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Merlin: The Medieval Embodiment of Overcoming the Devil

Merlin, child of a demon and pious woman, first appears in late twelfth century literature and develops uncanny prophetic abilities and unnatural powers rooted in his supernatural heritage, transforming him into a mysterious figure empowered by knowledge and cloaked in dichotomies resulting from his mixed parentage. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a mid-thirteenth century Iberian collection of exemplum honoring Holy Mary reportedly composed by Alfonso X of Castile, emphasize Merlin's complex nature relating how Merlin – referenced as “Satan's son” – retaliated against a Jew who insulted Holy Mary by appealing to God to cause the Jew's child to be born with a backwards head. In *Cantiga* 108, Merlin is dually associated with Satan and God while defending Christian faith by contorting nature highlighting his multifaceted and contrasting characteristics and abilities.¹ In *Metamorphosis and Identity*, Caroline Walker Bynum argues that identity was one aspect of medievals' fascination with change.² She suggests that particularly by the turn of the thirteenth century, people began focusing on identities and change as represented by hybrids –paradoxical mixtures – or as metamorphosis. According to Bynum, hybrids and metamorphosis reveal the true nature of something.³ Thus, Merlin is hybrid human-demon – a paradoxical mixture – who demonstrates that human nature's intrinsic good and evil facets constantly conflict. Consequently, he symbolizes the everyday struggle people experience in overcoming moral challenges presented by demons.

Historian James Charles Wall explains that the Church used the story of Lucifer and the rebel angels' fall from heaven to teach people the importance of recognizing Jesus as Christ by equating those who did not actively believe with outright deniers.⁴ Medievals thus employed demons to impart moral and religious lessons: Merlin is an example. Twelfth and thirteenth century authors depicted Merlin as a hybrid human-demon who overcame his demonic half to demonstrate that defeating demonic temptations was possible. In twelfth-and-thirteenth century romances, Merlin imparted a moral lesson by epitomizing how humans could defeat challenges presented by demons. Though this was not Merlin's sole purpose in any work, his portrayal as a human-demon hybrid – physically and characteristically – carries these undertones.

Merlin's birth and conception are critical narrative moments in establishing Merlin as a hybrid human-demon. French romance writer Robert de Boron, writing in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries for an aristocratic audience relates the story of Merlin's birth and conception in *Merlin*, the second book in his Holy Grail trilogy. He describes how God angered the demons when he freed Adam and Eve from their grasp in hell, leading them to conclude that prophets preaching repentance are the source of their woes. Consequently, the demons devise a plan to

¹ Kathleen Kulp-Hill, trans., *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise* (Tempe, AZ., 2000), p. 135.

² Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York, 2001), p. 18.

³ *Ibid.* 21-30.

⁴ James Charles Walls, *Devils* (Detroit, 1968), p. 38.

create a prophet who will “converse with the people on Earth and help [demons] greatly to deceive men and women alike, just as the prophets worked against [demons] when [demons] had them here.”⁵ In contrast to most prophets, who work to strengthen belief in God and religious practice, the demons made Merlin as an aid to help induce sin.⁶ Robert explicitly states that “the demons plotted to conceive a man who would work to deceive others.”⁷ Merlin’s conception was the result of this plan.

According to Robert, the demon assigned to conceive a demonic prophet labored deviously for years, deceiving and tormenting a family in pursuit of one of its pious, virginal daughters. Eventually, the daughter’s devotion lapses for a night after “her heart was filled with the deepest anger,” so “the demon, knowing anger had erased all else, was overjoyed that she had forgotten the good man’s lesson [her confessor], and said ‘Now I can do whatever I want with her! She’s outside her teacher’s protection and her Lord’s grace. Now we can put our man in her!’”⁸ Because of her momentary lapse in religious practice, the girl fell into the demon’s grasp. Merlin’s challenge then, is not only to overcome his heritage, but also to rectify his mother’s mistake, which empowered the demon. This also firmly establishes demons as challengers to Christian faith in Merlin stories, which is significant given Merlin’s role in the larger quest for the Holy Grail – a religious object. Merlin’s choice to pursue good, not evil, is critical because his diabolical parentage offered him the opportunity to be the ultimate challenger to Christian faith, but he rejects that path, instead pursuing religious service.

While the girl was sleeping, the demon “came to her chamber, lay with her, and conceived.”⁹ Awaking, the girl realizes she is no longer a virgin and cries out to God “keep [me] from peril and protect my soul from the Enemy.”¹⁰ Thus, Merlin’s parents – the demon and pious virgin – represent extreme examples of good and evil. Merlin’s lineage establishes him as a hybrid human-demon forced to reconcile competing parental influences. Robert describes the turmoil surrounding Merlin following his birth:

And when he was born, he had the power and intelligence of the Devil – he was bound to, being conceived by him. But the Enemy had made a foolish mistake, for Our Lord redeemed by His death all who truly repent, and the Enemy had worked upon the child’s mother through sheer trickery while she slept, and as soon as she was aware of the deception she had begged for forgiveness and submitted to the mercy and commandment of Holy Church and of God, and had obeyed all her confessor’s instruction. God had no wish to deprive the Devil of what was rightfully his, and since the Devil wanted the child to inherit his power to know all things said and done in the past, he did indeed acquire that knowledge; but, in view of the mother’s penitence and true confession and repentant heart, and of her unwillingness in the fatal deed, and of the power of her cleansing baptism in the font, Our Lord, who knows all things, did not wish to punish the child for his mother’s sin, but gave him the power to know the future. And so it was that the child inherited knowledge of things past from the Enemy, and, in addition, knowledge of things to come was bequeathed to him by God. It was up to him which way he inclined.¹¹

⁵ Nigel Bryant, trans., *Merlin*. (Cambridge: 2001), p. 46.

⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 45-46.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.* pg. 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Braynt, *Merlin*, pg. 54-55.

Merlin would have to choose whether to follow his father's demonic path, or his mother's righteous model, framing him as a moral example. Dyan Elliott relates how demons' intellectual capabilities deprive them of free will, which sharply contrasts with Merlin's God given ability to choose between good and evil highlighting Merlin's dichotomous nature.¹² According to Robert, Merlin's nature was demonic, but his mother nurtured him religiously demonstrating how Merlin's hybrid human-demon status results in a debate on nature versus. By stating that God gave Merlin free will enabling him to overcome his demonic nature, Robert made Merlin relatable to people experiencing internal religious conflicts and encouraged them to continue striving for piety by highlighting how Merlin's mother's religious devotion nurtured Merlin and corrected his nature.

Further, Robert's description of Merlin's conception draws parallels between Merlin's and Jesus's births. Merlin's mother describes how she was impregnated without knowingly having had intercourse, similar to – but not exactly like – Mary's Immaculate Conception which allowed Mary to be born free of sin, consequently enabling her to give birth to Jesus. Merlin mirrors Jesus, whose father was also a spiritual being – God – and functions as a fictional counter weight to Jesus, because both resulted from the union of spiritual creatures and humans. Jeffrey Burton Russell supports this analysis by explaining that in later medieval thought, “Mary [became] Satan's most vigorous opponent.”¹³ Thus, as a demon's and pious woman's son, Merlin embodied medieval fears of demons challenging religious life and success. Unlike Jesus, whose divine heritage predisposed him to good, Merlin's demon father should have impeded Merlin's ability to act piously. Helmut Hundsbichler further elaborates on the oppositional link between Jesus and Merlin, positing, “we may define the devil as a symbol of anything ill and evil in explicit contrast to and in explicit conflict with the good principle, which is represented by the Lord and his salvific and charitable ideas.”¹⁴ Merlin thus played a part in the demons' larger goal to challenge God by creating a demonic parallel explicitly contrasting Jesus. Essentially, Merlin develops as a potential Antichrist – the ultimate challenger to Christianity and God. As a result, Merlin becomes the paradigm of repentance and returning to God by later associating himself with the Divine while renouncing relations with demons.

In *The True History of Merlin the Magician*, Anne Mathers traces Merlin's historical development from the twelfth century – using *History of the Kings of Britain* – through the seventeenth century, looking at *Faerie Queene*, *Proof of Arthur*, and *Historia Anglica* challenging the idea that Merlin derived his powers from his demonic heritage. She posits that Merlin's capabilities stemmed from his connection to God instead. Mathers asserts that Merlin was “at the cutting edge between what was acceptable and what was to be condemned.”¹⁵ However, she ultimately concludes that Merlin's magic was devoid of the most diabolical traits such as demonic knowledge, rituals, talismans, or pagan sacrifices, despite obvious demonic connections.¹⁶ Even though she recognizes Merlin's heritage, Mathers fails to account for how characters surrounding Merlin – and even Merlin himself – understand his demon father's

¹² Dyan Elliot, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 134-135.

¹³ Jeffery Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1984), pg. 161.

¹⁴ Helmut Hundsbichler, “Devils in Visual Proximity,” In *Angels, Devils – The Supernatural and its Visual Representation*, ed. by Gerhard Jaritz (Budapest, 2011), p. 55.

¹⁵ Anne Lawrence-Mathers, *The True History of Merlin the Magician* (New Haven, 2012), pg. 119-120.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 157.

influence as a power source. She downplays his demonic characteristics to argue that his power was natural – connected to the environment and reminiscent of natural philosophy – not black.¹⁷ However, her examples of Merlin’s connection to nature only strengthen the argument for his hybridity.

To understand fully how Merlin functioned as a human-demon hybrid, medieval demonic conceptions should be examined. Medievals grounded their understanding of demons in the Christian version of the story of how Lucifer – a former angel who became Satan – led a group of angels in rebellion against God. After failing, they suffered eternal punishment as fallen angels. Saint Thomas Aquinas, an early thirteenth-century Dominican theologian, elaborates explaining that Lucifer and the rebel angels sinned by aspiring to be like God by seeking to function independently of God’s grace. As fallen angels, they could never regain the status and privilege they enjoyed as angels in God’s heavenly host; instead, they suffer perpetually in Hell’s flames.¹⁸

Caesarius of Heisterbach, a German monk writing contemporaneously with many Arthurian authors, elaborates on demons’ behavior in *The Dialogue of Miracles* – a work that recorded contemporary miracles. In his stories, he portrays demons as schemers working to lure humans to sin. Common motifs that emerge in his work are the connections between demons nature, horror, intellectual capabilities, and death. Caesarius begins Book V, which deals exclusively with demons, by stating that “Demons are called tempters, because they are either the authors or provokers of all the temptations that draw men to sin.”¹⁹ Thus, he establishes demons as “the first to ally [themselves] with wicked men” concretizing the connection between demons, evil, and sin.²⁰ Russell expounds on this arguing, “the Devil is perceived as the personification of real evil” and active inflictor of pain and suffering in medieval thought.²¹

According to medieval scholars, devils primarily utilize deceit to tempt humans to sin. A common theme in Caesarius’s work is demonic deception through the assumption of an alternate form. In Chapter IV, demons appear as soldiers and dancing girls, embodying the connection between femininity, evil, and temptation. In this episode, the demons trick a scholar and bring him to Hell; after his return, “the face of him thus brought back was so haggard, and so ghastly pale with a fixed and deathlike pallor, that he seemed only now to have returned from the tomb.”²² Caesarius links demons to trauma and death by highlighting the victim’s post-Hell state. His intention is to scare people into leading a religious life style by impressing the dread of Hell onto them and warning them about the negative repercussions associated with succumbing to demonic temptations. This story successfully conveys how demons were associated with deception, transformed their physical appearance, and inspired horror in people.

A second story in Chapter LI recounts how a monk shirked his responsibility to garden, angrily leaving the monastery, only to fall prey to a demon disguised as a nun in the woods. The demon

¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 126.

¹⁸ Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans., *Summa Theologica* (London, U.K.: Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD., 1922), pp. 150-152.

¹⁹ H. Von E. Scott and C.C. Swinton Bland, trans., *The Dialogue of Miracles* (London: George Routledge & Sons, LTD., 1929), p. 313.

²⁰ Ibid. pg. 314.

²¹ Russell, *Lucifer*, pg. 20.

²² Scott and Bland, *Dialogue of Miracles*, pp. 318-320.

convinces him that her prior sent her to speak with him and lead him home. Demonic trickery causes him to break his silence and follow a woman. He eventually realizes that the demon is deceiving him, causing the demon to flee and inflict him with storms. This story implies that anger, the same trait that gave Merlin's father access to Merlin's mother, empowers demons by relating how his initial anger enabled the demon to trick him.

Nancy Caciola argues that medieval work feminized demons, and demonized females, connecting them as evil sexual lures to delegitimize female political and religious influence.²³ Caesarius connects demons with femininity – a trait that Merlin also displays – in the story by explicitly stating that the demon disguised itself as a supposedly pious female nun. Elliott supports this adding that medieval church leaders connected women and demons sexually to legitimize their suppression of female autonomy.²⁴ Thus, demons and women function as linked sexual tempters opposing male piety and bodily control. More broadly, medieval theologians portrayed them as jointly challenging church supremacy and Christian doctrine. Caesarius' story epitomizes this by establishing the demon, disguised as a seemingly devout nun, as the reason a monk sinned.

This story also links nature and demons by describing how the demon hid in the woods, and controlled the weather by summoning a storm to harass the priest. Caciola cites several instances of demonically induced environmental harm supporting the link between demons and nature.²⁵ Church doctrine connected demons and nature because both represented forces beyond human control that challenged and affected human actions. In line with Caciola's argument that the Church sought to repress female influence and empower clergy by demonizing women, Christian theologians demonized nature depicting the wilderness as an effeminate and tempting force. Merlin combines these characteristics – dwelling in and controlling nature, and displaying female attributes – which are already intimately connected, embodying the male-divine-knowledgeable and female-demonic-usurper dichotomy.

Merlin's actions throughout twelfth-and-thirteenth century literature resemble demons' deeds, reflecting the fact that he is a human-demon hybrid delicately balancing the dichotomies associated with his paradoxical composition. Common motifs in Merlin literature include nature, deception, situational irony, feminine portrayal, destruction and gloom, and wisdom and knowledge. Many Merlin stories contain some combination, or all, of these themes in narrating Merlin's actions.

Merlin first appears in medieval literature in Geoffrey of Monmouth's mid-twelfth-century *History of the Kings of Britain* – a glorified record of Britain's past influenced by contemporary political strife – as a prophet with supreme knowledge and ability to recognize the hidden. King Vortigern summons Merlin as a child, because his wizards believe that stabilizing the king's perpetually collapsing tower requires blood from a fatherless boy. Merlin answers the king's summons, but, after hearing why he was brought, announces to the king that he “will convict [the wizards] of having devised a lie.”²⁶ He continues to act in a characteristically brazen manner,

²³ Nancy Caciola. *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press., 2006), pp. 161-167.

²⁴ Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, p. 35-60.

²⁵ Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, p. 50.

²⁶ Charles Dunn, trans., *History of the Kings of Britain*. (U.S.A: E.P. Dutton & CO., 1958) p. 135.

commanding the king to instruct his workers to build the tower according to his instructions. When Merlin's advice succeeds, "All they that stood by were no less astonished at such wisdom being found in him, deeming that he was possessed of some spirit of God."²⁷ From the outset, authority figures and respected leaders recognized Merlin as supremely capable, with suggestions that his abilities were supernaturally rooted. He is deemed wise – a positive term connoting age and experience – as a young child, exposing his knowledge as unnatural. Caciola points out that demonic possession sometimes resulted in outstanding intellectual capabilities, because demons were supremely intellectual beings.²⁸ Unsurprisingly, Merlin's intellectual abilities result in suspicion that he is a demon, or associated with them.²⁹ When Merlin solves the problem that Vortigern's wizards failed to resolve, he establishes himself as intellectually gifted, on par with demons. Just as Lucifer was the greatest angel, so too was Merlin the wisest man.³⁰ This first story thus distinguishes Merlin as superior to wizards and highlights his unnatural wisdom as supernaturally inherited. The fact that authors reference his knowledge as wisdom is noteworthy because of the term's positive association with pious sages. They do not portray him as the heir to demonically inherited information. The story also illustrates the first example of Merlin – even as a child – advising a king and appearing unnaturally superior, representing the paradoxical relationship between his youth and wisdom stemming from his dichotomous hybrid nature.

