A collection of historical essays written by undergraduate students at Washington University in St. Louis.

A Journal of the Washington University in St. Louis Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta.

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Contributors to This Issue

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This spring, we are delighted to unveil the fourteenth edition of the *Gateway History Journal* presented by Phi Alpha Theta at Washington University in St. Louis. Thanks to tireless efforts supporting the journal, we received a wide array of submissions from students not only across disciplines, but also across schools at the university. Spanning centuries and covering the entire globe, this year’s submissions stand out due to their serious engagement with highly politicized scholarly issues in a mature, sensible, and compelling way. The selections chosen by the Editorial Board represent just a sample of the types of amazing historical research being conducted by undergraduates all across our campus. Our chosen pieces, narrowed down through a rigorous deliberation process, offer commentary on issues as broad as rape and race to European exploration and the corruption of the American railroad industry at the height of the Industrial Revolution. Rather than spoil the six wonderful pieces we’ve published this year, we invite you to read on for yourself to see just how thoroughly authors have discussed their nuanced topics.

For the fourth year in a row, the Editorial Board is pleased to include this year’s abstracts for the senior honors theses in the History Department. Representing scholastic engagement that is of the highest caliber, these abstracts over a glimpse of the dedication, perseverance, and enthusiasm our graduating seniors have to offer.

As the editors of *Gateway*, we are humbled to have worked to showcase these pieces to the best of our ability. We sincerely thank the rest of the Editorial Board and our faculty advisor, Professor Cassie Adcock, for making this edition of *Gateway* a truly memorable one. Please enjoy the second online edition of this journal!

Your editors,
Lauren Henley (‘15) & Elijah Lowenstein (‘14)
Leland Stanford, a former governor of California, successful merchant, and president of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, stands atop Promontory Summit in Utah, a silver hammer and a set of iron pegs in hand. The Central Pacific is expanding at unprecedented rates, quickly on its way to linking the expanses of the country, from the financial capitals of New York and Boston through the rugged Central Plains all the way the golden coasts of the Pacific Ocean. The pegs, which Stanford methodically hammers into the ties of track before him, are connected to telegraph wires that, when struck, will trigger the firing of a cannon in both New York and San Francisco, a demonstration of nationalism and progress just a few short years after the Civil War’s end. The railroads are physically linking the country geographically between opposite poles and through climactic extremes, serving as a large and metaphorical bandage to heal a wounded nation.

The railroads were a quintessentially nationalistic endeavor. They epitomized the city on a hill John Winthrop described when envisioning the nation America, and paid homage to Andrew Jackson’s suggestion of manifest destiny as the tracks forged their way westward. L.U. Reavis, a staunch railroad advocate and promoter, wrote to the readers of Inland Monthly that the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad was “in harmony with nature herself” and “was the destiny or mission of our people on the North American continent.” Reavis framed the railroads in a way that many Americans perceived them: as a divine instrument to spread the American ideals of democracy and freedom.

Yet the railroads, even in just the relatively early years of their operation immediately following the Civil War, were only enjoying limited successes; many were failing or struggling to keep their assets and debt in balance with one another. And those that were surviving were only able to do so because of the deception, cunning, and power of the men who were behind them. Atop Promontory Summit the railroads epitomized the hope and future of a nation as it rebuilt from a brutal, deadly, and divisive conflict; in the boardrooms of those who backed the railroads, corruption, bribery, and questionable operational practices were the language of business.

The Civil War Births a Way of Business

To understand how men like Leland Stanford grew the railroads from fledgling and unprofitable lines to those that carried the hailed and revered iron horses of America, it is important to understand how the railroads were funded; many of these methods stem from Civil War financier Jay Cooke. As the war raged and became increasingly costly for the Union, the United States began selling war bonds in an attempt to fund the conflict. Jay Cooke, through strategic political relationships and a large base of liquid capital, became the central figure in a $500 million government bond issue of what were regarded as “five-twenty bonds”—bonds that paid six percent interest over twenty years that the government could call in after a five year period. Relatively unsuccessful in using traditional strategies to sell the bonds to consumers, primarily large banks and wealthy individuals, Cooke reinvented the ways bonds were sold, instead selling them in denominations as low as $50 to small-scale investors. Cooke framed these bonds to prospective bondholders as, rather than an investment to make money, an investment in patriotism, insinuating that those who bought the five-twenties were better Americans; Cooke “appeal[ed] not to bankers of the market’s sense of what the bonds were worth but to the people’s sense of what the Union was worth.” The bond market would be instrumental in financing the rapid expansion of the transcontinentals.

The Civil War provided the breeding grounds for new ways of financing large financial endeavors, but the conflict was also the impetus for quick westward expansion, as a Union-backed railroad that reached the Pacific coast would concretely establish the western United States as Union territory. Lincoln passed the Pacific Railway Act of 1862 out of wartime necessity. Among other things, the Act set up the Union Pacific Railroad as the first government-sponsored enterprise since the First Bank of the United States, created the framework for loan guarantees by the federal government, and made generous land provisions that were pegged to laid track mileage.

In the short term, the government used the railroads to secure the West and eliminate the Confederate threat beyond the Mississippi River, but it also had long-term aspirations for the railroads—rapid growth and migratory expansion into the West. Nevertheless, investors were wary of
the railroads, as there was simply no demand in the West for the railroads or the goods they would carry. Through the Civil War the West was comprised of isolated pockets of civilization amidst vast openness; in his book *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*, Richard White describes the railroads as “developmental roads that were supposed to create the traffic they would carry,” and that for the people spearheading the push for rail expansion into the West, “asking states or local investors...to build a railroad that extended off into what seemed to them a vast emptiness was like bringing an elephant to a horse fair. It was a different beast and they weren’t buying.” Thus, the railroad companies sent powerful lobbyists to Congress seeking further subsidies to bring down the incredibly high costs of financing the roads. With stronger backing from the government, financially and otherwise, those behind the railroad companies believed that they would be able to attract enough investors to fund the lines.

The lack of success on the part of the railroad companies to expand at the rates the government had hoped led to The Pacific Railway Act of 1864, which allocated, like the Act from which it was born, another $50 million to the railroad companies over thirty years, but the second of the two acts enabled the companies to issue bonds quicker. The 1864 Act also increased the land allocations per track mileage and gave the companies in possession of the land sole mining rights, and reduced the price per share of the Union Pacific dramatically. The incentives in The Pacific Railway Act of 1864 made the railroads an increasingly attractive opportunity for investors, who were buying bonds similar in nature to those of Jay Cooke. With the government incentivizing railroad construction, a rival company to the Union Pacific emerged: Leland Stanford’s Central Pacific Railroad. While the Union Pacific was government-sponsored and the Central Pacific was not, each functioned largely as a private corporation with a set of directors known as Associates, and each had the ability to raise capital at their own discretion. The relative autonomy of these companies created a business environment ripe for manipulation and profits, whatever the cost, all of which would come on the backs of bonds similar to those Jay Cooke had pioneered during the Civil War.

And Then Came the Money

With decreased regulations and stronger governmental support, the railroads began raising capital—albeit through questionable means—en masse, alluring the investments of major banks as well as smaller-scale investors. Jay Cooke himself was a large player in the financing of the railroads, having amassed a fortune from selling war bonds. Several other bankers were also leveraging their reputations, capital, and access to politicians and government money to fuel the rapid growth of the roads. Yet the 1864 Act imposed strict regulations on the railroad companies by dictating how stock issues could be conducted, and how much debt companies could assume relative to the capital they had raised. The loophole that enabled the roads to balloon as quickly as they did was that the companies only had to have a nominal amount of their total capital costs on hand at any given time to qualify for more government loans. What ensued from this complicated arrangement was a mutually reinforcing and compounding cycle of investment; the more money the government lent to the roads, the more legitimate they appeared in the eyes of investors, who would invest more money, which would enable the roads to qualify for more government loans. With relatively small amounts of capital on hand, the railroads were able to raise huge sums of money.

Where the Associates struggled was in translating these inflated balance sheets into profits. The railroads themselves were far from profitable; the up-front capital costs were high, and the markets that they would eventually serve in the West still weren’t robust enough to support such large-scale business. The Associates sought profits, and “the device for doing this was the insider construction company that made money by charging far more to build the railroad than the road actually cost.” These dummy companies were owned and operated by the same men that owned the railroads, and were compensated “partially in cash and partially in railroad securities, including stock,” and “the construction company[es] both profited from building the railroad and owned it.” The construction companies would then sell the railroad securities at face value on the open market to unsuspecting investors, thus reaping massive profits for the shareholders of the construction companies while releasing them of any liability with regard to the future of the railroads. Some estimates have suggested a total profit on investment for the associates as low as 480% and as high as 750%.7 And in liquidating their railroad securities on the open market, the Associates wouldn’t be tethered to the railroad companies if they collapsed under the immense debts they were accruing.

Perhaps the most notorious of these insider construction companies was the Credit Mobilier, the construction arm of the Union Pacific Railroad that, naturally, was owned by the controlling directors of the railroads. The Union Pacific paid the Credit Mobilier prices that were above market levels, flooding the balance sheet of Credit Mobilier with excess cash and securities and making the value of the company skyrocket and ballooning as quickly as it did, they collapsed under the immense debts they were accruing.

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were given to his wife who then sold them to the associates for over 800% above their market value. 8

Yet the questionable practices of Credit Mobilier and other similar construction companies extended far beyond the typical investor; in order to gain political access and favor, many of these construction companies had shareholders in high positions of the government. For example, William Windom was both a U.S. Senator and a Director of the Northern Pacific Railroad, while Henry Dawes, a Massachusetts congressman, was a shareholder of Credit Mobilier stock that had mysteriously paid him returns of over 200%, which were disproportionately larger than those of other investors. 9 In return, Dawes “produced legislation and reports that deprived Indians of land on a scale” that undercut the Native Americans and favored the railroads. 10 Whenever these relationships—which were clearly objectionable—seemed to be scrutinized by outsiders, politicians would engage in what White describes as a moralistic ritual: “moral concerns were raised, the relationship was clarified, the moral rectitude of the official was validated by the very people who had tempted him, and the official became a friend of the railroad.” 11 However, the precarious and dubious relationships that the growth of the railroads—via companies like Credit Mobilier—teetered on would ultimately come crashing down, devastating the industry and setting the stage for a new chapter of state-business relations.

For Every Action, There is An Equal and Opposite Reaction

Richard White refers to 1873 as the *Annus Horribilis*, or “the horrible year,” among a variety of factors including poor weather conditions that made westerly tracks unusable as well as some construction issues, it was the year that the not-so-proud tower of railroad financing and back door deals came crashing down. In 1872, Henry Dawes, the same congressman who had advocated for pro-railroad, anti-Native American legislation in Congress and enjoyed massive returns on shares of Credit Mobilier stock, was running for Massachusetts senator; during this national election that happened to coincide with presidential elections, an attack against presidential candidate Ulysses S. Grant in the *New York Sun* declared Credit Mobilier to be “The King of Frauds,” and included a list of “Congressmen who have robbed the people and now support the national robber.” 12 The article listed several politicians who were either investors in or close affiliates of the Credit Mobilier, one of whom was Senate-hopeful Dawes. Quickly the story was disseminated in media outlets nation-wide and prompted the formation of the Wilson Committee in the House of Representatives, a body solely charged with exploring the veracity of the allegations against Credit Mobilier. The more congressmen attempted to distance themselves from the embattled company, the more it became an object of scrutiny.

The Wilson Committee was able to implicate several high-ranking, high profile politicians and business leaders, including future president James Garfield, Vice President Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House James G. Blaine, and the leadership of the Union Pacific. While most of these men were able to get off relatively unscathed by the scandal, Credit Mobilier had been exposed as a scheme in which the Associates of the Union Pacific had sold company securities at below-market prices to politicians in exchange for legislative favor. 13 What made the Credit Mobilier more controversial than other companies similar in nature, such as Stanford’s Contract and Finance Company, was that “Congressmen were acquiring stock through the Credit Mobilier in a corporation they had chartered, one they had to supervise, and which repeatedly came before them” in Congress: the Union Pacific. 14

The financial structures of the railroads were like a mill; when water passed through, the mill functioned properly and generated energy, but would stop functioning entirely if the flow of water ceased. So, too, the railroads functioned as long as money kept being invested, yet when the stream of easily accessible capital disappeared, the financial schemes were no longer able to function properly. The Wilson Committee and its subsequent fallout led to the drying up of the financial stream—from both the government and private investors—that had sustained the growth of the railroad industry, having exposed what White describes as a looting of the transcontinentals from the inside, which made investors particularly wary. For men like Jay Cooke and other major banks similar in nature, wary investors were always a cause for concern.

The aftermath of the Wilson Committee badly crippled the Union Pacific, and media outlets turned against the railroads and their directors, who were perceived as having withheld information from the public to line their own pockets. Investors began to try and sell railroad securities, yet there wasn’t enough currency in circulation to sustain the demand for money. As the railroads quickly began to decline in value, they attempted to secure loans from banks, which had no money to dole out because of the demand from investors to get cash quickly. Banks, including those of Jay Cooke, began to fail without the necessary cash reserves on hand, leading to the Panic of 1873, a crippling economic depression. 15 The Panic of 1873 revealed the weaknesses in the teetering tower that was the railroad industry. Between the collapse of Cooke’s bank and the end of 1875, a combined 121 railways with combined outstanding bonds valued at $553,048,165 defaulted on their financial obligations; railroad stock prices collapsed, hemorrhaging 60% of their value in the five years following the panic. 16 Yet the Panic incited far-reaching implications not just for the railroads, which would struggle to regain their footing ever again, but also created an environment ripe for political turnover and
government intervention in private enterprise.

A New Chapter

The railroads epitomized a speculative bubble; a flurry of investment paired with a lack of regulation led to huge gains but also huge losses. When adjusted for inflation, the railroads defaulted on a combined nearly $11.4 billion in assets in 2013 dollars. Business in America would dramatically change following the Panic of 1873, and the majority of railroads, which were “overcapitalized, mismanaged, and often ill conceived,” succumbed to the economic pressures of the Panic.17 The roads went through a period of consolidation through the 1880s, with major financiers such as J.P. Morgan, Jay Gould, and Cornelius Vanderbilt striving to create a non-speculative, integrative railway system in the United States that capitalized on greater efficiencies. Yet the consolidation of the railroad industry led to an anti-monopolistic movement that would typify the end of the 19th century, and would cast the Supreme Court as the central role in setting the tone of this movement.

