

2023

VOLUME 27

VULCAN HISTORICAL REVIEW



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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The editorial staff is pleased to present the 27th edition of the *Vulcan Historical Review*. Last year, the *VHR* focused on marginalized and suppressed histories in a thematic edition that grappled with questions of race, racism, class, and gender. This year, the *VHR* authors and editors are proud to carry on this legacy of shining light into dark spaces, which is indicated through our cover art, “Flames in the Dark.” This artwork and the accompanying articles acknowledge how we, as historians, dedicate ourselves to exposing, grappling with, and sharing histories that are complex and troubling. In doing so, we hope to use our scholarship to illuminate the path towards a better, brighter future for ourselves and later generations. With articles from graduate and undergraduate students majoring in a variety of non-history fields, this year’s publication is one of the most interdisciplinary editions to date, representing the shared commitment to the pursuit of historical knowledge across a variety of fields.

This publication opens with a series of articles about individuals who were lights in the darkness, through fighting to overcome oppression and injustice within the systems they lived in and beyond them. We start with the winner of the Glenn Feldman Memorial Writing Award, a detailed and thoughtful discussion of the long struggle for gay rights in Germany. We then move to a work of comparative history about two extraordinary women who defied the status quo and changed history in the process. Our section on “Radicals, Rebels, and Revolutionaries” ends with a discussion of Golden-Age pirates, who turned to piracy to escape oppression and inequality, and another comparative history, examining the democratizing effects three different religions had on the ancient world. We then move to a section exploring how culture influences history, and history influences culture. This section starts with a vibrant exploration of the 1960s Disco movement, acknowledging how radicalism, activism, and popular culture often intersect in a myriad of ways. We then transition to another thoughtful examination of musical culture, this one exploring how music can be weaponized to perpetuate oppression, instead of fighting against it. We end with a piece on Mardi Gras and a film analysis of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, both examining how historical and cultural shifts often mirror and affect each other. Our third section, “Changing Culture, Changing Ideas,” builds on themes about the interwoven progression of history and culture. A poignant piece on the history of loneliness demonstrates how seemingly individual emotions are often

the product of broader historical and cultural developments, and an examination of antisemitism in medieval literature explores how literary mindsets reflect and affect historical developments. Finally, we move to perhaps the most important section of this publication: “Reckoning with History, Asserting Human Dignity.” This section contains two works, both of which grapple with incredibly dark moments in history and question how we must come to terms with and learn from these atrocities. Again, we return to the idea of “flames in the dark.” Regardless of the subject matter, each of these articles works to shine a light on a piece of history that was previously hidden in shadows and, together, work to illuminate the path towards a better and brighter future.

The 27th edition is possible through the incredible amount of support we have received from a number of individuals. First, we extend our gratitude to Dr. Andrew Baer, our faculty advisor. His constant encouragement and passion for history is an inspiration to us all. We would also like to thank our Chair Dr. Jonathan Wiesen, our Administrative Associate Melanie Daily, and our Office Services Specialist Jerrie McCurry for their continued support and assistance. We extend our gratitude to the Art and Art History Department for helping us find talented students and student artwork that beautifully complements the varying themes of this edition. We are incredibly grateful for our graphic designer, Tierra Andrews who, as always, did a wonderful job of bringing this year’s *VHR* to life and for the previous head editor, Alexis Cathcart, for her invaluable guidance and encouragement. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication of every author, editor, artist, and collaborator involved in this edition of the *VHR*. Their collaboration reminds us that history belongs to us all and that, regardless of major, age, race, sexuality, or gender, we all have a stake in preserving and sharing history.

Finally, we would like to thank the UAB Department of History. The guidance, wisdom, and constant encouragement that the History faculty have consistently provided has helped shape every article found in this publication and has guided yet another group of budding historians. We thank our readers and supporters for giving UAB undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to add to 27 years of historical scholarship that represents the department and the Chi Omicron Chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society.



RADICALS, REBELS, AND REVOLUTIONARIES

**NO LONGER
WOOL OVER
THE EYES**

by Izabella Janush-
Hernandez

GAY EMANCIPATION: THE EFFORT TO DELETE PARAGRAPH 175

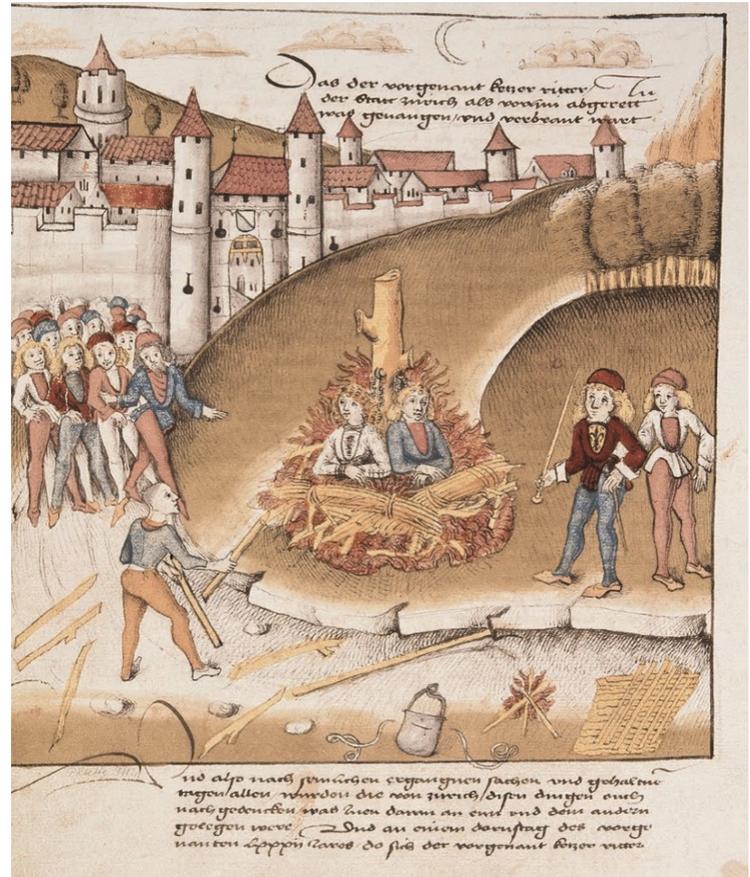
Luke Goodwin

Winner of the Glenn Feldman Memorial Writing Award

In 1897 Berlin, renowned physician Magnus Hirschfeld founded one of the world's earliest gay rights movements in response to German Penal Code Paragraph 175. The Prussian-dominated German government had introduced the law, which criminalized homosexual acts between men, to the German Empire in 1871. The empire had then forced states like Bavaria and Hanover to recriminalize sodomy, despite decades of its legality in those regions. Opposition to this attack on gay rights remained uncoordinated until 1897, when, led by Hirschfeld, several activists created the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (WhK). The committee stated their goal was "Justice through Science," via the repeal of Paragraph 175.

A Brief History of Homosexuality in Europe

The oppression of homosexual men in Europe developed over many centuries, accelerated by the rise of Christianity in the Middle Ages. Classical Rome enforced no statutes against sex between men, and it was generally not punished. The Romans ridiculed men who were penetrated during sex acts, evident in the Roman consul Curio teasing Julius Caesar as "every woman's husband and every man's wife," both for his infidelity and scandalous relationship with King Nicomedes of Bithynia. This sort of teasing was usually as far as discrimination went. Homosexuality in the classical world most often took the form of pederasty, or sexual acts between older men and young boys. Sexuality in the ancient world was not divided into categories of same-sex or opposite-sex attraction, but rather into a hierarchy of social and political power, in which a man would "prove" his authority in the patriarchal system by forcing the younger partner to perform sex acts. In Judaism, the stigmatization of



A knight and his squire being burned at the stake for sodomy. Zurich, 1482. Wikimedia Commons.

homosexuality emerged from the rise of ascetic celibacy as a whole following the Babylonian exile in 538 BCE. Yet, same-sex eroticism was not yet singled out as worse than non-reproductive sex acts between opposite-sex partners. Early Christians adopted the practice of sexual self-discipline into their own doctrine. Through the Roman Empire, Christians spread out from the Middle East, bringing with them a culture that suppressed all sexual expression, not just between men. By the Middle Ages, Christianity was the dominant religious

institution in Europe. Throughout this era, the church targeted same-sex intimacy more specifically. In the eleventh century, Benedictine monk Peter Damian petitioned Pope Leo IX to punish homosexuality as harshly as his authority would allow, and although his proposal was rejected, European nations only 200 years later punished repeat sodomy with burning at the stake. In medieval Europe, sodomy included not just anal intercourse, but also any sex acts “against nature,” or not for the purpose of reproduction, regardless of if the couple accused was same-sex or opposite-sex. In the fourteenth century, the church deployed inquisitors to torture confessions out of accused sodomites, including monks, nuns, and Templar knights.

In 1517 North Germany, Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation, but his popular new movement only guaranteed more harm for gay men who dared to express their love. The Reformation sparked witch-hunts across Europe as Catholics and Protestants struggled for power, killing each other, Jews, Muslims, and homosexuals. The Holy Roman Empire in central Europe served as the grounds for many religious wars following the Reformation, including the brutal Thirty Years’ War, in which Protestants and Catholics desperately tried to assert their institutions and beliefs onto the continent by force. Christians took on increasingly extreme stances during this age of crises and paranoia, drawing connections between demons, witches, and homosexuality. Leaders across the continent adopted anti-sodomy laws, carried by the fear of its association with witchcraft. By the Renaissance, leading theologians denounced sex between men as so abhorrent they claimed the devil himself would “[flee] with horror” at the sight of it. In the wake of the Reformation and witch-hunts, one nation built itself on Lutheran dogma, militarism, and absolutism, aiming to impose its values onto the fractured Germanic states.

Shadows over Germany

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, Prussia grew from one of many states in the Holy Roman Empire into the near-absolutist military kingdom that would shape the identity of a united German Empire. In the Middle Ages, central Europe was made up of hundreds of semi-autonomous electorates, principalities, bishoprics, and other states under the Holy Roman Empire. Among them were Austria and Prussia, two nations that engaged in a centuries-long “struggle for supremacy” as they vied to unify the hundreds of other German states under a common emperor, religion, and code of laws. Hohenzollern Prince Albert of Ansbach, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, converted to Lutheranism in the mid-1500s, making Prussia the first state in history to formally adopt Protestantism. Although the Austrian Habsburgs controlled the Holy Roman Empire of which Prussia was a part, the Hohenzollerns did not hesitate to challenge their hegemony on several occasions, due primarily to a difference in religion. Prussian victory in the Seven Years’ War wrenched the smaller German states free of Austrian authority and boosted national pride within Prussia. West of the Holy Roman Empire, massive legal changes dawned that accommodated LGBT+ people at a time when ‘sodomy’ still invoked the death penalty.

The French Revolution brought freedom to gay Europeans generally unheard of since before the reforms of Peter Damian in the eleventh century. France’s National Assembly wrote the French Penal Code in 1791, which “simply ignored sodomy—inspired by the liberal principle that the state should not meddle in private affairs—making France the first European state to decriminalize same-sex eroticism,” a mindset that Prussia refused to embrace. Three years after France passed its revolutionary Penal Code, Frederick the Great of Prussia began legal reforms to unite eighteenth-

century Prussia under one system of laws, which would oppress homosexuals for decades. Though Frederick never lived to see his plan fully implemented, his handpicked chancellor Johann Heinrich Casimir von Carmer created the Allgemeines Landrecht (ALR), a code to be enforced in all Prussian provinces, which was adopted by King Friedrich Wilhelm II in 1794. Although the ALR was progressive in some ways, even removing the death penalty for homosexuality, Carmer included ALR Paragraph 143, criminalizing gay and lesbian relationships. Prussian lawmakers rewrote Paragraph 143 in 1851 to only include male offenders, rewording the paragraph to frame sex between men as comparable to bestiality, a sentiment perpetuated into the 20th century.

Despite ideological differences between Napoleon's empire and the republic preceding it, the Napoleonic Code refused to punish sodomy as well. The Napoleonic Code influenced the laws of Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg, and Prussia's former ally Hanover, all of which decriminalized sodomy by 1848. Regardless of what the rest of the German world did, Prussia and Austria held on to their antisodomy laws throughout the nineteenth century, with Austria continuing the persecution of both male and female same-sex relationships. After Napoleon's fall in 1815, Prussia and Austria continued fighting to assert their cultural and political outlooks onto the smaller German states which had been liberalized by their time under Napoleon's empire. Otto von Bismarck, head of King Wilhelm I of Prussia's cabinet, dismissed the ideological differences between Prussia and the rest of the new German Confederation, saying "Germany does not look to Prussia for liberalism, but for power." As Prussia sought to prove its might, its government committed to repressive, conservative ideology in the name of internal authority at the cost of citizens' rights, including those who were subject to Paragraph 143. Prussia won the Austro-Prussian War in 1866 due to its large, well-trained, and loyal army,

annexing Hanover, Hesse, Nassau, and Schleswig-Holstein. With the North securely in the grip of the Hohenzollerns, all that remained was to take the South, and Napoleon III gave them their opportunity in 1870. The Franco-Prussian War provided the perfect conditions for Prussia to consolidate power over Germany for good. Less than two months into the war, Napoleon III surrendered to Bismarck, and, in January 1871, King Wilhelm I was crowned Emperor of Germany. The German Empire was born, dominated by Prussia and its legal institutions, including ALR Paragraph 143, which was reshaped into German Penal Code Paragraph 175. Paragraph 175 threatened up to five years in prison, one more than was under ALR Paragraph 143, for any erotic acts between men.

1890s Germany saw the gradual "parliamentarization of a semi-authoritarian regime," alongside a more medical and less moralistic view of homosexuality, giving some hope that change would be possible if the Reichstag could be persuaded. Courts across Germany interpreted Paragraph 175 differently, unsure about the innocence of the recipient of sexual penetration, while the crime the perpetrator was charged with could vary from sodomy to sexual assault. Confusion permeated the empire over what laws were even meant to be followed, until January 1, 1900, when the German Penal Code was formally institutionalized in all states. Amidst this chaotic rewriting of laws, activists worked to get Paragraph 175 deleted.

The Early Gay Rights Activists in Germany

Concurrent to the formation of the German Empire, some activists pushed for new understandings of sexuality. Hanoverian attorney Karl Heinrich Ulrichs published confrontational works in 1864 calling for the acceptance and normalization of "man-manly love" in places where it was already legal. These volumes invented a new label for those who felt same-sex attraction: "Urnings," defined as

“**As Prussia sought to prove its might, its government committed to repressive, conservative ideology in the name of internal authority at the cost of citizens’ rights, including those who were subject to Paragraph 143.**”

being neither male nor female, but an entirely distinct “sexual species.” Ulrichs described himself as an Urning, expanding on his identity in *The Riddle of Man-Manly Love* by writing “I have the beard of a man, my limbs, my body are those of a male. Inside, however, I am and remain a female”. This label emerged during a time in which gender and sexuality were thoroughly entangled, so although this definition aligns well with more modern concepts of being transgender, it is entirely possible that Ulrichs was using “female” to describe his attraction to men as being similar to how a heterosexual woman would experience sexual attraction. Ulrich’s new term helped lay the foundation for the perception of sexuality as something related to inborn identity, not criminal or sinful behavior.

Like Ulrichs, Hungarian author Karl-Maria Kertbeny tried inventing a new term for describing same-sex attraction, which would not carry the criminal or sinful associations of the word “sodomy.” In 1869, he coined the term “homosexual,” which, like “Urning,” was terminology intended to describe a type of person, instead of someone who committed a prohibited action. Berlin’s chief medical officer, Johann

Ludwig Casper, concluded “same-sex love was often a natural, inborn characteristic,” agreeing with the findings of Ulrichs and Kertbeny.

Amidst these advances in thinking about sexuality, the Royal Prussian Scientific Commission for Medical Affairs objected to the continued persecution of homosexual men in 1869, yet the Prussian government stubbornly ignored its own experts by retaining its ‘antisodomy’ laws. Renowned psychiatrist and neurologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, inspired by Ulrichs, advocated for the deletion of Paragraph 175 in his 1886 book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, claiming the law only encouraged blackmail. He continued to argue that the vast majority of cases of mental illness found in gay men was not a result of their sexuality, but a result of the stigmatization they faced from the law and the dominant view of homosexuality. Still, the German government ignored expert opinions. In spite of this, one expert refused to allow the suffering of gay men under Paragraph 175 to continue unnoticed.

Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld led the first campaign for gay rights in Germany. Hirschfeld was born in 1868 in Kolberg, Prussia to a Jewish family. He followed the careers of his father and two brothers by studying medicine. He traveled across Central Europe, before opening a practice in his hometown in 1894. Hirschfeld relocated to Berlin two years later, where he encountered the works of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing and became “the first physician to specialize in psychosexual diseases,” which included but was not limited to homosexuality. He also began speaking out against homophobic discrimination. According to historian Vern L Bullough, Hirschfeld was prompted to devote himself to defending homosexuality after the death of one of his patients, a young man, by suicide, after the young man’s family pressured him into an arranged heterosexual marriage. The young man bequeathed several notes and

“ **Ulrich’s new term helped lay the foundation for the perception of sexuality as being related to inborn identity, not criminal or sinful behavior.** ”

drawings to Hirschfeld outlining his internal struggles with his sexuality, some of which Hirschfeld included in his very first pamphlet defending same-sex desire. This pamphlet, entitled *Sappho and Socrates*, was published anonymously in 1896. Hirschfeld’s reputation spread across Germany, prompting ordinary men and women to come to him or write letters seeking answers to understand their own anomalous sexual desires or revulsions. Several courts called on him to give expert testimony in trials involving homosexuality. Hirschfeld was so impacted by the persecution and abuses gay men faced under Paragraph 175 that he dedicated an entire chapter in *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*, published in 1914, to sharing their stories.

In his efforts to stop the institutional intolerance of same-sex relationships, Hirschfeld primarily targeted German Imperial Penal Code Paragraph 175, but his influence spread far beyond the borders of the German Empire. Hirschfeld’s earliest efforts involved publishing pamphlets stating how homosexuality was inborn and natural, and existing laws should be changed to reflect this, an opinion echoed by activists around the world. In 1913, Hirschfeld helped found the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology alongside George Cecil Ives, Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, and several others in England. Ellis had already published a work in 1897, the same year as Oscar Wilde’s release from prison and the founding of the WhK. This work

defended homosexuality as no more harmful than any other abnormality and protested the law Wilde had been convicted under. Following his time stationed in Europe, an American soldier, Henry Gerber, created his own Society for Human Rights in 1924, one of the first gay rights organizations in the United States, inspired by the efforts of Hirschfeld and the Institute for Sexual Science. Together with Havelock Ellis and the Swiss scientist August Forel, Hirschfeld founded the World League for Sexual Reform (WLSR), organizing its meetings from 1921 to 1932.

The Love that Dares Speak Its Name

The release of Irish poet Oscar Wilde served as the catalyst for Hirschfeld to create the first organized movement advocating for gay rights. In 1895, the Marquis of Queensbury accused Oscar Wilde of being a “sodomite.” Wilde sued him for libel, but the opposing council proved he had engaged in sexual acts with a dozen other men. The court sentenced him to two years in prison with hard labor, the harshest legal sentence for “gross indecency.” The trials gained immense coverage across the continent, and according to Magnus Hirschfeld in 1932, “long after Oscar Wilde’s trial (1895), a homosexual was called an ‘Oscar,’ and to have anal intercourse ‘to Oscar.’” Hirschfeld often used Wilde in his writings as an example of the struggles gay men underwent. After being released in 1897, Wilde lamented to his publisher that he had been reduced to “a pathological problem in the eyes of German scientists,” possibly alluding to Hirschfeld among others. It was in May 1897, only days before Wilde was released from prison, when Hirschfeld, alongside the activists Max Spohr and Franz Josef von Bülow, founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (WhK).

The Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee in the German Empire



Karl Giese and Magnus Hirschfeld in 1934. Wikimedia Commons.

The Scientific Humanitarian Committee employed awareness campaigns and petitions to advocate for the repeal of Paragraph 175 throughout the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1897, the committee presented a petition to the Reichstag (the lower house of Germany's parliament) calling for the repeal of Paragraph 175 through the Social Democratic Party chairman and friend of Hirschfeld, August Bebel. The petition called for the repeal of Paragraph 175, and received thousands of signatures. When the petition failed, Hirschfeld and Spohr collected and re-released the works of the late Ulrichs in 1898. Together they also published the first *Journal of Sexual Science* in 1908, and in 1913, Hirschfeld founded a second organization, the Medical Society for Sexual Science. In a pamphlet put out by the WhK, reprinted for an English audience, Bebel told the Reichstag in 1898 "if the offences against paragraph 175—offences committed by thousands of

persons from the highest to the lowest—were really brought to light, there would be a scandal such as the world has never known," and he was proven correct in 1907.

The Eulenburg Affair proved the greatest challenge thus far to Hirschfeld's reputation and the work of the WhK. In 1907, the inflammatory journalist Maximilian Harden accused Prince Philipp Eulenburg, a close friend of Emperor Wilhelm II, of belonging to a group of homosexuals holding high positions of office. Harden's narrative also accused Eulenburg's circle of plotting against Chancellor Bismarck and isolating the emperor. Harden built his conspiracy theory mainly on the "evidence" of letters he received. These letters, written between Prince Eulenburg and Count Kuno von Moltke, contained affectionate pet names for each other and the emperor. Authorities tried Eulenburg under Paragraph 175, based on Harden's accusation, but subsequently cleared him of guilt. Moltke sued Harden for libel later the same year, but it was Moltke whom the jury found guilty of Harden's accusations, although poor procedure initiated a retrial. These trials became what professor Robert Beachy called a "multi-year media spectacle," reaching an infamy comparable to the trials of Oscar Wilde. Eulenburg's name, like Wilde's, also became a term ubiquitous with gay men. By 1909, the court declared Moltke innocent of sodomy and acquitted Harden of libel; Eulenburg's trial was postponed up until his death in 1929. Magnus Hirschfeld provided expert testimony for the trials, involving himself in a scandal which harmed his own public image. Participating in the trials drew unwanted attention from the press towards Hirschfeld and his efforts, attention which often had an overtly antisemitic bias. Critics accused Hirschfeld of sexualizing and effeminizing "normal" masculine friendships because he was Jewish. In the wake of the affair, Hirschfeld observed an increase in paranoia from the public over who might secretly be homosexual.

Hirschfeld's Institute in Weimar Germany

The end of World War One and the creation of the Weimar Republic allowed the WhK and other activists to operate more freely. According to Hirschfeld, it took “25 years of preparation” involving the collection of thousands of books and photographs until, in 1919, just after World War One and the end of the German Empire, he could open the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin. The Institute was more than just a library, offering marriage counseling and taking anonymous questionnaires from the public for Institute physicians to answer on particular days. It also served as a refuge and home for homosexual and transgender individuals, with Hirschfeld and his partner Karl Giese living there, as well as visitors and staff. Hirschfeld himself did not limit his advocacy to just gay emancipation; he was also a vocal socialist who supported nationalized healthcare and invited members of Germany's communist party to the institute.

Within the WhK, not everyone agreed with Hirschfeld's beliefs and methods. Adolf Brand and Benedict Friedländer seceded from the organization in 1903 to create the Community of Free Spirits (GdE). They challenged the concept of gay people having the opposite sex's brain or soul, instead suggesting that all humans were innately bisexual. In 1919, Friedrich Radszuweit founded the League for Human Rights (BfM) as a moderate alternative to the WhK and the GdE, attempting to improve public perception of LGBT+ people with respectability politics.

The same year as the creation of the Institute of Sexual Science, Hirschfeld cowrote and starred in *Anders als Die Andern* (Different From the Others), the first film to portray a gay character in a positive light. In 1931, one of the Institute's maids, all five of whom were transgender, successfully underwent one of the world's first sex-change operations from the Institute's surgeons. The maid, Dorchen Richter,

also known as Dora, received hormone treatment overseen by Hirschfeld, followed by a successful penectomy and vaginoplasty, the publicity of which established the Institute as the leading center for such operations.

In 1929, the WhK's awareness campaign almost paid off. The Reichstag voted to adopt a new legal code which would no longer include Paragraph 175. If this legal code had been implemented, Germany would have become the second major nation in Europe to decriminalize homosexuality after France. Though Hirschfeld and the media celebrated the adoption of the new set of laws as a victory of their advocacy, some members of the WhK opposed the new code, viewing it as “one step forward and two steps backward,” because the new law replaced Paragraph 175 with Paragraph 297, which raised the age of consent for men to twenty-one and made male prostitution illegal. The younger members of the WhK, led by Kurt Hiller, denounced the new law as an illusory success that would only enable more blackmail. Hirschfeld resigned from his role as president of the WhK over the schism, replaced by his colleague in the Institute of Sexual Science, Otto Juliusburger. Regardless of the WhK's consensus on the new laws, the Reichstag delayed its implementation indefinitely while a new, radical party rose to power.

Homosexuality and the Holocaust

From January 1933 onward, the Nazi regime destroyed most of Hirschfeld's progress. They targeted Hirschfeld not just for his Jewish heritage, but also because he was a socialist, a pacifist, and because of his work in the field of sexology. After Hirschfeld gave a lecture in Munich in 1920, Nazi sympathizers assaulted him so severely that when he recovered, he read his own obituary in the newspaper, published under the assumption he must not have survived. In 1931, Hirschfeld left Germany to travel the world, teaching in places like the United States, Egypt, Japan, and Palestine.

When he returned to Europe in 1933, he learned the Nazis broke into the Institute for Sexual Science while he was away and publicly burned the majority of his library, numbering over 12,000 volumes. Hirschfeld sought exile in France. In a Paris cinema in 1935, he watched a newsreel of the Nazis burning down his Institute as they called out “Burn Hirschfeld,” making him the symbolic target of their attack. Shortly after this attack, Hirschfeld died in Nice, France on his sixty-seventh birthday. His partner Karl Giese died to suicide in 1938 as the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, where he had failed to reopen the Institute.

The Nazis did not just attack Hirschfeld, they also persecuted homosexuality more severely than at any other point in the history of Germany. The Nazis amended Paragraph 175 in 1935 so that even kissing or looking at another man violated the law. Germany saw almost ten times more men convicted under Paragraph 175 after 1937. These men were subject to castration and being put in concentration camps by the Gestapo. The Nazi regime charged over 100,000 men with Paragraph 175, and upwards of 15,000 of the accused died in concentration camps. The Nazis targeted homosexuality not just because it went against their obsession with increasing the German population, but also because gay people tended to gather in their own clubs or bars, which SS leader Heinrich Himmler believed could be used for plotting treason if left alone. Additionally, some Nazi scientists appropriated the medical view of sexuality pioneered by activists like Hirschfeld and Krafft-Ebing to justify “curing” gay men with forced sterilization or the death penalty.

Despite the Nazi’s clear disdain for homosexuality, several gay men were drawn to the party. In 1938, Hitler orchestrated the assassination of Ernst Röhm, leader of the SA, the group which preceded the SS and protected the Nazi Party officials,

attributing it to Röhm’s open homosexuality. Before Hitler’s takeover, Röhm had even joined Radszuweit’s BfM, self-identifying as homosexual and influencing Radszuweit’s political opinions. After 1933, Radszuweit tried to placate his following by assuring them the Nazis were only attacking the socialist teachings of Hirschfeld, and the Nazi Party would soon repeal Paragraph 175. Heinrich Himmler proved him wrong by opening the Reich Office to Combat Homosexuality and Abortion in 1936. Röhm was not the only member of a gay rights movement to join the Nazis. Erwin Gohrbandt, one of the surgeons who performed Dora Richter’s sex change operation at the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, went on to become the Luftwaffe’s chief medical advisor, conducting human experimentation at the Dachau concentration camp.

Paragraph 175 in Divided Germany

Despite the defeat of the Nazi regime, Paragraph 175 persisted into postwar Germany. At the end of World War II in 1945, the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Soviet-occupied Germany, split into four sectors, later becoming West Germany and East Germany. LGBT+ people who survived the Holocaust largely remained in West Germany, East Germany, and Austria, but they did not find much acceptance in the postwar period. In response to a 1960 attempt to create a memorial for those killed at the Dachau concentration camp, the mayor of Dachau responded coldly with, “You must remember that many criminals and homosexuals were in Dachau. Do you want a memorial for such people?” This statement illustrated that homophobia did not die down simply because the Third Reich fell.

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) gained independence from its occupiers in 1949, electing Konrad Adenauer, cofounder of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), as chancellor. Adenauer, a devout Catholic, attempted to appease his supporters within the clergy by creating policies

which strongly promoted stable, explicitly patriarchal family structures in order to increase birth rates in the aftermath of World War II. These policies denied equal rights for men and women, leaving no room for those who did not fit into the traditional heterosexual family model. Churches and doctors alike praised the Third Reich for upholding “moral law” by persecuting homosexual men and other “community aliens,” even as other western nations such as France, Italy, and Switzerland called for West Germany to decriminalize same-sex relationships. The FRG underwent a series of reforms throughout the 1950s, and in 1958, the commission appointed by the West German Ministry of Justice reworked the version of Paragraph 175 used by the Nazis into Statute 363. The Allied Powers displayed negligence and complacency in allowing West Germany to keep any statute written by the Nazis. The Allies demanded all Nazi laws be abolished at the end of the war, but still let Paragraph 175 stay in the German penal code, thus allowing the continued persecution of gay men in Germany. Although convictions under the new Statute 363 were not as high as they had been in Nazi Germany, by the 1960s they were four times higher than in the Weimar Republic, at around 50,000 convictions. West German lawmakers, believing homosexuality to be learned behavior rather than an inborn trait, pushed the inherently contradictory idea that gay people were simultaneously so weak of will that they had been seduced away from heterosexuality, as well as conniving enough to orchestrate the downfall of modesty and public morality if left unchecked.

In 1969, activists convinced the Bundestag (West Germany’s parliament) to reform the sexual criminal laws. The progressive Social Democratic Party (SPD) pushed for Germany to be more progressive in the late 1960s, rather than cling to the conservative values of Adenauer and the CDU. Social Democrat Willy Brandt was elected as chancellor in 1964. The jurists Adolf Arndt and Barbara Just-Dahmann

“ **In response to an attempt in 1960 to create a memorial for those killed at the Dachau concentration camp, the mayor of Dachau responded coldly with, “You must remember that many criminals and homosexuals were in Dachau. Do you want a memorial for such people?”** ”

criticized the Christian moralists for their leniency in punishing Nazi war-criminals and attempted justification for continuing to criminalize sexual acts between consenting adults. In 1969, the FRG decriminalized same-sex acts between men over twenty-one, still keeping the higher age of consent suggested by the Weimar Republic and adopted by the NSDAP. Attitudes began to shift further with the release of the film *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt* (The Homosexual isn’t Perverse, but, Rather the Situation in Which he Lives), the premiere of which inspired the founding of many gay rights organizations, beginning with West Berlin’s Homosexual Action (HAW) in 1971. In 1973, the laws were amended again, and the age of consent between men became eighteen.

East Germany reformed Paragraph 175 faster than West Germany, but it still took effort from activists. Early efforts by psychiatrist and activist Rudolf Klimmer to get homosexuals recognized by the Organization of Those Persecuted by the Nazi Regime as victims of the Holocaust failed in 1946. The



Staged photograph of a Nazi SA member and a student selecting materials from the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin for burning on May 6, 1933. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

response to the riots and protests which followed the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 pushed leaders towards communist values such as respectability, masculinity, and the traditional family model. Within the German Democratic Republic (GDR), this initiated a wave of homophobic repression. The Social Unity Party of Germany (SED), East Germany's only political party, did not oppose gay equality because of religious moralism or eugenics, but because of the unfounded belief that same-sex desire had bourgeois origins and links to fascism, due to the existence of gay Nazis such as Ernst Röhm. Several GDR politicians, including the former Minister of Justice and the founder of the Stasi, were purged from the government for being "morally degenerate," although this was more likely an excuse for removing political enemies of Walter Ulbricht, leader of the SED.

