imagery, is experienced differently across those with the condition. However, several common features have been observed in those with aphantasia, such as the tendency to refer to conceptual knowledge instead of imagery in the information retrieval process (Ganczarek et al., 2020). Those with aphantasia, for example, may be unable to thoroughly recall emotional past information. This could be linked to several psychological issues, including depression and anxiety (Ganczarek et al., 2020).

Individuals with aphantasia have tested as being more intelligent than those with average and otherwise more vivid mental imagery, although they more typically experienced traits in line with autism spectrum disorder (Milton et al., 2021). Many individuals with aphantasia also seem to struggle with facial recognition (Milton et al., 2021). Furthermore, aphantasia appears to

influence career choice, with aphantasic people being more likely to work in either scientific or mathematical domains (Milton et al., 2021). Overall, living with aphantasia presents unique challenges, particularly in recalling past emotional experiences or just general experiences through visual representation. Nonetheless, many people born with this condition or are later subjected to it find ways to adapt and navigate through life.

### **Hyperphantasia: Enhanced Visual Imagery**

Hyperphantasia is the polar opposite of aphantasia, characterized by a superior ability to produce highly vivid, detailed mental images (Milton et al., 2021). Like aphantasia, the prevalence is not universally agreed upon, although the condition is estimated to be present in about 3% of the general population (Milton et al., 2021), with a higher incidence reported in children, estimated to be up to 11% (Pearson, 2019).

Like aphantasia, hyperphantasia is not a new concept, being first recognized in the early 1900s (Pearson, 2019). Previously, hyperphantasia was referred to as eidetic imagery, commonly known as photographic memory, is seen as a photo-realistic visual memory even weeks after seeing the original object (Pearson, 2019). Conversely, with a current and better understanding of the condition, eidetic imagery and hyperphantasia are entirely different; those with hyperphantasia can recall novel images with clarity even without experience, while eidetic memory would only involve things that were directly experienced. This confusion is warranted, however, as compared to aphantasia, hyperphantasia receives less attention in research, likely because it is perceived as a positive condition rather than a negative one.

Individuals with hyperphantasia tend to gravitate toward more creative work due to the vividness of their mental imagery (Milton et al., 2021). Hyperphantasia may relate to several positives and negatives in an individual's life. The ability to imagine highly detailed imagery is particularly useful for things such as learning and mental rotation, though it may also cause distress when less pleasant events are recalled in vivid detail. Hyperphantasia, and strong visual imagery in general, can even contribute to psychological disorders. In post-traumatic stress disorder, hyperphantasia can be linked to involuntary imagery that appears in highly vivid hallucinations or flashbacks, respectively (Pearson, 2019). Vivid mental imagery has also been tied to schizotypal or schizophrenic tendencies entailing hallucinations with more vivid imagery (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). Strong imagery may also contribute to depression and anxiety disorders, though it has recently demonstrated helpfulness as a tool for psychological treatment (Pearson, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

Understanding individual differences within mental imagery is vital, given just how important the process is within cognition and daily life. This paper investigated the range of individual differences in visual imagery, and the extremes of aphantasia and hyperphantasia along with the in-between of the spectrum and what cognitive and psychological factors these include. Some may argue that the study of mental imagery is non-important, given that most can navigate through their lives even without mental imagery. However, the relation of mental imagery and things such as memory and learning demonstrates just how important it is for mental imagery to be understood and explored within a variety of domains. Unfortunately, the knowledge of the underlying mechanisms and implications of their effects is quite limited. For this reason, research must continue to investigate this phenomenon and strive to understand the intricacies of the human mind and why human experience differs so greatly across cognition.

## **Implications and Applications**

The range of individual differences in mental imagery highlights the distinct experiences of mental imagery, linked to factors such as personality traits, emotion, and cognitive processes. The ties between the personality trait and extraversion/introversion to the extremes of mental imagery provide evidence of the frontal lobe's role in the visual imagery process. The frontal lobe, holding the brain's personality center, may have a greater role in visual imagery beyond the executive role. The fact that issues targeting autobiographical memory also impact visual imagery further indicates the link between visual imagery and memory, and therefore, the role of the hippocampus and memory centers of the brain in visual imagery. These distinctions highlight the relationship between cognition and mental imagery and, I believe, can be used for research into individual differences between brain patterns and uses of different cognitive functions. The exploration of visual mental imagery and how it is experienced individually also paves the way for applications across several domains.

## **Cognitive Psychology Research**

The extreme differences in visual imagery between those with aphantasia and hyperphantasia emphasize how great individual differences may be, which may suggest possible individual differences in other cognitive abilities. Individual differences should be a necessary consideration when leading new research. This insight may provide future guidance for new research looking to uncover the cognitive facets of imagery, allowing for a better understanding of aphantasia and hyperphantasia as well as the in-between of the visual imagery spectrum that could further stretch to aid in therapeutic approaches for related psychological disorders.

## ***Clinical Settings***

Due to its connection to emotion and memory, clinical settings may find use in recognizing the potential for the use of mental imagery in psychological therapies.

Understanding individual differences within mental imagery could easily enhance the effectiveness of therapeutic approaches, as those focusing on mental imagery have little use for those with aphantasia. This knowledge could allow for the development of alternative strategies, using either the other senses or instead focusing on cognitive processes other than imagery. Conversely, for individuals with disorders like schizophrenia or post-traumatic stress disorder, hyperphantasia has been linked to heightened distress. The acknowledgment of hyperphantasia and general individual differences within a patient's visual imagery may be aided through the use of therapies focused on controlling this imagery.

## ***Educational Settings***

There is extensive evidence of mental imagery aiding in the learning process, making knowledge of individual differences in educational settings important to consider and adapt to (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2023). If teachers can recognize these differences, they can tailor personalized teaching methods depending on a student's ability to create visual images. For students with aphantasia or otherwise weak mental imagery, more auditory materials could heighten learning, while students with hyperphantasia or otherwise strong mental imagery may benefit from more visually based learning strategies.

The possibilities of this are endless, and most educational settings should strive for personalized education with the consideration of each student's individual differences. By properly acknowledging and working around these differences, there are possibilities for enhanced cognitive psychological research, treatments, educational strategies, and more.

## **Limitations and Future Directions in Research**

The research reviewed on visual imagery relied on self-report measures to assess visual imagery, which can lead to unreliable data. Moreover, there are noticeable gaps in current research, particularly regarding the impact of emotion on mental imagery as well as individual differences in visual imagery ability beyond the extremes of aphantasia and hyperphantasia.

Notably, information on hyperphantasia is much sparser than information on aphantasia, which is much more extensively studied in the field. For this reason, the best potential future direction in this field would lie in an in-depth look at hyperphantasia, and possible daily and cognitive impact on individuals with the condition.

Future studies, for example, may include a comparative analysis of emotion and personality between individuals with aphantasia and hyperphantasia. Other studies may look at the less extreme cases, such as between those who can see shapes, but no color in visual imagery, and individuals who can see shapes, and only dull colors, and more in-between dimensions of imagery if possible. Other studies may go more in-depth with the study of learning and mental imagery, as many sources mentioned struggles related to learning within individuals with aphantasia but did not go into depth about why exactly this is.

Exploring the experiences of those who developed aphantasia following some form of trauma could also offer great insight, as well as show more of the mechanisms of mental imagery and how the minds of people with aphantasia differ from those without it. Such studies would fill the current gaps in the field's literature and contribute to more understanding of the great individual differences throughout human cognition, even beyond mental imagery.