After Merlin proves his intellectual abilities, Vortigern asks him to prophesy and explain the significance of the predicted red and white dragons that Merlin says will emerge from the hill where Vortigern is attempting to build his tower. Upon being asked, Merlin "straightway burst into tears, and drawing in the breath of prophecy," revealed the symbolism behind the dragons.³¹ Merlin's pre-prophesy tears are a significant reoccurring motif throughout romances, demonstrating demonic influence through feminine association. Merlin's tears are a feminine characteristic inherited from his demon father considered unnatural for a medieval male. Caciola contends that "demonic bodies were hybrid and unstable," in the sense that male and female traits were ascribed to them.³² Merlin embodied a similar dichotomous nature inherited from his father by balancing the human and demon, male and female, subject and advisor, and natural and supernatural, as will become more evident later.

Merlin's consistent foreboding and fear-inspiring prophecies also allude to his diabolical heritage. Following his introduction to Vortigern, Merlin delivers a lengthy and detailed prophecy concerning Britain's future riddled with symbols, double meanings, mythology, and animals. Beneath the surface, these prophecies allude to the apocalypse, reflecting the potential for Merlin to have emerged as the Antichrist. Gloom and destruction pervade the prophecies, which predicts, among other things, how "Children will perish in the wombs of their mothers, and dread shall be the torments of men."³³ Sin and gluttony – deadly sins with diabolical associations – feature with descriptions of how "Every soil shall riot in luxury, neither shall

²⁷ Ibid. pg. 136.

²⁸ Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, pg. 48.

²⁹ See *Merlin*, pp. 59, 86, 92.

³⁰ Russell, *Lucifer*, pg. 224.

³¹ Dunn, *History of the Kings of Britain*. pg. 139.

³² Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, pp. 162-163.

³³ Dunn, *History of the Kings of Britain*, pg. 139.

mankind cease to follow after lust.”³⁴ This prophecy exhibits multiple apocalyptic and nightmarish themes that pervade Merlin’s prophecies. Significantly, this prophecy articulates how turmoil and destruction will pervade Britain’s near future. This is noteworthy because Merlin routinely delivers prophecies foretelling of gloom reminiscent of Hell and havoc wrecked by demons. Russell’s chapter devoted to Hell elaborates on the various horrific details commonly ascribed to Hell including fire and brimstone, chained demons, Lucifer, and tortured souls.³⁵ Additionally, here, as in other Merlin stories, the king calls on Merlin for advice regarding Britain’s wellbeing, highlighting how Merlin repeatedly appears, due to his greater knowledge, in an advisory role to those who should be superior to him. He unnaturally usurps established social hierarchy by directing kings. This mirrors how Lucifer endeavored to act independently of God, but Merlin is different because he never attempts to assume complete control. Merlin’s hybrid status is affirmed by his willingness to challenge authority, but his devotion to the same leaders he challenges highlights how he channeled potentially malignant influences for noble causes.

Merlin continues acting above nature and common societal practice in other stories. Later in the *History of the Kings of Britain*, Geoffrey describes how Merlin created the structure now known as Stonehenge. He relates how before completing this supernatural feat, Merlin burst out in unnatural feminine laughter. Like his tears, Merlin’s laughter is associated with disrupting the natural order – whether physical, metaphysical, or social – because they express lack of bodily control commonly linked with females. Because Merlin physically appears male, these manifestations of femininity are unnatural and reflect his hybridity and dichotomous composition. Many times Merlin’s laughter precedes displays of supernatural prophecy, usurpations of rigid social hierarchy, or revelations of situational irony.³⁶ Laughter as uncontrollable emotion becomes one of his displays of femininity, which physically manifests his dichotomous essence, contradictory to itself and established order. Lewis Thorpe suggests that Merlin’s laughter is a sardonic expression of situational irony.³⁷ Situational irony arises when natural order is interrupted, resulting in an unexpected outcome. Merlin recognizes disruptions of order, and is able to disrupt order, because he is essentially such a disturbance as his laughter exemplifies. By attributing Stonehenge – a still unexplained phenomenon – to Merlin and relating how “he laid the stones down so lightly as none would believe,” Geoffrey further concretizes Merlin’s status as a semi-supernatural dichotomous being whose supernatural influences manifest themselves in unnatural gender blending, and unnatural ability to challenge normal world order – physically and socially.³⁸ In addition, ascribing Stonehenge to Merlin strengthens the argument that Merlin’s heritage endowed him with unnatural powers over nature linked to his general defying of natural hierarchies and associations.

Geoffrey’s *Vita Merlin* (1136-1138) provides more evidence linking Merlin with nature and demons. Here, Geoffrey portrays Merlin as a fallen angel, clearly alluding to his demonic

³⁴ Ibid. pg. 143.

³⁵ Russell, *Devils*, p. 44-61.

³⁶ For specific examples see Bryant, *Merlin*, pgs. 71-73, 99.; Basil Clarke, trans., *Life of Merlin* (Cardiff, Wales, 1973), pgs. 67, 77, 79.; *Silence: a thirteenth-century French romance*. Translated by Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1999), pgs 291-301.

³⁷ Lewis Thorpe. “Merlin’s Sardonic Laughter.” In *Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages*, Edited by W. Rothell and Fredrick Whitehead. (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1973), pp. 323-340.

³⁸ Dunn, *History of the Kings of Britain*. p. 166.

parentage, by retelling how Merlin, as a king, abandoned his kingdom and secluded himself in the woods rejecting relatives and friends, until a pure stream healed his madness. His exile is reminiscent of the fallen angels' exile from Heaven, suggesting that they share commonalities. However, ultimately, Merlin triumphs over demonic influences and regains his original status as a king, emphasizing the possibility of returning to grace for the masses, and demonstrating that he is unlike the fallen angels because they can never return to Heaven. Merlin is introduced "as king and prophet," positions of power and influence.³⁹ However, after witnessing deaths in battle Merlin is overcome "with fast-running tears [and] he mourned amid the strife", again illustrating his unnatural feminine proclivity towards emotion and tears.⁴⁰ Geoffrey emphasizes this, describing how "his flooding tears had no end."⁴¹ He became so devastated that "he crept away and fled to the woods" and "became a Man of the Woods, as if dedicated to the woods. So for a whole summer he stayed hidden in the woods, discovered by none, forgetful of himself and of his own, lurking like a wild thing."⁴² This is his fall from grace. By abandoning his responsibilities, rebelling against social order, and hiding in nature, Merlin likens himself to the fallen angels who God exiles from heaven. However, unlike the fallen angels, Merlin's exile is self-induced, which allows him to return eventually, distinguishing Merlin from his demon heritage. Geoffrey openly states that Merlin disassociated himself from humans and attempted to integrate himself into nature. This links him with demons, who are commonly associated with woods and nature by theologians like Caesarius. Parallels in Merlin's actions and description clearly mirror the story of the fallen angels who became demons. However, subtle differences highlight how Merlin's hybridity enabled him to return ultimately to civilization – a metaphor for God's grace – unlike demons, emphasizing that humans are capable of repentance.

While in the woods, other characters relate to Merlin as a "madman," highlighting perceptions of Merlin as demonically influenced – akin to a diabolically possessed person – and forsaking civilization. He forgets humanity and lives "an animal life," eating vegetation and sequestering himself from relatives.⁴³ Every time a relative or king's agent captures him, he reiterates his desire to escape to the woods. Linking societal desertion and the woods highlights Merlin's demon father as the source of his attraction to nature. Additionally, he has powers over animals and nature that strengthen his connection with the environment. In *The Vita Merlin*, Merlin rides a stag like a horse, arranges deer into a straight line, and subsists on shrubbery. Just as demons command nature – as Caesarius's stories reveal – Merlin controls even the most fearful animals, stressing his supernaturally inherited unnatural ability to manipulate and influence the environment as a superior.

Silence, a thirteenth-century French romance, develops this theme when Merlin appears, wild and beyond capture in the woods. He is introduced as the "son of the devil," demonstrating his hybridity.⁴⁴ According to the story, "he said that he would take to the woods/ and be so wild and hard to catch/ that he could never be taken," consciously disassociating himself from

³⁹ Basil Clarke, trans., *Life of Merlin* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1973), p. 53.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 55.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. 57.

⁴³ Ibid. 73

⁴⁴ *Silence: a thirteenth-century French romance*. Translated by Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1999). p. 271.

civilization.⁴⁵ He appears as “a man with long white hair flowing down his back” at the forest’s edge, residing in a “wasteland” – a transparent corollary to Hell, where demons reside.⁴⁶ *Cantiga* 85 of Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria* implies that Hell is a wasteland describing it as “a deep valley full of dragons and devils, blacker than coal.”⁴⁷ Comparing himself to animals, Merlin describes himself to Silence as “a man all covered with hair./ as hairy as bear./ He is as fleet as a woodland deer./ Herbs and roots are his food.”⁴⁸ He is unsure “if there is any human nature left in him.”⁴⁹ He thus concretizes himself as a man of dichotomies: bear and deer, human and beast – in addition to the dichotomies associated with his hybridity. He bluntly states that he is not fully human because he is torn between his demonic and human traits.

Silence elaborates in Nature and Nurture’s debate on how to understand Merlin as a human-demon hybrid by discussing whose influence on Merlin was greater. They conclude that Merlin’s nature is human, but his nurture is demonic. Nature – his human side – forces Merlin to give himself up to Silence for capture, hinting at Merlin’s ultimate decision to associate himself with God despite strong demonic tendencies.⁵⁰ In *Silence*, Nature’s and Nurture’s debate emphasizes to readers that humans’ intrinsic good qualities bar them from falling prey to demons. Notably, this is different from Robert de Baron’s understanding of Merlin as having a demonic nature and pious nurture, reflecting contemporary discourse on human nature. Regardless, both understandings yield the same message: that people can overcome demonic temptations drawing them to sin.

In *Silence*, Merlin is the ultimate deceiver and illuminator of deceptions. The plan he provides Silence with to trick and capture himself is his foremost ruse. Upon first appearing to Silence and learning of Silence’s mission to capture him, he instructs Silence on how to seize him.⁵¹ Although he ultimately tricks himself, he initially deceives Silence by cloaking his identity physically and through deception. This is part of how Merlin’s Nature – his human traits in *Silence* – overpowers his Nurture – his demonic traits – concretely exemplifying how evil forces can be defeated. Deception through disguise is a common tool used by demons for trickery, and a reoccurring strategy Merlin employs in medieval literature, linking Merlin and demons. However, in *Silence* Merlin ultimately elevates this diabolically inherited proclivity by utilizing it to help Silence succeed in capturing him, illustrating how people can channel seemingly evil characteristics for good.

Merlin appears disguised in stories beyond *Silence* because, as demons do to misguide people, he masks his identity while advising or manipulating situations. Alexander Makhov posits that medieval illustrations portray demons as multi-faced because demons lack a definitive identity, thus appearing under multiple guises.⁵² Elliott adds in her explanation of spiritual beings’

⁴⁵ Ibid. 273.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 275-277; For another example of Merlin appearing disguised in white see David E. Campbell, trans., *The Tale of Balain* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972) p. 70.

⁴⁷ Hulp-Kill, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X*, p. 110.

⁴⁸ Roche-Mahdi, *Silence*, p. 279.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 281-285.

⁵¹ Roche-Mahdi, *Silence*, p. 277

⁵² Alexander Makhov. “The Devil’s Image from the Viewpoint of Rhetoric,” In *Angels, Devils – The Supernatural and its Visual Representation*, ed. by Gerhard Jaritz (Budapest, 2011), p. 43.

disembodiment that they shape shift when interacting with humans, thereby deceiving through disguise.⁵³ Though Merlin often disguises himself, people eventually recognize him, or he reveals himself, and unlike demons, he supplies advice in people's interest because his literary role is to be a moral example of surpassing evil.⁵⁴

In court, the king forces Merlin to reveal his reasons for laughing at the peasant who bought shoes, the beggar, and the funeral procession. Merlin again links his uncontrollable laughter with violations of nature by revealing the situational irony and lies that occurred in each situation. In the process, he challenges the king's authority – defying social order – by refusing to explain himself until threatened with death. This is akin to when the fallen angels challenged God. This also alludes to Caciola's argument that theologians demonized females because they challenged authority figures and usurped power for themselves.⁵⁵ *Silence* thus suggests that Merlin possessed diabolically induced femininity; however, he ultimately validates himself as a masculine, pious figure by exposing lies associated with females, or supposed females, that infiltrate the court, from Silence's gender, to the queen's sexual interests and the nun's sex. Merlin reveals his attraction to all deceit by involving himself in unmasking other's deceptions. Instead of only being influenced by his effeminate demonic half for evil, he overcomes it by channeling his demonically inherited attraction to trickery for good by unveiling female oriented lies, thus establishing himself as male and pious.

In *Silence*, as in other Merlin stories, the supremacy of Merlin's knowledge illustrates its demonic origin. He accumulates renown for intellectual and prophetic abilities bequeathed to him by his demon father. Kings acknowledged him as intellectually superior, and wise, even after recognizing the source of his knowledge. In *The Tale of Balain*, another thirteenth-century French romance, Merlin functions largely as an advisor, prophesying for leaders and strongly suggesting courses of action. The text explicitly states that the king "believed Merlin in whatever he said," denoting complete deference to Merlin's knowledge.⁵⁶ Merlin asserts unnatural superiority over kings by refusing to answer their questions, even when disguised like a beggar.⁵⁷ Robert De Boron's *Merlin* relates how "Merlin had commanding influence over Pendragon and his brother Uther."⁵⁸ He does not fear rebuttal or punishment because he is above the rules of nature. Even though Caciola explains this as negatively associated with demonically labeled women, it is acceptable for Merlin because he distances himself from his diabolically inherited feminine traits, and uses them to benefit the authority figures he seemingly defies.

His disregard for kings' theoretical superiority also implies hubris, which is a diabolically inspired sin. Russell relates how Lucifer and the other fallen angels sinned through pride.⁵⁹ Like demons, Merlin avoids forced subservience by constantly asserting himself before authority figures.⁶⁰ Further proving his pride, he deems himself wiser and more memorable than one of

⁵³ Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 131.

⁵⁴ See Campbell, *Balain*, pgs 23- 27.; Bryant, *Merlin*, pgs 98-99.; Roche-Mahdi, *Silence*, pgs 275-281.

⁵⁵ Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, pp. 298-309.

⁵⁶ Campbell, *Balain*. p. 16.

⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 20-21.

⁵⁸ Bryant, *Merlin*, p. 88

⁵⁹ Walls, *Lucifer*, p. 174.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 201.

the greatest contemporary knights in *Balain*.⁶¹ However, unlike the fallen angels, Merlin's hubris goes unpunished, because he utilizes his knowledge to profit Britain and the kings, not to usurp their power.