Attitudes relaxed as the revolts died down, and the GDR stopped enforcing Paragraph 175 entirely after 1957. In 1968 they rewrote their criminal code to delete it entirely, with the East German Supreme Court stating "homosexual persons... are guaranteed the same civil rights as all other

citizens." This set a precedent not just for equality in law, but in society as well. The GDR followed up on this promise by replacing Paragraph 175 with the far less harsh Paragraph 151 in 1968, which restricted sex acts between gay men under eighteen until 1989, when sixteen was set as the age of consent for both homosexual and heterosexual couples. The legalization of homosexuality had an immediate positive effect. Physicians echoed Hirschfeld by publishing defenses of homosexuality as a safe, normal trait; lectures were given in universities about homosexuality as it transitioned from "a subject of expert knowledge to an issue of wider concern," and several gay liberation movements arose such as Berlin's Homosexual Interest Group (HIB), which was active throughout the 1970s.

The Legacy of the WhK

In 1990, East and West Germany reunited and confronted the issue of whether they would keep the remnants of Paragraph 175 still existing in West German law, or abolish it as East Germany had done years prior. In 1994, the Bundestag struck Paragraph 175 from the German Criminal Code, and the goal many had fought for since 1869 was finally realized. Chancellor Angela Merkel pardoned all men convicted under Paragraph 175 in postwar Germany from 1949 to 1969 and offered them compensation based on how long they had been imprisoned and how many times they were convicted, also giving a fund of €500,000 per year to a government-created LGBT+ research and advocacy group called the Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation.

Paragraph 175 was a cruel, senseless law that took away the lives and freedom of thousands of innocent people across centuries. None of the various excuses or justifications for homophobia given by different regimes, from the Kingdom of Prussia to the Republic of Germany, can account for suffering induced by this law. There is no excuse for hate, and

the only way to make sure the efforts of Magnus Hirschfeld and every other gay rights activist from Ulrichs to Klimmer were not in vain is to ensure that a law like Paragraph 175 never comes back into being. There is no guarantee that the progress so many have struggled to attain will not be erased, especially in the United States. The infamous “Don’t Say Gay” bill was passed in Florida last year, which, according to NPR reporter Laurel Wamsley, prohibits educators from discussing anything to do with sexuality or gender expression

in classrooms with students under ten years old, and permits parents to sue schools if they believe the law was violated. The American Civil Liberties Union has reported that over 400 bills attacking the rights of LGBTQ+ people are currently advancing through state legislatures, regarding healthcare access, freedom of expression, education, and in some cases attempting to outright criminalize the existence of transgender people. Lasting change is only possible if people stay active, remain vigilant, and learn from the past.

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EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN RULING MILLENIA APART: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

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Throughout the records of dynasties and kingdoms, an overwhelming majority of rulers have been male. Only recently have an increased number of nations welcomed women into government leadership. However, in certain periods, there have been exceptional instances where women came to power. This paper compares two notable cases of female leadership to reveal how women taking similar approaches to authority can yield different results. King Hatshepsut of the eighteenth Egyptian dynasty (1472–1458 BCE) and Empress Dowager Cixi of the Chinese Qing dynasty (1861–1908) had similar unusual roads to power and comparable policies of presentation. While they had definite differences in foreign relations and success, their fate in history is much the same.

Although these two dynasties inhabited vastly different cultures and were separated by over three thousand years, they faced comparable sexist power structures. Despite being one of the most advanced societies in the ancient world, Egypt during Hatshepsut's time was completely dominated by male rulers. In desperate situations, women were seen as transitory place-holders until a king could be secured. Their purpose was to co-regent with a young prince until he became old enough to rule alone. Seldom did a woman rise to the status of king in ancient Egypt. Commonly, the king's female relatives and concubines possessed privilege through their connection to him and were given titles such as "God's Wife" or "King's Mother."¹ In a similar manner, China's modernizing attempts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did little to quell its misogynistic tendencies. Women were limited to the status of Emperor's concubine, granting them meager influence. In both cultures, female consorts were in constant competition for the monarch's attention and the

“**Despite being one of the most advanced societies during Hatshepsut's time, Egypt was completely dominated by male rulers.**”

chance of prestige that came with it. As in ancient Egypt, the modern Chinese viewed women as temporary guides to child emperors. In face of these impediments, King Hatshepsut and Empress Cixi established themselves as leading authorities. Furthermore, they prolonged their terms in power well beyond expectations and thus broke long-standing patriarchal norms.

Hatshepsut and Cixi both ascended to the throne surrounded by death and political necessity. In the fifteenth century BCE, Hatshepsut was born the eldest daughter of the Egyptian king Thutmose I. This position granted her some authority and land through the priestly title of "God's Wife of Amen."² When the king died, his son (and Hatshepsut's brother), Thutmose II, inherited the kingdom. Through marriage to this brother, Hatshepsut secured her continued association with the throne. During their marriage, her value was determined by her ability to produce a male heir. However, she failed to produce such an heir, thus leaving the throne to the two-year-old son of Thutmose II's concubine when he died in 1479 BC. Hatshepsut then became co-regent to this illegitimate nephew, Thutmose III. In doing so, she outmaneuvered the boy's birth mother for power.³ This political strategizing demonstrates Hatshepsut's stubborn will to remain influential.

In contrast, Cixi, a descendant of a prominent Manchurian family, was chosen as one of the Xianfeng Emperor's

concubines in 1852, at the age of sixteen.⁴ Just as with Hatshepsut, emphasis was placed on her duty to bear a son. In fact, she was the only consort to provide the Xianfeng Emperor with a surviving heir. Thus, when the Emperor died, Cixi and this five-year-old son took the throne. While Chinese tradition prohibited consorts from interfering in state affairs, her son's new status granted Cixi prestige.⁵ Only a few years later, this son, Tongzhi Emperor, died at the age of nineteen. Cixi then placed her four-year-old nephew, Guangxu Emperor, on the throne and co-ruled with him. From the beginning of her reign in 1861 until 1881, Empress Cixi cooperatively shared her control with the late Xianfeng Emperor's widow and her nephew. The quick placement of her relative in power demonstrated Cixi's ability to keep not only herself, but also her family, associated with the dynasty. Both Hatshepsut and Cixi struggled to maintain legitimate connections to the ruling class. With the death of current male heirs, they risked losing their status and had to carefully circumvent contestations to their authority. Once they rose to leadership status, the women then had to employ equally unconventional methods to appeal to their subjects.

To maintain control of their kingdoms and avoid backlash, both dynasts took precautionary measures to quell opposition. In both cases, religion was used strategically. Hatshepsut claimed a personal connection to the god of life, Amen, and stated that he commanded her to lead Upper and Lower Egypt.⁶ Fear of and reverence for this god legitimized her position and prevented potential uprisings against the unusual female king. However, propagandist religion did not consistently support Empress Cixi as it did Hatshepsut. The long-standing Chinese concept of the Mandate of Heaven (the gods' approval of a ruler based on their fairness) constantly loomed over the empress. If the country descended into hardship, the ruling class was said to have lost the support of the gods, no longer possessing



Empress Dowager Cixi, circa 1890. Wikimedia Commons.

the Mandate of Heaven. This often led to rebellions and new government officials. Due to this threat, Empress Cixi carefully presented herself as "kindly and joyous," cooperating with her co-rulers and accepting foreign council.⁷

Another tactic used by the two women was propaganda in the form of monuments. This approach had varied results between the kingdoms. Hatshepsut placed many acclamatory inscriptions and statues of herself within the Temple of Karnak, a significant place of worship for all Egyptians.⁸ After her coronation, she also constructed the two largest obelisks in the world. These structures impressed Hatshepsut's subjects and were considered a sign of blessing from the gods.⁹ Likewise, Empress Cixi commissioned the restoration

of the prized Summer Palace, which had previously been destroyed during a British invasion (1856–1860). In doing this, she attempted to re-establish the country's dignity and assert herself as the source of such national pride. While this project had “symbolic value” in “wiping clean ... China's humiliations,” the empire did not have sufficient funds to complete Cixi's proposal.¹⁰ When palace reconstruction was eventually completed in the late 1880s, it was viewed as a useless diversion of necessary money in the effort to modernize.¹¹ Thus, Empress Cixi's efforts to impress her subjects were not as successful as Hatshepsut's, due to the different states of their economies.

Foreign encounters were another area in which the dynasties contrasted. In the ninth year of her reign, Hatshepsut established a fruitful trading relationship with the nearby nation of Punt. After several years of planning and using extensive resources, the expedition brought back goods such as incense and ebony. This success marked Hatshepsut as a “shrewd stateswoman and businesswoman.”¹² In the minds of the Egyptian people, Hatshepsut's economic successes improved her image once again. The same cannot be said for Empress Cixi. During the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), Cixi supported attacks on hundreds of foreign nationals and Christian missionaries from Japan, Russia, the United States, and several European countries, prompting intervention from outside forces. As a result, the Boxer Protocol was signed between China and eight allied nations, “allowing” numerous foreign troops to enter the country. This agreement, along with a series of other related unequal treaties, angered the nationalistic Chinese people.¹³ This event blatantly challenged the Qing Dynasty's Mandate of Heaven, specifically challenging the Empress Dowager.

When the two women faced challenges to their authority, they attempted similar initial solutions, but diverged later into

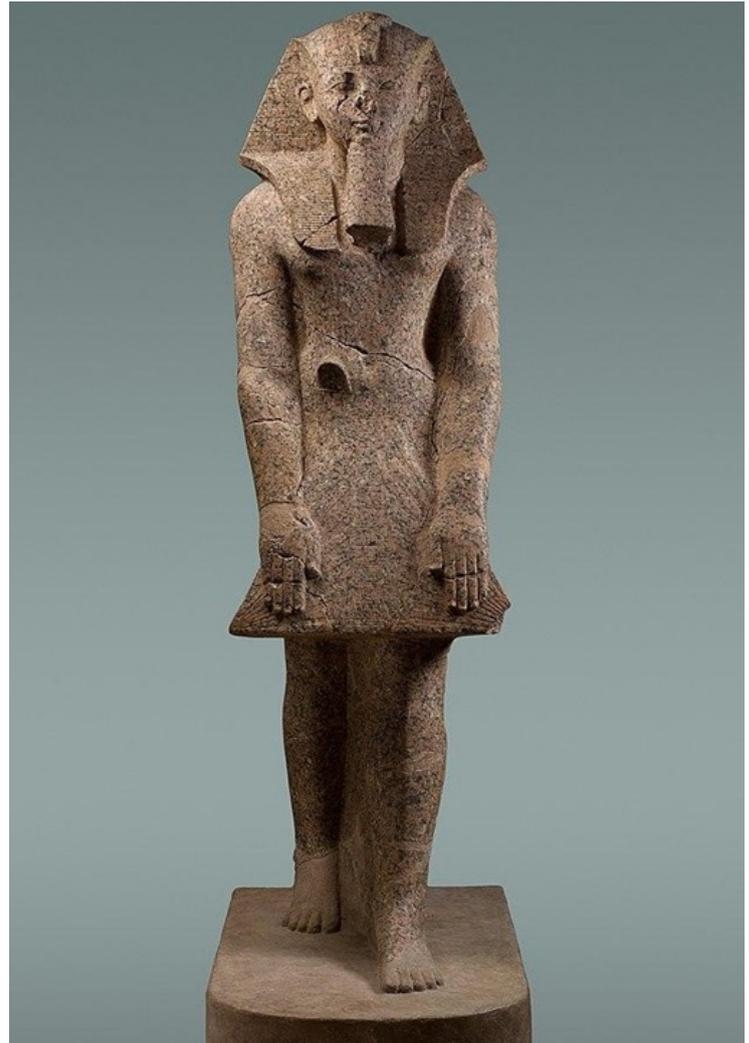
their respective policies. As Hatshepsut's nephew grew older, her purpose in the eyes of tradition began to wane. To remedy this, she began portraying herself as a man. Several statues and images depict Hatshepsut standing in a masculine pose, with male anatomy and a lack of feminine features, wearing men's clothing. This new appearance presented her as a respectable, elder male fit to co-regent alongside Thutmose III. This masculine identity did not challenge or emasculate the younger king, such as the presence of an older woman might. Similarly, Empress Cixi adopted masculine traits on a smaller interpersonal scale. According to one of the Empress's servants, she “always wanted to be a man” and expected to be spoken to as one.¹⁴ This tough persona gave her credibility when making provincial decisions. Although this image was not as intense as Hatshepsut's, both women's presentations show their need to present a masculine display of dominance.

Though both rulers presented themselves in similar manners, their approaches diverged when dealing with rivals and successors. As her career went on, Hatshepsut accepted her nephew as an equal. Through temple artwork and celebrations, she elevated Thutmose III to equal footing as a co-king.¹⁵ Until her death in 1458 BCE, the two ruled together in a “partnership of mutual dependence.”¹⁶ In contrast, Cixi rallied against her nephew's attempts at modernization and reform. She then had this nephew, the Guangxu Emperor, captured and placed on house arrest. As the empire began to fall apart, he died of poisoning one day before Empress Cixi in November of 1908. This coincidence led many to believe that the Empress ordered the murder of her own nephew, further tainting her image.¹⁷ The country was then overtaken by China's Nationalist party.

Although both leaders practiced similar techniques, their methods had vastly different outcomes, resulting in disparate

historical legacies. Despite leading her country through a prosperous era, subsequent rulers attempted to erase Hatshepsut from Egypt's records. After becoming the sole monarch in the wake of Hatshepsut's death, Thutmose III started a multi-year campaign to destroy all evidence of his aunt's power. He also curtailed future female access to power by limiting the influence given to anyone holding the title "God's Wife of Amen." Future kings became so suspicious of women's control that they no longer claimed "King's Wives." The wife's role was taken over by the king's mother because most monarchs believed she "would do nothing to jeopardize ... [her] own son."¹⁸ While Hatshepsut was alive, she redefined a royal woman's place and power in society. However, noble women were more constrained in the period immediately following her death than they had been in the past. Empress Cixi was also demonized after her death, but for her perceived failings instead of her unprecedented success. Due to several miscalculated actions, she was blamed for the empire's downfall. During a time when modernization should have been a priority, Cixi was concerned with preserving the past. She was labeled the "Dragon Lady"¹⁹ and later cast alongside many of China's other catastrophic women rulers, such as Madame Mao (Mao Zedong's wife, who tried to brutally overtake the communist party after his death). Though Cixi was not forgotten, she was recast as an example of "female failure," and a warning against allowing future female leaders.

Even in today's world, American female candidates for power face significant prejudice. In a 1993 study,²⁰ researchers Huddy and Terkildsen found that possessing feminine traits made candidates less likely to obtain a position in national office. Thus, women seen as "compassionate" and "family-oriented" were limited to local levels of office. Those who presented themselves as "tough" and "ambitious" were perceived by voters as more adequate leaders for higher positions. A similar masculine appeal was integral to



Statue of Hatshepsut in Masculine Garb, circa 1479 B.C. Wikimedia Commons.

Hatshepsut's strategy and added to her legitimacy in office. In contrast, despite occasional efforts to demand equal treatment, Empress Cixi maintained a "personal and feminine" appearance, leading others to believe she was not an adept leader.²¹ Cixi's femininity may have contributed to her being cast as a failure, demonstrating that women are often blamed for their mistakes simply because they are women, while men are not held to the same standard.

“ **China’s attempt at modernization during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did surprisingly little to quell its misogynistic tendencies.** ”

Regardless of their success, or lack thereof, both King Hatshepsut and Empress Dowager Cixi were viewed negatively by subsequent generations. Despite attempts to solidify and legitimize their status, future narratives failed to accurately represent their ambitions and accomplishments. Sexism challenged and hindered both women, leading them to unconventional methods of ruling. Despite thousands of years of evolution, prejudice continues to be an ongoing issue for today’s women. By comparing Hatshepsut’s and Cixi’s stories to the challenges women face today, it becomes clear that much improvement is still needed. To date, only thirty-

two percent of countries worldwide have elected a woman as the head of state at some point in their history. In many nations, the United States included, patriarchal norms have discouraged and prevented women from joining the highest ranks of government. In an attempt to break this glass ceiling, female candidates are required to portray and exaggerate masculine traits—traits that are often not necessary to be a successful ruler. Still, this tactic has been widely unsuccessful. As with Hatshepsut and Cixi, in the rare cases in which women rise to positions of high power, they are scrutinized and vilified more so than their male counterparts. This resistance leads them to take extraordinary precautions, which are not necessary for men. Despite arduous efforts and notable advancements, women leaders are often forgotten or denounced. As a result, before gender equality in government can be reached, countries must examine their basic assumptions regarding authority and re-evaluate the necessary aspects of a leader, placing less emphasis on gender and more on character.

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THE SEARCH FOR FREEDOM AND VENGEANCE DURING THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY

Haley Doby

Piracy is often romanticized in books and films, where pirates are depicted as roguish heroes or anti-heroes. Despite the popularity of pirates in media, most people know very little of the realities of piracy during its Golden Age (c. 1715-1725).¹ The period leading up to the Golden Age of piracy was a time of war and maritime revolt. This age of piracy began after the War of Spanish Succession started in 1701, during which, sailors were high in demand. The British Royal Navy impressed over a thousand men each year, only half of which would survive their service. Then, once the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713, ending the war, thousands of sailors were suddenly without work, and their already low wages declined significantly. In the two years after the treaty was signed, over 36,000 sailors were laid off.² The increase in sailors looking for work caused merchants to cut wages. It is not surprising that a number of these sailors took to piracy, both to escape their impoverished circumstances and to retaliate against those who caused them suffering. When we focus on pirates in the Atlantic and Caribbean, their acts of resistance against rich merchants and an oppressive society become evident. Piracy during its Golden Age, then, served as a form of rebellion that gave the lower classes and other marginalized groups the opportunity for freedom and equality.

When England joined the War of Spanish Succession, which was fought from 1701 to 1713, the demand for sailors in the British Royal Navy rose drastically. The Navy initially tried to entice sailors by offering them a few months pay upfront, but this typically attracted only naïve young men and those desperate for fast cash. Experienced sailors knew the money was not worth the backbreaking labor, poor long-term wages, horrible living conditions, and extremely high chance of death.

When the number of sailors voluntarily joining the Navy could not keep up with the demand, the impress service tried to make up for the shortage. A Royal Navy officer would lead “press gangs,” typically armed with clubs, who would abduct men from their homes and off the streets, forcing them to join the Navy. Often, these men already worked for merchant ships, but others were poor laborers. They were forced to work for reduced wages, which they often never saw. Sailors would try to avoid these press gangs by skipping town or by signing on with merchant ships, preferring to join merchant crews than fight in the Navy. These attempts did little good, as the Royal Navy often stopped merchant ships before they pulled into port and pressed a large portion of the merchant crew into service before they even had a chance to receive the wages earned from their voyage.³



A press-gang at work in a London street, 1779. Library of Congress.

Whether they worked for merchants or the Royal Navy, sailors had to fight to receive their wages. Merchants often tried to dock wages, using damaged goods as an excuse,

while the Navy issued “tickets” which stated that a sailor’s wages would be paid at some undisclosed future date. These tickets essentially functioned as “IOUs” and left sailors and their families in desperate need of the money they hoped to earn from the Navy.⁴ Sailors who could not afford to wait for months to be paid were forced to sell their tickets to debt collectors at a huge discount. As the government continued to accrue debt, their credit deteriorated, as did the value of the tickets.⁵ Furthermore, the risk of death while at sea was so high that many sailors did not even survive to receive their wages. Women had very few opportunities for work, which left sailors as the sole providers for their families. Since many sailors worked to provide for their families back on land, dying at sea meant family members did not receive the money they needed to survive.

Not only did sailors infrequently receive fair compensation for their labor, but it was a very dangerous job, often causing injury or death. The working conditions on both Navy and merchant vessels were abysmal. Hard labor and rough seas made injury a common occurrence, and the loss of a limb meant no work and no income. Sickness spread quickly, often caused by pests, contaminated water, or old food. In an effort to cut costs, merchants often provided less food than the crew needed, which meant that crews were often in danger of starvation and any unforeseen delays at sea could spell disaster.⁶ Crews frequently suffered abuse from merchant or Navy captains, as these captains ruled their ships with complete authority and doled out any punishments they deemed necessary. These “necessary” punishments often included brutal beatings, or even executions.⁷

Some punishments were especially cruel. For example, Richard Payne, a young cabin boy was brutally tortured for eighteen days after he was caught stealing a bit of rum from his captain’s quarters.⁸ The crew were likely horrified

by the captain’s actions but were unable to stop him, as the captain ruled the ship. If the crew mutinied, the captain could prosecute the offending members for piracy, which could have resulted in imprisonment or hanging.⁹ The captain was eventually executed for his actions, after several of the crew reported him to the authorities. While the captain’s execution demonstrates that legal protections did exist to discourage predatory captains, they were often ineffective. The laws were frequently unclear and, if a sailor could not find someone willing to act as a witness, it was a sailor’s word against a captain’s.¹⁰ Furthermore, these laws offered no protection mid-voyage, and sailors were unable to defend themselves at sea. Richard Payne’s story was an extreme case, but it highlights the power these captains held over their crew. The captain believed it his right to treat his subordinates however he wished, and the crew was unable to intervene to save their fellow sailor. Even though the crew was able to get justice for Payne, that justice came too late to save his life, which might often be the case in instances where the crews were able to utilize legal protections. While the brutality of Payne’s torture was extreme, it was not uncommon for sailors to be permanently disfigured, or even die from, beatings dealt out by their captains.¹¹ Inflicting harsh punishments was seen as the captain’s right, and courts did not always agree with sailors on what qualified as excessive punishment.

Many sailors turned to piracy as a way to escape the abuse and poor wages they experienced on Navy and merchant ships. Piracy during the Golden Age was focused on obtaining freedom from oppression and poverty, as well as declaring vengeance against abusive captains. Historian Marcus Rediker uses the term “social banditry” to describe Golden Age pirates because they protested systematic poverty and sought vengeance against their oppressors.¹² One way pirates attempted to break free of the oppressive culture they commonly found on board merchant and Navy ships

was by taking a more democratic approach, thus creating a fairer working environment. To create a more democratic environment, the pirates created articles or terms of agreement that pirates would sign before joining the crew. Pirates were able to review the articles and have a voice in what their lives at sea would look like, rather than being forced to accept poor treatment from abusive captains. These articles laid out who would hold positions of authority, how plunder and food would be distributed, how certain actions would be disciplined, and what rules would be used to maintain order while at sea. The very first agreement in the articles of Bartholomew Roberts, a pirate captain active from 1719–1722, outlined every man’s right to vote, as well as their right to fresh provisions. The agreement also specified that, if the crew happened to be low on provisions, they would vote on how to ration their supply.¹³ In contrast, crews on merchant ships were often given old food and short rations, which left sailors starving. Roberts’ crew lists both the right to vote and to fresh and plentiful provisions as the first agreement, which shows how important these rights were to the crew—and how often these rights had been denied them in the past. Every person on board the ship also participated in a common council. This council gathered to elect officers and to vote on any decisions the crew needed to make, such as the fate of their prisoners or where to hunt for ships. Everyone had the opportunity to debate and share their thoughts before they voted. This process ensured that all members of the crew had a voice in the matters of the ship.¹⁴ The choice to break away from oppressive captains and to instead build a better system was very radical, especially for the early eighteenth century. Pirate crews went from a system that required them to follow the captain’s every order to one where every crew member had been given the right to vote.

Because pirate crews strongly rejected the system that allowed captains to abuse their near-absolute power, pirate

captains were allowed a very limited authority over their crew. Pirates had several ways of keeping their captains’ authority in check. The crew elected the captains and could remove them by popular vote. The common council also elected a quartermaster. The quartermaster approved the decisions of the captain, again checking his power, and made sure everything was distributed equally.¹⁵ The wage gap between the captain and crew on a pirate ship was much smaller than it was on merchant and Navy vessels, and each crew member was guaranteed their share of the plunder. The quartermaster was responsible for dividing the plunder into shares for each crew member, the amount of which was determined by the agreed-upon articles. Crew members who had more responsibilities or riskier positions, such as doctors or gunners, were allocated more shares.¹⁶ While most of the crew received one share each, doctors and gunners received one and a quarter, and the captain and quartermaster could expect to receive two shares each. This system demonstrated the crew’s respect for pirates with more dangerous or demanding positions, as they were compensated accordingly for their labor. In his book, *Villains of All Nations*, Marcus Rediker describes this system as having been “one of the most egalitarian plans for the disposition of resources to be found anywhere in the early eighteenth century.”¹⁷ To summarize, many sailors, critical of how their ships were run, turned to piracy and participated in creating a new system where everyone could have a voice in governance. In the age of the Enlightenment, many men were discussing the possibility of a democratic society where all men could have a say in how they were governed, but few people actually accomplished this goal. Pirates, then, are an example of how Enlightenment ideals were successfully practiced on a small scale.

Pirates also set a sum of money aside for those who were injured. A pirate who became permanently disabled

would receive an amount of money as compensation and would remain a part of the crew, despite any blindness or missing limbs that might hinder their ability to work. The amount a crew member would be paid, and for what injuries, were typically outlined in the ship's articles. For example, Bartholomew Roberts' articles stated that if any of the crew lost a limb or became disabled, they would be compensated with 800 dollars, "and for lesser Hurts, proportionably."¹⁸ Pirates acknowledged that their way of life was dangerous, and they would not quickly abandon a crew member who had become disabled while serving the interests of the crew. The care pirates displayed for their sick and injured differed significantly from the situation on merchant or Navy ships, where, in the event if a crew member lost a limb, they would lose their job and have great difficulty finding employment elsewhere.¹⁹ Pirates went to great lengths to care for their sick; for example, Edward Teach, commonly known as Blackbeard, stopped trade at the Charleston Harbor until he received medicine for his crew.²⁰ These pirates built their rules and culture around providing for the common sailor, which was in opposition to how Navy captains and merchants ran their ships. The system of care pirates created demonstrated a consideration for worker's rights that was not widespread until centuries later. Because the entire pirate crew typically consisted of poor, working class people, it makes sense that the system they created would address issues they faced when working legally. The system was progressive, not just in comparison to Navy and merchant ships, but it was also progressive in general.

The Golden Age pirates had a deep mistrust of merchant captains and the wealthy. Their experiences with poor treatment and oppression made them feel resentful. While some pirates were content to break free from their oppressors and rebel against systems of oppression by building better, more equitable systems for themselves, many

other pirates chose to seek out vengeance against their oppressors. Samuel Bellamy, a notable pirate captain, made his contempt for authority known when he called common sailors "snivelling Puppies, who allow Superiors to kick them about Deck at Pleasure..."²¹ Further, he told a sailor who was unwilling to join him, "you are a sneaking Puppy, and so are all those who will submit to be governed by Laws which rich Men have made for their own Security."²² Bellamy's statements reveal his feelings of resentment toward both abusive captains and a society whose laws prioritized the values and desires of the wealthy over the needs of the working class. His contempt for both those who abused their power and the sailors who refused to rebel against it suggests that he saw violent rebellion as the only way to deal with an abusive authority. Further, these quotes suggest that Bellamy wanted the oppressed working class to rise up in rebellion with him, rather than submitting to corrupt authority.



Blackbeard the Pirate, 1736. Wikimedia Commons.

Pirates sometimes considered themselves "Robin Hoods" in taking what they could from the rich merchant captains²³ and redistributing the goods to their crew. However, a merchant was occasionally shown mercy if his crew defended his

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Bellamy's statements reveal his feelings of resentment toward both abusive captains and a society whose laws prioritized the values and desires of the wealthy over the needs of the working class.

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character. This situation occurred when the crew of Thomas Cocklyn seized the ship of merchant captain William Snelgrave at the Sierra Leone River. The pirate quartermaster beat Snelgrave with the handle of his pistol until Snelgrave's crew begged him to stop. Snelgrave later recounted how his crew was interrogated by Howell Davis, another pirate captain who had joined them. Davis' interrogation of the merchant captain's crew was intended to reveal if Snelgrave had been abusing his power and treating them poorly. When none of the merchant crew complained about Snelgrave, Davis expressed his disappointment in Cocklyn's crew for abusing Snelgrave, telling them that, "They should remember their reasons for going a pirating were to revenge themselves on base Merchants and cruel commanders of Ships."²⁴ Here, Davis contradicts the myth that pirates attacked merchant ships at random or for the sake of causing chaos; instead, he names revenge against merchant captains as the primary reason these sailors had taken to piracy. Even if the pirate crew was not taking revenge on their former captains, attacking any corrupt merchant captain was a way to take vengeance on the oppressive system as a whole.

Many pirates rejected the nations they once belonged to,

forming a nation of their own upon the decks of their ships or seizing a piece of land for themselves as a pirate haven. The pirate republic of Nassau, which existed from 1716 to 1726, is one example of pirates creating their own nation on land. Bellamy referred to himself as a prince with the right to "make War on the whole World."²⁵ Other pirates, such as Dirk Chivers, a pirate captain active in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea from 1694–1699, ceased to claim their country of birth as their own.²⁶ The nations these pirates belonged to often denied them rights. The Navy and merchant ships that abused and exploited sailors received support and sanction from the state, so it makes sense that pirates would also resent their nations. Rejecting their countries was also a form of rebellion for pirates. Just as they tried to create a democratic working environment on their ships, they also attempted to create their own nation where they could be equals rather than be subjected to abuse and oppression. There was a solidarity amongst pirates, which was often referred to as a "brotherhood." Pirates would sometimes come to each other's defense or seek vengeance for one another, such as when the pirate ship the Whydah Galley crashed near Boston, Massachusetts. Boston authorities imprisoned the survivors of the crash and subsequently hanged them. Afterwards, Blackbeard, captured a merchant ship from Boston, burning it in revenge.²⁷ The crew of the Whydah Galley was not Blackbeard's crew, but the pirate brotherhood and connection through this new national identity among pirates drove him to seek vengeance for them.

Women were not often involved in piracy, but many of those who were demonstrated a desire for freedom from the limited options presented to women in the early eighteenth century and from the oppressive expectations society set upon them. Two women pirates active in the Caribbean during the Golden Age were Anne Bonny and Mary Read. Read was born near London as an illegitimate child. Her

mother's husband had died at sea, so she was disguised as her deceased half-brother to receive support from the husband's family. Throughout her life, Read continued to take advantage of the opportunities cross-dressing offered; when she was around sixteen years old, she joined the crew of a British Royal Navy man-of-war, and later became a soldier in Flanders.²⁸ Bonny was raised in similar circumstances. She was born an illegitimate child in Ireland. Her father then dressed her as a boy to hide her true identity from his wife. Unlike Read, Bonny was raised in relative wealth, leaving her comfortable life behind to marry a poor sailor and take to piracy. Bonny and Read eventually joined the same crew and sailed under Captain "Calico" Jack Rackham in the Caribbean Sea. For Read, piracy offered an escape from poverty, while it offered Bonny freedom from the oppressive expectations placed on women.²⁹ Legally, women of this era did not belong to themselves, but to the men in their lives. Coverture laws prevented women from owning their own property or controlling their own wealth, as it legally belonged to their husbands or fathers. Piracy offered a way for women



Anne Bonny and Mary Read, who were convicted of piracy on November 28th, 1720 at a Court of Vice Admiralty held at St. Jago de la Vega on the Island of Jamaica, 1724. [Wikimedia Commons](#).

to control their own wealth, have autonomy over their own bodies, and have a voice in how they lived their lives. Piracy allowed them to seize personal power in a society that told them they were not worthy of it.