As the roads were consolidated and the vast Western markets envisioned in the nascent period of the roads came to fruition, railroad companies were able to price gouge; state governments responded by creating individualized transport rates. In the 1886 Supreme Court Decision Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Railway Company v. Illinois, the Supreme Court ruled “that a statute of a state, intended to regulate or to tax or to impose any other restriction upon the transmission of persons or property or telegraphic messages…, is not within the class of legislation which the states may enact in the absence of legislation from Congress.”18

This judicial decision, which gave, albeit implicitly, the power of interstate commerce regulation to the federal government, laid the foundation for the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887, which declared that “all charges…[for] the receiving, delivering, storage, or handling of…property [by the railroads]…shall be reasonable and just; and every unjust and unreasonable charge for such service is prohibited.”19 This law attempted to prohibit the monopolistic practice of price gouging, yet failed the give the government any true regulatory power over the carrier prices the railroads set. The act did, however, establish the Interstate Commerce Commission that was, in theory, supposed to act as the regulatory body for interstate commerce, and was the first body of its kind.

Were these two laws to have had true teeth in regulating commerce, they would have dramatically altered the way the railroads continued to do business. Their watered down nature, though, enabled the railroads to still engage in price fixing, just on a smaller scale. Nonetheless, these both represent an early instance of the federal government taking what could be perceived as an anti-big business stance, which, for the purposes of this paper and understanding the evolution of state-enterprise relationships in America, is significant.

Another 1886 case that came before the Supreme Court was that of Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad, in which the county of Santa Clara, California, sought to recoup taxes on land the Southern Pacific had deducted on the grounds that citizens were granted the same deductions. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the railroad, citing the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause.20 Through this decision, the court ruled not just in the favor of the specific railroad at hand, but for businesses in the long-term; by granting companies the same protections as natural citizens, the court reinforced the argument that, under the law, entire corporations should be treated as citizens, too.

1890 brought about the Sherman Antitrust Act, which attempted to limit the formation of monopolies and their effects on markets. The bill sought to make “every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several states, or with foreign nations” illegal.21 Similar to the Interstate Commerce Act, while this piece of legislation was superficially perceived to be a step towards reducing the power of monopolies, it lacked an enforcement mechanism built into the law. It wouldn’t be used to effectively trust-bust for another decade.

Despite the rumblings of government intervention in the affairs of corporations throughout the 1880s, the enacted legislation and the decisions being handed down by the Supreme Court lacked any truly effective power. While these interventions were significant in that they were the first steps the government was taking to regulate business, on the whole the Supreme Court and government appeared to be business-friendly institutions that would often times not go far enough in regulating business. In a speech entitled “Wall Street Owns the Country,” Mary Elizabeth Lease, a political activist who would go on to be a mouthpiece for the Populist Party, proclaimed America has “a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street. The great common people of the country are slaves, and monopoly is the master.”22 While Lease’s speech represented a particular facet of society in Gilded Age America, her criticisms of the government in its treatment of business weren’t unfounded; the inefficiencies of legislative and legal outputs were devastating to those who weren’t in charge of or could adeptly maneuver the shadowy halls of Washington D.C.

This relative lack of effective government intervention in the private sector led to shifting politics in the 1890s. The Populist Party, born partially out of farmers’ opposition to the monopolistic railroads, quickly became an influential political movement that set the stage for the larger, more all-encompassing Progressive Movement.23 Even in the written platform of the Populists, they explicitly target the railroad companies, writ-

17 White, Railroaded, 85.
19 The Interstate Commerce Act, 1:1 (1887)
21 Sherman Antitrust Act, 1:1, 1890
22 Lease, Mary Elizabeth, “Wall Street Owns the Country,” circa 1890.
23 The railroads based their prices off of mileage. A general rule was that the longer the haul, the cheaper the fare; the inverse was true of shorter hauls and higher prices. This price structure particularly hurt small farmers who were transporting perishable goods on the rails. They had to get their goods to market on a short time table, but couldn’t afford the high prices associated with short-distance shipping. Railroads were able to collude and price-gouge, which made rail transport of goods all but financially impossible for small farmers.
ing, “we believe that the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads,” ultimately calling upon full-scale nationalization of the industry. Further, with regard to the massive land subsidies the railroads amassed in their nascent years, the Populists advocated that land “should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, [and] …all land…held by railroads…should be reclaimed by the federal government.” The Populist Party carried five states in the Election of 1892 and secured several seats in Congress; while its impact on politics was never deep, it was profound in that national support for the young party indicated shifting popular sentiments to support less-favorable treatment of businesses.

Despite the rise of the Populist Party, the government continued its benign treatment of corporations. The toothless Sherman Antitrust Act was gutted in 1895 by yet another Supreme Court decision in the case of United States v. E.C. Knight, in which the Court ruled that only commerce was punishable under the Antitrust Act, but not the manufacturing of goods. Essentially, the decision stated that so long as goods were sold in the same state in which they were manufactured, a monopoly on the sale of said goods didn’t violate the law. This decision, which essentially granted legal immunity to multi-state corporations and monopolies, rendered the Sherman Antitrust Act to be even more useless than it had previously been, leaving behind a shell of what was already a weak piece of legislation.

When President Theodore Roosevelt began trust-busting 1904—the year in which he broke up the Northern Securities Railroad Company, a conglomerate of several railroads controlled by the same Board of Directors, he ended the long era of lax government treatment of corporations. A Boston Daily Globe article dated February 21, 1902, describes fear rippling through Wall Street on the heels of an announcement that Roosevelt instructed his Attorney General to file legal proceedings against the Northern Securities Company; this announcement sent railroad stocks tumbling, hemorrhaging a combined $55 million in value. Investors dumped Northern Securities shares in troves, and the article described J.P. Morgan, one of the major financial backers of the company, as “plainly agitated,” with other financiers claiming that Roosevelt’s actions were “an invasion upon the prerogatives of the Supreme Court.”

Tycoons’ and financiers’ frustrations with Roosevelt’s antitrust campaigns marked the beginning of a significant change in the relationship between business and the government. Until Roosevelt, the Supreme Court and Congress had done very little in pursuing the breaking up of trusts. Roosevelt set a precedent with the Northern Securities Railroad Company for trust-busting, a legacy that would long survive his own tenure as president, and limit forever the power of the corporation in amassing a monopoly or manipulating the economy as the massive railroad corporations had done before.

An Economy Redefined, A Nation Changed

Certainly the railroads were revolutionary in providing a corporate blueprint, how they structured themselves, and how they operated. Yet the railroads were also revolutionary in that they were unlike any businesses that had ever come before them; through the cunning and deceit of their leadership paired with a government that had never before confronted organizations of such size and scope, they were able to manipulate the economy, politicians, and investors in ways unlike ever before. The railroads forced the United States government to examine carefully its relationship with businesses, and also the degree to which it would intervene in the private sector; railroads proved an incredible impetus in setting up the legal framework in which corporations would operate for the next century.

The railroads were in many ways a grand experiment. And despite their mass defaults in the wake of the Panic of 1873 and then the subsequent periods of consolidation and increased regulation that followed into the very early years of the 20th century, it would be difficult to justify labeling the railroads as anything but an equally grand success. The railroads connected a nation broken and scarred by Civil War in the name of divine destiny and were beacons of national pride, while also facilitating a western migration that opened up new markets and led to increasing prosperity. In 1877, in the wake of what was, to that point, the largest panic the nation had yet endured, Railway Age explained that even though investors had lost billions, America as a nation had won because the nation “[had] the railroads. They [were] built and in operation, and the owners [couldn’t] take them away, even if they [wanted] to.”

Certainly there were costs, financially and otherwise, to building the railroads. Economic instability and uncertainty, the displacement of millions of Native Americans from indigenous lands that were recklessly redistributed to the railroad companies, and the exploitation of migrant labor on unprecedented levels apart from slavery, were all negative side effects of the transcontinentals’ construction. Yet the railroads were, ultimately, a positive development, and ones that would withstand the tests of time, serving a critical infrastructural purpose that would contribute to the continued industrialization and the development of the United States into the economic powerhouse that would lead the world for the next century.

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24 Omaha Platform of the Peoples’ Party of America, July 4, 1892.
25 Omaha Platform of the Peoples’ Party of America, July 4, 1892.
27 “Losses in Railway Securities,” Railway Age, March 22, 1877, 802.
On the morning of June 25, 1855, people across Missouri awoke to news that would later shake the state to its very core. Robert Newsom, a respective landowner, avid church-goer, and grandfather of three, was brutally murdered by one of his slaves, a nineteen year old woman named Celia. His remains, unwittingly disposed of by his grandson, were reduced to a mere pile of ashes, completely unidentifiable if not for the handmade buttons found within it. The sleepy farming town of Fulton was completely aghast, and newspapers across the nation scrambled to understand exactly how such a thing could have happened.

For Celia herself, the story began in the summer of 1850, when, immediately following her purchase by Robert Newsom, she was taken off the wagon and raped repeatedly by her new owner. This initial sexual assault in fact set a precedent that would eventually culminate in five years of abuse, three children, and, ultimately, the demise of both master and slave. On the night of June 23, 1855, a pregnant Celia later recounts, “the Devil got into me”, and she fatally bludgeoned Robert Newsom to death as he entered her cabin, demanding sex from her once more.

From that moment on, Celia has captured the minds and imaginations of Americans spanning the century, with her story being retold in a number of historical works. In a lot of ways, however, her case was not typical of slave women in the antebellum South. Whereas her crime assured the assault she suffered would be recorded for all posterity, so many other similar stories have been forever lost to history. And instead of meeting her end at the hands of a white mob bent on vengeance, Celia was given a trial in the court of law, however biased it may have been.

In many more ways, however, Celia was undeniably representative of millions of voices silenced by their oppression. Indeed, sexual exploitation was part of the daily lived realities of countless enslaved women, a fact that is now starting to gain the attention it deserves by antebellum historians. Yet bondswomen did not suffer their abuse passively. Instead, they utilized all means of resistance available to them, even if such actions ultimately cost them their lives.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive examination of the sexual exploitation of black female bodies in the antebellum South, however; such an undertaking would require the devotion of several books, and this is but one chapter. Rather, what follows is a short analysis that contextualizes Celia within a system that not only resulted the legal, sexual, and societal abuse of slave women, but necessitated it. This is her story.

“I Can Tell You That a White Man Laid a Nigger Gal Whenever He Wanted”

From its very inception, trans-Atlantic slavery was a distinctly gendered institution. Once captured, women did not generally travel the middle passage shackled beneath decks as did their male counterparts, but rather endured the arduous journey on the quarter deck. As recorded by the 1789 Report of the Committee of the Privy Council, slave trader William Snelgrave asserted: “We couple the sturdy Men together with Irons; but we suffer the Women and children to go about freely.” This policy, asserts Deborah White, “had significant consequences for black women.”

First, they were more easily accessible to the criminal whims and sexual desires of their captures, and few attempts were made to keep the crew members of slave ships from molesting African women. As one slaver reported, officers were permitted to indulge their passions at will and were sometimes guilty of such brutal excesses as disgrace human nature.”

And indeed, such was the precedent that would remain for the duration of slavery’s reign in the Americas. In fact, although undoubtedly tragic, Celia’s story was far from unique among slave women. As living commodities denied rights on the basis of race as well as sex, black women were left particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. And white men, for their part, certainly did not shy away from this reality, frequently directing their lustful desires towards the women whose fates they controlled. “I can tell you” recounts one ex-slave, “that a white man laid a nigger gal whenever he wanted.”

Indeed, even within the ‘benign’ slavery of small, border state plantations, the threat of sexual violence was a constant one for those in bondage. In fact, because there were fewer slave women living on each slaveholding, individual women were statistically more likely to experience sexual pressure and abuse from white men within their households than was the case on larger plantations. Yet, according to Susan Brownmiller’s Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape, rape’s prevalence in even the smallest slave societies was more than “a chance tool of violence. “ Rather, “it was an institutional crime, part and parcel of the white man’s subjugation of a people for economic and psychological gain.” Celia’s experience that first day on the wagon thus can and should be read as an assertion of power by Robert Newsom, one that was intended to imprint
upon her a sense of absolute subservience. He owned her, every part of her, and would from that moment on do with her as he wished.

Yet although undoubtedly perched atop the hierarchy of southern slaveholding societies, even white men could not indulge themselves completely unchallenged. According to many concerned onlookers, such trends were advancing the “mongrelization” of American society, and would inevitably result in the extinction of “pure” Caucasians if left unabated. As the usual instigators of the crime, young white males were also at risk of being led away from their Christian morals and towards a tempting life of sin. Worse still, asserted many southerners, the widespread rape of slave women frequently served as fodder for an emerging abolitionist movement in the nineteenth century, further adding to northern apprehensions surrounding the “moral dilemma” of slavery.

In response to such allegations, slavery supporters argued that black women, through their seductions, directed the lust of men towards themselves, thus “uplifting” their chaste white counterparts. Indeed, the degradation of slaves and the consequent consolidation of “whiteness” as an identity not only perpetuated the system of sexual violence against bondswomen, but ultimately constructed it as a necessary societal good. By trading the lesser bodies of black women amongst themselves, white men in the antebellum south ensured the untainted virtue of their white sisters, wives, and daughters. Unlike their unfortunate counterparts to the north, argued prominent pro-slavery voices of the time, even poor white women were thus spared from the horrors of prostitution and disgrace, leaving them to fulfill their natural, passive roles unabated. The purity of universal white womanhood thus became the grounds on which the sexual exploitation of slaves was justified, ultimately resulting in the perpetual, unapologetic rape of slave women throughout the antebellum south.

More convincing still was the argument put forth by Louisiana courts in the case of Vail v. Bird. Although it is true that the “female slave is peculiarly exposed from her condition to the seductions of an unprincipled master”, justices proclaimed, it was so rare in the case of concubinage that the “seduction and temptation are not mutual” that exceptions protecting black women from advances of their owners could not be founded upon it. Indeed, agreed slavery-supporter Johann Schoepf, “in almost every house there are negresses, slaves who count it an honor to bring a mulatto into the world.”

Slave women, then, were portrayed not only as the victims of white male lusts, but rather as eager participants in such interracial relations. Going further still, white men here painted themselves as the unwitting sufferers of black female lasciviousness. Bondwomen, they then argued, could not possibly be raped, when they themselves constantly preyed on white men to satisfy their incessant sexual cravings. Even the abolitionists James Redpath wrote that slave women were “gratified by the criminal advances of Saxons.” Thus, the Jezebel—a woman defined and controlled exclusively by her bestial libido—was born.