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## The Confluence

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# Mary Easton Sibley's Envisioned Societal Roles Through Education

Andrea Gentry

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## Introduction

Mary Easton Sibley, the founder of Lindenwood University, was a strong-willed, religious, and socially-devoted woman. Mary Sibley's adolescence provided events which supported her future as an educator and activist. Sibley was born into an upper-class family and her father, Rufus Easton, practiced law, politics, and was involved in real estate investing.<sup>1</sup> In 1800, and at the age of four, she and her family arrived in St. Louis. During this time, she encountered French customs and language, Native Americans, and enslaved African Americans. These encounters provided Sibley with an expansion of her knowledge of society. In her adolescence, Mary Sibley received an education from a boarding school in Kentucky. After achieving a satisfactory education, she returned to St. Louis in 1815 and met her husband, George Sibley, a friend of her father Rufus.<sup>2</sup> George became known for his work for the United States government.

After getting married in October 1815, George and Mary Sibley left St. Louis for Fort Osage, where they lived in their home named Fountain Cottage, and George acted as a trade superintendent to the Native Americans. With Sibley's sister Louisa living at Fountain Cottage, Sibley began teaching her and some of the Native American girls and settlers' daughters, offering them piano lessons as well as instruction in reading and writing.<sup>3</sup> While never formalized, these lessons marked the beginning of Mary's career as an educator.<sup>4</sup> In 1816, there was an increase in population in Fort Osage. Sibley then became concerned about the lack of education for the pioneer children, especially the girls and the Native American children. Sibley taught English to any children who came to her for education. In 1828, the Sibleys moved to St. Charles, Missouri. St. Charles was a growing town; by 1819, "St. Charles has grown, according to the census list, to include 981 whites, 124 slaves, and 5 negro residents."<sup>5</sup>

In 1832, when the Linden Wood School for Girls was founded, Mary Sibley had a religious awakening, which caused her to join the St. Charles Presbyterian Church and begin journaling her religious experiences and progress in her Christian career. Sibley wrote in her diary from 1832 until 1858. In her entries, Sibley describes her attitudes towards movements such as temperance and education for women and minorities, which were justified on religious grounds. From her actions and writings, Sibley displays the promotion of educational opportunities for young women, men, and minority groups. From the young age of 15, Sibley became immersed in education. Starting in 1832, Sibley began documenting her various educational endeavors. This research explores Mary Sibley's vision for proper society and the place of women and minorities, as seen through her promotion of education for all. The ways in which Sibley promoted education reveal the assumptions and opinions she held about society and the ideal place for women and minorities within societal roles.

Kristie C. Wolferman, in her book, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri*, discusses the life of Mary Sibley and her views regarding women's social and political roles, slavery, temperance, religion, and other topics that reflect educational and social developments. Wolferman claims in her journal that Mary Sibley

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<sup>1</sup> Kristie C. Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*.

<sup>3</sup> Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*.

<sup>4</sup> Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*.

<sup>5</sup> Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*.

expressed attitudes far ahead of her time, including temperance, women's suffrage, and education for women and underprivileged minorities.<sup>6</sup> In a presentation regarding her book at the Missouri State Archives, Wolferman stated Mary Sibley did not let anything block her path in promoting educational opportunities and "education she believes empowered and equalized people and should be available to everyone, ideas that were way ahead of Mary's time."<sup>7</sup> Wolferman is correct in saying Sibley believed education empowered, but she is incorrect in stating Sibley believed education equalized. While Sibley sought to empower people through what she believed were the appropriate roles, she did not seek to equalize them through education.

Mary Ellen Rowe, in her essay "Mary Sibley: Genteel Reformer," in *Feminist Frontiers: Women Who Shaped the Midwest*, describes Sibley as a complex and conflicted character. Rowe discusses Sibley's struggle with the negotiation between her need to define herself and the definition society had placed on her.<sup>8</sup> Rowe shows while church and social reform movements seemed to offer self-expression, autonomy, and significance, this was illusory because "evangelical Protestantism rested on patriarchal religious and social values."<sup>9</sup> Rowe is more accurate in portraying Sibley as a "genteel reformer." Mary Sibley was a social reformer but was not quite a radical reformer of the time. However, Rowe does not detail Sibley's mission to educate.

While Sibley promoted education for all, she did not promote the same education for everyone. Instead, she imagined education tailored to young white women, African American women, and immigrants, which reflected what she considered the "proper" roles played by each in society. Rowe's in-depth analysis of Sibley's personal diary shows while Sibley provided a broader scope of education for young white women, African Americans, and immigrants, she focused on preparing each for what she deemed their "appropriate" societal roles.

## Mary Sibley's Diary

While Mary Sibley intended her journal to display her religious journey and devotion, the journal also ends up displaying the social and cultural frontiers she encountered in a period of her life. Sibley makes her first entry on March 23, 1832, writing she has been in possession of her diary for three years, with the impression it would one day come to use by recording her "religious experience and progress in attempts to serve." From the first entry, it is evident Sibley found meaning in her life by serving through the church, which includes teaching and attending to her community.<sup>10</sup> Through Sibley's promotion of education for all, she displays her beliefs about society, gender, and race.

From the period of 1832 to 1858 in her diary, Sibley exhibited strong attitudes regarding gender roles. Sibley strongly believed men were superior, and subsequently, men should receive a superior education. In April 1836, she wrote, "I never wish to see that society in which the nobler sex cannot be looked up to as superior in knowledge, as they are in strength & energy of character. It would destroy half the delight of our associations if we were not permitted to feel that we have a protector in man to whom we can regard as our Superior." This view of men being superior to women is present in her modes of education. Through education

<sup>6</sup> Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*.

<sup>7</sup> "The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri Video Transcript," Missouri State Archives, Missouri Digital Heritage, 2009, <https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/presentations/default/sibley>.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Ellen Rowe, "Mary Sibley: Genteel Reformer," in *Feminist Frontiers: Women Who Shaped the Midwest*, ed. Yvonne J. Johnson, (Kirksville: Truman State University, 2010), 21-37.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on March 23, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

n, Sibley ensured she performed well in her Christian career. Sibley supplied education through a white Sabbath School, African Sabbath School, Female Benevolent Society, and her Linden Wood School for Girls. Through these institutions, Sibley provided differing education for young white women, young men, African American women, and immigrants. Considering these various groups, Sibley provided a preparatory education to young white women for their future roles as wives and mothers, religious and higher education connections to young white men, and religious education to African American women and German immigrants.

## White Sabbath School

Sabbath schools acted as institutions for children providing instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as moral and religious instruction. A school held on the sabbath was for purposes of religious education. “Sabbath or Sunday schools served as an important entry point for public schooling in the first decades of the nineteenth century. These schools provided the basic spelling, reading, and writing instruction often required for admission into public schools.”<sup>11</sup> The Common School movement started by Horace Mann, did not occur until 1837. For Sibley and her scholars, the Sabbath School served as an institution for young children to study religious texts and learn how to serve their religious duties.

On April 22, 1832, about a month after the beginning of her diary, Sibley begins mentioning the Sabbath School in which young men, women, and immigrants will be taught. At this time, Sibley was inquiring about the possible use of a schoolroom to commence the Sabbath School. Sibley told the children the Sabbath School opened “today at the little log cabin near Mr. Cole’s place,” a farmer in the area.<sup>12</sup> Sibley also wrote she felt “a great desire to serve God by serving my fellow creatures in some way but scarce know how to go about it.”<sup>13</sup> Sibley was still discovering her precise role in serving her Christian career. Her dedication to starting a Sabbath School displays a gradual process to the ideal of education for all.

By the following week, Sibley discussed the commencement of the neighborhood Sabbath School. However, due to the weather, only two young children were in attendance.<sup>14</sup> Sibley felt conflicted when she was unable to attend an afternoon sermon from Mr. I. W. Douglass because her time with students at the Sabbath School overlapped. Sibley wrote, “I almost regretted having gone as there were so few children but it was my duty as teacher to be at my post.”<sup>15</sup> This marked Sibley’s first written devotion to her long career as an educator. Even while Sibley had other wants in her daily life, she felt it more important to be present in the classroom and her duty to educate.

