6 | I

Volume 6 | Issue I | March 2022

A Quarterly Journal
Humanities and Social Sciences
Young Scholars Worldwide

The Schola

This issue was typeset on a MacBook Air, using Microsoft Publisher.

For further information on *The Schola*, visit our website: www.theschola.org.

CONTENTS

Volume 6 | Issue I | March 2022

Understanding Racial Violence in the US through Hannah Arendt's Banality of Evil

Carrie Luo '23
Lexington High School
Massachusetts, USA

Abstract

Following recent discussions about Donald Trump's election and the return of Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism to the best-selling charts, scholars and commentators have directed their focus on the future implications of Arendt's political thought for contemporary American society. Looking at the connection between Arendt's other work on the banality of evil and America's issue of racism, one can see how Arendt's other ideas help to describe the current socio-economic and political environment. Arendt's notion of the banality of evil, as expounded in her later text Eichmann in Jerusalem, suggests that 'thoughtlessness' around the political systems, within which we participate, enables participation in larger evils. Later concepts help to clarify and extend Arendt's analysis of the banality of evil. Structural violence, or the joint occurrence of high inequality, social exclusion, and humiliation, exists in structures to deny the rights of marginalized people. Similarly, cultural violence latent within ideologies, religions, science, or art, provides support for structural and direct violence, making it appear normal. By revealing the broader structural and societal factors that allow racial violence in society, the diverse forms of violence help to link Arendt's notion of the banality of evil to racial violence. Those that uphold certain social, economic, and political structures or persist in discourses that normalize these acts of violence are found in the racial banality of evil. Drawing on Arendt's insights, this paper calls for increased awareness of unperceived racial violence in the United States and underscores the importance of avoiding 'thoughtlessness'.

Introduction

Following the recent rise of right-wing populism in Europe and the United States and the fears about new forms of authoritarianism, many commentators have turned to a book that was published around 65 years ago: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*[1] by Hannah Arendt.[2] It was selling at 16 times its normal rate a month after the election of Donald Trump.[3] This surprising hit has reintroduced Arendt's opinions on totalitarianism to the public once again after all of these years, and people have been making connections between her theory and modern political circumstances. Arendt's *Origins* describes how unchecked capitalism, racism, antisemitism, and the decline of the traditional concept of the nation-state combined to produce totalitarianism in the early twentieth century. In addition, Lyndsey Stonebridge suggests that modern loneliness, or the isolation of individuals who lose a sense of rootedness in the world, results in the loss of a shared reality.[4] Stonebridge highlights that once people lose their human connection to other people, it makes it possible for tribalism, mass violence, and the extermination of what Arendt calls "superfluous people" to take place.[5] Stonebridge and other commentators draw important connections between Arendt's notion of violence against 'superfluous people' and the prison system in the United States, poverty and racism in the housing estates in London, migrant camps around the borders of Europe, and the forgotten spaces in Middle America with no role in the global economy. These are places that house the new 'superfluous people that have been declared invisible and immaterial.[6]

The "trending" of Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* reflects a broad interest in Arendt's contributions to analyzing the current political environment. However, this piece is going to answer a related question on how another of Arendt's theories–the banality of evil–can be applied to the more specific issue of racism in the United States. Rather than

---

[1] Arendt, Hannah. The Origins of Totalitarianism (San Diego: Harcourt, 1994).

[2] Isaac, Jeffrey. "Analysis | How Hannah Arendt's Classic Work on Totalitarianism Illuminates Today's America," *Washington Post*, accessed August 30, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/17/how-hannah-arendts-classic-work/.

[3] Isaac, Jeffrey. "Analysis | How Hannah Arendt's Classic Work on Totalitarianism Illuminates Today's America," Washington Post, accessed August 30, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/17/how-hannah-arendts-classic-work/.

[4] Illing, "A 1951 Book about Totalitarianism Is Flying off the Shelves. Here's Why." https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/17/how-hannah-arendts-classic-work/.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

applying Arendt's thoughts on totalitarianism to the Trump presidency or other global concerns about authoritarianism, this essay seeks to discuss how the concept of the banality of evil can be used to reveal hidden structural and cultural racial violence rooted in American life. By the end, it will be clear how ubiquitous "hidden" violence is crucial to understanding racial problems in the United States, and how to address the 'thoughtlessness' that perpetuates these acts of violence.

The first section introduces Arendt's concept of the banality of evil and her unique understanding of violence. It examines basic understandings of how violence can be enforced in subtle and inconceivable ways through societal structures that make average citizens a contributing force of "mass evil."[7] The second section offers an in-depth explanation of structural violence and links the banality of evil to examples of systemic racism in US society. The third section defines cultural violence and shows how modern examples of cultural violence link back to the Arendtian concept of the banality of evil. Examples of works on racial attitudes in the United States, such as Charles Mills' *The Racial Contract,* further underscore the discussion of the banality of evil and systemic racism. The fourth section connects ideas in the above sections together to explain how minimizing racial violence requires transforming and uprooting systemic racism and the attitudes that uphold it, with a major step being the effort to bring people away from being "thoughtless."

Arendt's Banality of Evil

Arendt's concept of the banality of evil indicates how members of modern society can be implicated in large-scale political violence. Coming from Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the banality of evil makes sense of Arendt's observations of the "normality" of Adolf Eichmann, one of the major organizers of the Holocaust, during his court testimony during his trial in Israel in 1961. The most unique characteristic Arendt notes about the banality of evil are that it can be 'committed on a gigantic scale' based on the most mundane and petty motivations.[8]

According to Arendt, the banality of evil allows groups of people to be slowly and systematically stripped of their rights and values.[9] This

---

[7] Patrick Hayden, "Superfluous Humanity: An Arendtian Perspective on the Political Evil of Global Poverty," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (March 2007): 279–300, doi:10.1177/03058298070350021001.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

type of radical evil,[10] making human beings superfluous, gradually makes it possible for mass imprisonment, violence, and even genocide to happen.[11] In the case of Eichmann, 'sheer thoughtlessness' made Eichmann 'perfectly incapable of telling right from wrong' because he chose not to exercise his capacity to judge his actions beyond the values of the social system in which he functioned as an agent.[12] 'Thoughtlessness' thus makes mass political evil possible when individuals unquestioningly apply themselves within a system that makes groups of people superfluous.

This mindset is seen in the paradigmatic case of Eichmann, whom Arendt viewed as nothing more than an unthinking instrument who nevertheless managed a bureaucratic program to facilitate the dehumanization and eventual murder of others.[13] Within such a system, individuals like Eichmann do not recognize the nature of their actions because they simply act as a small step in the process that allows society to dehumanize others. Contrary to some interpretations, Arendt is not saying that everyone deep down can be a Nazi, but she is highlighting that it is important for people to consider the background systems that enable an incident like the Holocaust to identify the radical evils that modern mass society can perpetuate.

Types of contemporary political evil find expression in different types of mass suffering. Arendt scholars have linked her idea of the banality of evil to such structural issues as global poverty and economic globalization (growing inequality between the rich and the poor), policies making refugees and 'illegal immigrants' superfluous, and policing in the United States (the double-standard of policing with White and African-American citizens).[14] These examples all share hallmarks of the banality of evil, in which individuals and whole societies perpetuate social, economic, and political systems that render people superfluous. Linking Arendt's insights to contemporary wealth inequality, Arendt scholar Patrick Hayden suggests that "we have become desensitized to the banal, thoughtless, 'ordinary' origins of pervasive economic rights violations, as these have become normalized in the global politico-economic order."[15]

---

[10] Richard J. Bernstein, "Are Arendt's Reflections on Evil Still Relevant?," *The Review of Politics* 70, no. 1 (2008): 64–76, doi:10.1017/S003467050800017X.
[11] Hannah Arendt and Amos Elon, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 1st edition (New York, N.Y: Penguin Classics, 2006).
[12] Hayden, "Superfluous Humanity."
[13] Ibid.
[14] Shamsher Samra et al., "Interpersonal and Structural Violence in the Wake of COVID-19," *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 11 (November 2020): 1659–1661, doi:10.2105/AJPH.2020.305930.
[15] Hayden, "Superfluous Humanity."

Despite the violence that the banality of evil can enable, Arendt importantly distinguishes such violence from genuine political power. While Arendt defines power as the human ability for a group of people to act in correspondence with each other to achieve political ends, violence is seen as a tool to achieve certain ends or an implementation of strength and power.[16] Because violence is used when people don't follow commands and disrespect authority, more violence is needed to achieve a given end, which further strips away power because violence erodes non-coercive authority and motivates people to resist.[17] As a result, Arendt claims that violence can only destroy power and cannot create power.

Structural Violence and Systemic Racism

Nuanced understandings of violence developed after the publication of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* helped to bring Arendt's notion of the banality of evil better into view regarding contemporary social problems. When most people think of violence, they are thinking of direct violence like war, murder, rape, or assault.[18] However, direct violence is only the most visible form of violence. As Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung has explained, structural and cultural violence often serve as invisible causes and effects of direct violence.

Structural violence reflects the understanding that violence can be exercised even when there are no concrete actors that one can point to directly attacking others. Unlike direct or acute violence, structural violence is therefore much harder to perceive.[19] By Peter Uvin's definition, structural violence is the joint occurrence of factors like high inequality, social exclusion, and humiliation.[20] High inequality and social exclusion take form in social structures that deny rights to certain marginalized people, such as unequal access to the state, development projects, and education. Humiliation is the social inferiority and powerlessness that marginalized people feel after experiencing social exclusion and inequality, which subjects them to exploitation and can eventually strip them of their self-respect and value.[21] As the examples

---

[16] Arendt, Hannah. On Violence (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).
[17] Ibid.
[18] "Varieties of Violence: Structural, Cultural, and Direct," TRANSCEND Media Service, accessed September 6, 2021, https://www.transcend.org/tms/2013/10/varieties-of-violence-structural-cultural-and-direct/.
[19] Uvin, Peter. "Global Dreams and Local Anger: From Structural to Acute Violence in a Globalizing World" (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2003).
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

from Hayden and other Arendt scholars cited above indicate, in its most extreme forms structural violence can render people superfluous, in Arendt's terminology, as they are stripped away of their rights and humanity.

Systemic racism exists side-by-side with racial violence. The *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case declared that slaves were property and not citizens. Even though later the 14th Amendment overruled *Dred Scott* by declaring that all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens of the country and the 15th Amendment passed the right for people of all races to vote, the crippling of Reconstruction led to the recreation of previous situations of labor before the Civil War and loose interpretations of the Amendments. These included the Jim Crow laws (creating literacy tests and poll taxes when African Americans voted), economic and geographical redlining, and the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, where "separate but equal" became the notion for many Southern states.[22] The denial of citizenship rights, voting rights, and segregation for African Americans combined to create a social, economic, and political system that justifies the hierarchical division of races (here meaning race as a term for its social construct or societal understanding). Supreme Court case rulings were not easily changed and these rulings laid the legal foundations for large and enduring racial gaps in American social, political, and economic life.

These historical forms of structural violence have their modern manifestations. The double standard in dealing with issues related to drugs is apparent: drug problems afflicting Black communities have been treated as a "war on drugs" but the opioid crisis is called an "epidemic."[23] While the police allow white protestors to occupy State Capitols, Black protestors are maced and sprayed with water cannons. In addition to police violence, the incarceration rate of African Americans is nearly six times the rate of white people.[24] Structural violence compounds racist and classist consequences and other social problems, as seen in incidents like six times higher COVID-19 death rates in Black-majority counties as opposed to white-majority counties.[25] Similarly, "COVID-19 mortality rates are double in poor communities, which are often segregated by both race and class in the United States [...]

