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Essays may include historically or socially harmful language directly relevant to the research questions; such language appears in quotation marks to indicate their contextual and historical roles.

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Letter from the Editors

This year's editorial duo are proud to present the 17th edition of CONTEXTS, Stanford's undergraduate research journal in anthropology. Every year, CONTEXTS presents a number of excellent student essays in the social sciences which speak to a variety of questions

Our authors for this year's publication focus upon the theme of connectivity. Our interpretation of connectivity refers to the dynamic and multidimensional ways in which people, objects and concepts interact across space and time, either in the real or imagined world. This could encompass socio-political, artistic, digital and / or philosophical relationships. Anthropological approaches to connectivity can examine infrastructures that either enable or constrain interactions, the flows of information and material goods, the forms of belonging, exclusion and agency that emerge from these networks. It is with this in mind that we'd like for our readers to pay attention to the intersections at which these pieces bring together the multi-faceted ways in which people, objects, time, and cultures interact.

The desire to connect is rooted in respect for others and an understanding of the (un)seen beauty in the world. Connections are core to the human experience. As bell hooks wrote, "When we choose to love, we choose to move against fear, against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect, to find ourselves in the other." Love is central to all of the pieces in this issue, whether it be a love for preserving the impact of memories, moments, or histories.

We are grateful to the authors that are featured in this edition for their attentiveness to the granularity of connectivity in our world today.

Warmly,
The Editorial Team
Mansa Ghildiyal | Via Ruby Lipman

A Modern Disease: Tracing Loneliness from Arendt to Anzaldúa

By Eylse Hwang

Abstract

This essay explores the enduring human condition of loneliness through a comparative analysis of Hannah Arendt's *Ideology and Terror* and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Arendt defines loneliness as the loss of companionship, leading to the erosion of self and the capacity for external experience, a condition intensified by modernity's destabilization of social structures. She contends that such loneliness fosters ideological thinking and totalitarianism by trapping individuals in isolated logic. Anzaldúa, writing from an intersectional feminist perspective, illustrates a parallel form of loneliness born from cultural hostility toward queer women of color and urban alienation. Applying Arendt's framework to Anzaldúa's work reveals how Arendt's loneliness manifests on a more personal and culturally distinct level, culminating in alienation and the inability to act. While Arendt gestures toward individuality as a potential remedy, Anzaldúa offers a more grounded resolution through reclaiming one's cultural roots and constructing a multifaceted identity. Together, their works illustrate how modern loneliness transcends time, ideology, and identity. However, the tension between individuality and companionship complicates their proposed solutions, leaving unresolved the liberal paradox of self-definition in an isolating world. Overall, Arendt's framework can clearly serve as an analytical foundation for exploring loneliness in the 20th century, as exemplified through an exploration of *Borderlands/La Frontera* under an Arendtian lens.

Man is a naturally social creature. We are hardwired to seek companionship from others, to find greater meaning from our place within society and define ourselves by the communities we belong to. Without our fellow man to anchor our sense of place and self, we lose a key component of our humanity. Despite this intense and instinctive desire for human connection, 20th century American society was deeply troubled by a growing sense of loneliness. By the 1920s, more than half of all Americans lived in urban environments, wrestling with the consequences of an increasingly industrialized and cosmopolitan way of life (US Census Bureau). This shift from the tight knit communities of

rural America to a sea of transient, anonymous faces in the big city gave way to a looming unease, a sense of being unmoored from others despite constantly being surrounded by people. While many modern intellectuals touch on this pervasive loss of community, Hannah Arendt develops a strong understanding of loneliness in her 1953 essay "Ideology and Terror" (Arendt 355-365). In this essay, Arendt establishes a framework for loneliness as understood through the loss of companionship, ultimately leading to a loss of self, external experience, and thought. Drawing on the nature of the modern world as a fertile ground for this loss of connection, Arendt explores how loneliness has enabled logic

and totalitarian governments to expand and ultimately leaves an open question, with vague references to the potential of the individual, as to how loneliness and its consequences will be resolved. While Arendt's work is a convincing portrayal of the causes and consequences of loneliness in the context of 20th century totalitarian governments, applying her framework to a selection from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Anzaldúa) gives credence to Arendt's understanding of the ubiquity of loneliness and its development and repercussions. Anzaldúa sees loneliness as cultivated through a culture antagonistic towards queer women and their individuality and the fear and isolation of the modern world, ultimately leading to alienation and the inability to act (Anzaldúa 500-504). Applying an Arendtian lens to Anzaldúa's work reveals unifying themes bridging the loneliness of a modern world reeling from totalitarianism and the loneliness of the intersectional, postmodern self. Even further, Anzaldúa provides a clearer response to Arendt's question on resolving loneliness, emphasizing connecting with one's origins and a radical embrace of individuality in the face of the demands of culture. Read together, Anzaldúa and Arendt build a robust understanding of liberalism's evolution from the Cold War to identity politics, discern the unresolved tensions of addressing loneliness with individuality, and reveal how resonant Arendt's understanding of loneliness is throughout the 20th century.

In "Ideology and Terror", Arendt comes to understand loneliness as a loss of companionship which ultimately culminates in a loss of self and connection with the external world. Arendt begins her discussion on loneliness by emphasizing its contrast with isolation. As Arendt describes, "what we call isolation in the political sphere, is called loneliness in the sphere of social intercourse" (362). She further explains how isolation occurs when one cannot bring together others to act in unity with him, while loneliness is

true "desert[ion] by all human companionship" (362). While closely related, the two concepts are uniquely distinct and do not necessarily imply each other. Loneliness is a loss of social connection in its entirety. While isolation does prevent man from working towards a tangible goal in conjunction with others, it does not eat into his personal and private life and still allows for shared relationships and ideas. Conversely, Arendt also notes how it is possible for one to "be lonely...without being isolated" (362). In such a case, one may find that he acts in conjunction with others but does not have a genuine social connection with his political companions.

To further clarify what loneliness means to Arendt, it is helpful to understand the process by which one becomes lonely. Central to Arendt's concept of loneliness is the loss of companionship. To Arendt, companionship anchors the self. As Arendt elaborates, "for the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely upon other people" (363). To Arendt, we define ourselves in contrast to and in the context of others. Without a sense of connection with others, we no longer have a sense of self. In distinguishing between the lonely and solitary man, Arendt emphasizes how the companionship of fellow man saves the solitary man "from duality and equivocality and doubt" (363), ensuring the solitary man retains his "identity" and can "speak with the single voice of one unexchangeable person" (363). Arendt's understanding of the solitary man unearths the contrasting figure of the lonely man, who is lost within his own thoughts. With no companion to confirm or deny his musings and provide a source of external validity, he is left with his self and his thoughts. However, returning to her understanding of self, Arendt reminds how the self can only be "confirmed...by the trusting and trustworthy company of [its] equals" (364), which the lonely man, by definition, is lacking in. As a result, even the self and thought are no longer confirmed and are open to being doubted as "man loses trust in himself as the partner of

his thoughts and the elementary confidence in the world which is necessary to make experiences" (364). To Arendt, true loneliness is the loss of self stemming from the fundamental abandonment of companionship. To lose companionship is to lose the only source of confirmation of identity and place within the external world, forcing the lonely man to become lost in his thoughts, unsure about who he is and whether any of his ideas, dreams, goals, and fears have any meaning or significance.

In ascertaining the causes of this loss of companionship, Arendt focuses on the uprooted, superfluous, and unstable nature of the modern world. Arendt notes how "the lonely man finds himself surrounded by others with whom he cannot establish contact or to whose hostility he is exposed" (363). This delineates two potential routes to loneliness: the inability to connect and hostility. The latter cause, hostility, is perhaps a classic and more timeless form of loneliness. It is generated when one is actively deprived of companionship and ostracized by society, forcing one to take refuge in his self which is ultimately lost in its own uncertainty and lack of external confirmation. While loneliness derived from inability to contact others is not entirely novel, Arendt argues that the modern world has exacerbated this form of loneliness such that a once rare experience "has become an everyday experience of the ever-growing masses" (364). Arendt pinpoints multiple aspects of the modern world which have fueled the exponential growth of this modern loneliness. Most central to Arendt's modern loneliness is the "uprootedness and superfluousness which have been the curse of modern masses" (362). Arendt defines uprootedness as having "no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others", while "to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all" (362). The connection between uprootedness and superfluous and loneliness can be quite clearly understood; when man is not given a place in society, he cannot connect

with others. Superfluousness deepens loneliness by removing any anchoring man may have in the material world, forcing him to become lost in his sense of self which ultimately crumbles without external validation. To Arendt, modernity promotes superfluousness and uprootedness through "the break-down of political institutions and social traditions" (362). New power structures have redefined man's relation to the world and society, creating a sense of instability that can easily deteriorate into a complete loss of connection with the world. Arendt later connects modern loneliness to "a world where nobody is reliable and nothing can be relied upon" (364), echoing this instability while also infusing a more hostile character to the form of loneliness she initially defines in opposition to hostility. Arendt further explains how the phenomenon of "destroying all space between men and pressing men against each other" (364) foments loneliness. This destruction of space can be interpreted as the modern phenomenon of living within an urban environment. This ultimately cultivates a physical sense of uprootedness – man has no place in the world and does not even have personal space for himself when he is living within a city.