Even though he ultimately works to better Britain, many of his prophecies predict destruction and turmoil reminiscent of Hell. Wall explains that Hell is commonly depicted as a chaotic flaming den home to battling fallen angels and sinful souls.⁶² In *The Vita Merlin*, as in other prophecies Geoffrey attributes to Merlin, he predicts havoc in Britain as "The nephews of the Cornish boar disrupt everything. They lay ambushes for each other and put one another death with their evil swords: they cannot wait to succeed lawfully, but seize the crown."⁶³ Consistent with the civil war Geoffrey experienced in Britain during the second half of the twelfth century when control was contested, he continually reiterates how Britain will experience mayhem as kings vie for power.⁶⁴ Geoffrey uses Merlin literarily to spectacularly forefront British history and make his work a 'best seller' furthering his own fame.⁶⁵ Consequently, Merlin's engaging and terrifying prophecies are not only a result of his demonic heritage, but also serve Geoffrey's own interests.

The story of King Arthur's conception referenced in *History of the Kings of Britain*, *Merlin*, and *Silence* synthesizes Merlin's demonic attributes and moral role. According to legend, Utherpendragon desires Igerne, the Duke Gorlois's wife. Merlin disguises Utherpendragon as Gorlois so he can be with Igerne. Together they conceive Arthur. This story is significant, because Merlin advises the king on how to manipulate the situation to achieve his illicit sexual goals. Elliott links demons with sexual sins, supporting the argument that Merlin's facilitation of royal adultery through deception was demonic. However, by ultimately producing Arthur – a morally positive result – the story reaffirms his hybrid status. This story also concretely exhibits how people can channel evil for good. Further, Merlin utilizes an herb – a natural tool – to transform Utherpendragon into Gorlois, concretizing the link between the act and his diabolical heritage.⁶⁶ Merlin's role in Arthur's conception highlights his demonic proclivity towards nature, deception, and power. Merlin's hybrid human-demon status is cemented by helping Utherpendragon fulfill his sinful desires.⁶⁷ However, Arthur's eventual status as Britain's savior precludes classifying Merlin's actions as demonic, implying that Merlin utilized abilities inherited from his demon father for a positive end. He becomes the paradigm of surpassing evil inclinations, and directing seemingly spiritually deleterious abilities and desires for morally upright ends by overcoming his potential to be Antichrist, instead orchestrating the conception of Britain's messianic Arthur.

⁶¹ Campbell, *Balain*, p. 25.

⁶² Walls, *Devils*, pp. 44-61.

⁶³ Clarke, *Vita Merlin*, p. 83.

⁶⁴ Clarke, *Vita Merlin*, pgs 6-7.; For more examples of destructive prophecies see Dunn, *History of the Kings of Britain*, pgs 138-154.; Clarke, *Vita Merlin*, pgs 103-113.; *Anglo-Norman Verse Prophecies of Merlin*. Translated by Jean Blacker (Dallas, TX: Scriptorium Press, 2005). pp 27-57.

⁶⁵ Lucy Allen Patton, introduction to *History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. By Charles Dunn (U.S.A.:E.P. Dutton & CO., Inc., 1958) pp. xv-xx.

⁶⁶ Bryant, *Merlin*, pgs 100-101.

⁶⁷ An additional account of Arthur's conception can be found in Dunn, *History of the Kings of Britain*, pgs 176-178.

Despite the fact that Merlin exhibits many demonic characteristics, he associates himself with God. In Robert de Boron's account, Merlin testifies "That [he has] knowledge of all things past, both word and deed, inherited from the Enemy. But Our Lord omnipotent gave me knowledge of things to come. Because of that the Enemy have lost me: I will never work on their behalf."⁶⁸ As a toddler, he even proclaims that he will "teach you to gain the love of Christ," demonstrating his allegiance.⁶⁹ He designates himself as Christian by referencing "Our Lord," while expressly distancing himself from "the Enemy" – Satan. Similarly, in *The Tale of Balain*, he announces that "God is [his] counselor," proving Merlin's association with God across texts.⁷⁰ In Geoffrey's tales about Merlin – most likely the source for other accounts on Merlin – he aligns with Christianity by derogatively describing how pagan invaders will sack Christian holy sites.⁷¹ Merlin thus exemplifies how people can choose between good and evil, despite moral challenges. However, unlike in other stories, Geoffrey's Merlin does not actively identify himself with God: this developed later.

The later historical development linking Merlin to God and Christianity is significant because it demonstrates how Merlin's moral role evolved in medieval literature. Influential secular leaders patronized Geoffrey's work, resulting in a glorification of British history. Internal political turmoil between the Normans – who had only recently conquered Britain under William of Orange's leadership in 1066 – the Welsh, and the Saxons, contributed to producing a mythological work focused on history, not moral lessons.⁷² Consequently, Geoffrey does not emphasize the ramifications of Merlin's status as a hybrid human-demon. However, as Arthurian literature spread in the early thirteenth century and the Holy Grail theme emerged, religious connections developed. Merlin's hybridity and its strong moral implications in later romantic works like *Silence*, *The Tale of Balain*, and *Merlin* reflect the growing prominence of Arthurian legends in medieval literature. As literature, these works aim to entertain the aristocracy, not to impart political lessons. Consequently, Merlin's character develops subtle moral overtones illustrating overcoming demonic challenges by portraying him as a hybrid human-demon whose internal dichotomies do not prevent him from ultimately rejecting demons in favor of God. By identifying as a Christian and employing his diabolically inherited powers for good, Merlin demonstrates that evil temptations can be surpassed and religious fulfillment attained.

⁶⁸ Bryant, *Merlin*, p. 92.

⁶⁹ Bryant, *Merlin*, p. 61.

⁷⁰ Campbell, *Balain*, p. 24.; Further connections can be found on pgs. 16, 37, 50, and 92.

⁷¹ Clarke, *Vita Merlin*, pg. 87.; Dunn, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 139.

⁷² Curley, Michael. *Geoffrey of Monmouth*. New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1994. pgs. 1-6.

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Phillip Emeritz

Feminine Power in the Ottoman Harem

Women in Muslim culture are often viewed in the Western world as oppressed, powerless beings; within the harem, they are no more than slaves and sexual objects. However, women were, in fact, deeply integrated into Muslim society.¹ The purpose of this paper is to illuminate some of the misconceptions and realities concerning women in Islamic culture. More specifically, it examines the *valide sultans*, or “queen mothers,” in the Ottoman imperial harem during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, arguably the height of female power in Islamic history.

The term harem comes from the Islamic root *h-r-m*, which denotes a sacred area with no gender specifications.² It is only through rumor and misinterpretation that the Western world has assigned such a confined, erotic image of this social structure. It cannot be questioned that women were unequal with men in society, but women commanded a surprising amount of influence and presence despite their limitations. Deniz Kandiyoti coined the term “patriarchal bargains” for the capabilities of women in a male-dominated society.³ These bargains shaped female subjectivity and ideology, and were susceptible to change through historical transformations. The power exercised by the *valides* in the Ottoman Empire is an excellent example of this concept as it reveals the extensive changes in Ottoman royal life and political authority during this period. The harem has been described by historians as a political arena for women as early as between the 4th and 11th century.⁴

Patronage in Islamic society was an important signifier of status and influence.⁵ The sixteenth and seventeenth century witnessed a shocking rise in female architectural patronage coupled with a dramatic decrease in public projects bestowed by the sultan. This is one of the significant aspects of the *valide*. This essay analyzes female patronage in general as well as two specific cases; the Atik Valide Mosque commissioned by Nurbanu Sultan in the sixteenth century and the Yeni Valide Mosque endowed by Hatice Turhan Sultan in the seventeenth century. These two *valide sultans* appropriately represent the rise and height of the period that many historians have

¹ Yvonne J. Seng, “Invisible Women: Residents of Early Sixteenth-Century Istanbul,” in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin R. G. Hambly (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 242.

² Asli Sancar, *Ottoman Women: Myth and Reality* (New Jersey: The Light, Inc., 2007), 44.

³ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Islam and Patriarchy: A Comparative Perspective,” in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1991), 27.

⁴ Nadia Maria El Cheikh, “Caliphal Harems, Household Harems: Baghdad in the Fourth Century of the Islamic Era,” in *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, ed. Marilyn Booth (London: Duke University Press, 2010), 100.

⁵ Leslie Peirce, “Gender and Sexual Propriety in Ottoman Royal Women’s Patronage,” in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 54.

referred to as “the sultanate of women.”⁶ The harem was not a prison for women; it was merely another stage for political power.

Let us first outline some of the Western misconceptions about the harem and women in Islamic society. Juxtaposing these ideas with the prominence of the *valide* will reveal how inaccurate these assumptions are and the reality of feminine power in the Ottoman Empire. The European traveler Hans Derschwan visited Istanbul in the mid-sixteenth century and commented that women were entirely invisible and separated in society.⁷ He noted their lack of public appearance, use of retinues and the veil while outside, and the intense restrictions of Islamic law on women. However, this observation was quite inaccurate and betrays Derschwan’s Western prejudices rather than understanding of Islamic society. Asli Sancar reinforces this erroneous mindset, writing that, “Ottoman women were portrayed as pitiable victims, creatures captive in the harem without any individual agency.”⁸ Western observers did not have the information available to historians today, which would have completely upset their ideas concerning the harem. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, female architectural projects increased dramatically.⁹ Buildings were constructed by or dedicated to women in both Istanbul and the Ottoman provinces. Public endowments were one of several activities that women engaged in, which are discussed further below. What is particularly ironic about Derschwan’s observations and Western ideology is that they assumed the veil was a sign of subjugation and disenfranchisement, when in fact it was a practice most commonly promoted by the upper class.¹⁰ Lower class women were much more open in public, which was a problem in Ottoman society addressed by law edicts, or *kanunnames*, issued by the sultans. Women of means fashioned the veil as a form of esteem and respect in Islamic society rather than it bearing shame or punishment.

Another Western misconception about the harem is that it was gender specific, when it actually referred to male as well as female spaces.¹¹ The imperial harem, *harem-i humayun*, was the name given to the third and innermost courtyard of Topkapi palace, which was reserved specifically for males. The women’s quarters also received the title of imperial harem, but the name was because of the sultan’s presence rather than that of the women. The palatial space was divided into the *haremlük*, the area allocated for women, and the *selamlük*, the area prescribed to men.¹² Gendered quarters were separated in the palace, but women were secluded from men almost as much as men from women. In fact, the seclusion of women to their own space resulted in the development of a private society.¹³ Women established their own community in the harem and

⁶ Leslie P. Peirce, “Beyond Harem Walls: Ottoman Royal Women and the Exercise of Power,” in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women’s History*, ed. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 40.

⁷ Seng, “Invisible Women,” 241.

⁸ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 38.

⁹ Ulku U. Bates, “Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey,” in *Women in the Muslim World*, ed. Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), 247.

¹⁰ Ian C. Dengler, “Turkish Women in the Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age,” in *Women in the Muslim World*, 230.

¹¹ Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1993), 5.

¹² Irvin Cemil Schick, “The Harem as Gendered Space and the Spatial Reproduction of Gender,” in *Harem Histories*, 70.

¹³ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 7.

operated within their own area. The organization of the harem hierarchy and the training of princesses and concubines mirrored that of the eunuchs and young men and pages in the third courtyard of Topkapi palace.¹⁴ Therefore, the boundaries within Islamic society and the boundaries that Western observers imagined are quite different. The degree of social mobility was not wrapped up so much in a dichotomy of public/private or male/female as privileged/common.¹⁵ Women of means wielded influence and power, all within the confines of gender discrimination and a male-dominated society. This arguably made them more skillful than their male counterparts, but that is more a matter of opinion than debate.

Moving from Western inaccuracies about the harem and Muslim women, it is now worthwhile to investigate the level of participation women took in Islamic society. This will help to frame the emergence of the *valide* and the potential that women had for political and societal power. The harem provided the central arena of politics for royal women in Ottoman society both in terms of competition with other females and in reaching out to the male sphere of influence.¹⁶ Women embraced their sexuality and utilized it in the political arena; indeed, a primary factor in social or political prominence was through reproduction. Ian Dengler states that, “women of the ruling elites had one role not open to other women in the social order: they could become political and social arbiters.”¹⁷ Women achieved power through the act of childbearing, which in turn generated influence and authority for the mothers. This is a perfect example of Kandiyoti’s patriarchal bargains wherein women operated under male-prescribed constraints in order to achieve sovereignty and power.

Additionally, women managed the household and harem as the supreme authority.¹⁸ This concept dates back at least to ancient Greek society and the concept of *oikonomos*, where woman maintained the staff and upkeep of the house while the male figure operated in the public sphere. Managing the harem was no simple task; there was, in fact, an extensive hierarchy of female positions within the harem.¹⁹ The harem expanded dramatically in the period examined here due to the changes within the royal family and succession. The emergence of this distinctive harem culture is at least partially attributed to what has been termed “sedentarization” by historians of the Ottoman Empire.²⁰ This transformation entailed sultans focusing less on military conquest and more on the consolidation and centralization of the royal family and the rapidly growing provinces of the Islamic nation. Although this can be viewed as a noble pursuit, supporting peace over war and centrality over civil strife, other scholars consider this change in Ottoman society to reflect a deteriorating political dynasty. However, there can be no question that women, the *valide* at the head, were tasked with important, demanding obligations within the imperial harem.

Reproduction was a necessary component to female influence and political authority in the harem.²¹ Indeed, the title of *valide sultan* was the highest role a woman could aspire to in Ottoman society. The fact that the harem was a political arena necessarily generated political

¹⁴ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 139.

¹⁵ Peirce, “Beyond Harem Walls,” 45.

¹⁶ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 3.

¹⁷ Dengler, “Turkish Women,” 236.

¹⁸ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 55.

¹⁹ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 6.

²⁰ Leslie Peirce, “Domesticating Sexuality: Harem Culture in Ottoman Imperial Law,” in *Harem Histories*, 130.

²¹ Dengler, “Turkish Women,” 232.

factions and dissension within the women's quarters.²² Moreover, the changing significance of female roles affected the hierarchy of power and thus caused conflict between royal women. The emergence of the *valide* was preceded by the *haseki*, or the sultan's favorite. As the role of mother became more important than that of wife, the two positions clashed.²³ A primary example of this conflict is between Mahpeyker Kosem Sultan and Hatice Turhan Sultan, which is examined in the section regarding the seventeenth century *valide*.

Lastly, it is important to recognize the role of women in the public sphere of Muslim society. Although Derscham's observations held some truth, his exaggeration and lack of understanding cause a distinctly different image of female presence in Istanbul. Women were welcomed into Islamic society through virtue and piety.²⁴ This was true from the beginning of Muslim faith with the prophet Muhammad accepting female converts into his religion. Women exercised certain practices to remain "ritually 'inside' while physically 'outside'" such as wearing the veil or being attended by a retinue of servants.²⁵ Far from being a punishment, women embraced these personal obligations as a "confirmation of esteem."²⁶ Derscham was correct that women were not often in the streets and, when present, maintained a level of seclusion. However, this seclusion ironically highlighted their femininity rather than covering it. Women had to promote Islamic virtues in order to be recognized as a respectable member of society, a practice that is evident in the reigns of Nurbanu and Turhan. Under the kanunnames of this period, devoted women received the title *muhaddere* and were allowed to appear in public, as long as they were escorted by a retinue.²⁷ Women were capable of achieving greater social status and mobility through piety and devotion to the Islamic faith. Moreover, their seclusion was a positive affirmation of feminine prowess. Another patriarchal bargain that appears here is that women of means were able to commission public projects in order to display their influence in place of their physical appearance.²⁸ Women operated around their gendered inequality to maintain a social and political presence, which the *valides* utilized to display their extensive authority.

