The ruins of WWII witnessed a significant shift of historiography, which could be concisely described as the downfall of the era of great individuals. Ever since the world witnessed the disastrous impacts of dictatorship, academia took a more cautious approach towards the glorification of characters and subsequently commenced to reflect upon history research as a whole, calling attention to the very source of greatness: power, since it could be expressed in an astonishing large variety of forms: a twentieth-century dictator, an early modern absolutist monarch, or "Arma virumque cano", to name a few.

Imperialism itself could be considered one especially strong representation of power. Innately aggressive by definition[1], its branches also reached towards the economic sphere through "neo-imperialism[2]". However, a more subtle and frequently ignored expression of power through imperialism was its cultural, ideological and collective psychological impacts, namely the creation of barbarity; local receptions of foreign imperialism; the construction of national identities; and literary expressions of supremacy, upon which this essay would serve to discuss.

Amidst all attempts to validate or defend imperialist ambitions such as defensive imperialism and "the white man's burden", one concept emerged as of foundational importance: the empire as the embodiment of civilisation, countering the barbarism of foreign, hostile peoples. A distinct correlation of the proclamation of civilisation and the justification of imperialism could be uncovered through the analysis of multiple empires. Cast under historical light, the concepts of civilisation and barbarity[3] were more often a social and inter-cultural construction. It was the contacts and conflicts between cultures that invented "civilisation", since accusations of barbarity could transform enmity and xenophobia into unquestionable necessities, thus justifying any radical imperialist expansion. Although barbarism was nevertheless normally applied to describe nomadic societies due to their reliance upon more primitive means of production, as the notion of the "savage race[4]" was intrinsically artificial, the creation of "civilisation" within cross-ethnical empires could also be encouraged by the increasing need of national and ethnical pride in concordance to continuous imperialist expansions.

To further elaborate on the shifting notions of barbarity, its impacts, and its relations with imperialism, this essay would like to introduce the change in the power dynamic in imperialist China for further discussion. The term "Man-Yi" was coined at least as early as during the Han dynasty to indicate "the savage peoples" more collectively than earlier notions of "Man, Yi, Rong, Di[5]". By the flourishing age of the Qing dynasty[6], the majority of the intelligentsia regarded themselves as the most civilised peoples of the world, and the regime as "the Celestial Empire". Conversely, the Opium Wars firmly established the image of the late Qing dynasty as "the Sick Man of (East) Asia"——a weak, corrupted, opium-addict empire leaning on the verge of bankruptcy, and burdened with outdated Confucian doctrines that hindered its development and de-intellectualised its people. This affected not only European perceptions of China, but was a strong blow to Chinese recognitions of their own social and ideological norms as well. The West evolved to be widely viewed as "civilised", whereas traditional Chinese practices once accepted as societal convention——namely the notorious foot-binding practices[7], the bureaucratism integrated in Chinese political culture, and the majority of Confucian doctrines——became inherently barbaric through popular recognition in the eyes of the Chinese.

The aforementioned shifting perceptions of barbarity allowed this essay to attain deeper insight into receptions of foreign imperialism. The Boxer Rebellion reflected the rapid diminishing of confidence and pride in traditional Chinese culture, ideologies, and dogmas that derived from and in turn aggravated the turmoil of the late Qing dynasty. Clashing

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[1] Defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, imperialism refers to "the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation, especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas"

[2] Specifically refers to dominance over other nations through economic exchange

[3] The word "barbaric" derived from the attic Greek "βάρβαρος", which originally referred to "babbler", an onomatopoeic word imitating what Greeks thought of as unintelligible sounds of foreign languages. Incorporated into the Latin language as "barbaricus", the word became more discriminatory in its implications, indicating "foreign, strange, outlandish"

[4] Quoting Charles Churchill's "Happy, thrice happy now the savage race. Since Europe took their gold, and gave them grace!", *Gotham (1764)*

[5] In literal terms, the four concepts refer to southern, eastern, western, and northern barbaric ethnic groups respectively

[6] Referring to the successive reigns of the emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong.