Such justifications not only served the purpose of easing the moral consciences of a deeply religious society, but also allowed for the rise of yet another dimension of slavery—the economic exploitation of black female sexuality. Indeed, because laws transformed the children of slaves into chattel, the rape of black women served the decidedly practical purpose of creating new commodities to be sold or consumed for the profit of the owner. The benefit for white males was thus twofold; they could assert their supremacy in the most pleasurable way possible, while at the same enjoying the subsequent increases to their human capital. “They was glad of it,” recalled one formerly enslaved woman, “be glad to have them little bastards, brag on it.”

Slave women, for their part, were forced to adapt to this basic reality. Indeed, whatever protestations she may have had about her treatment, Celia coped with her situation for five years without incident. And like other bondswomen coerced into sexual relations with her master, Celia received several material goods far beyond that which would be expected otherwise for her complacency. “Certainly one such reward,” declares McLaurin, “at least from the point of view of Newsom, was cabin of her own, one that would have been luxurious compared to the housing in which the vast majority of American slaves resided.” Built of brick rather than wood, it was a one-story structure with a single front entrance and windows on the back. The cabin also possessed a large chimney and fireplace complete with hearth stones, and was situated in a grove of cherry and pear trees some sixty steps behind the Newsom’s home. Such isolation from her peers and proximity to the big house was, no doubt, intended to provide Robert with easy access to his concubine, away from the potentially meddlesome gaze of his five male slaves.

One such slave, mentioned in court records only as George, posed a particular challenge to Newsom. Indeed, sometime before 1855, Celia became romantically involved with the bondsman, even welcoming him into her cabin on nights when her master did not visit. Shortly before the night of the murder, however, George became exacerbated with their secret arrangement. To this point, William Powell—the husband of Newsom’s eldest daughter—testified:

[Celia] said that George had told her he would have nothing more to do with her if she did not quit the old man. It was Celia, then, who was responsible for her own abuse, and it was Celia who would ultimately have to either effectively resist the coercion of her owner, or terminate her relationship with her fellow bondsman.

That she could not hope to receive any sympathy from George was a clear as his ultimatum. Yet for George, as with other slave men caught in such sexual triangles, Celia’s abuse imposed on him a dilemma that challenged the very essence of his masculinity. His inability to prevent the harm of his loved ones, no doubt, would have been extremely detrimental to both his psychological state as well as his status within the slave

8 Vail v. Bird, Louisiana Supreme Court (1859).
9 Deborah Gray White. Ain’t I a Woman?, 30.
10 Deborah Gray White. Ain’t I a Woman?, 30.
11 Edward E. Baptiste, ““Cuffy,” “Fancy Maids,” and “One-Eyed Men”, 1648.
12 McLaurin, Celia, a Slave, 24.
13 Missouri v. Celia, File No. No. 4496 (1855).
community. To have confronted Newsom directly at this stage and demand that he cease his sexual exploitation of Celia could at best result in a severe beating, and at worst cost him his life. While some black males did indeed take such risks, most, understandably, were unwilling to do so.¹⁴ So George made a demand of the most vulnerable member of the triangle, however unfair it may have been.¹⁵ The fact that it was ultimately George who implicated Celia in her master’s murder only furthers the theory of his survivalist mentality.

Desperate to escape an impossible situation, Celia then turned to her only other option for possible salvation—her fellow women. As the only female slave on the farmstead, however, Celia did not have the support network of bondswomen found on larger plantations, so she sought as allies the white women of her household. And indeed, white women, unlike slaveholding men, saw neither intraracial relations nor the mixed-race offspring they often produced as yet another profitable addition to their stock. “Half white children” asserts Deborah White, “told a story of a white man’s infidelity, a slave woman’s helplessness (though this concerned few whites), and a white woman’s inability to defy the social and legal constraints that kept her bound to her husband regardless of his transgressions.”¹⁶ Unable to do anything about it, continues White, many a Southern white woman feigned ignorance of such illicit interracial affairs, especially in regards to those occurring within her own household.

And indeed, such was the case for Mary and Virginia, Robert Newsom’s daughters. According to official court testimony, Virginia was approached the day of the murder by a then very desperate Celia, who recounted the abuse she had suffered and continued to suffer by her owner. Colonel Jefferson Jones, the man responsible for Celia’s interrogation after the murder, recounted:

“She said she threatened him that she would hurt him if he did not quit forcing her while she was sick. She said she intended to hurt him, not to kill him…. I asked if she had told anyone she would hurt him. Said she had told the white family.”¹⁷

Because of a patriarchal system that reduced white women to little more than mere objects themselves, however, neither Mary nor Virginia was in a position to change their father’s conduct. Mary was still an adolescent herself, totally dependent upon her father, and Virginia was a mother with three children of her own to consider. There was little choice for either but to remain on their father’s farm, regardless of whatever ill feelings they may have harbored concerning his behavior. What is more, due to aforementioned stereotypes distorting the sexuality of black women, each of the women could have very well viewed Celia not as an unwitting victim, but rather as a scorned whore looking to ruin the reputation of her highly esteemed master.

Indeed, although all women were powerless relative to white men, white women were in large part both wholesale subscribers to the dogma surrounding slavery as well as undeniable benefactors of slave women’s degradation. The labor of slave women not only allowed for the increased leisure of their mistresses, but served as a symbol of wealth and social standing so coveted by southern-reared whites. Indeed, far from being bonded to black women in the sisterhood of oppression, many white women even turned themselves into martyrs when their husbands assaulted slaves, and only joined the abolitionist cause to remove the temptation of the immoral black women from their households.¹⁸ It was also well known amongst slaves that the white “missus” was often just as quick with the whip as her husband, and, when “disciplining” her unwilling “sexual rivals” especially, twice as harsh.¹⁹ Although such treatment was probably not applicable to Celia’s case specifically, she could, in the end, expect no aid to come from her white mistresses. Thus, on the night of June 23, 1855, Celia ended her abuse in the only way left available to her—through violence. It was a choice that would, ultimately, cost the young mother her life.

“The Time Has Come for Action—Bold, Determined Action”

As the sweltering heat of the mid-summer months began to settle over Fulton, tempers, too, grew fiery just across the border. The nation watched with increasing apprehension as the battle over the future of Kansas shifted in nature from ideological to literal. Indeed, in the weeks leading to Robert Newsom’s death, violent clashes like that of the Parkville Luminary began to dominate the news cycles of even the most far removed northern cities. “With fiendish yells of delight” recounts Mr. Pattenson to the New York Times, “border ruffians entered, seized, and bound me.” They then proceeded to tear down the press and throw it, piece by piece, into the river. Only Pattenson’s Canadian citizenship convinced the angry mob that he, too, should not likewise be disposed.²⁰ Others caught in the wake of Missouri’s infamous “border ruffians”, however, were not so fortunate.

In the eyes of the perpetrators themselves, however, right was undoubtedly on their side. Although certainly not all slave-holders themselves, a great many Missourians viewed the institution as a logical—if not necessary—step towards frontier development. Indeed, asserts Christopher Phillips, “this oppression offered the opportunity to establish their supremacy in the leveled atmosphere of democratic egalitarianism.”²¹ Rather than contradicting the founding principles of the nation, slavery for them instead served as the very embodiment of the American dream; even the most downtrodden of whites, proclaimed popular discourse of the time, could one day acquire slaves of their own, provided they possessed sufficient industry, perseverance, and thrift. Thus, all white Missourians were ostensibly given a stake in slavery, and all were consequently responsible for its survival.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household.
¹⁸ Missouri v. Celia, File No. No. 4496 (1855).
¹⁹ For more on slaveholding women’s interaction with blacks, see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese’s Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women in the Old South (University of North Carolina Press: 1988).
²⁰ Melton A. McLaurin, Celia, a Slave, 57.
Yet as Celia awaited trial in Callaway County jail, Missourians found themselves in the midst of a raging two-front siege. On one front, abolitionists to the north and east worked tirelessly to reveal the true horrors of the south’s “peculiar institution”, further stirring the consciences of an increasingly apprehensive nation. On the other, Kansas’s Free-Soilers pushed back against the tide of militant “border ruffians”, threatening to form Missouri’s third border with open enemies of slavery. Worse still, declared the Lafayette Emigration Society in an appeal to potential Missouri settlers:

“We know of a surety that they have emissaries and spies in almost every town, village and city in the south, watching our movements, and tampering with our slaves.

“Words will no longer do any good,” the Society goes on to assert. “The time has come for action—bold, determined action.”

And indeed, after tales of abolitionist-led uprisings and “negro thefts” began to permeate Missouri’s press, the state flocked to action. On election day in April 1855, Kansas’s “Herald of Freedom” reported a full three hundred Missourians camped in tents and waggons outside the Wakarusa district alone, all in an attempt to cast their ballots and secure the legislature to pro-slavery interests. And on July 12, just days after the announcement of Celia’s indictment, a statewide convention was held to protect the region against “aggression on our slave property” by abolitionists across the border. Thus, concludes McLaurin, “the intensified slavery debates in Missouri coincided precisely with the investigation of Robert Newsom’s murder, and the significance of the slavery issue in the politics of neighboring Boone County strongly suggests that residents of Callaway would have been equally concerned.”

It was in this atmosphere of hostility and unrest that Celia, then in her last stages of pregnancy, would stand trial. Yet despite the influence of all outside forces, Celia was, at least ostensibly, receiving what an untold number of blacks in similar situations could only dream—due process in a court of law. Indeed, ensuring none could later accuse it of overseeing a sham trial, the state carefully selected Celia’s defense, settling ultimately on I.W. Boulware and former Congressman John Jameson. Boulware, in the years to follow, was to become one of the most distinguished criminal defense attorneys west of the Mississippi. And of Jameson, the History of Callaway County proclaims:

“As a lawyer, he was not profound, but as a jury advocate, he was not excelled by anyone in Central Missouri and by few, if any, in the state.”

Both would, in the course of Celia’s trial, prove themselves not only competent and steadfast attorneys, but also genuinely sympathetic to the plight of their young defendant.

Yet here is where all semblances of a fair and impartial trial ceased. Not only was Celia prohibited by law to testify against the white man she stood trial for murdering, but records of trial proceedings reveal an arduous battle for even the most basic rights of defense to be recognized. Indeed, the first jury instruction asked for by the defendant was the standard “presumption of innocence,” and read: “the law presumes the defendant innocent, and the jury are to place themselves upon this presumption and only recede from it when driven from it by the testimony.” Yet even this the court refused to give to the jury. Rather than being a convention of modernity, it was in 1855 an almost invariable custom of courts to give an instruction on the presumption of innocence when requested to do so, as was done here. The refusal of the court to do so was no doubt indicative of its hostile attitude toward the defense,

Indeed, this fact becomes still clearer when taken in tandem with subsequent struggles by the defense. Taking the words “any woman” used in a Missouri statute prohibiting forcible rape to mean black woman as well as white, the defense proclaimed that:

the using of a master authority to compel a slave to be by him defiled is using force, malice and duress, within the meaning of the 29th section of article II of Missouri Statutes for 1845 concerning crimes and punishments.

This the court unequivocally rejected. The defense then asked for the inclusion of the following instruction:

If the jury believes from the evidence that Celia did kill Newsom, but that the killing was necessary to protect herself against a forced sexual intercourse with her on the part of said Newsom, and there was imminent danger of such forced sexual connection being accomplished by Newsom, the will not find her guilty of murder in the first degree.

From the instructions asked for by the defense, it is clear that her attorneys were striving to get a verdict of murder in the second degree, and thus save their client from execution. However, this instruction, too, was refused.

Yet for the presiding judge in this trial, as well as for the state Supreme Court justices that later followed, there was no choice. The defense, in essence, not only demanded that the court officially recognize Celia as a woman rather than as property, but was ultimately asking that it challenge the very principle on which the hierarchy of antebellum society rested—the absolute authority of the white male. Indeed, acquiescing to the demands of the defense would mean asserting that Robert Newsom did not have a right to use his property in any manner he saw fit. Worse still, it would require granting a slave woman control over her own sexuality, as well as condoning her use of violence to thwart the will of her master, consequently establishing a precedent that would inevitably sow the seeds of the institution’s destruction. And while in the midst of a heated battle...
with an encroaching abolitionist tide, this was certainly not a call Missouri’s judiciary could afford to make.

Indeed, court records spoke of a bias that was decidedly clear; of the 13 instructions submitted by the defendant, four were permitted. Of the nine submitted by the state, eight were given. One such instruction submitted and approved by the state read:

If [Newsom] was in the habit of having intercourse with the defendant, who was his slave, and went to her cabin on the night he was killed to have intercourse with her, or for any other purpose, and while he was standing in the floor talking to her she struck him with a stick, which was a dangerous weapon, and knocked him down and struck him again after he fell, and killed him by either blow, it is murder in the first degree.

The wording of the above instruction was clearly intended to permit the jury to find the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree without also establishing premeditated intent, an allowance that blatantly contradicted the 1849 revised statutes of Missouri mandating the opposite. By contrast, the defense’s instruction to the jury to acquit Celia if they believed “that the killing was done without deliberation and premeditation” was, predictably, denied.32

And so it was that upon the close of the trial, the jury unanimously found the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree. After giving birth to her third child, the judge declared, Celia was to be hung from the neck until dead.

“Thus Concludes a Most Terrible Tragedy”

In the close of 1855, an editorialist for the Missouri Republican penned an impassioned plea to the citizens of St. Louis, working desperately to turn public opinion against executing the young woman recently convicted of first degree murder. “However much the prisoner may have unsexed herself in the perpetration of the crime for which she is condemned to hang," declares the Republican, “she is in person but a woman still.”33 Every community in the nation, it goes on to assert, would rise indignantly to defend the honor of a female against any “vile coward” who dare insult it, successfully shielding women from the predatory nature of the masculine villain.

Shall the law then, representing the aggregate of public sentiment, forget this national and individual sentiment, characteristically and nobly American, and order a frail creature from the cell to the scaffolds there to be hung like the most hardened wretch in the land?34 The public’s response, predictably, was a no so resounding that the original judgment of death by hanging was quickly overturned and instead commuted to life imprisonment.35

The murderess in question, however, was not Celia, but rather Henrietta Robinson, a young white woman accused of poisoning her neighbor and his sister-in-law in upstate New York. With her veiled face and mysterious aura, Henrietta captured the nation’s attention and sympathy, despite her background being unknown, her actions erratic, and her crime unpaved. Champions of her cause in New York and throughout the country bombarded the presiding judge with letters and, in one act of desperation, even supplied the murderess with poison in an attempt to prevent a public execution.36

Celia’s case, by contrast, garnered no wave of public compassion, nor did it provoke any last minute to pleas to limit capital punishment to the “sterner sex”. Instead, on the morning of June 25th, just one day before it made its heartfelt appeal for Henrietta, the Republican ran Celia’s story under the sensationalist headline “Fiendish Murder.” Rather than tempering the report with descriptions of the innocent irrationality inherent within all women, as was the case for Miss Robinson, the editorialist provided readers only with the grisly details of Robert Newsom’s death.