Before turning to the emergence of the *valide sultan*, there is another societal transformation that must be discussed: the structural changes within the royal family. Islamic faith revered mothers, which can clearly be seen from the hadith, "Heaven is under the feet of mothers."²⁹ As has been shown, reproduction was a critical aspect of female power and dictated the role that a woman would have in Ottoman society. Princes had originally been sent to govern Ottoman provinces and their mothers would accompany them, acting as regents and patrons for their son. However, princely patronage was revoked in order to further consolidate the power of the sultan.³⁰ Although this detracted from political influence among males, it only served to further empower royal mothers. By the time that Nurbanu received the title of *valide* in the late sixteenth century,

²² Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 77.

²³ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 91.

²⁴ Asma Afsaruddin, "Early Women Exemplars and the Construction of Gendered Space: (Re-)Defining Feminine Moral Excellence," in *Harem Histories*, 43.

²⁵ Schick, "Harem as Gendered Space," 72.

²⁶ Kandiyoti, "Islam and Patriarchy," 34.

²⁷ Peirce, "Domesticating Sexuality," 105.

²⁸ Lucienne Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (Vermont: Ashgate, 2006), 15.

²⁹ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 61.

³⁰ Peirce, "Gender and Sexual Propriety," 55.

sultans commissioned very few public projects and only the queen mothers endowed buildings within the capital city.³¹ This was in part a result of the chaotic system of succession in the Ottoman dynasty, where an heir ascended to the throne if they were capable of eliminating their rivals. Due to this unpredictable and violence-inducing process, mothers depended on their sons' political survival in order to establish their own authority.³²

In the sixteenth century, the royal family was confined to Istanbul and only the sultan could travel outside the capital.³³ This greatly expanded the inhabitants of the imperial harem at Topkapi palace and affected the political operations therein. Royal women that were not mothers, as well as the women of a deceased sultan, were moved to the Old Palace.³⁴ Coupled with this transformation was a reconsideration of dynastic succession. Rather than having an open throne upon the death of the sultan, dynastic continuity through seniority was established.³⁵ This ended the rampant fratricide and civil war that accompanied the deaths of previous sultans and created a stable line of succession. Now, let us examine the emergence of the position of *valide sultan* as it generally played into Ottoman politics. Then, we will elaborate on the client networks used by the *valide* as well as the reflections of architecture on gendered roles. With all of that information provided, it will be easy to recognize the reigns of Nurbanu and Turhan in terms of Muslim female power and sociopolitical transformations in Istanbul.

Starting in the mid-fifteenth century, sultans only took slave concubines as their sexual partners.³⁶ Nurbanu was, in fact, Italian and Turhan was Russian, both of them being brought to the imperial harem as captives in Ottoman conquests. Suleyman took Hurrem Sultan, or Roxelana, as his *haseki* in the sixteenth century, which began the transition that led to the *valide sultan*. Leslie Peirce states that the “greatest source of authority and status for dynastic women continued to be the role of mother of a male dynast.”³⁷ Political influence was determined through sexual status and the queen mother was the ruler of the harem. Deniz Kandiyoti also writes that women “can establish their place in the patriline only by producing male offspring” and that the “powerful postmenopausal matriarch thus is the other side of the coin.”³⁸ Conflict erupted between these two sides as the budding sexual concubine clashed with the post sexual. This issue is encapsulated with the feud between Turhan and Kosem, in which the powerful matriarch Kosem attempted to wrest power from the youthful *valide* Turhan, resulting in a political coup and the death of Mahpeyker.

The *valide* controlled a vast amount of wealth in order to finance various philanthropic projects in Istanbul.³⁹ Female patronage had become prominent with the removal of princely patronage and the sultan's lacking endowments. Buildings erected in the capital displayed the political and financial power that the queen mother commanded. By the time Turhan came to power in the mid-seventeenth century, the role of *valide* had become institutionalized and thus her success

³¹ Peirce, “Gender and Sexual Propriety,” 62.

³² Peirce, “Beyond Harem Walls,” 46.

³³ Peirce, “Beyond Harem Walls,” 47.

³⁴ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 124. Also, Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 122.

³⁵ Peirce, “Beyond Harem Walls,” 48.

³⁶ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 115.

³⁷ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 230.

³⁸ Kandiyoti, “Islam and Patriarchy,” 32.

³⁹ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 109.

was guaranteed.⁴⁰ The *valide* became deeply entrenched in the political affairs of the sultan, her son, and operated as a co-regent to the Ottoman ruler. When Turhan died near the end of the seventeenth century, along with the removal of her son Mehmed IV's grand vizier, his political power failed and his reign collapsed.⁴¹ This reveals how much control Turhan had over the sultan's empire and the interdependence of mother and son.

However, even such powerful women as the *valides* still required intermediaries to exercise their political influence. As mentioned above, women had to maintain Islamic values and seclusion in order to appear as respectable members in Muslim society. The next section will detail how the queen mothers operated diverse, extensive networks of clientage in order to accomplish their political goals. The *valide* was recognized as a powerful political figure, second only to her son, the sultan. Therefore, it is easy to understand that interest in creating networks was mutual between the master and client.⁴² Just as the *valide* required clients to extend her influence, individuals were eager to create political ties to such an important figure in Istanbul. The idea that Muslim women in the harem were nothing more than sexual objects is ridiculous when this female position is witnessed. The favor of the queen mother was sought after with great interest because of the power and patronage wielded by her.

The *valide* was provided a male steward from the palace to act as an intermediary for her public affairs.⁴³ This position was one of high honor and provided the queen mother with indirect contact to the world that she needed to maintain seclusion from as an exemplar of Islamic virtue and ideology. The *valide* also managed important political positions under the sultan. Turhan appointed Koprulu Mehmed as her son's grand vizier, which began the Koprulu dynastic era for viziers.⁴⁴ In addition, the queen mother also selected the concubines for the sultan's harem.⁴⁵ This marked immense control on the part of the *valide*, who now held power over the women that would potentially succeed her as head of the harem. Finally, the queen mother arranged princess marriages in order to establish political ties with officials, thus creating relations with the various individuals serving the ruler of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁶ This is not an exhaustive list, but highlights the primary clients that the *valide* controlled. This shows that the queen mother was a highly desirable political ally as well as revealing her influence over the governing offices under the sultan. This position raised royal women to power possibly commensurate with that of the sovereign, despite gendered inequalities and necessary seclusion of females.

Finally, before examining the actual reigns of Nurbanu and Turhan, it is important to discuss the concept of gendered architecture.⁴⁷ Female architecture differed from the style of males and reveals Islamic ideology as well as the patron's personal interests. Gendered space results in

⁴⁰ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 112.

⁴¹ Salih Gulen. *The Ottoman Sultans: Mighty Guests of the Throne*, trans. Emrah Sahin (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2010), 197.

⁴² Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 143.

⁴³ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 106.

⁴⁴ Gulen, *Ottoman Sultans*, 191.

⁴⁵ Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*, 17.

⁴⁶ Peirce, "Beyond Harem Walls," 53.

⁴⁷ Lucienne Thys-Senocak, "The Yeni Valide Mosque Complex of Eminonu, Istanbul (1597-1665): Gender and Vision in Ottoman Architecture," in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, 80.

spatial politics and historical transformations result in the “restructuring of space.”⁴⁸ In this sense, the segregation of male and female spatial distribution necessarily creates architecture that reflects and changes according to gender ideology. Female architecture is unique in certain characteristics as seclusion, role of the buildings, and epigraphy attached to the building.

One feature that is similar between male and female architecture, interestingly enough, is the manipulation of gaze.⁴⁹ Both genders utilized visibility and seclusion to impress upon observers the importance of the patron. A building type that emerges during this period of female patronage is the *hunkar kasri*, or royal pavilion.⁵⁰ This structure, similar to the kiosks within the Topkapi palace and the riverfront, afforded visibility to whoever was inside while maintaining invisibility and inaccessibility to outside viewers. The use of this structure by *valides* is significant for two reasons; 1) even when outside of the palace and in public buildings, women continued to be “ritually ‘inside’”, and 2) the fact that the queen mother employed similar architecture to that of sultans, in the Ottoman capital nonetheless, speaks to her growing power and certain equalities between genders. The Western dichotomy of public/male and private/female is blurred by such instances and requires a reconsideration of gendered roles in Muslim society. Additionally, *valide* architecture mimics other forms of sultanic iconography such as dual minarets on mosques and the freedom to build within the capital city of Istanbul.⁵¹

Epigraphy tied to these female endowments further reveals the influence and attitudes of the patrons. The *vakfiye*, or deed of trust, for Nurbanu’s Atik Valide Mosque Complex illuminates both her role as a woman in Muslim society and as mother to the Islamic ruler.⁵² In the first part of this document, Nurbanu exhorts her Muslim values as well as her generous, charitable nature. As mentioned above, women had to exercise Islamic piety and devotion to be respected in society, so it is clear to see the motivation behind the *valide* including such rhetoric in her deed. It goes without saying why she would cite her achievements and success as a political patron of Istanbul; almost every political endowment since the ancient Egyptians in the 3rd millennia BCE glorifies the patron and ensures that any visitor will know the full extent of his or her benevolence. The next part of the deed defends her son, Murad III, against his political opponents and critics. During this period in Ottoman history, sultans were increasingly secluded and isolated, leading many to believe the ruler to be sedentary and weak. Nurbanu, acting both as her son’s mother and defending her own legitimacy in office, praises the sultan’s virtues and antagonizes the insults that others have made against him. The defensive tone of this document reveals the issues of stability and influence surrounding the sultan as well as the power and influence wielded by the *valide*.

Ulku Bates notes that the inscriptions in Turhan’s mosque complex cite her relationship as mother of her son rather than wife of the late sultan, Ibrahim.⁵³ The power of *valide sultan* had been firmly established by Turhan’s reign, which reflects the sentiment of her complex’s

⁴⁸ Schick, “Harem as Gendered Space,” 80.

⁴⁹ Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*, 9.

⁵⁰ Thys-Senocak, “Yeni Valide Mosque Complex,” 76.

⁵¹ Thys-Senocak, “Yeni Valide Mosque Complex,” 82.

⁵² Pinar Kayaalp, “Vakfiye and Inscriptions: An Interpretation of the Written Records of the Atik Valide Mosque Complex,” in *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* vol. 1, no. 2 (2012): 306-7, accessed December 16, 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/ijia.1.2.300_1

⁵³ Bates, “Women as Patrons,” 258.

epigraphy. The wives of deceased sultans were removed to the Old Palace while the queen mother ruled as supreme female power and co-regent to the sultan. Therefore, it is no surprise that Turhan would want observers at the mosque to remember her in her position as *valide* rather than wife of a sultan. This is further reinforced when compared to the inscriptions in the mosque commissioned by Mihrumah, the daughter of Suleyman I. Her inscriptions celebrate Suleyman and her husband, Selim I and entirely avoid using her name.⁵⁴ This stark contrast displays the development of the *valide* and the growing power of women in Ottoman society. Lastly, many of the endowments by women are religious structures, whether mosques, schools, or hospitals. This creates the same message as Nurbanu's vakfiye: the female patron is pious, charitable, and powerful.

Finally, let us briefly examine the reigns of Nurbanu and Turhan as two models for the *valide* in terms of capabilities and conflicts. Nurbanu Sultan was the first *valide*, coming to power at the end of the sixteenth century. One of her major accomplishments, the Atik Valide Mosque, was the grandest endowment by any female patron to that point.⁵⁵ Another significant aspect of Nurbanu's reign was her royal stipend; she received a daily allowance of 1,000 aspers while the other women of the harem received between 30 and 40.⁵⁶ These two points reveal the impressive power and wealth of the *valide*, which overshadowed all female figures of Islamic history. The *valide* was the apogee of women's agency and power in Muslim society. The restrictions and seclusion of women did nothing to hinder the extensive influence of the queen mother. In fact, these gendered inequalities were embraced and shone through the endowments and actions of the *valide*.

Ottoman rhetoric praised the sultan, citing his charitable nature and protection of the lower class.⁵⁷ Following in this path, Nurbanu invokes the same style of rhetoric in her mosque to highlight her own virtues and capability. Notably, the epigraphy in the Atik Mosque mentions no name other than Nurbanu's, implying her independence from male patrons.⁵⁸ Despite being a woman in Muslim society, Nurbanu held sovereign power and maintained wealth and authority that could only be topped by the sultan himself. Upon her death, a massive funeral procession was held for the *valide*.⁵⁹ This lavish public ceremony reveals the power and influence that Nurbanu had acquired during her reign as queen mother. Murad III, her son, walked alongside the funeral procession and wept openly, which is a particularly significant event. Nurbanu achieved a role unlike any held by a female and, even in death, was granted an extraordinary ceremony that exalted the powerful woman.

Hatice Turhan Sultan entered the role of *valide* a century later, at which point the position had been recognized and institutionalized in the Ottoman Empire. Turhan was brought as a slave concubine to serve under the current *valide*, Mahpeyker Kosem Sultan.⁶⁰ However, conflict erupted between the two women when Mehmed IV, Turhan's son, ascended to the throne. As I mentioned above, the two sides of the coin concerning female power were the sexual mother of

⁵⁴ Kayaalp, "Vakfiye and Inscriptions," 313.

⁵⁵ Kayaalp, "Vakfiye and Inscriptions," 303.

⁵⁶ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 116.

⁵⁷ Peirce, "Domesticating Sexuality," 110.

⁵⁸ Kayaalp, "Vakfiye and Inscriptions," 312.

⁵⁹ Sancar, *Ottoman Women*, 105.

⁶⁰ Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*, 1.

the sultan and the post sexual matriarch. Kosem remained in power and challenged Turhan's rule, accordingly due to the new *valide*'s youth. Kosem wanted to replace Mehmed IV with Suleyman II, whose mother could more easily be manipulated.⁶¹ However, Turhan was not going to give up her position as the most powerful woman in the Ottoman Empire. Kosem's servant, Meleki Hatun, betrayed her plans to Turhan, who then had Mahpeyker killed by the black eunuchs during a political coup.⁶²

Turhan became *valide sultan* in 1651 with the death of Kosem.⁶³ She was supported by the Muslim society because of the investment in queen mothers and quickly began exercising her power as co-regent of the Ottoman Empire. One of Turhan's first acts as a female architectural patron was creating the two forts Seddulbahir and Kumkale on the Dardanelles, the strait connecting the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara.⁶⁴ This was an unusual endowment for a *valide*, but is understandable in the context of her ascension. Turhan claimed the role of queen mother through a violent coup and it was critical that she assure the Muslim society that she was a capable leader. The construction of these military strongholds on an important naval passage impressed the idea of Turhan as a protector of the empire. She secured her position in the Ottoman capital through intellect and strategic patronage. Turhan's other significant endowment was the Yeni Valide Mosque Complex. This structure had been started by Safiye Sultan at the end of the sixteenth century, but was not finished until Turhan commissioned its completion in 1670.⁶⁵ As noted above, one of the key features of the structure was the *hunkar kasri*. The particular significance of this pavilion reflects the gendered architecture of the endowment. The pavilion was enclosed and secluded, but offered vision of the royal tomb, marketplace, and religious schools.⁶⁶ This allowed Turhan, or any women present in the pavilion, to view the public spaces where access was restricted. Not only does this speak to the gender inequalities and patriarchal bargains of female patronage, it also mirrors sultanic architecture. The idea of vision within seclusion was administered to promote the magnificence of the sovereign ruler, but became the tool of Muslim women as well.

Women in Islamic society were unquestionably held to a different standard than men. However, their seclusion was embraced rather than scorned because it created a unique feminine culture. Likewise, the harem was not an orgiastic prison, but rather a private site of female political enterprise. The *valide sultans* are the most impressive of female roles in Islamic history, revealing the power available to women that are often imagined as invisible and restrained. The queen mothers do not create an exception in history either, but rather exacerbate circumstances that were already apparent in Muslim society. To the outsider, Muslim women may appear to be disenfranchised, subjugated individuals. While there are certainly gender inequalities, women in the Muslim world were in fact capable of obtaining power, wealth, and influence. The harem was a political arena, and the *valide* was its champion.