---

[22] E. Chemerinsky, "The Case Against the Supreme Court": 37, 2014, accessed December 30, 2021.

[23] "The Banality of Systemic Racism – The Forward," accessed September 6, 2021, https://forward.com/scribe/449041/the-banality-of-systemic-racism/.

[24] "The Banality of Systemic Racism – The Forward."

[25] Shamsher Samra et al., "Interpersonal and Structural Violence in the Wake of COVID-19," *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 11 (November 2020): 1659–1661, doi:10.2105/AJPH.2020.305930.

Nationwide, death rates are six times higher in predominantly Black versus White counties."[26] Structural inequality such as skyrocketing unemployment rates and racialized wealth inequality worsens the racist and classist impact of COVID-19 on racially marginalized communities.[27] Systems of inequality built up over centuries continue to run like a machine that directs violence toward marginalized people while not creating a single actor responsible. While structural violence is again often invisible, both structural and direct violence are also frequently justified through what Galtung calls cultural violence.

Cultural Violence and Cultural Racism

Similar to structural violence, cultural violence is an invisible force in society that impacts perceptions of direct and structural violence. Galtung describes cultural violence as "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence."[28] Direct violence is thus understood as an *event*, structural violence as a *process*, and cultural violence as an *invariant*.[29] Cultural violence supports and provides the base for the growth of structural and direct violence by fostering a society that allows certain citizens to be superfluous and therefore open to victimization and violence. Structural violence and patterns of exploitation can build up on the societal base that is already created by cultural violence that also justifies the more visible direct violence perpetrated against certain groups.[30]

Cultural violence may take place in areas like religion, ideology, language, art, empirical science, formal science, and cosmology. For instance, in the case of religion, religious narratives have been used to justify oppressive social structures rooted in race, gender, and class.[31] Religion can thus lead to the cultural acceptance of certain groups of people over other groups of people. Other cases include ideologies that debase the value of specifically constructed Others. The Other is often dehumanized and deprived of rights and protections through being blamed for specific social problems. For instance, Hitler describes the Jews as "vermin," Stalin describes the kulaks as the "class enemy," and Hutu extremists referred to the Tutsis as "cockroaches" during the

---

[26] Samra et al., "Interpersonal and Structural Violence in the Wake of COVID-19."
[27] Samra et al.
[28] Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 291, https://www.jstor.org/stable/423472.
[29] Galtung, "Cultural Violence": 294.
[30] Galtung, "Cultural Violence."
[31] Ibid.

Rwandan genocide. The acceptance of such an ideology dehumanizes the Other and makes direct and structural violence toward the Other seem normal. This relates to the case of Eichmann, who was embedded in a cultural system and governmental apparatus that promoted mass killing as acceptable. The cultural setting made the Jews the Other and made the extermination of the Jews a normal duty. This underlying cultural violence, coupled with Eichmann's apparent thoughtlessness and desire to succeed at his job, made him unable to see the systemic violence he was committing.

Science, although often considered empirical and unbiased, has oftentimes been used by people for the majority to support policies that promote the extermination of a group of people. The famous case of *Buck v. Bell* upheld the forced sterilization of women of childbearing age that were deemed "idiotic, imbecile, feebleminded of epileptic."[32] The social context creates the cultural setting that makes it seem only reasonable for *Buck v. Bell* to be upheld. The eugenics movement, social Darwinism, and the development of IQ tests similarly created a general fear around the reproduction of 'inferior' peoples.[33] The idea of forced sterilization was thus extremely popular and was supported by both conservatives and progressives, multiple presidents, and Nobel Peace Prize winners. In these situations, the cultural acceptance of violent narratives masks the violence of these laws, thus legitimizing direct and structural violence.[34] In addition, there is still the continued forced sterilization of migrant women at the US/Mexico border.[35]

The formation of cultural racism in the United States has been building for hundreds of years through the enslavement and murder of millions of African and indigenous peoples.[36] Centuries later, this direct violence is remembered only in history books (if at all), and slavery is seen as merely a past event.[37] This massive direct violence over centuries seeped down and sedimented as structural violence that maintains

---

[32] Corinna Barrett Lain, "Three Supreme Court 'Failures' and a Story of Supreme Court Success," preprint (LawArXiv, May 2017): 1032, doi:10.31228/osf.io/5csgw.
[33] Corinna Barrett Lain, "Three Supreme Court 'Failures' and a Story of Supreme Court Success," preprint (LawArXiv, May 2017), doi:10.31228/osf.io/5csgw.
[34] Lain.
[35] M. Manian, "Immigration Detention and Coerced Sterilization: History Tragically Repeats Itself," *ACLU*, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/immigration-detention-and-coerced-sterilization-history-tragically-repeats-itself/>, accessed December 30, 2021.
[36] Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 295, https://www.jstor.org/stable/423472.
[37] Ibid.

unequal racial dynamics also commonly called systemic racism.[38] This systemic racism is supported by various forms of cultural violence, including ideas like pseudoscience that seek to prove the superiority of white Europeans. Charles Mills describes the sedimentation of direct violence into structural and cultural violence as part of the "racial contract" in the United States. Mills defines the racial contract as a set of agreements between whites to categorize the remaining subset of humans as "nonwhite" and of different and inferior moral status to ensure that they have a subordinate civil standing in white-ruled polities.[39]

Structural and cultural violence, along with Mills' notion of the racial contract, allow us to extend Arendt's notion of the banality of evil to understanding systemic racism in the US. All people who take part in the society that is upholding the racial contract essentially participate in producing and reproducing direct, structural, and cultural racial violence. What Arendt described as thoughtlessness prevents those privileged by the racial contract from identifying the way to root out the racial contract from their culture and social, political, and economic systems. The racial contract provides an additional theoretical language that reflects the interrelations between Arendt's notion of thoughtlessness, centuries of ideological formation of the superiority of white people and inferiority of the "nonwhites," larger systems of structural inequality, and the instances of acute racially-motivated violence.

The Banality of Evil and Racial Violence

Tying the last few sections together, cultural violence creates the norm that makes enduring structural violence possible. Both structural violence and cultural violence can create the conditions for direct or acute violence. As Uvin notes, exploitation, humiliation, and massive inequality result in direct violence among impacted communities, which cultural violence then blames on the victims themselves in ways that ignore these structural factors.[40]

As noted above, Arendt understood the banality of evil as playing a large part in modern forms of mass violence. When cultural violence provides the base for the formation of the racial banality of evil by dictating social norms, the banality of evil also fuels the occurrence of

---

[38] Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 295, https://www.jstor.org/stable/423472.
[39] CHARLES W. MILLS, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell University Press, 1997), https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt5hh1wj.
[40] Uvin, Galtung, "Cultural Violence."

direct and structural violence in society. Hitler's labeling of the Jews as "vermin" (cultural violence) seeped down into the subconsciousness of the citizens and eventually created the environment that allowed citizens to eventually think of and treat Jewish people as "vermin." Going back to Arendt's explanation in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt makes clear (using different language) that this type of cultural violence allowed Hitler to impose successive legal measures (structural violence) that lead to the Holocaust (direct violence). Even though Arendt is not trying to convince people that everyone could become a Nazi, she is actively trying to state that a background system can mask or normalize mass social and political violence like the Holocaust.[41] The example of Eichmann shows that the most mundane and normal humans can participate in large-scale political violence. Eichmann fulfilled his job to make sure the trains sending the Jews to concentration camps worked fast and well. It is his capability in his part of the job that contributed to the Holocaust. This example is important in that it explains how one can contribute towards a larger societal persecution with a clear conscience, and we can see a larger connection between the United States and the makings of Nazi Race Laws. Whitman explains that the "Nazis had always felt that their quest from *Lebensraum*, 'living space,' corresponded with the white American conquest of the West and the extermination of Native American tribes to mere remnants isolated on reservations."[42] The vagueness of race classifications in America inspired Nazis to reflect the same vagueness to serve the purpose of oppression.[43] These examples explain that structural violence and societal evil may manifest as different situations but still share immense similarities.

Applied to examples of systemic racism in the US, with its associated forms of direct, structural, and cultural violence, the banality of evil helps to explain how people without explicit racist intents can still uphold racist systems. When confronted with the history of anti-Black racism in the US, what Mills calls the "epistemology of ignorance" makes many whites unable to understand the world they created themselves,[44] in large part again through the cultural violence of discourse that breaks down racism into individual behaviors like "discrimination" and "prejudice" and makes slavery a past event recorded in history books.[45] The epistemology of ignorance encourages what Arendt called thoughtlessness, and therefore reproduces the racial order that secures

---

[41] "The Grossly Misunderstood 'banality of Evil' Theory - Israel News - Haaretz.Com."

[42] "Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law, by James Q. Whitman." The Black Scholar: Pragmatic Utopias 48, no. 3 (2018): 61.

[43] Ibid., 61–63.

[44] MILLS, *The Racial Contract*.

[45] Galtung, "Cultural Violence."

the privileges of white citizens and maintains the subordination of nonwhites.[46] Both the epistemology and moves to innocence like settler nativism, fantasizing adoption, and equivocation allow white Americans to associate racism with direct violence that is not related to them as long as they do not perform direct violence.[47] Lack of individual participation in direct violence thus seems to justify and nullify structural racial violence that marginalized people still experience today, as this type of thoughtlessness actively prevents racially privileged people from effectively recognizing structural and cultural racial violence. The continuing use of racial ideologies through dog whistle politics similarly maintains the racial banality of evil in American society.

Modern policing in the United States also connects to Arendt's take on violence, and the distinction she draws between violence and power. According to Arendt's distinction between power and violence, once people stop trusting the police, their power and authority decline, making it more necessary for the government to resort to violence. Arendt's definition of power points to the ability of a group of people to work together towards a political ideal and that this gives power to an individual, group, or institution. But here violence from the police is only chipping away the power of the police and the legitimacy of the state by extension. There are also few realizations of how to fix the situation since people living in the society are in a "thoughtless" state. What is seen in direct assault incidents is, essentially, fueled by hundreds of years of structural and cultural violence, which then causes direct violence and the outrage of American citizens to happen.

Conclusion

Connecting the three types of violence – direct, structural, and cultural – to Hannah Arendt's notion of the banality of evil, we see racial violence in the United States in a new light. While visible examples of direct violence often receive the most attention, the thoughtless participation of many citizens in a society defined by structural and cultural violence also allows these banal forms of racial violence to persist in the country.

In the future, the problem could play out in many different ways. It could happen in a way following Arendt's ideas of violence stripping away power.[48] As more direct violence is used to maintain authority, marginalized people might be motivated to work together, giving them

---

[46] MILLS.

[47] Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," n.d., 40.

[48] Arendt, Hannah. On Violence (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).

more power to resist authority. However, Uvin also warns that structural violence frequently results in direct violence among the marginalized, who fight amongst themselves for the "remaining piece of the pie." If the root causes of racial violence – meaning structural violence, cultural violence, and thoughtlessness, racial violence will be sustained and passed on into the future.

Combatting thoughtlessness requires citizens to be aware of societal systems, historical violence, and citizen attitudes because it requires constant "thinking" and problem-solving from everyone. Thus, it is important to build a robust civic education system that critically engages racism in US history and to encourage a society that educates people to think critically and to engage in self-reflection. The cultural violence of the epistemology of ignorance and the structural violence that this denial of racism upholds perpetuate racial violence, even though many people are not directly involved in assaults against marginalized people.[49] Only by taking collective action to recognize the problems in the structures of the United States can we hope one day to make it a place truly accepting for all groups of people.