His body appears, so far as discovery can be made, to have been entirely consumed, except a few small bones, found in the pile of ashes, including a part of his skull bone and the extremities of some of his fingers.37

And on January 24, 1868, the Fulton Telegraph picked up where the Republican left off, filing in the missing details provided by the trial itself. “On the evening of the occurrence,” begins the Telegraph, “[Celia] procured a large, stout stick… and took position behind the door, leaving it slightly ajar. Her master came into the cabin, pushed the door open and entered; as soon as he entered she struck him with the stick, felling him to the ground.”38 Gone from the description of Celia’s ‘crime’ is any mentioning of the sexual abuse incurred at the hands of her master, despite it being the crucial element in her defense. Indeed, no motive for the killing was provided at all, nor was there any attempt to explain what Robert Newsom was doing in her quarters in the first place. Again, only the blunt details of the killing itself are reported, consequently providing the audience with only a limited, carefully constructed account to interpret.

And, indeed, the intended reactions from this article are clear. Robert Newsom, mentioned only by his “very handsome estate” and the details of his gruesome death, was painted here as the upstanding yet hapless victim, completely unaware that his own painful and unprovoked murder lay just beyond the cabin’s threshold. Celia, by contrast, is cast quite literally as a woman possessed by unspeakable evil. “As soon as I struck him” the Fulton Telegraph reports Celia as admitting, “the Devil got into me, and I struck him with the stick until he was dead, and then rolled him in the fire and burnt him up.”39 She was not a girl driven to desperation by the incessant sexual demands of a predatory owner, but rather a calculating murderess, waiting in the shadows to attack, sly, and dismember her unwitting guardian.

38 Fulton Telegraph, “Hanging a Negress.” January 4, 1856.
By diverting audience attention away from Celia’s rape and towards her ‘crime’, the *Fulton Telegraph* and *Missouri Republican* tapped into a long history of white fears of black violence. Indeed, because the power of a slave’s will to be free was something both very familiar and increasingly feared within plantation communities, tales of murderous slaves and their white victims circulated with great frequency throughout the nation’s history. According to McLaurin, the threat of slave violence and possible insurrection was “a specter that constantly haunted the white population of the antebellum South, and the residents of Callaway County were no exception.”

A successful slave uprising of Toussaint L’Ouverture in 1789, hundreds of Haiti’s former slave owners fled for the shores of the American south, bringing with them horrific tales of neighbors brutally murdered by their former property. And again, just one decade after Missouri’s entry into the Union and roughly a decade before the birth of Celia, Nat Turner’s Virginia rebellion culminated in the deaths of more than fifty whites, further instilling terror into the collective hearts of slave owners.

For white southerners, L’Ouverture and Turner not only became personifications of such terror, but served also as a warning of what would happen should the ‘black menace’ not be contained. That the white population of Calloway County were themselves anxious is evident from reports of black violence against former masters in the West Indies carried by the Fulton Telegraph as late as 1848.

And indeed, such fears were again resurrected when, in the years immediately preceding Celia’s case, the threat of armed revolt rose from the very backyard of Calloway County itself. An aborted slave insurrection plot was uncovered in the Fulton area in 1842, just a stone’s throw away from the Newsores’ own homestead. And again in 1849, a group of thirty Lewis County slave men and women belonging to four different owners armed themselves with knives, clubs, and three guns in an attempt to escape, only surrendering to the white mob that confronted them after their leader was shot dead. Although no whites were killed, these episodes only exacerbated the atmosphere of hostility and paranoia of whites towards their slaves. In an attempt to eradicate all potential for collective violence, Missourians enacted laws that made it illegal for slaves to congregate without a white person present, organized community slave patrols, and anxiously watched for any signs of unrest.

Yet, as most slave owners of Calloway County were well aware, planned insurrections were only a tiny portion of the danger posed by those they held in bondage. Indeed, even Celia—a pregnant, sickly hand servant—posed a threat that proved far more difficult to contain. Indeed, in contrast to the case of Henrietta Robinson, a slave woman was often dangerous because of her femininity, not in spite of it. In small slave-holding households especially, bondswomen more often than not worked within the “big house” itself, serving as cooks, wet nurses, and personal servant to their white families. Although such an intimate structuring often left slave women increasingly susceptible to the violence of their owners, they also provided them with additional opportunities for deadly resistance.

That such lethal potential was indeed on the minds of antebellum whites is no better evidenced than by the press’s rendition of the murder itself. Robert Newsom, it begins:

> was murdered by one of his own slaves, a negro woman, in the kitchen—supposed, some time during the night—and his body entirely consumed by fire in the kitchen fire-place, and the ashes taken up the next morning and deposited in the back yard.

Although later corrected by Robert Newsom’s son in his letter to the editor, the fact that the kitchen was supposed to be the place of both the murder and the body’s disposal is certainly not insignificant. As a domestic slave who very likely spent an upwards of twelve hours a day in the kitchen, Celia would have drawn no suspicion as she “fiendishly” stalked her prey, slaughtered him in his own home, and ruthlessly cremated his corpse. Even the ash pile, the *Republican* goes on to say, “had not before been noticed” and might never have been, had Celia herself had not directed attention to it.

Indeed, although the exact number of murders perpetrated by slave women can never be known, the kitchen as the backdrop of treachery occupied the imaginations of American slave holders from the institution’s infancy. As early as 1755, a Charleston slave was burned at the stake for poisoning her master, and in 1769, a special issue of the South Carolina Gazette carried the story of a woman who poisoned her owner’s infant child. And after one Missouri woman was poisoned in her bed by a servant and another’s entire family was made ill by arsenic-laced coffee, the *Liberty Tribune* in 1850 decried the fact that “a family cannot sit down to partake at their own table with impunity; or retire to their own beds without being made victim to the murderous and vindictive slaves.” For those in slave-holding communities well aware of these occurrences, Celia then represented not only one isolated case of a woman gone mad, but rather the unmitigated evil that lay dormant within the most intimate spaces of their households.

In reality, however, nonviolent protests, rather than outright murder, were more typically utilized by the bondswoman. Indeed, asserts Deborah Gray White in *Ar'n't I A Woman*, it was well known amongst slaves that “a bullet through the head, a jail cell, a merciless whipping, and/or sale was the likely fate of any slave, male or female, who demonstrated aggressive behavior, “even in defense against sexual assault.” Instead, slave women often feigned illness in order to gain respite from work or attempt to ward off unwanted advances, tapping into the self-interests of their masters and relying heavily on their inherent value as child-bearers. And indeed, evidence suggests that Celia herself may have utilized this

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40 Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, a Slave*. 46.
42 Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, a Slave*. 47.
46 *Missouri Republican*. “Fiendish Murder” June 25, 1855.
47 *Missouri Republican*. “Fiendish Murder” June 25, 1855.
48 Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman?,* 79.
49 *Liberty Tribune*, May 3 1850, as cited in Diane Mutti Burke’s *On Slavery’s Border*, 186.
50 Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman?,* 80.
tactic, initially citing pregnancy-related illness in her efforts to keep Robert Newsom from her cabin on the night of the fated murder. For Celia, as well as for unknown scores of slave women, violence was the extreme end of the resistance spectrum, resorted to only when all other means of defense were exhausted.

Thus, such articles worked to exploit already existing fears surrounding black resistance and armed revolt, fears that ultimately necessitated the execution of Celia and all others like her. And indeed, on the morning of December 21, 1855, Celia was hung before Callaway County Courthouse. “Thus” concludes the Fulton Telegraph, “has closed one of the most horrible tragedies ever enacted in our country.”

Conclusion
Four years before the life of Celia was cut short, another slave woman stood before an all white Ohio audience and asked, “A’r’n’t I a woman?” Through the sexual, legal, and societal abuse of Celia and countless women scattered throughout the south, Sojourner Truth received her answer—and absolute and unequivocal “No”. Indeed, asserts Deborah White:

Slave women were the only women in America who were sexually exploited with impunity, stripped and whipped with a lash, and worked like oxen. In the nineteenth century when the nation was preoccupied with keeping women in the home and protecting them, only slave women were so totally unprotected by men or by law. Only black women had their womanhood so totally denied.

Far from being the passive victims of an unapologetically racist society, however, Celia’s case demonstrates that enslaved women did indeed assert ownership of their own bodies, resisting the wills of their owners through every means available to them. Unfortunately, her case also demonstrates the brutal lengths society was willing to go to deny slave women those rights, transforming the young mother into a warning for those who consider challenging the authority of the white male.

Ultimately, however, Celia lives on in American history as a symbol of an unapologetically exploitative system, as well as the face of women who defied it. Through her story, we can better comprehend the ways slavery not only resulted in the sexual, legal, and societal abuse of black bodies, but required it, consequently enriching our understanding of the institution as a whole.

52 Deborah Gray White, A’r’n’t I a Woman, 162.
To many scholars, the idea that the Catholic Church of the eleventh and twelfth centuries could condone violence seems incompatible with the teachings of Christ. However, the sources documenting the First Crusade in 1095 indicate that Pope Urban advocated violence against the Seljuk Turks and called for holy war in Jerusalem. The Church’s justification of violence was based on the spiritual orthodoxy of the time, which was a complex set of logical arguments that revolve around the ideas of sin, penance and the purity of Christ. As the twelfth century Christian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux writes: “Truly, when [a soldier of Christ] kills a criminal, he commits not homicide but, as I would call it, malicide, and clearly he may be considered the avenger of Christ.” Looking further into the Church’s justifications of violence, one could argue that Pope Urban II used the idea that violence could be controlled by the papacy to consolidate spiritual power at the time of the First Crusade.

To properly understand the culture of warfare and violence in Latin Christendom at the turn of the twelfth century, it is important that one understands the political circumstances of the papacy and all of Christendom. Western Europe was inhabited by a number of kingdoms with differing levels of political clout. The Holy Roman Empire and French kingdoms had been involved in land disputes and inheritance battles for centuries. Although Christianity was the common religion of western Europe, the lords and kings were by no means unified. Many lords appointed the clergymen for their own estates, which decentralized the local parishes from the pope’s control. The monk, not the pope in Rome, was the most influential spiritual figure for nearly all Christians in Western Europe.

The papacy itself was in a state of uncertainty. The Gregorian reforms of the 1070s had placed a great emphasis on a return to orthodoxy and canon law that had slipped somewhat amongst the clergy. However, Pope Gregory VII was so zealous in his attempt to bring the clergy under his control that he caused a severe rift in relations between the papacy and Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire. In what is now known as the Investiture Controversy, Gregory and Henry feuded over which leader was responsible for appointing clergy. Since Gregory could not attack Henry by use of force, he instead chose to use the weapon of excommunication. The two then ventured into a period of political back-and-forth, which resulted in Gregory’s exile from Rome and the installation of Antipope Clement III. Henry’s action against Gregory had been legitimized in part by clergymen in Germany that Henry had installed, illuminating the lack of control that the Pope had over the bishoprics of western Europe.

Pope Gregory’s dispute with Henry had shown that in a direct confrontation, the kingdoms of Europe could overcome the papacy with military force.

The Byzantine Empire at the time of Pope Urban II was under attack by the Seljuk Turks. The Seljuk kingdom, which had originated in Persia, spanned from the Middle East to the steppes of Asia. Recent military victories had emboldened the Seljuk offensive, which had almost completely taken over the Anatolian Peninsula. A great victory against the Byzantine Empire’s largest army in 1071 had pushed the Byzantine forces out of Asia Minor. Emperor Alexius Comnenus managed to stall the Seljuk offensive in the 1090s but still felt threatened enough to send a call for aid to Urban II in 1095.

Many western European lords began to feel the effects of Turkish expansion in the last quarter of the eleventh century. Reports concerning Seljuk mistreatment of European pilgrims in the Levant reached the ears of lords in France and the Holy Roman Empire. Although the route to Jerusalem had always been treacherous, the hostility against Christians had risen with the Seljuk domination. Pilgrims were being taxed heavily or even killed before they could set foot in Jerusalem. According to an account from Baldric of Dol, “Christian blood, redeemed by the blood of Christ, has been shed, and Christian flesh, akin to the flesh of Christ, has been subjected to unspeakable degradation and servitude.” This violence attracted the attention of the Church, which had encouraged Christians to embark on holy pilgrimages to atone for their sins.

The pilgrimages to Jerusalem were part of a culture that was developing during the reforms of the eleventh century. The penitential culture of Christianity was based around the ideas of sin and penance and began to propagate through Christendom. Strict adherence to orthodoxy and obsession with spiritual purity became the norm in western Europe. Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, in 1093, urged good Christians to “…shut out all thoughts save that of God, and such as can aid thee in seeking him; close thy door and seek him... thy face, Lord, will I seek.” Part of this culture was the concept of forgiveness of sin for repenting Christians. “God spares the wicked out of justice; for it is just that God, than whom none is better or more powerful, should be good even to the wicked, and should make the wicked good.”

The strict culture of sin and penance that the Church started to adopt in the eleventh century gave the clergy and papacy a powerful tool.

5 Ibid., 359.
Many spiritual thinkers in the eleventh century saw the violence between Christians as sinful. The Church policies of excommunication were utilized well before, with one famous example of excommunication being Gregory VII excommunicating Henry IV for the latter’s refusal to quit the practice of lay investiture.

In the confessional culture, the wickedness of sin was balanced by the forgiveness in acts of penance. This focus on a penitential act to balance sin would be critical to the papacy when Urban II called for soldiers to voyage to the Holy Land during the First Crusade. Since the local clergy were responsible for prescribing penances for sinners, the Church gained authority of the lives and souls of all Christians. Penance could be as simple as reciting a Bible verse or it could be as intense as a mandated pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In his treatise on confession, Caesarius of Heisterbach wrote around 1220:

A priest, who was a monk in our house, and told me the story, confessed one day to a nocturnal illusion, and a single psalm was assigned to him as a penance. He forgot to perform this small duty, and on the same day began to feel so great an irritation and burning, as if glowing nettles were being applied to his skin, that he was somewhat alarmed. Unable to discover any outward cause for this, he suddenly remembered the psalm he had forgotten to say; and inferring that this had been sent as a punishment for his forgetfulness, he recited the psalm, and found the pain gone. The penitent ought to be very watchful against forgetfulness. Caesarius’ account exemplifies the seriousness with which many contemporary Christians took the process of confession of sin and penance. This sincere adherence to canon emboldened the attempts at spiritual reform and purity that the Church was already articulating in the eleventh century.