⁶¹ Gulen, *Ottoman Sultans*, 189.

⁶² Peirce, "Beyond Harem Walls," 51.

⁶³ Peirce, "Gender and Sexual Propriety," 63.

⁶⁴ Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*, 5.

⁶⁵ Thys-Senocak, "Yeni Valide Mosque Complex," 69.

⁶⁶ Thys-Senocak, "Yeni Valide Mosque Complex," 81.

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Robert Gary Žakula, MA

“Pleased to be assisted even by the Devil Himself”: Recollection, Reprieve, and the U.S. Intervention of Grenada, 1983

“Oh God! Oh God! They have turned their guns on the People!,” screamed progressive Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, deposed leader of the Grenadian Revolution. On October 19, 1983, under the direction of Marxist-Leninist ideologues like Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard and General Hudson Austin, soldiers used automatic weapons and armored cars to disperse civilian crowds who “freed” Bishop from house arrest and congregated on Fort Rupert.¹ Though some civilians were armed, it is not clear who fired the shot. “Drunk on ideology,” as some Grenadians observed, the coup’s instigator’s nonetheless killed scores in the process. “There were those who saw Maurice as not being able to go beyond democratic socialism,” one islander commented. To some he was not “hard enough” to lead the country.² When ordered to face the fort’s wall, Bishop refused, “They shot my father in his back; if they are going to shoot me, I want to look at my executioners in the eyes.”³ Hard-liners, “fanatically committed to the Leninist canon,” executed Bishop and murdered his Cabinet and civilian followers in cold blood. “Revolutionary had killed revolutionary [and] with that action the Grenadian revolution had aborted itself.”⁴ Grenadians fled and hid from the carnage and chaos. “I could hear some shots from the fort... The busmen weren’t taking any chances. They left a lot of people behind,” said an observer.⁵ Locals then witnessed a flare explode in the sky, signaling that orders were carried out. Soldiers dumped Bishop and his supporters, riddled with machine gun bullets, into a makeshift grave pit and burned their bodies over night.⁶ “Bishop was killed on his most popular day,” one islander remarked.⁷ Another reflected, “Maurice was an exceptional person. He inspired the nation.”⁸

Grenada, a small Eastern Caribbean nation with roughly 100,000 people, has experienced a history of turmoil and instability. In addition to the long struggle against various forms of colonialism and a delusional domestic despot⁹, the island entangled itself during the late Cold

¹ Beverley A. Steele, *Grenada: A History of its People* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2003), p. 409.

² Terrence Marryshow, interview by author, tape recording, 20 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

³ Steele, *Grenada*, p. 409

⁴ Hugh O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada: An Eyewitness Account of the U.S. Invasion and the Caribbean History That Provoked It* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Hamilton, 1984), p. 2-3

⁵ Paul Scoon, interview by author, tape recording, 18 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

⁶ Steele, *Grenada*, p. 409

⁷ Marryshow, interview by author.

⁸ Peter David, interview by author, tape recording, 23 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada,

⁹ Sir Eric Gairy led Grenada for over two decades, gradually increasing his authoritarianism. Tony Thorndike writes, “He had successfully exploited the grievances of the common people in 1951 and set Grenada

War. For four years Bishop and the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) attempted to overhaul the island through democratic socialism. The PRG made advances in many social services through state-led programs in the early stages of the revolution, especially in health and education. Despite some populist support for Bishop himself, the Grenadian Revolution greatly struggled. "We had become the pariahs of the Caribbean," reflected a former revolutionary.¹⁰ The state suppressed their own people, repressed political freedoms, and committed human rights abuses. "The revolution did not care about your personal rights," commented one Grenadian.¹¹ Grenada's relations with other socialist states jeopardized the revolution, as the PRG willingly accepted military and economic aid from Cuba, the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc, Libya, and North Korea. Grenada's socialism also strained diplomatic relations within the Caribbean and more so the U.S. Internally, ideological schisms marred consensus on the revolution's direction and tensions derailed its leadership.¹² The PRG hard-liners' coup set the precedent for U.S. intervention when the faction massacred Bishop, his supporters, and several Cabinet members and set up the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC). The U.S. saw in Grenada an opportunity to roll back communism in the developing world, and more so in Latin America and the Caribbean. On October 25, President Ronald Reagan ordered a joint U.S.-Caribbean military operation to evacuate American medical students and citizens and to restore democracy. Although the operation was incredibly controversial and condemned on the world stage, Americans generally supported the mission and over ninety-percent of Grenadians welcomed the invasion and supported a transition back to political democracy.¹³

upon a new course. Twenty years on, he had betrayed most of his promises and failed to realize that the world, including Grenada, had moved ahead. He was an anachronism, and dismissed the growing youthful resistance as beneath his, and God's, contempt. A laughing stock in the Caribbean, he became blind to his image, and to much else in his naiveté and susceptibilities. It was to prove disastrous to him." The man was obsessed with Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) and "other cosmic phenomena." "When discussed by him on the world stage, he rapidly became the object of derision." Moreover, Chile's Augusto Pinochet supplied Gairy's paramilitary units the "Green Beasts" and the "Iguanas" with uniforms, and Gairy himself employed a goon squad of "the toughest and roughest roughnecks," the Mongoose Gang, to terrorize opposition and suppress locals. "Repression was justified in terms of anti-communism and Divine wisdom." From *Grenada: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), pp. 39-40.

¹⁰ Kendrick Radix quoted from Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald S. Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 252.

¹¹ Eddie Frederick, interview by author, tape recording, 17, 27 June 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹² As Jamaican-born Grenadian historian Beverley A. Steele notes, "The first mistake was seek and accept the help of foreign countries, accept a foreign ideology, and engage in hemispheric animosities in what was a local struggle against oppression. The other mistake was that of condoning unnecessary measures of suppression and brutality against their own Grenadian people." In *Grenada*, p. 412.

Former political prisoner and entrepreneur Winston Whyte reflects on ideology, "There is something exciting about the Marxist rhetoric. It gives us something to hate, and hate is a powerful emotion...It destroys you the hater, not the hated. But while you are in the throes of the excitement it is an absolutely elevating rhetoric. It intoxicates you. That's why you can do so many bad things. It's like a germ in your soul. And that's why so many atrocities are committed in the name of Marxism because you are taken over by a kind of evil." Interview by author, tape recording, 22 June 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹³ CBS conducted a statistical poll after U.S. operations ended. The poll found that 91% of Grenadians approved of the intervention, based on 304 responses. Found in "Grenadians Welcomed Invasion, a Poll Finds," *New York Times*, November 6, 1983. Another poll, conducted in early 1984, showed that 86% of Grenadians still believed the intervention was good. See Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 113.

Exploring the 1983 U.S.-led invasion of Grenada, this paper is primarily a story of diplomacy, military interventionism, and foreign-local interaction through the lens of peoples' experiences. This paper does not necessarily alter or reinterpret the metanarrative, but rather utilizes contingencies in the moment and peoples' responses to them to restructure and nuance our understanding of the event. Incorporating previously unused sources and voices, such as oral histories, memoirs, government reports, and periodicals during operational planning and combat, I show the Grenadian civilian and military experience, as well as that of American officials and servicemen and women, as generally seen on the ground. A unique case during the Cold War, particularly in U.S.-Latin American/Caribbean relations, the overwhelming majority of Grenadians undeniably supported an intervention and welcomed the Americans with open arms. At the same time, however, this article demonstrates that the invasion and response was not so clear-cut, but rather was a multi-angled episode in which Grenadians, Americans, and foreign nationals held different perceptions and understandings of October 1983. I strive to answer the following: Utilizing Grenadian experiences, how did islanders perceive their situation and the American invasion? Albeit the operation's overall success, how did intelligence failures lead to soldiers' combat confusion or mishaps? How did American officials or military personnel understand the invasion and interact with locals and vice-versa?

The communist hard-liners' violence were unquestionably the darkest periods in the island's history. The combat operations that followed certainly demonstrated similar levels of violence, exposed psychological depths, and revealed a range of emotions amongst soldiers and non-combatants alike. By accessing memory and personal experiences we understand how Grenadians, representing cross-sections of society, and American personnel felt in the moment. Emerging from that darkness, however, most islanders revealed an incredible sense of hope and relief for the invasion. As former political prisoner and entrepreneur Winston Whyte frankly expressed, "Nobody thought about listening to the Grenadian to find out how we felt."¹⁴

After the massacre the RMC attempted to consolidate the coup. Following orders from Austin, People's Revolutionary Army (PRA) soldiers instituted a daily curfew and threatened to kill more citizens. East German-built BTRs lined the streets of St. George's, the capital city, and the island's parishes. A former teacher and parliamentary official recalled, "I heard on the radio there was a shoot-on-sight curfew so I tipped back into the house and sure enough when I looked down the road I saw a...bit of artillery...a mobile tank...focusing on the hill almost in direct line to my own house."¹⁵ Grenadian radio host and image consultant Eddie Frederick, then in his youth, commented, "When they killed Maurice I was despondent. Totally despondent...I fell asleep weeping. I thought it was a dream...Everything just went haywire." He further expressed, "This is a small island. What the hell were we doing with these kinds of vehicles here? God only knows...I was scared shitless."¹⁶ Medical doctor Terrence Marryshow, who was studying in Cuba, stated Bishops' assassination was "the most tragic period in my entire life." To him and many other Grenadians, the hard-liners "actually created...conditions for an invasion of our country."¹⁷ Grenadians prayed for resolve and an end to the terror. "You didn't know

¹⁴ Whyte, interview by author.

¹⁵ Interview with a government official, tape recording, 1 July 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹⁶ Frederick, interview by author.

¹⁷ Marryshow, interview by author.

where you were going because half of your cabinet had been executed. And you don't know what's going on. You don't know where this will end,” stated Frederick.¹⁸ Former teacher, economist, and Prime Minister George Brizan remarked, “When Maurice Bishop was assassinated I said to myself...Grenada will be pleased to be assisted even by the Devil himself.”¹⁹ Frederick affirmed this outlook held by many islanders, “We had reached the point in Grenada where if it were the Devil that came, we would have been honoring him because it was so bad. It was very uncertain.”²⁰ In spite of such remarks and the fact that ideologues controlled the country, the Grenadian population was predominately socially conservative and religiously devout. Although many Grenadians held the socialist Bishop in populist esteem, historian Michael Grow writes, “A majority of the island’s population consisted of socially conservative, Catholic or Anglican peasant small-holders—inauspicious clay from which to mold a Marxist society. They were also the products of a British colonial heritage in which respect for parliamentary democracy and civil liberties had been deeply ingrained.”²¹ Brizan asserted, “Marxism-Leninism is out of place in a peasant society. Grenada is a small peasant society. It is not an industrial society.”²²

Embracing their faith, many islanders hoped and believed that an outside force would intervene. For days leading up to the invasion, local Grenadians noted that “everything was completely dead [and] completely quiet,” but at night they could hear reconnaissance planes. Some assumed the Americans were coming.²³ Frederick stated, “it was intimidating us...so we expected something.”²⁴ One evening, despite the RMC’s curfew and threats, Governor General Sir Paul Scoon ventured into the island’s mountains and saw something in the sky. “Reagan was up in the sky there every night looking to see what was going on,” he observed. “That is Daddy Reagan.”²⁵ Former revolutionary and Minister of Tourism Peter David expected an American invasion, “Grenada was not important to the U.S. prior to October 1983 in any real sense. [By then] Ronald Reagan had Grenada in his cross-hairs.”²⁶ For four years, to be sure, the PRG propagated heavy anti-Americanism as the revolution moved from democratic socialism and toward hardened communism. In turn, the U.S. reacted with diplomatic hostility. The island’s revolution was “like a thorn in Ronald Reagan’s body,” remarked Brizan. “Grenada presented itself like a lance before a bull.” To most Grenadians, however, Cold War geopolitics and U.S. interventionist justification were irrelevant to their own critical situation—they simply wanted to be freed from fear and find justice. “The intervention in Grenada was welcome by the vast majority of Grenadians,” observed Brizan. “The only people who would have been opposed would be ideologues.”²⁷ Describing the islanders’ prayers for help, revered Jamaican-born Grenadian historian Beverley A. Steele used a common local proverb, “If God can’t come, he

¹⁸ Frederick, interview by author.

¹⁹ George Brizan, interview by author, tape recording, 18 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

²⁰ Frederick, interview by author.

²¹ Michael Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 140-41.

²² Brizan, interview by author.

²³ Interview with a government official, tape recording, 1 July 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

²⁴ Frederick, interview by author.

²⁵ Scoon, interview by author.

²⁶ David, interview by author.

²⁷ Brizan, interview by author.

does send.”²⁸

Prior U.S. military maneuvers, administrative hype, and official reports, however, indicated otherwise that policymakers anticipated some type of conflict. In the early eighties American naval fleets participated in a series of exercises called Operation Ocean Venture around a set of Puerto Rican islands called “Amber and the Amberdines.” This could have been a codename for Grenada and the Grenadines. Grenada was also off the Venezuelan coastline and could have affected sea lines of communication (SLOC), including important oil tanker, cargo ship, and naval routes around the Atlantic and South America. Moreover, President Reagan repeatedly claimed that Grenada’s construction of a military-grade airport would serve as a transit point for Soviet and Cuban arms shipments and soldiers to and from proxy wars and hotspots in Africa and Central America.²⁹ One Grenadian commented, “I’m inclined to believe it [the airport] was more a propaganda push...I can see no evidence at all to indicate it could have been anything else.”³⁰ Yuri Pavlov, head of the Soviet Foreign office’s Latin American division, remarked, “No one in his right mind was thinking in Moscow...of turning Grenada into yet another Cuba. It was too small and too susceptible to economic and political pressures and could not be defended militarily.”³¹ Despite the lack of proper intelligence, the Reagan administration’s Cold Warrior rhetoric nonetheless remained strong through the first term. After the October massacre, Herbert E. Meyer, Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC), wrote, “To be sure, we have no direct evidence of Soviet involvement in the Grenada coup [but] it is standard Kremlin procedure to violently replace an ally with a stooge.”³² “Our intelligence there was primitive. There was virtually none, really,” insisted National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane.³³

Even without clear information on Soviet involvement, U.S. officials still viewed Cuban communist adventurism and the evolving crisis on the island as possible regional destabilizers. Conservative Caribbean leaders, aligned with American interests, held this perspective, as well. The heavily armed island, stockpiled with foreign-supplied weapons, was close in proximity to other nations, a chief concern in the Eastern Caribbean. “We could have supplied the Caribbean,” noted former political prisoner and lawyer Lloyd Noel.³⁴ The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), chaired by Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica, cited a potential threat to surrounding islands. Governor General Scoon, under RMC house arrest and the sole remaining official with legitimate constitutional power, managed to send Charles secret messages requesting intervention. Backed by Prime Minister Tom Adams of Barbados, Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica, and other Caribbean leaders, Charles and the OECS requested U.S. assistance for “a pre-emptive defensive strike in order to remove a dangerous

²⁸ Steele, *Grenada*, 415.

²⁹ Strober, *Reagan*, 251; Edward A. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield: Reagan, the Soviets, and Central America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 129.

³⁰ Government official, interview by author.

³¹ Yuri Pavlov, Episode 18 “Backyard,” Cold War Series, National Security Archive/George Washington University, published 21 February 1999.