[7] A practice derived from and exclusive to Han culture, frequent attempts made by Qing emperors to ban foot-binding met with almost absolute failure. This abhorring practice never faced serious challenge until the introduction of Western culture to China, when female emancipation was also advocated in the country. Indeed a truly and undeniably barbaric practice, this essay would still like to focus explicitly on the shifting public receptions of foot-binding, and its relations with the perceptions of barbarity in particular.

with all components of the Chinese social strata of the time, the most violent conflicts fuelled by similar losses of conviction broke out in the gutter, directed at Chinese converts to Christianity[8]. Atheism and reverence for secular authorities was well rooted in Chinese traditions, and the predominantly western character of Christianity further aggravated the conflict as sentiments of fear and xenophobia prevailed ever since the outbreak of the First Opium War. Amongst Chinese Christians, female converts attracted particular interests of both local authorities and missionaries of the time. Women who took oaths of virginity, such as Saint Agata Lin Zhao who famously commented that "Two paths lead to heaven: one is the maintenance of chastity, the other is martyrdom[9]", irreconcilably conflicted with traditional Chinese cultural norms prizing fertility, marital roles, and adherence to tradition. It also raised concern amongst men as women converting to a western religion could be received as a proof of incompetence, thus leading to emasculation anxieties. Overall, the advent of a progressive, technologically advanced West in the world of the Chinese commoner posed a challenge towards some of the fundamental beliefs that had long been held and passed down by generations, elite and plebian alike. This precipitated a loss of conviction, spreading common anxiety which resulted in either internalised fear or outwardly expressed xenophobia——in a word, foreign imperialism was received with the rapid polarisation and radicalisation of local confidence and self-recognition.

The mutual impact of the creation and validation of civilisation between different peoples within an empire furthered the construction of a uniform national identity further. A conscious process or not, establishing an imperial identity and the identities of all the empire's governed peoples not only distinguished friend or foe, dominance or subordination, but also left the boundaries of citizenship under a flexible obscurity that conveniently allowed occasional transgressions to take place, as in the cases of the Han dynasty and the Roman Empire[10]. However, "the second-class citizen" remained an issue, as discrimination, no matter how difficult to measure and assess, undoubtedly existed[11]. Hence, it could be reasonably concluded that the construction of imperial identity was also the self-recognition and reception of the more minor ethnical, racial, or religious identities of the different governed peoples within an empire. Although it could significantly promote uniformity under the context of collective psychology, as seen both in classical antiquity and from the Afro-Vietnamese troops deployed by the French army during WWI, it could not erase or eliminate fully the potentially simmering animosity between ethnicities, races, or faiths, as discrimination was often integrated into the imperial social order as an accepted convention.

The perceived supremacy of certain peoples in an imperialist world order expressed and immortalised itself in the field of art and literature. Orientalism, ranging from vivid imaginations of the *cariye* [12]secluded in the Ottoman Imperial *seraglio*[13] to concubines hidden from public view in the Forbidden City, from Japanese *geishas* to Manchu princesses, was the romanticised corpus of western imagination of a mysterious, or even seductive east, since the thin veneer of orientalist fantasies could not enshroud the fact that these women were not as thoroughly helpless or repressed as depicted in such works of art[14]. Imageries of the Chinese princess regularly appeared as a literary phenomenon, and from the transition of

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[8] It should be acknowledged that the experience of Chinese Christians during the late Qing dynasty——the ones later canonised by the Papal See as the Chinese martyrs in particular——was a uniquely violent one.

[9] The original line was "上天的道路，一是守贞，二是殉道", the translation is provided by this essay.

[10] The Han dynasty, although conforming to the norms of distinguishing between its "civilised" society and the "barbaric" Huns and other nomadic ethnicities, nevertheless accepted people classified as "Man-Yi" who were willing to conform to Han traditions and to achieve a *modus vivendi* with the imperial lifestyle. Similarly, the Roman Empire absorbed willing entrants, especially provincial elites and the literati. Renowned Jewish historian Josephus was eventually accepted to Roman high society after abandoning his cause of aiding the Jewish Revolt. Patronised by Vespasian who freed him from initial slavery, he was able to circulate his writings such as *Ioudaikē archaiologia* to a wider, learned audience.

[11] Josephus expressed his annoyance at the treatment he received from patricians due to his Jewish identity, and although the British Empire had banned slave trade in 1833, Afro-Caribbeans were still discriminated in the empire.