The practice of imitatio Christi, or the Imitation of Christ, developed concurrently with the culture of sin and purity. Theologians of eleventh-century Latin Christendom postulated that since Jesus was God’s image of purity on Earth, ordinary Christians could strive for spiritual purity by attempting to mimic Christ. “He whose life is Christ, and for whom death is profit, what should he fear in life or in death?” Bernard, a monk of Clairvaux in the mid-twelfth century, wrote this passage concerning the emulation of Christ by good Christians. Bernard made a logical argument in explaining spiritual beliefs, as did many of his contemporaries. Justification for spiritual beliefs and orthodoxy relied heavily on passages from the Bible and drawing logical conclusions from spiritual truths. Bernard stated that living or dying as a good Christian will benefit Christ: living as Christ embodies Jesus on earth, while dying profited Christ by sending a soul to Heaven, His kingdom.

Even before his speech at Clermont, Urban II urged all Christians to follow the way of Christ. This common goal of spiritual purity would not only curtail Christian violence against other Christians, which the Church abhorred, but it also gave Christians a common culture, which helped to consolidate the pope’s authority in Europe. Many spiritual thinkers in the eleventh century saw the violence between Christians as sinful. The new ideas of purity and imitatio Christi forbade murder as a deadly sin. Bernard of Clairvaux described the Christian violence as an “unhappy victory by which, in overcoming a man, you succumb to vice and under the rule of anger or of pride you vainly glory in the vanquishing of a man… What, therefore, is the purpose or the fruit of this worldly- I cannot call it a militia but a malice- if the killer sins fatally and the one killed eternally perish?” The Church saw the acts of war within Latin Christendom as futile. One of the papacy’s first attempts at legislating control over the various factions of Europe was the Truce of God. The idea of a holy truce between Christians was first proposed in the late tenth century but became enacted as policy in the eleventh century. The bishop of Cologne communicated the terms of the truce in his lands:

“Inasmuch as in our own times the church, through its members, has been extraordinarily afflicted by tribulations and difficulties, so that tranquility and peace were wholly despaired of, we have endeavored by God’s help to aid it, suffering so many burdens and perils… We have at length provided this remedy, so that we might to some extent re-establish, on certain days at least, the peace which, because of our sins, we could not make enduring.”

In this declaration, the bishop both admonished the warring factions that caused havoc in Christendom and affirmed the Church’s commitment to an expansive legalization of peace.

The Truce of God often did not outlaw violence entirely; rather, the creators outlawed violence or specific acts on certain days: “Throughout the year on every Sunday, Friday and Saturday, and on the fast days of the four seasons…” The clergy rationalized these terms with Biblical passages and spiritual logic. The Bishop of Cologne’s version contained even a section on which weapons could be used on certain occasions.

The Truce of God can be viewed as the direct precursor to the declaration of holy war and the Church’s sanction of violence against heretics.

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6 Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), trans. Harry Rothwell in Readings in Medieval History, 462.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 38-39.
ethics. Many of the same spiritual arguments against the Christian-centric violence were made in support of warfare against the Seljuk Turks. One of the most important arguments in support of holy war was Urban II’s sermon at Clermont in 1095. Although no version of his original speech survived, several interpretations of the sermon written several years later exist that show the extent to which the Church legitimized the violence of the First Crusade. It is difficult to tell whether Urban intended a mobilization on the scale of what occurred in 1096; however, the sources show that many holy men consider his sermon at Clermont to be calling for the retaking of Jerusalem and cleansing of the Holy Land.

The Gesta Francorum is one of the oldest records of what Urban said at Clermont. It was written by a crusading soldier under the command of Bohemond of Taranto, penned somewhere between 1100 and 1101. This version is fairly short and incomplete. It is interesting to note that the account makes only one reference to the Holy Land: “If anyone desired to follow the Lord zealously, with a pure heart and mind, and wished faithfully to bear the cross after Him, he would no longer hesitate to take up the way to the Holy Sepulcher.”

The Gesta focused on how Urban instructed followers of Christ to have their sins forgiven by following in the steps of Jesus. This can be looked at as a double meaning: the Imitatio Christi required Christians to act holy as Jesus would have, but also could indicate following Christ’s footsteps in the Holy Land. There is little mention of violence in Gesta, although Urban does indicate to the Franks that “Great is your reward in Heaven.”

Subsequent versions of Urban’s speech at Clermont were more explicit in a call for holy war. Robert, a monk from Rheims, wrote in 1107 that Urban placed Jerusalem as the final objective for the holy war. “This royal city, therefore, situated at the centre of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God, to the worship of the heathens.”

Robert described the gruesome acts that the Turks were inflicting on Christians living in Jerusalem. In this account, Urban makes a promise for heavenly rewards for fighting for Christ: “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name’s sake shall receive a hundred-fold and shall inherit everlasting life.”

This idea of remission of sins (penance) for fighting in the Holy Land is an important concept in the development of a papal legitimacy of violence against heretics. Although it is impossible to say for certain whether Urban promised the remission of sin in his speech at Clermont, the papacy did apply this interpretation of penance during and after the First Crusade.

Baldric, Archbishop of Dol, wrote an account of Urban’s speech that is similar to Robert of Rheims’. In it, Urban recounts the unspeakable travesties of holy justice committed by the Turks. Similar to Robert’s account, Urban described the Holy Land as in dire need of cleansing. “Drive out the Turks… who are in this land, and may you deem it a beautiful thing to die for Christ in that city in which He died for us.”

Urban urged the Franks to both achieve glory in battle for Christ and relieve their sins by accomplishing a penitential pilgrimage. Urban furthermore uses logic to establish legitimacy for the killing of Turks. “You should shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to brandish your sword against Saracens. It is the only warfare that is righteous, for it is charity to risk your life for your brothers.”

Urban differentiates the violence against Christians and Saracens; his logic is that because killing Saracens is helping the Eastern Church, it amounts to charity, which is a Christian virtue.

Urban spent the months following the Council of Clermont touring France, preaching the message of holy war. The pope’s rationale for urging Europeans to fight abroad was twofold; the main argument was that the milites, (knights) were in a state of sin for committing acts of violence against fellow Christians. In his speech at Clermont, Urban purportedly shamed the warriors of Europe for their violence: “You, girt about with the badge of knighthood, are arrogant with pride; you rage against your brothers and cut each other in pieces. This is not the true soldiery of Christ, but the Franks to both achieve glory in battle for Christ and relieve their sins by accomplishing a penitential pilgrimage. Urban also used logic to establish legitimacy for the killing of Turks. “You should shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to brandish your sword against Saracens. It is the only warfare that is righteous, for it is charity to risk your life for your brothers.”

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The only action that could be taken, in line with the culture of sin and penance, was a pilgrimage to cleanse the Holy Sepulcher.

The second part of the call for holy war was the promise of salvation for any soul that was lost in the Holy Land. Pope Urban and other contemporary ecclesiastical writers argued that the war against Saracens was justified, and thus deserved Papal sanction. “The danger or the victory of the Christian is determined by the intent of the heart rather than the outcome of the battle. If the cause for which one fights is good, the battle cannot end badly…”

Since the crusaders were walking in the footsteps of Christ, the philosophy of Imitatio Christi held that these soldiers were spiritually pure while fighting and killing. Thus, the requirements for purity and salvation were fulfilled while on crusade.

Pope Urban II’s call for holy war set a precedent for papal control of violence in Latin Christendom. The culture of sin and penance that came with the reforms of the eleventh century strengthened the Church’s spiritual ties with Christians throughout Europe. These ties, along with the Church’s call for pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the legalizaion of violence against Muslims, spurred tens of thousands of Christians in Europe to answer Urban’s call for holy war.

13 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Baldric of Dol, 32.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 31.
19 Bernard of Clairvaux, 291.
EXPANDING POPULATIONS: THE AMERICAN MULTIPLICATION TABLE IN THE CHINESE CONTEXT

Ryan Mikkelsen

“People are indeed the essential of commerce, and the more people the more trade; the more trade, the more money; the more money, the more strength; and the more strength, the greater the nation...All temporal felicities, I mean national, spring from the number of people.”
~ Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) English novelist

The birthrate among white Americans in 1800 exceeded the birthrate of any country, developing or otherwise, anywhere in the world at the turn of the 21st century. In the early years of nationhood, Americans were reproducing at historically unprecedented rates, a phenomenon that persisted for the first half of the country’s existence. Reflecting on this fecundity of American couples in 1846, Indiana Democrat Andrew Kennedy defined the increase as being nothing short of an “American multiplication table.” However, when considering nations experiencing a rapid population increase immediately following formation, the People’s Republic of China is typically the prime example, not the early United States. How does this unrivaled “American multiplication table” compare to China’s infamous population growth? In both situations, early leaders, in particular Benjamin Franklin and Mao Zedong, supported an expanding population. By examining the historical and personal context surrounding each leader, it becomes clear why both Franklin and Mao first promoted each policy: Franklin desired a growing population in order to facilitate American western expansion while Mao, on the other hand, wanted a larger population in an attempt to validate the benefits of socialism and rule by the Communist Party. This historical background also helps explain ultimately why each policy was or was not successful: American social and political institutions allowed people to make individual reproduction decisions while Chinese socialism influenced such choices.

From the middle of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century, every European nation-state actively sought a to have a larger populace. Elites in both England and France, two of the largest world powers at the time, even bragged about the sizes of London and France respectively as indicators of national well being and status. English political economist Sir William Petty recognized that a large number of subjects was a source of wealth for a country as early as 1662 when he concluded, “fewness of people, is real poverty.” Some 80 years later, in 1741, this analysis still held true when German demographer Johann Peter Sussmilch likewise noted: “A state which has only half as many inhabitants as its circumstances and food permit, will be only half as fortunate, powerful, and wealthy as it could and should be.” Among the scholars and leaders of 17th and 18th century Europe, not only was a larger population desirable, it became a goal that every government ought to actively pursue. Historian Alan Houston, however, traces the roots of pronatalism, or the support of higher reproduction rates, even further back in time, identifying biblical roots for advocating population growth. The result, according to Houston, was that in 17th and 18th century Europe “a large and thriving population was a sign of God’s grace and favor.” Moreover, “population was an index of social health, depopulation indicated decay and corruption.” Supported by traditional values, population in 17th and 18th century Europe was not only a measuring stick for development and advancement but also a popular topic of concern.

Economist Adam Smith addressed the relationship between population and wealth in his famous 1776 treatise The Wealth of Nations. Smith concluded that a larger population was in fact the most indicative characteristic of a nation’s future growth. Smith promoted the notion that an increased level of wealth led to a larger population, so to complain of a larger population was inherently to lament “the greatest public prosperity.” For Smith, children were a source of wealth. This reality was particularly true for the North American continent where “labour is there so well rewarded that a numerous family of children, instead of being a burthen is a source of opulence and prosperity to the parents.” Labor in America at the time was expensive, and parents could afford to have children, knowing that their children would be able to find jobs and support themselves.

Such was the contemporary dialogue surrounding population growth when Benjamin Franklin wrote his influential 1751 essay entitled Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc. In it, Franklin presented a revolutionary concept in demography: a country’s population cannot exceed the amount of subsistence that the country’s land provides. Franklin’s caveat: depending on the degree of development, different societies are capable of producing different levels of subsistence, provided the same land. A higher level of subsistence, facilitated American western expansion while Mao, on the other hand, wanted a larger population in an attempt to validate the benefits of socialism and rule by the Communist Party. This historical background also helps explain ultimately why each policy was or was not successful: American social and political institutions allowed people to make individual reproduction decisions while Chinese socialism influenced such choices.

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3 Alan C. Houston, Benjamin Franklin & the Politics of Improvement (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 116.
5 Ibid, 117.
6 Ibid, 121.
9 Smith, An Inquiry, 18 November 2013.
in turn, led to early marriages and more children, promoting the strength of a nation. As a result, Franklin concluded, in much the same manner that Mao would many years later, that the American population could and indeed ought to expand at its current miraculous rate, as it was proof of a higher state of development. Franklin even went so far as to calculate just how fast the American population was doubling. His estimate of 25 years proved remarkably accurate, predicting the American population in 1890 over 100 years later within .13%. 

Franklin felt so strongly about population growth that he even challenged several cultural norms that inhibited it. An avid supporter of early marriage on the grounds that it supported population growth, Franklin addressed common social views regarding marriage and children in his short article “The Speech of Polly Baker” published in 1741. Franklin presents Miss Polly Baker, a young lady brought to court for having yet another child out of wedlock. Rather than admitting guilt, however, Polly Baker defends her situation by questioning: “Can it be a Crime (in the Nature of Things I mean) to add to the Number of the King’s Subjects, in a new Country that really wants People? I own it, I should think it rather a Praise worthy, than a Punishable Action.” In suggesting that single mothers and bastard children ought to be supported rather than punished, Franklin is challenging many of the cultural norms of his time, including the role of marriage, all for the sake of a larger population.

Scholars have questioned, though, how Franklin, inclined to speculate on the future of things and skilled in the art of “political arithmetic,” could neglect to acknowledge the disastrous Malthusian implications of his calculated doubling-rate of a mere 25 years. Throughout his political career, Franklin simply pursued what he felt to be the highest interests of the American people at the time. Approaching population issues from a mercantilist point of view, Franklin viewed population growth as a good thing. Unlike many later demographers, a larger population, for Franklin, did not lead to widespread poverty or deleterious societal issues, especially regarding to relations with Britain. Rather as historian Alan Houston notes, “when it came to population growth, he did not see disruption and instability, as when a child outgrows its parents, but mutual benefit.” While such a rapid explosion in population would have been an insupportable catastrophe under different circumstances, the colonies were blessed with large and resource-filled stretches of land. Economic growth within the colonies, then, was a direct result of a high reproduction rate. Recognizing this critical relationship, Franklin, as an economist, became an ardent supporter of a growing American populace.