Some argue against understanding pirates as revolutionaries or "social bandits." In his essay "Well-Behaved Pirates Seldom Make History," pirate historian Mark Hanna uses Anne Bonny and Mary Read's silence during their trial as one example of pirates not being revolutionary, stating that, "If ever there was a moment for a speech about the oppression of women, that was it."³⁰ I disagree; the assumption that someone who experiences oppression could give a speech to their oppressors and expect their voice to be heard comes from a place of privilege. Women were denied a voice in every aspect of their lives and given no agency over their futures or bodies. The treatment of women as second-class citizens was not going to change in a courtroom full of men who had likely already decided Bonny and Read's fates. Bonny and Read's refusal to defend themselves in court, then, was not a moment of submission, but an act of rebellion. Any speech or defense they gave would have been ignored by the court and gawked at by people who could not fathom a version of womanhood that looked like masculinity. Instead, Bonny and Read exercised the only autonomy they still had by refusing to explain themselves to the court. Furthermore, Bonny and Read did not need to convince the world to change for their stories to inspire women for centuries after their deaths, even if that was the "right" time for a revolutionary speech. Foucault argues that the act of power must be intentional on a local scale, but the global impact of power is often unintentional.³¹ The long-lasting, widespread impact of Bonny and Read's stories demonstrate their unintentional power. Bonny and Read were revolutionary because they rejected societal expectations and carved out a place for themselves in a male dominated environment that was often hostile to

women. We often consider rebellion to be the act of trying to change an oppressive system from within, but leaving the system altogether and trying to create a better life elsewhere is also rebellious. Bonny and Read demonstrated just how effective this second kind of rebellion can be.

People are drawn to pirates in books and movies because they are exciting, and the idea of seeking freedom from an oppressive society is appealing to many; however, there was so much more to piracy than is portrayed by media today. Modern media romanticizes the lives of pirates, while the lives of working class people from this era are downplayed or just outright ignored. The radical aspects of piracy, pirates' search for vengeance, and their attempts to break free of

oppressive lives, are instead replaced with playful mischief. Pirates, particularly those of the Golden Age, tried, time and time again, to change the way sailors were treated. These sailors, tired of living with the ever-present threat of poverty and abuse, took to piracy to seek freedom and take vengeance upon their oppressors. Many did this by rejecting the nations that they were from and establishing their own nations upon the decks of their ships, along with creating a democratic system of voting, a more equal distribution of money, and compensation for injury. Thus, the lives of pirates during the Golden Age are more nuanced, and in many ways, more interesting than their portrayal today.

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THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF FAITH

Riley Reber

In the ancient world, most religions were polytheistic, with gods who were both local to specific people groups and syncretized with gods from other groups. A priestly caste was typically in charge of pleasing these gods and devoted rituals and sacrifices to their gods. Rulers, from the Egyptian pharaohs to the Roman emperors, claimed legitimacy by proclaiming themselves as the descendants, or even incarnations, of these gods. These ancient faiths have one more thing in common: with a few exceptions, they are all extinct. They have been replaced by the religions that are familiar to modern-day people. Among these religions, this paper focuses on Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

When these religions were founded, they were radical rejections of the status quo. The beginnings of these religious movements spanned over a thousand years, from the 500s BCE to the dawn of the Middle Ages. While all three religions have important differences, they are all part of a broader religious reformation that swept away the ancient status quo. The Buddha would revolutionize views of life and death and cast doubt on the necessity of godly worship. The temples of Zeus would give way to Christian churches. The Kaaba, once used by polytheists, would become the holiest place for the Islamic faith. What made these religions so successful? First, instead of rubbing shoulders with the rich and powerful, the Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad preached to the common man. All three religions created a democratization of faith. Instead of holiness being monopolized by the priestly castes and wealthy nobles, these movements opened the gateway of holiness to all, from peasant to emperor. Second, all three religions featured divinities that had loving and personal relationships with their followers. In this essay, I will analyze the ways in which earlier religions were monopolized by the



The Kaaba, Islam's holiest mosque. Wikimedia Commons.

elite. I will also analyze the features of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam that attracted millions. Specifically, I will examine how these religions attracted the lower classes in a way that few of the earlier religions were able to keep up with. Within the context of this paper, how is holiness defined? It is a comprehensive term encompassing a variety of things associated with religion. Holiness included, but was not limited to, the desire for the divine to heal one's child when they are sick; the security of knowing one's god(s) approve of them; a sense of closeness to said god(s); and a desire for a way to escape the troubles of the world and take solace in understanding the world spiritually. In short, "holiness" in this paper encompasses all the positive emotions and benefits

people associate with religion. In the ancient world, holiness was only attainable by a few.

In the ancient world, specifically the Middle East, Arabia, and India, the relationship between individuals and the gods was based on quid pro quo. Priests would perform extravagant sacrifices to the gods in order to get what they wanted, such as a bountiful harvest. This worldview is reflected in the artwork of these polytheistic religions. At the Temple of Bel in Dura Europos (a Roman city in Syria), the most prominent artwork shown, is of ritual sacrifices.¹ The Romans' conception of their religion would define their opposition to Christianity. After Christianity emerged, Rome "tested" Christians by coercing them to give a sacrifice to the Roman gods.² Since the worthiness of a sacrifice to the gods was often measured by how much was given, these sacrifices were inherently inaccessible to people without much to give. Furthermore, these sacrifices destroyed resources that people needed to survive, such as cattle. In this belief system, if a person needed help from the gods, prayers would not be enough. If you could not give the gods what they wanted, they did not care.

“ Instead of rubbing shoulders with the rich and powerful, the Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad preached to the common man. ”

An early critique of this system is found in a Buddhist text known as the Kutadanta Sutta. This text depicts a Brahmin (a member of the priestly caste in India) named Kutadanta. Kutadanta planned on a grand sacrifice of "seven hundred bulls, seven hundred bullocks, seven hundred heifers, seven

hundred he-goats, and seven hundred rams."³ While this story is likely exaggerated, the wastefulness of these sacrifices and their exclusive nature was sharply challenged by the Buddha. However, it is important to note that Hinduism at the time did have an alternative to ritual sacrifices: renunciation. This path to holiness required the renouncer to be "homeless, celibate, and [beg] for food."⁴ In doing so, they had to leave behind their spouses and children. While this alternate way was theoretically possible for anyone, only someone with wealth could afford to leave behind their loved ones who needed providing for. Thus, this path was not a viable alternative to the poor of India, who could not afford to abandon their families in pursuit of spiritual wisdom.

The story found in the Kutadanta Sutta illustrates how Buddhism was much more accessible to lower classes than its contemporary religions. When the Buddha is visiting Kutadanta's land, Kutadanta goes to him for spiritual guidance. His advisors tell Kutadanta not to go, as Kutadanta is "well born," "possessed of great wealth," and "advanced in years."⁵ Despite this advice, Kutadanta resolves to learn spiritual matters from a man of a lower status than him. This subversion of power in the story demonstrates a blatant criticism of the power structure of the time, showing that status did not necessarily correlate to spiritual wisdom. When Kutadanta asks the Buddha how to best perform the ritual sacrifice he intends to do, the Buddha responds with a story. In the story, there is a king named Mahavijita (representing Kutadanta) who intends to perform the same sacrifice. When he asks his chaplain (representing the Buddha) how to do so, the chaplain replies that a better sacrifice would be to use the money intended for the sacrifice to rid the land of bandits and distribute wealth to the people. When the king followed his chaplain's advice, this better sacrifice did not slaughter living beings or force people to labor for it. This story clearly shows that the "wealth" of the sacrifice is not as

important as a sacrifice's moral character. Finally, the Buddha takes his parable even further; when Kutadanta asks if there is a "more profitable" sacrifice than the one just described, the Buddha responds by sharing simple tasks that anyone, wealthy or otherwise, can do. He explains that not only is providing shelter for the holy a better sacrifice, but so is going to the Buddha or his disciples for refuge. He also explains that being pure of heart and committing yourself to righteous actions is a greater sacrifice than any amount of bull or rams. The Kutadanta Sutta is a perfect summary of Buddhism's criticisms of the religious status quo and demonstrates why millions of marginalized people joined the faith. They did not need to sacrifice a goat or fully renounce material things to be holy. Even just providing for the Buddhist community (called the Sangha) was a greater act than either of those things.

While the Buddha was the first great prophet of this religious reformation, it was 500 years before the next arrived, this time in the outskirts of the world's mightiest empire. Around the year 30 C.E., Jesus of Nazareth began his ministry in the Roman province of Judaea. He was a Jewish man who preached a radical message: that one true, loving God had come to save humanity from its sins. His message, which the Romans already viewed as subversive due to its monotheism, contained stories and phrases praising the spiritual nobility of the poor and criticizing the rich. One notable phrase is that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."⁶

Another parable Jesus told, the story of the widow's mite, had a similar theme to the Buddha's message in the Kutadanta Sutta and also illustrates the democratic nature of Christianity. In this story, Jesus and his followers noticed a charity box that several rich men donated large sums to. Meanwhile, a poor widow donated a small amount of money. Jesus told his followers that the widow had put in more

than any other contributor, because while everyone else donated from their surplus, the widow donated all that she had.⁷ Not only did Jesus applaud the poor, he also identified God with them. Jesus said that when God judges humanity, the ones that will be sent to Hell are the ones who saw Him "hungry and gave [Him] nothing to eat." When the people were confused by this statement, he explained that whatever they did for the least of God's people—the poor, hungry, and sick—they did for him.⁸ The ones who would ultimately enter Heaven were the ones who had given to the least of God's people. The message, therefore, was that everyone should treat their fellow people with compassion and that if they do so, they would be rewarded in Heaven. In Christianity, it was not a ritual sacrifice that brought holiness, but acting according to the teachings of Jesus. Being humble, loving your neighbor, and having faith in God were all accessible to everyone and gave every person equal access to salvation.

Given Jesus' message, it is no shock, then, that the poor and marginalized flocked to Christianity. Because of this, many upper-class Romans looked down on Christianity. In *Against Celsus*, the Christian writer Origen responds to Celsus, a Roman critic of Christianity. Celsus claimed that the Christians were inspiring laborers, whom he states are, "the most uninstructed and rustic" of men to think of themselves as wiser than their "betters" and to preach their faith according to this belief.⁹ This criticism of Christianity is truly ironic. The criticism Celsus makes of Christianity is exactly what helped Christianity outlast and replace the Roman pantheon.

The final religion in this movement. In the 600s, an Arab man named Muhammad received a vision from God revealing spiritual truth to him. God urged Muhammad to spread this message—but that was easier said than done. At first, his preaching seemed to fall on deaf ears. In chapter 26 of

the Quran, God calms Muhammad's frustration by offering advice on how to deal with his critics. To calm Muhammad, God tells him stories of past prophets, such as Abraham and Noah, who also struggled with criticism. These figures were supposed to represent Muhammad and mirror his struggles converting people. In one of the stories God tells Muhammad, people doubt what the Prophet Nuh (the Muslim term for the biblical Noah) has to say about the coming flood. Part of the reason they doubt Nuh is because his followers are "the lowest of the low."¹⁰ Nuh defends his followers, saying that any wrong they have done can be judged by God, and that he will not drive away true believers. God then saves Nuh and his followers from the promised flood, while the doubters perish within it.¹¹ This story demonstrates that, while some people viewed Muhammad's followers as lowly, they were noble in the eyes of God. This story demonstrates Islam's favorable attitude towards the poor, and its beliefs in practice demonstrate a favorable attitude as well. One of the Five Pillars of Islam (the foundational beliefs of Islam) is giving charity to the poor, something that is required of all Muslims with the means to do so. Instead of scorning the "lowest of the low," then, Islam advocates for supporting them.

Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism also uplifted women, as well as the poor. To be clear, the exact status and position of women in each of these faiths was heavily dependent on which sect they were in, and many would be considered regressive and misogynistic by modern standards. Nevertheless, each religion arguably left women better off than they had been prior. First, there is Christianity. Once again, Jesus' words, such as his praise for the previously-mentioned widow, speak volumes. Even though the culture of the time viewed women as intellectually inferior, Jesus taught women alongside men. Further, in his parables, there are several women protagonists, such as the woman in the parable of the leaven.¹² Not only did Jesus respect women's

spiritual capacity, but Christianity also offered a way for women to resist the patriarchal norms of the time. The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is the diary of a Christian woman named Perpetua who will soon be martyred. Her father, in tears, begs her to recant her faith, but she refuses. During this period, a woman was expected to obey her father at all times, when unmarried, and obey her husband when married. Perpetua disobeying her father would be considered a great offense. Yet the act receives divine approval when God rewards her by making her infant son "no longer desire the breast," so she does not have to worry about who will nurse him after she is killed.¹³ This story shows that Christianity offered a way for women to resist patriarchal control through the acts of their faith.

Islam and Buddhism also gave women more power than they had previously possessed. In Islam, the Quran proclaims that men and women have an equal capacity for piety by repeatedly saying that "men and women" who follow God's law and praise him will receive his rewards.¹⁴ Lastly, while the Buddha had relatively little to say about gender, he did state that women were equally capable of reaching enlightenment as men.¹⁵

While the accessibility of these religions was an important factor in their success, it was not the only factor. After all, the ease at which holiness was attainable does not explain why so many Christians were willing to be "thrown to the lions" for it. I would argue that the reason Islam and Christianity have lasted in the face of persecution is because of what adherents believe the Abrahamic God to be: personal, loving, and forgiving. In the Greek and Roman pantheon, their gods were petty, fickle, and cruel. In one story, the Greek goddess Athena turns a woman into a spider for a snide comment. This behavior stands in contrast to the God of Abraham. In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, God is likened to a father

with two sons. One son disrespects him and squanders his inheritance. When the son returns destitute, he begs for forgiveness and to at least be accepted as a servant. Rather than be angry, the father is overjoyed that his beloved son has returned and throws a celebration.¹⁶ God's radical forgiveness is a central part of Jesus' message. Thus, the promised reward of Heaven is what allowed martyrs to stand firm in their belief. The God depicted in the Quran has a similar love for his people. When Muhammad is conflicted and worried, God comforts him by reminding him of all the times he has protected those who preached his word.

Buddhism, meanwhile, is somewhat of an outlier. The original teachings of the Buddha, as well as the modern Theravada schools of Buddhism are not concerned with gods, and thus do not fit this category. However, Buddhism's largest school, Mahayana, does include loving divinities in the form of the Bodhisattvas. In Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who, rather than enter Nirvana (the spiritual goal of Buddhism), refuse to enter it until "all beings enter Nirvana together."¹⁷ To help achieve enlightenment, many Mahayana Buddhists venerate and pray to the Bodhisattvas for help. These compassionate divinities explain why Mahayana Buddhism is by far the most prevalent school of Buddhism.

This paper has explored the qualities that Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam have in common, which warrant them being grouped as part of a more general, broad religious movement in the ancient and late classical world. A testament to their influence is one of the few ancient pantheons that remains: Hinduism. Since Hinduism and Roman polytheism shared similar qualities and faced similar dissent, why is Hinduism still around, and thriving? I would argue that the answer lies in the bhakti movement. The bhakti movement "[emphasized] the mutual intense emotional



Mosaic depiction of Jesus from the Hagia Sophia, Istanbul. Wikimedia Commons.

attachment and love of a devotee toward a personal god and of the god for the devotee."¹⁸ Arising in the seventh century, bhakti poetry described a god in ways that would typically be used to describe an absent lover, giving the religion a loving, personal relationship with the divine that other religions were developing. Furthermore, many bhakti movements were open to people "of both genders and all castes," solving the problem that the Buddha criticized of the mechanism of faith being open only to the wealthy. In opening the doors of moksha to all and providing a personal, loving relationship with a god, Hinduism survived the reformation of ancient religion into the modern day, where it is more prevalent than ever.

Until now, I have focused on ancient sources and interpreting what their appeal to lower class people may have been. However, what may be the strongest piece of evidence

for my claims, and the inspiration for this paper, comes from a very modern source. In the jungles of Myanmar, an ethnic group known as “the Karen”, have been fighting for their independence, for over eighty years. The Karen, are a religiously diverse group. Some within this group follow the old gods, while others have converted to and follow Baptist Christianity. An unnamed man was the first in his village to be baptized. In *The Longest Struggle: The Karen of Burma*, he explains why he did so: “We used to perform sacrifices

when we were sick,” he says. “If we had no chicken, we had to find one. So, if we were poor, it was difficult for us. Now we worship God, we don’t have to perform sacrifices, so it’s a little better.”¹⁹ Being a Christian helped this man improve his family’s standard of living, in ways that other religions could not. His experience demonstrates the great power and influence of Christianity, and reminds us that religious studies are not just the realm of bookshelves and universities, but also of kitchen tables and small villages.

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HISTORY AND POPULAR CULTURE



SUN-RA

by Ellis Goldstein

BLAME IT ON THE BOOGIE: THE STORY OF THE RISE AND FALL OF DISCO

Devin Hudson

Introduction

This project originated on a trip to Atlanta for a surprise birthday party. I had been placed in charge of the music and decided to put on some old-school songs. “Somebody Else’s Guy” by Joycelyn Brown played and created a new interest in me.ⁱ I decided to go and check the genre of the song and discovered that it belonged to Post-disco. I became intrigued because I had never heard of Post-disco. Upon doing further research I learned that Post-disco was used to describe a period of American music that started with an event dubbed as “Disco Demolition Night,” which occurred on July 12, 1979 at Comiskey Park in Chicago, Illinois.ⁱⁱ Disco Demolition Night is known as the culmination of Disco hate. Opponents of the genre hated Disco because of its over-commercialization and how it represented the mass liberation of Blacks, Latinos, gays and women. I found that this characterization does not match the literal definition of Disco, which means that this is a mislabeling. This paper shows how the assigned labels placed on Disco along with its over-commercialization led to increased Disco hate and Disco Demolition Night and only serves as glimpse of the rise and fall of Disco in the 1970’s.

Post-disco is also referred to as “boogie”. Boogie has been used to describe a style of dance. The title of this paper originated from a song performed by The Jackson 5, “Blame It On The Boogie,” released in 1978. I use this title as a double entendre because the song is listed in the Disco genre, but I also use the title to emphasize the power that Disco had socially. Lead singer Michael Jackson laments the strain that Disco has put on his relationship.ⁱⁱⁱ Boogie is proving to be much too strong for Jackson to compete with, leaving Jackson to place the blame on the art form.

“Disco” in its capitalized form intends to refer to a broader meaning, including the genre, era and the message. “Disco” in lowercase refers to a tangible definition, such as a building or a record.

Blame it on the Boogie

Fans and opposers mislabeling Disco, along with the over-commercialization of the genre, led to increased hate, culminating in the event known as “Disco Demolition Night.” Disco represented the mass liberation of gays, Blacks, Latinos and women.^{iv} The Disco era became a utopia for these social pariahs.

The word “disco” derives from the word “discothèque,” a French word used to describe the nightclubs scene in Europe. “Discothèque dress” became used in 1964 to describe a popular short sleeve dress in America.^v The word was then shortened to “disco” when an April edition of Playboy magazine began to cover the fashion trend, giving birth to a genre and, subsequently, a new culture.^{vi}

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Producers had become plastic surgeons for vinyl bodies.

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Although Disco did not set out to attract any particular groups, except regular partygoers, gay people were a regular and increasing population at these clubs. The aura complimented all of their physical and emotional desires, and welcomed them in on a nightly basis. In general, clubs allow individuals to remove their daily baggage and slip into a groove, free of greater responsibility. Disco allowed

gay people to do this at a more sufficient rate. While most gay individuals felt required to mask their sexuality in their everyday lives, they were now in a space that promoted and fed off it. The challenge became being more gay than the next person. Perhaps if you were not gay enough, you could be rejected from entering the club, ending your night before it could even get started. This was certainly the case at clubs like the Loft and Studio 54, the two most popular discothèques in New York.^{vii}

An important development in the gay liberation movement came June 17, 1969, nearly ten years before Disco Demolition Night. It was customary for the police to make monetary arrangements with mob bosses, allowing club owners to conduct business, despite city ordinances and statutes. It was illegal for men to dance with other men.^{viii} It was also illegal for clubs and bars to sell alcoholic drinks to homosexuals, but that measure had been overruled by law enforcement.^{ix} New York's finest would allow the bending of these rules as long as they received the necessary paperwork—green paperwork adorned with president faces. A missed payment resulted in the raid of the Stonewall Inn disco club that evening in June.^x Although officers may have thought the raid would stymie the growth of Disco, the opposite occurred. Disco was spreading fast, and it was only the beginning. When one disco would succumb to extinction, another would open its arms, welcoming in the “limp wrist,”^{xi} a slang term used to codify flamboyant homosexuals.

Leaving behind low-tier discos did not come without penalty. Disco was becoming more commercial by the minute, and as gay grew, so did Disco. As mentioned earlier, being gay enough got you into the club, but this was about to change. Disco was receiving a facelift. Heterosexual guests began to experience Disco, removing the exclusivity that was common in most clubs. Many wanted to enjoy a good time, with good



Grace Jones, a regular at the most popular disco club, Studio 54 in New York. Courtesy of *NY Daily News*.

music and good people. However, they did not come dressed in familiar disco attire. They arrived well-groomed and in vibrant, tailored suits. They showed up to even more elaborate decorations. Large disco balls hung from the ceiling, and expensive lights were scattered about the club. It was becoming more apparent that the game was changing, and one would need to change with it. Participants were beginning to notice the growth of gay and discos and were excited by it.^{xii}

Disco, by now, was in full swing. There was the scene and the vibe that attracted gay people, along with the music that attracted other minorities, namely Blacks and Latinos. Black people, historically, have been given the arduous task of navigating life under uncomfortable circumstances.

Beginning with their arrival in North America in the early 1600s, through the modern civil rights movement of the 1960s, and continuing with present-day brutality at the hands of police, discrimination has been a dominant theme in the journey of African-Americans. Yet, Blacks have still managed to find a way for themselves, especially socially and artistically. During the 1960s, protest songs dominated the air waves, thus defining the civil rights movement. Black people collectively closed their eyes and hoped with Sam Cooke as he envisioned and promised change through song.^{xiii} Another example of Black musical liberation can be found in James Brown creating a five-minute Black power testimonial in 1968, announcing the power and prestige of his race.^{xiv} Almost anyone, regardless of race or sex, could exist within Disco. Demonstrative protest was the thing then, but Disco was a different song. The party moved from the streets to the clubs.



Radio DJ Steve Dahl standing next to a large box of disco records on Disco Demolition Night. Courtesy of *The Guardian*.

Many discos intended to stay authentic, providing an outlet for an energetic and rhythmic population. Promoters and owners would still do much of the leg work for their venues, creating the most socially accepting environment possible.^{xv} However, the DJ's did not find the same fortune. Their success became dependent on the crowd's enjoyment. This

meant updated equipment, which was met with updated prices. Some discos failed to meet this expectation and found themselves shutting down.^{xvi} Others adapted and created new atmospheres for their guests. Song selection became the single most important factor to the success of a disco. Practically all discos consisted of public sex and drugs, but the music is what drove the moment. The DJ assumed the responsibility of keeping people on the dance floor, but they needed help, and help they did receive. A shift was beginning in the music industry. Instead of the common three-minute records listeners were accustomed to hearing on the radios, music label executives came upon an interesting discovery—the longer the song plays, the longer a person is able to dance to it. Donna Summer was already the most popular female disco artist of the era and her seventeen-minute orgasm only helped to maintain her elite status.^{xvii} Even R&B and Soul singer Marvin Gaye, at the request of his music label, created a twelve-minute disco record, which became a number one hit in 1977.^{xviii} Gaye's song was a response to "Disco Lady" by Johnnie Taylor, the first song ever certified platinum by the RIAA [Recording Industry of Association of America], as well as the first song to ever top Billboard Hot 100 charts with "disco" in its title.^{xix} Although not nearly long as the hits by Gaye and Summer, just having any mention of disco certainly helped the popularity of Taylor's song, furthering the power and reach of the genre. Needless to say, if you did not have a hit on Billboard, you did not have what labels were looking for. Music executives began a race to pump out the next great hit that would load their pockets. The over-commercialization of Disco was on its way, and the repercussions were behind it.

The mass liberation of gays, Blacks and Latinos cannot be summed up with one song. One could make a case, however, that "I Will Survive," performed by Gloria Gaynor, offers a strong summation concerning the message of the movement. The eight-minute declaration holds power that all

minorities could identify and cling to.^{xx} The song was hailed for its minimal production, representative of the early stages of Disco. Many Disco songs of the 1970s were dominated by heavy production, background singers and pitched vocals—features that were added to ensure financial gain. In fact, Disco had come to a point where the singer was no longer the focal point. The average artist could become a star if paired with the right production team.^{xxi} Producers had become plastic surgeons for vinyl bodies. It was this factor that could be looked at as a contributing factor to Disco hate. Not only did adjacent outsiders assign messages to disco, but the message was also being misconstrued and its messengers misused. Liberation was all about freedom, creativity and expression. It is ironic, then, that liberation through Disco was being controlled on multiple fronts—fashion, music and message.

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The look of Disco soon followed, going from weirdo to wealthy.

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In many ways, Disco had become dependent. In the beginning, it depended on the DJ. The DJ was more important than the bartender, doorman and even the club owner. The aesthetic of Disco soon followed, going from weirdo to wealthy. This dependency then shifted to record label executives and producers. Their ability to create a hit while creating stars in the process became a prominent feature for the genre. The one thing that never changed was the presence of minorities—the originators of Disco. They never went away; they just became outnumbered, battling more competing forces than any of them could foresee. With Disco seemingly on its last leg, an opposing genre was coming to demolish the sound for good.



The scene from Comiskey Park on Chicago, July 12th, 1979. Signs reading “Disco Sucks” hang in the background. Courtesy of Detroit Free Press.

For a while, Rock and Disco existed together, but in two totally different spaces. Disco was not just gayer rock. Disco had its own personality. As dependency brought Disco down, Rock set out to finish the job. After all, there can only be one majority, which means the minority will always lose. In 1978, radio DJ Steve Dahl existed to represent that majority. Dahl accepted a job in Detroit as radio DJ for the city’s rock station, but was fired when the station switched from Rock to Disco.^{xxii} Dahl eventually found work in radio again and latched on to the dependency of Disco. Dahl attacked Disco for its failure to sustain a genuine, authentic product.^{xxiii} Routine rants and parodies followed Dahl’s initial disapproval. Rock DJ’s were ready to finish off Disco when the opportunity presented itself, joining Dahl’s “Disco sucks” campaign. The only thing left for Disco was a public funeral.

July 12, 1979 marked the end of Disco and the beginning of Post-disco. Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox, hosted Disco’s demolition. In a joint effort with White Sox owner Bill Veeck and his son Mike Veeck, Dahl and his anti-disco army, The Insane Coho Lips,^{xxiv} hosted “Disco Demolition Night” between a double-header, featuring the White Sox versus the Detroit Tigers.^{xxv} Combined with “Disco Demolition Night” was “Teen Night.” Fans—as well as non-

fans— could be admitted into the game for just ninety-eight cents, as long as they brought a Disco record to blow up during the game. Teens showed up in mass numbers, and many brought more than one record, making their Disco hatred obvious. The event exceeded capacity instantly.^{xxvi} After the Tigers won the first game,^{xxvii} Dahl took to the field sporting military gear and ready to commence the destruction. This war would be completely one sided. Dahl engaged the crowd in song before detonating the massive stack of Disco records. Spectators became so enamored with the spectacle that they decided to take the demonstration to the next level. Thousands from the sellout crowd, full of beer and marijuana, converged onto the field to complete Disco's demise, trashing the outfield and delaying the game. The event was so powerful that the second game of the double-header was canceled and later forfeited by the White Sox, as

officials deemed the playing field unplayable.

“Straight, middle-class people never learned how to party.”^{xxviii} Perhaps partying was not something you learned to do, more than it was something that you experienced. For gays, Blacks, Latinos and women, partying came naturally; thus, Disco came naturally. Disco, to them, was the frustration, oppression and hatred felt elsewhere in life being released artistically for hours upon hours, in a way they knew best. “But for us, partying is release, celebration.” The more hostile vibes in your life, the better you learn how to party, “cause that’s your salvation.”^{xxix} Disco Demolition Night did not happen because Disco existed. Disco Demolition Night happened because the release had been realized by participants and identified by opposers.

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MUSIC AS PROPAGANDA IN THE THIRD REICH

Samantha Howerton

Music can elicit emotional and even physical responses that images and literature cannot. With this in mind, music is one of the most powerful tools for mass control. Mass control, or the state in which people are fully obedient to an individual or group, continues to prove itself vital to numerous fascist governments and organizations. While these entities utilize a variety of resources and tactics, Nazi Germany, in particular, weaponized music in a way never seen before. When considering propaganda in Nazi Germany, music is often overlooked. Nevertheless, music was an extremely important aspect of the propaganda used, mainly because of how it conveys information and expresses ideas. The Nazis recognized the power and influence of music and utilized it to further solidify their control over the people of Germany. Not only did they successfully control the airways and radio, but they also utilized music to alienate certain racial, ethnic, or religious groups deemed as a threat to the Third Reich. This targeted use of discrimination is evident through the banning of art and music the Nazis deemed “degenerate.” Additionally, their tactics for mass control were present within the music created for and endorsed by the Nazi Party. The ways in which the Nazi party utilized anthems, marches for the Hitler Youth, or already famous compositions, demonstrates that music was an effective method for controlling the people of Nazi Germany.

Coming out of World War I, Europeans welcomed new forms of expression and leisure. This included a Modernist movement in Germany and a rise in jazz clubs.^{1,2} The Germans fully embraced the Roaring Twenties; that in of itself was a shining symbol of personal freedom and self-expression. However, as the Nazis rose to power, the party created the Reichsmusikkammer (RMK) in 1933 to ban these



The cover for the program of the Entartete Musik exhibit, depicting “Johnny,” a fictional black musician, as a monkey with the Star of David on his lapel. Courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

new forms of musical and artistic expression, referring to them as “entartete,” or “degenerate.”³ The RMK also required German musicians to be added to a registry, which facilitated the suppression of music created by people the Third Reich deemed “subhuman.” The ban on “degenerate” music targeted many notable Jewish musicians, including Arnold Schoenberg and Giacomo Meyerbeer.⁴ Unsurprisingly, the Nazis blamed the “Jewish influence” for the existence and

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No matter how musically ‘good’ a composition was, the race or religious background of the composer negated any value that the piece held.

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creation of so-called degenerate art and music. They claimed that “degeneracy” was a racial characteristic and utilized this argument to continually deepen their antisemitic views.⁵ In other words, “The real issue was not with the work of art itself but with the race or ethnicity of its creator.”⁶ This attack on music reveals that the Nazis firmly believed that the origins of genres like Jazz “tainted German musical culture”⁷ and further solidified their desire to keep the Germans “pure” from foreign or Jewish influence. These regulations only increased the control that the Nazis had over the people of Germany.