With a strong understanding of Arendt's loneliness, one can analyze what Arendt sees as its consequences: a complete reliance on logic, which ultimately allows totalitarian governments based on ideology to take power. As Arendt reflects on loneliness, she concludes only "logical reasoning whose premise is the self evident" (364) is left when the mind is abandoned by "the self" and "the world" (364). Once one has become lost within his thoughts through the process of loneliness, the only coherent ideas he has rely on what is universally true and the logic inherent to human nature. However, Arendt also notes that man is naturally productive – "homo faber" (362) – which inclines him to begin to produce something from this logic and force "the self evident...to develop its own lines

of 'thought'" (364). Because the lonely man has no other reference point or being to confirm or deny his thoughts against and his line of thinking is seemingly self-evident, this cannot be escaped. Given that the lonely man's only option is to think, he thus "thinks everything to the worst" (364). This overbearing rule of logic is the basis for totalitarian thought, which Arendt terms "ideology" (360). Because ideology is identical to the logic man is left with in loneliness, the lonely man easily falls victim to totalitarianism.

Outside of aligning its ideological basis with the lonely man, totalitarianism further exploits modern loneliness by trapping the mind within its logic. The lonely man already has lost companionship, his sense of self, and his connection to the external world. All he has left is self-evident logic. As Arendt sharply concludes, "he will be utterly lost if ever he lets go of the first premise" (364). While Arendt acknowledges it is possible for the lonely man to become a solitary man and "transform...logic into thought" (364), thus breaking the spiral of ideology, this is not possible because the modern man under totalitarian rule is lonely. The only way for one to break out of his loneliness and the control of ideology is to find companionship. However, this is impossible given the superfluous and uprooted nature of the modern world and the fear, restrictions, and isolation totalitarian regimes instill.

Arendt paints a dark picture concerning the nature of modern loneliness and how it feeds into the seeming inevitability of totalitarian rule. However, she does offer a meager resolution to this terrible spiral within man's individuality. At the end of her essay, she emphasizes how "every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning... identical with man's freedom...guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man" (365). In this statement, Arendt embraces the power of individuality and recognizes the unique potential in every man. Her stance is a strong affirmation of liberalism, which Patrick Deneen

aptly characterizes as "conceiv[ing] humans as rights-bearing individuals who could fashion and pursue for themselves their own version of the good life" (1). Under the framework of liberalism, Arendt recognizes man's ability to choose. And while she may believe that most men under modern totalitarian rule will succumb to loneliness and ideology, she also has confidence in at least one man, with his unique will, resisting loneliness and clawing his society out of totalitarian rule.

Arendt creates a strong and detailed framework for examining the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to loneliness. While Arendt limits her application of her loneliness framework to totalitarian governments in "Ideology and Terror", her conception of loneliness as a loss of companionship, self, and connection to the external world; her understanding of the nature of the modern world exacerbating loneliness; and her belief in the potential of the individual in breaking the cycle of loneliness help create a foundation for understanding and extending the many iterations of loneliness that resonate amongst a diverse array of 20th century American intellectuals.

Gloria Anzaldúa and Hannah Arendt could not be more different. Writing nearly 40 years apart, Arendt is staunchly ingrained within traditional Cold War liberalism and anti-communism. "Ideology and Terror" is highly analytical and is distinctly rooted in political theory, attempting to generalize specific processes. In contrast, Anzaldúa is an intersectional feminist from an era in which liberalism has turned towards identity politics. An anti-foundationalist, *Borderlands/La Frontera* is rooted in Anzaldúa's personal narrative and incorporates cultural complexities and experiences specific to her female, Chicana, and lesbian identity. Despite the stark disparities between Anzaldúa and Arendt, both latch onto the common thread of loneliness within their pieces, illustrating a greater theme

looming over the latter half of the 20th century. Many of the concepts within Arendt's loneliness framework translate into Anzaldúa's writing, revealing how Arendt has struck a nerve with a deeper throughline of the modern human condition. Even further, reading Anzaldúa through Arendt provides a larger theoretical and universal grounding for her personal experiences.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa asserts that the loneliness and alienation felt by the queer woman of color stems from her culture as well as the fear and isolation of the modern world. Arendt's understanding of companionship, hostility, and modern loneliness are clearly reflected in Anzaldúa's portrayal of the roots of loneliness. Despite Anzaldúa's strong connection with certain aspects of her culture, she simultaneously finds herself antagonized by many of its traditions and norms. Anzaldúa reflects on how "the individual exists first as kin – as sister, as father, as padrino – and last as self" (40) within her culture. This concept of community above all ultimately leads to "no tolerance for deviance" (40) against societal norms. In Anzaldúa's case, this is in the form of queerness (40). With deviants ultimately being "condemned by the community" (40) it is clear how the loneliness of the queer woman of color results from these cultural norms. Arendt's understanding of loneliness as the loss of sense of self further illuminates Anzaldúa's loneliness. As Arendt describes, when man loses companionship he also "loses trust in himself as the partner of his thoughts... self and world...are lost" (364). Arendt also notes how hostility is one of two ways in which man becomes lonely (363). Anzaldúa's culture's prioritization of community above all and devaluation of the self to the point of expressing hostility to deviant individuals generates loneliness in the same framework that Arendt proposes. Ironically, by placing community first, Anzaldúa's culture denies companionship for those who do not align with the values of the community. This loss of true companionship leads to a loss of

sense of self, which is further promoted through the denigration of the deviant self and is a key step in the path to loneliness.

Fear and isolation also create loneliness for Anzaldúa's queer woman of color. Part of this fear comes from culture. As Anzaldúa writes in reference to lesbians of color, "We're afraid of being abandoned by the mother culture" (42). Anzaldúa further reflects on the plight of the woman of color, noting how she "does not feel safe when her own culture, and white culture are critical of her; when the males of all races hunt her as prey" (42). This is once again reflective of Arendt's understanding of hostility as a key cause of loneliness. The hostility of one's culture towards her identity makes her feel unwelcome and unable to find companionship, leading to loneliness. Anzaldúa also finds this fear and isolation coming from the nature of the modern world, describing how "we shiver in separate cells in enclosed cities...barely keeping the panic below the surface of the skin...fearing the torches being set to our buildings" (42). The movement away from community to the isolation induced by living in an urban environment is a core cause of Anzaldúa's loneliness. The underlying sense of not truly mattering to anybody and not having enough space in the world (as understood through the connotations of "separate cells" and "enclosed cities") is key to Arendt's ideas of uprootedness and superfluousness as exacerbated by modernity and urbanization causing loneliness (362). Anzaldúa's description of "shiver[ing] in separate cells in enclosed cities" further depicts a cold modern world, void of connection despite being packed with people. There is a sense of existential fear within her understanding of urbanization, one in which, as Arendt would describe, "nobody is reliable and nothing can be relied upon" (364). This results in an unsettling sense of anxiety and fear of all those around you. In a modern world defined by separation, it is impossible to know how others perceive you and thus the possibility of being

turned on lingers around every corner.

In addition to aptly capturing and extending Anzaldúa's understanding of the causes of loneliness, the alienation and inability to act Anzaldúa sees as consequences of this lack of companionship can be further clarified through an Arendtian lens. One of the key repercussions of loneliness Anzaldúa meditates on is "Alienation from her mother culture [and] the dominant culture," making "the woman of color...not feel safe within the inner life of her Self" (42). Alienation does not simply describe external relations between a person and society. For Anzaldúa, it extends into one's personal sense of being and self, distorting the only place where one can take refuge after they have been abandoned by those around them. As Arendt elaborates, once one loses companionship they no longer have an anchor for the self and become lost in their own "duality and equivocality and doubt" (363). Everything except logic depends on having a strong sense of self and externality (364), and hence one becomes truly lonely in this state of loss. Loneliness is thus destructive to Anzaldúa's "inner life of her Self", as it takes away any sense of structure or understanding derived from interacting with the outside world and even the self can no longer be defined once companionship – which Arendt sees as central to "confirm[ing] identity" (364) – is lost. With no true stability, the lonely, alienated woman has no safety.