Both a politician and diplomat, Franklin advocated for an expanding population in short because it led to an expanding nation. In 1754, Franklin published an essay entitled “A Plan for Settling Two Western Colonies” in which he outlined the future importance of the Ohio River Valley. Franklin argued that the region would undoubtedly become not only prosperous but also a major asset to whatever country could claim it. The question was whether that would be England or France. To ensure British success, Franklin suggested: “It would be the interest and advantage of all the present colonies to support these new ones… so that the new colonies would soon be full of people.” By establishing British settlements in the area, Franklin reasoned, the colonies would strengthen trade with Native American tribes, become safer, and grow more powerful. Perhaps more importantly, the British would also prevent the French from achieving these same ends. British settlements in the Ohio Valley would preclude a much-feared union of the French possessions of Canada and Louisiana. A unified French front would hem the American colonies in from the west, restricting British growth essentially to the Appalachian Mountains while leaving the rest of the continent open to France. Looking ahead, Franklin recognized the potential for either British or French occupation. The key to each nation’s success was an ability to provide a population that could fill the area. As a result, Franklin stressed the importance of the British colonies not only acting and reproducing, but that doing so quickly, for every moment that passed likewise allowed France to strengthen its hold over the region.

Franklin was by no means the only or the last political figure to recognize the large role population was playing in the colonization of the new world. When the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, Baron Hector Carondelet, gave his report on the conditions of the territory, he identified: “The fundamental American threat” to Spanish Louisiana as being “not military but demographic.” Carondelet reported that the region now contained 40,000 Americans “who have been uniting and multiplying in the silence of peace… with a remarkable rapidity.” In much the same manner, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh noted in 1818 the phenomenal rate of American increase and the resulting ability to secure territory: “You Americans need not trouble yourselves about Oregon, you will conquer Oregon in your bedchambers.”

Franklin recognized in 1754 what Carondelet would later report and what Castlereagh would later concede: the American ability to reproduce had tremendous ramifications. Franklin sought to direct landed expansion for the good of the nation, and he encouraged population growth as the tool to achieve it.

Beginning in 1798 with the publication of Reverend Thomas R. Malthus’s An Essay on the Principle of Population, an increasing number of countries and societies around the world began to acknowledge the disadvantages of a rapidly growing population. China, however, remained a notable exception well into the 20th century. Though China had a large population for hundreds of years, wars, famine, and a high infant mortality rate traditionally kept the rate of increase in check. For much of Chinese history, peasants engaged in agriculture, which required large amounts

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12 Houston, Benjamin Franklin, 106.
15 Houston, Benjamin Franklin, 130.
16 Ibid, 122.
17 Franklin, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin.
19 Ibid, 233.
of manpower. Because infant mortality was so high, Chinese parents often had many children in order to ensure that several survived to manage the farm and take care of the parents in old age. On a national level, emperors in ancient China therefore considered a large population to be the source of power and strength for a prosperous kingdom.

Beyond the practical benefits of a large population, however, China’s pronatalist culture stemmed from basic underpinnings in classical Chinese philosophy and Confucianism. Traditional Chinese philosophy held that the universe started from life, reproduction. Confucianism incorporated these notions and eventually magnified their significance such that “sexual relations were the driving force of changes in the universe.” Without reproduction, nothing could exist. In fact, according to Chinese scholar Zhou Yutong “Confucianism is a philosophy of reproduction.”

Ancestor worship, extremely prevalent within Chinese culture, was initially practiced by the Chinese as a means of recognizing and giving thanks for their ancestors’ ability to reproduce. Filial piety or obedience and respect for one’s parents was the logical corollary to ancestor worship, and the greatest way one could show respect for his or her parents in Chinese culture was to carry on their lineage by reproducing. Therefore, beginning in ancient times, for both practical and cultural reasons, Chinese people were accustomed to high birth rates and valued reproduction.

The significance of these deeply-ingrained cultural norms are most clearly seen in the traditional idioms and sayings that still permeate Chinese society today. For instance there are Chinese expressions 多子多福 “more children, more happiness or fortune” or 四十同堂五十气“four generations under one roof (equals) five generations of prosperity.” One saying even goes so far as to contend, “five sons are not to many for a man.” Children were a blessing in Chinese culture and if someone had few or no children, it was generally looked upon as punishment for doing something bad in the past. “To die without sons” or “to be the last one’s family line” are common insults in China. When the Chinese government first began implanting restrictive birth policies, the main resistance came from traditional Chinese values. Even today, the rural population, more heavily influenced by traditional ideas than Chinese urbanites, has a greater difficulty in accepting government directives regarding population, vehemently resisting such efforts. Rural families are often willing to pay heavy fines to have a second or third child, because they view children as indispensable, a source of wealth. These traditional sayings and contemporary phenomena among China’s rural population together demonstrate the profound and lasting impact of pro-population Chinese philosophy and Confucianism on Chinese society.

Such were the existing ideologies surrounding population on October 1, 1949 when Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong founded the People’s Republic of China and began implementing his own pronatalist population policies, known collectively as 多子多力 “the more people, the greater the strength.” That same year Mao already began refuting the idea of a potentially oversized Chinese population saying: “It is a very good thing that China has a big population... Of all things in the world, people are the most precious. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, as long as there are people, every kind of miracle can be performed.” Mao reasserted his position in 1957 saying, “as long as we have many people, it is easy to do things.” Indeed, Mao would defend his pronatalist stance throughout the entirety of his career as Chairman of the Communist party. Furthermore, because of his position as Party Chairman, Mao had direct control over the course of Chinese population policy; his word was final. Just as with Benjamin Franklin, though, it is insightful to examine precisely why Mao, often in contrast to his peers, so strongly insisted on a growing population.

In crafting many of his policies, whether involving population or not, Mao drew heavily from his own lived experiences. As a result, Mao’s distinct background and rise to power determined his unique outlook on all manner of topics, including population. As an example, out of the five initial members of the Central Committee Secretariat in 1949, only Mao never studied abroad. Many of the Communist Party’s leaders traveled to either Russia or Europe to study Marxism; Mao, however, felt that Chinese culture was more important than Western culture. Never studying abroad, Mao insulated himself from Western ideas regarding population, studying in more detail the traditional Chinese pronatalist philosophies described above. In addition to his domestic education, Mao’s childhood and family experience likely influenced his population policies. Mao was born into a poor peasant family as one of four children. As a child, Mao undoubtedly saw the benefits of having more children around the house to help out. However, each of Mao’s siblings would die relatively young (24, 29, and 47 years old) while fighting for the Communist Party. Later in life, three of Mao’s own children died young. These personal experiences, growing up as a poor peasant and subsequent loss of loved ones, predisposed Mao towards a pronatalist stance.

Mao was first and foremost a military leader, and consequently, he approached many problems with a military mindset. More than that, Mao simply conceptualized subjects best in military terms. For instance, in describing the fecundity of Chinese mothers, Mao once compared women to aircraft carriers using the analogy that women gave birth to children who would one day split off from them in a similar manner to aircraft carriers that had planes that would take off. Having successfully overcome both the Guomindang and Japanese

21 Ibid, 359.
22 Ibid, 360.
23 Ibid, 360.
26 Tang, Bing, Maoism and Chinese Culture, 36.
27 Ibid, 348.
28 Qu, Li, Population, 118.
29 Ibid, 192.
30 Shapiro, Mao’s War, 20.
31 Tang, Bing, Maoism and Chinese Culture, 360.
32 Ibid, 351.
In November 1957 he shocked even Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in claiming that American nuclear bombs would not be enough to destroy China, as the Chinese would simply have to “get to work producing more babies than ever before.” For Mao, the Chinese ability to reproduce meant that China could withstand attack or war from any nation, with the assurance that the population would soon rebound to its original level.

Beyond a strictly military perspective, Mao also approached population from a Marxist standpoint. Under a socialist system, an increasing population is simply an asset to production. Marx criticized Malthus’ identification of a large population as the reason for the existence of suffering, instead contending that the issue lay with the capitalist system not distributing the wealth evenly as the population continued to grow. Marxist principles held that a larger population simply meant a bigger labor supply, increased production, and a stronger economy. Marxism and the support of a limited population were fundamentally and ideologically incompatible. Questioning the benefits of an expanding population in essence amounted to questioning the veracity of Marxism. Because of this duality, many Chinese citizens up until the 1970’s blindly accepted that a growing population was a benefit to society. Mao strictly adhered to Marxist principles and consequently steered Chinese policy down a path of population growth. Mao argued against the “theory of human mouths” with his own “theory of human hands” essentially emphasizing the productive rather than the consumption side of a population. This analysis led him to declare in 1949: “Even if China’s population multiplies many times, she is fully capable of finding a solution; the solution is production.” Mao’s belief in the principles of Marxism solidified his support of a larger population.

The historical context and individual reasoning behind both Benjamin Franklin’s and Mao Zedong’s pronatalist policies are particularly important, because they better inform why outcome in each situation was so radically different. Americans, pursuing westward landed expansion, used an incredibly rapid rate of increase over the span of the first 120 years of nationhood to populate and settle what would become the continental United States. The increase in population, expansion of territory, and abundance of natural resources quickly made the U.S. a world power. In China, however, Mao Zedong’s growth policies led to an unsustainable and catastrophic increase in population. After Mao’s death, Chinese officials were forced to adopt increasingly severe family-planning measures, culminating in the draconian One-Child Policy, in an attempt to limit in a rate of increase that had spiraled out of control. Even today, China suffers from immense environmental issues, the result of overly rapid population growth.

Why the wide range in results? How could one nation’s pronatalist policies turn out so much better than the other’s? It is easy to argue that the key difference lies precisely in the fact that America had the land and the resources to accommodate such unprecedented levels of population growth whereas China did not. Another common explanation is that China started with a much greater initial population. Beneath these superficial conclusions, however, lies a more profound explanation for America’s success and China’s failure, implicated by the reasons that each nation first pursued its respective policy. The American and Chinese societies had distinct social and political differences, mainly freedoms in America and a lack thereof in China. Rather than rendering any comparison impossible, these societal distinctions in fact serve to better inform an analysis of outcomes. The freedom to have a desired number of children is demonstrated in America by the phenomenon of the moving fertility frontier while the lack of freedom in China is seen in the implementation of socialist policies.

Early Americans enjoyed the ability to purchase their own land, one freedom that Chinese citizens lacked. As historian Walter Nugent writes in his book *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion*: “Young Americans could procreate as fast as biology allowed in the secure expectation that that productive land awaited their many children.” The U.S. government made the purchase of frontier property extremely easy by selling large tracts of lands for pennies an acre. Federal land laws grew less and less stringent over time, such that by 1862, any settler could receive 160 acres of land for free under the Homestead Act, provided that they could occupy and “improve” it for a period of five years. This situation is juxtaposed with the land ownership potential in China after the ascension of the Communist Party in 1949. Specifically, the Communist Party seized the property of wealthy landlords and redistributed it among the peasant class. In both instances, the government was supplying land to those who needed it. The critical distinction however lies in the political and social conditions under which this supply of land was taking place. In America, the government freely and fairly sold land to those willing to purchase it; in China, the land was forcibly taken and subsequently given out under the auspices of socialist equality. The government supply of property in China was not tied to the American freedom to purchase and occupy that property.

Beyond the freedom to purchase their own land, Americans were also free to choose both how many kids to have and the age at which they married, a factor strongly correlated to population increase. These decisions, conducted at an individual level, allowed married couples to determine how many children would be appropriate for them, provided their unique circumstances. Pioneer Timothy Flint remarked in 1815 “I have never seen a country to appearance more fruitful in men… The process of doubling population, without Malthus and without theory, without

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33 Shapiro, *Mao’s War*, 20.
36 Ibid.
37 Shapiro, *Mao’s War*, 32.
38 Nugent, *Habits of Empire*, 223.
39 Ibid, 231.
artificial or natural wants, goes on I am sure on the banks of the Ohio as rapidly as anywhere in the world.” However, what Flint observed in 1815 had been going on just few years earlier along the Appalachian Mountains and would be occurring just a few years hence somewhat further west. The population phenomenon, in fact, moved with the western frontier. In their 2004 study, economist Michael R. Haines and historian J. David Hacker examine fertility data at the county level from 1800-1860 both temporally and spatially. They find a statistically significant correlation between longitude and fertility rates in America at the time. Moreover, they demonstrate that this high fertility rate moves with the frontier, specifically that birth rates increase, stabilize, and then decline, as the frontier gets further away. This incredible phenomenon reflects the coming to fruition of one of Benjamin Franklin’s original hopes for an increasing American population: successful westward expansion.

In examining this moving fertility frontier, it is equally important to determine what caused the original spike in reproduction along the western frontier as it is to determine what caused its decline, because without the latter America would inevitably have developed many of the same population problems that China experienced some 180 years later. But first, why the massive spike in reproduction rates along the American frontier? In a crude sense, “frontiers were” as historian Walter Nugent points out, “lusty places, and without the love and lust, they would’ve remained as empty of white people as the far edges of New Spain and New France did.” The frontier by definition lay at the edge of society, indeed at the edge of the New World, and this dangerous, exciting position may have led to increased rates of reproduction. More concretely, however, due to the hard lifestyle and degree of manual labor that the frontier required, more men tended to move west than women, resulting in a natural surplus of young adult males. A high male to female ratio created a younger, earlier marriage age along the frontier, ultimately implicating more children per marriage. Moreover, children on the frontier were, as Adam Smith noted, an asset. More children meant that a family could farm more land, produce more crops, and live a better life. Additionally, parents need not be concerned that their children would lack for land of their own. In reflecting on the nature of frontier parents, Benjamin Franklin remarked “such are not afraid to marry; for if they even look far enough forward to consider how their Children when grown up are to be provided for, they see that more Land is to be had at Rates equally easy, all Circumstances considered.” The western frontier, advancing at the boundary of the civilized world, created an environment conducive to high reproduction rates, and the availability of land provided an outlet for subsequent generations to continue to push westward, as their parents had before them.

The frontier was a region of high reproduction rates, but what caused Americans to so drastically change their habits as the frontier moved away? The answer is hard to attribute to one reason alone; rather the decline appears to be a combination of several coinciding factors. One dominant explanation is the subsequent diminishing of land availability. To ensure one’s children did not move away, settlers had to be able to guarantee them some form of property via inheritance. With a decline in available land, this became less and less realistic. The rise of new urban centers compounded this problem by providing children alternative, non-agricultural work opportunities as well as easy methods of transport between these new cities. Society also demanded that children be sent to school. Thus, the cost of raising children, mainly in the form of larger inheritances per child, began to rise, rendering large numbers of children unrealistic. Why the necessity to keep children at home? As Haines and Hacker explain, “in a society without adequate financial market and intermediaries and with a heavy reliance on wealth holding in the form of real property (land, structures, livestock, equipment) provision for old age was more likely in the form of children.” However, the shift from frontier life also brought the increased availability of banks and other investments, shifting how parents conceived life – cycle saving from children to other forms of wealth.