³² “The Importance of Grenada,” NIC 7692-83, Herbert E. Meyer, 26 October 1983, CIA Freedom of Information Act Reading Room.

³³ Strober, *Reagan*, 262.

³⁴ Lloyd Noel, interview by author, tape recording, 22 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

threat to peace and security to the region.”³⁵ Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger reflected that the Charles “made a particularly eloquent plea to President Reagan, pointing out the very real threat Grenada’s radical government (by then virtually an anarchy) posed to all of the outer Caribbean states.”³⁶ Colonel Oliver North, later embroiled in the Iran-Contra Affair, remembered that “her influence was critical. She was the Margaret Thatcher of the Caribbean. She was regarded across the Caribbean as a staunch believer in democracy.”³⁷ Scholar Russell Crandall encapsulates the Caribbean perspective, “In fact, from the beginning of the crisis, the Caribbean nations were out well ahead of the United States in their belief that a U.S.-led invasion was both desirable and necessary.”³⁸

Regarding the dire situation on Grenada itself, the Reagan administration viewed the hard-liners’ coup as a genuine threat to American citizens on the island and St. George’s University, an American-owned medical school. Duane “Dewey” Clarridge, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Division Chief for Latin America, remembered President Ronald Reagan noticeably upset about the students’ condition and pondered another possible hostage situation like Iran. The Marine Barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon just days before surely weighed heavy, too. Although Reagan made the final decision, invading Grenada was clearly a divisive episode within different channels of the U.S. government as major infighting took place among top officials during the planning stages in October 1983. Despite the seemingly last-minute decision to invade, Colonel North attested that contingency planning went into operation well before October. Serving as the lead staffer in a non-combatative disposition, he worked with interagency groups at the State Department and chaired committees at the White House. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Langhorne Motley insisted planning for intervention in mid-October.³⁹ Relatively uninformed of the Executive decision, the CIA and Department of Defense (DOD), nevertheless, believed there were alternative resolutions and suggested non-military options. As scholar Edward A. Lynch writes, “[E]ven the most paranoid Cold Warrior might have had difficulty seeing Grenada as much of a threat to the United States.”⁴⁰ Weinberger, originally against a military solution, summarized the consensus officials had reached, “This [the coup] clearly threatened the safety of Americans inside Grenada... as well as the security of the neighboring Caribbean nations who were friendly with the United States and were begging us to intervene. All of these factors made it quite clearly a matter vital to our national interest.”⁴¹ Grenada was also an easy Cold War win to roll back communism in the developing world, which was meant to have larger regional implications and send a message to Castro’s Cuba and the Sandinista’s Nicaragua.

³⁵ “The Grenada Invasion: Caribbean states request peace force,” *The Globe and Mail*, 27 October 1983.

³⁶ Caspar Weinberger, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 309.

³⁷ Strober, *Reagan*, 265. British Prime Minister Thatcher herself condemned the intervention, even though Grenada was no longer part of the Empire and she had recently executed the Falklands War against Argentina.

³⁸ Russell Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy: U.S. Interventions in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 108.

³⁹ Strober, *Reagan*, 263, 266; Mark Adkin, *Urgent Fury: The Battle for Grenada* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989), 206.

⁴⁰ Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield*, 128.

⁴¹ Caspar Weinberger, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 309.

Reagan's hawkish decision to invade Grenada may have been hasty, as the administration only gave a few days for planning a full-on raid and assembling a joint operation among the armed services and participating Caribbean nations. Deemed Operation Urgent Fury, military commanders scrambled to coordinate logistics, reroute naval fleets, and mobilize traditional forces and special operations. U.S. Atlantic Command Admiral Wesley McDonald, who had overall control of Urgent Fury, remarked, "The planning time was very compressed." Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, commander of the Second Fleet, took control of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), "I received orders to stand by for the rescue of U.S. citizens who were in peril...I was told to send a flotilla—which was on its way to Beirut as a normal rotation relief—south. And that got my attention: What were we going down there for?"⁴² Reagan's chief objectives for Urgent Fury "were to protect and evacuate approximately 1,000 U.S. citizens, neutralize the Grenadian and Cuban forces, and stabilize the internal situation so that democratic government could be restored."⁴³ Building on the Executive's goals, Metcalf provided three military strategies, "to protect the lives of US citizens caught in the factional fighting between rival Grenadian leftists; to restore order and conditions for democratic government; and to eradicate Cuban, Soviet, and other East Bloc influences on the island."⁴⁴ Commodore Robert S. Owens, deputy chief of staff for operations, mentioned, "Commanders were directed to ensure minimum casualties to both friendly and Grenadian people. We didn't want to go down there and tear the island apart."⁴⁵ Despite such measures and goals, concern for the well-being of the Grenadian people themselves was by and large absent through these diplomatic and military developments. Because of the lack of intelligence and an understanding of local conditions, American and pan-Caribbean perceptions of the situation differed from how the common Grenadian, not American students or foreign nationals, felt on the ground. Again, the Cold War mentality was not particularly relevant to local people, but many Grenadians hoped that external action would overturn the RMC's marshal law. Frederick asserted, "That period represented a kill or be killed scenario."⁴⁶ An intervention was "the only way things would be different in Grenada," expressed Governor General Scoon.⁴⁷

At the U.S. Embassy in Barbados, Caribbean leaders further pandered to Ambassador Milan Bish, who informed the Reagan administration of the known request for intervention. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Charles Gillespie also joined the meetings to discuss responses to the situation. Contrary to some prior interpretations on the OECS request, Grenadians knew of plans to invade and evacuate students. Word spread swiftly around the Caribbean, including CARICOM members who voiced opposition, and eventually reached the RMC leadership. A Guyanese official who attended the emergency meeting tipped General Austin that an invasion of Grenada was possible.⁴⁸ "Right after that meeting, someone

⁴² Daniel P. Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," *Parameters* 18, no. 4 (December 1988): 53; Strober, *Reagan*, 266.

⁴³ Reynold A. Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada: An Account of the U.S.-Caribbean Invasion* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 79.

⁴⁴ Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 53.

⁴⁵ "Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983)," Naval History and Heritage Command, Department of the Navy, 4 February 2000, <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq95-1.htm>.

⁴⁶ Frederick, interview by author.

⁴⁷ Scoon, interview by author.

⁴⁸ Strober, *Reagan*, 269. "The Making of an Invasion: Chronology of the Planning," *The Washington Post*, 30 October 1983, p. A1.

passed the word to Grenada that the United States and a Caribbean peacekeeping force would invade,” expressed Captain Thomas Scott, Commander-in-Chief Atlantic.⁴⁹

Little-known last ditch diplomatic exchanges also occurred to avert a military solution. St. George’s University was central to these attempts. University founder Chancellor Charles Modica, in New York, stated that the students were unharmed. In Grenada, General Austin met with university Vice Chancellor Geoffrey Bourne and guaranteed the students’ safety. Austin reportedly gave him his home telephone number in case of an emergency. Two former Carter officials, Robert Pastor and Peter Bourne, the Vice Chancellor’s son, sent numerous cables to the RMC leadership urging a “transition” plan from military rule to short elections and restoration of constitutional law. Furthermore, Lieutenant Leon Cornwall reiterated the RMC’s “concern” for the safety of American citizens. Local reports indicated, however, that Cornwall was planning a possible counter coup to Austin, who some members were blaming for Bishops’ death. Cornwall described the island’s situation as “calm, tense and pretty volatile.”⁵⁰ Speaking on the perceived harm to students, former revolutionary and union president Chester Humphrey recalled:

I could tell you as a fact that American citizens in Grenada faced absolutely no risk. As a commissar I was on the Fort Rupert, which was where my reporting base was, and I was coordinating delivery of water and other supplies to the medical school...I do very well believe there was never any discussion or intent or anything to harm any American citizens. It would have been foolish to do so...And the Americans essentially just used the opportunity to invade.⁵¹

“I do not believe that students were under threat,” added David. “I saw the students. The students were fully reassured in the days leading up to [the invasion].”⁵²

The medical students themselves, however, did not have a definite consensus on the island’s recent events. Some groups of students wished to leave the island immediately because of the RMC, while others wanted to stay behind and finish their studies. Within Grenada many students “had felt isolated and uncertain following a violent coup” and many welcomed an opportunity to return home.⁵³ Despite no intelligence source documentation, Grenadian testimonies certainly contradict U.S. assessments and provide a new angle on the students.

Measures were still taken on both sides for an impending encounter, however. Reagan officials ignored any reconciliation efforts and overtures of “democratic” restoration, given the hardline faction’s recent bloodshed. White House spokesman Larry Speakes said they were “not worth 2 cents because we didn’t trust them.” While the Americans geared up for the offensive, knowledge of the invasion gave “Grenada’s military leaders and a Cuban garrison crucial

⁴⁹ “Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983),” Naval History and Heritage Command.

⁵⁰ “The Making of an Invasion,” p. A1.

⁵¹ Chester Humphrey, interview by author, tape recording, 30 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

⁵² David, interview by author.

⁵³ Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada*, 87.

advance notice to resupply their troops and fortify defenses.”⁵⁴ “The Cubans and PRA were very well placed. They had occupied the high ground and strategically placed their anti-aircraft positions around the airfield before the initial assault by U.S. and Caribbean forces. They were probably where we'd have been if we'd been on the resisting side,” remembered Scott.⁵⁵ Austin prepared a few thousand PRA soldiers loyal to him and Coard, in hiding, in staffing the island’s heavy artillery and anti-aircraft installations. With arsenal support from East Germany, North Korea, Libya, and the Soviet Union, islanders formed “several well-armed enemy battalions” around southern Grenada, where most of the population resided, including the assumedly endangered American students. Although Fidel Castro saw Bishop as a younger brother and condemned his murder, the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR), the Cuban Armed Forces, dispatched Colonel Pedro Tortoló Comas to organize resistance. Nearly 700 Cuban construction workers and engineers as well as contingents of soldiers, on a holdover from fighting in Angola, assisted the PRA. Tortoló and the Cubans dug trenches, laid telephone lines, and set up medical posts. Austin informed the island of the invasion through radio and requested that every Grenadian pick up arms to defend the nation, including civilians and the youth militia, some in their early teens. He announced that Grenada must be “prepared to fight to the last man and woman to defend our homeland.”⁵⁶ “A number of us wanted to come back and fight [against] an invasion of that nature,” reflected Marryshow, who held a sense of national pride and duty to protect the island’s sovereignty.⁵⁷ Disregarding the socialist aid and anticipating an American intervention, David asserted, “Every nation has a right to develop its defense capabilities...no matter how small.”⁵⁸ The RMC, which massacred the PRG leadership and incited fear amongst the population, and PRA soldiers, conceivably out of touch with how common Grenadians felt, were nonetheless ideologically and militarily prepared for the intervention. “We must see ourselves Army as soldiers, Ready to die in the defence of the homeland and of socialism,” read the last line of an exercise book later taken off a dead PRA combatant.⁵⁹ On the international Cold War stage, however, Soviet official Sergei Tarasenko reiterated Pavlov’s earlier remark and expressed, “In Moscow we had no interest in this affair...Grenada would fall by itself.”⁶⁰

“*Grenada?* That didn’t make any sense...A mission is a mission. But...I mean, Grenada for Chrissakes... We’re not just missing the target here...Hell, we’re not even shooting at it,” remarked Delta Force soldier Eric Haney to his squadron commander. Irrespective of his skepticism, Haney and his B Squadron team, along with other Special Forces such as Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, Air Force Special Operations Wing, and Marine battalions, supplemented traditional forces in Grenada.⁶¹ Many of these Special Forces conducted the initial assaults on the island and stayed behind to assist ground units. “The conventional commanders

⁵⁴ “The Making of an Invasion,” p. A1.

⁵⁵ “Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983),” Naval History and Heritage Command.

⁵⁶ Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 53; O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 6, 10; Peter Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars: A Short History of U.S. Military Engagements, 1975-2000* (Viking: New York), 84; Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 206-7.

⁵⁷ Marryshow, interview by author.

⁵⁸ David, interview by author.

⁵⁹ O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 11.

⁶⁰ Strober, *Reagan*, 257.

⁶¹ Eric L. Haney, *Inside Delta Force: The Story of America’s Elite Counterterrorist Unit* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2005), 292-3.

and staffs for Urgent Fury did as well as they did because, by and large, they remembered the nature of their elite forces...Special warriors led the way in the Grenada fighting.”⁶²

Some missions started in tragedy, though. A day before the invasion, in fact, SEAL Team Six attempted a reconnaissance task to acquire enemy locations and gather intelligence. Jumping from six hundred feet into heavy rain and a stormy sea, four men died when they became entangled in their parachutes and were dragged down by heavy equipment. The SEALs’ Whaler boats flooded, as well, and the team could not complete their objective. Because of the lack of prior mapping and ground intelligence, many of the special and traditional forces thus went into Grenada “blind.”⁶³ Haney expressed perhaps what many soldiers felt, “[W]e had absolutely no intelligence about what to expect or where to expect it.”⁶⁴

Intelligence failures, however, were not the fault of Special Forces or the SEALs’ botched mission. Practically no one in any of the U.S. intelligence agencies felt the need to build a file on Grenada, despite the strained diplomatic relations and presumed safety of the students. “Nobody in our intelligence community ever thought we would need such a map for Grenada, so they never made one,” reflected United States Information Agency (USIA) officer Stephen F. Dachi.⁶⁵ This had serious consequences on how some units conducted their objectives. Haney’s Delta Force commander vented, “All I have is a Xeroxed page from a travel guide, and it ain’t worth a damn. We’ve got a request in to Defense Mapping and to the CIA... We won’t get any maps but we’ll get some damn interesting excuses.” “We didn’t even have a rumor of decent maps. We were able to get our hands on a Michelin guide to the Windward Islands with a somewhat usable chart of Grenada. This allowed us to get a basic feel for the layout of the island,” remembered Haney.⁶⁶ Hearing stories about ground operations in progress on the island, diplomat Robert Beecroft recalled, “One soldier had gone into a service station and bought a map of Grenada because they didn’t have maps.”⁶⁷

An American force of nearly 8,000, supplemented by 353 Caribbean soldiers, clearly overwhelmed the Grenadians and Cubans, numbering only a few thousand, and ensured a supposed easy military victory. Once the Urgent Fury campaign was underway on October 25, aerial flyovers and ground troops provided command with on-site updates. This proved crucial

⁶² Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 56.

⁶³ Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars*, 79; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144.

⁶⁴ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 294.

⁶⁵ Stephen F. Dachi, *American Memory Project*, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 30 May 1997.

⁶⁶ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 292, 294.

⁶⁷ Robert M. Beecroft, *American Memory Project*, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 17 September 2004.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney, then a Wyoming Congressman, reflected on combat communication problems, “The invasion of Grenada... was a successful effort, but also underscored disorganization. When I visited the Caribbean island as a member of Congress a few days after we’d gone in, I was told about an army officer who had needed artillery support. He could look out to sea and see naval vessels on the horizon, but he had no way to talk to them. So he used his personal credit card in a pay phone, placed a call to Fort Bragg, asked Bragg to contact the Pentagon, had the Pentagon contact the navy, who in turn told the commander off the coast to get this poor guy some artillery support. Clearly a new system was needed,” taken from *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 150.

for special and conventional elements to carry out their missions. Engaged combat quickly corrected the intelligence community's blunder, exposed pragmatism among soldiers and their superiors, and allowed for last-minute changes to plans. Although most tasks succeeded, to be sure, communication errors and bad intelligence caused some to fail in misfortune or embarrassment.⁶⁸ The fighting between the invasion forces and resistance over the span of a few days was also valiant, intense, and utterly frightening for soldiers and civilians alike.