---

[49] Rossing, "Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2017): 180, doi:10.14321/rhetpublaffa.20.1.0180.

Bibliography

Arendt, Hannah, and Amos Elon. Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil. 1st edition. (New York, N.Y: Penguin Classics, 2006).

Arendt, Hannah. On Violence (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).

Arendt, Hannah. The Origins of Totalitarianism (San Diego: Harcourt, 1994).

Bernstein, Richard J. "Are Arendt's Reflections on Evil Still Relevant?" The Review of Politics 70, no. 1 (2008): 64–76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S003467050800017X.

Cross Riddle, Karie. "Structural Violence, Intersectionality, and Justpeace : Evaluating Women's Peacebuilding Agency in Manipur, India." Hypatia 32, no. 3 (2017): 574–592. https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12340.

E. Chemerinsky, "The Case Against the Supreme Court," 2014, accessed December 30, 2021.

Evans, Robert G. "Green Leviathan? Thomas Hobbes, Joel Bakan and Arnold Schwarzenegger." Healthcare Policy 2, no. 3 (February 2007): 18–25. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2585453/.

Galtung, Johan. "Cultural Violence." Journal of Peace Research 27, no. 3 (1990): 291–305. https://www.jstor.org/stable/423472.

Hannah Arendt and Amos Elon, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, 1st edition (New York, N.Y: Penguin Classics, 2006).

Hayden, Patrick. "Superfluous Humanity: An Arendtian Perspective on the Political Evil of Global Poverty." Millennium: Journal of International Studies 35, no. 2 (March 2007): 279–300. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298070350021001.

Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law, by James Q. Whitman." The Black Scholar: Pragmatic Utopias 48, no. 3 (2018): 61–63.

Illing, Sean. "A 1951 Book about Totalitarianism Is Flying off the Shelves. Here's Why." Vox, June 2017. https://www.vox.com/conversations/2017/6/28/15829712/hannah-arendt-donald-trump-brexit-totalitarianism.

Isaac, Jeffrey. "Analysis | How Hannah Arendt's Classic Work on Totalitarianism Illuminates Today's America." Washington Post. Accessed August 30, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/17/how-hannah-arendts-classic-work/.

Lain, Corinna Barrett. "Three Supreme Court 'Failures' and a Story of Supreme Court Success." Preprint (LawArXiv, May 2017). https://doi.org/10.31228/osf.io/5csgw.

Manian, Maya. "Immigration Detention and Coerced Sterilization: History Tragically Repeats Itself," ACLU, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/immigration-detention-and-coerced-sterilization-history-tragically-repeats-itself/>, accessed December 30, 2021.

MILLS, CHARLES W. The Racial Contract (Cornell University Press, 1997). https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt5hh1wj.

Rossing. "Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class." Rhetoric and Public Affairs 20, no. 1 (2017): 180. https://doi.org/10.14321/rhetpublaffa.20.1.0180.

Samra, Shamsher, Todd Schneberk, Dennis Hsieh, and Philippe Bourgois. "Interpersonal and Structural Violence in the Wake of COVID-19." American Journal of Public Health 110, no. 11 (November 2020): 1659–1661. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305930.

"The Banality of Systemic Racism – The Forward." Accessed September 6, 2021. https://forward.com/scribe/449041/the-banality-of-systemic-racism/.

"The Grossly Misunderstood 'Banality of Evil' Theory - Israel News - Haaretz.Com." Accessed August 30, 2021. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/the-grossly-misunderstood-banality-of-evil-theory-1.5448677.

"The Origins of Totalitarianism: Arendt, Hannah: 9780156701532: Amazon.Com: Books." Accessed August 30, 2021. https://www.amazon.com/Origins-Totalitarianism-Hannah-Arendt/dp/0156701537/ref=pd_lpo_1?pd_rd_i=0156701537&psc=1.

"Totalitarianism in the Age of Trump: Lessons from Hannah Arendt." The Guardian, February 2017. http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/01/totalitarianism-in-age-donald-trump-lessons-from-hannah-arendt-protests.

Tuck, Eve, and K Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," n.d., 40.

Uvin, Peter. "Global Dreams and Local Anger: From Structural to Acute Violence in a Globalizing World" (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2003).

"Varieties of Violence: Structural, Cultural, and Direct." TRANSCEND Media Service. Accessed September 6, 2021. https://www.transcend.org/tms/2013/10/varieties-of-violence-structural-cultural-and-direct/.

The Legend of Eureka: Riot or Revolution?

Amy Ma '23
Groton School
Massachusetts, USA

Abstract

The Eureka Stockade, a miners' rebellion that occurred on the Victorian goldfields on December 3rd, 1954, has long held a monumental role in Australian national identity. Inflated by politicians and labor movements as a "revolution" and "the birthplace of Australian democracy," this 20-minute confrontation between dissatisfied miners and British soldiers gradually evolved into a symbol against oppression. However, the debate surrounding the significance of Eureka has been controversial. A closer analysis of the motivations and effects of the incident finds the well-known titles buttressing the historical importance of Eureka to be largely unfounded. Not only were most miners motivated largely by expectations of short-term economic gain and, in some cases, desire for political representation, but the rebellion brought little impact outside of the gold fields. At most, it merely accelerated the inclination toward popular sovereignty and democracy, which had developed decades earlier in the British colonies. This essay examines the extent to which the Eureka Stockade directly influenced Australian politics and the reasons behind its enduring popularity in political discourse – both in rhetoric and imagery. By analyzing the causes, effects, and legacy of the uprising, this paper concludes that the legend of Eureka is alarmingly, yet predictably, overdramatized. The overall analysis renders that the proliferation of Eureka's Stockade in the political and social fabric of Australia accentuates the ability of sympathetic national legends to unite populations.

Background

It is often claimed that Australia's only revolution, the Eureka Stockade, lasted a total of fifteen minutes.[1] The year was 1854, almost four years since the Gold Rush began in the nascent Australian colony of Victoria. On the Ballarat goldfields, a group of rowdy miners fought a clumsy battle against the Victorian government, which they saw as oppressive and corrupt. The rebellion was quickly suppressed, with twenty-two diggers and six soldiers reportedly dying during the scuffle.[2] Despite paling in scale to the more grandiose French, American, and Russian Revolutions which surround it, Eureka has been regarded as a "revolution" and "a strike for liberty" by the likes of Karl Marx[3] and Mark Twain.[4] Australian politician Herbert Vere Evatt went as far as to deem it the "birthplace of Australian democracy."[5] However, other historians have been more critical of the significance of Eureka, calling it an "incident, dressed up in borrowed robes, often given a ludicrously inflated importance."[6]

The Eureka Stockade, motivated by the miners' desire for financial welfare and less commonly, political representation, accelerated Australia's political development by promoting democratic ideas among the general population; however, contrary to popular narrative, it did not directly cause any immediate reform beyond the gold fields. While alarmingly exaggerated and misused, Eureka's allure as an emotive and adaptable story has solidified its symbolic position in Australian identity for years to come.

Origins of the Australian Gold Rush

Though scattered reports of gold in Southeastern Australia dated back to 1823, they were never met with great interest. Penal colonial governments suppressed these claims due to concerns that they would

---

[1] Russel Ward, Australia (The Modern Nations in Historical Perspective) (Englewood Cliffs. Prentice-Hall1965), 57.

[2] Ward, *Australia (The Modern Nations)*, 56.

[3] Karl Marx, "News from Australia," Die Neue-Oder Zeitung, 7 March 1855. Quoted in Benjamin T. Jones, *Republicanism and Responsible Government: The Shaping of Democracy in Australia and Canada* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2014), 351, digital file.

[4] Mark Twain, "23," in *Following the Equator: A Journey around the World* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925), digital file. Quoted in Frank Welsh, *Australia: A New History of the Great Southern Land* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2006), 209.

[5] Eric Petersen, "The Eureka Rebellion of 1854," *Politics and Culture*, no. 4 (2004): accessed May 1, 2021, https://politicsandculture.org/2010/08/10/the-eureka-rebellion-of-1854-by-eric-petersen-2/.

[6] Welsh, *Australia: A New History,* 219.

encourage mutiny and destabilize the modest pastoral workforce.[7] Neither was the general population particularly enthusiastic, for most lacked practical knowledge of mining skills.[8] However, the success of the California Gold Rush in 1848 transformed the attitude of the colonies.[9] The discovery of gold at the Loddon River, about 16 miles from Melbourne, on July 5th, 1851, kickstarted Victoria's Gold Rush – the colony's first period of rapid population growth and economic development.[10] Ballarat, located in the central highlands, soon became one of the hotspots for gold.

Due to heavy dependence on luck and the nature of Ballarat's deep leads, mining was a financially stressful affair. The Eureka diggings in East Ballarat were particularly rich, but most of its gold lay a hundred or more feet underground in ancient riverbeds known as deep leads.[11] Miners often spent up to nine months just sinking their shafts before they could even know whether they had struck riches.[12] As more people flocked to the gold fields desperate for quick riches, alluvial surface gold became scarce. Capital and expensive machinery were increasingly necessary for success, which troubled the self-employed, "artisanal" miners that comprised the majority at goldfields like Ballarat.[13] Out of these difficult circumstances emerged predictable frustration and financial stress for many who were less lucky, which made them furious when outrageous government taxation was implemented.

Causes of the Eureka Stockade

Objection towards the overpriced Miner's License was undoubtedly the primary motivation behind the Eureka Stockade. The Miner's License was a direct monthly tax of thirty shillings, worth at least a third of a shepherd's wage, required for every digger on the Victorian goldfields.[14] Other than the lucky few who struck wild riches, most miners who won little to no gold found themselves with an increased financial burden. Bitter protests occurred regularly across mining

---

[7] The Examiner, "'Keep It Quiet!' Anniversary of Gold Discovery," *The Examiner* (Launceston, Tasmania, Australia), February 15, 1934, 6, accessed March 17, 2021, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/51857157.
[8] Geoffrey Serle, *Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861* (Carlton, Victoria, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1977), 44, Apple Book.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Geoffrey Blainey, *A History of Victoria*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 43, digital file.
[11] Bob O'Brien and S. D. S Huyghue, *Massacre at Eureka: The Untold Story*, rev. ed. (Ballarat, Vic.: Sovereign Hill Museums Association, 1998), 46.
[12] Blainey, *A History,* 49.
[13] Ward, *Australia (The Modern Nations)*, 56.
[14] Ibid., 48.

communities, and the license was criticized by the local press as a "juggernaut tax [intended] to crush the poor" imposed by their "Victorian Czar."[15] The economic situation of late 1854 was especially difficult: compared to earlier months, overall gold production had dropped by 35 percent.[16] Rationally, a time of financial hardship would be the last occasion to tighten taxation; but when Sir Charles Hotham replaced La Trobe as Governor of Victoria in May 1854, what greeted him was a severe budget deficiency of one million pounds caused by irresponsible management.[17] In order to quickly relieve the debts, Governor Hotham (in hindsight erroneously) increased the inspection of licenses eightfold, which peaked discontent.