In 1938, a music exhibit titled “Entartete Musik,” or “Degenerate Music” was organized by the RMK to showcase a curated selection of banned music.⁸ This exhibit displayed portraits of banned musicians and composers. The exhibit also included listening booths where the “degenerate” music was played for interested patrons.^{9,10} Visitors of the exhibit were given brochures written by Nazi official Hans Severus Ziegler. The brochure cover featured a caricature of a fictional black jazz musician named “Jonny,” who is depicted as a monkey in a suit wearing a Star of David on his lapel. As noted by Marita Berg, a writer for Deutsche Welle (DW), a modern German media outlet, “It [Jonny] would become a prominent figure within Nazi propaganda and the symbol of ‘degenerate’ music.”¹¹ Ziegler gave a speech to introduce the exhibit, saying “What has been collected in this exhibition



German lyrics for the “Horst Wessel Lied,” the official anthem of the Nazi Party. [Wikimedia Commons.](#)

represents an effigy of wickedness – an effigy of arrogant Jewish impudence and complete spiritual insipidness.”¹² The Germans truly believed that the works shown in the Degenerate Music exhibit were despicable, as described by Ziegler.

Even as they banned “degenerate” music, the Third Reich also approved and even endorsed music by certain composers and musicians. Hitler claimed that there were

three “master composers” who were the representation of “good’ German music.”¹³ These composers were Ludwig Von Beethoven, Richard Wagner, and Anton Bruckner. At the peak of his career, Beethoven was said to possess a great amount of self-confidence; he once said, “Strength is the morality of the man who stands out from the rest, and it is mine.”¹⁴ Perhaps Hitler saw himself in Beethoven’s great confidence and believed that his own spirit was representative of what Germany should be. Richard Wagner was a personal favorite composer of Hitler’s.¹⁵ Wagner was known to be antisemitic, as he believed that Jewish musicians were “the ultimate source of what he perceived as substanceless music.”¹⁶ Wagner expressed this belief and other antisemitic principles under a pseudonym in a work titled “Judenthum in der Musik” (Judaism in Music) that was published in 1850.¹⁷ His most famous composition, “Die Walküre” (“Ride of the Valkyries”), is an epic musical piece that incites intense feelings of wonder among listeners. This composition “was broadcast to accompany reports on German air attacks.”¹⁸ Wagner’s music was utilized in a way that made the Germans feel pride in their country’s aggression - and this aggressive national pride was also present in Bruckner, yet another composer endorsed by the Nazis. Bruckner was heavily influenced by Wagner and his compositions.¹⁹ Additionally, he was yet another example of a “good” German creator who was utilized to evoke national pride among the Germans. All three of these composers are characterized by the triumphant themes in their music, so it is understandable that the Nazis were drawn to their compositions, as these compositions were used to instill national pride.

The Nazis utilized anthems to further solidify their control. The Nazi Party anthem, arguably the most famous Nazi song, is titled the “Horst Wessel Lied” or the “Horst Wessel Song.”²⁰ This composition was titled after the writer, an early Nazi recruit who was killed by political enemies. The Nazis

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Perhaps Hitler saw himself in Beethoven’s great confidence and believed that his own spirit was representative of what Germany should be.

hailed him as a martyr and, in turn, they adopted his song as the official Nazi anthem. The song itself is in a major key, and the tempo is a march. These elements are both musical characteristics that incite feelings of patriotism or national pride among listeners. The melody is repetitive and easy for one to sing along to. The lyrics themselves are full of patriotic propaganda. The first and last stanzas include the lines “Comrades shot by the red front and reaction/ March in spirit with us in our ranks.”²¹ These stanzas highlight how the Nazis sought to promote unity within the Party. The lyrics claim that Party soldiers are so incredibly devoted to the Nazi cause, that they would continue to march with the Party even in death. In the third stanza, the lyrics are as follows: “For the last time the call will now be blown/ For the struggle now we all stand ready/ Soon will fly Hitler-flags over every street/ Slavery will last only a short time longer.”²² These lyrics are a testament to the Nazis’ desire for the “Nazification” of Germany and eventually Europe. The word “slavery” in this context holds a variety of meanings. First, it refers to the Nazi belief that Germany was “enslaved” by other countries through having to pay reparations for World War I. “Slavery” also refers to the immense economic struggle that all Germans experienced after the Great War.²¹ The Horst Wessel Song is surviving proof of the success of Nazi Germany. Not only was it immensely popular, but the lyrics themselves also promoted patriotism and national pride among the Germans.

Another important aspect of propaganda in Nazi Germany began with the indoctrination of the youth. The Nazis accomplished this indoctrination through the creation of the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth).²² This organization was comprised of young German boys who engaged in several activities that promoted full submission to the Swastika. The Hitler Youth participated in education, military exercises, and community service. Most notably, young boys participating in the Hitler Youth engaged in group singing and marches. These boys were also instructed in both singing and musical instruments. Music was used as a tool to unify these boys and indoctrinate them in Nazi ideals. An unknown former member of the Hitler Youth spoke about his experience as a young boy in the program. He stated, "In the songs that we sang, in the poems that we recited, everything was bright, shiny and clear, the sun and earth were ours, and tomorrow so, too, would be the whole world."²³ These words reveal how truly powerful music was to the Nazis, as it was a vital tool of mass control, especially for the youth.

The quote from the unknown Hitler Youth member echoes the lyrics of a popular song in Nazi Germany, titled "Es zittern die morschen Knochen" ("The Rotten Bones are Trembling"). The lyrics of this song are triumphant and confident: "We will continue to march/ When everything falls into shards/ And today Germany belongs to us/ And tomorrow the whole world."²⁴ In a video provided by The *European Grandma Project*, Grandma Rosa, a German-speaking Austrian who lived during the time of Nazi Germany, recalled the lyrics to the song and explained her interpretation of it.²⁵ "That's all they think of," Grandma Rosa stated when recalling the lyrics. She continues, "The elderly - it's the elderly with the rotten bones which are trembling. But the young ones are all on their [the Nazis'] side." Her words highlight why the Nazis believed that it was so incredibly important to indoctrinate the youth. When someone is young, they are impressionable and easy

to influence. However, the elderly had an established set of morals and were the most likely to resist. Additionally, the song acted as a thinly veiled threat to the elderly who did not support the Nazis – the young were going to take over Germany regardless. The elderly could either cast aside their personal beliefs and follow the Nazis or keep their ideals and perish. Grandma Rosa closes the video with these words: "Because we are the masters – Germany belongs to us!" Those who sang this song proclaimed that their country belonged to them, the young, impressionable Germans - not the "rotten bones."

Music was experienced and utilized in a variety of ways during the rule of the Third Reich. Whether it was claiming "degeneracy" in music was a racial characteristic, or encouraging Germans to sing along to anthems that were laden with propaganda, music was ultimately an extremely effective tactic to keep the German people obedient to the Nazis. "Degenerate" music became an important aspect of Nazi propaganda, as it allowed the Third Reich to deepen the narrative that they enforced. No matter how musically "good" a composition was, the race or religious background of the composer negated any value that the piece held. As mentioned earlier, music is able to communicate messages and ideas in a manner that other forms of propaganda normally cannot. With this in mind, music proved itself an effective medium to promote and celebrate Nazi values. From endorsing known antisemitic composers to finding inspiration in popular German symphonies, the Nazis became experts at cherry-picking music that best suited their ideologies and purpose. The songs of the Third Reich contained similar musical elements that incited feelings of inspiration or patriotism in the listener. The lyrics encouraged a nationalistic response as well, as popular Nazi songs communicate themes of national pride and hope among the people of Nazi Germany. The Hitler Youth succeeded in communicating

these ideas as well, in the marches and group singing that young boys were required to partake in. One usually does not think about music when considering Nazi Propaganda and how it was so incredibly effective. With all of this in mind, music was overall an extremely effective and masterful way to expose the German people to propaganda.

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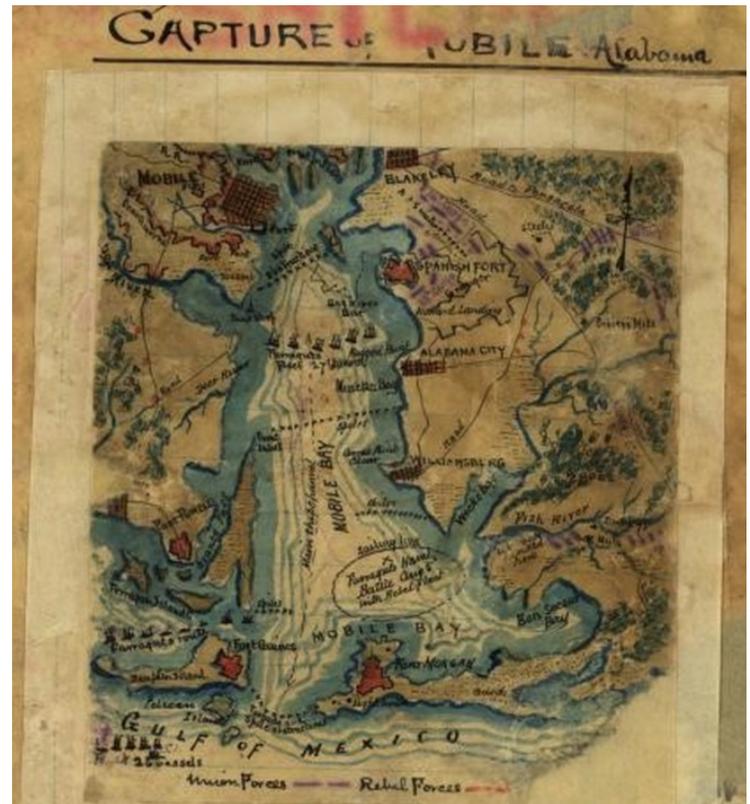
REBIRTH AND REVITALIZATION OF AN INTEGRAL CULTURAL IDENTITY: A HISTORY OF MARDI GRAS BEFORE AND AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

Kane McCreadie

Introduction

The Church Street Graveyard in downtown Mobile, particularly on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, is host to quite a unique local tradition. Crowds gather for the annual Joe Cain Day processions, which then kick off the day's parades. As these crowds wait, a bus pulls into the street before the graveyard, and as it stops, forty women clad in black then begin to exit the vehicle. Dressed from head to toe in traditional mourning wear, these women proceed to the final resting place of local hero Joseph Stillwell Cain Jr. and, in a purely theatrical fashion, begin to lament their deceased "lover." After this ceremony, men begin dancing near the grave, and the most important day in the Mobile Mardi Gras season has begun. Soon, the parades and revelry will start for the day. These are just some of the local traditions during the weeks-long holiday of Mardi Gras, a holiday not only steeped in centuries of traditions, but also culturally integral to the city of Mobile, Alabama.

From an outside perspective, the annual celebration of Mardi Gras¹ seems to be a three-week party leading into the Lenten season.² While Mardi Gras itself does consist of celebrating and partying, or reveling, those who observe the season annually attach much more meaning to the holiday. The season contains parades and balls that are thrown by "secret societies." These societies are responsible for the various floats seen every year and have an individual code they adhere to, which is unique to each of the various societies. Mardi Gras is most commonly associated with the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, partly because of the state's French history and partly because people in New Orleans



Map of Mobile. Library of Congress.

seem to throw the most extravagant and debaucherous celebrations of the season. Associating Mardi Gras with New Orleans has given most Americans many misconceptions about the holiday, including that Mardi Gras in the United States was first celebrated in New Orleans. However, these misconceptions vastly misrepresent both the rich history of the holiday and its cultural significance, especially for the city of Mobile, Alabama.

In America, Mardi Gras was first celebrated in the city of Mobile. Because of this tradition, the city has developed a

unique cultural identity and history surrounding the holiday, similar to but separate from the celebrations in New Orleans. This history is charted through local legends, exaggerations, conflicting stories, and hometown pride, where historical facts and invented tradition blend together. Even amongst all the confusion around the history of Mardi Gras, there are some fundamental truths. These truths have defined Mobile and led her through some of the most difficult times in the city's history to come out stronger and more vibrant than ever.

However, this history tends to be overshadowed by people associating Mardi Gras with New Orleans, which itself does have a unique Mardi Gras history. Because of this association, so much rich cultural history has been glossed over. This paper will address the many misconceptions surrounding Mardi Gras through its history and traditions in Mobile, explain the importance of the holiday to the identity of Mobilians, and demonstrate the significance of an invented tradition around a local historical figure, as it is woven into the larger significance of Mardi Gras and Mobile's cultural history.

History of Mardi Gras in Mobile before the Civil War

Far from the pageantry, rules, and traditions of its present-day state, Mardi Gras, from its inception in 1704, has evolved into a celebration entirely different from its beginning in the eighteenth century. It has grown to include parades, balls, and even a week-long vacation from schools and universities in order to celebrate. But how did it start and when did it begin to take on its current form? What traditions were kept consistent with their original form, and which ones evolved into the modern conception? While the historical record is largely incomplete, and folklore has stepped in to fill this void, there is enough of a record to understand the foundations from which Mardi Gras sprang.

Mobile itself was founded in 1702 at 27-Mile Bluff as the Fort

de la Louis de la Mobile, not too far north of the current site of the city on the west bank of Mobile Bay, as a French colony in the province of Louisiana. The first Mardi Gras was celebrated just two years later.

One can begin to truly understand the connection between the city and this strange holiday: the holiday was with the city from the beginning of its existence. Mardi Gras is celebrated on a day separate from when it was first observed, August 25, 1704. This day was also Saint Louis Day, demonstrating the connection between Mardi Gras and the cultural significance of Catholicism in Mobile.^{3,4} The men were celebrating the Masque de la Mobile, the feast of Saint Louis Day.

On this day, a few men would masquerade and revel, laying the foundations of Mardi Gras traditions that were passed down and developed through the generations. The feast of Saint Louis was initiated by Nicholas Langlois, and by 1710 it had spread to the local Chickasaw tribe. They, too, masqueraded and reveled with the same spirit of the Frenchmen who brought the feast to the region. Already, the infectious spirit of celebrating Mardi Gras was beginning to take hold in the region. In 1711, with the consent of Governor Bienville, Langlois initiated the first celebration of Mardi Gras on a Tuesday. At this point it was primarily, but not exclusively, referred to as Boeuf Gras,⁵ a name which would come to grace one of the first Mardi Gras societies in Mobile. The appearance of "Mardi Gras" as another name for the celebration is also the first concrete evidence that Mobile started the celebration of Mardi Gras before the city of New Orleans did.⁶ By 1780, Mobile had gone through three colonial rulers,⁷ and Mardi Gras continued to grow and evolve. The celebration was thought to have spread from the Frenchmen to the city's Spaniards, who began celebrating in 1784. But as is the common case for the history of Mardi Gras in Mobile, this date is another historical discrepancy. According to

historian Julian Lee Rayford,⁸

“I learned from several sources that the Spaniards in Mobile, 1784, organized the Spanish Mystic Society. But from a manuscript of Frank Diard’s I found a different story. Diard gives a detailed description of their parade. He says, ‘The Spanish Mystic Society was instituted by the Spanish population on January 6th, 1793.’”⁹

While Mardi Gras was originally a French holiday, the development of a Spanish Mystic Society in either 1784 or 1793 shows that it was becoming popular among the city’s non-French inhabitants as well. The Spanish Mystic Society held its last parade in 1833, but this is no indication that the celebrations of Mardi Gras were fading. As the holiday celebrations began to spread, Mardi Gras societies began to expand their celebrations. One such society, the Boeuf Gras Society (led by Nicholas Langlois), made an improvised bull’s head out of paper mâché, and pulled this head down Dauphin Street in downtown Mobile. The society grew in size and complexity, and by 1830, the bull’s head had been replaced with a better version, one made of heavier paper mâché, imported from France. The fluidity of the holiday is what gives Mardi Gras its unique nature, stemming from the ever-changing celebrations and re-imagining of the holiday. While the Spanish Mystic Society had died off, the Boeuf Gras Society was still going strong, and further changes with the holiday changes were emerging.

On par with the trend of twisting and rehashing the history of Mardi Gras, the story of one rambunctious Mobilian, Michael Krafft, has had several interpretations. In nineteenth-century Mobile, it was a widespread practice to celebrate New Year’s Day in Mardi Gras style. Mardi Gras had no set season, as it does now; instead, it was celebrated before Christmas until Fat Tuesday (in February or March). On one New Year’s Eve,

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However, it was not just the act of parading that brought Mardi Gras back to Mobile. Rather, it was the manner in which he did it, the sheer bravado of his demonstration, and the clear message he was sending, that the city was not broken and that the good times would continue to roll.

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Michael Krafft led a band of men to a hardware store, where they gathered rakes and cowbells. The men then proceeded to make merry throughout the entire night, until they had made their way to the house of the mayor of Mobile, Honorable John Stocking Jr., early the next morning. The mayor happily received these men and prepared a great feast for them, thus beginning the annual parade of revelers known as the Cowbellions. From this society, many of the modern traditions sprang forward and cemented their position in the celebration of Mardi Gras today. These traditions include the creation of the society called “Order of Myths” in Mobile, which always leads the last parade of the season in a fashion that calls back to past Mardi Gras celebrations. Other societies include the New Orleans’ first Mardi Gras Society and the Mystic Krewe of Comus.¹⁰ Some inconsistencies in the Krafft story appear in the form of the actual date, number of men, and even the owner of the hardware store from which they acquired the rakes and cowbells. Rayford provides a few

accounts from various men who recount the infamous event. From Noah Ludlow:¹¹ "Monday, January 1st, 1844, a society that styled itself the 'Mobile Cowbellions' visited the theater in their peculiar costumes. The society was then, and has been for over fifty years, confined to the city of Mobile...It commenced its existence about the year 1824 or 1825, with a party of young men out on a midnight frolic on the last day of the year."¹² Rayford then contrasts this narrative with a firsthand account from one of Krafft's fellow revelers, Charles Kennerly, who wrote, "I am very positive from its connection with other facts of my personal history, about which I am certainly not mistaken, that the date was 1831."¹³ Most of the actual descriptions of events associated with Mardi Gras were not written until some years, or even decades, after the event had happened. As is evidenced, these events were retold to various degrees before being written and accepted. The folklore held dear by its celebrants and the traditions that come out of these events are what makes Mardi Gras such a unique and fascinating holiday. Both the Boeuf Gras Society and the Mobile Cowbellions, as well as other societies in Mobile, ceased to exist by the start of the American Civil War in 1861. The bull's head that the Boeuf Gras Society had used was scrapped for use as gun wadding in the defense of Mobile. However, this was not the end of Mardi Gras in Mobile. If anything, this crisis led to the revival of the holiday and, in a broader sense, the revival of the city of Mobile.

Joe Cain: The Local Hero Who Saved Mardi Gras in Mobile

During the Civil War, Mobile was the second largest port in the South and home to several shipbuilding companies, making it an important city both economically and militarily. After the capture of New Orleans in 1862, Mobile became a strategically important target for the Union war plan. After the Confederate defeat at the Battle of Mobile Bay in August of 1864, the city was effectively cut off by a Union blockade.¹⁴

The city formally surrendered to Union troops in May of 1865 and was then occupied by Union forces. The blockade and subsequent surrender to Union forces had a serious impact on the economy and social fabric of the city. Union forces outlawed the parading that had been associated with Mardi Gras, and the holiday looked as if it was gone for good in the city. However, one man would take it upon himself to not only bring the holiday back to the city, but also to set the course for the modern iteration of Mardi Gras to take shape. That man was Joe Cain, whose fateful decision to parade down the streets of Mobile single-handedly revitalized the holiday within the city.

When it comes to Joe Cain, there is as much locally crafted folklore as there are facts and records of who he was and what he did. What do we actually know about this man? We know that his parents moved to Mobile from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1825. We know he was born Joseph Stillwell Cain Jr. on October 10, 1832, on Dauphin Street. He was a true Mabilian, fascinated with the Mardi Gras carnival and its celebrations from a youthful age. In 1846, at the age of thirteen, he was a founding member of the Tea Drinker's Society, along with other young men of Mobile who were no older than sixteen. This society was formed in the spirit of including the average "everyman," and was named with deliberate irony, as tea drinking was considered elitist. Cain did not believe in the exclusiveness of the revelry; instead, he believed that celebrations were best observed when all were included, at least along the socio-racial paradigm of the pre-and-post-Civil War South. To Cain, this distinction was between those well off and those who were commoners. The Tea Drinker's Society participated in the New Year revelry alongside the Cowbellions up until the Civil War and continued from 1866 until 1883. Cain held a variety of jobs around Mobile including working as a cotton broker, coroner, inspector of naval stores, and clerk of the Old Southern



Kirkland, Scotty E. "Joe Cain." Wikimedia Commons.

Market at City Hall. Cain also served in the Confederate army. He, as a Confederate soldier, would have felt the demoralization of the city of Mobile that came from defeat and occupation. But he was not a man to dwell on gloom and despair; instead, he was a man of life and was filled with a jovial spirit, a true reveler in all the sense of Mardi Gras. He made it a personal goal to revitalize both the traditions of Mardi Gras and the spirit of Mobile, things he held dearly. It was the way in which he chose to deliver this morale boost that has cemented his place as a local legend and focal point of present-day Mardi Gras celebrations in Mobile.

After attending Fat Tuesday celebrations in New Orleans after the end of the Civil War, Cain decided that it was time that these celebrations make their way back to his beloved

hometown. Cain admired the New Orleans escalation in revelry, culminating in a massive celebration on Fat Tuesday to end the season, and he brought this process to Mobile. On the Sunday before Fat Tuesday in 1866 or 1868,¹⁵ Joe Cain brought the six men comprising his cabinet of comic advisors, who referred to themselves as the Lost Cause Minstrel Band and paraded down the streets of Mobile in the traditions held before the Civil War. However, it was not just the act of parading that brought Mardi Gras back to Mobile. Rather, it also was the manner in which he paraded, the sheer bravado of his demonstration and the clear message he was sending, that the city was not broken and that the good times would continue to roll. Joe Cain had styled himself in the wear of the Chickasaw tribe of Native Americans as he paraded down the streets of Mobile. He was dressed as a fictional chief of his own creation, Chief Slacabamornico. This character would become colloquially known as "Ol' Slac." Cain did not dress this way merely to mimic the fashion of pre-Civil War revelers, of which he was also a part. Cain also chose to be adorned in this fashion because it sent a particular message to the occupying Union forces. The Chickasaw had never been defeated in battle, and Cain knew that the Union forces, as well as the people of Mobile, were well aware of that fact. Cain wanted the Union troops to know that although they had won the Battle of Mobile Bay and controlled the city, Mobile was not defeated. Strengthening his message, Cain's festivities were in direct violation of Union ordinances barring public parading. An article from the *Mobile Bay Magazine* stated,

"The Chickasaw Indians were never defeated in battle by French or American troops. As they paraded through the streets with Joe atop an old coal cart lovingly named 'Hickory' after their hero Andrew Jackson, they were 'giving it' to the Yankees

occupying the streets in their federal uniforms, saying, 'You'll never defeat us again, just as the Chickasaws were never defeated, and the South may have been defeated in war, but we're not crushed or conquered!'"¹⁶

Regardless of whether these words were accurately recorded, the sentiment they expressed was certainly clear to the Union soldiers. Mardi Gras seemed to pick up as it had never left. In fact, it seemed to have continued with greater force than ever before, thus demonstrating the continuing power and resilience of the South.

“**Joe Cain Day is a day of indulgence, revelry, and good tidings towards all neighbors in the city of Mobile. It is a tribute to the spirit of Mardi Gras in Mobile, filtered through invented traditions centered around one local hero.**”

There is debate as to when these spectacular events transpired. While Julian Lee Rayford believes Cain's first post-Civil War parade happened in 1866, publisher Steve Joynt counters this fact. An article from the 2015 edition of the *Mobile Mask* states:

“Lacking any dated, written record of the account, Joynt combed through old newspapers for any hint of a spectacle regarding Cain, who legend has it, wore

traditional Chickasaw dress while parading through the streets. Yet, at a time when the city had three daily newspapers, not one mentioned the episode, either in 1866 or 1867. In fact a newspaper from on microfilm currently housed at Louisiana State University indicated Cain was observing Mardi Gras in New Orleans in 1867, while a story from the former *Mobile Daily Register* a year later suggested any celebration around 'Fat Tuesday' was 'heretofore unmentioned.'"¹⁷

Regardless of the year he decided to parade, Joe Cain's decision to parade on that significant day reignited the flame and spirit of both Mardi Gras and Mobile within all Mobilians. Rayford states, "Out of the Fat Tuesday fantasy of Joe Cain, at least twenty-five societies grew—women's as well as men's, and at least one for both men and women—and fifteen or sixteen formal Mardi Gras parades. As well as a carnival of their own for the colored people of Mobile."¹⁸ Cain's pivotal decision to parade down the streets as "Ol' Slac" not only brought Mardi Gras back but began to shift the way Mobile celebrated the holiday towards its current form. The celebrations moved away from the well-to-do members of Mobile, who would revel around New Years, to the more inclusive weeks-long celebration the city practices today.

As a celebration taking place in a deep south city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Mardi Gras was not separate from the racial paradigms of the region and the time. For centuries, Black people in Mobile could only watch the parades from a distance. That is not to say, however, that Black Mobilians did not make important contributions to the history of the holiday, as they were often involved in the parades. For example, they helped build the paper mâché floats, thread the beads for costumes, and carry torches along parade routes before electric street lights were common. These were invaluable contributions to the celebration of



Library of Congress. Submitted by Carol M. Highsmith 2010.

the holiday. As with most of the labor and contributions during the Mardi Gras season, these contributions were voluntary in nature. However, it should be noted that the pattern of Black people not being able to enjoy the fruits of either voluntary or unpaid labor would persist throughout the South for many decades to come. Following the Civil War, as the holiday shifted from only the most well-off Mobilians celebrating around New Years to then including commoners, Black Mobilians began their own Mardi Gras celebrations as well. They set up their own societies, the first being Order of the Doves, hosting balls from 1894 to 1914. The first Black parading society was the Order of May Zulu, which held parades from 1938 until 1952.¹⁹ Out of these first societies, many more sprang.

As time progressed and society began to change, so too did Mardi Gras. Founded in the same year as the Order of May Zulu, the Mobile Area Mardi Gras Association (MAMGA) was created by Black Mobilians and is today one of the largest associations of its kind in the area. The importance of organizations like MAMGA was stated by Joseph Roberson in 2007: "It means a lot to me simply because, in the African-American community, so much of our heritage and traditions

were expunged during the enslavement era, so opportunities like this to make connections through generations, to take part in social organizations, provide a nexus between the generations, and also a sense of belonging."²⁰ Here we see how Black Mobilians worked adjacent to white society in order to create new traditions and identities post enslavement.

One of the most significant traditions involving MAMGA and the traditionally white Mobile Carnival Association (MCA) also began in 2007. Roberson was elected as MAMGA's King Elixis I that year and accepted an invitation from the MCA's royalty to attend their ball, and the tradition of each association's royalty attending the other's ball has continued since. The way this tradition may provide a way to engage with the history of the holiday's past, as well as provide new invented traditions, was expressed by Roberson: "I think, on both sides, it opened their eyes to the significance of respecting the traditions of both organizations [...] and provided a reference point for both organizations to have a clear view of how each [...] celebrates Carnival [...] The reference point led to conversation. The conversation led to changes."²¹ While Mardi Gras may have started with practices that reflected the context in which it operated, to this day it continues to adapt and reflect the spirit and attitudes of the city in which it exists.

Joe Cain died in 1904 at his home in Bayou La Batre, a small fishing town south of Mobile. He never lost the spirit of Mardi Gras and was a true symbol for Mobile's cultures and values. Rayford provides us with a testament from the magazine *Mobile Item* saying, "An old landmark in the history of the city and county of Mobile has been removed by the death last night of Mr. Joseph S. Cain. The announcement of the death of Mr. Cain will bring sorrow to hundreds-in fact to all who knew this great old man, who, in his un-ostentatious way, took great delight in doing good for others, in carrying out the

precepts of the Golden Rule.”²²

In 1967, Rayford himself started a new Mardi Gras tradition in honor of Cain. On the Sunday before every Fat Tuesday, the people of Mobile pay tribute to this local hero. It starts with the procession of his “wives,” represented by actresses clad in black, lamenting their late husband. However, Joe Cain was known to have had only one wife in his life. The mourning widows are an entirely invented tradition, an example of Mardi Gras comedy and street theater. Beyond that, and embracing the “everyman” ideals of Joe Cain, anyone could join in the parade rather than having to be in a formal society, as with other parades. Police eventually had to shut this down, as the processions would become too large. The floats themselves were made of plywood and on truck beds, as opposed to the more ornate and extravagant *mâché* floats belonging to Mardi Gras societies.²³ Joe Cain Day is a day of indulgence, revelry, and good tidings towards all neighbors in the city of Mobile. It is a tribute to the spirit of Mardi Gras in Mobile, filtered through invented traditions centered around one local hero.

What Mardi Gras Means for Mobilians

The meaning of Mardi Gras can be difficult to describe to someone who is not well acquainted with the holiday, beyond conceptions of the stereotypical parties and parades. There is nothing comparable to Mardi Gras for those who live outside its sphere of influence. Mardi Gras itself is never about repetition; each float is torn down and rebuilt from scratch every year. Every year, the societies and crews center their floats and balls around a theme, thus bringing out unique floats different from any previous ones. But Mardi Gras can mean so much more to us Mobilians than one may initially see.

Growing up in Mobile, celebrating Mardi Gras meant attending parades from either mid or late January through

February and even into early March, depending on where Ash Wednesday falls that year. The parades consist of many colorful floats, each differently styled and either bearing the traditional green, purple, and gold colors of Mardi Gras or any number of other vibrant colors.²⁴ These floats are never drab and dreary, but as vibrant as the spirit of Mardi Gras itself. Although it took some time to get there, the modern spirit of Mardi Gras is an inclusive one, where everyone belongs in the revelry, not just Mobilians. Just one example of this inclusivity is that high schools from around the state send their marching bands to participate in the parades.²⁵ While the balls are typically invitation-only and by tradition required to be masquerade balls, there are some open to the public. This holiday is so important to the city of Mobile that schools take a week off starting with the Weekend of Joe Cain Day. Many Mobilians will use this extra time to attend parades throughout the day, as the three days from Joe Cain Day to Fat Tuesday yield the most extravagant parades and the biggest crowds. It is a time to reflect on what the city means to us, and to celebrate a unique culture and history that we call ours. For some, it can be a time of reflection and remembrance, as well as a time of celebrations and comradery.