One of Vice Admiral Metcalf's key objectives was to secure the Point Salines airport. In the symbolic first combat parachute operation since World War II, Rangers jumped out of C-130 planes over the Salines runway. Delayed by the SEAL mission and navigation problems, the Rangers risked exposure in broad daylight. Because the PRA configured the Soviet-built ZSU 23mm anti-aircraft at a higher altitude, the Rangers were able to parachute "under the radar," but only at a dangerously low drop space of 500 feet.⁶⁹ Haney observed, "The lead plane broke away, but the others just kept coming, and then we could see the Rangers pouring out the jump doors and into the sky. They were jumping at such a low altitude that their parachutes opened only a few seconds before they hit the ground. Goddamn, what a stirring sight!" After a few more C-130 passes, "the air was full of green parachutes dangling brave men."⁷⁰ In the midst of heavy anti-aircraft fire, two armored vehicles with heavy cannon, and soldiers spraying machine guns, roughly 500 Rangers daringly landed, assaulted across the runway, and effectively dissipated PRA and Cuban resistance under Tortoló's command. A C-141 plane then landed and the 82nd Airborne Division relieved many of the Rangers. A contingent of Rangers, however, stayed behind to locate students on various campuses. Others continued to push into the island's mountainous valleys, capture Grenadian and Cuban installations, and rendezvous with Marines. Grenada's hills were steep and overburdened special and conventional forces, and dozens collapsed with heat exhaustion. The heat and terrain made fighting in the jungle more dangerous and susceptible to casualties. One Ranger recalled, "there was more fire to contend with, steady and well-aimed, from positions that were cleverly placed in the surrounding hills. Whoever was up there, Grenadian or Cuban or both, knew how to fight."⁷¹ The invasion of Grenada was the only time during the Cold War in which American troops and Cubans directly fought each other. "He did a damned good job," commented Metcalf on Tortoló.⁷²

As some scholars and observers have previously noted, Grenadian and more so Cuban resistance turned out to be a "tactical surprise." Crandall writes, "Whatever Castro's instructions really were, the Cubans no doubt put up a fight, one much fiercer than the Pentagon's military planners had anticipated."⁷³ Journalist Hugh O'Shaughnessy adds, "Vastly outnumbered, equipped with

⁶⁸ Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144; Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 58.

⁶⁹ Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 146.

⁷⁰ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 302.

⁷¹ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 302; Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 55; Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 289; Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada*, 81.

⁷² Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada*, 80.

⁷³ Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144, 149. Historian Piero Gleijeses notes that, according to CIA assessments, the extent of Cuban adventurism in Africa, conducted independently of Moscow, stunned analysts. Cuban-funded revolutions and guerilla strength in Algeria, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola surprised many American covert operations and U.S.-supplied paramilitaries on the continent. See *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

hardly a fraction of the weapons and accoutrements available to the US forces and their Caribbean auxiliaries...the Grenadian forces and their Cuban allies were nevertheless ready when the US troops landed to put up a fiercer fight than Washington or any outside observer foresaw.”⁷⁴ The construction workers, supplemented by Cuban soldiers, certainly knew how to fight and confirmed U.S. estimates that they were militarily-trained. In D.C., Robert Gates, Deputy Director of Intelligence, wrote to Colonel North after the first day of operations that the intelligence community reaffirmed Cuban strength and noted the possibility of Cuban reinforcements on the ship *Vietnam Heroico*.⁷⁵ In Grenada, Humphrey disagreed, “The Cubans insisted that they were not going to get involved in this conflict...they condemned Bernard [and] refused to give any kind of military assistance...The Cubans really only fought in self-defense.”⁷⁶ Further accessibility of documents may reconcile these differing viewpoints or provide new insight into the roles of various groups of Cubans in Grenada.

On the north side of the island and around strategic coastal points, Colonel James P. Faulkner and Lieutenant Colonel Roy Smith commanded a Marine battalion team. SEAL Team Four first reconnoitered the beaches. Assisted by AH-1 Cobra gunships and CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters, Marines landed amphibiously and took the lesser-used Pearls airport with little resistance. Another Marines contingent attacked and captured a PRA fort. The Marines on land swept through the northern parishes and headed south, eventually linking up with the Rangers. One company was ordered to sail around the island and assist with the battle in St. George’s and help a SEAL team rescue Governor General Scoon, while another coordinated a beach assault between Point Salines and the capital. Cobra gunships, circling the jungle to root out resistance, sustained heavy fire from the surrounding hills.⁷⁷

While the Rangers secured the airport and Marines captured the northern portion, Metcalf also ordered a full-scale attack on St. George’s and southern defenses and to take out the anti-aircraft on the surrounding hills. Traditional and special elements were used. SEAL Team Six, supported by an offshore destroyer, used demolitions to destroy an enemy radio tower so as to cut off the island’s communication. Naval ships at sea and Air Force planes, supplemented by Delta Force gunships, then attacked Fort Rupert, one of the PRA’s artillery strongholds. Heavy fire turned back Delta’s A Squadron near the fort. Such aerial support was also critical to invading traditional ground forces.⁷⁸ “The first points of bombardment came from American battleships on the horizon and they bombarded the fort where we were,” recollected Humphrey, commissar at Fort Rupert. “I had seen several people killed. The chief of the anti-aircraft guns on the fort...was killed thirty feet away from me. There was an explosion and I saw a flash of light and when I looked around I saw his headless body on the ground.”⁷⁹ Numerous PRA members fled the fort while others hid in the barracks. During an airstrike on Fort Frederick, the

⁷⁴ O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 18.

⁷⁵ “Assessment of Cuban Forces in Grenada,” prepared by Robert A. Gates, 26 October 1983, CIA Freedom of Information Act Reading Room.

⁷⁶ Humphrey, interview by author.

⁷⁷ Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars*, 76, 79, 82; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 146; Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 5-6.

⁷⁸ Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 59; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 145; Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 303

⁷⁹ Humphrey, interview by author.

main military headquarters, an adjacent mental hospital was mistakenly bombed and destroyed. U.S. forces mistook the hospital as an enemy location because of its advertised flag, and PRA soldiers manned its artillery and fired machine guns on aircraft.⁸⁰ The attack on defensive positions and aerial bombardments still overwhelmed many PRA soldiers and islanders who fought. Scoon recalled, “There were the local boys shooting at the aircrafts but their shots couldn’t reach.”⁸¹ “I had a half-brother who was in the People’s Revolutionary Army. I saw him walking...and I said the bombers were too much for him and he more or less deserted,” stated Brizan.⁸²

The aerial assault on the southern half of the island was quite the spectacle for Grenadians watching from their private homes. To many locals, however, the bombardment was a haunting experience but also one with mixed emotions. One Grenadian recounted, “The whole valley was reverberating. A very scary thing...The bombing was a terrible thing. You’d hear the scream of the overhead bombers.” In a very close encounter, “A bit of shrapnel came in and sliced across the carpet and ended up in my parent’s bedroom,” they added. Some islanders used their faith to get through the assault. The bombardment was “quite a scary experience and of course being a religious person I prayed a lot,” confided a local.⁸³ Frederick mentioned that the Air Force jets were “daunting...When you hear them they feel like they are taking your skin off because they were flying so skillfully and low.” Frightened and numbed by the fighting, he expressed, “You don't know what to feel. You just want it to be over...It was like a long nightmare.” At the same time the bombing shook the island to its core, Frederick recalled that “You could literally hear people celebrating in their homes.”⁸⁴ This was a major surprise for ground forces in the capital under aerial cover. “We encountered this all through St. George's," said Thomas Brooks, assistant chief of staff for intelligence. “People were leaning out of windows and saying 'God bless America.'”⁸⁵

Some combatants and civilians observed individuals in the throes of warfare on the ground. Haney recalled the daring account of a helicopter that crashed near the coast, broke its tail off, and blades flew into the trees and hills. The pilot had been shot through the head, which likely caused the collision. Almost immediately, a Cuban patrol attacked the downed crew. One soldier was pinned underneath, while discharged hydraulic fluid blinded half of the crew. As soon as the helicopter engulfed in flames, three crewmates lifted the hulk up and pulled the soldier out to safety. Another fired shots and threw grenades to keep the Cuban patrol at bay. A relief helicopter eventually flew the crew to a carrier hospital bay.⁸⁶ One Ranger described getting out of another downed helicopter in the water, “As soon as we hit the shore we headed down the beach. We ran about 500 meters ‘til we linked up with the rest of the guys, and joined the perimeter. Scared the shit out of me!” Leonel Cairo, a Cuban worker, had orders to report on U.S. troop movements around the airport, “I saw the parachute troops landing. They

⁸⁰ Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars*, 82.

⁸¹ Scoon, interview by author.

⁸² Brizan, interview by author.

⁸³ Government official, interview by author.

⁸⁴ Frederick, interview by author.

⁸⁵ “Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983),” Naval History and Heritage Command.

⁸⁶ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 303-4.

grouped...and slowly began to engage in reconnaissance. The Yankee planes landed on the runway. I kept watching their movements. A few minutes later we were attacked. I had a rifle and shot back.”⁸⁷ In the city itself, U.S. troops snaked their way through the streets of St. George’s. They were “maneuvering through the drains on either side,” one Grenadian remembered. Some individual soldiers’ stealth movements shocked and surprised locals. An islander recollected, “I remember sitting on my parent’s veranda...I suddenly looked up and looked straight into a pair of eyes of an American soldier. It was the most startling thing!”⁸⁸ On Richmond Hill, just below the prison, Frederick and his friends watched the invasion forces near the coast. Witnessing a violent act, he recounted, “We were looking through binoculars and saw when the guy came out of the [American] helicopter with his hands up and the guy [resistance] shot him...And then he dragged him...there was a beach on the side and he dragged him down to the water.” Frederick conveyed, “It was a grueling experience.”⁸⁹

Like the SEALs’ classified task, another special operations mission ended in failure. Delta Force attempted to take Richmond Hill Prison by attacking the nearby fortress and releasing any political prisoners. On the day of the invasion a series of Blackhawk helicopters left Barbados and crossed the sea. “It looked like Vietnam. I saw all these helicopter gunships right in a row,” recalled one Grenadian.⁹⁰ Haney explained his initial observations, “We crossed the coast of Grenada on the backside of a rainstorm, just as the first light of dawn lit the eastern sky. The terrain was mountainous, with steep, jungle-covered ridges separated by deep, narrow valleys.”⁹¹ The impressive aerial view quickly gave way to some of the most intense fighting on the island. Brigadier General David Grange, in charge of the assault, coupled Haney’s initial skepticism and observed, “As we flew across the island in morning light, some people waved, some shot at us with AK-47s. It was confusing at first from what we expected of the attitude of the people...The mission was not very clear, nor were the rules of engagement.”⁹² Haney and Grange perhaps did not comprehend the invasion’s overall purpose but nonetheless followed orders. A series of sustaining rifle bursts and machine guns first found the helicopters, followed by heavier fire. “The anti-aircraft started to go off and the phones started to ring and the people screaming ‘Stop shooting! Stop shooting!’” remembered David, who was stationed at one of the island’s radio towers.⁹³ Anti-aircraft batteries successfully picked apart the incoming helicopters. “Parts of the helicopter were being blasted off. I could feel the heat of the rounds passing through the bird and near my face,” recalled Haney. “I had never, ever seen ground fire so concentrated and effective.” PRA fighters were, in fact, able to defend their positions with enhanced optical sights. Bullets ripped through Haney’s men, including the gunner and navigator. He also saw other helicopters take heavy fire, and one went down in a controlled crash. Notwithstanding the battle, bad intelligence indicated the wrong target, as the intended fort was abandoned. Badly wounded, the squadron flew to a carrier for immediate medical attention. Haney then boarded another helicopter to sweep the hills for resistance and assist the Rangers and 82nd Airborne. With the exception of SEAL Team Six and Delta Force’s B Squadron, all other Special Forces

⁸⁷ Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 272, 228.

⁸⁸ Government official, interview by author.

⁸⁹ Frederick, interview by author.

⁹⁰ Government official, interview by author.

⁹¹ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 294-6.

⁹² Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars*, 82.

⁹³ David, interview by author.

tasks succeeded as planned.⁹⁴

In addition to special operations, a conventional warfare task one day of fighting went terribly awry. 82nd Airborne troops, assisted by Rangers, were assigned to raid the Calivigny Barracks. Poorly planned, uncoordinated, and with little ground intelligence, soldiers nonetheless followed orders and embarked on a “suicide mission.” Boarded upon Blackhawk helicopters, several contingents performed an air assault on the compound. Due to operational confusion and a PRA-Cuban battalion with intense anti-aircraft fire, three helicopters crashed, three crewmen died, and over a dozen were wounded. It was clearly a misuse of Ranger abilities and special warfare and an embarrassing episode for the U.S. military during Urgent Fury.⁹⁵

After securing the airports and taking out defensive positions, the other main objectives were to procure Governor General Scoon and rescue hundreds of students, located at multiple campuses.⁹⁶ Before dawn on the 25th, a SEAL Team Six detachment swiftly made their way to Scoon, who the PRA had placed under house arrest, as well as his family and over two dozen civilians inside. “We heard voices shouting ‘Mr. Scoon! Mr. Scoon!’” recalled the Governor General. Grenadian fire poured down on the Scoon residence and pinned the SEALs to a precarious situation. PRA soldiers also used armored BTRs and besieged the SEALs. With few weapons and poor communication, the soldiers and the Governor General’s group could not leave. In spite of heavy anti-aircraft fire, Metcalf ordered Air Force and Navy jets to provide air support. Norman Schwarzkopf, Metcalf’s deputy commander for Urgent Fury, suggested a heavily-armored aerial Marine unit to evacuate the Governor General, his attended party, and the embattled SEALs. Commanders dispatched several Cobra helicopters to the residence, one of which went down in fire in St. George’s harbor. Marines landed, took out Grenadian positions, and assisted the SEALs in escaping. Scoon, the only legal representative left with constitutional authority in Grenada, then flew to the *USS Guam*, where he wrote a formal appeal of assistance to the OECS and U.S.⁹⁷

Initially unaware of more than one St. George’s campus, ground reports indicated that students were at both the True Blue and Grand Anse locations. Intelligence did not provide the military with a task file on the American-owned university, a clear logistical mishap that could have compromised the mission. The contingent of Rangers that stayed behind at Point Salines first went to True Blue and found a couple hundred scared but unharmed students. Schwarzkopf took the lead on Grand Anse. He ordered Marine helicopters to fly in Rangers behind PRA lines and use the same helicopters to fly students out. A medical student looked out their window and saw “something right out of *Apocalypse Now*” as a line of helicopters headed toward the beach. During the vertical assault, anti-aircraft shot down one Sea Knight helicopter. Needing additional seats to evacuate the students, a dozen Rangers stayed behind and managed to evade

⁹⁴ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 296-9.

⁹⁵ Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 57-58.

⁹⁶ These two events have been written on extensively in scholarly works and memoirs, including Scoon’s *Survival for Service: My Experiences as Governor General of Grenada* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2003).