In July 1832, the attendance numbers of the Sabbath School increased. Sibley reported an almost full cabin of mostly German children, which Sibley refers to as Dutch. Sibley’s goal in educating these Dutch children was to teach them about religion and their duties to God. Sibley described only one of the young Dutch boys attending the Sabbath School spoke English.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, the boy acted as an interpreter and aided Sibley in lecturing “upon the propriety of keeping silence during the time of prayer.”<sup>17</sup> Even though there was a language barrier, Sibley

<sup>11</sup> Paul D. Sanders, “The Sabbath School Movement, Two Early Children’s Psalm Books, and Their Influence on the Introduction of Public School Music Education in the United States,” *Contributions to Music Education* 43 (2018): 117, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26478002>.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on April 22, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on April 29, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

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

<sup>16</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 1, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

wanted to provide these children with tools to serve under Christianity. Over two weeks later, Sibley accounted few numbers of scholars in attendance at her Sabbath School because the Dutch children started attending the Catholic Church.<sup>18</sup> After attending the Sabbath School in the morning, Sibley spent her evening promoting an education for a large family of children. Sibley wrote, “went in the evening to try and prevail upon a woman who has a large family of children growing up in ignorance.”<sup>19</sup> By her wording, Sibley aimed to convince the children’s mother to send them to school. Sibley believed without a proper primary and religious education, these children would grow up lacking the knowledge and awareness they could receive in a proper education. Specifically, Sibley wished to send one of the sons to a day school and to send another to the Sabbath School.<sup>20</sup>

Late in July 1832, Sibley displayed her willingness to provide outside educational opportunities for her scholars. As mentioned previously, the Sabbath School was conducted in a log cabin next to the home of Mr. Cole, a farmer. Mr. Cole’s son, Hiram Cole, had been attending the Sabbath School constantly for the past month. At this time, Hiram began expressing his educational goals to Sibley, hoping she could assist. Sibley wrote, “he told me yesterday that he had just begun to feel the importance of having a good education & that he wished to go on in the fall to one of the Eastern Colleges.”<sup>21</sup> Sibley wondered on what terms Hiram could possibly be admitted to the college. Sibley described Hiram as “a young man who had been a cripple from his birth,” and “he is very wicked as far as blaspheming the name of the most High God.”<sup>22</sup> Sibley further described, “to one so deformed, so unfit for the enjoyments of this life, if he have not hope of the next how dreadful is his situation.”<sup>23</sup> Even though Sibley doubted Hiram’s devotion to and ability for higher education, she promised to use her connections to make inquiries on his behalf. Two months later, in September, Sibley reported she spoke to Mr. P about a possible place in a college for Hiram. Mr. P promised to write to Doctor Beecher, the President of Illinois College, to discover on what terms Hiram could be admitted.<sup>24</sup> While this is the last piece in which Sibley discusses Hiram, it displays her connections to higher education. However, these connections to higher education were only exercised for young men.

July 25, 1835, marked the last of descriptive entries in Sibley’s diary displaying the events of her Sabbath School.<sup>25</sup> Sibley’s Sabbath School upheld a religious education for young girls, young boys, and German children. Throughout her writings on her Sabbath School, Sibley displayed the belief that education should be available to all children and her devotion to her duty as an educator.

## African Sabbath School

The first African American schools were created in the late eighteenth century, and by the 1820s, the first African Americans graduated college. While the early and mid-nineteenth century saw progress toward African American education, educational institutions were scarce, limited numbers were enrolled, and they severely lacked funding. The attitudes towards African American education were generally split into two groups. One opposed educated African Americans because of the possibility of slave revolt. The other group believed African

<sup>18</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 15, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 15, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 30, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on September 26, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 25, 1835, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

Americans required an education to read the Bible and other religious texts and subsequently should receive a further religious education within Sabbath Schools. While owning Linden Wood, George and Mary Sibley owned enslaved African Americans. In 1829, they were known to have six enslaved African Americans, five men and one woman.

Sibley began discussing her involvement with an African Sabbath School on February 17, 1834, around two years after the start of her diary and white Sabbath School. In this entry, Sibley described going through her regular Sunday routines of attending the morning Sabbath School and sermons in the afternoon. However, this day differed from average; Sibley wrote “in the evening commenced an African School which with the blessing of God we hope to continue and make it the means of doing some good.”<sup>26</sup> Even though Sibley’s ideas of providing a religious education through a Sabbath School to African Americans were not new, it supported her belief of education for all.

A month later, in March, Sibley described her new regular Sunday routine of attending the white Sabbath School in the morning, listening to sermons in the afternoon, and attending the African Sabbath School in the evening. On Sunday, Sibley instructed the white Sabbath School on their duties concerning the lesson, but the lesson for the African Sabbath School differed.<sup>27</sup> Sibley wrote, “Attended the African school for the evening and gave the whole school advice & exhorted them to repent explaining to them the meaning of repentance. They were very much disposed to give attention to what was said.”<sup>28</sup> Sibley wanted education for African Americans, but the education provided in her Sabbath schools depended on what she deemed assisted them the best.

Within the same week, Sibley gave a more detailed update on the African Sabbath School. Sibley found the exercises and discussion of the African school to be interesting.<sup>29</sup> Since the last commencement of the African school, the number of attendees increased, and Sibley described the school as growing fast.<sup>30</sup> However, the increase in members soon declined. Sibley wrote, “Some however came & returned their books and said they were forbid to attend by their Masters. One woman appeared to be grieved about it very much.”<sup>31</sup> This marked the beginning of resistance to Sibley’s African Sabbath School. As mentioned previously, some enslavers did not deem providing enslaved African American an education appropriate. Sibley accounts the resistance to her African Sabbath school to a man who has been, for some time, spreading misrepresentations of the school around St. Charles.<sup>32</sup> Sibley wrote, “We told the poor girls to pray for their masters and be obedient & all would be well with them if they served God.”<sup>33</sup>

In April 1834, Sibley gave an update on the African Sabbath School. Sibley attended the Sabbath School for white children in the morning, heard two sermons, and then attended the African Sabbath School in the evening.<sup>34</sup> Sibley described, “The black people appear very much interested. The simple prayer of these poor people at the closing of the school is really affecting.”<sup>35</sup> Sibley believed her African Sabbath School assisted the attendees in a positive

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<sup>26</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on February 17, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on March 30, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on March 31, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on March 31, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on April 24, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

manner. Sibley continued by writing, “I have felt happier after closing this school of an evening than I have done for a long time in the performance of any single duty.”<sup>36</sup> Not only did this African Sabbath School aid its scholars, but it also aided Sibley in her duties as an educator. Sibley believed the school persevered and became “instrumental of doing them soon good.”<sup>37</sup>

More resistance to Sibley’s African Sabbath School occurred at the beginning of August of 1834. Sibley spent her day completing domestic work and came to read an article in a political paper which was “attacking individuals for helping Sunday Schools for Slaves.”<sup>38</sup>

Our African School has succeeded her in some respects better than we expected—we who are engaged in it, think it our duty to do something to enlighten the minds of those poor benighted creatures on their souls Salvation—We think if the bible should be sent all over the world to heathen nations & is entitled as the word of God to the attention of all His rational Creatures it would be strange inconsistency to say our slaves shall not be taught to read it or shall not know its contents. I believe it to be peculiarly the duty of every Christian head of a family to instruct his servant in the Bible himself or else place them in the way of being instructed.<sup>39</sup>

Sibley’s statement displays her devotion to the education of enslaved African American and her belief all people, no matter societal rank, should receive an education from the Bible. Sibley’s wording of “heathen nations” shows she wished for all nations who did not subscribe to Christianity to receive religious education in the Bible. She claims it might be strange to have the goal of converting “heathen nations” in Christianity but not the enslaved African Americans of the United States. Sibley even more displays her ideals when saying it is the duty of the head of households to educate their enslaved. Sibley continued this discussion of the African Sabbath School by writing, “The Lord grant that who have undertaken to teach the few slaves who attend the S.S. of St. Charles may do our duty faithfully, and never be deterred by any persecution from serving our God according to the dictates of our conscience.”<sup>40</sup> Even through resistance to the African School, Sibley hoped she and the other educators at the school may complete their duties through the “persecution” and provide support to the enslaved African Americans who were allowed to attend.