Fascinatingly, the decline in fertility rates can also be attributed to ideational transitions that accompany modernization. The fact that people across all levels of society went through this fertility swing at about the same time “argues that the growing influence of secular values has changed people’s willingness to control and plan family size.” In fact, in his 1977 study, demographer Ron J. Lesthaeghe found that in the case of Belgium, fertility decline was positively correlated to percentage of citizens voting for socialist, liberal, or communist candidates and negatively correlated with the size of the population paying Easter dues in the Catholic Church. In the context of America, similar studies relating the number of children given biblical names and high fertility rates have concluded many of the same results. The decline in reproduction rates as the frontier advanced ultimately came about as multiple side-effects of modernity, less land, rise of cities and banks, and ideational changes, coincided to alter people’s decisions to have children.

In the case of China, however, the communist Chinese government under Mao Zedong, through socialist policies, made people’s ability to freely decide on topics such as marriage age, number of children, and family planning, more difficult than in the U.S. On a practical level, the Chinese government made it hard to practice family planning by prohibiting the importation and production of contraceptives. Additionally, as Chinese historians Zongli Tang and Bing Zuo note, “birth control was considered not only to be illegal and inhumane, it was also treated as the by-product of capitalism.” In the years following the revolution, there was very little support for any sort of family planning, especially once the

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41 Ibid, 37-63.
42 Nugent, *Habits of Empire*, 233.
43 Gutmann, *Navigating Time*, 44.
44 Ibid, 39.
46 Ibid, 43.
47 Ibid, 43.
idea became related to Western capitalism. The result was that young married couples often struggled for tangible alternatives to actually bearing children. Chinese journalist Liu Binyan recalls his personal experience with his wife at the time: “Neither of us wanted to have a baby yet, but contraception was discouraged and abortion forbidden by government policy. By 1952, contraceptive devices had disappeared from the market.”

The Communist Chinese government, in an effort to have a larger population, strictly limited access to contraceptives and other methods of family planning, restricting couples’ abilities to choose when it came to having children.

More than just inhibiting the ability to practice family planning, the Communist party also constantly sought to influence peoples’ perceptions, and therefore their choices, regarding population. The Party primarily reinforced the benefits of a large populace to society via media propaganda. The government argued that having more children demonstrated the flourishing of China, because such children could not have been supported before Communist rule. Accordingly, the Communist Party also incentivized women having more children by providing families more ration coupons for each additional child, creating a system that essentially benefited large families.

Chinese mothers were even given awards by the Party for having more children. The idea was based on a Soviet policy, whereby women received political and financial rewards for having more children. China adapted the policy by awarding congratulatory flags to women with large families that read, “people will flourish, reap abundant grain.” Furthermore, historian Judith Shapiro identifies a “traditional culture of patronage and obedience to authority, a coercive organizational status” within China. This cultural heritage would have made it less likely, even difficult for people to disobey Mao’s policies, including those regarding population.

As a result, having many children became a civic duty over time, an obligation to the Communist Party. Chinese author Min Anchee describes in Red Azalea, a reflection on her time spent in China during the Cultural revolution: “Mother said that she wouldn’t ever have produced nine children with my father if she had not wanted to respond to the Party’s call, “More population means more power.”” Although the work is a piece of fiction, the sentiments expressed within are indicative of the broader, coercive societal trends that existed at the time, mainly the necessity to reproduce. The recollections of Chinese Journalist Liu Banyan further corroborate Anchee’s experience: “I remember a man who worked at the Youth League Central and whose wife kept on having children until she was completely exhausted. She had eleven.” While just one example, the quote brings to light the reality that Chinese couples at the time were no longer having children for pleasure or to increase the probability of old age insurance. Having children was both an effort and a chore, but most importantly, bearing children was a civic duty.

The Chinese population, denied access to contraception and bombarded with pronatalist propaganda from the Communist Party, had little freedom when it came to practicing reproduction; moreover, they also lacked the freedom to effectively question these policies. Soviet Socialism as practiced under Mao did not allow for any dissenting views to be incorporated. His word was final. Mao stifled political opponents and perceived threats in all facets of government, including any contrary ideas regarding population. This lack of political agency meant that the pronatalist policies espoused by Mao could not readily be called into question. “Soviet dogma had a deeply constraining effect on Chinese intellectual life, determining which topics could be studied and which schools of thought were considered acceptable.” In the field of demography, no school of thought was more widely disallowed than Malthusianism, as evidenced by the silencing of Ma Yinchu.

Perhaps the largest tragedy of the Chinese population growth is that it might have been avoided had the warnings of Ma Yinchu been heeded. An economist and demographer, Ma was the president of Peking University, the most prestigious institution of higher education in China. Also a member of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, Ma, acting as a concerned Party member, gave a report in 1957 titled New Demography that cautioned against China’s growing population. He predicted that the overpopulation of China would inhibit economic development in the future. “In that era, however, any argument for population control was perceived as a form of Malthusianism.” Malthusianism, in turn, directly conflicted with socialism and was a tool for capitalist enterprise. Despite maintaining key differences with Malthus, Ma was stripped of his title as president in January of 1960 and silenced for the next 20 years. Both nationally and across the Peking campus, the Party sponsored huge campaigns involving tens of thousands of posters denouncing Ma’s arguments. As a result “there was little chance that population issues could be openly discussed as long as Ma’s ideas remained ideological heresy.” After Ma lost his titles and positions, the “population issue became a forbidden topic, and nobody dared to touch upon it.”

The conditions in Communist China under Mao, including basic socialist assertions that a growing population would support economic growth, an inability to practice family planning, a perceived civic duty to reproduce, and a lack of political and intellectual freedom, are all heavily contrasted with the flexible and adaptable realities of America. More than just having the landed space and the

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49 Shapiro, Mao’s War Against Nature, 32.
50 Ibid, 30.
51 Ibid, 12.
52 Ibid, 12.
53 Ibid, 12.
57 Ibid, 41.
58 Shapiro, Mao’s War Against Nature, 23.
59 Tang, Bing, Maoism and Chinese Culture, 351.
need for a population to fill it, America also provided the political environment for people to choose, including the choice of contraception, the choice of marriage age, and even the choice to question an expanding population and its ramifications.

Most modern demographers agree that overpopulation is indeed detrimental to a nation’s development. However, as demonstrated by the two very different outcomes between the early United States and China, this is not always the case. With much of the world still developing today, this comparison serves as a reminder that a rapid rate of reproduction not necessarily be cause for alarm. As in the case of the early United States, an expanding population can actually be a source of strength for a country with plenty of land and resources. Additionally, a high rate of reproduction in the developing world may still be held in check by high rates of infant mortality, war, or disease. The comparison provides the lesson that as these developing nations stop waging wars and increase nutrition and medical care, thereby lowering rates of infant mortality and disease, they must also put into place the political and social institutions that allow a fertility transition to occur. In examining the U.S. and China, both countries’ leaders adopted a pro-population growth stance; only the American political and societal institutions, however, provided the freedom to adopt that stance as the situation changed. Additionally, the Chinese government’s recent easing in the One-Child Policy makes this comparison particularly relevant. Chinese citizens, pressured at one time into bearing too many children and later limited to just one, will finally have the freedom to choose the correct number of kids for themselves. While this might seem like cause for concern, perhaps in easing these restrictions, Chinese government leaders are recognizing what the early American fertility frontier demonstrates; modern Chinese parents will find the costs of additional children to outweigh the benefits. The rest of the world can rest easy; China’s population will remain stable.
European Experience in Overseas Exploration

Sarah Legault

In 1583, Stephen Parmenius sat upon a boat in the northern seas near Newfoundland and he penned a letter to his friend, Richard Hakluyt, in England. He recorded his travelling experience and interactions with nearby boats. Then, he faced the landscape around him, about to describe it, and he wrote:

But what shall I say, my good Hakluyt, when I see nothing but a very wildernesse? Of fish here is incredibell abundance, whereby great gaine grows to them that travel to those parts: the hooke is no sooner throwne out but it is oft-soones drawn up with some goodly fish, the whole land is full of hilles and woodes. The trees for the most part are yonges and some of them very yole and some yong: a great part of them being fallen by reason of their age, doth so hinder the sight of the land, and stoppe the way of those that seeke to travel, that they can goe no whither.

Parmenius’ letter offers us the tantalizing opportunity to imagine how explorers in his period viewed the landscapes that they encountered. Scholars often overlook the unknown and experiential aspect of the early English overseas enterprises. Historians focus on the proto-nationalist assertion represented by overseas exploration and colonization and expressed in the promotional literature for such activities. However, we may wonder whether the experiences in the unknown, in reality, emphasized English pride. A sense of a European discovery could have arisen alongside patriotic sentiment as explorers found themselves in encounters outside Europe. Although he never left Europe, Richard Hakluyt, the man to whom Parmenius wrote, might have understood the ignorance with which the travelers faced the New World and the potential for a broad, European involvement in exploration. His career showed the tensions between an English drive in overseas enterprises and a cross-European experience in the unknown.

The English began their American explorations with an initial rush for discovery in the years after Christopher Columbus discovered the continent. At the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth, England, under Henry VII, established contact with the New World. The king granted patents for exploration to the Venetian John Cabot and the Genoese Sebastian Cabot as well as to a series of merchant explorers from Bristol. John Cabot is said to have reached continental America at a latitude around 42 degrees to 54 degrees north and Sebastian Cabot purportedly explored the area northwest of England as did the Bristol merchants. Few documents remain that explain these ventures since the voyagers did not publish records of their expeditions. The English later brought these early voyages forward to support English claims to discovery of, and hence of possession to, lands in the Americas. However, major voyages of exploration waned after Henry VIII’s reign.

Renewed interest in the Americas began in the second half of the sixteenth century, especially during Queen Elizabeth’s reign. While Richard Eden’s translation of Pietro Martire d’Anghiera’s Decades of the New World receives recognition from modern scholars as a marker of the increased interest, Martin Frobisher’s, John Davis’ and Humphrey Gilbert’s journeys to the north in the 1570s and 1580s represented a rise in actual American exploration and a new focus on publishing English accounts of the continent. Frobisher and Gilbert sought mainly for a north-west passage across the continent to China although they also hoped for mineral wealth and land for colonial projects. Increased journeys to the southwest brought Englishmen into contact with Spanish American settlements throughout the later sixteenth century, but particularly during the Armada Wars. Between 1577 and 1580, Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the world, the first such circumnavigation. In 1585, Raleigh established the first colony at Roanoke and he supported another effort in 1587. Although the colony failed drastically, it represented the first English attempt to permanently settle the American continent. The Virginia Company planted the first successful colony in 1607 in James’ reign.

Patriotic conceptions played a large role in driving the overseas exploration and colonial ventures. English competition with Spain re-
receives particular attention in today’s scholarship. Many of the English voyages occurred at a time of high tension between England and Spain; the Anglo-Spanish Armada War spanned from 1585 to 1604. Spain had also maintained dominance in the New World since Christopher Columbus’ discovery in 1492 so any exploration into the Americas represented an entrance into what the Spanish claimed as their territory. However, competition with other nations appeared in promotional writing supporting overseas enterprises as well. When Hakluyt encouraged the English to colonize America quickly in *Discourse on Western Planting*, he argued, “yf wee doe procrastinate the planting, [...] the frenche, the Normans, the Brytons, or the duche, or some other nation will not onely prevente us of the mightie Bay of St. Laurence [...] but also will deprive us of that good lande which nowe wee have discovered.” The colonial enterprise seems in Hakluyt’s statement as a contest between countries for territorial possession and exploratory expeditions sometimes acquired a similar significance in his writings.

However, Europeans did not simply engage in competition when they embarked on explorations and colonial ventures overseas. Explorers entered areas of the world completely new to themselves. While they discussed discoveries in terms understandable to other Europeans, overseas worlds remained spaces filled with unknown landscapes, plants and animals and occupied by people different from themselves. Experiencing such a landscape and understanding it could emphasize shared European relationships over patriotic sentiment.

Travel accounts allow us to imagine the ignorance in which English travelers found themselves as they entered the New World. Dionysie Settle recorded Freesland’s uninhabitable shore, which he passed with Martin Frobisher’s third northwestern voyage. He wrote:

All along the coast lye very highe mounteines covered with snowe, except in such places, where, through the steepenesse of the mounteines, of force it must needs fall. Foure days coasting along this Land, we found no signe of habitation. Little birdes, whiche we judged to have lost the shoare, by reason of thicke fogges, that which country is much subject unto, came fleeing to our shippes, whiche causeth us to suppose, that the countrie is both more tolerable, and also habitable within, then the outward shoare maketh shewe or signification. Settle revealed, in line with colonial desires, the English interest in the land’s habitability. But he also spoke to the extreme unknown that the American land represented. The crew with which he sailed had to extrapolate simply from the bird that livable land existed within the fog and beyond the ice-covered mountains visible from the ship. We can imagine the fear and awe with which travelers probably viewed such landscapes. Frobisher and his crew must have felt lost in the wild as they maneuvered between the fog and the mountains and passed “monstruous and huge yce, comparable to great mountaines” that no “temperature under the Pole” could dissolve. They traveled amidst a landscape in which they could not even determine whether life existed.

Danger threatened on voyages. Sailors drowned at sea; crews grew weak from illness or lack of food. Relations with natives were always


16 Hakluyt, in *The Original Writings & Correspondence*, 279.


18 Dionysie Settle, *A True reporte of the last voyaGe into the west and west-northeast regions, d. 1577. Worthily authored by Capteine Frobisher of the sayde voyaGe the firstfinder and general With a description of the people there inhabiting, and other circumstances notable. Written by Dionysie Settle, one of the companie in the sayde voyage, and servant to the Right Honourable the Earle of Cumberland* (London: 1577), 7. EBOOK. http://www.ebook.com/search/full_rec/SOURCE=ptghumbs.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=603868905&VID=210699&PAGENO=1&FILE=../1384890208_11122&SEARCHSCREEN=CITATIONS&SEARCHCONFIG=var_spell.cfg.


20 Ibid., 9.

21 Sir Walter Raleigh includes a personal account of a seamen’s death in his *Discoverie of Guinea*: “I sent Captain Whiddon to speak with them [Spaniards], whom
uncertain. Eskimos took five men captive on Frobisher’s second voyage but Lawrence Kemys relied on an Indian guide to navigate South America. The landscape itself could prove a danger. Explorers, after all, did not know what to expect from it. Lawrence Kemys included an account in his report from Sir Walter Raleigh’s second voyage to Guiana that reveals the vulnerability with which the Englishmen faced the New World. Kemys related:

All which time wee could no where set foot on shore, but rested day and night wet & weatherbeaten in our coverles boat which was sometimes ready to sinke under us. To be breefe, my men became weake and sicke, and if we had stayed anie longer time out, I doubt whether the greatest part of us had ever come abord again.