In addition to the loss of self derived from alienation, Anzaldúa also explores how loneliness obstructs one's ability to act. Anzaldúa specifically makes note of how the queer woman of color becomes "petrified...she can't respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits" (42). This overwhelming fear stems from both the loss of self and "culture tak[ing] away our ability to act" (42). With no refuge in her self, she has no basis on which to mount a response.

This is clarified through Arendt's understanding of loneliness as taking away one's "capacity for...experience" (364) through annihilating the self. Understanding Anzaldúa through this framework, it is clear how the lack of self disconnects one from the external world, ultimately stifling any potential action that could be made. Culture further removes one's potential for action by creating the hostile environment (363) which Arendt sees as a fertile ground for loneliness. With this inability to act, Anzaldúa proposes two choices for the alienated woman: "to feel a victim where someone else is in control and therefore responsible to blame" or "to feel strong, and for the most part, in control" (43). Her latter option provides a resolution for loneliness rather than examining its consequences. However, Anzaldúa's understanding of the victim mindset is fruitful ground for analysis under Arendt's framework. In the context of her piece, this "someone else...in control" and thus to blame is understood as culture (43), or the greater structures and norms of her society. Loneliness leaves a void open for misguidance and erasure of agency – while the victim may superficially reclaim control through revealing guilt, they lose an aspect of their agency when they usurp their own sense of control by allowing a larger social structure to dictate their life. In Arendt's case, she sees totalitarianism as filling the void of loneliness. As Arendt elaborates, totalitarianism provides the premise for the logic one is left with when he is lonely, and "he will be utterly lost if ever he lets go of the first premise" (364). Totalitarianism, just like culture, provides a foundation for the lonely to fall back on. However, this foundation ultimately robs the individual of their agency. These larger societal structures mould the individual's mind to their larger purpose, forcing the individual to surrender their power to society.

Though much of Anzaldúa's loneliness can be understood through an Arendtian lens, Anzaldúa offers a more robust solution to the issue

than Arendt focusing on maintaining one's roots while embracing individuality. Despite lamenting its treatment of deviants like herself, Anzaldúa is clearly inspired by her Chicana identity and culture. *Borderlands/La Frontera* is interspersed with Spanish, from the title of the piece to her understanding of exclusion in "las otras" (41) to Anzaldúa's proposal of "la mestiza" (44) as an answer to the loneliness and alienation her culture creates. She even acknowledges how, while she "abhor[s] some of [her] culture's ways", she will "defend [her] race and culture when they are attacked by non-mexicanos" (43). This complexity can be interpreted as a way of resolving loneliness and its consequences. As Anzaldúa recounts, "I was...the only one in my family to ever leave home. But I didn't leave all parts of me: I kept the ground of my own being...the Valley, Texas" (38). Hints of Arendt's conception of the self can be found in Anzaldúa's reference to "all parts of me". Anzaldúa recognizes the necessity of some foundation for identity, expanding Arendt's notion of "the confirmation of...identity... depend[ing] entirely upon other people" (363) in the direction of respecting and valuing one's origins. By maintaining one's origins, the self is no longer lost and can connect with the external world, preventing a crucial point in which loneliness destroys identity and agency. Anzaldúa continues to emphasize how "I did not lose touch with my origins because lo mexicano is in my system. I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back" (43). She once again uplifts her roots as key in preventing loss. Read through an Arendtian lens, Anzaldúa finds companionship for the lonely soul through culture. Of course, it is not all parts of her culture given Anzaldúa's critique of the role of culture in alienation. However, for Anzaldúa, it is important to at least connect with some aspects of the society, ideas, and norms one was born into. This is hinted at in Arendt's understanding of "the break-down of...social traditions" (362) causing the plight of modern loneliness, indicating how Anzaldúa and Arendt converge on the

larger idea of needing some sort of foundation within tradition and origins to address the issue. While Arendt only notes the loss of tradition as a cause of loneliness, Anzaldúa attempts to mend the root of loneliness by addressing one of its core causes.

Much like Arendt, Anzaldúa advocates for a strong sense of individuality to ameliorate loneliness and its consequences. As an alternative to victimizing oneself and blaming culture for one's alienation, Anzaldúa proposes "feel[ing] strong, and...in control" (43). Rather than diffusing one's control and sense of self to society, Anzaldúa embraces the power of the individual to take action within their life and confirm their sense of self, thus warding off loneliness. This radical individuality is best exemplified in her final proposition of *la mestiza*:

So don't give me your tenets and your laws. Don't give me your lukewarm gods. What I want is an accounting with all three cultures – white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – una cultura mestiza – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture (504).

Anzaldúa embraces her potential as an individual to craft the life and world she would like. *La mestiza* is the pinnacle of the intersectional woman in defiance of the expectations and norms of her culture. She does not fall prey to loneliness and losing her sense of self to both the hostility of culture and a rejection of her roots. Rather, by taking the parts of her culture she values and infusing them with the other spaces she identifies with she reclaims her identity, individuality, and agency. Despite being a progressive statement steeped in the identity politics of the 1980s, Arendt's vague

resolution can be seen as an early forerunner of this radical embrace of individuality. As Arendt understands, “beginning is identical with man’s freedom...guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man” (365). Arendt recognizes the potential of each individual and believes that every human can create a new beginning, in reference to overthrowing totalitarian governments. If totalitarianism can be considered analogous to Anzaldúa’s understanding of culture in cultivating loneliness, then it is clear that what Anzaldúa is describing is not so different from Arendt’s belief in each individual containing some innate power to shape the world and redefine culture.

In response to the overwhelming loneliness of the 20th century, both Arendt and Anzaldúa strongly embrace the individual and their ability to design a world of their own creation in a heavily liberal manner. In the end, it is up to the person as a singular force to either accept the dominant societal and power structures which foment their disconnection from others or choose to rebel and reclaim the agency and self they have lost to loneliness. While Anzaldúa is often associated with anti-foundationalism and intersectional feminism, her ideas have clearly been molded by liberalism and reflect on the search for foundations that have defined the past century. With the basis of liberalism being the “rights-bearing individuals who could fashion and pursue for themselves their own version of the good life” (1), it becomes apparent how Anzaldúa’s intersectional feminism has grown out of this understanding of human nature. While Anzaldúa focuses more on identity and culture, she nevertheless comes to the same conclusion as Arendt and countless other liberal thinkers: one has the agency to determine their life and ought to do so. It is from this foundation, alongside the cultural underpinnings of *la mestiza*, that Anzaldúa’s anti-foundationalism can perhaps be better understood as a sort of multi-foundationalism which acknowledges the complexity, uniqueness, and sanctity of the hu-

man experience.

Comparing Anzaldúa and Arendt also uncovers a larger tension between a seemingly omnipresent loneliness and the individuality proposed to resolve it. In embracing one’s unique self, one must, to some extent, disregard the sentiments of those around them. However, doing so can cause further alienation. After all, how can one find their identity in, as Arendt describes, “the company of my equals” (364) when the individuality that allows them to resist loneliness precludes them from having any equals in the first place? While Anzaldúa’s understanding of loneliness and its resolution has less to do with direct companionship, using Anzaldúa’s individuality as an elaboration on Arendt’s clearly shows how in creating a culture and life of their own, the person who is genuinely true to themselves must choose to disregard some aspects of societal culture and embark on their path through life without others having shared a similar experience. This paradox of individuality as a response to modern loneliness advocated by liberalism and its successors is addressed but not fully resolved within Arendt or Anzaldúa’s pieces.

While Arendt’s framework can be used to dissect Anzaldúa’s understanding of loneliness within *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa writes from a uniquely personal perspective rooted in her Chicana identity, creating a distinct depiction of the causes, consequences, and resolution of loneliness. As Anzaldúa describes, “alienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self” (20). For Anzaldúa, one of the core causes of loneliness is the double alienation the Chicana faces. Anzaldúa continues to expand on how this double alienation ultimately degrades the self and thus cultivates loneliness, examining how “In the Gringo world, the Chicano suffers from excessive humility and self effacement... breed[ing] a false machismo which leads him

to put down women and even to brutalize them” (83). Anzaldúa clearly demonstrates how both colonial and patriarchal structures intermingle to foment new forms of oppression and loss of self, ultimately promoting alienation. While totalitarianism can be viewed as the culture associated with Arendt’s loneliness, the antagonization of the Chicana from two separate societal forces that augment each other provides Anzaldúa with a nuanced understanding of loneliness specific to the culture she writes from.