Within the following week, Sibley further discussed the effects of a political paper attacking individuals helping Sabbath School for enslaved people.<sup>41</sup> Sibley discovered the political paper was particularly focused on the discussion of the St. Charles Sabbath School for Africans and described the attack as “most gross and outrageous.”<sup>42</sup> Even with the negative words spoken about the African Sabbath School, Sibley hoped, “the Lord be pleased graciously to open the eyes of the writer of this article to his own true situation and lead him to repentance & faith.”<sup>43</sup> Sibley had a strong faith and consistency in improving society through education. August 5, 1834, marked the last entries describing the St. Charles African Sabbath School. In the last entry, Sibley mentioned a series of events contributed to the end of the discussion of the African School. Sibley wrote, “At the time the abusive article was probably written, one of the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 1, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>39</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 1, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 5, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 5, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

principal teachers was dying, another was absent attending a sick husband & another was mourning over the recent sudden death of a Father—hat will sin not do—and what a Hell would this Earth be was it not for the sustaining grace of God.”<sup>44</sup> Sibley’s involvement in the St. Charles Sabbath School for enslaved African Americans shows her dedication to the belief in education for all. From her writings describing the duty of enslavers to educate their enslaved in the words of the Bible, Sibley supported a more formal education for enslaved African Americans along with the religious education she provided.

## Female Benevolent Society

Female Benevolent Societies have been historically known to be nonprofit organizations with the purpose of doing good within their communities. During the nineteenth century, these benevolent societies served as institutions for women to work together to achieve the goals they deemed necessary. Like others, Sibley’s doings in the St. Charles Presbyterian Church Female Benevolent Society focused on religious, educational, and activist themes. A year after Sibley’s first connection with the Presbyterian Church of St. Charles, she wrote about her membership in a Female Benevolent Society attached to the Church.<sup>45</sup> In this first meeting, Sibley discussed in her diary it was pleasant, and the subject of conversation was religion.<sup>46</sup> The members “proposed to the Society to do all in their power to have a Colonization Society formed in St. Charles and to contribute towards it by a yearly subscription as the donation of the Female Benevolent Society of St. Charles.”<sup>47</sup> While not education related, this displays Sibley’s views of the proper and possible roles of African Americans within American society. She provided education through her African Sabbath School to the enslaved African Americans of St. Charles. However, by supporting the founding of a Colonization Society in St. Charles, she did not believe African Americans could fully integrate into the society they lived in.

By April 1, 1833, Sibley began the promotion of education through the Female Benevolent Society. On this day, after the church was dismissed, Sibley visited a “poor woman” in an attempt to convince her to send an orphan child to school.<sup>48</sup> In response to the offer, Sibley reported the woman appeared very grateful and much affected, “She consented to send the boy and on returning to town I made arrangements with the teacher to take him and our Female Benevolent Society would pay for his schooling.”<sup>49</sup> While Sibley was unable to provide a formal education to young men at the time, she wished for all children, regardless of class, to have access to an education. A similar situation occurred over two weeks later; Sibley wrote, “went to St. Charles to get the consent of a Dutch family to send their daughter to school in place of an orphan girl who had been sent by the female benevolent society and had removed to Illinois.”<sup>50</sup> Previously, Sibley discussed sending a young man to school. Within the same month, through the Female Benevolent Society, Sibley arranged to send two young girls from different families to school. Even though Sibley did not directly educate these three children, she shows through her actions the promotion of education for all children.

Continuing through Sibley’s diary entries in 1833, she sparingly discusses her involvement of the promotion of education for young children through the Female Benevolent Society. In one of her last detailed entries on the Female Benevolent Society, Sibley mentions

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on March 23, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on March 23, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>48</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on April 1, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on April 15, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

visiting yet another family. After attending the meeting for the Female Benevolent Society, she was sent to an unwell neighbor.<sup>51</sup> Sibley describes the family as universalistic and said she, “Could not introduce the subject of religion, but prayed that if they construe the Bible wrong (as I think they must) that their eyes may be opened to see the truth. Left two or three tracts in the Bible which belonged to the house.”<sup>52</sup> Sibley could not support this family through her usual way of business: discussing religion or providing the children with an education. However, this entry displays her willingness to support all different families and children. About six months later, in October, Sibley reported low numbers of attendance at the Female Benevolent Society meeting, so they were unable to conduct society business.<sup>53</sup> At this time, in the last half of 1833, Sibley did not further discuss the Female Benevolent Society of St. Charles because they lacked the members to continue to offer educational opportunities to children of the community.

## Linden Wood School for Girls

The early nineteenth century had differing views of how women should be educated. Some individuals expected women to be independent thinkers, while others placed emphasis on domestic skills.<sup>54</sup> Society placed a women’s value of worth in their ability to effectively participate as a wife and mother. The early nineteenth century also saw a rise of providing “book learning” to women. Sibley’s diary entries discussing her Linden Wood School for Girls displays themes of domestic duties, book learning, and independent thinking.

Four months after the start of her diary, Sibley made an entry discussing her role in boarding and teaching young girls. Sibley reported, at the request of parents of the young girls, she now “consented to board and teach about half a dozen young ladies a year.”<sup>55</sup> The young girls under Sibley’s care were from upper-class families. One girl, Theodosia, belonged to the Catholic Church and was a granddaughter of a judge.<sup>56</sup> However, Theodosia’s mother had some stipulations upon placing her in Sibley’s care. The mother “particularly desired that no undue influence should be exerted over her to induce her to abandon her religion.”<sup>57</sup> Young women had limited educational opportunities during the early and mid-nineteenth century, especially West of the Mississippi River. Due to limited educational institutions for girls, Theodosia was placed in Sibley’s school, even though their religious beliefs differed. Sibley wrote, “I, of course had no disposition to take particular pains to make a convert of her unless the simple assertion of what I believed truth should have that effect; if it did, I would not justly be blamed with deceiving her Mother, yet still as I consider it my duty to act differently in some things now from what I did.”<sup>58</sup> Sibley was steadfast in her faith but was still willing to alter her normal teachings for Theodosia.

Sibley provided a copy of a letter she wrote to Theodosia’s mother addressing concerns of religious conversion. Sibley assures Theodosia’s mother she has “endeavored to deal with the utmost candor” towards the mother’s hopes for Theodosia’s education and welfare.<sup>59</sup> Sibley further claims her religious duties have had and will continue to be of the slightest influence on the girls under her care.<sup>60</sup> When Theodosia was placed under her care, Sibley was not yet a

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<sup>51</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on April 18, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on October 12, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>54</sup> Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*.

<sup>55</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 5, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 5, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

“professor of religion,” so, Sibley offered the mother to send Theodosia home if she feared the education Sibley provided.<sup>61</sup> Then Sibley provided the mother with an update on Theodosia’s progress, saying “not as rapidly as I would wish. She does not possess an investigating mind and wants application . . . extremely amiable and is gifted in several excellent traits of character. We are all attached to her, but if your judgment decides it would be more to her advantage to place her somewhere else I shall cheerfully acquiesce to your decision.”<sup>62</sup> From the first years of boarding and teaching young girls, Sibley was certainly confident she provided a good education for the young girls, even when parental concerns arose.