Hatred towards the license was further exacerbated by the violent, oppressive behavior of the police. In order to enforce the Miner's License and monitor the miners' behavior, a police force known as the Gold Commission patrolled the goldfields. Though clashes between miners, especially xenophobic attacks against Chinese immigrants, were certainly not uncommon, Governor Hotham and many contemporary historians acknowledge "the high level of self-discipline and responsibility among the diggers."[18] The attitude of the Gold Commission, however, did not match the peaceful behavior observed. The government paid little consideration to the suitability of policemen, leaving the positions plagued by poorly trained ex-convicts with histories of violence.[19] J.B. Humffray, a prominent rebel leader, writes that "honest men [were] hunted like kangaroos... and treated as if they were felons."[20] The nature of Eureka as a deep lead mine worsened the problem. Miners would climb over a hundred feet just to show the officers a piece of paper for ten seconds, delaying the operations in the deeper shafts by half an hour or more. Water in the deep shafts often damaged the licenses, and miners often misplaced their papers when they changed out of wet clothes.[21] These difficulties were no excuse. Heavy beatings and monstrous fines often ensued following the failure to present a license, which unsurprisingly brought anger and grievances to the Ballarat mining communities. However, although this tax, and the brutality of the police in collecting it, served as the main motivation for Eureka, it would cause the least impact because it was such a local problem. Rather, the desire for political reform, which eventually arose

---

[15] Serle, *Golden Age,* 54.
[16] Ibid., line 4064.
[17] Serle, *Golden Age,* 316.
[18] Ward, *Australia (The Modern Nations),* 55.
[19] Welsh, *Australia: A New History*, 211.
[20] O'Brien and Huyghue, *Massacre at Eureka*, 51.
[21] Geoffrey Norman Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, 3rd ed. (Carlton, VC, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 50.

out of the hatred towards the government's taxation, proved to be far more influential on the colony.

Deepening injustice in the goldfields gradually ignited desires for democratic reform among some diggers. Increasingly violent license hunts and the unjust acquittal of murderer James Bentley made it clear to the Ballarat miners that the Victorian government was not an institution designed to protect them but to capitalize off them.[22] Despite comprising a quarter of the colony, the miners held no representation in parliament.[23] Determined to improve their political and financial circumstances, some 10,000 men gathered on November 11th, 1854 to ratify the Ballarat Reform League Charter, a four-page ultimatum addressing the Victorian government.[24] The charter called for the immediate abolition of the Miner's License and the Gold Commission, but focused mostly on suffrage and political representation – ideological issues scaling far beyond the local level.[25] Considered "a marriage between liberalism and civic republicanism," the Chartist-flavored ultimatum boldly promoted liberty, civic duty, and individual rights.[26] The fiery rebels also adopted the classic American protest outcry, that "taxation without representation is tyranny."[27] It is important, though, to distinguish separatist republican sentiments from the League. The miners believed that "the principles they were fighting for, the rights of British subjects and the spirit of the constitution, were not in opposition to their monarch."[28] Contrary to Marx's beliefs, the people of Ballarat did not want to *revolutionize* their government, they simply wanted to be represented within it.

Even then, most miners saw political involvement as a perk of their struggle for lower taxation rates. The miners of Victoria had a consistent record of favoring monetary interests over the political: previously, small-scale suffrage protests in 1853 were curbed by a reduction in taxation.[29] Despite the radical declarations of the Charter, very few likely believed in them to their fullest extent. Eyewitness Rafaello Carboni noted that among many miners gathered "there was no democratic feeling, but merely a spirit of resistance to the license

---

[22] Jones, *Republicanism and Responsible Government*, 328.
[23] Marjorie Barnard, *A History of Australia* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1986), 262.
[24] Barnard, *A History*, 262
[25] Members of the Ballarat Reform League, "Ballarat Reform League Charter," November 11, 1854, accessed December 10, 2020, https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/eureka-stories/ballarat-reform-league-charter/.
[26] Jones, *Republicanism and Responsible Government*, 335.
[27] Members of the Ballarat Reform League, "Ballarat Reform League Charter."
[28] Ibid., 343.
[29] Serle, *Golden Age,* 237.

fee."[30] While most supported the reforms out of financial frustrations, only fifteen percent of those at Ballarat were willing to take up arms for the cause, demonstrating the lack of true commitment.[31] Historian Geoffrey Sterle offers a plausible reason for this political indifference. He argues that "most diggers still regarded themselves as temporary visitors to the colony; hence they had no special interest in its government except as it immediately affected them."[32] This hypothesis explains why the cost of the Miner's License, with monthly payments and biweekly police checks, was the central complaint rather than long-term political reform. Nevertheless, the Ballarat Reform League Charter would become the public representation of the miners' goals, promoting democratic sentiments among the Melbourne public even if those ideologies were not as common on the goldfields.

When the miners presented their Charter to the Victorian government in late November, the demands within the charter were unfortunately dismissed immediately. Although Governor Hotham agreed to grant the miners suffrage, he refused to abolish the Miner's License and ordered troop reinforcements to Ballarat.[33] Since the primary, economic objective was not fulfilled, troop crackdowns were received with great hostility. Having recognized the futility of political negotiation, the miners stoned the policemen and declared further violence as their last resort. [34] On November 29th, some 2000 men gathered at Beverly Hill where they made inflammatory speeches and took vows.[35] A Prussian blue flag adorned by a white Southern Cross was raised, under which the men, led by Peter Lalor, swore: "to stand truly by each other and fight to defend [their] rights and liberties."[36] Afterward, the miners lit a giant bonfire in which they burnt all their Miner's Licenses, symbolizing their defiance. Within a few days, they hastily built an acre-long stockade out of a paling fence and prepared for the inevitable battle.

The Battle

The Eureka Stockade was a battle the rebels were destined to lose. With no military commander, no training, and a lack of planning, the disorganized miners stood no chance against the professional British

---

[30] Raffaello Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade* (December 1855; repr., Middlesex: Echo Library, 2007), page 106.
[31] Ibid., 525.
[32] Ibid., 534.
[33] Barnard, *A History,* 212-213.
[34] Ibid., 262.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, 49.

soldiers[37] As Carboni describes, "orders [were] given by everybody, attended by nobody."[38] The troops stormed the stockade in the early morning of December 3rd, a Sabbath day. By Sunday morning, only 120 men remained in the stockade in comparison to 2000 who originally gathered, cementing their inevitable defeat.[39] There are numerous explanations for the large exodus of men. Since rest on Sabbath was a common practice on the gold fields, many miners left the stockade on Saturday to spend the day with family.[40] The shortage of arms and ammunition also discouraged some miners from participating.[41] Either way, the miners were outnumbered by 276 well-trained British soldiers and forced to surrender within fifteen minutes.[42] Many more were injured and imprisoned. Loved ones lay smashed, tents burnt with fury, the Eureka flag was torn and trampled, and for a moment it seemed as if the fight against oppression had been lost.

Effects of the Eureka Stockade

Although the rebels lost the battle, the cruel bloodshed of the Eureka Stockade drew the necessary press and public support to elevate its political resonance to a state level. The early morning of December 3rd was devastating for diggers; yet in public perception, the miners' cause had shifted from a mostly monetary local issue to one that concerned the value of human life. Public sympathy was encouraged by the British soldiers' aimless slaughter during the Stockade. According to Carboni, the troops fired at the tents "indiscriminately," even shooting a "mother with a baby in arms."[43] Another witness described that "one man far from the scene in bed with his wife was dragged from her arms and murdered in his tent, which [the soldiers] afterward fired."[44] In response, *The Ballarat Times* headlined the Stockade a "massacre"; *the Melbourne Herald* extensively detailed the awful sight of dead miners; *the Age* proclaimed that "[the people of Melbourne] do not sympathize with injustice and coercion."[45] This dramatic increase in press coverage had significant effects: days after the rebellion, six thousand protestors

---

[37] Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade,* 61.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Fitz-Simons, *Eureka: The Unfinished*, line 7349.

[40] Timothy Willem Jones and Clare Wright, "The Goldfields' Sabbath: A Postsecular Analysis of Social Cohesion and Social Control on the Ballarat Goldfields, 1854.," *Journal of Religious History*, December 2019, digital file.

[41] Clarke, *History of Australia*, 58.

[42] Barnard, *A History,* 262.

[43] Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, 75.

[44] Fyson, "Eyewitness at Eureka."

[45] Fitz-Simons, *Eureka: The Unfinished*, line 8140.

gathered outside St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne to protest.[46] Other mining communities from Geelong and Bendigo also petitioned the government. Public support for the miners was so favorable that all the arrested miners were "acquitted to loud cheers until their defense counsel no longer bothered to present a case."[47] It was ultimately the British soldiers' misdemeanors and the court of public opinion that saved the Ballarat Reform League from being forgotten in history as a minor strife. The miners' dissatisfaction was no longer a local insurgence but was now associated with the rights and liberties of every citizen within the colony. The quick endorsement of the Charter's tenets by the people of Victoria suggests both the popularity of the League and the existence of progressive sentiments before the Stockade. Eventually, the strength of public pressure, in combination with a fear of more violence, forced the Victorian government to comply with the miners' demands.

Eureka's positive impacts, which proved to be largely financial, were experienced most greatly in the goldfields. Finally recognizing the necessity of reform, Governor Hotham conceded that "although the principle of the license was right, the mode of working it was entirely wrong."[48] In addition to the acquittal of all rebels, the Victorian government initiated a series of reforms that drastically improved the political and financial circumstances of miners. The most important reform was the abolition of the police force and the monthly Miner's License, the latter replaced by a far cheaper annual tax in March 1855. Attached to this yearly license was the ability to vote, though perhaps unsurprisingly, very few miners exercised this privilege.[49] The lack of political inclination post-abolition again suggests that pure democratic sentiments were not the driving force behind Eureka, but simply a means of acquiring the desired financial welfare. Nevertheless, the miners gained greater political freedom, which they utilized to further improve their financial livelihoods. When Peter Lalor and other representatives were elected to the Victorian Parliament, they were able to advocate for better mining policies in the Mining Act of June 1855, which gave almost all local regulatory and judicial power to miner communities on the fields.[50] At least on the local level, Eureka was absolutely "a victory won by a lost battle," as Mark Twain declared.[51] All of the miner's demands in the Charter were granted. However, the more controversial aspect of Eureka's impacts is the extent to which it affected

---

[46] *Riot or Revolution*.

[47] Welsh, *Australia: A New History*, 214.

[48] Serle, *Golden Age,* 78.

[49] Barnard, *A History*, 263.

[50] Welsh, *Australia: A New History*, 214.

[51] Twain, Following the Equator: A Journey Across the World, 23.

the greater political development of Australia, and more specifically, the Colony of Victoria.

The adoption of democratic policies such as manhood suffrage during the 1850s was encouraged but not directly caused by the Eureka Stockade because it popularized pre-existing political sentiments. From manhood suffrage to the formation of the constitution, the 1850s were, in general, a time of great political advancement for the Australian colonies. The Gold Rush, along with a new wave of immigration, brought an influx of novel ideas which certainly nurtured the preexisting democratic movement.[52] Yet it is exactly the volatility of the 1850s political climate that makes it difficult to definitively conclude the extent to which the Eureka Stockade guided these changes. Less than one year after the rebellion, the miners had representation in parliament. Within three years, the ability to vote was given to all male British citizens in Victoria over the age of twenty-one.[53] The proximity of these events suggests at least some degree of connection. Since the Eureka Stockade became so well-known among the Victorian population, it likely promoted democratic ideas. As a result, the political climate after the stockade became "overwhelmingly liberal," which inevitably accelerated the adaptation of progressive policies.[54]

However, one must be cautious of the *post hoc, propter hoc* fallacy, for Eureka was not the direct cause but at most a catalyst of these political developments. Manhood suffrage and civic republicanism were not novel ideas in Australia, and the course toward responsible government had been set decades before. By the 1830s, democratic demands already prevailed in Victorian society.[55] Calls for self-government dominated 1840s political rhetoric. Major newspapers such as *the Sydney Chronicle*, *the Guardian*, and *the Examiner* called for universal suffrage not "limited by any paltry property qualifications" as early as 1842.[56] The Colony of South Australia adopted voting rights a year before Victoria. Even within the Victorian colony itself, drafts of the constitution preceded the rebellion, and a bill to enfranchise diggers was sent to London in March 1854, eight months before the Stockade.[57]

---

[52] Jones, *Republicanism and Responsible Government*, 352.