Every New Year’s Eve, we drop a Moonpie from the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) tower, similar to the famous ball dropping in Times Square. While this tradition began in 2008, moonpies themselves have been thrown from floats since 1952.²⁶ Mardi Gras also symbolizes the rebirth of the Earth in spring, shedding the cold and lifeless aura of winter. In spring, the Azaleas, our city’s flower, and an important symbol of Mardi Gras, begin to bloom again. Mardi Gras and Mobile are inseparable, for one could not tell the history of Mobile without telling, at least in some form, the history of Mardi Gras. Publisher Steve Joynt puts it best

when discussing the traditions and the history, saying, “It’s the same thing. And your kid sees that. It’s the same thing you saw, the same thing your parents saw, the same thing your grandparents saw. ... Mardi Gras is a keystone to your past, not just your family’s past, but the past of your community, all at the same time.”²⁷

Mardi Gras was with Mobile in her highest and lowest points, and only left for the Civil War and Second World War. The revival of Mardi Gras lifted the spirits of a defeated city

ENDNOTES

1. French for “Fat Tuesday.”
2. Lent is between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday, typically lasting 40 days or more. It is a Catholic tradition and is marked by abstaining from debauchery and vice for the duration until Easter Sunday.
3. Mobile was designated a diocese for the states of Alabama and Florida on May 15, 1829. By 1980, Mobile was raised to archdiocese status and comprises the lower 28 counties of Alabama.
4. Mardi Gras is rooted in the Catholic beliefs of the early French inhabitants of Mobile.
5. French for fat oxen, Boeuf Gras was a tradition brought from France in which one would consume the last of red meat before the somber Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday, as well as other indulgences of the flesh.
6. The city of New Orleans would not be formally established until seven years later, in 1718. “Mardi Gras History.” *Mardi Gras New Orleans*, 2023, <https://www.mardigrasneworleans.com/history/>.
7. France from 1702-1763, England from 1763-1780, and the last colonial ruler Spain from 1780-1813, before being handed over to the Americans.
8. Julian Lee Rayford compiled a history of Mardi Gras in Mobile, titled “Chasing the Devil Round a Stump”. This is considered to be one of the most comprehensive histories on Mobile’s history of Mardi Gras. He also led the Joe Cain Day processions in 1967 to celebrate the man who brought Mardi Gras back.
9. Julian Lee Rayford, *Chasin’ the Devil Round A Stump* (American Printing Company, 1962), 26.
10. Debbie M Lord, “Cowbellion Bowl’s Origins Shrouded in Mystery,” *Al.com*, 9 June 2009, https://www.al.com/living-press-register/2009/06/cowbellion_bowls_origins_shrou.html.
11. Noah Ludlow was in Mobile at the time running a professional theater company from the 1830s-1850’s. Jane Jansak, “Noah Ludlow,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, 2022, <http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/ARTICLE/m-7134>.
12. Rayford, *Chasin’ the Devil Round A Stump*, 35.
13. Rayford, *Chasin’ the Devil Round A Stump*, 39.

occupied by federal forces after the conclusion of the Civil War. Further, the post-Civil War revival paved the way for the modern version to take shape, a version much more open and inclusive than its previous form. That form would not have been possible had Joe Cain not decided to parade down the street that decisive day, over one hundred-fifty years ago.

14. Megan L. Bever, “Summer 1864: Union Forces Capture the Port of Mobile,” *ALABAMA HERITAGE*, 25 July 2014, <https://www.alabamaheritage.com/civil-war-era/summer-1864-union-forces-capturethe-port-of-mobile>.
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18. Rayford, *Chasin’ the Devil Round A Stump*, 63.
19. “Beyond the Book – Mobile Alabama Mardi Gras Association - Alabama African American History,” *Alabama African American History - Sponsored by AT&T*, Mobile Area Mardi Gras Association, 30 Mar. 2022, <https://alafricanamerican.com/beyond-the-book-honoree-archives/beyond-the-bookmobile-alabama-mardi-gras-association/>.
20. Chelsea Brasted, “Is Mobile, Alabama Home to America’s Oldest Mardi Gras Celebration?” *History, National Geographic*, 26 Jan. 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/mobilealabama-home-america-oldest-mardi-gras-celebration>.
21. Brasted, “Is Mobile, Alabama Home to America’s Oldest Mardi Gras Celebration?”
22. Rayford, *Chasin’ the Devil Round A Stump*, 73.
23. Joynt, “Joe Cain.”
24. Purple for royalty and justice. Green for faith and fertility. Gold for power and riches.
25. Live music is a staple of Mardi Gras parades. Marching bands fill the spaces between floats and keep the crowds entertained as the parades stop and start along their routes.
26. While Moonpies originated in Chattanooga, TN, the close association of Mardi Gras and Moonshaped faces led to the adoption of the treat as a popular throw from floats.
27. Brasted, “Is Mobile, Alabama Home to America’s Oldest Mardi Gras Celebration?”

THE DEATH OF THE WESTERN MYTH IN *THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE*

Mary Hannah McPhail-Edwards

The *Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is a study in duality. In it, director John Ford divides the lives of his characters and the American West they inhabit into a series of juxtapositions: before and after the railroad came, before and after the river was dammed, and before and after the territory of Shinbone became a state. “One day when they dam the river,” says Hallie, who begins the movie as Tom Doniphon’s girlfriend and ends it as Ransom Stoddard’s wife, “we’ll have lots of water and all kinds of flowers.”¹ Ford uses Hallie’s choice of Ransom Stoddard, the politician, over Tom Doniphon, the frontiersman, to illustrate the choice of progress. But Ford makes it clear in the last scene of the movie that once Hallie’s dream of progress has come to fruition, she aches to return to the ‘wilderness’ of her uncivilized past. Where another story might stop with Stoddard defeating the outlaw Liberty Valance and getting the girl, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* shows us the aftermath of his victory, which is the overwhelming awareness of the lie his success— and, by extension, the Western myth— is built on. Doniphon and Stoddard typify what Richard Locke calls, “two incompatible virtues,”² and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* concludes that neither is enough on its own. Doniphon can defeat Liberty Valance, but he cannot teach a classroom and earn Hallie’s affection. Stoddard can inspire a bar full of apathetic drunks to vote and learn the Constitution, but he can never acquire the ‘savage’ fighting spirit that it will take to defend Shinbone and enact real change. Through the utilization and examination of overblown classic archetypes within the stark framework of a small, nuanced story, John Ford uses *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* to illustrate the falsity of the frontier hero myth.

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Ford points out the unfortunate truth even as he challenges it; a cinematic lie beats a difficult truth every time.

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The majority of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is presented as a story told by Senator Ransom Stoddard, a well-off politician who returns to the small frontier town of Shinbone to attend the funeral of Tom Doniphon, his friend and rival for Hallie’s affections. The editor of the local newspaper wonders why such a fancy-pants fellow would go so far out of his way for old Tom Doniphon, and Ransom is more than willing to explain. The story of his association with Doniphon begins twenty-five years prior, with Ransom arriving in a wild territory that has no patience for his idealistic, lawyerly ways. Almost as soon as he arrives, he is robbed by Liberty Valance, the scourge of Shinbone, an outlaw so comically evil that horses spook at the sight of him. Ransom refuses to carry a gun, but he will hold a grudge, a dishwashing job, a torch for Tom Doniphon’s girl— and, eventually, a gun. It is the West, after all. However, the titular “man who shot Liberty Valance” is not Ransom, as it first appears; instead, Ransom admits that all his success has been built on the murder committed by Tom Doniphon, who allowed him to take credit for the slaying. Ford points out an unfortunate truth even as he challenges it: a cinematic lie beats a difficult truth every time. As the harsh beauty of the Wild West is transformed to accommodate the railroad, Shinbone remakes itself in the image of the fictionalized

version of the frontier hero and abandons its less than glamorous origin, represented by Tom Doniphon. Back in the present day, the legend has become fact.

Through his directorial choices, John Ford deliberately echoed the style of his earlier, more formulaic Westerns in order to evoke a sense of nostalgia, while simultaneously prompting viewers to notice its hollowness. Ford shot *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* in black and white, although his earlier Westerns, including *The Searchers* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, were shot in color. He once said, "You might say I'm old fashioned, but black and white is real photography,"³ and purportedly cited the final shootout between Ransom Stoddard and Liberty Valance as a scene that worked better in black and white than in color. More cynical critics have traced this decision back to Paramount's cost-cutting efforts, as well as an attempt to conceal the fact that John Wayne and James Stewart were both undeniably middle-aged. Taken alongside the film's theme of deconstructing the frontier myth, the black and white cinematography comes across as a melancholy reflection of earlier, more earnest Westerns, forcing the viewer to recall that their hero is no longer the boyish, unironic thirty-two year old who appeared in *Stagecoach*. Adding to the dated effect is the fact that the movie was shot on a soundstage; according to David Bordwell, film theorist and historian, "Here history is not vistas and crowds but interiors and individuals."⁴ The picturesque exterior shots and crowd scenes of the traditional Western are fanciful trappings of a genre that Ford reveals to be, at its core, about Liberty Valance and the marshal debating murder versus self-defense in a dingy bar as Ransom Stoddard waits in the street. As Ford strips away the ornamentation of the genre, his characters use every means necessary to avoid asking the question that hangs over the myth of the Wild West: "How do I know that I'm the good guy?" *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* questions the place



Jimmy Stewart and Vera Miles in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). [Wikipedia Commons](#).

of semi-civilized adventurers in a time where there are no more new adventures, in which each new frontier is tamed as soon as it is discovered. In Ford's unadorned, swiftly changing frontier, the best an aspiring hero can hope for is to be lauded for the best lie he's ever told.

The two main players in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* are Ransom Stoddard and Tom Doniphon, not Liberty Valance himself. Valance acts not as a character, but as part of the setting, a natural enemy of the frontier hero in the same vein as a drought. Bordwell writes, "Liberty Valance is Stoddard's exact opposite,"⁵ but the film demonstrates that this is hardly true. Doniphon is Stoddard's nemesis, while Liberty is just the man he fought. Nowhere is this clearer than in the 1953

short story upon which *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is based.⁶

This story allows Stoddard and Doniphon to delve into the shades of gray in their characters that are only subtextual in the movie. For example, Senator Ransom does not tell the reporter the true story about Tom, who is called Bert Barricune in the short story. He reminisces about meeting Tom/Bert after Liberty Valance and his gang left him 'afoot' in the prairie, and Tom, coming upon him, helped him onto his own horse and walked him five miles to water. Ransom wastes no time purchasing a gun. He steals scraps of food from the diner where he works, and yet manages to remain conceited, vain, self-important, and condescending. Each job he holds is below him, and everyone he meets is his inferior. On their second meeting, Tom/Bert declares, justifiably, "I should have left you for the buzzards."⁷ In both the movie and the short story, Valance does not have the power over Ransom that Doniphon does— the power to make his existence ridiculous, to make him aware of the futility of his desires, even as he helps him achieve them. Ransom and Doniphon's threat to each other is their similarity. In the short story, Ransom says, "He [Doniphon] was my enemy; he was my conscience; he made me whatever I am."⁸ In the movie, he states the opposite— when asked who Tom Doniphon is, he replies,

“**Shooting a man in the back is murder, while shooting him head-on is self-defense. Hitting him with an open hand is cowardly, whereas hitting him with a fist proves your strength.**”



John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). Wikipedia Commons

"He was a friend."⁹ The truth lies somewhere in between. Tom Doniphon is the man Ransom wants to be and yet fears becoming above all else, the man who made him a liar and a hero. Ford's film demonstrates repeatedly the importance and complexity of honor in the moral gray area of the Wild West. Shooting a man in the back is murder, while shooting him head-on is self-defense. Hitting him with an open hand is cowardly, whereas hitting him with a fist proves your strength. In the town of Shinbone, where the law is a cowardly marshal, dragged reluctantly to the victim's bedside to inform him that retribution is impossible because the holdup took place outside city limits, everyone is desperate to convince themselves that one evil is better than another.

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***The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* questions the place of semi-civilized adventurers in a time where there are no more new adventures, in which each new frontier is tamed as soon as it is discovered.**
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Tom Doniphon's death is the death of a ghost. He ceased to exist when he was no longer needed, when it became clear that “the civilization he fights for will have no place for him.”¹⁰ After Doniphon shoots Liberty Valance, Ford immediately switches his identity from ‘hero’ to ‘tragic relic of the past.’ The frontier myth and all it represents did not die in a blaze of glory.

Unlike Liberty, Tom Doniphon does not get the drama of a shootout. He is the horse inside the rally hall, petering

out and being made ridiculous before he is allowed to die. In the midst of Stoddard's celebration and triumph, Ford chooses to show us perhaps the most poignant scenes of the movie: Doniphon drunkenly burning down the house that he was fixing up for Hallie in an implied suicide attempt, and Doniphon quietly leaving the territorial convention in the capitol city as Stoddard goes back inside, a hero. The movie, like Doniphon's own rapidly changing world, no longer knows what to do with him. Bordwell notes, “Since he [Doniphon] is the first man we see on horseback in the film, his heroic stature is immediately established...”¹¹ But the shadow of railroads and stagecoaches hangs over the film, making this distinction meaningless. Doniphon died ‘with his boots on,’ only to have them stolen, his legacy perverted by the growing worthlessness of the values he represents. A man who rides a horse more skillfully than anyone else is obsolete in a world where the railroad allows passengers to travel across the United States in less than four days. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is both a love letter to the Western genre and a farewell. We arrive, mourning, at its funeral, and discover that the coffin is empty and the boots are gone.

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CHANGING CULTURE, CHANGING IDEAS



MOURNING

by Disney Bagwell

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF LONELINESS

Caleb Burnett

Loneliness is not a static emotional experience, but rather an emotion unique to modernity that arose in response to a heightened sense of isolation created by various historical developments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These developments changed humanity's relationship with itself and the world. Loneliness is a complex emotion that is felt in many different ways depending on particular situational and environmental factors. However, it can generally be defined as a sense of lack deriving from isolation.¹ For example, loneliness could be experienced due to a lack of friendships, lack of love, or a lack of meaningful relationships.² To experience loneliness, being physically alone is not always necessary. The twentieth-century writer Sylvia Plath wrote that she felt most lonely when she was at the library in the presence of others, where she could compare her own feelings of isolation to those socializing around her.³ Before the nineteenth century, the word "loneliness" or "lonely" was often used interchangeably with "solitude" and was meant to convey the physical state of being alone or removing oneself from society.⁴ The idea of *oneliness* was also popular in early modern Europe and argued humans are never truly alone because of their ever-present relationship with God.⁵ However, the shift from agrarian societies to urban industrial ones with socially mobile populations in the early nineteenth century resulted in a new conception of loneliness as a distinct experience that was a response to the emerging competitive individualism of modern life.⁶ Several scholars have argued that urbanization and solitary living are central to the creation of modern loneliness.⁷

While environmental factors are important, this school of thought downplays the impact of secularization, the rise of modern medicine, and existential philosophy on

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Twentieth-century Americans saw the loner as maladjusted to the demands of a society that emphasized sociability and the appearance of friendliness.

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contemporary ideas of loneliness and being alone. These various factors have all contributed to the development of modern loneliness as a distinct emotional state experienced due to a sense of lack and isolation that is separate from older notions of solitude.

Loneliness before the nineteenth century was not thought of as an emotional or psychological experience, but a physical one with both negative and positive connotations. The word is first described in Thomas Blount's 1661 edition of *Glossographia* as "an [*sic*] one; an oneliness or loneliness, a single or singleness."⁸ The term *lonely* appears more than the term *loneliness* in printed text before 1800, with "solitude" being the dominant term used to describe being alone.⁹ Solitude could be a time of positive reflection and meditation, and often implied a religious context in which one communed with God. In this sense, one was never truly alone, as they were always with the ever-present God.¹⁰ These pre-nineteenth-century ideas of solitude drew on the older Christian tradition of hermeticism, which saw isolation as a spiritual path to salvation. Some Enlightenment intellectuals like Jean-Jaques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft even



Christian hermits like St. Paul of Thebes, depicted here in Giuseppe Di Ribera's 1640 painting, sought out solitude to commune with God through silent contemplation. [Wikimedia Commons](#).

associated solitude with deistic ideas of God-in-nature.¹¹ Before the nineteenth century, being alone in the form of solitude was not a solely negative experience; in fact, it could be beneficial to the soul under certain circumstances.

This religiously-influenced conception of solitude as an inherently neutral experience that affected the soul depending on how or when it was experienced was also reflected in early-modern medical traditions. The humoral tradition dominated Western medicine from the second to late eighteenth centuries. Humorism believed that good health was brought about through the balance of the body's four humors: blood, choler (yellow bile), phlegm, and black bile.¹² An imbalance of the humors was caused by excess passions

and unnatural habits of the body, which resulted in various ailments, such as depression or obesity. Therefore, solitude had to be kept in balance as well to not impact a person's health.¹³ The historian Faye Bound Alberti writes, "Solitude was particularly problematic when it was imposed from the outside rather than sought from within...Too little solitude, like too much exercise, could deplete the spirits; too much made them sluggish and prone to melancholia."¹⁴ Being alone was not an inherently bad thing or a reflection of an individual's social failures, as is often associated with modern ideas of loneliness. Even the eighteenth-century English neoclassical writer and critic of solitude Samuel Johnson believed in a "universal reason for some stated intervals of solitude."¹⁵ He writes, "Knowledge is to be gained by study, and study to be prosecuted only in retirement...since it is necessary that we weaken the temptations of the world, by retiring at certain seasons of it."¹⁶ It was only through extreme acts like misanthropically renouncing society or being unwillingly alone—perhaps through exile or imprisonment—that an issue arose. This is to say that how humans have regarded what is now considered "loneliness" has not been experienced the same way throughout history. How humans have felt about being alone has changed over time due to various historical and intellectual developments.

In the late eighteenth century, Enlightenment ideas challenged traditional understandings about loneliness, as new concepts such as "individualism" and "civil society" altered humans' understandings of themselves and others. With the French philosopher Rene Descartes's famous proclamation, "I think therefore I am," it was now possible to separate the mind and body from one another and to view the mind as being in control of the body. Alberti writes, "It became possible to view the human body as an automaton, and physical movement, including the heartbeat, as reflecting physiological impulse, rather than a spiritual presence."¹⁷

Concurrently, neoclassicists of the Enlightenment believed that solitude was a negative experience that harmed one's mental health and resulted in the loss of one's capacity to reason.¹⁸ Many of these artists, writers, and intellectuals lived active social lives in coffee houses and social clubs, and their art stressed the elements and virtues they believed all men had in common.¹⁹ Solitude was now critiqued from the standpoint of duty, as men were supposed to be public examples of the good life in the public sphere.²⁰ Alberti writes, "Performing sociability through public gatherings and collective participation in some kind of shared consensus of value was one of the ways through which civil society was manifested and reinforced."²¹ In the words of the English poet Alexander Pope, "Self-love and Social be the Same."²² However, later Romanticists praised solitude's ability to provide emotional fulfillment and emphasized the necessity of the search for the individual in an increasingly mechanized society.²³ The English Romantic poet William Wordsworth depicted being alone in nature as a time of intellectual and spiritual development. In his 1807 poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," he writes, "I wandered lonely as a cloud/ That floats on high o'er vales and hill,/ When all at once I saw a crowd,/ A host, of golden daffodils;/ Beneath the lake, beneath the trees,/ Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."²⁴ After further recounting the beauty witnessed on his solitary stroll through nature, he reflects on the experience in the final stanza. He writes, "For oft, when on my couch I lie/ In vacant or in pensive mood,/ They flash upon that inward eye/ Which is the bliss of solitude;/ And then my heart with pleasure fills,/ And dances with the daffodils."²⁵ To Romanticists like Wordsworth, reflecting on the solitude of nature provided a blissful escape from the stresses and pressures of public life. The new rational individual of the eighteenth century was pressured to both act on their own as an individual and to conform to the common values of civil society.

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Modern medicine came to pathologize loneliness and view it as a mental affliction to be treated alongside mental conditions like depression and anxiety.

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The struggle to live as an individual in a modern world that constrained individual self-expression created the sense of isolation necessary for the emergence of loneliness throughout the nineteenth century. By 1800, the term "loneliness" had replaced "solitude," and a cultural emphasis on the power of the individual grew, especially in America.²⁶ Observers like Alexis De Tocqueville believed that individualistic ideologies left Americans susceptible to loneliness. To Tocqueville, Americans were free agents who were not linked by traditional family and social bonds. He wrote, "Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart."²⁷

This emphasis on individuality created a framework wherein people bore more personal responsibility for their failures, especially within an emerging capitalist context. These individualistic ideologies left many people feeling lonely, and they recalled in their diaries and letters a desire for meaningful relationships with other people.²⁸ Nineteenth-century novels also began to stress the desire for a sense of belonging and emotional satisfaction in their protagonists.²⁹ While nineteenth-century loneliness was mostly situational, a growing sense of isolation was reflected in both personal and public writings. These writings emphasized the need for the



The 20th-century political philosopher Hannah Arendt theorized that loneliness was a product of modernity and a part of the human condition. Wikimedia Commons.

individual to live a fulfilling life while existing in a world that made them unable to do so.

New understandings of loneliness as an experience caused by a lack of meaningfulness in some aspect of one's life emerged in Western thought alongside new ways of living. Industrialization and mass migration brought about these new lifestyles. In the early 1800s, around half of the U.S. population moved across state lines. By the end of the century, over fifty percent of Americans lived in towns and cities.³⁰ Instead of working within settled communities their entire lives, people abandoned their family farms in search of factory jobs in cities.³¹ Industrialization uprooted

traditional ways of life and reoriented humans' relationships to their labor. People were now competing and performing alienating labor in this new urban environment, while traditional community life began to disappear.³² Political theorist Hannah Arendt identified this uprootedness, caused by industrialization, as the origin of modern loneliness. The traditional community structures from which humans derived meaning were now replaced with labor.³³ Marx wrote during this period about how no man "seen in his isolation produces values," as "products become values only in their social relationship."³⁴ Marx recognized the incompatibility of classical political thought with modern industrial life, which reduced transcendent "ideas" down to functional "values." Values were social commodities that only derived importance through their connection to society and commerce. Anything of value was the product of society and the relationship between its members.³⁵ Therefore, traditional ideas about being alone such as oneliness or solitude were no longer valuable to modern society. The development of the soul or strengthening of one's relationship with God through solitude could not be easily transmuted into an entity of exchange. Arendt writes, "At no time prior to the incipient Industrial Revolution was it held that values, and not things, are the result of man's productive capacity, or was everything that exists related to society and not to man 'seen in his isolation.'"³⁶ Everything in the modern world now derived existence from society and ascribed all things, whether that be material objects or ideas themselves, value. Value was now the main unit by which to measure human thought and action.³⁷ As a result, being in solitude was no longer a meaningful act, as it produced no value. The collapse of traditional forms of community and ways of thinking, brought about by industrialization and urbanization, gave individuals no ability to manifest themselves in any meaningful way outside of their labor. However, this labor was ultimately

alienating factory labor which produced a paradox whereby people were told by society to live as free individuals, yet were constrained by the very values and practices of society when attempting to live as one. As Arendt states, “Man is utterly thrown back on himself. On the biological and on himself...In the process of labor, a curious loneliness arises.”³⁸

The Industrial Revolution also brought about the rise of mass solitary living, which bred the conditions of isolation and aloneness necessary for loneliness to occur. Living alone has historically been reserved for a small percentage of the population. Solitary living has also been specific to certain situations, such as the migration west on the American frontier, which left many men living alone in communities with heavily disproportionate sex ratios.³⁹ At the turn of the twentieth century, there was a notable rise in solitary households, that continued to rise throughout it, especially after 1960.⁴⁰ Larger percentages of people across age groups are now living alone at unprecedented rates, with over five million American solitary dwellers aged between eighteen and thirty-four.⁴¹ The historian Keith Snell has argued that this unprecedented rise in solitary living stems from a variety of different factors that have affected historical family structures. Further, he has argued that the rise of solitary living is not the origin of loneliness per se, but one factor that has resulted in greater amounts of aloneness, which is known to contribute to experiencing loneliness.⁴² This mass urbanism, brought about by industrialization, as a cause of loneliness seems contradictory at first, as urban environments push people closer to one another and should thus prevent loneliness. However, as the writer Olivia Liang points out, environmental space is not the same as emotional space.⁴³ Loneliness is not necessarily experienced due to a lack of social interactions, but a lack of meaningful relationships. Historians Luke Fernandez and Susan J. Matt write, “As Americans became city dwellers, they met more

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At the core of modern loneliness are fundamental questions about the political, economic, and social structures that shape Western society.

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people, and some might have expected that they would encounter less isolation than they had on farms and in small towns. But these hopes were not always borne out.”⁴⁴ Urban environments created expectations among many to have larger social circles than had been the norm in the nineteenth century’s smaller communities. Some doctors even worried that this increased sense of stress and overstimulation from large amounts of interaction could lead to nervousness and adverse health effects among city dwellers. While doctors and academics worried about too much interaction, others did take action to address their loneliness.

Citizens of cities including New York, Detroit, and Chicago formed Lonely Clubs or Lonely Bureaus, which were meant to bring people together and form friendships.⁴⁵ The existence of these groups indicates that mass loneliness not only existed in twentieth-century cities, but had also come to be viewed as something that could be aggressively fought and overcome. The formation of these clubs also suggests that traditional treatments such as religion and resignation were no longer considered adequate. As the founder of New York’s Less Lonely League stated, “I thought that through a church I might meet [...] people. I attended one in Central Park, west, but [...] no friends were to be made there. I attended another church in Lenox avenue [...] Now I don’t attend any church.”⁴⁶ Because of the loneliness, despondency, and isolation felt by many in the modern city environment, many people continued



The American artist Edward Hopper often depicted scenes of urban isolation and loneliness experienced by many in the modern city environment, as in his 1942 masterpiece work *Nighthawks*. Wikimedia Commons.

to form these clubs and write their local papers about their want for connection.⁴⁷ To many in the early twentieth century, loneliness was considered a serious problem, but one that could be overcome.

Rising rates of secularization and waning religious certainty, which began in the nineteenth century, are important factors that contributed to the formation of modern loneliness. Religion and religious faith have always served as a remedy for loneliness and still do for many. The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud wrote of how “devout, intrinsic religion” provided a type of buffer from loneliness. It both shielded off fears of social isolation through religious gatherings, while also quelling feelings of inner isolation, as the ever-present God ensured the believer was never truly alone.⁴⁸ Nations across Western Europe and North America have undergone a gradual process of secularization since the nineteenth century, wherein those nations’ traditions, values, and beliefs have changed as a result.⁴⁹ Sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Max Weber have theorized that industrialization was the primary force behind this secularization, as modern bureaucracies assumed responsibility for many of the

societal tasks that churches and parishes had previously performed. With these responsibilities now in the hands of the state, religious institutions faded in significance over time.⁵⁰ Advances in modern medicine in the nineteenth century, which were influenced by increasing secularization, also changed scientific understandings of human anatomy. Alberti writes, “Western medicine found new ways of classifying mental and physical health and developed a series of specialisms around emotional and psychological wellbeing on the one hand, and physical organs, systems, and parts on the other.”⁵¹ Modern medical approaches that emphasized the study of biology and psychology viewed solitude as having a negative effect on the body, as opposed to the previous humoral tradition that interpreted solitude as partially beneficial to the human soul.⁵²

While traditional religious prescriptions for loneliness were on the decline, new forms of Protestantism, such as the New Thought movement, preached that individuals could change their situations through positive thinking. Fernandez and Matt write, “By mid-century, books like the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale’s *The Power of Positive Thinking* were [...] best sellers, spreading the message that people could change their conditions through a positive outlook.”⁵³ Whereas an eighteenth-century farmer could alleviate his loneliness through his certainty in God’s divine plan, loneliness by the twentieth century was now a social phenomenon that was no longer mitigated simply through a relationship with God. Instead, the mindset one approached the emotional experience with, as well as the presence of secular peer groups that shared a sense of belonging, grew in importance at this time, as a way of treating feelings of loneliness.⁵⁴

Loneliness by the mid-twentieth century began to be interpreted in several different ways, with some writers viewing it as an intrinsic part of the human condition itself.

By this time, there was a growing belief in an inherent conflict of the self versus the world, and the individual versus society, which is still influential in Western political, economic, and intellectual discussions today.⁵⁵ Existentialism identified the helplessness of the individual who had become estranged from the human soul as a result of scientific and technological advancements, as well as the American belief in progress.⁵⁶ Existential loneliness was seen as an intrinsic part of the human experience that represented the individual's struggle to come to terms with the paradox of being a unique self striving for meaning in life, while also existing as a social being dependent on others to become fully human. Martin Heidegger, inspired by Søren Kierkegaard, viewed loneliness as the individual's struggle toward true self-knowledge and freedom.⁵⁷ As Sartre writes, "Hell is other people," and learning to live with oneself was the only way to truly affirm one's being and authenticity.⁵⁸

However, the existentialist perspective did not become the dominant way of thinking about and treating loneliness in a post-war America that embraced technology, individualism, and consumerism. Fernandez and Matt write, "Beginning in the twentieth century, Americans heard again and again that their isolation and social and business failures were due not to forces larger than themselves...but to their own failure to develop a likable self."⁵⁹ The term *loner* developed in the 1940s to mark those who sought out solitude as abnormal, compared to well-adjusted people who were supposed to be sociable and seek out friends. Twentieth-century Americans saw the *loner* as maladjusted to the demands of a society that emphasized sociability and the appearance of friendliness.⁶⁰ New technologies such as radios, televisions, and telephones were intentionally marketed as solutions to loneliness as well. These products placed an even bigger stigma on loners, as these technologies made facilitating interactions easier than

ever before. There was no longer an excuse to not interact with people. Though consumption was marketed as a cure for loneliness, in reality, it only exacerbated loneliness, as people retreated further into their private homes with private pools and private cars.⁶¹ David Riesman's 1950 sociological study *The Lonely Crowd* critiqued middle-class American culture as group-oriented, sensitive to the opinions of others, and unable to identify internal value.⁶² Post-war individualism sought a cure for loneliness through consumption and suburban life, yet this lifestyle made it harder to form communities and only intensified people's loneliness.

Still searching for a cure to this new social malady, many turned to psychology, medicine, and self-help, as a new industry of loneliness emerged in the 1970s. Philip Slater's 1970 book *The Pursuit of Loneliness* blamed Americans' individualistic character as the cause of mass loneliness and suggested that Americans would be happier if they let go of their individualistic tendencies and consumption habits.⁶³ This perspective blamed the lonely person as the cause of their own suffering and only reinforced the concept that loneliness was linked to personal shortcomings. Loneliness by the 1970s was seen as a socially negative condition that was the consequence of an individual's failure to live a socially acceptable, extroverted lifestyle. An interest in loneliness among academics as a troubling psychological condition emerged during this period, as psychologists Letitia Ann Peplau and Daniel Perlman organized a 1979 NIH-funded conference on loneliness at UCLA. Peplau and Perlman created a loneliness scale, thus making the emotion a measurable and quantifiable psychological condition.⁶⁴ Other academic fields have similarly begun studying loneliness, with most healthcare professionals holding a psychodynamic view of loneliness as pathological, usually resulting from problems in interpersonal relationships or infant and childhood

attachments.⁶⁵ Much of social science literature since the 1970s has viewed loneliness as an abnormal and destructive emotion, with neuroscientists John and Stephanie Cacioppo identifying loneliness as a social contagion that could be cured through medicine.⁶⁶ Modern medicine, then, came to pathologize loneliness and view it as a mental affliction that could be treated alongside mental conditions like depression and anxiety.⁶⁷

These contemporary ideas of loneliness work under the assumption that loneliness is a static emotional experience. The historical record shows this to be false, as Western ideas about being alone have changed dramatically since the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment allowed humans to view themselves as rationally-thinking individuals capable of making decisions for themselves. Just as this new way of understanding existence came into being, nineteenth-century industrialization radically altered how humans lived and worked in new large-scale urban environments. The consciousness of the individual's inability to manifest himself fully in this new modern environment created feelings of isolation and separateness that are now referred to as "loneliness." Most seek to fill this void with something to make loneliness tolerable. Still, secularization has rendered traditional solutions like religion ineffective, and successful alternatives have yet to emerge. Cures for loneliness have been influenced by different ideas and trends over the last two hundred years, such as new technologies, modern medicine, existentialist philosophy, and consumerism.

Loneliness and its cures have also taken on unique characteristics in the twenty-first century, due to the influence of technology and social media. The post-1970s pathologization of loneliness still informs contemporary understandings of loneliness.⁶⁸ There has been much concern among governments and the media about a "loneliness

epidemic," as rates of loneliness across the West have reached record highs.⁶⁹ The ideological and historical roots of this modern emotion are important to consider as policymakers in the U.S. and U.K. move to fight this supposed epidemic. At the core of modern loneliness are fundamental questions about the political, economic, and social structures that shape Western society. Treating loneliness is not just a medical matter, but a political one.