In May 1833, almost a year later, Sibley’s sister brought two young ladies who remained under her care for a year. At this time, Sibley believed the responsibility of educating youth to “be very great” and hoped she was “enabled to perform my duty as one who is to give account for all I have received.”<sup>63</sup> By August of the same year, Sibley began to face trials under the nature of teaching. Sibley prefaces this entry by writing,

I commenced this spring the little school I had last year consisting of seven or eight young girls—on the plan I have long thought necessary for the good of the rising generation. That is the women instead of being raised helpless & dependent beings should be taught a habit of industry & usefulness. Especially that they should be made to consider it a privilege and duty to wait upon themselves to be perfectly independent of the enervating effects that slavery has produced almost universally upon the character of the people of west and South.<sup>64</sup>

Sibley wished for all young girls, not just the ones under her care, to learn usefulness in their further societal roles. Sibley aimed to achieve this education of industry and usefulness in her “little school.”<sup>65</sup> However, while carrying out her plan, Sibley was faced with stories of her “domestic arrangements” which became of concern to some of the parents of the young girls under her care.<sup>66</sup> The parents wished Sibley to alter the particulars of the education provided to the young girls. Sibley reassured her purpose in writing, “I endeavored to do my duty to those under my care from a sense of responsibility to a higher tribunal than any erected by the opinions of the world or a few intermeddling individuals.”<sup>67</sup> Sibley also stated if the parents did not have confidence in her promotion of the best interest of the girls, then they could send them back home.<sup>68</sup>

Two days later, Sibley provided a copy of a letter to parents addressing the arisen concerns. Sibley began the letter stating the reports had been false and were circulated by children, servants, and “ill-natured and intermeddling persons.”<sup>69</sup> Sibley continued to write in the letter about a “pernicious system of education” she describes as,

so common, especially in slave countries, which turns upon the world thousands of my sex helpless dependent creatures, mere Doll babies dressed up for exhibition decorated with external accomplishments, very pretty to hold in the Drawing room or

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<sup>61</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 5, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on May 4, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>64</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 17, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>65</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 17, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>66</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 17, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

Ball room but of no manner of use either to ourselves or their fellow creatures, when called upon to take their stations in society as wives, mothers & heads of families. Sibley wished to overturn a long-standing tradition of education which was gradually harming women in the process. Sibley wished for her girls under her care to be more than just a show piece of society. To correct this long-standing pernicious system of education, Sibley suggested the young girls needed to be “practically & experimentally & what is worth more than all habitually acquainted with all the various duties of Domestic economy & arrangement.”<sup>70</sup> Along with this essential knowledge, the girls also needed a liberal education.<sup>71</sup> Sibley believed only then do these girls “become the pride, the comfort, the stay of their relatives and friends, whereas on the other hand they become a burden to all with whom they are connected.”<sup>72</sup> Sibley’s use of “they become a burden” further showed she wished to prepare the girls under her care for their future roles in society as wives and mothers. To help achieve her goal of preparing these young girls, Sibley demanded to be in control of all their time, employments and “everyone should be created precisely alike and obliged to conform to the same rules.”<sup>73</sup> She further points out “the young lady who when at home may have ten or twenty slaves at her heels should be on exactly the same footing as the one who is dependent upon her own exertions for a livelihood.”<sup>74</sup> Sibley wanted the girls to be proficient in their duties and the duties of the people who will serve them in their future households.

In her letter to parents, Sibley continued by being critical of the girls brought up through what she described as the pernicious system of education. Sibley states these girls are delicate enough, they could not “bear the idea of helping herself to a drink of water.”<sup>75</sup> With this delicate nature, Sibley believed women became an object of scorn because of their inability to take care of themselves.<sup>76</sup> Also, the women could be capable of filling their station “with honor in consequence of her practical & useful acquirements.”<sup>77</sup> Another aspect of the education Sibley provided young girls was a focus on domestic duties. This included producing food and clothing, cleaning, and other activities essential to run a household. Sibley had the girls under her care complete tasks the servants regularly ensured were accomplished.<sup>78</sup> As Sibley had complete confidence in her integrity in the education of young women, she required the parents of her students to hold this confidence as well. Sibley reported in her letter that some parents had acknowledged the improvement of their children as a cause of being taught by her, and because of this acknowledgement, Sibley found no reason to alter her course of education.<sup>79</sup> Sibley ends her letter to parents by commenting about an overwhelming amount of people encouraging “luxury, indolence, and efficiency.”<sup>80</sup> With a last message to parents with conflicting views of Sibley’s provided education, she wrote, “I will not be accessory to the guild of bringing up immortal beings in the manner too many are brought up in our land.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>72</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>79</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

In response to this letter, Major P., a parent of one of Sibley's students, declined to send his daughter to return to the school.<sup>82</sup> However, two weeks after Sibley provided a copy of her letter to students' parents in her diary, she received Mr. Ridgely's daughter to be educated. Mr. Ridgely sent a letter in support of Sibley's teachings.<sup>83</sup> Even with her boarding school coming under criticism, Sibley persevered with confidence in her teachings. Three months later, Sibley was writing letters to friends, one of whom resided in Louisiana. Sibley gave him an overview of her plan of action in terms of education for young women and "requested that he would mention to some of his friends that might send their daughters here."<sup>84</sup> Sibley hoped she could educate some "young ladies of the South" because they carried strong principles of the Christian religion.<sup>85</sup>

In March 1834, Sibley again faced criticism for her teachings to young women. Mr. N. mentioned to Sibley some found her "suffering" of the schoolgirls to dance by the piano for a half hour in the evening to be bad practice.<sup>86</sup> The following year in July, Sibley commented on her lessons to the young women. She read them a chapter, led them in prayer, and then gave them a music lesson.<sup>87</sup> Sibley described this day as a series of lessons "a great trial of patience."<sup>88</sup> In the same entry, Sibley wrote about a discussion with one of her students and wrote "Talked with one of the young ladies on her state of mind and told her of the good she might do after she goes home by keeping Sabbath School in her neighborhood and setting a good example." Not only did Sibley prepare the young women under her care for their set roles within society, but she also pushed for some of the girls to continue a similar life in education as her own. Sibley wrote about the trials of teaching various times: "the trials of a teachers life are great & many and surely none would undertake the task unless they had a higher motive than earthly gain."<sup>89</sup> While Sibley faced backlash from parents, students, and community members concerning her teachings to young women, she held her devotion strong in preparing the girls for what she deemed the appropriate roles as wives and mothers their personal connections could be proud of.

Despite the criticism and misinformation brought into the discussion about her African Sabbath School and Linden Wood School for Girls, Sibley was her own worst critic. In January 1833, Sibley wrote in self-reflection and disapproval of her diary.<sup>90</sup> She evaluated her long intermissions between entries and deemed them a negative representation of her religious service. Sibley wrote, "as I wish to keep up the history of events connected with my spiritual welfare as well as to record the exercises of the mind in my progress, I shall whenever I can keep the link unbroken by relating such circumstances as are interesting to me which may have occurred between the dates of the entries in this desultory diary."<sup>91</sup> In consequence of the intermissions, Sibley believed her diary lacked a plan and purpose. However, Sibley was exceedingly mistaken in her evaluation.

Sibley's diary encapsulates her dedication to her duties as an educator and member of society. Not only did Sibley promote education for all within her community, but she was also

<sup>82</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>83</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on August 31, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>84</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on November 8, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on March 8, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>87</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on July 4, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on January 11, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

concerned for the growing young generations. Sibley had educational connections in Illinois, Louisiana, and Missouri. In one entry, Sibley described supporting another Sunday School in the area by providing them with books.<sup>92</sup> Sibley was also aware of other institutions which provided women's education. In January 1836, Sibley expressed her opinions on Mrs. Willard's Seminary in Troy, New York.<sup>93</sup> This school was founded in 1814 as a preparatory academy for young girls.