[53] Mat McLachan, "The Eureka Stockade with Professor Frank Bongiorno," December 1, 2019, in *Living History*, narrated by Frank Bongiorno, podcast, audio, 38:13, accessed December 9, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Zd0Io93QXg.

[54] Ward, *Australia (The Modern Nations)*, 63.

[55] Welsh, *Australia: A New History*, 210.

[56] James Normington-Rawling, "Before Eureka," *Labour History*, no. 4 (May 1963): 16, https://doi.org/10.2307/27507716.

[57] Serle, *Golden Age,* 236.

Eureka did not *give birth* to Australian democracy, as the famous myth popularized by Evatt suggests. The rebellion can instead be interpreted as a symptom of a long-established trend toward democratic reform. The goldfields simply inflamed passions for democracy and hastened the political reforms which were bound to come eventually.

In reality, the Eureka Stockade did not change the course of Australian history; rather, it was the demographic transition brought by the Gold Rush that contributed to the political, economic, and social climate of the time. Gold in Australia was fleeting. Within two decades almost all of the precious metal, both surface and underground, had vanished from Southeastern Australian soil. Nonetheless, the vast influx of free men accelerated Australia's political and economic development while leaving enduring cultural changes. Within ten years, the population of Victoria grew to more than 500,000 compared to the original 80,000.[58] Though thousands of migrants came from China, America, and other European countries, migrants from Britain nevertheless constituted the majority of immigrants.[59] The immigrants brought novel (and mostly Chartist) political ideas and new industrial skills[60]; but the largest impact of the gold rush stems from its sociocultural effects: the concept of mateship, the blurring of convict identity, the growing middle-class culture, the construction of universities and churches, and the general increase in refinement and education were all nurtured by the free immigrants.[61] Amid political change, Australian culture was also evolving; and as a new Australian identity develops, the search for lore and heroes led to the dramatization of Eureka and the persistence of its political legacy.

The Legacy of Eureka

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, many Australian political entities have sported Eureka as a symbol for their causes. From the storming of the New South Wales Parliament in 1878 to the Yarra Maritime Strike of 1890, to the Great Shearer's Strike of 1891[62], to the Australian Labor Movement in the 20th century, it was the Eureka Flag,

---

[58] Clarke, *History of Australia,* 56.

[59] Blainey, *A History,* 44.

[60] Ward, *Australia (The Modern Nations)*, 66.

[61] Ibid., 62.

[62] Anne Beggs Sunter, "Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-constructing the Eureka Legend" (doctoral thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002), 64, accessed March 17, 2021, https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/39407.

with its white-starred southern cross, that they held high in the air.[63] Unsurprisingly, the Stockade has become synonymous with trade union movements, but other political identities have also woven the event into their historical narratives. Communist publications of the 1950s embraced Eureka because they regarded the uprising as an example of "the triumph of collective action."[64] Likely an attempt to assimilate communist ideologies into Australian national rhetoric, the party even named its youth organization the Eureka Youth League. Eventually, the National Socialist Party of Australia (NSPA) donned the Eureka flag as an official emblem in 1968. On the other hand, white-Australia nationalists also praised Eureka for its patriotic spirit and xenophobic undertones, with the far-right Australia First Party controversially adopting the flag as their official party logo in 2016.[65] In both the anti-Chinese riots of the 1860s and the anti-immigration rallies of the 21st century, the Eureka Flag was used as a symbol of the white nationalist struggle.[66] Due to Eureka's popularity on both sides of the political spectrum, interesting collaborations have occurred, such as the Centenary of the Rebellion in 1954 where communists and right-wing Roman Catholic politicians were forced to cooperate.[67] In the way that historian Dr. Anne Beggs Sunter suggests, "Eureka can be likened to Norman Lindsay's magic pudding, capable of constantly being cut up, yet always able to renew and reinvent itself."[68] Therefore, the popularity of the Eurekan myth is best at illustrating how mutual belief in a mythical explanation of the past could be used as a centripetal force to foster interconnection and reinforce shared values. As Australians sought to rid themselves of their penal British past, Eureka became a natural point of interest in their search for national heroes. Having a common heritage is unifying, and for a country that is not rich in dramatic historical events, seekers of tradition were able to tailor the story of Eureka to justify and sanctify their desired ideological narratives. Yet, another notable reason for Eureka's popular legacy is its ability to invoke public sympathy.

---

[63] Elizabeth Huf, "Great Shearers' Strike of 1891," *Queensland Historical Atlas,* 29 September 2010, https://www.qhatlas.com.au/content/great-shearers%E2%80%99-strike-1891 (1 February 2020).

[64] Convict Creations (specific name unknown), "Australia in the Cold War," *Convict Creations*, published date known, http://convictcreations.com/history/coldwar.html (1 February 2020).

[65] John Hood, "Eureka's Spirit," *Australia First Party,* published date unknown, https://australiafirstparty.net/nationalism/the-nationalist-ethic/eurekas-spirit/ (1 February 2020).

[66] Sunter, *Birth of a Nation,* 67.

[67] Serle, *Golden Age,* 542.

[68] Sunter, "Contested Memories," 29.

Eureka's resonance with so many political groups is also due to its ability to invoke sympathy. Rarely are the actual events of Eureka mentioned or praised (for they are frankly quite underwhelming), but rather, it is used as an emotive, colorful symbol and a token of national identity. The Stockade's popularity in the field of arts further bolstered its sympathetic appeal. The acclaimed *Ballad of Eureka* by Victor Daley, for example, framed the Eurekan men as heroes who fought bravely against tyrants for the sake of freedom but inevitably fell before Fate.[69] Whether among the Melbourne population in 1854 or in modern Australian society, the legacy of Eureka persists precisely because it was so "lame": people could not resist supporting the emotive underdog narrative. Perhaps, this minute rebellion has received far too much attention for it truthfully was; but due to its ability to appeal to both mind and emotion, this fifteen-minute rebellion will likely continue to serve as a key symbol within Australian political rhetoric, regardless of the ongoing debate about its tangible impact.

However, from Eureka's exaggerated significance emerges problems surrounding the selective narration of history. The dangers of Eureka's overdramatization are easily visible in the gross simplifications and biased distortions that the event has weathered. One of the most common misconceptions popularized by media and even some historians proclaimed Eureka as the only battle occurring on Australian soil.[70] Yet, this claim blatantly overlooks critical periods of Australian history such as the Frontier Wars. The Australian Frontier Wars were a series of "state-sanctioned" battles and massacres lasting from 1788 to 1934 that resulted in the slaughter of more than 40,000 indigenous Australians. While some may point out the extended period as an explanation for its obscurity, concentrated massacres in Myall Creek (28 deaths) and the Tasmanian War (600 deaths) also receive little acknowledgment.[71] To further illustrate Eureka's overinflated significance, it could be likened to another clash on the gold fields – the Lambing Flat riots. Occurring between 1860 and 1861, the racially motivated battles saw a mob of 3000 Caucasian miners brutally attack 2000 Chinese miners in addition to a police camp.[72] Though Lambing Flat's battles were larger in both magnitude and duration, its dramatically smaller coverage in comparison to Eureka again sheds light on the way that Australian history had been recounted. As Lauren Harris describes,

---

[69] Serle, *Golden Age,* 542.

[70] Ward, *Australia (The Modern Nations)*, 57.

[71] Jane Morrison, "Australian Frontier Conflicts 1788-1940s," Australian Frontier Conflicts, last modified 2020, accessed May 1, 2021, https://australianfrontierconflicts.com.au/.

[72] Lauren Carroll Harris, "The Riots History Erased: Reckoning with the Racism of Lambing Flat," *The Guardian* (Kings Place, London), August 6, 2018.

undesired events, including the persecution of Aboriginal Australians and Chinese immigrants, may have been naturally or purposefully avoided, while comforting stories of heroic white uprisings endured. Thus, the success of Eureka's legacy could also serve as an interesting case study on the selection of history in adherence to potential ideological biases.

Conclusion

When the restored Eureka flag was unveiled at Ballarat on December 3, 1973, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam uttered that "the importance of a historical event lies not in what happened but in what later generations believe to have happened." This principle aligns with the tale of Eureka, which is most powerful in its "strength as a national tradition."[73] This paper has highlighted the overdramatization of the Eureka Legend. Unlike common mythology, the Eureka Stockade did not directly cause any major reforms beyond the goldfields, but rather only expedite political development and the formation of an Australian identity by popularizing democratic sentiments among the Victorian population. The common perception of Eureka as the birthplace of Australian democracy espoused by Marx, Twain, and Evatt exaggerates the effects of the uprising and overlooks key political developments initiated in the decades.

However, despite its lack of tangible impact, Eureka is a critical part of Australian culture. The rebellion, woven into the identities of many political ideologies, has become an event of great symbolic meaning to Victoria and Australia. Accordingly, Eureka survives in Australian political rhetoric not because of its magnitude or direct impact, but because of its ability to resonate with human sympathy and represent Australian identity. The latter where, just as Carboni describes, while standing under the Eureka Flag days before the battle, people "of all nations and colors came together irrespective of nationality, religion, or color to salute the Southern Cross as a refuge of all the oppressed from all countries on earth."[74] There are problems, though, which arise from the inflation of Eureka's worth. Misconceptions and the comfort of the Eureka legend led the event to overshadow other parts of Australian history that require more acknowledgment but are often forgotten or deliberately overlooked. Thus, the Eureka Stockade is an example of how events could adopt significance over time, and how history might impede the ability of populations to perceive their past objectively. Nevertheless, the modern legacy of Eureka is neither one of

---

[73] Ibid., 540.
[74] Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade,* 39.

glorious revolution nor chaotic riot, but a largely symbolic and overdramatized fight against oppression.

Bibliography

Barnard, Marjorie. *A History of Australia*. London: Angus & Robertson, 1986.

Blainey, Geoffrey. *A History of Victoria*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Blainey, Geoffrey. The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining. 4th ed. Carlton, Vic, Melbourne University Press, 1994.

Carboni, Raffaello. *The Eureka Stockade*. December 1855. Reprint, Middlesex: Echo Library, 2007.

Charleston, Libby-Jane. "The Forgotten Rebels of the Eureka Stockade." *The Huffington Post*. 15 July 2016. https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2015/12/11/australian-history-eureka_n_8734440.html (February 1, 2021)

Clark, Manning. "Rewriting Australian History." 1954. in *The Oxford Book of Australian Essays*, by Imre Salusinszky, 129-38. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Clarke, Frank G. *The History of Australia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Convict Creations. "Australia in the Cold War." *Convict Creations*. http://convictcreations.com/history/coldwar.html (February 1, 2021)

FitzSimons, Peter. *Eureka: The Unfinished Revolution*. North Sydney, N.S.W.: William Heinemann Australia, 2012.