⁹⁷ Scoon, interview by author; Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 59; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144.

the PRA and Cubans. The soldiers stole a fishing boat and headed to a destroyer offshore. Although the “rescue” operation took over two days, all American students and civilians were eventually evacuated and headed north. Whether in true danger or simply frightened by the island’s situation, many “students had nothing but praise for the U.S. military and nothing but gratitude and relief to be home safe.” Much of the intelligence community and politicians learned of these sentiments after the fact, and Reagan used students’ stories to his advantage to justify the intervention. One medical student, for instance, reflected on their situation before the U.S. invasion, “We thought we could be potential hostages. We just wanted to get out, if we could.”⁹⁸

Despite the fierce battle between Delta Force and the PRA unit at Richmond Hill, which heavy resistance repelled the Americans, many Grenadian soldiers abandoned their posts toward the end of fighting. Some threw away their weapons and uniforms and blended into society. Others were treated for wounds at local hospitals and makeshift medical tents. The prison guards fled, too, allowing some political prisoners to escape without assistance. Others were still at Richmond Hill Prison when they encountered an American unit looking for them. Whyte, an entrepreneur and former senator jailed for four years for openly speaking against the revolution, remarked, “I was totally unafraid. This is my country as much as theirs and I had equal right to do what I had to do to protect freedoms they said they would protect.” He and his prison mates had many near-death experiences. When Bishop was murdered, guards “came like mad dogs [and] cranked their guns up.” One pushed a machine gun into Whyte’s throat. He reflected on the power of faith while imprisoned, “We stayed them off by chanting spiritual hymns and by resisting them through the power of the spirit...My strength comes from within. They can’t find that. That’s why they had to lock you up and beat you and torture you and kill you.” He added, “In your own quiet way you fight them.” Whyte felt incredible reprieve during the American invasion, “They released me...The U.S. soldiers took me out...I never knew my name could have sounded so nice.”⁹⁹ Another political prisoner, lawyer Lloyd Noel, resigned as the revolution’s attorney general and was subsequently jailed for voicing criticism. Imprisoned for over two years, Noel stated, “No charge. No trial. No interview. No nothing. Just in jail 24 hours a day.” He lamented, “You don’t exist.” Like Whyte, Noel used faith to get through the ordeal, “Our job was consoling...the less-able guys.” A Roman Catholic, he held onto his rosary and shared his light-up cross with other prisoners. “That was our light,” he symbolically reflected. Noel remembered armored vehicles came up and American soldiers busted the locked iron doors. The soldiers guarded some freed prisoners and stayed the night to stave off snipers. A few prisoners, including Whyte, Noel, and Leslie Pierre, spent the night at Alistair Hughes’ home, a revered Grenadian journalist who was also detained. During the revolution Amnesty International apparently found ways to acquire information about Richmond Hill. U.S. intelligence also built a list of prisoner names, which the military used to locate and identify them. Noel visited the U.S. and lobbied for aid, “I had to start from scratch.” He and other prisoners testified before Congress and even visited the White House. “Reagan was seen as the savior,” he remarked. Venerating the decision to intervene, Hughes boldly stated, “Don’t call it

⁹⁸ Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield*, 129, 143; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 146-8, 153.

⁹⁹ Whyte also spoke on democracy and individual rights, “If you are really free you don’t have to proclaim that you are free. If you are democratic you don’t have to thump your chest and say that you are democratic. Your actions will prove who and what you are...It is repugnant to me to take away a man’s right because you can only unleash the creative powers of people when you give them the right to think.” Interview by author.

an invasion. It was a rescue mission.”¹⁰⁰ These types of statements reverberated around the island. Most Grenadians felt immense relief and believed the intervention was specifically intended for them, irrespective of U.S. foreign policy to defeat communism or Reagan’s sideshow objective to evacuate Americans.

Despite such celebrations across the island, some operations exhibited a clear Cold War picture. Along with the fierce battles between the PRA, Cubans, and Americans, psychological operations and interrogations exhibited some of the darker elements of the intervention and spread heavy anti-communist rhetoric. The Army deployed the 1st Psychological Operations Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Ashworth. Operating on “humanitarian” aspects and disregarding territorial ambitions of the U.S., Ashworth’s team prepared propaganda material a few days before the invasion. During combat operations a Barbadian radio station played taped recordings and a naval ship broadcast the team’s messages. In Spanish, the broadcast asked Cubans to not fight and give themselves up, reminding construction workers they could return to their families in Cuba as soon as possible. In English, the messages asked Grenadians to stay in their homes during the conflict to avoid harm but also assist soldiers in finding PRA members when possible. On the island, the U.S. took control of “Spice Island Radio,” as well as flew a helicopter with an attached loud speaker, spreading anti-Cuban messages. The team also plastered city walls with wanted and reward posters for hiding combatants and weapons, dropped leaflets from helicopters over parishes, and drove jeeps with speakers around the coastline and countryside to “Help send the Cubans back to Havana where they belong.” They also gave out green and blue handbills asking locals to join the invasion force and restore democracy. The unit also distributed a gruesome cartoon that showed two options for Cubans—bleeding corpses or surrendering soldiers. A good thing that occurred was that many turned themselves in, limiting the potential for more violence. Given the revolution’s direction and recent coup, the psychological operations team limited rhetoric toward the Grenadian population. “There is an anti-Communist feeling in this country right now. We would not want to do anything offensive or politically untoward,” remarked Ashworth. One poster, however, depicted several of Grenada’s Marxist leaders with red lines across their faces. Another showed word associations between communism destroying the country and another demonstrating the progress and prosperity of democracy. Absent from the broadcasts and posters was Bishop who, despite socialist leanings, many Grenadians held in nationalist populist esteem. While the team’s operation was fairly effective in Grenada, it drew criticism elsewhere. The unit disseminated a poster with a photograph of a half-naked black PRG leader with a psychological operations soldier standing over him, showing islanders they did not have to live in fear anymore. Although Grenadians had little negative reaction to the poster, it had blowback in the U.S. The *Washington Post* published the photograph, resulting in accusations of racism perpetuated by the military.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Noel, interview by author; O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 25, 27.

¹⁰¹ “U.S. Psychological Team on Offense in Grenada,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 November 1983, p. 1; O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 209-211; *Unpublished Collection on Grenada*, boxes 1-4, National Security Archive, accessed August 2009; “Review of Psychological Operations: Lessons Learned from Recent Operational Experience,” prepared by Christopher J. Lamb, September 2005, National Defense University Press, Washington, D.C., p. 104.

Concurrent with psychological operations, U.S. and Caribbean soldiers and intelligence officers rooted out and interrogated revolutionaries and foreign nationals. On his way to setting up a defensive line in the parish of St. David, the 82nd Airborne captured Chester Humphrey and placed him under detention at Point Salines, along with other PRA and Cuban fighters. Humphrey would be arraigned and released numerous times and later became a labor unionist leader. U.S. personnel searched extensively for other members in St. George's. Ferron Lowe recounts his experience:

I was one of the people taken out by the Americans...I was taken about five or six days after the invasion because there were different agents telling them who were involved...They mashed up my home...When they pulled me out they put me down in the street and put their feet on my head and my face on the bare street...They really terrorized my parent's house [and] took all my personal documents.”

Like Humphrey, soldiers took Lowe to Point Salines. Confined behind barbed wire with other Grenadian resistance, as well as Cubans who awaited deportation, Lowe was detained and sleep deprived for four days. Americans interrogated Lowe about his involvement in the revolution and his connections to other communist countries. “Eventually after four days they realized I’m not one the bigwigs,” he remarked. “The main thing was to break you psychologically.”¹⁰² Peter David, too, had been questioned. “I was detained on several occasions,” he said. “Certain persons were painted in a certain way [and sought after].” After a series of interrogations, officials released David and ordered him not to take part in any political activities. He recollected, “You’ve already been detained and questioned and you are...no longer a threat. [The Americans then] gave me a green card that permitted me to travel throughout my own country.”¹⁰³ Moreover, U.S. personnel had interrogated numerous foreign nationals, including Soviet ambassadors and Cuban advisors, as well as civilians from socialist countries. Over a period of four days, officials detained West German doctor Regina Fuchs, who had practiced medicine on the island for nearly two years, on Richmond Hill. She said, “I knew I was innocent. I had not been involved in politics.” Agents, assumed to be CIA affiliates, questioned her about politics, travel history, and involvement in East Germany, Cuba, and Grenada. After detention, a captain for the Caribbean forces explained that she had a little more than 48 hours to leave the island. “I was never charged or never told what it was I was supposed to have done wrong,” stated Fuchs.¹⁰⁴ Although these individuals held various political beliefs or positions under the revolution, Scoon remembered that many Grenadian officials, along with Jamaican soldiers assisting the U.S., expressed their desire to eliminate Grenadian hard-liners like Coard and Austin. “[They believed] the one mistake the Americans made was [that] they shouldn’t have brought them in alive. Better to save a lot of money and trouble,” he remembered. “But I guess the Americans had to play the rules of war.”¹⁰⁵ Altogether, Operation Urgent Fury achieved all of its intended strategic goals. Major Mark Adkin summarizes

Urgent Fury was an overall success politically and militarily. Communist plans for Caribbean expansion had been dealt a severe blow, ordinary Grenadians had been freed

¹⁰² Lowe, interview by author.

¹⁰³ David, interview by author.

¹⁰⁴ “Grenada Weighed Seeking U.S. Aid, Report Shows; W. German Doctor Tells of U.S. Interrogation,” *The Washington Post*, 21 November 1983, A1.

¹⁰⁵ Scoon, interview by author.

from an oppressive regime, U.S. combat casualties were insignificant, hundreds of students had been evacuated without a single injury, it was all over comparatively quickly, and American troops had been welcomed as liberators by many.¹⁰⁶

After combat operations ended on November 2, the 82nd Airborne and a Caribbean peacekeeping contingent stayed behind to keep order during the island's transition. Most troops left by late December, in time for the Christmas holiday. At the request of Grenada's Advisory Council and Caribbean leaders, as well as the Reagan administration's urging, a couple hundred U.S.-Caribbean forces remained through 1984 to augment police, leading up to the restoration of democratic elections and implementation of an extensive development program to modernize the island. In the States, Americans generally supported Urgent Fury. The disordered success of the operation, chiefly the intelligence blunders, communication mishaps, and special operations misfortunes, led to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act (1986), which streamlined command and emphasized cooperation during joint efforts, and the activation of the four-star unified U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) (1987). On the world stage, however, much of the international community condemned the intervention, citing violations of sovereignty and disregard for Organization of American States (OAS) and United Nations (UN) charters. Scoon's appeal and the OECS request, as well as the discovery of enormous reserves and warehouses of Soviet-made and Cuban-supplied weaponry, legitimized the U.S.-led operation in the eyes of American politicians and Eastern Caribbean leaders. Some Grenadians, however, disagreed with how the episode was conducted. Marryshow commented, "We were robbed of an historical opportunity to resolve a problem for ourselves that we ourselves had created." He added, "We need to honor the soldiers who gave their lives...in the defense of the country."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 333.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John W. Vessey added, "We planned the operation in a very short period of time--in about 48 hours. We planned it with insufficient intelligence for the type of operation we wanted to conduct. As a result we probably used more force than we needed to do the job, but the operation went reasonably well...Things did go wrong, but generally the operation was a success. The troops did very well." From "Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada, 12 October-2 November 1983," by Ronald H. Cole, Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁷ By the end of operations, 18 American soldiers died and 116 were wounded. Cited from Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 57. Grenadian and Cuban figures vary. For different interpretations on combat casualty rates, refer to Cole Blasier *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America, 1910-1985* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 286-7, and Crandall's chapter on Grenada in *Gunboat Democracy*, 106-162.

Retired General Colin Powell, who assisted with Operation Urgent Fury, wrote on the adjustments in military protocol, "Relations between the services were marred by communications, fractured command and control, interservice parochialism, and mismanagement from Washington. The invasion of Grenada succeeded, but it was a sloppy success," taken from *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 292.

Despite the intervention and short-lived occupation, the majority of Grenadians regarded the Americans as liberators and welcomed them with open arms. Many alleviated islanders perceived the soldiers as angels in parachutes. Indeed, the U.S. invasion answered the prayers of distressed and frightened Grenadians but also served Cold War aims. "The American government used this as an opportunity to seek their interests and at the same time look at the political implications of returning Grenada to some form of normalcy," commented post-invasion Minister of Education George McGuire.¹⁰⁸ American personnel were a godsend that overturned the chaos, relieved the fears of locals, and set the island back on track, even if it was a moderate path. "We were not treated as conquerors, but as friends of the people," remarked Colonel Faulkner. "Uniformly and universally, they were very, very happy to see us there," recalled intelligence officer Brooks. "I thought it must have been like it was a generation earlier, when Europe was liberated during World War II. We hadn't anticipated anything like that."¹⁰⁹ Private Rebecca Church, who assisted in seizing hidden caches, stated, "We feel really proud when the locals shout 'We love America.'"¹¹⁰ Grenadians confirmed how the island's population felt. "These people were so proud to point to the American presence in their little capital cities because [it] gives them a sense of importance," avowed Whyte.¹¹¹ Another Grenadian reflected, "I did not pick up an anti-American sentiment at all...I was glad that they came in...because I subsequently heard that my own name was on a list to be eliminated."¹¹² Frederick remembered people had no fear about U.S. soldiers around because they were "fed up with that during the revolution." At checkpoints and in homes around the island Grenadians of all ages blessed U.S. troops with gracious pleasantries, presented flowers, or provided cooked meals and fruit. "Grenadians treated the soldiers well...Wonderful camaraderie...They were a guest," stated Frederick. Groups of children, excited and fascinated with the soldiers, socialized with the soldiers or inquired about equipment. Patrol units on the street frequently stopped to join groups of locals in friendly conversation. Many U.S. troops, however, were careful to leave behind a good impression by thanking locals for their hospitality or wishing them well. Frederick even remembered American personnel visiting the museum where he worked and wanting to learn more about the island's history. Through the overall experiences of the Grenadian Revolution, Bishop's overthrow and massacre, the RMC's marshal law, and subsequent American intervention, though, Frederick solemnly expressed, "We were battle-weary as a people."¹¹³

As an interesting anecdote about the caches, more than one million rounds were found under a false floor in the Cuban embassy. The amount of weaponry captured overall was enough to fill a hangar at Andrews Air Force Base. Open to the public, anyone could ride a shuttle to examine the arsenal and documents discovered in Grenada. See Lynch, *The Cold War's Last Battlefield*, 147.

"U.S. Troops Pull Out," *The Grenadian Voice*, 17 December 1983, p. 1; Cheney, *In My Time*, 150; Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 60; Marrayshow, interview by author.

¹⁰⁸ George McGuire, interview by author, tape recording, 30 June 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹⁰⁹ Steele, *Grenada*, 415; "Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983)," Naval History and Heritage Command.

¹¹⁰ Although they had no direct combat role, American servicewomen like Church assisted with intelligence, logistics, and peacekeeping. The discovery of foreign weaponry further justified Reagan's mission. See "Women in Army pass the acid test in Grenada 'war,'" *The Grenadian Voice*, 10 November 1983, p. 9.

¹¹¹ Whyte, interview by author.

¹¹² Government official, interview by author.

¹¹³ O'Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 180; Frederick, interview by author.

The U.S.-led invasion of Grenada was certainly, then, in many ways an aberration during the Cold War, especially in the developing world. The U.S. often supported western-style democracies, repressive regimes, or counterrevolutionaries through direct assistance or backdoor channels. Regionally, the Grenada episode was a unique case in Latin America and the Caribbean. While many countries willingly accepted or appealed for economic aid, not too many places in the developing world resoundingly supported military interventions or openly received American boots on the ground.

USAID Officer Hariadene Johnson reflected, “I’d never been any place where Americans were not more popular than Grenada. They really and truly appreciated the fact that Ronald Reagan had sent the troops down. They did not feel that it was an invasion. They felt that the troops came to save them and they went out of their way to express appreciation to any American, tourist, government official, or what have you. At the same time, they were bitterly disappointed, because they felt that by coming down there that America had more or less adopted the island and why didn’t we turn it in to another Puerto Rico and that Puerto Rico was their symbol for success in the Caribbean,” *American Memory Project*, interview by W. Haven North, 8 September 1998.