It also provided secondary and post-secondary instruction. However, Sibley defined their education system as the pernicious system she had discussed years prior. On this topic, Sibley wrote, "If the domestic instruction held a more prominent part I think the plan would be an excellent one, but I am opposed to the plan of making learned women at the expense of destroying their fitness for the peculiar duties allotted them in the station of life in which by the providence of God they have been designed to move."<sup>94</sup> Sibley supported more advanced instruction for women, but was partial to the study of domestic duties because it was the station the majority of women held in society. Sibley continued to explain "book knowledge" was not as necessary to women as it was to men, and she never desired to live in a non-male superior society.<sup>95</sup>

Upon this analysis of her diary entries, while Sibley promoted education for all, she did not promote the same education for everyone. Kristie C. Wolferman does an excellent job of showing how Sibley empowered others through education, but she was incorrect in stating Sibley equalized people.<sup>96</sup> Sibley did the exact opposite in her educational endeavors. She supported educational opportunities for groups which aligned to what she deemed their roles within society. Sibley accomplished her ideals of appropriate societal roles for young white women and men, African American women, and immigrants through her work in education, the church, and the surrounding community. The main instruments which aided Sibley in her ideals were the white Sabbath School, African Sabbath School, Female Benevolent Society, and the Linden Wood School for Girls. It is through Sibley's stubbornness and confidence in education that she contributed to a legacy in Lindenwood University.

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<sup>92</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on April 28, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>93</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on January 21, 1836, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Mary Sibley diary entry on January 21, 1836, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

<sup>96</sup> Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*.

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## The Confluence

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Manuscript 1073

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### You Are Not the Hero: Women's Role in "Rapunzel"

Amber L. Budd

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One of the ways that people learn socially acceptable behaviors is through reading or other forms of media. Whoever holds the power in a society determines what is written or considered “right.” The issue then arises that problematic ideas and expectations of a group of people can be widely promoted, and many (if not most) will buy into it because the dominant power has deemed it the correct way of viewing the world. The feminist movement is a product of societal and political pushback against the controlling patriarchal powers. Feminist criticism, consequently, offers new perspectives on literature by pointing out the harmful stereotypes about women in older works. The Grimm fairy tale “Rapunzel,” when viewed from the perspective of feminist criticism, enforces the dominant patriarchal ideology that men are superior to women, even going so far as to classify women into monstrous and angelic categories that either support or oppose a man’s goals.

The Grimm’s tale “Rapunzel” begins with the tragic circumstances of the mother’s pregnancy, where her uncontrollable craving for the rapunzel herbs in a sorceress’s garden drives her husband to steal the herbs in the night. When caught by the sorceress (Frau Gothel), he bargains for his life by promising her the unborn child. After the child’s birth, Gothel takes the daughter and names her Rapunzel, eventually isolating the girl in a tower that can only be accessed by climbing her long hair. Rapunzel’s singing attracts a prince who, after learning how to enter the tower, initiates a secret relationship with Rapunzel. Their plan for escape is discovered by Frau Gothel after Rapunzel accidentally reveals it in an innocent question. In retaliation, the sorceress cuts off Rapunzel’s hair, banishes her to the wilderness, and blinds the prince. Years later, the two lovers are reunited (Rapunzel, having given birth to twins in the meantime), and her tears restore the prince’s sight, allowing them to return to his kingdom and enjoy their “happily ever after.”

Overall, the story of Rapunzel falls into several generic themes that feminist critics find to be concerning or unjust. Dobie notes that the uniting concept of feminist criticism is “the assumption that Western culture is fundamentally patriarchal, creating an imbalance of power that marginalizes women and their work” (Dobie 104). Her idea rings true (from a literary standpoint) in the Brothers Grimm’s tale of Rapunzel, where the male prince takes on the role of the active hero even though the story itself is named after the girl, Rapunzel, who (ironically) has the least active role in the events of the fairy tale. The titular character has been shoved into the margins, a side-note in her own story with only two moments in which her voice is heard. Simone de Beauvoir, when speaking about real-life culture, made the general claim that “Lacking her own history, the female is always secondary or nonexistent [...] women are not born inferior but rather are made to be so” (Dobie 107). While the concept of women being made inferior may not be entirely applicable to Frau Gothel, it is Rapunzel who is “locked in a tower that stood in a forest and that had neither a door nor a stairway, but only a tiny little window at the very top” (Grimm). Motherly Frau Gothel’s actions, from a certain perspective, demonstrate a “wizedened” belief that little Rapunzel is not meant to be someone who goes out into society but stays hidden, a lesser being who has no place in the world. On the other hand, her captivity could be interpreted as Frau Gothel’s attempt to protect Rapunzel from those who wish to harm or use her. However, the result is the same: Rapunzel is taught inferiority through the removal of her autonomy, primarily her entrapment in the tower and the severing of her hair, since hair often represents feminine power and sexuality. While there are more specific problems with the treatment of women in “Rapunzel,” it is also important to understand the broader stance of feminist criticism regarding the fairytale.

“Rapunzel,” despite being a relatively short fairy tale, frequently implies that women are

weaker beings compared to men through depictions of mental and physical weakness in women. At the beginning of the tale, Rapunzel's biological mother declares, "If I do not get some rapunzel from the garden behind our house, I shall die," which spurs her husband to "heroic" action (Grimm). The mother's statement—played off as one of the temporary cravings of pregnancy — actually enforces the patriarchal viewpoint that women are delicate and fragile. She does not say that she simply has a powerful craving for rapunzel, but instead claims that death will take her if she does not get to eat some of the lettuce-like plant. Even if this scene were to be instead read as the mother dramatizing her cravings, then it still functions as an unflattering depiction of the mother. She is either fragile or silly, delicate or dramatic. Yet, readers pick up the cue that this is a desirable attitude for a woman (according to the patriarchy) because of her status as a married woman with a husband who is stirred to action by her dire words. Not only are they in a committed relationship, but the husband "loved her dearly" for her temperament (Grimm). On the other hand, Rapunzel's feminine weakness indicates the patriarchal belief that she is in need of a guiding husband. The plan for Rapunzel's escape is going well until she asks Frau Gothel why she is so much heavier to lift than the prince, who is due to arrive at any minute (Grimm). With this question, readers are led to believe that Rapunzel is not smart enough to take care of herself because, without the prince there to aid her, she immediately gives away her plans to her captor. The foolish moment seems even more so when one realizes it is one of only two lines Rapunzel iterates throughout the tale. "Rapunzel" regularly conforms to the patriarchal idea that women are weaker beings than men.

Furthermore, the fairy tale perpetuates ideas of women's desirability as decided by the male gaze. After the prince states his intent to marry Rapunzel, she thinks, "He would rather have me than would old Frau Gothel" (Grimm). Rapunzel is a simple girl with no autonomy or power in her situation. She relies on the prince to get her out of the tower and is confined by Frau Gothel's authority. Frau Gothel, on the other hand, is an independent woman and a sorceress. With those attributes come the implications of monstrosity, as she is an unnatural woman who cannot be tamed into marriage. Being described as "old" also sets Frau Gothel apart as undesirable, unlike Rapunzel, who is young and beautiful. Her ancient age is a reflection of her disagreeable actions and attitude from the perspective of the men (or man) in power. Rapunzel further cements her place as the more appealing woman to the prince at the end of the fairy tale, when upon finding the prince staggering blind through the forest (after herself wandering for years with their twin children), "Two of her tears fell into his eyes, and they became clear once again, and could see as well as before" (Grimm). The healing qualities of her tears, whether magical or metaphorical, are an ability that only appears to benefit Rapunzel. While it is her gift, she uses it to repair the prince's eyesight—like an angel bestowing her blessing on the man, giving of herself for his glory. Rapunzel is separated from the monstrosity of Frau Gothel, depicted as a saintly woman whom no man could help but love in her caring and nurturing of her husband and children despite her own suffering. Rapunzel's appealing nature in the fairytale is determined and defined by the previous expectations of the male gaze.