Overall, in “Ideology and Terror”, Arendt creates a foundational framework for loneliness as understood through losing companionship, self, and external experience. Arendt indicates modernity as a fertile ground for loneliness, allowing unchained logic and totalitarian regimes to take over. Understanding Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* through Arendt offers insight into how loneliness has percolated through the modern and postmodern American consciousness. Arendt’s framework seamlessly integrates into Anzaldúa’s depiction of a hostile culture and modern world cultivating loneliness, ultimately alienating the individual from her sense of self and agency. While Arendt notes the potential for freedom in each man as a resolution to loneliness, Anzaldúa expands on this deeply liberal embrace of individuality through an intersectional and multi-foundational lens by emphasizing the importance of maintaining one’s many roots and identities while still building a world of one’s own creation. With such disparate intellectuals both lamenting the loneliness and displacement modernity has inculcated within man, it is clear that across eras, cultures, and perspectives loneliness has become a rampant affliction. While individuality may be a temporary salve, it is an unstable resolution whose contradictions are not fully addressed by Arendt or Anzaldúa. Regardless, Arendt’s foundation for loneliness ties together the diffuse anxiety undercutting many 20th century intellectuals, providing companionship for understanding loneliness in Anzaldúa’s work and beyond.

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“Hair-itage”: How Body Hair Practices Enforce a Gender Dichotomy

Ernesto Orellana

Abstract

For a large part of my life, I was told that as a man I am not allowed to remove my body hair. Never questioning the rules enforced on me, I did as I was told but never wondered why I was told such rules. In this sartorial autobiography, I finally explore some reasons why my family and community keep the “hairy man, hairless woman” tradition alive, how they react when a person challenges this dichotomy, and under what circumstances it is permissible for someone to distort the established dichotomy on body hair and gender. I provide a personal account and share specific memories from my upbringing, introduce certain topics from anthropology, analyze research on sartorial practices relating to body hair, and finally make connections between my lived experience and the published literature.

Vignette

I recall several instances throughout my life when I had to confront new hair growing all over my body. As a pubescent teenager, I remember noticing new hair growing on my body; completely unforeseen to me. Prior to this, I had never closely fixated on men’s hairy bodies. I was perplexed by this changing body. So much so that it made me uncomfortable. I engaged in many conversations with my father and mother about this hair. Hair on my legs and armpits, and even hair growing on my knuckles and wrists. Fast-forward several years, I asked my sister if she could wax my immature, messy facial hair for my high school graduation. I viewed this unkempt facial hair as atrocious. This provoked a conversation among the women in my family and they reached a consensus: I was not supposed to wax. One aunt remarked that she found it very attractive when men had a full beard with dimples. Another said that she really liked it when men had a chest full of hair.

My daily dress consists of trying to conceal as much of this body hair as possible. Until I gain the independence and autonomy to remove this body hair, I must dress to cover. Several years ago, when my family was on vacation at an aquatic theme park, I was too scared to take my shirt off because I would have to reveal my hairy armpits. I was forced to take my shirt off because the park employee said I could not go down the water slide with a shirt on for my safety. My persistence with covering up body hair is so intense that I excuse this practice as a form of ‘modesty’.

I am disgusted by any sort of hair that is associated with a changing body. That is, I am completely comfortable with the hair on my head, eyebrows, and eyelashes, for example, because these have been with me since birth. Where does this discomfort towards a pubescent body come from, and why do I admire my previously youthful appearance? Perhaps I was too accustomed to being on the feminine/youthful end of the spectrum and did not want to move over to the masculine/mature end when the time came. For a while, my body hair was discomforting because I was obsessed, and continue to be obsessed, with looking youthful. Gareth Terry and Virginia Braun (2016) say, “... the wider presentation of youthful, relatively hairless bodies in media has simply made ‘minor’ body modification such as back hair removal more acceptable to men concerned with arresting some of the visible effects of a changing body.” It could be that the American media I was exposed to pushes for an ideal male body that contradicts what my community enforced on me and is something difficult to achieve by the average American. Nonetheless, I don’t want to focus so much on my own perceptions of male body hair but rather on my community’s feelings toward these perceptions.

All this hair that had not been with me since early childhood or even birth represents a change in my body and identity that I am still not accustomed to. I argue that my community trained me to live in a gender binary and on a daily basis regulates each person’s strict adherence to these rules. These rules dictate who can or can’t remove their own body hair, when exceptions can be made, and how to react when someone does not follow these rules.

Background

In this essay, I connect my lived experience as a second-generation American of Latino descent, raised by predominantly Mexican and Central American cultures in South Central Los Angeles at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I explore concepts such as sexual dimorphism, agency, and sexual attractions concerning male body hair and attempt to connect the literature and studies to my own upbringing.

The cultural enclave that raised me struggles to understand the anthropological/sociological interpretations of gender and sexuality that are commonplace in American culture. This is especially the case for those first-generation Americans who immigrated to the United States and raised their families here. As a result, older generations strictly uphold the gender dichotomy and maintain the cultural sexual dimorphism. From my experience, the gendered practice of body hair removal is as common in Latin American cultures as it is in the Anglophone countries discussed hereafter such as the United States of America and New Zealand. As a practice that enforces sexual dimorphism in Latin American households, body hair removal is restricted to women.

Setting the Stage

The concept of sexual dimorphism is observed in several cultures around the world. It is originally a term used in biology to describe species with salient, contrasting features between the male and female. J. Michael Plavcan (2001) explains this concept in detail:

... the term “sexual dimorphism” is usually reserved for secondary sex differences, particularly if they are thought to arise from sexual selection (Crook, 1972). However, the term is sometimes used with reference to any sexual difference, including genetic and biochemical differences. For example, platyrrhine monkeys have sexually dimorphic alleles for color vision (Jacobs, 1994)

Scientists use this term to explain physiological differences between the male and female of a species. But, what does sexual dimorphism look like in humans? The difference in the amount of body hair between a man and a woman can be a sexual dimorphism but this metric is unreliable because the amount of body hair can vary around the world. As Alok V. Menon (2019) writes, “[P]eople of all genders have body hair. [T] here are women with lots of it and men with none of it.” That is, women from a certain part of the world may have more body hair than men from another part of the world.

In addition to this biological interpretation, sexual dimorphism also has a cultural interpretation. Andrea Cornwall (2012) describes it as such:

Dimorphic bodies are fashioned through interventions that exaggerate or minimize bodily characteristics, with the potential to achieve transitions or transits from one gender to another, or to produce a range of gendered possibilities within the scope offered by being and becoming a “man” or a “woman” in different cultural and subcultural contexts.

We humans practice dimorphism as a cultural phenomenon. In other words, although we have a naturally physical validation of sex differences, we employ the regular practice, or lack thereof, to magnify or erase these signs to push us towards one end of the gender dichotomy or the other. Cornwall adds, “In many cultures, and especially in the West, dimorphism is so deeply embedded in everyday life that any departures from normative gender expressions can be met with mockery, discrimination and violence.” This is exactly how I and other males in my surroundings experienced reactions to the practice or consideration of body hair removal. Elena Frank (2014) would consider the practice of body hair removal for the purpose of maintaining the dichotomy as “a process—something that is accomplished or achieved...” She uses this term to refer to masculinity, but we can extrapolate it to practices that enforce the gender binary. Therefore, masculinity, a cultural trait assigned to males, is something that needs to be constantly nurtured and not something that we are born with. This concept is remarkably similar to Jennifer Koester’s (2015) concept of gender as a performance by Indian women in Rajasthan; women are expected to wear traditional Indian attire and stray away from Western dress under the guise of ‘modesty’. In actuality, they wear saris and other forms of female Indian dress to affirm, or perform, their femininity. Koester argues, “... in North India, women’s embodied gender performances, if performed incorrectly through immodest (and especially Western) sartorial practices, can invite a range of punishments...”