Harris, Lauren Carroll. "The Riots History Erased: Reckoning with the Racism of Lambing Flat." The Guardian (Kings Place, London), August 6, 2018. Accessed May 1, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/aug/07/the-riots-history-erased-reckoning-with-the-racism-of-lambing-flat

Hood, John. "Eureka's Spirit." *Australia First Party*. https://australiafirstparty.net/nationalism/the-nationalist-ethic/eurekas-spirit/ (February 1, 2020)

Huf, Elizabeth. "Great Shearers' Strike of 1891," *Queensland Historical Atlas*. 29 September 2010.

https://www.qhatlas.com.au/content/great-shearers%E2%80%99-strike-1891 (February 1, 2021)

Jones, Benjamin T. *Republicanism and Responsible Government: The Shaping of Democracy in Australia and Canada*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2014.

Jones, Timothy Willem, and Clare Wright. "The Goldfields' Sabbath: A Postsecular Analysis of Social Cohesion and Social Control on the Ballarat Goldfields, 1854." *Journal of Religious History*, December 2019.

Marx, Karl. "News from Australia," Die Neue-Oder Zeitung, 7 March 1855. Quoted in Benjamin T. Jones, *Republicanism and Responsible Government: The Shaping of Democracy in Australia and Canada*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2014. 351.

McLachlan, Mat. "The Eureka Stockade with Professor Frank Bongiorno." December 1, 2019. In *Living History*, narrated by Frank Bongiorno. Podcast, audio, 38:13. Accessed December 9, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Zd0Io93QXg.

Members of the Ballarat Reform League. "Ballarat Reform League Charter." November 11, 1854. https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/eureka-stories/ballarat-reform-league-charter/.

Morrison, Jane. "Australian Frontier Conflicts 1788-1940s." Australian Frontier Conflicts. Last modified 2020. Accessed May 1, 2021. https://australianfrontierconflicts.com.au/

Normington-Rawling, James. "Before Eureka." *Labour History*, no. 4 (May 1963): 11-18. https://doi.org/10.2307/27507716.

O'Brien, Bob, and S. D. S Huyghue. *Massacre at Eureka: The Untold Story*. Rev. ed. Ballarat, Vic.: Sovereign Hill Museums Association, 1998.

Petersen, Eric. "The Eureka Rebellion of 1854." Politics and Culture, no. 4 (2004). Accessed May 1, 2021. https://politicsandculture.org/issue/2004-issue-4/.

Riot or Revolution - the Eureka Stockade. Produced by Rachael Blake. Aired on December 3, 2006, on Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLHl8EEIYak.

Serle, Geoffrey. *Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*. Carlton, Victoria, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1977. Apple Book.

State Library of New South Wales. "Rush to Victoria." Discover Collections. Last modified May 24, 2012. Accessed March 13, 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20130812215236/http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/gold/victoria/index.html

Sunter, Anne Beggs. "Birth of a Nation? Constructing and Deconstructing the Eureka Legend." Doctoral thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002. Accessed March 17, 2021. https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/39407

Sunter, Anne Beggs. "Contested Memories of Eureka: Museum Interpretations of the Eureka Stockade." *Labour History*, no. 85 (November 2003): 29-45. https://doi.org/10.2307/27515926.

The Examiner. "'Keep It Quiet!' Anniversary of Gold Discovery." *The Examiner* (Launceston, Tasmania, Australia), February 15, 1934, 6. Accessed March 17, 2021. https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/51857157.

Twain, Mark. "23." In *Following the Equator: A Journey around the World*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925.

Ward, Russel. *Australia (The Modern Nations in Historical Perspective)*. Englewood Cliffs.: Prentice-Hall, 1965

Welsh, Frank. *Australia: A New History of the Great Southern Land*. Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2006.

Her Part in the Honors:
The Hidden History of Feminism in Ancient Rome

Kerem Koyluoglu '23
The Hun School of Princeton
New Jersey, USA

Abstract

The Roman government's standing as the bedrock of Western civic structures is largely a result of the striking and durable innovations its people made in determining the relationship of the individual with his or her administration. Ideas essential to the mindset of modern Western civilization, equality before the law, enfranchisement, civil liberties, etc. all have deep-rooted connections to the practices of Rome. This paper identifies episodes of feminism in the Roman state from 207 BCE to 27 AD, a period that came as a result of the collision between a supposedly egalitarian state and a patriarchal society. The essay explores the prerequisite conditions that catalyzed feminist thinking in both administrative and social settings. The assemblage of the first governmental women's council came in tandem with breakthrough instances of female voices in public protest. A review of Hortensia's famous oration against the triumvir Marc Antony, effective as it was revolutionary, focuses on the high-level and explicit incursions into the male-dominated legal society. Finally, a short tour of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* reveals the popular dissent against the compulsory roles placed upon women in social and dating life, concluding that the republican and feminism experiment are inseparable, whether it be during the Roman age or in the Revolutionary era 1900 years removed. The sparks of a gender equality debate in an otherwise patrician Rome cements this link, and a dedicated group of progressive thinkers impacted the basis of Western civilization in ways unavoidable in the modern world.

Introduction

The 1848 Seneca Falls convention marked the beginning of an organized feminist movement whose ideas would dominate global policy and upend millennia of social and political norms in mere one-hundred-seventy years. Or, at least, that is one accepted narrative. A more expansive look at history paints a different reality – the ideas associated with Elizabeth Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, etc. continued a long-neglected debate that began some two-thousand years before their time.

The inception and egalitarian development of the Roman Republic invited many groups within its borders to petition for political and social empowerment. Between the First Secession of the Plebs (494 BCE) and the Social War (91-88 BCE), the foundations for a nation of universal suffrage were being formed, with classes of people progressively further from the original Roman elite earning full or substantial enfranchisement throughout the centuries. Adjacent to the advancement of merchants', plebeian, non-Italians', etc. rights, the question of where women stood in a political society that supposedly espoused equality, yet hesitated to deliver, saw development up through the collapse of the Republic and the beginnings of the Roman Empire. Cato's predictions in 195 BCE that what the women of Rome were "longing for [was] complete liberty, or rather - if we want to speak the truth - complete license."[1] saw increasingly greater merit in successive centuries. Some two hundred years after Cato, the matron Hortensia identified the crux of the question: "Why should [women] pay taxes when [they] have no part in the sovereignty, the offices...the policy-making [of the Republic]?"[2] Her query demonstrated just how far political feminist thinking had progressed from a time that had once seen no public rights for women. The following contributions to the gender equality debate in the Roman Republic and Empire are indicative of a history of feminism with much deeper roots than the women of Seneca Falls.

---

[1] Titus Livius, "Titus Livius (Livy), the History of Rome, Book 34." Translated by Evan T Sage, Titus Livius (Livy), The History of Rome, Book 34, chapter 4, Perseus Digital Library, Accessed October 27, 2021, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0164%3Abook%3D34%3Achapter%3D4.

[2] Appianus, and John M. Carter. "Books 32-33" in *The Civil Wars*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

Status of Women in Ancient Rome

The public status of women in the Roman world was substandard to the point of barbarity. "When it comes to silencing women, Western culture has had thousands of years of practice."[3] Women in every iteration of the Roman state were classified as mothers, daughters, wives, goddesses, or prostitutes. They were required by law to have a male relative advocate on their behalf in court, prostitutes could not prosecute for rape and violated female slaves were considered property damaged at the hands of their owners.[4] Women had no enfranchisement whatsoever, and the only form of political power they could wield was through personal influence over their powerful spouses, relatives, and associates – though these were highly unique cases that fell short of any form of public participation.

The singular major and dedicated role women played in public life was in the Vestal Virgin priesthood. Restricted from marriage or sex for thirty years, the Vestals were charged with considering and performing religious rites specifically devoid of male participation. These rituals included the preservation of the fire of Vesta, which was consecrated to the well-being of the city of Rome. Men, of course, played an ongoing role in the suppression of women in public and social life. Cato the Elder (234-149 BCE) reportedly banned boys from attending senate meetings out of concern that they might report the political happenings of the day to their mothers.[5]

Though shut out of public matters, Roman women found substantial success in business, were able to own and inherit property, and "appear[ed] as much engaged in business and as interested in speculation as the men."[5] Aristocratic women, well-read and competent, were savvy investors and were often preferred creditors and proponents of public works projects.[6] Women operated brick factories,[7] and female owners of businesses were exempt from prosecution for the strict adultery laws that dominated life during the Roman Empire.[8] A

---

[3] Beard, Mary. 2017. *Women & Power. A Manifesto*. London: Profile Books, p. 44.
[4] Cartwright, Mark. "The Role of Women in the Roman World." *World History Encyclopedia*, World History Encyclopedia, 25 Jan. 2022, https://www.worldhistory.org/article/659/the-role-of-women-in-the-roman-world/.
[5] Boissier, Gaston, and Adnah David Jones. 1898. *Cicero and his friends; a study of Roman society in the time of Caesar*. New York: Putnam, p. 89
[6] Lane Fox, Robin. 1987. *Pagans and Christians*. New York: Knopf, p. 464
[7] Abbott, Frank Frost. 1963. *Society and politics in ancient Rome: essays and sketches*. New York: Biblo and Tannen, p. 98.
[8] Lefkowitz, Mary R., and Maureen B. Fant. 2005. *Women's life in Greece and Rome: a source book in translation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 104.

dedicated corps of female calligraphers and scribes emerged during the Republic,[9] and women flourished in the takeaway food industry, which serviced a vast majority of Roman urban dwellers due to the lack of kitchens in most apartment buildings.

The status of women in Ancient Rome consisted of a high-octane mix: on one hand, the complete disenfranchisement of half the Roman population and lack of many legal rights left many women under a seemingly incurable patriarchy. On the other, a flourishing and dynamic group of educated and competent aristocrats and businesswomen – who were able to see the egalitarian rhetoric of their male counterparts, analyze its hypocrisy, and make competent reproaches in its wake – were an indispensable part of the Roman economic livelihood. The twin realities created a theatre for feminist thought and advancement that would reach a scope unseen until the French Revolution some two-thousand years later.

Carthage: Catalyst for Change

Among the conflicts that defined the Roman Republic's ascension from the city-state to the Mediterranean empire, the Punic Wars proved to be the most consequential for the advancement of female political enfranchisement. Historically speaking, war, especially war between two equally capable powers, creates the necessary conditions for social change out of the desperation and societal impact derived from nation-threatening struggles. Rome's multiple and potent conflicts with the Carthaginian empire are a testament to this reality and enabled women's first breakthrough into the world of Republican politics.

The results of the Second Punic War (218-202 BCE) effectively introduced the dominant Roman state that soon produced the conquering figures of G. Marius, G. Caesar, Augustus, etc. Yet the exploits of the Carthaginian Empire nearly ended Roman ambition in one extensive campaign throughout the Italian heartland. Led by Hannibal Barca, the decades-long Italian theatre of the Second Punic War proved disastrous to the Roman well-being and spirit. The Battle of Cannae (216 BCE) was a unique catastrophe in a uniquely catastrophic era for the Romans, seeing some *one-fifth* of Roman men between the ages of 18 and 50 perishing under the Carthaginian sword.[10] Similar

---

[9] Rawson, Beryl. 2003. *Children and childhood in Roman Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10266573, p.80.
[10] Battle of Cannae." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., n.d. Accessed November 4, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Cannae.

calamities dotted the timeline of the early war. Hannibal's ravaging of the Roman homeland forced many principled Romans to cast off previous reservations about women and their role in the administration of the Republic.