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FROM HOMILIES TO LITTLE SAINT HUGH: ANTISEMITISM IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

Haley Wells

Many of the antisemitic stereotypes found in contemporary popular culture originated or were popularized during the Middle Ages, particularly in Europe. Often, these antisemitic mindsets were disseminated and popularized through literature. This literature reflects the antisemitic attitudes and anxieties that were widespread among the ruling classes, the clergy, and ordinary citizens. In this paper, I will examine the Venerable Bede's homilies, the writings of Gerald of Wales, Chretien de Troyes' grail narrative, and *The Ballad of Hugh of Lincoln*, an Anglo-Norman blood libel ballad. By examining the antisemitic attitudes found in these sources, I will explore how they recorded and affected the antisemitic attitudes found in England and France during the Middle Ages. Further, I explore how these sources shed light on the evolution of antisemitism in England and France, due to events such as the Norman Conquest, the entry of the Jews into England, and the Crusades. While the texts examined are varied, they all conceptualize the Jews in one of three ways: using the Jews as an Other to demarcate a different identity; marking the Jews as a threat to a people group or identity and sometimes calling for the mitigation of that threat; or identifying the Jews as both an Other and a threat, thereby interpreting them as both necessary and necessarily expendable.

Until the Norman Conquest of 1066, most historians agree that Jews did not live in England. If some did live there during the early Middle Ages, their numbers were incredibly small. However, when William the Conqueror subjugated England in 1066, he invited the Jews of Normandy to join him. Once in England, the Jews worked as tax and debt collectors for the king; they also worked as merchants, moneylenders, and shopkeepers. Medievalist Geraldine Heng writes that they

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This imagery of life over death and spirituality over materialism places Judaism and Christianity in stark contrast to each other and validates the superiority of Christianity.

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“dominated credit markets...and were vital to the development of a commercializing land market in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.”¹ Their financial role in England fueled a great deal of resentment, which is reflected in the blood libel stories that emerged during this period, the widespread dissemination of antisemitic stereotypes in a variety of written and oral media, as well as sporadic violent attacks that were committed against them. Eventually, these antisemitic persecutions reached a head with Edward I's 1290 edict of Jewish expulsion from England. The Jews did not return to England until 1656.² However, even before the Jewish people migrated to England, English writers considered and wrote about the role Jews and Judaism played in their world. Early English literature is rife with examples of antisemitism being utilized for a variety of religious and secular purposes; this utility of antisemitism is especially prominent in the Venerable Bede's writings.

Bede was an English monk who lived during the seventh and eighth centuries. From the age of seven until his death, he resided at the joint monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow and wrote all his texts from there. Between 720 and 730

C.E., he utilized antisemitism in his homilies to discredit contemporary Judaism and validate English Christianity. He wrote that the Jews “continue to be like a tomb still closed by a stone.”³ Because Bede was a monk, his antisemitism is, unsurprisingly, grounded in religion.⁴ For example, his characterization of the Jews speaks to the well-known image of Christ’s tomb being closed by a stone, prior to his resurrection.⁵ However, Bede’s antisemitism was more than the repackaging of religious tropes. While he did not live in the secular world, Bede’s writings on the Jews utilize elements of English secular culture. This secular element is intertwined with Christian tropes and ideals—as virtually everything in post-conversion England was—and it takes the basic antisemitic setpieces found in early Christian thought and personalizes them specifically for English culture and attitudes.

In early English culture, tombs and graves carried a variety of complex and sometimes contradictory connotations; in comparing the Jews to a tomb, Bede speaks to the idea of tombs as monuments honoring the past and indicates that Judaism is obsolete. Early English literature, such as the epic poem *Beowulf*, reflects the idea of tombs and barrows standing as monuments to the past, a concept that was most likely shaped by the many Bronze Age burial mounds that dotted the early English landscape. While *Beowulf* was written down about a century after Bede was writing, the poem is based on much earlier influences, and so the attitudes depicted resonate with the attitudes of Bede’s contemporary audience. In the poem, tombs and barrows represent what past people and cultures have left behind. Just before *Beowulf* dies, he states, “The brave in battle will bid a tomb be built/ shining over my pyre on the cliffs by the sea;/ it will be as a monument to my people.”⁶ While *Beowulf*’s death and the erection of this monument is narrated in present tense, the text makes it clear that the events of the poem happened

in the distant past.⁷ Thus, a contemporary audience would have understood *Beowulf*’s barrow as one of the markers of a bygone era, a marker that existed to commemorate the existence and accomplishments of a long-gone people group. Outside of the literary realm, early English people would have repeatedly associated tombs and burial monuments with the distant past, as they encountered Bronze Age burial mounds scattered across the landscape—a permanent tribute to a long-gone culture.⁸ Thus, in comparing the Jews to a tomb, Bede suggests that there was some glory and merit in the Jewish faith initially—as burial monuments were built to *celebrate* the glory of past cultures—but the Jews are now clinging to that long-dead glory, rather than moving forward into the new, glorious Christian future. Medievalist Kathy Lavezzo notes that Bede was not unequivocally antisemitic about all aspects of Jewishness, but showed respect for Biblical Jewish sanctuaries.⁹ Thus, Bede’s writings reveal his respect for Biblical Judaism, acknowledging that there was glory to be found in the bygone days of Jewry. However, his writings depict contemporary Jews acting as an outdated monument to the glory of past Jewry instead of embracing the present glory of Christianity.

Furthermore, in comparing Jews to a tomb, Bede associates them with eternal damnation. Early English texts about death and dying suggest that early English Christians had complicated views about the subject; often, their conception of death centered on the eternal destruction sin caused, rather than the end of a body’s life. For example, Vercelli Homily IX states that a person can experience three deaths, with the first death being “the man who has been overcome by many sins” and the third death being “those souls who must dwell in hell.”¹⁰ This homiletic text demonstrates that conceptions of death frequently meant eternal damnation, rather than physical death, though the two types of death are visually and conceptually linked. Thus, in associating Jews with tombs,



Medieval manuscript illuminated initial showing Bede at work. Source: The British Library Illuminated Manuscripts.

Bede alludes to the ultimate death—damnation in hell—and makes it clear that Jews cannot be understood as anything but damned souls and agents who threaten to bring about the damnation of others. Further, the visceral materialism of imagining Jews as stone tombs highlights the sinful worldliness of their unbelief. Early English Christianity often focused on the importance of spiritualism over materialism. Many medieval texts, including Blickling Homily X, warn readers to “turn away from the affairs of this world”¹¹ because all worldly materialism is transitory in comparison to eternal life. Bede himself wrote frequently about the importance of forsaking material wealth and turning to God, as illustrated in several stories he tells about saintly figures who forsake their worldly wealth and turn to monastic life to earn eternal life in

heaven. So, associating the Jews with worldly materialism, Bede frames them as the antithesis of Christianity. Christians, in contrast, are characterized as “living stones built up, a spiritual house.”¹² In contrast to the Jews, who are visually associated with a place of death, Christians are visually associated with a place devoted to life. This imagery of life over death and spirituality over materialism places Judaism and Christianity in stark contrast to each other and validates the superiority of Christianity. This seemingly simple image of a tomb versus a house, then, is loaded with secular and religious implications that construct the Jews as an entirely undesirable Other and use them as the margins to define and exalt English Christianity.

Bede did not limit himself to comparing Jews to tombs; in other homilies, he imagines the Jews as exiles from God, again suggesting the superiority of Christianity through a negative depiction of Judaism. Lavezzo writes that Bede thought, “Contemporary Jews shut themselves away from God through their hardened and resolutely carnal hearts.”¹³ The concept of exile was central in early English culture. Depictions of secular exile can be found in texts such as *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *Christ and Satan*. Thus, it is unsurprising that Bede utilized this concept in his writings, nor is it surprising that he utilized the concept for an antisemitic purpose. Medievalist Leonard H. Frey writes that exile was viewed as “the ultimate in hardships.”¹⁴ He explains that one reason a person could become an exile was because they rebelled against their ruler, an idea that resonates with the Christian belief that Jews rebelled against God.¹⁵ Throughout the Bible, Jews are depicted as rebels against God because of their pride or stubbornness. Their label as Christ-killers also contains the idea that they blatantly defied God in killing Jesus Christ. Bede, then, used the secular concept of exile to highlight how the Jews were spiritually

exiled from God, thus putting an abstract, spiritual condition in concrete terms his contemporary readers could understand. Bede's depiction of the Jews as spiritual exiles also builds on a larger tradition of blending the secular concept of exile with the Christian concept of alienation from God. In the Christian poem *Christ and Satan*, Satan is also depicted as an exile because of rebellion against God.¹⁶ Satan states, "I must now set myself/upon the ways of exile, sorrowing, upon these wide paths."¹⁷ This passage demonstrates how, in many early English texts, the language used to describe alienation from God was exceptionally similar to the language used to describe secular exile. Similar language was used in *Beowulf* to describe the monster Grendel's alienation from God: "The other, misshapen,/ marched the exile's path in the form of a man."¹⁸ Thus, Bede marks the Jews as more than ordinary people alienated from God; he places them in the same role as Satan himself and other monsters alienated from God, thereby marking the Jews as monstrous through their spiritual alienation. Even the pagans Bede writes about are not marked as spiritual exiles with the same intensity, demonstrating how Bede's vitriol was reserved solely for the Jews. Further, the idea of Jews as exiles may also be tied to the idea of them being like a tomb. Another reason someone could become an exile was because they were part of a clan that died out, leaving them alone. This condition is depicted in both *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. Though Bede does not explicitly suggest that the Jews are exiles because their clan—the Biblical Jew—is dead, it is hardly a stretch to interpret his writings in this light. Bede may have viewed the Jews as exiles, both because they were rebellious and because he thought they were clinging to a dead tradition—a tradition that had left them without a spiritual community to find solace in—rather than converting to and assimilating into the Christian community.

Connected to the concept of exile is imagery of wintry weather, which is another metaphor Bede uses to demonize the Jews. In one of his homilies, Bede writes, "Why did the evangelist trouble to record that it was winter time, except that he wished to indicate by the harshness of the winter winds and storms the hardness of the Jews' unbelief."¹⁹ The comparison of the Jews to wintry weather highlights the common antisemitic conception of Jews as coldhearted, both because of their refusal to accept Christianity and because of their reputation as Christ-killers. Imagery of wintry weather is often linked to imagery of death in medieval texts. For example, one section of *The Wanderer*, an Old English elegy, reads, "Long ago I hid my gold-giving friend/ in the darkness of the earth and went wretched/ winter-sad over the ice-locked waves/ sought, hall-sick, a treasure-giver/ wherever I might find, near or far."²⁰ In this passage, the wanderer buries his dead lord (the gold-giving friend), an event that is visually and conceptually linked to winter, which the phrases "winter-sad" and "ice-locked waves" demonstrate. In comparing the Jews to wintry weather, Bede again ties contemporary Judaism to the concept of death—the death of Biblical Judaism and the eternal spiritual death that comes with rejecting Christianity. Furthermore, imagery of wintry weather is often connected to the concept of exile. Another Old English elegy, *The Seafarer*, reads, "I, wretched with care, dwelt all winter/ on the ice-cold sea in the path of exile/ deprived of dear kinsmen/ hung with icicles of frost while hail flew in showers."²¹ This passage demonstrates that, for early English Christians, wintry weather and exile were visually and conceptually linked; in fact, the language of the elegy constructs winter as the force that keeps the seafarer isolated and exiled, far more than any human social construct does. While a social command may have cast him out of society, the winter works to continually isolate and torment him. The idea of winter perpetuating or highlighting

exile was not reserved solely for texts dealing with literal social exile. Medievalist Thomas Rendall writes that Old English poets also conceptualized spiritual estrangement from God in terms of wintry weather.²² Thus, Bede associating the Jews with wintry weather ties them back to the concept of spiritual exile from God. However, the strength of Bede's antisemitism is displayed in how he does not merely say the Jews are *like* exiles, stuck in the wintry weather by their refusal to accept eternal spiritual life; instead, he compares the Jews to the wintry weather itself, not only dehumanizing them, but also implying that they are actively contributing to others' alienation from God. Wintry weather would have been one of the biggest threats to survival in early medieval England; thus, in associating the Jews with this threat, Bede strongly Others the Jews and highlights them as an enemy to everything Christians in England value— including their literal and spiritual lives.

The way Bede's writings treat Biblical Jews versus contemporary Jews reveals a tension between conceptualizing the "mythical Jews" versus the "Jew next door." Historian Jonathan Sarna coined these terms, writing about the struggle many people face as they try to reconcile their conception of the stereotypical "mythical Jew" of the Bible with their encounters with real, everyday Jews.²³ Bede's appreciation for the sanctuaries of Biblical Judaism fits neatly into Sarna's concept of the mythical Jew. In Bede's case, these mythical Jews represent virtue, as they created the foundation Christianity would later build on. However, when Bede writes about his conception of the Jew next door—contemporary Jews (who do not even live in his country)—he is far less respectful. Writing on how people relieve these cognitive tensions, Sarna writes that the dissonance can be resolved in four different ways, including suppression,²⁴ which he defines as "ignoring feelings of

dissonance and living with the resulting inconsistency."²⁵ Bede's writings demonstrate this suppression. However, Bede's suppression may have been ignorance, rather than ignoring the dissonance. As previously discussed, "If...there were Jews in England in Saxon times [the period during which Bede was writing], their numbers could not have been great."²⁶ Therefore, it is unlikely that Bede, isolated at Wearmouth-Jarrow, ever met a real Jewish person. So, while his works display a clear divide between respecting biblical Jews and denigrating contemporary Judaism, he was probably never forced to confront this dissonance in the same way someone living next to and interacting with a Jew would have to. Beyond being ignorant of the dissonance, Bede's works seem to assume that the divide is rational: biblical Jews were respectable because Christianity had not yet been formed, but after the formation of Christianity, anyone who chose not to convert was clearly hardhearted, bestial, and—worst of all—a threat to those who did accept the Christian religion.

Bede's writings raise a question of why he decried Judaism so vehemently, since, given that they did not live in England, they did not present a direct physical or political threat to the English people. Further, Jews could not truly be a pervasive *spiritual* threat, as they were never in contact with English Christians. Realistically, the bigger threat to Christianity during this period was continuing paganism that resisted conversion efforts and, a few years later, pagan Viking raiders, who often sacked monasteries and murdered clerics. One way to understand Bede's apparent hatred for Jews and Judaism lies in understanding his goals as a monk. As a Christian monk writing soon after the English conversion to Christianity, one of Bede's main goals was to convince his audience—both in England and abroad—of the legitimacy of English Christianity. Thus, framing Christianity in contrast to the Jewish Other is one way his writings work to legitimate

English Christianity. Historian Linda Colley writes, “Men and women decide who they are by reference to who and what they are not. Once confronted with an obviously alien ‘Them,’ an otherwise diverse community can become a reassuring or merely desperate ‘Us’.”²⁷ In this way, Bede’s Othering of the Jews highlights the supposed superiority of Christianity and draws boundaries around Christianity as a comforting in-group. Because the Jews serve a necessary function, then, Bede’s writings never call for their destruction or even advocate very strongly for their conversion; instead, they illustrate how Judaism is diametrically opposed to Christianity, thereby emphasizing the validity and desirability of Christianity in the process.

Several centuries after Bede, a cleric named Gerald of Wales incorporated antisemitism into his writings for his Norman patron, Henry II of England. Gerald hoped to be appointed bishop of St. Davids in Wales, so he was deeply invested in securing the king’s favor. Thus, his use of antisemitism is politically motivated and meant to demonize the Britons (Welsh) Henry II was attempting to subjugate. In his *Speculum Ecclesiae*, he scorns how the Britons expect King Arthur to return and fight for them, stating, “They really expect him [Arthur] to come back, just as the Jews, led astray by even greater stupidity, misfortune, and misplaced faith, really expect their Messiah to return.”²⁸ This passage is part of a much larger piece of anti-Welsh propaganda, intended to aid Henry II in his campaign to conquer Wales and subjugate the Welsh people. As Henry II’s forces struggled with the Welsh, the Welsh rallied around the legend of King Arthur, claiming that he would return to lead them to victory.²⁹ Gerald of Wales did his best to destroy Welsh morale by undermining the Welsh people’s faith in Arthur’s return. Building on the distaste for the Jewish religion, found in works like Bede’s, Gerald compares the Welsh to the Jewish Other to augment the

inferior identity assigned to the Welsh.

Gerald’s writing demonstrates two important things. First, it suggests that, by this period, antisemitism was so widespread in England that an antisemitic stereotype could be included in a text without any further explanation, and readers would still understand it. Jews were living in England during the time Gerald was writing, as the Normans invited the Jews into England after the conquest of 1066. So, English antisemitic attitudes were no longer directed at a distant people group; now they were directed at individuals who lived alongside Gerald of Wales—and this antisemitic rhetoric often fueled the flames of much more violent antisemitic actions. This text also demonstrates how far antisemitic attitudes had spread beyond the religious sphere. Just like Bede’s writings, this text alludes to the belief that Christianity is the one true religion, but, unlike Bede’s writings, the goal of the antisemitic rhetoric is political in nature, rather than religious. Second, this text demonstrates a principle that medievalist Geraldine Heng discusses in her book on race in the Middle Ages: namely that, “Jews functioned as the benchmark by which racial others were defined, measured, scaled, and assessed.”³⁰ Though Gerald is not making a point about race, he does use the Jews as a benchmark to measure the transgressive beliefs of the Welsh. Further, Gerald’s text shows how Othering the Jews had become politically expedient, rather than just religiously useful. I would argue that the political usefulness of demonizing the Jews developed as the Jews moved into England, gaining power and influence. When they did not live in England, their usefulness as an Other remained largely ideological; Jews and Judaism as a *concept* was something Christian writers could effectively use to legitimate Christianity. However, when the Jews joined English society, rhetoric against them became more concrete and more explicitly political—not just



French medieval manuscript depicting the crucifixion of Christ. Source: The British Library Illuminated Manuscripts.

as a way of disempowering other social groups, such as the Welsh, but also as an attempt to halt the growing social and economic power of the Jews. Thus, Gerald belittles the Jews, not just to invalidate the Welsh cause, but also to encourage and affect the social disempowerment of the Jews.

Across the English Channel, French poet Chrétien de Troyes—a moniker that simply means “a Christian from Troyes” and, I would argue, positions his works as explicitly religious—also included antisemitic stereotypes in a grail narrative titled *Perceval: The Story of the Grail*. Like Gerald of Wales, Chrétien’s religiously-charged antisemitism was influenced by politics, notably, the Crusades. Chrétien’s first mention of the Jews, in a speech from a mother to her knightly son, states that Jesus “suffered at the hands of the

Jews—/betrayed and falsely judged.”³¹ The next mention of the Jews comes from a Christian knight who, on Easter, gives a speech about the crucifixion. He states, “The Jews, in their wicked jealousy/ (They ought to be killed like dogs!)/ setting Him high on the Cross,/ Harmed themselves but helped us,/ For they were lost, and we/ Were saved.”³² Both of these invectives against the Jews are religiously charged, citing the Jewish deicide as the grievance that fuels antisemitic hatred. These passages also highlight the Jew as an Other, one that is characterized by a loss of salvation, in counterpoint to Christians *gaining* salvation. Within this text, Chrétien illustrates how the Jewish Other could be used for Christian salvation, as his knight, Perceval, who has lost his memory and forgotten God, is brought back to Christianity through his hatred for the Jews and his remembrance of the deicide. Thus, the narrative suggests that Jews, as an Other, continue to play a role in Christian salvation: through being enemies of Christianity, they galvanize Christians to remain faithful and seek eternal life. Though Chrétien’s characters express hatred for the Jews, his narrative structure also implicitly acknowledges the necessity of the Jews for Christian identity formation and salvation.

However, this text also identifies the Jews as a threat and calls for the violent mitigation of that threat. While the narrative constructs the Jewish Other as an important tool for Christian salvation, it also underscores the threatening nature of the Other and suggests that mitigating that threat contributes to Christian salvation far more than merely acknowledging it or allowing it to grow. When read in the context of the Crusades, this call for violent action suddenly becomes understandable. Chrétien wrote this narrative for Count Philip of Flanders, who was a crusader knight.³³ According to military historian John D. Hosler, “Philip was prone to bouts of extreme cruelty and violence”³⁴—even

against his own people. During the First Crusade, he expanded this pattern of violence, arriving “with great promise (and a considerable military force) at Acre in the Holy Land in August of 1177.”³⁵ Crusades historian Malcolm Barber writes that he brought “more resources than any other French baron and perhaps even than the monarchy.”³⁶ Crusading was incredibly important to Phillip because he saw it as a way to prove his faith, reinforce his Christian identity, and venerate the Christian religion. In a letter to Hildegard of Bingen, a Benedictine abbess, he wrote that he wished to “exalt the name of Christianity...and to bring low the terrible savagery of the Saracens.”³⁷ Violence through the Crusades, then, was one way to achieve his religious goals. Thus, in creating a character who calls for the mass murder of the Jews, Chrétien reflects the attitudes and actions of his patron: he highlights a knightly desire to reinforce or prove Christian identity and identifies violent action against a religious Other as one way to reinforce this identity. His text, therefore, condones Philip’s own actions in the pursuit of being a better Christian.

Further, Chretien wrote *Perceval* just after the 1187 fall of Jerusalem, so the First Crusade as a whole also forms “an important backdrop for this material.”³⁸ During the First Crusade, Christians perpetuated a great deal of violence against the Jews they encountered. While the official stance of the Catholic Church was toleration towards Jews,³⁹ anti-Jewish violence occurred even before the First Crusade.⁴⁰ For example, one medieval chronicler, Albert of Aix, wrote about how crusaders in the kingdom of Lorraine (a French holding), “arose in a spirit of cruelty against the Jewish people scattered throughout all the cities and slaughtered them cruelly [...] asserting it to be the beginning of their expedition and of their duty against the enemies of the Christian faith.”⁴¹ Though Chrétien was not alive when the violence in Lorraine occurred, it arguably influenced his work, as it set the stage

“ **Thus, we see how Chrétien’s text reflects the attitudes of the day by mirroring the way social definitions of acceptable (and expected) knighthood had expanded to include new types of socially-sanctioned violence.** ”

for the antisemitism that grew exponentially during the First Crusade and marked France as a region that was distinctly dangerous for Jews. Further, the figures most involved in propagating antisemitic persecution were “the bishop of Limoges, the king of France, [and] the duke of Normandy.”⁴² The attitudes and actions of these three French leaders would have influenced the material French writers like Chretien created during this period, as these writers required the approval and patronage of the nobility. Any writer who wished to retain their patronage (as Chrétien did) would have to promote the antisemitic attitudes of those in power and even condone their antisemitic actions. Thus, Chrétien’s writing reflects not only the attitudes of Count Phillip, but also broader French attitudes regarding the Jews leading up to and in the wake of the First Crusade.

Chretien’s suggestion (if such a strongly-worded statement should be called a suggestion) that the Jews should be killed like dogs demonstrates how those who committed violence against the Jews did not see them as truly human. Othering is virtually always dehumanizing, so the portrayal of Jews as animalistic is unsurprising (Bede also compared the Jews to wild animals⁴³), but it becomes particularly notable when

considered in conjunction with the call to violence. While calling for violence against humans—no matter how alien they may seem—would probably cause moral quandaries, especially for knights claiming to be Christian, calling for violence against an inhuman threat would not cause the same moral conflict. In his book *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination*, psychologist Sam Keen highlights the idea that dehumanizing an enemy (or Other) makes virtually any level of violence possible, stating, “As a rule, human beings do not kill other human beings [...] A variety of dehumanizing faces is superimposed over the enemy to allow him to be killed without guilt.”⁴⁴ This theory maps exceptionally well onto Chretien’s writing. If Chretien can convince his audience (and perhaps himself) that the Jews are not humans, but the ultimate evil—the killers of Christ and the eternal enemy of Christianity—then any violence propagated against them during the First Crusade or in the future becomes much easier to justify. This justification, then, would prevent any internal conflict or cognitive dissonance for knights like Phillip of Flanders, who was part of that violence.

Further, Chretien’s text grapples with the common question of what it means to be a good knight and places antisemitic violence at the center of his response. In many medieval texts confession is an integral part of a knight’s life; in these stories, knights go to confession when they wished to absolve themselves of sins that might harm their reputations or when they wish to remove moral roadblocks that could prevent them from constructing the ideal knightly identity. Thus, confession and absolution served the crucial social function of reinforcing knightly identities through symbolically removing “stains” that would diminish that identity. In a similar manner, Chrétien’s antisemitic diatribe absolves both Chrétien’s patron and any crusading knights who committed antisemitic violence of a possible moral stain that might



Medieval manuscript depicting the death of St. Robert of Bury, a young boy who was allegedly murdered by Jews in 1181. Wikimedia Commons.

undermine their knightly identities. The diatribe frames anti-Jewish violence as not just acceptable, but also *expected* of any good Christian knight. Thus, Chretien’s language moves beyond absolutism to argue that committing violence—particularly antisemitic violence—is crucial to being an ideal Christian knight. The First Crusade (and all subsequent Crusades) forced people across Europe to interrogate what it meant to be a good Christian and, specifically, what it meant to be a good knight. Many texts written during and after the Crusades question what knightly ideal men should strive to live up to. In his text, Chrétien’s antisemitism outlines its own knightly ideal: that good Christian knights should destroy the threatening Jewish Other through violence. Thus, a knight who has lost his memory and subsequently lost his sense of

knightly identity is brought back to that identity through a call to do violence against the Jews—an act that promises to help him live up to the Christian ideal of knighthood once more. Thus, we see how Chrétien's text reflects the attitudes of the day by mirroring the way social definitions of acceptable (and expected) knighthood had expanded to include new types of socially-sanctioned violence.

About a century after Chretien composed *Perceval*, using antisemitism to grapple with questions of religious identity, the people of England composed "Hugh of Lincoln" to grapple with anxieties about the Jews in English political and social spaces. The Anglo-Norman ballad "Hugh of Lincoln" was composed between 1255 and 1272,⁴⁵ identifying the Jews of England as a threat to the Christian English and playing out the fantasy of mitigating this threat. The ballad also presents the Jews of England as an Other and grapples with how Christian identity is constituted and even strengthened through Jewish aggression. This ballad is one of the first written versions of the Jewish blood libel story, though it is most likely based on a much older oral tradition. Blood libel is "the false allegation that Jews used the blood of non-Jewish, usually Christian children, for ritual purposes."⁴⁶ The earliest European accusation of blood libel occurred in 1144, when the Jews of Norwich, England were accused of kidnapping and torturing a young boy the same way Christ was tortured.⁴⁷ Hugh of Lincoln's ballad merges both the religious and hagiographical elements seen in earlier versions of the blood libel story with allusions to real political and historical developments, such as the reign of King Henry, making the political purpose of this story particularly critical to examine and understand.

This ballad overwhelmingly suggests that the Jews are a threat to English Christians—not just physically, but also socially and politically. In this text, the Jews threaten to

silence the Christian voice—literally and socially—and assert a Jewish voice over the Christian one. In the 368 lines of this ballad, the Christian characters get only forty-five lines of dialogue. In contrast, the Jewish characters (who are much less numerous than the many Christian characters) dominate over sixty-four lines of dialogue. One Jew alone speaks for eight unbroken stanzas, whereas a Christian speech never lasts for more than a stanza or two. Furthermore, the text is interwoven with examples of Christians being rendered speechless, while the Jews speak freely. For example, when the Jews are preparing to kill Hugh, the youthful blood libel victim, the text states, "The wicked Jewes of Lincolne *cried*, / With *one consent*, 'Whatere betide/ Come let the ladde be crucified.'"⁴⁸ This passage highlights a mob of Jews speaking with a loud, powerful, and united voice. This united voice stands in contrast to the speeches Christians have made thus far, where each Christian always speaks alone. So, the text juxtaposes singular Christian voices that are powerless to prevent evil against a powerful mass of Jewish voices that work in concord to commit evil and drown out the paucity of Christian voices. A few lines later, when describing Hugh, the text states, "The infant trembled from fote [foot] to head/ At the sight, bot [but] never a word be said."⁴⁹ And, just before Hugh dies, the text states, "No words but these he was herde [heard] to saye."⁵⁰ These two passages highlight Hugh's silence; even at the height of his suffering, his voice is never heard. While the Jews around Hugh discuss their evil deeds, the Christian child is entirely robbed of his voice. Once again, Jewish voices are highlighted in contrast to the lack of a Christian voice. Finally, Hugh is permanently silenced by death, a silencing that is highlighted when the Jews state, "The *silent* erthe shal our secret keep."⁵¹ In this passage, the silent ground Hugh is concealed in further emphasizes Hugh's total lack of a voice. Again, the Jews—who even guide the narrative about Hugh's silence—have a prominent voice,

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The intimate link between Jewish greed and Jewish violence, going all the way back to Christ’s killing, critiques how Jews in England had been allowed to run the English financial engines.
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while silence and Christianity are conceptually linked. Even the brutal murder of a Christian child becomes a secret that is shrouded in silence. Hugh’s permanent silence, then, can be read as a metaphor for the Christian community as a whole being silenced—perhaps permanently—by Jewish power and Jewish voices, an anxiety that is prevalent throughout the entirety of this text. Even the Christian *king* is given a marginal voice compared to the Jews; in one instance, the text states, “King Henrie said, and his words were few.”⁵² This line follows eight stanzas of Jopin the Jew speaking, placing the verbosity of the Jews in stark contrast to how little Christians—even the most powerful one in England—speak or are allowed a voice. In placing the King’s limited lines next to Jopin’s eight stanzas, the ballad demonstrates the belief that even an ordinary Jew has a more influential social voice than the most powerful Christian in England. This ballad would have been sung communally before it was written down, an oral tradition which the first line of the text highlights: “You shall *heare* a good song, if you *listen* to mee”⁵³ This opening line and the sung nature of the ballad more generally emphasize themes of speaking, and listening—who gets to speak and who must listen, whose voice is stolen and whose is raised? While the narrator of the ballad is clearly Christian (and thus

the Christian voice ultimately triumphs), the narrative clearly expresses the fear that Christians are losing or have already lost their voices and, by extension, social influence to Jews who are taking power.

The fear of Jewish voices drowning out Christian voices becomes understandable when viewed in a political context. Though the Jews were the ones robbed of a voice again and again during this period, Christian anxieties that Jews would eclipse their voices do make sense, given that the Jews worked for those in power. The Normans invited the Jews into England, and they utilized the Jews as debt/tax collectors and money lenders to bring capital into their coffers.⁵⁴ The Jews’ financial position made the common people of England resent and fear them. Just a few decades before Hugh’s ballad was recorded, this resentment exploded into an anti-Jewish riot in York, England. During this riot, “the city’s entire Jewish population was massacred,”⁵⁵ demonstrating the vitriolic strength of Christian resentment against the Jews. Further, prior to the creation of this ballad, the Christians of England watched the Normans greatly diminish their social voice. When the Normans took over England, the language the English people had written, spoken, and even worshiped in for centuries was replaced by Norman French. Though many of the English common people persisted in using English to communicate with each other, the fact that this ballad is written in *Anglo-Norman*, rather than pure English, speaks to just how much French subsumed their native language. It is unsurprising, then, that common English Christians feared losing their voice to the Jews, as well as the Normans. Jews were incredibly visible in England during this period. Heng writes that they intermingled with Christians “in neighborhoods, markets, fairs, towns, and cities.”⁵⁶ Further, many became quite successful and powerful as a result of their financial alliance with the Normans. Heng states that

“on a per capita basis, the community of English Jews has been identified as the wealthiest among all the countries of northern Europe.”⁵⁷ This prosperity made the Jews—particularly Jews with a great deal of social power—even more visible and made many English Christians feel uneasy, as well as resentful. Jews had been constructed as a threat since the days of Bede and before—a threat to Christianity, a threat to national identity, and a threat to salvation. And, as English Christians watched the Jews become increasingly more prominent, they came to understand them as a financial, political, and physical threat—one that threatened to erase their voices and identities entirely.