Literature Review

Not much research has been done into the reception of male body hair removal practices in Western cultures. Breanne Fahs conducted a study on female students in a women’s studies college class. In this study, the volunteers had to let their body hair grow for ten weeks and report back the reactions or comments they received from family members and others. Heterosexual, lesbian, and bisexual women reported that this experiment prompted family members and others around them to question their sexuality in the case of heterosexual women and to question their gender identity in the case of one bisexual participant. In that sense, body hair serves to enforce heterosexuality or normative gender identity on women; by periodically removing her body hair, a woman is reminded of what her community and others want her to fulfill. Females with partners also had to grapple with the idea of being sexually attractive for their partners and in that sense considered that their bodies belonged to their (male) partners. Fahs (2011) also points out the contradiction when families are both restrictive of a woman’s sexuality or promiscuity but are also actively involved in making the

same woman sexually attractive for males. One of the student participants reports on her mother's reaction to the study:

She said to me, "If you do this assignment, I'm having nothing to do with you until it's over." She says I am "turning into a man." She also tells me that I have man's legs now. I said that my legs are just the same as they were before and that I'm just more of a "natural woman," but she disagrees and just says that they're more like my brother.

I must highlight the mother's comment about her daughter looking like her brother. This idea of a woman becoming her brother or male counterpart in the nuclear family underscores the understanding that body hair removal practices in a woman push her across the male-female division.

Breanne Fahs (2013) also extended this optional experiment to her male students. In this case, male students were asked "...to shave their underarm, leg, and pubic hair for the duration of the semester." When these students reflected on their experiences, they explored themes such as emasculation/masculinizing the practice of body hair removal, agency, and homophobia. Regarding agency, their identity was only questioned if they were doing it for a reason. If they told someone they removed their hair simply because they chose to do so, then they would face reactions such as the one described below:

Regulation by parents also occurred for Aaron, whose conservative Latino parents and brother associated shaving with homosexuality: "My parents treated me like it was this big problem, a sign of not being a Man. My brother teased me about it, called me a pussy and a fag. I can't believe how much they seem to care about it even though I told them I was only doing it for extra credit," (Fahs, 2013)

However, when the student had the capacity to displace the decision to remove body hair onto someone else, they did not feel that the experience diminished their masculinity or questioned their sexuality. One student reflected on this by saying to Fahs, "As long as I could blame it on you, I enjoyed it. I would never do this otherwise but halfway through I started wondering why I kept repeating that it was for a class assignment to people who asked me about it. Why couldn't I just say that I did it because I felt like it? I'm a man. I don't need a reason." (Fahs, 572).

The theme I would like to explore here is how the students manipulated agency. During the experiment, they learned that gender as a social construction dictated their body hair practices. Similarly, I realized that although I identify as a male, choosing to remove my body hair makes others think that I am confused about my identity or actively shifting my identity which causes anxiety.

Gareth Terry and Virginia Braun (2016) analyzed survey responses from New Zealanders aged between 18 and 35 on the topic of body hair practices by men. They interviewed men and women with several sexual orientations. They find that the survey responses explore three key themes. Two of these themes contradict each other while the third one provides a vague explanation for this contradiction. The first theme addresses hair on male bodies as being completely natural. The second theme, in contrast, argues that hair on male bodies is repulsive as explained by evolutionary vs. cultural history, i.e., body hair on men and women is a residue of our human past. Some of these participants believe both men and women must remove body hair. What can we make of this contradiction, and what conclusions can be drawn regarding the expectations and desires toward male body hair in New Zealand? I must highlight that the authors mention similar shifts in practices in Australia and the US. Perhaps the third theme can provide a conclusion: male body hair is acceptable, to some degree, but must be controlled to avoid excess.

I sense that if I gave my family a valid explanation for removing my body hair, they would let it slide. As Fahs says, "With the exception of male athletes (e.g., swimmers and runners who shave for aerodynamic reasons)... the norm of men growing their body hair and letting their hair remain 'natural' persists in the U.S." (2013). The male students in her class managed the anxiety in their surroundings by explaining that their sartorial decisions were for a university course. Whether for academics or athleticism, it is socially acceptable for a man to remove his body hair if it is somehow beneficial.

Discussion

Will my family ever come to terms with my morphed body? It will require much effort for them to accept my preferences if they go against our culture's appreciation for male body hair. As a person assigned male at birth, choosing to shave or depilate challenges the sexual dimorphism established by my community. This practice introduces confusion into the mix because, for many in my community, it is difficult to conceive how I continue to identify as a male since choosing to have a hairless body communicates that I want to be on the other side of the gender binary. However, if I am removing this hair for a plausible reason, all concerns are dismissed with a wave of the hand (but a few raised eyebrows).

Although my family has not encouraged me to make myself "sexually presentable" to the degree that women are trained to shave or wax for potential male partners, I have been made aware of what is expected of a man's physical appearance when he is courting a woman. These regulations on male body hair are so finely detailed to the point that expectations shift as a man grows through different stages of life from toddler to pubescent teenager, and finally to husband. This also demonstrates the heteronormativity so deeply embedded in the Latino community. For example, male body

hair practices are dictated by what a woman deems attractive, not by what another man does. The same applies to women's body hair practices.

My upbringing shaped the constraints I encounter when considering body hair removal and I am still learning to deal with these contradictions. I understand that my sartorial practices only define my identity if I allow it. Others may think that I am questioning my gender identity or sexual orientation because of how I choose to present my body. But, what I truly wish to interrogate is the connectivity between humans and the hair dichotomy that allows gendered practices to shape the agency over our bodies.

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Enlightenment Against Empire: Korean Women's Education by Christian Missionaries During the Japanese Colonial Period, (1910-1945)

Claudia Sung

Abstract

This paper explores women's education in Korea leading up to and during the Japanese colonial period from 1910 to 1945. Within the scope of formal classroom education, there was a range of educators despite an overall lack of educational opportunities, including state-run schools, grassroots night schools, and missionary schools. My research focuses on the role of women's education performed by Christian missionaries through organizations such as the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association), focusing on Seoul and other urban regions where education was more prominent. In their pursuit of extending Christianity into Korea, missionaries reshaped societal roles, forging new pathways and opportunities for native women to empower themselves along the way. As the Korean political landscape shifted, traditional society was no longer the sole barrier to the expansion of Christianity. Japanese colonialism emerged as another force standing in missionaries' way, who found themselves serving as a form of resistance in their quest to convert. However, at the core of this conflict was the desire to assimilate the Korean people into a larger cultural ideology — a goal shared by both the Japanese colonial government and Christian missionaries. Taking a chronological approach, this paper examines how both the Japanese government and Christian missionary organizations reacted to the state of women's education in the Late Joseon and colonial period.

Introduction

“It is not lands or houses or material things that make a nation. It is PEOPLE that count. The Korean people are not Chinese and not Japanese... They have a distinct contribution to make to the world and The Chosen Christian College constitutes an important part of the machinery that is to help them do it.”

- Chosen Christian College pamphlet, ca.
(1924-1930)

At the turn of the twentieth century, Korea began its process of annexation to Japan and was no longer subordinate to the Chinese government. Alongside the political forces seeking to incorporate Koreans into a larger cultural identity, women’s education burgeoned as a new phenomenon within Korean society—one entangled with the role of Western Christian missionaries. Through a chronological account, this paper examines how both the Japanese government and Christian missionary organizations reacted to the state of women’s education in the Late Joseon and colonial period.

Throughout the Late Joseon, missionaries reshaped societal roles in their pursuit of extending Christianity into Korea, forging new pathways and opportunities for native women to empower themselves along the way. As the Korean political landscape shifted, traditional society was no longer the sole barrier to the expansion of Christianity. Japanese colonialism emerged as another force standing in the way of missionaries, who found themselves serving as a form of resistance in their quest to convert. However, at the core of this conflict was a goal shared by both the Japanese colonial government and Christian missionaries—the desire to assimilate the Korean people into their respective ideologies.

This paper paints a picture of women’s education throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a push and pull between Japanese and Western Christian forces, focusing on the role of women’s education performed by Christian missionaries through organizations such as the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). Missionary education was not a selfless offering. It came with as many contradictions and tensions as state-run education, which historians should be eager to explore due to its continued influence and stronghold in Korea a century later.

Pre-Colonial Period (1868-1910)

Japanese Officials

Before one can address the issue of women’s education within colonial Korea, it is essential to examine the roots of women’s education within Japan. At the start of the Meiji Revolution (1868 – 1889), traditionally seen as the start of Japan’s imperial endeavors as they sought to recreate Western empires, the redesign of domestic women’s education was a top priority. Describing this phenomenon, historian Sabine Frühstück observes, “In 1876, statesman Mori Arinori (1847–1889) lamented how ‘[throughout] Asia, women are looked down on.’ Striving to counter this reality, he... suggested that girls’ education was even more important than that of boys, because young women would have to take over a household as soon as they got married, after which they would be the ‘natural teachers’ of their future children. In short, education was to make them ‘good wives [and] wise mothers’ (ryōsai kenbo)” (Frühstück 2022, 72). The design of women’s education throughout the Meiji continued to enforce this concept of “good wife, wise mother” ideology.