[12] Refers to enslaved concubines in the Islamic world, particularly in the Ottoman Empire.

[13] Refers to a harem in the Islamic world.

[14] Though the true conditions of the Ottoman Imperial Harem were strictly secreted from public view, historical records nevertheless shown that females could be bestowed with political power, and they were able to have profound and persistent influences upon the empire. The *Kadınlar saltanatı* witnessed *valide* sultans and *haseki* sultans, namely Hürrem Sultan, Mihrimah Sultan, and Kösem Sultan acting as the de facto rulers or co-rulers of the Ottoman Empire. The conditions of imperial consorts in Chinese dynasties were not dissimilar to the Ottoman seraglio in this respect, as in both cases females whose positions were in close proximity to the ruling monarch were normally held in high esteem at court, naturally leading to the formation of an "anteroom of power" around them that gradually established their considerable political influence. It would also be overly reductionist to assert that it was the Islamic faith alone that shaped the characteristics of Middle Eastern women, since its teachings could well be considered as ahead of its time under the context of the pre-Islamic *Jahiliyyah* in the seventh century. Islamic tradition did not deny the strong personalities of famous female Muslim figures such as "resolute and noble" Khadijah, Fatimah "al-Zahra", and Aishah, and the core characteristics attributed to these notable women well exceeded the boundaries of conventional

Turandot to Lo-Tsen, not only was the fall of Imperial China and the rise of Europe as world powers an obvious illation, the analysis of the depictions of such characters also indicates a lesser focus on behaviours and an emphasis upon their eastern, feminine identity. Consistent was this condition amongst western imaginations of Muslim females, often depicted not as individuals, but as similar soulless symbols. Nineteenth-century feminists, including Charlotte Bronte in her *Jane Eyre*, applied the imagery of the *cariye* to emphasise upon the independency of the strong European woman, since the stereotypical persona of oriental females comprised of obedience, helplessness, and recurringly falling victim to Islamic or Confucian dogmas under the eastern, patriarchal despotism. Rarer cases were Muslims or Chinese females being portrayed as initiators of despotism themselves——exotic, distant, dangerous, implying female transgression of power that had long been an object of fear amongst patriarchies. Yet such figures were still often passive in their pursuit of both romance and self-realisation, as their design primarily served as embodiments of exotic attraction. As such, orientalism as a literary phenomenon suggested a partially imaginal power structure heavily influenced by the conjoint dynamics of female passivity, oriental despotism, and the European imperialist world order of the colonial age. Conveying the perceived supremacy of the west and exaggeratingly portraying western civilisation as inherently more progressive, orientalism reflected, expressed, and furthered popular fantasies crafted by the colonial order. It was not the orient that fascinated so many and inspired orientalist imaginations. It was power, dominance, and self-recognition as supreme. Thus, the literary expression of supremacy was the direct product of imperialism, and orientalism was only one example, since similar patterns could be noticed elsewhere, namely in depictions of the Western Regions in Chinese literature of the Tang dynasty, as well as portrayals of female Native Americans in early colonialist literature.

In brief, although imperialism in humankind history could be interpreted manifold, the cultural, ideological, and collective psychological imperialistic experience indicated that imperialism is much more than a form of national expansion——it is and has always been a phenomenon that affected the mentality of both the victorious and the vanquished through establishing a power balance resistant of turmoil, at least in the short term. This shift in the order of world power encouraged a wave of self-recognition renewal to take place in concordance with imperialist expansions, leading to the standardisation and clarification of civilisation; the radicalisation and polarisation of locals upon receiving foreign imperialism, the natural and conscious construction of flexible imperial national identities, as well as representations of power in art, literature, and popular culture. Hence, the history of imperialism demonstrated how the milieu and the psychology of an era could be shaped by the contemporaneous military, political, and diplomatic world order, and that imperialism is an experience shared between all that have been involved——"The world is, of course, nothing but our conception of it."

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feminine roles. Aishah who was childless has been renowned in the Islamic world not for her maternal role, but for her sharp wit and learnedness, shown through "take half your knowledge from *Humayra*", her interpretation of the Qu'ran, and her commandership of the Battle of the Camel immortalised in popular belief.

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