Though the ballad focuses on the Jews as killers, it ties their homicidal tendencies to their greed, again highlighting English concerns over their financial foothold in England. For example, the text tells us that the Jews who plotted Hugh’s murder were “the richest in all the land.”⁵⁸ Further, the justification Jopin offers for the murder reads, “For thirty peeces,—like Jhesus of old—/ The child himself has freely sold.”⁵⁹ Jopin adds, “My lawful purchase he [Hugh] will be.”⁶⁰ In these lines, the focus on monetary gain, paired with homicidal desires that hearken back to the Jewish killing of Christ, highlights how Jewish access to wealth was viewed as a threat. By calling Hugh his “lawful purchase,” Jopin uses money to legitimize his murder, thus depicting wealthy Jews as mercenary enough to place a price on everything, even human life. Furthermore, these lines demonstrate Christian worries that the Jews used their monetary connections to legally legitimate their atrocities. The intimate link between Jewish greed and Jewish violence, going all the way back to Christ’s killing, critiques how Jews in England had been allowed to run the English financial engines. This critique suggests that a people group who are willing to place a price on a Christian child’s life should never be given social power

or control the financial engines of England.

This ballad also expresses anxieties about the relationship between the Norman overlords and the English common people through its critique of the Jews. Unlike the writings of Bede, Gerald, and Chretien, this text was not created for a noble patron or intended to flatter nobility. A ballad is a folk song,⁶¹ which means that it is composed by and for common people, and it addresses their desires and concerns. During the 1200s, English commoners were often concerned about their relationship with their Norman overlords. Throughout much of the post-conquest period, the Norman relationship with the English people was fraught with tension. The Normans imported their own language to England, forcing English to “go underground” for centuries. They cemented the feudal system in England, placing most of the English people at the bottom of the feudal hierarchy as servants and peasant laborers. Furthermore, they often sought to control the English people through violence.⁶² The *Peterborough Chronicle*, an English historical record that began before the Conquest and continued after, recorded many of the atrocities the English people suffered at the hands of the Normans, thereby demonstrating the fear and hatred the English felt towards their overlords. This ballad, then, depicts the tensions between the English and the Normans by demonizing the Jews, whom the Normans had invited in and shared a close working relationship with. The narrative suggests that in a manner similar to how the Normans terrorized the English, the Jews also terrorized the English people, often with the Norman’s approval.

In particular, this ballad contains an implicit critique of the Norman king by tying him to the Jewish people. Throughout the text, the implication that King Henry is either blind to the Jewish threat, and is thus an incompetent ruler, or is overly sympathetic to them, to the detriment of his Christian English

subjects, is present. For example, when Hugh's mother tells the king that the Jews have her son, the text states, "He replied to her words respecting the youth/... 'By the pitie of God, an this tale be sooth,/ These Jewes of Lincolne shal die without ruth;/ But if the story falshode be,/ The Jewes you wrong most grevouslie,/ Then by Sanct [Saint] Edouard men shal see,/ Thyself the punishment shalte drie [You will experience their punishment]."⁶³ In this passage, the French king of England demonstrates a reluctance to believe Hugh's Christian mother, though the narrative establishes that she is more insightful than those around her. In one example of her insight, she knows that the Jews are up to some nefarious scheme long before anyone takes her claims seriously. Although the king is a Christian—and should thus side with the Christian woman appealing to him—he is ambivalent, almost taking the side of the Jews. He promises to investigate, but he never follows up on that promise. Furthermore, he threatens to punish Hugh's mother if she spoke in error, thereby slandering the Jews. In threatening Hugh's mother with punishment, the king operates as though the Jews have a legal right to be protected from defamation, which was not the case during this period. Geraldine Heng writes that even the Jews' rights to sue or be protected from mob violence were often ignored, and they certainly were not protected from malicious slander.⁶⁴ So, in behaving as though the Jews have the same legal rights as Christian subjects, King Henry awards the Jews a huge *de facto* right and strips his Christian subject of her *de jure* rights. The criticism of the king embedded within the ballad reflects longstanding Norman-English political tensions, while antisemitism provides a particularly visceral way to convey these critiques. Rather than critiquing the misrule of the Normans by telling a story about *their* brutality or corruption, the ballad highlights Norman misrule through making a Norman ruler sympathetic to and even willing to assist the Jews at the expense of the

Christian English subjects.

This text, like Chrétien's grail narrative, also envisions mitigating the Jewish threat through violence. At the end of the ballad, the text narrates how Jopin was, "Dragged with strong horses, wel shoed and wel fed/ Til his bodie is dead, dead, dead!"⁶⁵ After he dies, his body is displayed as a warning to show "what the murderer gets for his pains."⁶⁶ The line describing Jopin's death illustrates a disconcerting amount of vitriol and an explicit desire to see Jopin, who may represent *all* Jews, die violently. Just like Chrétien's text, the ballad paints this killing as acceptable and entirely expected, given what we know about Jopin's greed-fueled crimes. However, the other Jews—who committed the murder with Jopin—get away without punishment. Thus, the text creates the sense that justice was meted out unfairly and overly lightly and ends the story with a lack of resolution. The text calls for the Jewish threat to be mitigated, but it also reflects a historical moment when the Jewish threat was *not* being mitigated because the Jews worked for the king. Though the Jews were expelled from England just a few decades later (which, arguably, was an attempt to mitigate the Jewish threat), expulsion was far from the minds of Norman rulers when this ballad was recorded. So, while the text imagines an "ideal solution"—killing the Jews and thereby saving the Christians—it also depicts the less ideal reality—the ruler of England allowing the Jews to escape without punishment. Further, it hints at the resentment that came with that reality. By depicting this unpleasant reality, the text communicates contemporary English anxieties, while also containing a tacit call for action—a call for better leadership, and for utilizing violence to mitigate the Jewish threat.

Antisemitism did not begin or end during the Middle Ages. While it is tempting to call the stereotypes and attitudes examined in this paper purely medieval, none of these

stereotypes are a unique product of the Middle Ages. Some were first recorded then, but all build on much older ideas and concerns—and these attitudes live on in our present day. This distinction is important because, when discussing oppressive attitudes that are seemingly out-of-place in an ostensibly “progressive” world, people often attach the label “medieval” to them. This label presumes that barbarism arose and is contained within the Middle Ages. On this topic, medievalists Amy Kaufman and Paul Sturtevant write, “If we believe witch trials are one of the defining features of the Middle Ages, we can imagine that “civilized” cultures left torture and religious persecution behind in the Dark Ages.”⁶⁷ In the same vein, if we assume that many antisemitic stereotypes arose during the Middle Ages as a result of some backwards “medieval” mindset, we miss both the much older history of antisemitism and how antisemitism is alive and thriving today because it is still useful and frequently utilized. So, understanding medieval

antisemitism is not a comforting exercise in distancing ourselves from people of the past. Instead, it forces us to recognize just how similar we often are to medieval people, how we are often just as bigoted, just as suspicious, and just as quick to Other those who seem unlike us. In most regards, we are not more advanced than the people of medieval England. We are not less prejudiced or significantly more diverse. We still tell our own antisemitic tales and call them history. Examining medieval antisemitism, then, should never give us a sense of superiority. But, in understanding how these mindsets originated, why they developed, and what influenced them, we are better equipped to understand how antisemitism wove itself into the fabric of our present-day communities. And through gaining that knowledge, we are better equipped to combat and destroy those attitudes for future generations.

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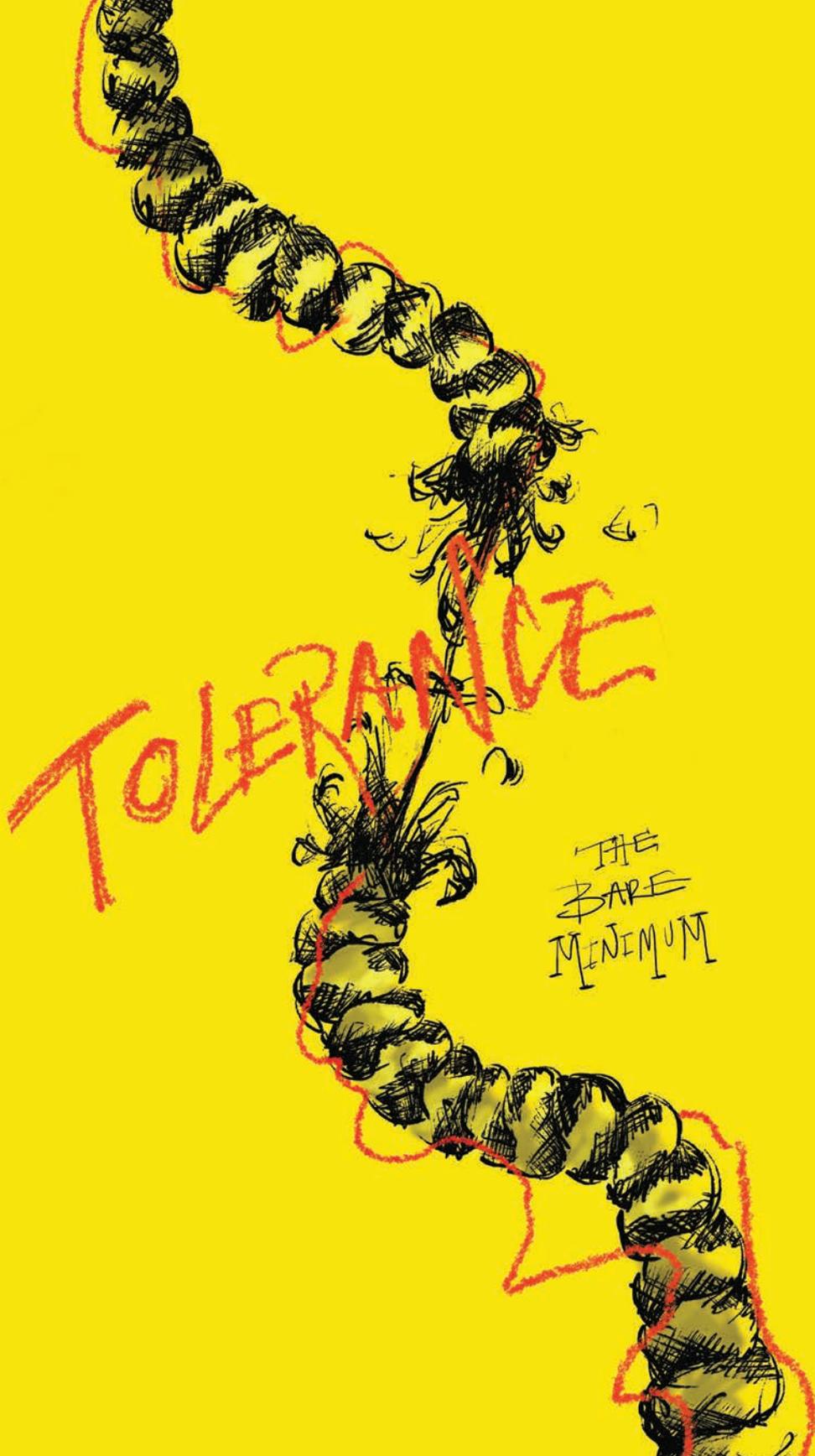
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RECKONING WITH HISTORY, ASSERTING HUMAN DIGNITY

TOLERANCE

by Faith Potter



THE LIMITED SCOPE AND LEGACY OF THE DOCTORS' TRIAL

Annie Foreman

One of the main goals of the Nuremberg Trials was to publicly document the crimes that Nazi Germany had committed during the war. Many hoped that this documentation would help prevent future genocides and would demonstrate to the German public how sinister their government was, as well as show how the people of Germany were complicit in Nazi atrocities. The Allied powers aimed to outline the causes and effects of Hitler's power and bring the men who unquestionably supported his ideology to justice. This goal recognized the necessity of clearly identifying the motives behind the Nazis' willingness to treat Jewish people as "less than beasts."¹ Due to the tremendous scope of the Nazis' crimes and the limited space in the courtroom, multiple trials were required, each involving a different industry or aspect of the Nazis' crimes. The second trial, which immediately followed the Major War Criminals Trials, was the Doctors' Trial. Beginning on October 25, 1946, twenty-three Nazi physicians were tried on counts of conspiracy, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and "membership in a criminal organization."² Their crimes included the involuntary human experiments, sterilizations, and euthanasia that occurred between 1939 and 1945. Prior to the Nuremberg Trials, voluntary consent was a relatively new and unpracticed medical standard, especially in research experiments involving humans. As a result of Doctors' Trial, a set of guidelines regarding human experiments was created. These guidelines, known as the Nuremberg Code, established the foundations of modern medical ethics in human experiments, emphasizing the well-being of the patient and the necessity of voluntary consent. Due to the publicity surrounding the trials and the morals that were questioned, voluntary consent began to gain recognition as a necessary step in patient-

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The Nazis' seemingly mundane treatment of their horrendous experiments exemplified the need for accountability in the medical field.

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physician conduct. A universal lack of voluntary consent from patients and participants in experiments allowed Nazi physicians to abuse their power in a way that had never been seen before, opening a discussion about human rights in medical proceedings that may have never occurred otherwise. Using the abundance of documentation that the Nazis provided, the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial was able to pinpoint and acknowledge a human rights violation present in the medical community, in the hopes that no future group would be able to commit atrocities like the Nazis. However, the trial was unable to recognize the ideas prevalent in society that influenced Nazi physicians to commit these crimes.

While conducting euthanasia programs and inhumane medical experiments, Nazi physicians were meticulous in their documentation. This documentation allowed the judges of the Doctors' Trial to determine that guidelines such as the Nuremberg Code were necessary, giving universal validation to most victims of unethical medical experiments. According to the Harvard Law School Library Nuremberg Trials Project, about 2,800 documents and 13,000 pages of material were brought in, relating to the Doctors' Trial.³ Evidence ranged from statements made by the defendants to victim testimonies and scars. Among this evidence was an affidavit



Survivor of Holocaust experiments shows scar in the Doctors' Trial. Wikimedia Commons.

made by Viktor Hermann Brack, a member of the SS and an organizer of the euthanasia program that existed from 1939 to 1941. In this affidavit, Brack details his involvement in the euthanasia program and the procedure that it followed. Brack states that “about fifty to sixty thousand persons were killed in this way from Autumn 1939 to the Summer of 1941.”⁴ The procedural element of the euthanasia program and the substantial number of deaths that were a result of the program demonstrate how systematic the Nazi government was. Not only was the government conducting experiments to determine the most effective process for euthanasia and sterilization, but it was also documenting its process and progress like any ordinary medical facility. The Nazis’ seemingly mundane treatment of their horrendous experiments exemplified the need for accountability in the medical field. Throughout history, medical professionals worldwide have masked their sadistic actions behind mundane procedure, not comprehending the evil they are committing or hoping their actions will go unnoticed. The

Doctors’ Trial unintentionally showcased this widespread phenomenon, opening discussions about change in the medical field, specifically in the form of patient autonomy.

In the Doctors’ Trial, a few survivors were given a bit of their autonomy back when they were able to act as witnesses against the physicians who wronged them. Survivors like Jadwiga Dzido, a Polish victim of an experiment involving infection, provided evidence against the defendants through showing the effects the experiments had on their bodies. In Dzido’s case, a scar on her right leg served as evidence.⁵ In the Doctors’ Trial, survivor testimony was limited (as most people did not survive the procedures) but necessary to demonstrate the consequences of the physicians’ actions, so that the public would be unable to dispute the evidence provided in the trial. By providing proof of the atrocities committed against Jews and people with disabilities, the judges at Nuremberg acknowledged the illegal and immoral behaviors of Nazi physicians, with the hope that the German public would do the same.

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In recognizing that humans do not have the same values, morals, and beliefs – and thus each patient’s conception of what is beneficial to them will differ – power was given to the patient in the form of consent.
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However, the Doctors’ Trial deliberately focused on crimes against non-German citizens, rather than Germans.⁶ In

of these regulations. In giving the patient full autonomy regarding their medical procedures, the Nuremberg Code and the Doctors' Trial aimed to make sure that something like the Holocaust could never happen again. By making the idea of voluntary consent universal, the Nuremberg Trials informed the world of every individual's rights as a human, enabling people to recognize when their rights were being violated.

While the Nuremberg Trials were successful in documenting the atrocities Nazi physicians had committed during the Holocaust, the trials were unsuccessful in recognizing the ideas that empowered these physicians to carry out inhumane practices after Hitler came to power. In only covering events that occurred between 1939 and 1945, the Doctors' Trial ignored the ideas and events that led to the culmination of hatred that was the Holocaust. As Holocaust historian Michael Marrus states, "In their eagerness to establish the link with Nazism, the prosecutors and the judges largely ignored the degree to which racist and eugenic thought had become well established, if not dominant, in medical thinking in Germany even before the Nazis' seizure of power."⁹ By not acknowledging the context of the medical and historical field at the time of Hitler's rise to power and before, the judges of the Nuremberg Trials did not fully realize the extent to which victims of the Holocaust were affected. The idea of eugenics had been present in medical communities since the time of Charles Darwin, influencing medical professionals worldwide. In the United States, International Exhibitions of Eugenics were held, resulting in illustrations such as the "Eugenics Tree," which claimed that "eugenics is the self direction of human evolution."¹⁰ The universal subscription to the harmful beliefs of eugenics fueled the idea of racial superiority worldwide, setting the stage for Hitler to come to power with unbridled antisemitic beliefs. Racism and eugenics were seen as valid medical insights at the time, therefore allowing the



Viktor Brack and other defendants in the Doctors' Trial. Wikimedia Commons.

experiments, sterilizations, and euthanasia that occurred from 1939 to 1945. The physicians tried in the Doctors' Trial fully believed that eugenics was an acceptable medical theory, thus enabling them to act upon their racist, ableist, and antisemitic beliefs.

However, they had been acting upon these ideas for years prior to 1939. Focusing entirely on the evidence and documents of the case rather than the causes of the Nazi ideology allowed the prosecution to limit the blame to Nazi Germany alone, even though racism, antisemitism, and eugenics were practiced in medicine all over the world. The prosecutors and judges of the Doctors' Trial were unable or unwilling to fully realize the overall lack of humanity and scientific credibility of ideas prevalent at the time. Thus, the trial disregarded how societal beliefs can affect medical practices, and endangered future human lives by failing to recognize the causes of a large-scale abuse of power. Due to the dominant ideology regarding race and genetics, Jewish and disabled people, as well as others who were deemed

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The prosecutors and judges of the Doctors' Trial were unable or unwilling to fully realize the overall lack of humanity and scientific credibility of ideas prevalent at the time. Thus, the trial disregarded how societal beliefs can affect medical practices, and endangered future human lives by failing to recognize the causes of a large-scale abuse of power.

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'lesser than,' dealt with discrimination in the medical field long before Hitler and the Nazis rose to power. The verdicts for the physicians were also unsuitable, with seven defendants getting acquitted and four being sentenced to twenty years or less in prison. By acting as though the experiments and programs on trial were an abrupt change in the perception of Jews and other minorities, the suffering and mistreatment of victims was not fully recognized.

Because of the number of witnesses and documents present in the Doctors' Trial, as well as the development of the Nuremberg Code and the idea of voluntary consent, the prosecutors of the Doctors' Trials made a strong effort to demonstrate the cruelty and injustice of the Nazi party and ensure that no group would be able to commit such

inhumane acts again. In doing so, the Allied powers were able to document the atrocities of the Nazis, leaving little verifiable room for international deniers and sympathizers. However, the trial was unable to encompass the full extent of what people in the Holocaust went through, as the scope of the trial was limited, thereby ignoring the ideas that enabled the defendants to commit atrocities without remorse, which were prevalent in society long before Hitler came to power. By defining the goal of clarifying “the ideas and motives which moved these defendants to treat their fellow men as less than beasts,”¹¹ the Chief of Counsel for the Doctors' Trial, Telford Taylor, unintentionally highlighted the trial's failure to do so. The trial's limited range of focus inhibited the prosecution's ability to accurately depict the extent of the crimes against German citizens as well as what led the defendants of the Doctors' Trial to feel that their mistreatment of other humans was justified. Rather than setting a precedent for achieving justice, the true legacy of the Doctors' Trial lies in its effect on the ethical proceedings of the medical community. The development of the Nuremberg Code ensured that no one in the medical community would be able to commit similar atrocities without violating recognized ethical standards. This acknowledgement of ethics in human experiments allowed for the prioritization of a person's right to bodily autonomy and led to the establishment of informed consent in most medical procedures.

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF AMERICAN WAR CRIMES IN VIETNAM

Henry Smith

The Vietnam War was and remains one of the most complex and polarizing episodes in recent American history. Numerous debates have been held about the causes and logic that led to American involvement, the reasons America lost the war, and the war's place within the broader context of Cold War history and United States foreign policy. One of the darker aspects of the Vietnam War was how U.S. soldiers frequently used violence against non-combatants, with little opposition or even outright encouragement from their commanding officers. To be clear, violence against civilians and prisoners has been a part of nearly every conflict in human history, from the conquests of Alexander and Rome to more modern wars in the Middle East, Ukraine, and Southeast Asia. The U.S. military has an extensive history of war crimes against the Native Americans in the nineteenth century and against the Filipino people during the Philippine rebellion of the early 1900's. In the aftermath of the Civil War, Henry Wirz became the only Confederate officer executed for war crimes for his treatment of Union captives at the Andersonville prison in Georgia. However, the debate over American atrocities in Vietnam is more prominent due to the relative recency of the conflict and the fact that it is the only war which America has definitively lost. As with other aspects of the Vietnam War, the subject of American war crimes is contentious and heated. Human Rights advocates have long desired to see an American reckoning with the conduct of American troops during the war. Meanwhile, those sympathetic to the U.S. military feel that reports of war crimes committed by U.S. forces have been exaggerated and that further discussion of the matter would stain the honor of the American military.

One of the earliest publications to cover the nature and

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The problems that would lead to My Lai began with their training. Soldiers were primarily trained to follow orders without question and to be suspicious of everyone who was not an American.

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scope of American abuses in Vietnam was Bertrand Russell's 1967 book *War Crimes in Vietnam*. In this book, Russell provides sweeping historical context, examining the role of French colonialism and France's various methods of coercion, as well as Japanese imperialism of the early twentieth century, leading up to World War II. He also discusses the role of French and American racism to explain the logic that lay behind some of both armies' more brutal tactics and to explain why the French and American public generally tolerated (or chose to ignore) these abuses. Russell briefly covers the role of the American press, particularly the *New York Times*, in reporting and covering up various war crimes U.S. forces committed in Vietnam. The majority of the book covers the realities of chemical warfare, napalm bombing, concentration camps, and the treatment of Vietnamese detainees. The last few chapters include appeals to the U.S. public, American soldiers, and the international community to end the war in Vietnam.

Russell was an unapologetic critic of U.S. policy in Vietnam and imperialism throughout the world. He makes no attempt

to hide his own political leanings but is careful to remain transparent about his sources in order to counter the inevitable questions about the veracity of his claims. He sees the American war in Vietnam as part of a broader pattern of U.S. imperialism, whose ultimate goal is to secure near-total world domination. Russell's book was written in the early 1960's and published in 1967, as the war approached its height. Thus, his book includes nothing about the My Lai Massacre (since it had not yet happened), nor any commentary on the yet-to-be elected Nixon administration's policies in Cambodia and Laos. Russell's portrait of American involvement is painted in the context of the French imperialism that preceded it. For him, the U.S. war in Vietnam began almost as soon as the French withdrew and began escalating through the Eisenhower administration, though he reserves plenty of blame for the Kennedy and Johnson administrations as well. Perhaps Russell's most inflammatory remark was his desire to see the U.S. lose the war in Vietnam and that the country be reunited. In the midst of the 1960's, this was a deeply unpopular position. Prior to the Tet Offensive, the war had broad popular support. Even those who opposed it did not go so far as to say that they wished to see America lose the war, thus allowing the communist North Vietnamese to take over the country. Russell's logic is that only a military defeat would curb the United States' rampant imperialism and prevent future military interventions. Another particularly inflammatory remark was how he compared American aggression to that of the Nazis in World War II.¹ Russell also argues that the South Vietnamese government was illegitimate, that the country was arbitrarily divided, and that the U.S. had no legal standing to intervene in Vietnam, to say nothing of the atrocities that American forces committed.²

While American war crimes are the focus of Russell's

book, he is more interested in highlighting how they are an extension of U.S. imperialism, racism, and a host of other historical patterns, rather than focusing on the details of the atrocities themselves. For him, violence against civilians and prisoners is an inevitable aspect of any war of imperialist aggression. That the United States is the aggressor in Vietnam is a point he feels is obvious but, nevertheless, takes pains to drive home throughout the book. Russell's account reflects the viewpoint of those who were adamantly opposed to the war from the very beginning, and his argument that the only solution to ending *war crimes in Vietnam* is for America to withdraw its forces entirely echoes the arguments of those who fought to see its end throughout the 1960's and early 1970's.

Russell's book undoubtedly represents a radical viewpoint about the Vietnam War and a searingly critical view of American soldiers' conduct during the war. The book *Vietnam War Crimes*, a collection of articles, essays, and book excerpts by various authors, offers more varied and contrasting viewpoints. The first article from 1978 by Guenter Lewy, a political science professor at the University of Massachusetts, argues that, while some American soldiers undoubtedly did commit war crimes, those were isolated cases and there was no pattern of systemic violence against civilians. Moreover, Lewy argues that much of international law fails to address questions about how American soldiers should conduct a counter-insurgency, where guerrillas use civilian shelters as cover and many civilians willingly render aid to those same guerrillas. He also blames North Vietnamese propaganda and the willingness of the U.S. army to allow journalists open access to the battlefields of South Vietnam for creating a slanted view of U.S. conduct during the war, because every mistake or incident of civilian casualties was scrutinized.³

In contrast to Lewy's article, Christopher Hitchens made

the case in 2001 that Henry Kissinger (the Secretary of State at the time) and Richard Nixon were directly responsible for the deaths of countless Vietnamese civilians and should be tried for war crimes. Hitchens discusses the famous “Christmas Bombing” of North Vietnam and how it was primarily undertaken to improve Nixon’s chances in his 1972 reelection campaign. Kissinger and others within the Nixon administration felt that only a “Total War” could defeat the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. This sentiment manifested itself in Operation Speedy Express, the saturation bombing and artillery strikes, which killed thousands in the Mekong Delta region, as well as the bombing campaigns in Laos and Cambodia, which were intended to halt the flow of supplies to North Vietnam and the Viet Cong.⁴

Hitchens and Russell both focus on how American war crimes in Vietnam were an inevitable outgrowth of U.S. policy, though they focus on different policies. Russell critiques U.S. foreign policy and interventionism over the entire course of the 1950’s and 1960’s, while Hitchens is more interested in the specific policies of the Nixon administration and Henry Kissinger’s State Department, specifically the use of bombing and the expansion of the war into Laos and Cambodia. Lewy’s excerpt is more sympathetic to the U.S. military and offers virtually no commentary on the role of U.S. policy regarding war crimes. Hitchens and Russell see American war crimes as part of a broader issue with American foreign policy, while Lewy sees the issue through the lens of those involved in combat on the ground. In these competing viewpoints, ultimate responsibility for criminal misconduct within a warzone resides in two completely different worlds. For Hitchens and Russell, it is American military and political leaders who carry the burden of responsibility; for Lewy, it is the officers making individual decisions about when to call for artillery or airstrikes.



Survivors of the My Lai Massacre. Wikimedia Commons.

Any discussion of war crimes in Vietnam will inevitably turn to the massacre at the village of My Lai. On March 16, 1968, a company of American soldiers attacked the village of My Lai without provocation or warning. Estimates of the death toll vary, but the most widely accepted figure is that between four and five hundred Vietnamese civilians were killed. In their book, *Four Hours in My Lai*, Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim deconstruct the reasons why the massacre occurred and analyze its impact on Americans’ attitudes towards the war. They begin by providing an overview of the situation in Vietnam in 1968, detailing how the war had descended into a bloody quagmire, despite the near-limitless resources that the United States military poured into the conflict. The authors describe the complexities of counter-insurgency warfare and the growing frustration that led to the military’s

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According to numerous witnesses, and his own admission, Calley had murdered more than one-hundred unarmed Vietnamese civilians, most of them women, children, and elderly people. However, despite the grotesque nature of his actions, Calley became something of a hero for much of the American public.

fateful decision to rely on a strategy of attrition, where killing as many enemies as possible was the ultimate goal.⁵ Bilton and Sim then turn their attention to Charlie Company itself, the unit responsible for the massacre at My Lai. They provide background on some of the soldiers from the company, as well as an overview of the training they received upon their enlistment in the army and their early experiences in Vietnam in the months prior to the massacre. Most of the men of Charlie Company were fairly average Americans who had joined for a variety of reasons: adventure and wanderlust, a desire to support their families, or a sense of duty and patriotism. The problems that led to My Lai began with their training. Soldiers were primarily trained to follow orders without question and to be suspicious of everyone who was not an American. “Charlie,” as the Viet Cong were often called, could be anywhere or anyone, and the only measure

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of progress against the insurgency was how many enemy soldiers were killed each month.⁶

Like Russell and Hitchens, Bilton and Sim focus on how the army’s strategy of attrition and emphasis on “body counts” as a measure of progress created an atmosphere conducive to indiscriminate violence. They also discuss the reality of guerrilla warfare and Charlie Company’s steady demoralization, which led to increased distrust and even resentment towards the Vietnamese civilians they were supposed to be protecting. The authors describe a steady escalation of violent conduct amongst the men of Charlie Company as casualties mounted from snipers, mines, and various booby traps. Vietnamese prisoners were beaten, tortured, and executed, often with the encouragement of officers like Captain Ernest Medina. Sexual violence against Vietnamese women also became commonplace, with virtually no consequences for any of the men involved.⁷ The incident which most historians view as the precipitating event for the massacre at My Lai was the death of Sergeant George Cox, a well-liked officer. He died in yet another Viet Cong minefield, though there were rumors that the mines had been planted by the South Vietnamese Army. The company, already frustrated by months of mounting casualties with no significant progress against the local Viet Cong to show for it, became frenzied. They reportedly attacked multiple Vietnamese civilians on their way back to base and murdered a Vietnamese woman. These attacks occurred on March 14, 1968, just two days before the attack on My Lai. The death of Sergeant Cox, whom many of the men viewed as an “older brother” figure, was the spark that lit the proverbial powder keg. On the afternoon of March 15, just after Sergeant Cox’s funeral, the men of Charlie Company were told they would attack My Lai the following day. Bilton and Sim detail the various accounts of the discussion surrounding the operation



Victims of Charlie Company left on a dirt road near the village of My Lai. Wikimedia Commons.

and the nature of the orders that the men received.⁸ Two sentences in particular stand out:

Here, outside Medina's command post, occurred the inevitable conjuncture of policy and psychology—the time and the place when America's wall-eyed strategy in Vietnam coalesced with the unappeasable bloodlust of 'a normal cross section of American youth assigned to any rifle company.' A machine out of control joined with men out of control.⁹

While most of the authors we have examined have focused on either the culpability of American policy regarding war crimes (Russell and Hitchens) or the responsibility of individual military officers (Lewy), thus far, only Bilton and Sim's book has examined how the military's careless strategy and the growing fear and anger of a particular infantry unit converged to cause one of the most horrific incidents in the Vietnam War, if not all of American history.