Of course, "Rapunzel" exemplifies many of the concerns of feminist critics regarding the power dynamics of men and women. It is Kate Millett who believed that "power in both public and domestic life is held by males, and literature is a record of the collective consciousness of the patriarchy" (Dobie 107). "Rapunzel" supports this idea, since "He [the prince] *led* her into *his* kingdom, where *he* was received with joy" (Grimm, emphasis added). Despite Rapunzel saving the prince, he is the one who holds power over her public life, as she is the one who follows his

lead as a shadow that is paid no mind by others. Furthermore, his decision to take Rapunzel away overshadows the approval and wishes of Frau Gothel, even though she serves as a stepmother of sorts with authority over Rapunzel. The prince's power overcomes both of these women in public affairs and in domestic life. When reflecting on the author's life and works, Dobie comes to the conclusion that Mary Wollstonecraft noticed "the imbalances of power between her own mother and father and having observed as an adult the indignities suffered by women of all classes, she recognized that they are born into powerlessness" (Dobie 106). "Rapunzel" takes this quite literally, as Rapunzel is born into a family powerless to prevent Frau Gothel from taking her and locking her in a tower. Her only hope of escape is from the man who sneaks in and offers her liberation—if she marries him. What Rapunzel has is merely the semblance of power and choice, but in truth, she remains just as powerless throughout the whole fairy tale as she was as a baby. By examining the power dynamics of the characters in "Rapunzel," readers see that the tale reflects the issues feminist critics noticed about the power structures between men and women in real life.

The dominant patriarchal ideology that women are inferior to men—a group organized into monsters and angels depending on their appeal to male wants and needs—is a prevalent issue in the fairytale "Rapunzel." There are several overarching topics of feminist concern that "Rapunzel" perpetuates, alongside more specific concerns such as depictions of womanly weakness and desirability according to male preferences. The fairytale also displays power dynamics skewed in favor of the male "hero," which aligns with real patterns observed by feminist critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ultimately, this shows that even beloved stories (with empowering animated retellings) can hide harmful messages in the spaces between words for women and their role in the world.

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## The Confluence

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### Long Live The Cruel King of England: A Character Analysis of Shakespeare's "Henry V"

Georgia L. Coomer

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Throughout literary history, few characters are as celebrated for their heroism and leadership as Shakespeare's Henry V. On the surface, this young king appears victorious at Agincourt, delivers inspiring speeches to rally his men against overwhelming odds, and secures a marriage that aims to unite two powerful kingdoms. However, beneath this polished image of the ideal monarch lies a more troubling character. Despite his heroic depiction at Agincourt, Shakespeare's Henry V often engages in calculated political maneuvering, cruel manipulation, and self-serving tactics. He is a ruler whose youth is characterized not by nobility, but by ruthlessness.

Shakespeare presents Henry V as a shrewd political figure who manipulates his relationships for his own advantage. As Erickson points out, Henry has a unique talent for manipulating others while appearing morally untainted, as though he has done nothing wrong. When he seeks justification for going to war with France, he shifts moral responsibility onto Canterbury, allowing himself to "avoid direct encounter with his own conscience by redefining it as Canterbury's" (15). The deliberate avoidance of responsibility highlights Henry's cunning character. He creates scenarios that lead others to make morally questionable choices for him, allowing him to maintain his own good reputation. Canterbury, in turn, willingly accepts this burden, declaring, "The sin upon my head, dread sovereign!" (I.ii.102). During their exchange, Shakespeare shows how Henry's cleverness allows him to achieve his ambitious goals while pretending to act out of a sense of duty. The king does not just shift moral responsibility onto others; he also builds a system of justification around himself, using the church's authority to support his chosen path.

Henry V looks like a kind and fair leader, but he can also be cruel when he wants to be, showing that he was not always bound by morals when he was younger. As Berman observes, there exists a "daemon beneath the mask of moderation" that emerges most vividly during moments of military necessity (538). This duality is nowhere more apparent than in Henry's infamous speech before Harfleur, where his threats against civilians expose what Berman terms his "spiritual ferocity" (537). Shakespeare deliberately shows how Henry's imagination dwells on horrific images of violence: "naked infants spitted upon pikes" and mothers whose "howls confused do break the clouds" (III.iii.37-40)—with an intensity that suggests not just intimidation but a genuine capacity for brutality. The king talks a lot about terrible acts to seem like he wants to prevent violence, but his words show he can think about great cruelty without feeling bad about it.

Shakespeare shows Henry V as a ruler with emotions that seem to reach further than normal human feelings, highlighting his ability to manipulate others and change his morals. Berman notes that Henry has a strong spirit that goes beyond regular feelings like pity, fear, and horror (537). The intense emotional ability is not good but rather a trait that allows him to act in whatever way helps him reach his goals. His speech at Harfleur is a clear example, where he not only threatens violence but also describes terrible acts without any moral concern. It shows he is willing to ignore ethical limits when it benefits him, and as Erickson points out, Henry has a "conscience wide as hell"—meaning he can justify almost any action to get what he wants (18). Henry's ability to move between showing Christian goodness and making violent threats shows a clever young man who only follows rules that are convenient for him.

Henry V's execution of the French prisoners at Agincourt represents perhaps the most disturbing example of his cruelty, revealing how readily he discards chivalric codes when they conflict with his own agenda. The shocking order, which is issued twice in the play to guarantee it is carried out, highlights the difference between Henry's public image as a Christian king and his ruthless approach as a military leader. When he commands, "Then every soldier kill his

prisoners" (IV.vi.38), Henry reveals his willingness to violate the established rules of warfare that protected surrendered combatants, in other words, the prisoners of war. Shakespeare deliberately places this uncomfortable moment at the heart of Henry's greatest military triumph, forcing readers to confront the moral compromises underneath his heroic facade. The decision cannot be dismissed as merely a response to immediate danger; rather, it amplifies what Berman describes as Henry's "terrifying moral neutrality" when confronting decisions of state (538). Henry approaches the prisoners' lives as another variable in his military calculations. The king's ability to order mass execution without apparent moral qualm reflects his "glacial intellectual hardness" that Berman identifies (536). The execution order exposes the fundamental truth about Henry's character: beneath his appeals to honor and justice there is a young ruler whose conscious changes based on what is convenient for him, ready to do very cruel things if it helps him reach his goals.

Shakespeare's "Henry V" does not present the ideal Christian king commonly imagined. Instead, it introduces a complicated and morally ambiguous character. Henry's youth is marked by his navigation between virtue and vice when it serves his interests. Through his calculated dealings with Canterbury, his intimidating threats at Harfleur, and his brutal execution of prisoners at Agincourt, Shakespeare reveals a ruler whose heroic image conceals a core of ruthlessness. Henry is a young monarch who recognizes that power relies on both performance and military skill. His "conscience wide as hell" allows him to shift moral responsibility onto others while preserving his own image of righteousness. The duality makes Henry both compelling and unsettling: he can be both an inspiring leader and a calculating military presence who disregards ethical boundaries when they obstruct his goals. Rather than celebrating a flawless hero, Shakespeare's "Henry V" challenges readers to examine the moral compromises that often accompany political success and the principles that characterize effective leadership. Shakespeare asks readers to see past the idealized stories about kings to understand how power can change even the people we admire.

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## The Confluence

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Manuscript 1081

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### Conformable Kate: Identity and Power in The Taming of the Shrew

Helen R. Ball

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In the induction scene of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, a wealthy lord and his companions play an elaborate trick on beggar Christopher Sly upon his waking from a drunken stupor, convincing the latter that he is a great lord. Though confounded and reluctant at first, Sly eventually believes this ploy, accepts his role as a lord, and acts in accordance with such an identity. This opening sets the stage to prefigure the taming and manipulation of identity which Katherine, the play's titular shrew, undergoes at the hands of Petruchio. Although Shakespeare's play gives far more prominence to Petruchio and Kate's story, both interactions play a major role in the shaping of others' identities, and this aspect of *The Taming of the Shrew* ultimately suggests that the characters who exercise this naming autonomy have the most power. Petruchio's verbal, ritualistic plot to mold Kate into his ideal wife contributes to making him the most powerful character in the play, and the success of the wealthy lord's plot at the beginning corresponds to Petruchio's later success as the perpetrator and shaper of others' identities.