This emphasis on women’s education and its role in the home was paired with the expansion of the home as part of the public sphere. Women would be the domestic teachers of future citizens and the wives of current ones. The education of women became one of the greatest concerns of empire-building, since they would be the caretakers of men,

who would serve the nation through military service. The home took on a national significance alongside a personal one.

Women's education also played an important role as a motivator for Meiji era expansion into Korea. As Japanese officials sought to recreate Western forms of colonialism within their own imperial project, they repeated the reasoning of "Western observers of Japan... [who] concluded early on that the treatment accorded women was a measure of the level of civilization of a given society" (Nolle and Hastings 1991, 153). Japan used the treatment of Korean women, especially the state's failure to ensure proper education of women, as a public reason for its expansion efforts. Thus, the Japanese empire repurposed the same language tying the failures of women's education to a lack of civilization, which had been used against them in previous decades, against Korea. Historian Theodore Jun Yoo argues, "Japan openly derided Korea's ill-fated attempts to modernize through public education... It was the Japanese view that without the assistance of Japan, Korea would struggle to establish a public education system for both sexes" (Yoo 2008, 44). Comparisons with Westernized countries, a group within which Japan sought to carve a place for itself, were a way to advocate for modernizing Korea through colonial endeavors using the righteous goal of ushering in a new era for women's rights. One 1896 author wrote, "Europe [was] the pioneer of modern civilization... a fountainhead of reasoning power and human knowledge. Behold the woman of a civilized nation. She enjoys equal rights with man. She studies all branches of learning in schools... Nay, she is honored because she is not inferior to her husband in education and accomplishment" (Yoo 2008, 44). By emphasizing a view of the Korean people as being less advanced, the Japanese government justified its conquests.

Christian Missionary Organizations

Concurrently with Japanese discourse over Korean education, the Late Joseon (1592-1910) gave way to immense changes in the state of women. Traditional Confucian ideals of Korean women during this period were tightly tied to the public-private divide of Confucianism. Activities outside of the home were strictly regulated, as the male domain was out of the house and the female domain was inside. Women were immensely bound to their husbands and could not remarry upon their death (Kim and Kim 2014, 79).

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, literacy for women was limited to the gentry class of yangban educated in traditional texts. Catholic texts from China read by the Korean literati spurred a rise in Christianity among the elite, as these scholars would self-study the texts before bringing them back to their communities (Cho 2010, 67).

Christianity in Korea grew as international mission groups began their work throughout the late nineteenth century. Protestant groups focused more on social aspects of conversion, while Catholic groups focused more on spiritual aspects. Protestants built many schools and hospitals while Catholics focused more on growing their institution; thus, Protestantism became linked to community aspects such as education, with many modern schools claiming Christian foundations (Grayson 2017, 15). While the origins of Christianity in Korea were the scholarly, imported Chinese texts read by the elite, Protestants used their knowledge and work in the social sphere of Korea to appeal to the less educated classes as well. Missionaries would prepare printed, trans-

lated work for commoners. These texts would also be geared towards those practicing native religions, incorporating and relating aspects of both Western and Eastern cultural traditions. Works have been found comparing Jesus Christ to Chinese sages and using Buddhist terms to explain Christianity (Oak 2006, 78).

However, due to the gendered boundaries of Confucianism, in which women primarily operated in the private, domestic realm while men were in the public sphere, Christian missionaries rarely educated rural women themselves in the early stages of Christian missionary work in Korea. Missionary organizations instead sponsored “Bible women,” who were native female converts who worked closely with missionary organizations. This practice used native women to infiltrate the existing public-private divide of Confucianism, as foreign missionaries could not enter homes to meet women in the private sphere as fellow Korean women could.

Typically, these Bible women already existed outside of the Confucian confines of Korean society, being widows, unmarried adult women, or cast-off wives who were not tied to the public-private divide through marriage (Kim and Kim 2014, 77). Upon successful conversion, these “Bible women” were employed by foreign missionaries to distribute Bibles and other Christian literature to women within their own homes and communities, in the hopes that they would persuade their husbands to establish churches within their communities (Cha 2022, 56-75).

Missionaries were keen to advertise their efforts. Many stories centering on the lives of native women spread the message of this Christian education as empowerment. Notably, these tales were often narrated by missionary educators as opposed to the converted Christian women themselves, despite the fact that these women became literate through the efforts of missionary education.

Daniel Gifford was a Presbyterian missionary who proselytized in Korea for 8 years. As a result of his time in the East, he produced the book *Every-Day Life in Korea*, providing insight into the lives and culture of the Korean people he sought to convert. One chapter entitled “What the Gospel Did for One Man” contains the story of one such convert known as “Mr. Chay.” Lingering in the background of this story is the story of his wife.

While Mr. Chay’s wife remains unnamed throughout the chapter, she first appears as one of the natives encouraging her husband to return to pagan Korean beliefs. Gifford states, “One day she would bless Mr. Han and me, and call us her best friends, because of the great reform in her husband; the next day she would break out into the most bitter cursing, declaring that we had no business to come there and prevent her husband from offering sacrifice to the evil spirits and to his ancestors.” This missionary portrayal of Korean natives shows them suffering before the arrival of Christianity. Chay’s wife is portrayed as a victim at the hands of her husband and the greater pagan society. However, as the chapter progresses and Mr. Chay himself converts, his wife gains more freedom. Gifford writes, “His wife, having lost all her desire to worship the evil spirits and continue the ancestral sacrifices, formed one of the first groups of women to be received into the church after Mrs. Lee joined the station.” Once Chay and his wife temporarily relocate to a mountain village, she is no longer shown as a victim of Chay’s actions. In her new life, she leads women as part of the Christian faith. Without taking part in the initial conversion herself or being allowed to question her husband’s sudden change, Chay’s wife eventually accepts her own conversion. Never even granting Chay’s wife a baptismal name, Gifford unintentionally demonstrates the restricted ways in which female converts were expected to behave (Gifford 1898). Despite new freedoms gained under missionary education, missionaries such as Gifford saw native Korean women as conduits for changing the perspectives of their communities while simultaneously as wives who would eventually follow the will of their husbands.

In this way, early Christian missionary groups prior to the colonial period focused on women's education as a method to create mass conversion within Korea. While their efforts in training small groups of native women to expand women's educational efforts were successful, they worked by operating within the existing confines of Confucianism—both the deep-rooted religious traditions and the limited opportunities offered to women.

However, these efforts also created new roles and opportunities for Korean women in society. In the Late Joseon, women's recorded names were only references to their relations with male family members. The practice of baptism gave women the opportunity to hold official names. Furthermore, the efforts of both foreign missionaries and native Bible Women allowed more Korean women to become literate and therefore engage with written literature (Chou 1995, 29-45). Hyaeweol Choi writes on how Christianity "offered women new symbolic resources with which to look at the world and themselves, helping them to affirm their sense of worth and dignity" (Choi 2009, 154).

Missionaries went on to create schools within Korea at elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels. The cultural shifts that these Christian groups initiated led to changes in educational efforts from native Koreans as well. By the late 1890s, pushes for reform led the Yi government to create several Western-style schools, including vocational and medical schools. These had a place alongside Korean-run private schools focused on academic subjects from the Western tradition. This movement, deemed "education for the nation," would soon become a target of Japanese colonial officials (Tsurumi 1984, 295).

The Japanese Colonial Period (1910-1945)

Japanese Officials

During the Japanese colonial period in Korea, many of the private schools that had been established during the Late Joseon period were shut down out of fear that they would harbor anti-Japanese sentiment. Upon inspection, the Japanese government found that these schools contained many slogans harboring nationalist sentiment, such as supporting independence for Korea (Tsurumi 1984, 295). Many of these schools were also absorbed by the state and repurposed into public education run by the Japanese colonial administration.

One of the key focuses of Japanese colonial ideology was the racial assimilation of its subjects. The Japanese empire still operated under a racial hierarchy, in which Koreans were seen as part of the Japanese lineage but simultaneously distinct due to their lack of modernization—frozen in time. Only through assimilation policies would they be able to become full-fledged Japanese citizens (Henry 2014, 4). This racial differentiation was solidified through policies and unofficial rules put in place by the colonial governments, such as limited access to higher education for those of Korean descent, which prevented Koreans from achieving the same social status as Japanese citizens, regardless of their efforts (Chosun Ilbo 1937).