The remainder of Bilton and Sim's book covers the

immediate aftermath of the My Lai massacre, from the perspective of Charlie Company and the survivors from the village. Bilton and Sims also detail the efforts to cover up the massacre and how journalists and army investigators subsequently investigated the soldiers who took part in the massacre and the officers who helped hide the truth. The authors also take care to show the broader impact the massacre had on the United States, South Vietnam, and the world. My Lai was one of many events, like the Tet Offensive and the Pentagon Papers, which helped to further turn public opinion against the war effort. The massacre caused immense damage to the world's perception of the U.S. and the war in Vietnam and helped turn the popular support of the Vietnamese people even further in the direction of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese.

One of the most high-profile episodes in the aftermath of the My Lai Massacre was the trial of Lieutenant William Calley, who had led the first platoon of Charlie Company in the initial sweep through My Lai. According to numerous witnesses, and his own admission, Calley had murdered more than one hundred unarmed Vietnamese civilians, most of them women, children, and elderly people. However, despite the grotesque nature of his actions, Calley became something of a hero for much of the American public. An excerpt from Michael R. Belknap's book *The Vietnam War on Trial: The My Lai Massacre and the Court Martial of Lt. Calley* details how American public opinion swung overwhelmingly in Calley's favor. Over the course of Calley's trial, thousands of people sent letters to President Nixon, urging him to pardon Calley for murders which he had already confessed to and for which his primary defense was that he was only following orders. Numerous public opinion polls showed that people overwhelmingly thought that Calley should be freed and that his actions were either exaggerated or were common

practice. Even elected congressmen came to Calley's defense, as well as state governors like George Wallace of Alabama, Jimmy Carter of Georgia and John Bell Williams of Mississippi. Veterans' groups and sympathetic civilians led protests in support of a confessed mass murderer. Calley even received fan mail, tens of thousands of letters, while his trial was ongoing. Interestingly, support for Calley cut across ideological divides. Those who supported the war felt that Calley was being punished for doing his job as a soldier: killing the enemy, even if that "enemy" consisted of unarmed women and children. Those who opposed the war felt that Calley was being made a scapegoat and that the entire United States Armed Forces should be put on trial, not merely for My Lai, but for the entirety of the Vietnam War.¹⁰

Bilton and Sim's *Four Hours in My Lai* also details the outpouring of popular support for Calley. The book details how people drove with "Free Calley" stickers on the back of their cars, draft boards across the country resigned in protest, and sympathetic newspapers ran pieces supporting Calley and urging either President Nixon or the military to show clemency. A small band from Alabama, which called itself "Company C," even wrote a short song in support of Calley: My Name is William Calley, I'm a soldier of this land, I've vowed to do my duty and to gain the upper hand, But they've made me out a villain, they have stamped me with a brand, As we go marching on...¹¹ Bilton and Sim generally agree with Belknap's analysis, that those who supported the war felt that Calley's trial was an attack on the military, and those who opposed it felt that Calley was merely a scapegoat for a crime, and a war, for which others higher up the chain of command bore far greater responsibility. In a way, both viewpoints reflected growing frustration across the ideological spectrum with the war. Many of Calley's supporters on the right argued that it was unfair to punish

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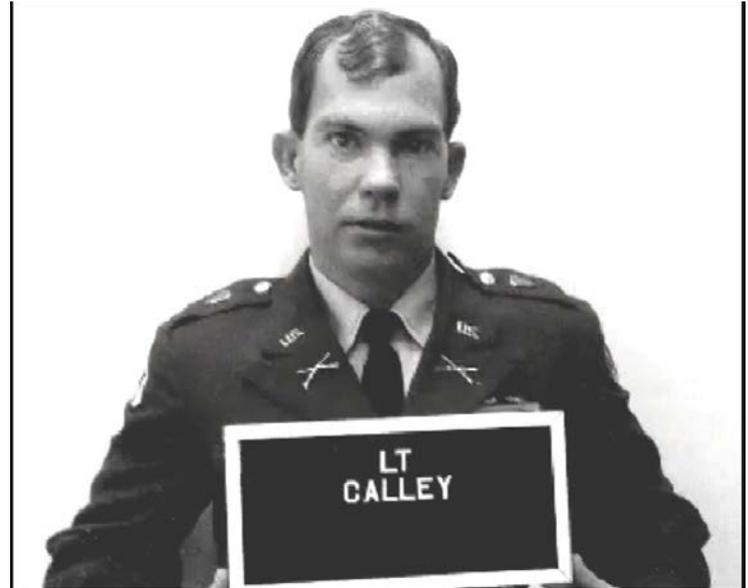
The Nixon Administration, leaders in Congress, and the heads of the armed forces knew that it was more than Charlie Company who was on trial.

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an American soldier for war crimes when the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) systematically tortured and executed American soldiers. They also felt that the trial was part of a broader pattern where the upper echelons of the U.S. military and government handicapped U.S. soldiers from doing what was needed to win the war. Those on the left felt that Calley and the men of Charlie Company were decent American kids who had been drafted into an illegal war and transformed by the military into ruthless killers, a sentiment echoed by the mother of Paul Meadlo: "They come along and took him to the service. He fought for his country and look what they done to him—made a murderer out of him, to start with."¹² Paul Meadlo was one of the soldiers of Charlie Company who assisted Lieutenant Calley in the mass executions that took place at My Lai. He would later testify at Calley's trial and give an infamous interview on CBS where he described the graphic details of what had occurred at My Lai.¹³

The public was also outraged with the army's mishandling of the My Lai case. Because it had taken over a year after the massacre for the American people to learn about it, many concluded that there had been a coverup. Lieutenant General William R. Peers vindicated this sentiment with the publication of his infamous Peers Report. He found that several high-ranking

U.S. military officers knew that civilians had been murdered in My Lai and chose not to investigate. None of the officers accused of covering up the massacre were officially convicted, and, in fact, few were even indicted or brought to trial. However, several were quietly disciplined by the army in the form of demotions and rescinded medals, lending credence to the argument that the army's top priority was protecting its image, rather than bringing the perpetrators and enablers to justice. Major William George Eckhardt was the main prosecutor of the My Lai cases. He ultimately failed to convict Captain Ernest Medina, who ordered and planned Charlie Company's assault on My Lai, as well as two other officers involved in the massacre. An article written by Eckhardt titled "My Lai: An American Tragedy," published over thirty years later, defends the army's handling of the My Lai investigation. Eckhardt acknowledges that his and other prosecutors' records against the My Lai defendants were rather poor, and that the House Armed Services Committee crippled the prosecution by blocking testimony it had received during Lieutenant General Peers' investigation. However, he makes two crucial arguments in favor of the army's handling of the case. First, he defends the army's decision to try the defendants under military law in a military court-martial, stating that it had no impact on the trials, even though several of the cases were dismissed or acquitted in the face of overwhelming evidence. Secondly, he argues that the military publicly awarding the Soldiers' Medal to Hugh Thompson and his crew in 1998 gave American soldiers a positive example of how to act in a situation like My Lai.¹⁴ Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson Jr. and his helicopter crew courageously landed between Lieutenant Calley's platoon and a group of villagers at My Lai. Thompson arranged for the villagers' evacuation by helicopter, and his crew later rescued another survivor and brought her to a nearby hospital. He was also the first to report what had happened at My Lai and would testify against



Lieutenant William Calley, the only member of Charlie Company to be convicted for his crimes at My Lai. [Wikimedia Commons](#).

several of the defendants in their trials.

There are several problems with Eckhardt's analysis. Hugh Thompson and his crew members, Larry Colburn and Glenn Andreotta, absolutely deserve to be lauded for having the courage to rescue innocent civilians from their own comrades, report what they had seen to their superiors, and testify before congress and numerous military tribunals during the court-martials of the perpetrators. However, it goes without saying that honoring three soldiers who did the right thing cannot balance out the failure to convict all but one of the perpetrators and those involved in the coverup. Thompson reported what he saw and testified before congress and the nation because he knew that those responsible had to be held accountable. Eckhardt utterly ignores the issue of how senior military officers like Major General Samuel W. Koster, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Barker, and Colonel Oran K. Henderson failed to investigate Thompson's allegations. Furthermore, Bilton and Sim detail the efforts made by Medina, Barker, Henderson, and others to cover up what

had happened, including creating fictional reports and even awards for successfully engaging the enemy.¹⁵ While Eckhardt is correct that Hugh Thompson and his crew acted courageously and should serve as an inspiration to any soldier in the U.S. military, the fact remains that there were a great many more people involved in My Lai who failed to act as courageously as Thompson and his crew did.

While Eckhardt's focus on the heroics of Thompson and his crew represents a typical deflection away from the misconduct of many by highlighting the bravery of a few, his argument that the decision to try the defendants in military courts did not affect the outcome of their trials is far more specious. According to Bilton and Sim, several prominent American lawyers, including Daniel Patrick Moynihan who was counsel to President Nixon, argued that a special presidential commission should perform its own investigation and that the trials should be conducted before an international war crimes tribunal under the Geneva Conventions. As the authors explain, Nixon's reason for refusing them was both simple and obvious:

What this held out for the White House was the awful spectre of a huge war crimes trial -- a Nuremberg-style hearing with two sets of defendants. The mass murderers of Charlie Company would be on trial but so clearly would the American government's military policies in South Vietnam. Kissinger was particularly worried about the effect the My Lai revelations would have on America's ability to fight the war. As Moynihan had said, it was America that was being judged.¹⁶

An investigation by a presidential commission and a trial in the Hague would have removed the U.S. military from the process, ensuring they could not sit in judgment of

themselves. The Nixon administration, leaders in congress, and the heads of the armed forces knew that it was more than Charlie Company who was on trial. Thus, to protect its own reputation, the army constructed a narrative in which Lieutenant Calley bore singular blame for what happened at My Lai, and the officers involved in covering up the massacre, as well as the soldiers who carried it out under Calley's orders, were all acquitted. The Nixon Administration, fearful of the negative publicity that the trials could generate, was more than willing to allow the army to handle them as an "in house" affair.

While Eckhardt's desire to defend the institution that he had dedicated most of his life to is understandable, it is also a betrayal of fellow officers such as William Peers, who, after compiling his report, demanded that senior officers involved in the coverup be prosecuted alongside those who had taken part in the massacre. Like Eckhardt, Peers had dedicated most of his life to the military and initially disbelieved the allegations made against Charlie Company. However, after his investigation, Peers concluded that bringing charges against all involved was more than simply the right thing to do; it was also necessary for the military and the nation to come to grips with what had happened. Furthermore, he concluded that justice would ultimately be better for the overall conduct and discipline of the army in the future, regardless of the damage inflicted on the army's reputation in the short-term. Despite his admirable but ultimately futile attempts to convict Medina and two other officers involved in My Lai, Eckhardt failed to see how the institution he served had stacked the deck against him and all but ensured that everyone but Lieutenant Calley would escape punishment.

In the decades after the Vietnam War ended, My Lai and the various other atrocities U.S. soldiers committed remained a difficult topic for American citizens and scholars to confront.

In December of 1994, Tulane University held a conference attended by scholars, authors, journalists, and even some of those who were present at My Lai. The conference held various panels and discussions, presenting multiple viewpoints in an attempt to come to a deeper understanding of how and why the My Lai Massacre occurred. The transcripts and recordings of these discussions were edited into a book by David L. Anderson titled *Facing My Lai*. The book provides background and context on what occurred, much like *Four Hours in My Lai*, while also covering various topics related to the massacre: the evolution of the media's coverage of My Lai, depictions of the massacre in literature, different historical approaches to war crimes and atrocities, the role of the Geneva Conventions in regards to My Lai, and the impact on the U.S. military.

The first transcript from *Facing My Lai* is from psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and is based on his discussions with Vietnam veterans, including a veteran of My Lai. His argument is similar to that made by Bilton and Sim: that any ordinary person, under the right combination of circumstances, would be capable of committing actions similar to those taken by the men of Charlie Company. Lifton discusses the impact of brutalization, racism, the strategy of attrition that emphasized "body-counts," and other factors discussed by previous authors. He refers to this combination of factors that can drive normal people to commit appalling crimes as the "atrocious producing situation." Like Bilton, Sim, and Russell, he argues that the Vietnam War was itself an atrocious producing situation, which made events like My Lai more probable, if not inevitable.

In regards to our modern understanding of My Lai, the central theme that Lifton focuses on is the idea of witness. The first form of witness relates to responsibility, resistance, and radical opposition. Many of the soldiers Lifton spoke

with who had committed atrocities accepted responsibility for their actions, despite acknowledging they were operating under conditions that made such behavior more acceptable within their units. Many of the soldiers who refused to engage in such behavior had already decided that they were opposed to the war, likely because many had heard testimony from Vietnam veterans about the reality of the conflict.

Vietnam was perhaps the first war in American history where the soldiers fighting it played an active role in opposing it and eventually bringing it to an end.¹⁷ Lifton also confronts the issue of false witness. According to Lifton:

False witness really is a way of ignoring the deepest testimony of Vietnam veterans and seeking to take from Vietnam lessons of more destructiveness... It is the Rambo idea of refighting the Vietnam War and winning it this time, or of insisting that we should have used whatever technological weaponry necessary to win that war in an absolute way.¹⁸

Lifton argues that this line of thinking led to the First Gulf War under the Bush administration. In fact, one could argue that much of the aggressive foreign policy developed by the Reagan and Bush administrations and targeted at places like Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Iraq was a form of redemption for the defeat in Vietnam. Finally, Lifton discusses the idea of "historical memory." Our collective witness and willingness to confront the realities of My Lai, and of conflict in general, can allow us "to reject our hubris and accept our own limitations."¹⁹

One of the main reasons that American war crimes are so difficult for us to confront is that they are a direct challenge to our sense of American exceptionalism. In Wounded Knee, Nisour Square, and especially My Lai, we are forced to bear witness to the fact that we are as susceptible to acting with

barbarity and inhumanity as the people of any other nation. Despite the vast differences of the books and articles covered in this essay, they each carry a common message: to come to terms with events like My Lai and other *war crimes in Vietnam* requires a profound degree of humility and a nuanced understanding of the nature of war and the human condition.

ENDNOTES

1. Bertrand Russell, *War Crimes in Vietnam* (New York City: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 102.
2. *War Crimes in Vietnam*, 101-2.
3. Guenter Lewy, "American Tactics in Vietnam Were Justified and Legal" in *Vietnam War Crimes* (New York City: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 41-50.
4. Christopher Hitchens, "Henry Kissinger's Policies Led to War Crimes" in *Vietnam War Crimes*. (New York City: Greenhaven Press. 2006), 51-61.
5. Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York City: Penguin Books, 1992), 25-46.
6. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 47-72.
7. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 72-86.
8. *Four Hours in My Lai* 92-101.
9. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 98.
10. Michael R. Belknap, "The Main Perpetrator at My Lai Became a National Hero" in *Vietnam War Crimes*. (New York City: Greenhaven Press. 2006), 77-86.
11. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 339-341.
12. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 263.
13. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 260-2, 333-4.
14. William George Eckhardt, "The Government Responded Appropriately to the My Lai Massacre" in *Vietnam War Crimes*. (New York City: Greenhaven Press. 2006), 91-4.
15. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 172-196, 202-7.
16. *Four Hours in My Lai*, 320-1.
17. Robert Jay Lifton, "Looking into the Abyss: Bearing Witness to My Lai and Vietnam" in *Facing My Lai* (Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas. 1998), 19-23.
18. *Facing My Lai*, 23.
19. *Facing My Lai*, 25.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS, EDITORS, AND ARTISTS



Angelina Scuffle is a senior in UAB's undergraduate program, majoring in history, with a minor in ancient, medieval, and renaissance studies. This is Angelina's first editor position, though not her first time working within the publication process. She has had her own work, primarily poetry, published in UAB's *Aura* literary magazine. Her passion for history and the power of writing has brought her into working for publications such as the *VHR*. It is her hope to continue helping to publish, alongside her own work, historical papers that contribute impactful messages to her community.



Annie Foreman is a junior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham majoring in Computer Science with a minor in Film. Annie is a member of the Honors College at UAB. Her research and academic interests include film and society, computer algorithms, artificial intelligence, and the environment, with a particular interest in local stories. She is currently working on a film project documenting the landfill fire in Moody, Alabama and the residents affected by it. After graduating, Annie hopes to become a software developer or data scientist while maintaining her hobbies of filmmaking, reading, and writing.



Anthony Venezia is an undergraduate student double-majoring in Political Science and History. He is also enrolled in the Accelerated Bachelor's-Master's program for History and is scheduled to graduate with both degrees in 2024. As a pre-law student, much of his work to this point has focused on legal systems, the history of judicial supremacy, and the interaction between liberty and democracy. He is an award-winning former Mock Trial competitor and recently founded UAB's first ever Moot Court club in 2022. Last year, he spoke at the Southern Regional Honors Conference about the Supreme Court's then-impending abortion rights decision. This year, he is scheduled to present at multiple honors conferences on the topics of originalism, the Constitution, and National Socialist conceptions of law. This upcoming fall he intends to submit applications to law schools with future aspirations to clerk for and eventually serve as a federal appellate judge.



Caden Grider is a Questbridge scholar and a junior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, majoring in history. Caden is particularly interested in Eastern European history, early United States history, and the history of economics. He is a member of the editorial board at the *Vulcan Historical Review*. Caden currently works at Corretti Catering, located in the historic Florentine Building on Second Avenue North. In his free time, he enjoys weightlifting, hiking, and reading.



Caleb Burnett is a senior double-majoring in history and political science (concentration in American politics and political theory) with a minor in art history. He was the recipient of the Department of History's Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award for the 2022-2023 academic year and a member of Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Alpha Theta History Honors Society. He has worked as a tutor for UAB's Trio Academic Services program, and this is his first time writing and editing for the *VHR*. His research interests include the history of ideas, the history of political thought, intellectual and philosophical history, and the effects of industrialization, modernization, and secularization on Western thought, as well as an interest in post-WWII American politics and culture. After graduation, he plans on continuing his intellectual journey, reading more books, and surviving the general malaise of human existence while possibly pursuing a master's degree in history in the near future.



Daniel Martin is a senior at UAB majoring in History, with a focus on East Asian Studies. He really enjoys studying Japanese history, particularly the Tokugawa Era, to understand and explain how Japanese society and culture has evolved into what it is today. This is Daniel's first year as an editor for *VHR*. He is currently a member of the Japan-America Society of Alabama, where he enjoys participating in local events geared towards educating the people of Birmingham about Japanese culture and traditions. He has also volunteered over 150 hours of community service at the Shelby County Humane Society and tutored at various Birmingham City Schools during his down time. After Daniel's graduation in May, he will be moving to Hitachi, Japan to become an English teacher in Japan and to further his studies into Japanese culture.



Devin Hudson is from Birmingham, Alabama. He graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2022, where he received a Bachelors in History. He currently works as a full-time educator at i3 Academy Middle. During his time at UAB, he served as the secretary and president of the school's Chi Omicron chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society. He is also a member of the prestigious Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society, where university president Dr. Watts is also a lifetime member. His educational interests include history, research, journalism and literature. He specifically enjoys oral history, pop culture, African-American history, U.S. history and response poetry. Increasing the use of analysis and journalism is a goal of his, as it relates to the presentation of history. He is a first time *VHR* participant where he is serving as both an editor and a writer for the 2023 edition. He presented research at the 2023 Phi Alpha Theta Regional Conference, winning the session paper prize for his work, "The Bat Out of Hell: Instances of Controversy in Black Entertainment." He plans to earn his masters and doctorate in similar fields and teach at the college level as a lecturing professor.



Disney Bagwell is a multi-disciplinary artist, specializing in photography, graphic design, animation, and mixed media works. She is from Huntsville, Alabama, although she currently resides in Birmingham to attend the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is working to obtain a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a focus on graphic design. Within her university, she has worked as a graphic designer for the digital news outlet U.A.B. Kaleidoscope. Along with Kaleidoscope, her work has been featured in several U.A.B art exhibitions, as well as within the Huntsville Museum of Art. Although Miss Bagwell focuses most of her efforts in graphic design, her personal work consists largely of mixed media work. This work includes analogue photographic processes, such as cyanotype, photograms, and film photography. Outside of school, she works on graphic design commissions for local musicians and venues. Following graduation, she hopes to continue this work and start a career pursuing graphic design and photography within the music industry.



Elisabeth Brown is from Birmingham, Alabama. She is a graduate student in history at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she earned her bachelor's degree in history in 2022. Her research interests include yearbooks as public historical documents, the history of childhood and youth culture, and the relationship between popular music and historical memory. Elisabeth is currently an intern at Sloss Furnaces National Historical Landmark. She plans to pursue further graduate education in the fields of public history and historic preservation, following her graduation later this year.



Ellis Goldstein Birmingham native Ellis Goldstein has been drawing all her life. She has been producing work by request since her teenage years, and her first piece sold at nineteen. Since then, she has taken on commission work for numerous clients, including tattoo designs and portraits. She is a current BA candidate at the University of Alabama at Birmingham studying illustration, with aspirations of graphic novel fame. Ellis's work has been featured in several shows thus far, including the 'I_Butterfly' exhibit hosted by UAB's Solar House and UAB's own Juried Annual Student Art Show. At another show one of her pieces was even purchased by Dr Upart of the Art History department. Ellis's work has been considered for use as album art by local musician Mel Crosby and she has pieces on display at both Paramount Bar and Grill and Salvatore's 31. Sanctum Tattoos and Comics has agreed to host a series of zines she wrote. Ellis explores the relationship between narratives and communication in her recent work with short form comics and zines. Her use of black and white figures shows the complexities of feeling versus expression.



Emily Wilson has served as an editor for the *Vulcan Historical Review* since 2021. This will be their third year as an editor.



Faith Potter is a multidisciplinary designer from Birmingham Alabama. She is a BA candidate with a concentration in Graphic Design at The University of Alabama at Birmingham. Faith is currently working as a Graphic Design Intern for The University of Alabama at Birmingham's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. As a designer for UAB's ODEI, Faith has designed their Year in Review and a variety of direct-marketing materials, such as pronoun pins and FAQ cards. Faith also works with Bloom Studios which is a design course that partners with non-profits and focuses on practicing "Design for Good." Faith has created identity and branding systems, and packaging and publication designs for a wide variety of clients, such as the City of Hoover and the Alabama Workforce Council. Although Faith's heart lies in design, her paintings have been featured in two of UAB's Student Juried Art Exhibitions and once in UAB's *AURA* Art Review. Faith has also had her work take first place in the Eastern Women's Committee Art show and has been featured in the Cahaba Sun. Faith desires to extend her knowledge in typography and brand identity while working with clients to help broaden their reach and strengthen their image.



Faiza Mawani is a junior majoring in Political Science and History, as well as getting her Master's in Public Administration through the Accelerated-Bachelors Masters Program. This is Faiza's first editor position, but she has been published in professional journals and has been a blog and graduate intern for the UAB Institute for Human Rights. She is passionate about public policy and uses history to inform her about how the past impacts the present. She hopes to explore unique historical topics that affect policies today, using her voice to inform those that are unaware of these topics.



Haley Doby is a junior at UAB majoring in History with a minor in Anthropology. After earning her bachelor's degree, she plans to pursue a master's in history, with hopes of someday obtaining a PhD. She is interested in studying rebellions and revolutions throughout history, with a particular focus on piracy in the early eighteenth century. She is currently looking for volunteer opportunities and will be volunteering for Vulcan Park and Museum in the near future. In her free time, she enjoys reading, listening to music, and hiking.



Haley Wells is a junior double-majoring in History and English (concentration literature). She is also a graduate student, completing her Masters in History through UAB's accelerated Bachelors-to-Masters program. Haley has published in the last two editions of the *Vulcan* and has served as a *Vulcan* editor for the last two years. This will be her third year as an editor. Haley's areas of interest include medieval history and literature, Birmingham history, the history of race and racism, gender history, perceptions of disability in history and fiction, and crime fiction. Haley has presented her research at the 2021 and 2022 Phi Alpha Theta regional conferences, where she earned awards for best paper on her panels. She was also selected to present a paper on *Beowulf* at the 2023 National Conference on Undergraduate Research and a paper on Dr. James Montgomery at the 2023 Symposium for History Undergraduate Research at Mississippi State University. After completing her Master's in History, she hopes to earn a PhD in literature and teach at a college level. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, reading, and spending time with her family and three dogs.



Hayden Batt is a second-year graduate student from Huntsville, Alabama. In his undergraduate years at UAB, he found himself drawn to modern American history, with most of his independent writing dealing with the Civil Rights Movement, The Vietnam War, and the local history of his hometown. Although out of his area of study, he also enjoys reading about early America. He is currently a TA for UAB's History Department and will soon use this experience. After graduating with his master's degree, he is excited to begin teaching U.S. History at UAB in the fall 2023 semester. One day, he hopes to continue his education and pursue his Ph.D. to achieve his career goal of becoming a professor.



Henry Smith is a sixth year graduate student seeking a Master's Degree in history. He completed his Bachelor's Degree in the Spring of 2021 with a double major in history and political science. He has a particular focus in classical history, the cold war, conflict studies (particularly revolution and civil war), genocide, and privatized warfare. He has written previous essays about the Vietnam War, the Second Gulf War, the Nicaraguan Revolution, the Holocaust and the Catholic Church, human trafficking in Syria, and the reign of Emperor Nero. He is currently writing a Master's Thesis about the Roman-Parthian War in Armenia in 58 CE. Henry also works with Trio Academic Services in the Hill Student Center, tutoring undergraduate students in Western Civilization, U.S. History, and World History. He plans to begin teaching at the high school or junior college level upon the completion of his Master's Degree.



Izabella Janush-Hernandez is a sophomore at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, studying psychology with a minor in studio art. Originally from Montgomery, Alabama, Izabella is working toward her undergraduate degree in psychology and plans to pursue a Master's and PhD in abnormal psychology. Using oil paint for six years now, Izabella specializes in figurative oil painting and has been producing painting commissions since early high school. Izabella has had works featured in UAB's Juried Annual Student Art Show, as well as the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. Her work largely focuses on the connection between identity and sensuality through physical mannerisms. She enjoys using her interest in psychology and human nature to inspire her paintings. Izabella hopes to pursue a career in abnormal psychology alongside selling her artwork. In her free time, Izabella enjoys reading and spending time with her dog, Yulia.



Kane McCreadie is a first-year graduate student in the Cultural Heritage Studies master's program through UAB's Department of Art and Art History. As an undergraduate, he majored in Anthropology and History with a minor in Peace, Justice, and Ecology. His specific research interests through the master's program include understanding cultural heritage as a process, who gets to define this heritage, and explore how cultural heritage as a process can be used in conflict resolution. Further, he is interested in understanding the role history plays and is interpreted in the cultural heritage process. He is currently one of several teaching fellows at the Birmingham Museum of Art and works at Sloss Furnaces. He plans on using his master's degree as well as experience working in museums to pursue further museum work centered around heritage and cultural representation, as well as academic research through museum work, eventually pursuing a PhD in the future. When he is not working or studying, Kane enjoys playing bass guitar and writing and recording music with his bandmate.



Luke Goodwin is a junior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham majoring in History with a double-minor in Media Studies and Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies. His areas of interest include Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, German history, 20th Century America, culinary history, and daily-life history. Luke grew up in the small city of Gardendale, Alabama, just a short drive from Birmingham. In the future he hopes to get a master's degree in History and pursue a career as either a curator or archivist.



Mary Hannah McPhail-Edwards is a junior majoring in English (concentration Creative Writing) and minoring in accounting. In 2020 and 2021, she won national prizes in the Scholastic Art and Writing Competition for fiction, poetry, and essays. Her primary focus is fiction, but she also enjoys analysis of literature and her favorite classic movie genres, such as Westerns, science fiction, and mystery. While pursuing her degree, she is working part-time as a bookkeeper. After graduating, she hopes to continue writing fiction in addition to her 'day job.' In her free time, she enjoys reading, knitting, and arguing with her cat.



Miranda Brunn is currently a senior at UAB majoring in Communication (Management concentration) and minoring in history and psychology. While her main focus is centered on communication topics such as deception and interpersonal relationships, she is also passionate about world history, specifically German culture, and chronicles of female hardship. With her current work, she endeavors to dispel gender stereotypes and empower women through their own history. In addition to serving as an editor for the *VHR*, Miranda also holds the position of Event Coordinator within the Undergraduate Communication Association and has been accepted into the national communication honor society of Lambda Pi Eta. Additionally, she conducts deception-related group research in UAB's communication department. After graduating in the spring of 2023, she intends to pursue a master's degree in communication at UAB. Outside of her academic life, Miranda enjoys traveling, hiking, discovering new foods, and spending time with her loved ones.



Riley Reber is a junior majoring in History, as well as getting her Master's in Secondary Education through the Alternate Master's Program. This is her first published work. She has been passionate about history from a young age and hopes to make others feel that same passion. One of the most important aspects of history is discovering how and why our modern world is the way it is, and she is confident that her paper can offer an interesting perspective on that. In the future, she plans to bring her passion to the classroom teaching the next generation of scholars.



Samantha Howerton is a well-rounded sophomore in the honors college, majoring in Communications (concentration public relations). After earning her undergraduate degree, Samantha hopes to work as a representative for a pharmaceutical company. When she is not busy with her obligations on campus, she can be found in Publix Pharmacy, where she works as a part-time pharmacy technician. Not only has she worked as a chemistry teaching assistant for UAB, but she also has presented research regarding microplastics in the Cahaba River at the UAB Spring 2022 Research Expo. Although her academic and career interests pertain to brand reputation and pharmaceuticals, Samantha enjoys exploring different areas of study, including Japanese, music, and history. While she enjoys studying history as whole, World War II history has piqued her interest. In her free time, she likes to sing, play the piano, and play video games.



Sarah Radeke is an art student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is twenty-one years old and was born and raised in Pinson, Alabama. She is earning her bachelor's in art with a minor in business administration. She has worked for a screen-printing business since she was sixteen, and she became a manager at nineteen. Through this job, she has had the opportunity to make custom designs for businesses and schools. Her style follows realistic depictions of still lifes and moments in time; her preferred medium is oil painting and screen-printing. She feels a strong tie to her childhood memories and likes to depict these in her pieces. She wants her audience to experience this glimpse into her past, but most importantly, remember parts of their own. Her mother is her biggest inspiration and motivator. She was taught how to paint and craft at the age of three. Since then, she has been drawn to art. She decided in grade school she wanted to be in the art field and has stuck to her dreams. These dreams began as becoming a fashion designer, but now she wants to own her own printing business. She is set to graduate in May of 2023.



Veda Joshi is a sophomore majoring in history and minoring in chemistry. He is currently enrolled in the Accelerated Bachelor's-to-Master's program in history. Veda's main research interests center around the nature of democracy in the 20th century, with a particular emphasis on Germany as a case-study of democratic experimentation and failure. His current focus is on studying the Weimar Republic and West Germany as comparative case for the relative success of new democracies. His interests in medicine intersect heavily with his interests in history, as he also enjoys studying the development of modern medicine, both in procedure and in social perception, as a result of historical events and the differences in interpretation of medical science across cultures. Veda also incorporates his love for music as a means to study a society's interpretation of itself as its political and social conditions change over time. He has presented a statistics-based analysis of everyday British life during the Blitz at the Southern Regional Honors Conference and a detailed analysis of the Dutch East Indies campaign of the Second World War at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research. He hopes to go to medical school after he is finished with his MA.

Cover art by Sarah Anne Radeke



2023 VULCAN HISTORICAL REVIEW

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