Initially, both the wealthy lord in the induction and Petruchio in the main scenes utilize outward proclamations of their plans before truly achieving them; these proclamations anticipate their inevitable success. For the two men, declaring brings value to acting, and they need the reactions of others, if only to refute. The unnamed lord, for instance, declares to his companions that he will "practice on this drunken man" (Shakespeare 2.1.37). While his companions doubt the success of such a far-fetched prank, this does not deter him; in fact, it simply motivates him to argue further and prove his point, with eventual success (Shakespeare 1.1.70). It is interesting that this lord categorizes his trickery as "practice," which suggests that he does not take the plan seriously--rather, it is a mere "pastime" (Shakespeare 1.1.70). Petruchio's whim of taming Kate carries a similar lack of gravity. He has come to Padua rather superfluously: to marry a wealthy woman after already inheriting his father's wealth (Shakespeare 1.2.68). Marriage, of course, carries more commitment than a prank, but Petruchio approaches it in much the same manner as the lord in the induction scene. In what is perhaps one of the most striking scenes of the play, he tells Kate,

Thus in plain terms: your father hath consented  
That you shall be my wife, your dowry 'greed on,  
And, will you nill you, I will marry you.  
Now, Kate, I am a husband for your turn,  
For by this light, whereby I see thy beauty,  
Thy beauty that doth make me like thee well,  
Thou must be married to no man but me.  
For I am he am born to tame you, Kate,  
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate  
Conformable as other household Kates. (Shakespeare 2.1.282-293)

Not only does Petruchio declare Kate to be his wife, but he also calls himself her husband to mark his control over both their identities. He represents this dichotomy of naming in "plain terms" (Shakespeare 2.1.284). His plan is simple: declare his intentions ("you shall be my wife"), name Kate, and tame her. Both Petruchio and the lord thus communicate their plans outwardly and actively, proving this the prerequisite of success. Though unnecessary and performative, these plans come to fruition only after being verbalized.

Author Gary Schneider writes of a similar phenomenon to Petruchio's naming-predicting strategy. In "The Public, the Private, and the Shaming of the Shrew," he explains how the private and the public intertwine within the play, describing Petruchio's public antics as "a consolidation of the civilizing process" (Schneider 236). In other words, public customs shape expectations and norms of private life. Thus, when Petruchio publicly asserts power over Kate, he sets a precedent for their married life as well, to the extent that he will "rail and brawl" to prevent her sleep (Shakespeare 4.1.206). Though private, it is shaped by his public plan to tame her. Additionally, the customs at the time of *Shrew*'s setting unintentionally reinforce the public's priority over the private. Schneider mentions that marriage was the "primary public ritual, the social trope" in early modern England (Schneider 240). Both a legal institution and a domestic practice, the marriage ceremony represented the merging of the two spheres; thus, it is the ideal mechanism through which Petruchio can exert control. By promoting his taming strategies in public, he asserts the standard for what is to follow at home. Schneider aptly mentions that Petruchio plans to

order the marriage banns to be proclaimed, which denotes an archaic, unnecessary ritual, as the start of his publicization process. It is also particularly unnecessary since Kate is well known to be a shrew, undesirable to suitors, and therefore she does not need to be claimed (Schneider 241). It makes sense, then, that Kate successfully becomes tamed only after she has been wed to Petruchio *and* lived in his house; she has experienced both private and public forms of control.

*The Taming of the Shrew* demonstrates that both the act of naming someone and the outward assertion of one's beliefs through rituals serve to successfully control people. Petruchio participates in both such practices, and he goes a step further than the wealthy gentlemen at the beginning. The lord in the induction scene indeed forces a new identity on Christopher Sly and calls him "your Honor" against his will (Shakespeare i.2.13). However, he seems to focus less on giving Sly a particular name — in fact, he does not give him a real name at all. Petruchio, conversely, focuses on taking Katherine's name and modifying it to reflect the way he wants her to behave. It is a fundamental part of his taming strategy, taking place even before they are married. In "Household Kates: Domesticating Commodities in *The Taming of the Shrew*," Natasha Korda explains that Kate, the nickname Petruchio forces upon her, denotes a delicacy object and a play on the word 'cate' (Korda 109). She explains further that cates are considered extra-domestic objects, usually not made at home, and thus Kate the cate needs to be brought into Petruchio's house and tamed by him (Korda 117). This is not an identity she wishes to accept, and she says, "They call me Katherine that do talk of me" (Shakespeare 2.1.192). Yet, both Petruchio and Kate's father, Baptista (the one who essentially "sells" Kate to Petruchio), ignore this wish to be seen as something with substance, rather than a dainty and superficial object (Shakespeare 2.1.175). Baptista passes over the control and ownership of Kate to Petruchio, who is free to name her as he wishes.

Korda's article largely focuses on the characters' consumption habits and the wordplay that intertwines with it, but, additionally, this wordplay allows Shakespeare to allude to Petruchio's degree of power. As mentioned, 'Kate' is a pun on the word 'cate,' denoting Katherine as an object of delicacy that simultaneously must be tamed. Additionally, Petruchio refers to her as "dainty," which, as Korda notes, refers not only to a rare object but also to someone who is particular about what they choose to consume (Korda 117). This makes sense, considering that Kate is known infamously for her shrewishness. One of Petruchio's power tactics is to limit her consumption habits, whether it be food, clothing, or even company. For example, he deprives her of the others' company after their wedding, insisting on "mastering her" (Shakespeare 3.2.235). Ultimately, Petruchio teaches her to consume status objects in a way that suits his needs (Korda 124). In the final scene, Kate has fully been tamed, and she obeys his command to throw her cap underfoot (Korda 124). Shakespeare intentionally crafted his characters with rich wordplay, allowing scenes such as this to demonstrate Petruchio's nuanced position of power he holds over Kate. By controlling her consumption habits at his arbitrary will, he makes the "dainty Kate" his own version of what he thinks a woman ought to be.

By the denouement of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio's plan of mastery has come to fruition, and he exhibits it with poise at the wedding banquet. In what seems to be a reminder of his previous success in declaring outcomes, Petruchio confidently bets that his wife will come out to greet him, and she does (Shakespeare 5.2.75). If Petruchio has used more subtlety in his requests prior to the banquet, such as when he requests, "Prithee, Kate, let's stand aside," he does not make use of gentle words here (Shakespeare 5.1.62). In fact, whereas Lucentio and Hortensio "bid" and "entreat" their wives, Petruchio "commands" his (Shakespeare 5.2.80-105). Though Kate's spirit does not appear to be broken in this scene, she nevertheless has succumbed to Petruchio's will, making him ultimately the most powerful character in the play. Other interpretations may suggest that Kate has taken the upper hand over Petruchio and has even taken control of the other wives, merely playacting when she extolls them to honor their husbands (Shakespeare 5.2.193); yet, despite her outward attitude, it nonetheless seems as though Kate has chosen conformity. She even notes, "But now I see our lances are but straws" (Shakespeare 5.2.189). These words denote a final surrender to Petruchio's wishes; the fact that Kate refers to weaponry here still indicates a desire to fight but insufficient capability of doing so. By using the final scene to compare him to the other men at the banquet (with their shrewish, disobedient wives), Shakespeare highlights Petruchio's dominance. Much of the authority in the play comes from the ability to decide upon, ignore,

and manipulate others' identities. Just like the wealthy lord in the induction demonstrates, power is an arbitrary game, and not necessarily one that rewards fairness. Petruchio manipulates the very roots of Katherine's private and public identity: her name. By so doing, he exerts a nuanced power that controls multiple facets of her self and trains her to conform to his whims.

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