The immediate aftermath of Cannae showed the first signs of direct female participation in matters of the state. Looking to make additional profits off of his extraordinary victory, Hannibal sent several prisoners to beg the Roman Senate for the ransom necessary for their release. A crowd of desperate friends and relatives gathered in the public meeting space, frantically pleading for the return of their kin. The petition was rejected, and the prisoners were accompanied by the sympathetic crowd to the Roman gates. Principally, both men and women partook in the protests throughout the crisis, a previously unheard-of phenomenon. Livy contends that the women were compelled by their "fear and destitute condition to mingle in the Forum with the crowd of men"[11] – the miserable conditions of the Punic war had finally begun to take their toll, revealing cracks in the divisions between the sexes in participation in public policy.

Hannibal's molestation of the Italian cities continued until 203 BCE when Roman pressure in North Africa necessitated a return to Carthage. Four years before he abandoned the peninsula, the Carthaginian war unveiled another breakthrough in women's political participation in the Republic.

The birth of a hermaphrodite infant the size of a toddler, deemed a bad omen by the Roman College of Pontiffs, called for a religious response. The College decreed that Rome's Vestal Virgins must drown the androgyne and that the ritual be accompanied by hymns. During the procession, though, a bolt of lightning struck the temple of *Juno Regina*, inciting declarations of the goddess' anger and the necessity of a gift to the angered deity. In other circumstances, the Vestals may have been punished for the calamity, but in rare instances, their recommendation was followed. The officers relegated to organize this sacrifice to Juno themselves innovated when they invited all matrons within ten miles of Rome to assemble the necessary funds. The matrons selected 25 of their women to act as treasurers for the endeavors from their dowries and raised the money needed for the golden basin gifted to Juno. The women's committee embodied the first known instance of explicit female administration of a Republican program. In Rome, religious matters were state matters, and the relegation to a board of women a

---

[11] Livius, Titus. "Book 22." Essay. In *History of Rome*, translated by B. O. Foster, 5:396–396. Loeb ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020.

matter of such religious significance is a major landmark in an increasingly tangible political feminist movement.

The mark of Cannae and the Second Punic War era irrevocably altered Roman women's standing in both the determination of policies and participation in public discourse in the upper echelons of the Republican government. Untouched milestones that had once been unthinkable – those being active female engagement in political protest and the creation of a Women's Committee on religious financial matters – were surpassed in the span of a decade. The conclusion of Rome's most perilous conflict made it the predominant force of the Western Mediterranean and paved the way for an empire that would eventually stretch from Britain to Mesopotamia. The influx of wealth, cultures, and ideas forced the Romans to negotiate their unequal treatment of the sexes within a Republican system that prided itself on equality. The succeeding centuries would forge the durable bonds between Feminism and Republicanism, and create opportunities for individual women to transcend the Roman Senate to become politicians in their own right.

Hortensia, the Orator

Throughout the course of the Roman Republic, the very idea of a civil war was one of sacrilege. The gods had favored Roman armies to expand the nation's territories and defeat enemies of the state – what would happen if these troops were cast against each other? This mindset, among other things, destroyed the integrity of the Republic in its final decades. The misery and fear from these conflicts were later at the forefront of the justifications required to concentrate power into Octavian, later Augustus, at the inception of the Empire. Between the years of 91-31 BCE, no fewer than twelve instances of secessionist combat were waged,[12] each interrupted only by a host of revolts, conspiracies, and invasions by foreign tribes. Towards the end of these sixty years, popular patience was at its breaking point. The process of continuous bloodshed, of innumerable brothers, husbands, and sons who never returned home sent anxiety throughout the Roman people that contributed to the rapid abandonment of Republican principles.

During the penultimate civil war of this era, that between the Second Triumvirate (Marc Anthony, Octavian, and Lepidus) against the assassins of Julius Caesar, a new edict was imposed: a select 1400 of the richest women were required to evaluate their property and contribute a portion of their wealth to the triumvirs to use as they saw fit.

---

[12] "Rome and Its Civil Wars." *UMass Amherst*. University of Massachusetts Amherst, n.d. Accessed November 15, 2021, https://www.umass.edu/civilwars/about.html.

Furthermore, anyone caught hiding her assets would be punished, and informers rewarded. The aggrieved women subject to the tax decided to appeal to the wives of each Caesarian but were unable to gain the support of all three women, being crudely rebuffed by Marc Anthony's spouse, Fulvia. At this obstacle, the congregation turned their sights towards the triumvirs themselves by forcing their way into an ongoing tribunal and selecting Hortensia as their spokeswoman. The daughter of Q. Hortensius, a famous statesman, historian, and legal rival of the largest names of the day, Hortensia was well-versed in rhetoric. Amid a stunned crowd, facing a livid Marc Anthony, her railing against the injustice of the tax simultaneously criticized the anaemic role of women in stately matters.

> As was proper for women of our rank petitioning you for something, we addressed your womenfolk. But Fulvia's rudeness has driven us here...Why should we pay taxes when we have no part in the honors, the commands, the state-craft, for which you contend against each other with such harmful results? 'Because this is a time of war,' do you say? When have there not been wars, and when have taxes ever been imposed on women, who are exempted by their sex among all mankind?[13]

The present triumvirs were enraged at the women who dared assemble themselves in public while the men remained silent and ordered them escorted out. The wholly male crowd, though, demanded that Hortensia's delegation be allowed to stay and participate in the tribunal. Under mounting pressure, Marc Anthony announced that one thousand of the original 1400 women would be taken off the tariff list and that all men, foreign or not, who possessed more than a designated amount of money would be taxed. In this way, all able groups in Rome were made to contribute to the state.

From the very first sentence of Hortensia's oration, two powerful questions follow: Did the aristocratic women of Rome have a unified civic identity? Was this an example of that identity demanding political representation? The implications of her reference to the "women of our rank" are vast. Valerius Maximus, a collector of historical anecdotes under the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius (r.14 AD–37 AD), referred to the recipients of the tax as the *ordo matronarum*, or the "class of matrons."[14] This order received exclusive and identifying clothing

---

[13] Appianus, and John M. Carter. "Books 32-33" in *The Civil Wars*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

[14] Maximus, Valerius. "Women Who Pleaded Before Magistrates for Themselves or Others." Essay. In *Memorable Doings and Saying*, translated by Bailey D R Shackleton, 2:211–213. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

from the Senate, but no official senatorial status was ever mentioned when discussing the group. Women of Hortensia's rank were also legally required to appeal first to the wives of a magistrate when petitioning for a cause, the designated protocol being yet another indication that there was a common denominator among those taxed on the day of her speech. Finally, during the Second Punic War some two-hundred years earlier, the Republic did appreciate a distinct status for certain women when considering a new levy on its citizens,[15] namely employing those women into an administrative council dedicated to raising funds for religious activities. While a technical definition of this *ordo matronarum* is lost, several indicators of a common political identity are present throughout the duration of the Roman Republic and are evidence of a coherent body that, if pressed, could have a say in matters of the state.

The issue of whether Hortensia's speech was a deliberate demand for enfranchisement offers similarly few concrete answers. It is a fact that her father, Hortensius, wrote the best contemporary recount of the Social War, a rebellion on the part of Italian cities under Roman rule for their right to vote. In this, the idea of the daughter of the greatest historian of a voting rights movement being the woman most aware of the implications that her speech held is appealing. Considering the context of where she spoke, and the lack of vagueness in the reasoning she gave for rejecting the tax, it is clear that Hortensia would not have been satisfied with restricting her argument to a mere matter of personal finance.

Regardless of the details surrounding its delivery, Hortensia's message was clear. In some one-hundred words, she had articulated a stance that many historians of the American Revolution would later understand in only four: no taxation without representation. If women had no formal participation in the politics of their nation, then by what means were they required to contribute when it tears itself apart? In the context that the order of women *was* being taxed, there was no room for confusion on the part of the recipients of her speech. No such ideas of the relationship between the state and its women would be promulgated to an audience of such influence until the inception of the feminist movement of the nineteenth century.

---

[15] Bauman, Richard A., and Richard A. Bauman. "Hortensia and the Order Matronarum." Essay. In *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*. Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 1994.

Ovid, the Poet

While Hortensia's demonstration engaged the legal aspect of Roman Feminism, the poetry of Ovid brought gender equity out of the political and into the human realm. His *Ars Amatoria* catapulted the women of Rome into the intellectual debate on women's place in the social sphere. His writings would go against the conservative and women-targeting decrees of the government, and add an unseen dimension to the ongoing gender equity conversation that emerged from the Roman Republican spirit. Ovid's pragmatic works reflected upon a progressive era of Roman penmanship, and in that, he became a priority target for exile by the contemporaneous emperor Augustus.

The works of Ovid are, in a word, diverse. They range from Genesis-style creation myths[16] to his *Ars Amatoria*, a guide to love introduced by a rejection of godly knowledge and an insistence that all included tips on the art of love-making are borne from experience alone.[17]

> *Non ego, Phoebe, datas a te mihi mentiar artes,*
> *Nec nos aëriae voce monemur avis,*
> *Nec mihi sunt visae Clio Cliusque sorores*
> *Servanti pecudes vallibus, Ascra, tuis:*
> *Usus opus movet hoc: vati parete perito;*
>
> I boast no aid the Delphian god affords,
> Nor auspice from the flight of chattering birds,
> Nor Clio, nor her sisters, have I seen,
> As Hesiod saw them on the shady green:
> Experience makes my work a truth so tried

In the conservative era of Augustan Rome, many of Ovid's compositions were repudiated on moral grounds. On this basis, Ovid himself is one of the most censored authors in human history[18], with the

---

[16] bkm5145. "BHAVIK M CAMS E-PORTFOLIO." *Bhavik M CAMS EPortfolio*. Last modified October 2, 2015. Accessed August 6, 2021. https://sites.psu.edu/bkm5145cams045/2015/10/02/metamorphoses-vs-genesis/.
[17] Naso, Publius Ovidius. "Excerpt from the Erotic Poems." Translated by Peter Green. *Penguin Random House Canada*. Last modified 2004. Accessed August 6, 2021. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/261092/the-erotic-poems-by-ovid/9780140443608/excerpt.
[18] "History of Ovid's Banned Books from Antiquity to Present." *History of Ovid's Banned Books from Antiquity to Present | Ovid and the Censored Voice*. The Censored Voice, 2021. Last modified 2021. Accessed August 6, 2021. http://web.colby.edu/ovid-censorship/censorship/history-of-ovids-banned-books-from-antiquity-to-present/.

Ars Amatoria seeing various national suppressions from within the decade it was published (1 BCE) until the late 20th century.

Book III of the *Ars Amatoria* offers scholars of Rome a unique take on the status of women and the societal expectations put upon them during Ovid's time. More specifically, it contains valuable and forward-minded perceptions of the meaning and conduction of love. The *Ars Amatoria* advances modern notions on the state of sexual and colloquial culture in the society of the Early Roman Empire and provides keen insight into the world into which Emperor Augustus enacted his public morality legislation.

In the years between 25 BCE and AD 8, Ovid took it upon himself to gather the proper experience for a book on love-making, if unaware that he was conducting research at the time. Marrying three times and divorcing two, the author's sexual conduct and erotic writings eventually ran him afoul of the public morality-driven Augustus, who sanctioned his exile to the far-out city of Tomis, in modern-day Romania. While the specific reasons for his verdict are unclear, Ovid himself declared that he had been cast out based on *carmen et error* (a poem and an error).[19] The *carmen* is believed to have been the *Amatoria*, the error of an adulterous run-in with the emperor's daughter.