The similarities between state-run classroom education and its Japanese roots were essential to these policies. For instance, women were tasked with learning and speaking the newly constructed Japanese language (which had previously been fragmented and differentiated across regions), helping to incorporate it into Korean homes (Tai 1999, 518). In her discussion of colonial education in Taiwan, historian Eika Tai discusses the concept of “Kokugo” being established as a standard language of Japan due to the perception of English being a unifying factor that allowed for Western colonization. Takeshi and Mangan observe, “The ‘Japanese language’ did not exist at that time... there was a huge gap between the literary language and the colloquial language. It was not until the turn of the century that official efforts to create a standardized written language began... If the dominance of the Japanese language was established... ambitious [colonial subjects] would have to learn it in order to get good jobs... in this way, the political socialization of [colonial subjects] would be successfully achieved” (Takeshi and Mangan 1997, 315). Thus, “Kokugo” education was intended to politically socialize colonial subjects into a newly created Japanese identity.

Within Korea, the same logic that had been applied domestically in Japan worked its way into women’s education. Tai discusses how women played a role in “disseminating Kokugo into family life.” In crafting a “Kokugo home,” it was important for family members to speak Kokugo and receive education on how to serve as mothers in colonial families. There was also a large focus on domesticity in Korean ordinary school education. In his analysis of Korean women’s civic education textbooks, Mark Caprio notes how the texts centered “‘lifestyle reforms’ that women be ‘enlightened (kyōka) in the doctrine of ‘good wife, wise mother’ (ryōsai kenbo), and specifically advised that they be ‘domesticated’ (junchi) from their

outside activities to allow them to devote their energy to raising their children and caring for home-related matters... Women’s first mission to the state and society [was] in the home—house-keeping and child upbringing” (Caprio 2009, 154). The state that these Korean women upheld would be the newly Japanese society.

These policies for Korean women being educated under the colonial government echoed those placed on Japanese women throughout the Meiji Restoration of the late nineteenth century. This redesigned education focused on “good wife, wise mother” ideology, which had been used as a justification for colonizing Korea, was now being imported into Korea as promised, alongside several other assimilation policies that sought to racially incorporate ethnic Koreans into the Japanese hierarchy.

Christian Missionary Organizations

Despite the barrage of changes applied towards the newly developing Korean education system, the Japanese government did not do much against Western missionary schools as a result of treaty privileges and fear of provoking Western governments, which allowed them to continue serving as a dominant form of women’s education. The limited ratio of available public school seats to school-age Korean students also made missionary schools a popular option for education, an issue exacerbated by the arrival of ethnically Japanese students, who were given priority spots in public schools (Neuhas 2023, 625).

The influence of missionaries on women was noted throughout society, as evidenced by opinions shared within the pub-

lic sphere. The Chosun Ilbo, one of the two main Korean-owned newspapers operating during the height of the colonial period, often shared information about the work of missionary educators despite repeated suspension by the colonial government. In 1937, the Chosun Ilbo covered the anniversary of Ewha Girls' High School (which shared roots with but was separated from the eponymous university in 1918) and discussed its roots in the American Protestant missionary tradition. They wrote, "This occasion is truly worth celebrating, not just to honor Ewha Girls' High School, but because it symbolizes the foundation of women's education in Korea, which laid the groundwork for further development and progress" (Chosun Ilbo 1937). Even in 1937, after 27 years of Japanese educational efforts, missionaries were still considered to be the root of women's education from which later colonial efforts had to expand upon—not simply a subgroup or alternative form.

The missionary-written narratives of the Late Joseon also persisted into the colonial period. Edna Van Fleet, a faculty member of the missionary-established Ewha College, highlighted the success of Ewha Haktang with the story of Mrs. Ha Poksun Ye, an Ewha graduate. Van Fleet wrote, "While in college, Poksun's family had engaged her to be married to an older man and an unbeliever (non-Christian)," demonstrating how Korean women were still bound to family influences. However, Poksun, who was in school to become a teacher herself, fell in love with a young man named Mr. Ye while teaching at Sunday School. Secretly, Poksun arranged to marry Mr. Ye, and "The same day she graduated from college—and just the day before she

was to have married the other man—she was married in the church on the college campus" (Van Fleet 1932). Through this story, Van Fleet tied the influence of Ewha's Christian ideals to every step of Poksun's deviation away from stringent Korean social and familial norms. Similar to the Joseon tradition of Bible Women, the story focuses on the expansion of Christianity through native efforts, as Samuel, the child of this Korean Christian pair, "[was] at the head of his class in the Government school, where [he influenced] his classmates to live Christian lives."

However, Poksun's story also highlights how the victimhood of Korean women took a new form. Van Fleet wrote, "Poksun's happiness was short lived. This was the year of the independence movement in Korea. Her husband was thrown into prison for helping to print the independence newspaper" (Van Fleet 1932, 519). Alongside the forces of Confucianism and Korean tradition, Japanese colonialism began to emerge as another force harming the lives of Korean women within Christian tales, allowing Christian missionary groups to take on the dimension of resistance.

There was a critical link between women's education throughout the colonial period and anti-colonial resistance. Christian missionary schools proved to be an essential form of maintaining Korean national identity, as pro-independence Korean educators of women often turned to Japanese ideology to avoid having their already fledgling schools shut down (Hahn and Jeon 2021, 586). Within the larger conversation on colonial education, Christian education stood as an opposing force to Japanese enforcement. The role that female education played in Christian missionary efforts bolstered its strength, which became clear in the events of the March 1st Movement—mass protests that occurred throughout Korea in opposition to Japanese colonial rule. As written by historian Patricia Tsurumi, "historically appearing in significant numbers in the public arena for the first time, female students could be seen demonstrating side by side with male students" (Tsurumi 1984, 302). Christian missionary education of women has thus been regarded as a significant factor in female involvement in revolutionary movements. This becomes especially apparent when viewed with Japanese colonies such as Taiwan, where revolution on this scale against colonial officials never occurred.

As Japanese officials sought to counter anti-colonial forces within Korea and further assimilate Koreans into Japanese society, missionary organizations working towards women's education thus became key targets. In 1938, colonial officials required the cutting of contacts with international groups, putting missionary organizations working toward women's education at a standstill. Officials stated that women's education was not an issue due to its Christian nature, but because it was a force opposing Korean assimilation into Japanese culture. As stated in a letter on behalf of Helen Kim, then Vice President of Ewha College, to the American Young Women's Christian Association, "The Japanese are doing everything possible to develop the Japanese National spirit in the Koreans. They were calling together representative Christians from all missions... saying they are not so much opposed to Christianity but it must be Japanised" (Young to Lyon 1938).

Missionary organizations took on a nationalist attitude in response to Japanese encroachment on their role in women's education. When discussing the value of educating Koreans, missionary organizations highlighted aspects of Korean culture that were unique enough to demonstrate the merit of its retention against Japanese cultural assimilation; simultaneously, these cultural traditions were often stripped of historical context and made inoffensive to avoid constituting idolatry.

Organizations made statements celebrating historical achievements within architecture, porcelain, and written language (Hangul). While emphasizing these good parts of the country with nationalistic sentiment, they simultaneously highlighted harmful influences upon the Korean people in

order to communicate the necessity of Christianity. The downfall of Korean society into an "uncivilized society" was characterized as the result of various harmful forces on the native people, including colonialism and idol worship. In order to turn into a worthy, civilized nation, Korea would then need to fend off these forces and return to its core, civilized state. The missionary-founded Chosen Christian College wrote, "The Koreans lost... much of their civilization because of years of oppression, unjust government, and idolatry. But forty years of missionary effort... have revived their mental powers, spiritual capacities, and industrial ambitions" (Chōsen Christian College ca. 1924–1930).

If Christian organizations postured themselves as the force that would bend Korea back to civilization, youth education was to be its weapon. One Christian author wrote about Korean children as a "raw material out of which Christianity is to help make a worthy nation." The nationalist vision created by missionaries was not only an independent Korea but a Christian one, a narrative that was deliberately woven into Korean historical education. Key to this superficial celebration of Korean history was opposition to Japanese forces. Promotional materials for colleges run by Christian missionaries highlighted examples of unique technological advancements throughout Korean history. One notecard asked, "Who first made an ironclad boat for fighting purposes?... The Koreans, having become desperate at the successes of the Japanese invaders under Hideyoshi, suddenly launched a turtle-shaped boat... [which] enabled them to defeat the Japanese Navy" (Chōsen Christian College ca. 1924–1930). These tales advertised aspects of Korean culture while simultaneously stripping Koreans of agency within their historical narrative. Rather than serving as truly anti-colonial, these stories postured Christianity as the solution to both previous traditional structures and the new forces of oppression within the Japanese colonial structure. In this way, Christian organizations deemphasized the role of native Koreans as colonial subjects working to create a new future for their own people. Instead, they would be the building blocks with which missionaries created a worthy Christian nation.