The *Ars Amatoria* consists of three books contingent on helping their readers in the sometimes-daunting task of picking up a lover. The first two books, dedicated to men, focus on surprisingly modern-relatable concepts for one's method of getting the girl. Sections such as "Aphrodisiacs", "Respect Her Freedom", and "Don't Forget Her Birthday!" sound straight out of an article from the *Cosmopolitan*, and demonstrate a level of humaneness in Roman society that often grows lost among the endless maps, battle dates, and abbreviated first names that much of Roman history is comprised of.

Book III of the *Amatoria*, segmented into parts as "Cover Your Defects", consists largely of advice to women relating to physical appearance than behavioral ones, as he prescribes for men. Within this third book, though, lie two sections that contain decidedly unique opinions on the nature of love – casting it as a matter of mutual gratification[20] over the Augustan *leges Juliae*, which promoted strict, patriarchal marriage with the intent of children throughout the Empire.

---

[19] A. D. F. Brown, "The unreality of Ovid's Tomitan exile", *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 10.2 (1985), pp. 18–22.
[20] Dutton, Jacqueline, The Rape of the Sabine Women, Ovid Ars Amatoria Book I: 101-134, master's dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 2005

These chapters, parts I and XVI, facilitate knowledge of the liberal minds of Roman society in an era of political conservatism.

Part I of Book III, titled "It's Time to Teach You Girls", illuminates Roman history in that it exhibits a popular social consciousness present at the time. During a period when the *Lex Julia de Maritandis Ordinibus* imposed a soft requirement that all Romans marry, any major social publication that rejected the reduction of women to mere marriable legal objects (through promoting and aiding their efforts for more casual relationships) was politically radical.

> *Dixerit e multis aliquis 'quid virus in angues*
> *Adicis, et rabidae tradis ovile lupae?'*
> *Parcite paucarum diffundere crimen in omnes;*
> *Spectetur meritis quaeque puella suis.*[Ibid]

> "But," some exclaim, "what phrensy rules your mind?
> Would you increase the craft of womankind?
> Teach them new wiles and arts? As well you may
> Instruct a snake to bite, or wolf to prey."
> But sure too hard a censure they pursue
> Who charge on all the failings of a few;
> Examine first impartially each fair,
> Then, as she merits, or condemn or spare.[Ibid]

Part I offers yet more contradiction with Augustus' morality laws, as seen in the *Lex Julia de Adulteriis Coercendis*, a collection of ordinances that, among other things, allowed fathers and husbands to kill their daughters and wives caught in infidelity. While addressing pimps and actors, the law is decidedly lacking in its specifications on the fate of most men caught cheating, reflecting the general conception of male virtue and female wickedness in adultery. Within the first lines of his third book, Ovid turns this conception on its head, stating that *men* are the primary adulterers of Roman society, yet receive a disproportionately small amount of the blame.

> *Saepe viri fallunt: tenerae non saepe puellae,*
> *Paucaque, si quaeras, crimina fraudis habent.*[ibid]

> Men often are false: not often tender girls
> Yet they have few, if you look, accusations of fraud.[Ibid]

Ovid's take on the fallibility of men reaches beyond the laws of the day, as evidenced in Part XVI of the *Ars Amatoria*, "Make Him Believe He's Loved", dedicated towards the masculine disposition of being foolishly quick to perceive infatuation.

Efficite (et facile est), ut nos credamus amari:
Prona venit cupidis in sua vota fides.
Spectet amabilius iuvenem, suspiret ab imo
Femina, tam sero cur veniatque roget:
Accedant lacrimae, dolor et de paelice fictus,
Et laniet digitis illius ora suis:
Iamdudum persuasus erit; miserebitur ultro,
Et dicet 'cura carpitur ista mei'.[Ibid]

[Women,] Perpetual fondness of your lover feign,
Nor will you find it hard belief to gain;
Full of himself, he your design will aid!
To what we wish 'tis easy to persuade.
With dying eyes his face and form survey,
Then sigh, and wonder he so long could stay;
Now, drop a tear your sorrows to assuage,
Anon, reproach him, and pretend to rage.
Such proofs as these will all distrust remove,
And make him pity your excessive love.
Scarce to himself will he forbear to cry,
"How can I let this poor, fond creature die?"[Ibid]

In giving female readers pointers on how they can manipulate their male counterparts, Ovid articulates a revolutionary social stance, compared to depictions of victorious masculinity, often in the face of feminine interference,[21] within works such as the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*. Such takes on the relationship between the sexes were criminally revolutionary for the time, and similar notions resurfaced only by the nineteenth century.

The people of Rome are not its Senate, nor its emperors, nor its generals. They lack the privilege of being the primary focus for the majority of Latin literature that has survived to the modern day. To say that the period of Augustus' reign was defined by emergent social conservatism of the *Leges Juliae* alone would be an anaemic take on the matter. Ovid refutes this notion time and again with the *Ars Amatoria*, from its popularity to its intention. In his exceptionally real work, Ovid has painted a picture for historians of the society of Romans beyond military camps and palace walls – of a people who look, evidently, like humanity today.

---

[21] Naso, Publius Ovidius. "Cornelius Tacitus, the Annals Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodribb, Ed." Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb. *Cornelius Tacitus, The Annals, BOOK III, Chapter 24*. Perseus Digital Library, n.d. Accessed August 6, 2021.
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D24.

Throughout Book III of his *Ars Amatoria* are passages dedicated towards the redefinition of love, rejecting the restrictive and sexually controlling society of Augustus for the attainment of common pleasure between man and woman. While subversive and feminist in its own right, the *Amatoria*'s widespread success and adoption by groups lobbying against the patriarchal laws of Augustus[22] are testaments to the progressive social and sexual landscape of the time; one that, after the triumph of Christianity, would not largely see light until the 20th century.

Conclusion

While no direct link between the feminists of Rome and those of Seneca Falls exists, Hortensia's oration on the relationship between the state and its women redefines the scope of the history for a "greater" feminist movement. Valerius Maximus accredits most of Hortensia's eloquence to her father, stating that she had merely "revived her father's elegance...Q.Hortensius then lived again in his female progeny and inspired her daughter's words."[Ibid] Yet it was not the male Hortenius who had breached all social and legal protocol by barging into a tribunal and condemning the edicts of the most powerful man in Rome. It was not Cicero who, while consuming Rome's paper supply for his anti-Antonian pamphlets, rebuffed the triumvirs. It was not Brutus, nor Cassius who, while hunted down by the armies of Marc Anthony and Augustus, vanquished the heirs of Caesar. It was Hortensia; she successfully carved out a place for women in the patriarchal Roman Republic, far before any other political feminist, and did what the giants of the era could not do solely through her power of argumentation.

Ovid advanced women's position in the social stage through defiance similar to that of Hortensia. His *Ars Amatoria* rejected the male supremacism advanced by Augustus' morality legislation and replaced it with an egalitarian vision of love as an act of mutual satisfaction, inspiring readers across the Mediterranean and speaking for dissent against the emperor's laws. Christianity would do its best to destroy Ovidian love, yet the ideas of the modern sexual revolution are eminently described in an era two-thousand years removed.

The introduction of the Republic into the political consciousness of the Ancient and Western Worlds necessarily raised the question of gender equality. It is no coincidence that at the same time that republics became the most widespread form of government in the revolutions of the nineteenth century, the feminist movement saw its ascendancy. The

---

[22] "Ars Amatoria." *Encyclopædia Britannica.* Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., n.d. Accessed November 15, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ars-amatoria.

Roman state between 100 BCE–100 AD, during the height of its Republicanism, underwent the universal consequence of attempting to manage an egalitarian state that denied specific citizens the political liberties enjoyed by their others. The underlying phenomenon that drove centuries of Roman Feminism, culminating in the productions of Hortensia and Ovid, is the same as the ones that sparked the Women's Suffrage Movement some two millennia later: the representative governance conversation is inexorably linked to the gender equality conversation; If the latter is lacking, then the former ceases to be a republic.

Bibliography

Abbott, Frank Frost. 1963. *Society and politics in ancient Rome: essays and sketches*. New York: Biblo and Tannen, p. 98.

A. D. F. Brown, "The unreality of Ovid's Tomitan exile", *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 10.2 (1985), pp. 18–22.

Appianus, and John M. Carter. "Books 32-33" in *The Civil Wars*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

"Ars Amatoria." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., n.d. Accessed November 15, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ars-amatoria.

Bauman, Richard A., and Richard A. Bauman. "Hortensia and the Order Matronarum." Essay. In *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*, 81–83. Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 1994.

Battle of Cannae." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., n.d. Accessed November 4, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Cannae.

Beard, Mary. 2017. *Women & Power. A Manifesto*. London: Profile Books, p. 44.

bkm5145. "BHAVIK M CAMS E-PORTFOLIO." *Bhavik M CAMS EPortfolio*. Last modified October 2, 2015. Accessed August 6, 2021. https://sites.psu.edu/bkm5145cams045/2015/10/02/metamorphoses-vs-genesis/.

Boissier, Gaston, and Adnah David Jones. 1898. *Cicero and his Friends; A Study of Roman Society in the Time of Caesar*. New York: Putnam, p. 8

Cartwright, Mark. "The Role of Women in the Roman World." *World History Encyclopedia*, World History Encyclopedia, 25 Jan. 2022, https://www.worldhistory.org/article/659/the-role-of-women-in-the-roman-world/.

Dutton, Jacqueline, The Rape of the Sabine Women, Ovid Ars Amatoria Book I: 101-134, master's dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 2005

"History of Ovid's Banned Books from Antiquity to Present." *History of Ovid's Banned Books from Antiquity to Present | Ovid and the Censored Voice*.

The Censored Voice, 2021. Last modified 2021. Accessed August 6, 2021. http://web.colby.edu/ovid-censorship/censorship/history-of-ovids-banned-books-from-antiquity-to-present/.

Lane Fox, Robin. 1987. *Pagans and Christians*. New York: Knopf, p. 464

Lefkowitz, Mary R., and Maureen B. Fant. 2005. *Women's life in Greece and Rome: a source book in translation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 104.

Livius, Titus. "Book 22." Essay. In *History of Rome*, translated by B. O. Foster, 5:396–396. Loeb ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020.

Maximus, Valerius. "Women Who Pleaded Before Magistrates for Themselves or Others." Essay. In *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, translated by Bailey D R Shackleton, 2:211–213. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Naso, Publius Ovidius. "Cornelius Tacitus, the Annals Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodribb, Ed." Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb. *Cornelius Tacitus, The Annals, BOOK III, Chapter 24*. Perseus Digital Library, n.d. Accessed August 6, 2021. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D24.

Naso, Publius Ovidius. "Excerpt from the Erotic Poems." Translated by Peter Green. *Penguin Random House Canada*. Last modified 2004. Accessed August 6, 2021. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/261092/the-erotic-poems-by-ovid/9780140443608/excerpt.

Naso, Publius Ovidius. "P. Ovidius Naso, Ars AMATORIA R. EHWALD, ED." *P. Ovidius Naso, Ars Amatoria, Liber Primus*. Perseus Digital Library, n.d. Accessed August 6, 2021. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0068%3Atext%3DArs.

Rawson, Beryl. 2003. *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10266573, p.80.

"Rome and Its Civil Wars." *UMass Amherst*. University of Massachusetts Amherst, n.d. Accessed November 15, 2021, https://www.umass.edu/civilwars/about.html.

Titus Livius, "Titus Livius (Livy), the History of Rome, Book 34 ." Translated by Evan T Sage, Titus Livius (Livy), The History of Rome, Book 34, chapter 4, Perseus Digital Library, Accessed October 27, 2021, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0164%3Abook%3