Missionary Education as Assimilation

While assimilation has been a term typically applied to the attempted racial incorporation of ethnic Koreans into the Japanese empire, it is also an apt framework to analyze the aims and strategies of Christian missionary organizations. Missionary education for women signaled a different form of assimilation for Korean women from the cultural erasure of the Japanese government. Rather, it sought to assimilate Korean Christian women into a larger transnational Christian identity parallel to the missions in other countries around the world.

Missionaries were successful in advancing Christian women's education as a cultural assimilation force within society. Discourse around Ewha and other early women's education efforts repeatedly emphasized the importance of missionaries as an early foundation that would expand in cultural significance in the distant future. This rhetoric of expansion through women's education was as blatant as Japanese ideology regarding the need to increase Japanization. One play written and produced by the Ewha College and Kindergarten Training School opens with the sentence, "The first fifty years of the Christian education of women in Korea is thought of as a river—beginning in a tiny spring into which brooks and streams flow to make a mighty river" (The Ewha College and Kindergarten Training School 1936). The role that education played in anti-colonial revolution was not necessarily intentionally anti-Japanese assimilation. Instead, it focused on the rapid growth of a different cultural ideology—Christianity. This included a focus on celebrating the foundational role of Christian women's education, an idea that gained a stronghold throughout Korean society.

Ewha educator Helen Kim stated that "a strong and conscious effort needs to be made toward the realization of the Christian mission of our institution. How to develop the real Christian spirit in the very hearts of all our girls so that their lives of service will tell that they have been to the Christian Ewha—this is our real task... Now, with all the secular and hostile forces around them, they cannot be expected to become Christians without convincing arguments and constant inspiration" (Kim 1938). Leaders within Christian education understood the role of Christian education as one of the many forces pulling at Korean women at the time, and Christian educators too required tactics in order to diverge from "secular and hostile forces" such as Japanese official ideology, modernization, and traditional values. The expansion of Christianity thus relied on fostering a Christian spirit in opposition to these secular forces. Along with this came a need to make Christianity a stronger, more convincing force, which institutions such as Ewha did with their own assimilation tactics.

One of these tactics was rhetoric surrounding the intrinsic worth of ethnic Koreans. Japanese colonial assimilation has been noted for its creation of a pan-Asian racial identity with Japanese identity placed at the top of its hierarchy, which ethnic Koreans could advance into through cultural assimilation regardless of nationality (Ziomek 2019, 44). Meanwhile, Christian rhetoric around Korean nationalism focused on the fundamental worth of Koreans, aiming to create a civilized Christian nation from their people. Similar to Japanese ideology, missionaries advocated for Koreans to advance into a greater transnational identity—another form of assimilation, albeit religious instead of cultural.

Both Japanese officials and Christian missionary parties sought to create their empires through women's education, especially education around motherhood and domesticity. While the "good wife, wise mother" ideology has been a tenet of considering Japanese assimilation tactics regarding women, Christian educators also held a strong focus on domesticity as a form of inculcating an ideological nation. Hyaewol Choi argues, "Just as converting women to Christianity was crucial for the proliferation of Christian communities because 'no nation can become Christian without Christian mothers,' so fostering Christian women to become future leaders was imperative to ensure that present and future Christian women were under good guidance" (Choi 2009, 148).

Motherhood was essential to the structure of Christian expansion. Promotional materials for Ewha included a photo of a couple holding their newborn child, captioned, "One of the many babies who are glad their mothers went to Ewha College. One of the many fathers who are proud to be known as Ewha sons-in-law. One of the many Ewha mothers who are making safe and happy homes" (Kim 1938, 55). Christian missionary organizations repeatedly tied the importance of Christianity to institutions of motherhood and the home. Similarly to how missionaries utilized existing traditional societal structures of women in the pre-colonial period to spread their ideology through Bible women, they later played on the domestic gender roles present within colonial Korean society to advocate for Christianity. Just as colonial officials used domestic education to foster the mothers of a Japanese society, missionaries used it to create a Christian one.

Similarly to how Japanese officials replicated educational structures from the Meiji within Korea, missionary groups such as the YWCA used Western assimilation strategies in their outreach efforts. Descriptions from America's National World War I Museum and Memorial detail YWCA efforts "to Americanize immigrant girls and women, who in turn could teach their families American patriotic values and American customs – particularly girls who grew up in the U.S. and could bridge the culture gap for their mothers and other family members... The institutes provided courses on sewing, cooking and music, all taught through a white American lens" (National WWI Museum and Memorial 2025). Historian Zornitsa Keremidchieva argues that "The YWCA's approach was notably different from the approach of other agencies because it recognised that immigrant communities could not be accessed without reaching out to women... Inserting women into the national narrative would also put them at the centre of the project of rebuilding democratic societies after the war" (Keremidchieva 2016, 283). In the post-WWI era, centering female education efforts through domesticity had been an important method for the YWCA to create a stronger American identity amid the forces of war and immigration. Thus, Christian missionary organizations extended assimilation tactics that they applied domestically to Korea, just as Japanese colonial education was an extension of domestic programs, both to create a stronger national identity.

Conclusion

Christian missionary education of women itself has had an undeniable impact in shaping modern Korea. Protestantism is the most popular religion in Korea despite its historically recent entry into the country within the late nineteenth century (Choi 2020, 279). Meanwhile, 42.7% of Koreans have a negative view of Japan (East Asia Institute 2024). Christianity's lasting presence and Japan's failure to racially restructure demonstrate that, ultimately, assimilation into Christianity was a more successful and enduring phenomenon, contingent on many methods, including the education of Korean women.

Japanese assimilation tactics portrayed Korean racial inferiority while providing state-sponsored education as a pathway for eventual racial assimilation or "Japanization." Missionary rhetoric praised the internal worth of Koreans while simultaneously implying that their true destiny as a nation was in conversion to Christianity and victimizing them through narrating their history. However, while Japanese education often deprioritized or limited the advancement of Korean women, Christian educational organizations allowed for women to play key pivotal roles in creating their own futures; women such as Helen Kim were at the forefront of Christian women's colleges such as Ewha despite their missionary roots. Both groups hoped to assimilate women into their ideologies, but the contradictions within Japanese ideology outweighed those within Christian rhetoric. By intertwining their educational goals with forging new roles for Korean women in society, from the cast-off wives of the Late Joseon to school-aged women in the colonial period, Christian organizations invested their assimilation efforts toward groups that were neglected by the top-down structure of the Japanese colonial government. Christian assimilation did not come from the government, but rather, the transnational force of Christianity. However, it proved to be just as strong a force – one that has infiltrated Korean society to reshape the role of women.

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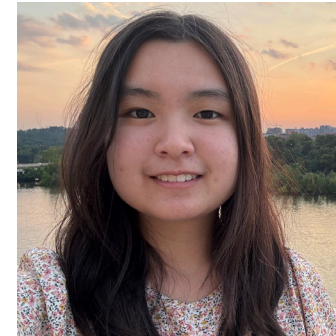
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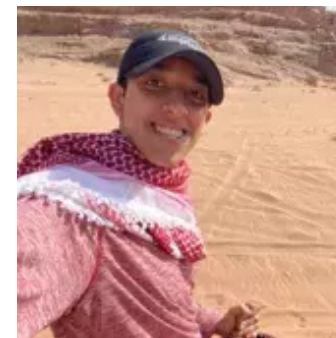
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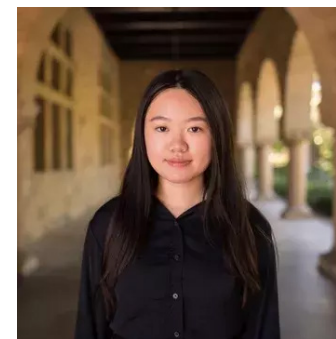
Meet the Authors



Elyse Hwang is a sophomore majoring in History and Biology. She's interested in understanding how the world works and why it works -- from the molecular pathways that regulate life to the ideas that influence how we interact with others and the world. When she finds the time, she loves writing poetry and journaling, exploring the Bay Area, and listening to music.



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CONTEXTS

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