Kemys’s story evokes the misery and uncertainty that early modern explorations held for travelers. Scholars tend to emphasize propagandistic accounts that encouraged positive views of colonization or exploration or they trace observations with mercantile purpose alone. But Kemys and his men sat in ill health and fear aboard ships in ceaseless rain in a geography of which they knew little. Such an experience does not receive enough attention in scholarship.

The difficulties explorers encountered point to the fact that English pride could not define the entire exploration or colonizing experience. The uncertainties encouraged a reaction beyond that of patriotic assertion. We can imagine that Kemys’ and his men’s concerns lay not in achievements for England while they huddled miserably in their wet boats but in whether they would survive. Settle probably wondered more at the wild in which he found himself than at its promise for England.

Parmenius posed a complication in himself to the Englishness of exploratory ventures. Stephen Parmenius was born in Buda between 1555 and 1560. His family lived under Turkish rule but had converted to Protestantism. The first record of Parmenius in England appeared when he arrived at Oxford and he became roommates with Hakluyt at Christ’s Church, between late 1581 or early 1582. Between leaving Buda and arriving in England, Parmenius explored Europe; he was listed as a student at the University of Heidelberg in 1579 and he is assumed to have visited Italy. Scholars credit Parmenius with writing a poem, “De Navigatione,” that matches Hakluyt’s promotional, patriotic rationale for English colonization more closely than any other writing at the time. It celebrates English heroes of exploration, the Protestant conversion of American natives and vilifies both Muslims and Spain. But Parmenius only inhabited England for two years; he wrote the 1583 letter to Hakluyt from Humphrey Gilbert’s journey to settle Newfoundland and died on the same exploration. His presence in the exploration may speak to an inclusive Protestant identity as his move to Protestant England and his poem celebrating the Protestant conversion of natives suggest. It may also embody, though, a broad, human interest in exploring the world; he traveled across Europe then joined Gilbert’s expedition, which allowed him to journey further.

While Parmenius’ presence on Gilbert’s voyage proposes limits to the extent patriotism defined New World contact, his letter further suggests the flexibility of “national” distinctions in overseas contacts. Parmenius writes of boats from several nations fishing in the waters off Newfoundland. He relates, “for we found in this place about twenty Portugall and Spanish shippes besides the ships of the English.” His account implies that the boats coexisted peacefully regardless of their different countries of origin. The waters represented a common ground for the fishing crews.

Edward Waterhouse’s response to the 1622 massacre at Jamestown, admittedly during the period of English colonization not exploration, presents an unusual but pointed illustration of a similar unity in experiencing the New World. On March 22, 1622, the Powhatan tribe, which lived around Jamestown, attacked the colonizers at the settlement. Waterhouse encouraged the English to follow Spain’s practices and to defeat the local Native American peoples by turning quarrelling tribes against each other. He wrote regarding the Spanish, “So, the Spaniard made great use for his owne turne of the quarrels and enmities that were amongst the Indians, as thoroughly understanding and following that Maxime of the Politician, Divide & impera, make divisions and take Kingdomes.” Then, he advised the English in Virginia, “So as the quarrels, and the causes of afterwards to my great grief I left buried in the said island after my return from Guiana, being a man most honest and valiant.” Sir Walter Raleigh, The discourse of the large, rich and beautifull empire of Guiana with a relation of the great and golden citye of Manoa (which the spanyards call El Dorado) and the provinces of Emeria, Arromaia, Amapaia, and other countries, with their rivers, adjoining. Performed in the yeare 1595. By Sir W. Ralegh Knight, captaine of her Majesties Guard, Lo. Warden of the Summer Isles, and her Highnesse Lieutenant general of the counti of Cornwall (London: 1596), 4.

George Best, A true discourse of the late voyages of discoverie for the finding of a passage to Cathaya by the Northweast, under the conduct of Martin Frobisher generall, devided into three books: in the first werof is shewed, his first voyage:: wherein also by the way is sette out a geographicaall description of the world, and what partes thereof have bin discovered by the navigations of the Englishmen: also there are annexed certayne reasons, to prove all partes of reth worlde habitable, with a generall mappe adjoined: in the second, is set out his second voyage, with the adventures and accidents thereof: in the thirde, is declared the strange fortunes which hapned in the third voyage, with a severall description of the countrey and the people there inhabiting: with a particular card thereunto adjoined of Meta Incognita, so farre forth as the secretes of the voyce may permit (London: 1578), 26. Sabin Americana. Gale, Cengage Learning. Washington University. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/Sabin?f姿=RN&ca=EY112004949&schtyp=pa&st=14. Kemys describes his guides usefulness to his English audience, “For besides his precise knowledge of all the coast, he speaketh all their languages, was bred in Guiana, is a sworn brother to Putima, who slew the Spaniards in their returne from Ma-

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them, and the different humours of these people being well understood, it will be an easie matter to overthrow those that now are, or may bee our enemies hereafter, by ayding and setting on their enemies against them.\textsuperscript{30} Although Waterhouse wrote twenty years after the Anglo-Spanish Armada War, many Englishmen at the time he wrote still saw the Spanish attitude toward Native Americans as exemplifying a stereotypical Spanish cruelty.\textsuperscript{31} Such Englishmen might have desired that the English differentiate themselves from the Spanish in treating with the natives. However, Waterhouse’s encounters in the Americas convinced him that the Spanish practices toward the natives could be justified; he did not argue that the English should avoid the Spanish example but that they should follow Spain in conquering the natives. His understanding of the massacre led him to bridge a gap between England and Spain in a manner that, presumably, few Englishmen who did not possess the same experience would. A commonality arose, in Waterhouse’s account, between the colonizing Spanish and the colonizing English.

The willingness to cross such boundaries that appeared in English explorers’ and colonizers’ accounts of happenings in the Americas also became apparent in texts that tried to conceptualize the new lands. George Best, in his relation of Martin Frobisher’s first voyage, suggested a shared European discovery when he discussed Englishmen’s abilities to inhabit warmer climes. He wrote, “But what should I name anye more experiences, seyeing that all the coasts of Guynea and Bynnin are inhabited of Portugals, Spanyarydes, French, and some Englishmen, and there have built Castels and Townes.”\textsuperscript{32} Best’s statement emphasizes the attempt to understand discovery. Questions arose regarding such simple aspects as a country’s habitability. While the statement characterizes colonizing European peoples by their countries, it implies a connection between the various peoples. The Portuguese, Spanish and French appeared as European peoples similar to Englishmen, and different from warmer climes’ native inhabitants, so the Portuguese, Spanish and French could provide evidence to answer English questions regarding habitability. So the various European explorers and colonizers produced information upon which other Europeans could draw when discussing the edges of the world.

The European experience in discovery emphasized attempts to balance recent, first-hand evidence, like that on habitability, with information inherited from ancient and medieval texts.\textsuperscript{33} As travelers entered new regions, they half-expected to encounter the strange figures and monsters that ancient and medieval texts explained as existing in the distant corners of the world. Some voyagers did imagine their discoveries as holding with such tales or they fabricated stories to align with such expectations.\textsuperscript{34} Others recorded travels that did not match the marvels that previous writers had described. However, sixteenth century Europeans had limited capacities to verify either new or ancient travel stories. They did not have the technological potential to document travels completely or to record them through indexical means. So written accounts provided the only evidence about the world’s recently discovered regions and authors and publishers faced difficulties in deciding what information to regard as correct.

Ancient, medieval and early modern writers, though, cited authority for their claims in the same way; authors from all the periods validated their stories by asserting first-hand “testimony,” either from their personal experiences or from conversations with others who had direct knowledge.\textsuperscript{35} New travel accounts could raise suspicions about ancient tales if the two differed too radically. However, while authors and publishers might have held doubts about sources, they generally accepted written experiences as truth. They sought to sell their books and to assert their own knowledge about the world so they remained willing to view both recent geographical information and oft-recounted wonders as “plausible.”\textsuperscript{36} A belief in God’s wonder, or at least a written assertion of such a belief, also underlay the inclusive approach to information about new lands. If God produced the world’s marvels, anything could exist.\textsuperscript{37} Indeed, when some scholars questioned the veracity of marvelous accounts, they qualified their hesitations by claiming that God’s glory made anything possible.\textsuperscript{38}“verye wilderness” aligns with Biblical imagery and it suggests an ancient landscape, untouched and untamed by man.\textsuperscript{39}

Stephen Parmenius’ 1583 letter to Richard Hakluyt illustrates the early modern approach to the world overseas. Parmenius’ reference to a “verye wilderness” aligns with Biblical imagery and it suggests an ancient landscape, untouched and untamed by man.\textsuperscript{40} The abundance of fish and the density of the forest point to God’s miraculous creation.\textsuperscript{41} However, Parmenius continued from the passage quoted above to detail his observations of the land near Newfoundland, mentioning the capabilities and the local wildlife.\textsuperscript{42} The analysis represents an attempt to understand treacherously executed by the native infidels upon the ENlgish, the 22 of March last. Together with the names of those that were then massacred; that their lawfull heyres, by this notice given, may take order for the inheriting of their lands and estates in Virginia. And a treatise annexed, written by that learned mathematician Mr. Henry Briggs, of the Northwest passage to the South Sea through the continent of Virginia, and by Fretum Hudson. Also a commemoration of such worthy benefactors as have contrib

30 Waterhouse, A declaration of the state of the colony and affaires in Virginia, 25.
31 The stereotype of the Spanish as cruel accompanied other antagonistic stereotypes that arose in England, particularly during the Armada War, and vilified the Spanish. Together, these stereotypes constitute the “Black Legend.” Malby, The Black Legend in England. For the continuation of the Black Legend after the Armada Wars, see 138.
32 Best, A true discourse of the late voyages of discoverie for the finding of a passage to Cathay by the Northweat, 20.
34 Ibid., 427.
35 Ibid., 416.
36 Ibid., 417-419.
37 Ibid., 435-436.
38 Ibid., 415.
39 See Ibid., 432.
40 Parmenius, in The Original Writings & Correspondence, 200. Discussion with Professor Johnson. Liana Vardi notes that wilderness could represent “the wilderness to which man had been condemned after the Fall and which he could tame only by his labor.” Liana Vardi, “Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe” The American Historical Review 101:5 (December 1996): 1361-1362. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2170176.
42 Parmenius, in The Original Writings & Correspondence, 200-201.
the landscape through its commodities and agricultural potential. His first-hand account combined impressions informed by Biblical ideas with an evaluation of the land’s commercial promise.43

So English interests could not entirely define overseas voyages and a European process of discovery emerged from experiences in the new worlds.44 European explorers entered regions new to them. They experienced climates far different from their own and they interacted with people deemed savage by European standards. Regardless of their affiliations with different countries, they could view themselves as experiencing the same process.

Richard Hakluyt represents a key figure in the English expansion overseas. Hakluyt’s reputation rests on his proto-nationalist and promotional writing. He played an important role in promoting English overseas enterprises and in envisioning an English nation.45 The trope of competition between peoples runs throughout the promotional prefaces and dedications to his translations and compilations.46 D. B. Quinn described Hakluyt’s reputation as that of a national “protagonist” and J. A. Froude described Hakluyt’s most famous work, his Principal Navigations of the English Nation, as the “prose epic of the modern nation.”47 However, his work also demonstrated an understanding of the European experience in discovery.

Although Hakluyt never sailed to the Americas, he probably understood the situation that confronted Europeans in the New World well. He not only read travel accounts when compiling the Principal Navigations, in which he included hundreds of English voyages, but he studied contemporary exploration accounts from both Englishmen and foreigners throughout his life.48 He maintained contact with figures throughout England’s navigation community as well.49 The uncertainty, danger or wonder that his contacts experienced could not have escaped his attention.

Hakluyt’s personal contacts might have clarified particularly the dangers involved in exploration. Hakluyt presumably knew Humphrey Gilbert personally before Gilbert drowned while exploring Newfoundland in 1583. He certainly knew Stephen Parmenius, as they had roomed together at Christ’s Church, and Parmenius died on the same expedition.50 So he could not have possessed illusions about exploration and colonization. He understood the threats Europeans encountered in such enterprises, as well as the extent to which Europeans did not know the lands and waters they entered.

Surely such an understanding underlay his frequent suggestion that England adopt a lecture on navigation similar to that offered in Spain. The series of lectures provided Spanish sailors with training in ocean navigation. Hakluyt, in the 1598 volume of Principal Navigations, framed the lectures’ usefulness by emphasizing the dangers life at sea poses. He wrote, “no kinde of men of any profession in the common wealth passe their yeares in so great and continuall hazard of life; and since of so many, so few grow to gray heires.”51 He continued the theme later on the page:

When I call to minde, how many noble ships have bene lost, how many worthy persons have bene drenched in the sea, and how greatly this Realme hath been impoverished by losse of great Ordinance and other rich commodities through the ignorance of our Seamen, I have greatly wished there were a Lecture of Navigation read in this Citie.52

Although Hakluyt also connected the lectures to the attainment of wealth, he placed a considerable emphasis on them as a manner to increase the seamen’s abilities to complete voyages safely. Such an emphasis suggests a sincere awareness on Hakluyt’s part not only of the patriotic benefits exploration and colonization promised but of the dangers inherent to the enterprises. Hakluyt held such a strong belief in the benefits the lectures could provide that he repeated his argument encouraging England to adopt a lecture on navigation in his 1600 epistle to Sir Robert Cecil as well as in his preface to the Divers Voyages and a 1584 letter to Sir Francis Walsingham.53

43 Ibid., 199-200.
44 Lisa Voigt suggests the possibility for collaboration across borders in her discussion of English dependence on Spanish texts on the Americas. She concludes by asserting that the Spanish texts “taught their captors the value of the experience that crosses borders.” Voigt, Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic, 318-319.
49 Hakluyt writes that he began studying foreign exploration accounts early in his career and his later translations suggest that he maintained an interest in explorations by non-Englishmen as well. Hakluyt, Principal Navigations (1589), 22.
50 In The Original Writings & Correspondence.
51 Mancall, Hakluyt’s Promise, 121-122.
52 Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations (1598), 3.
53 Ibid.
54 Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations (1600), A3. Richard Hakluyt, Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the islands adiacent unto the
Hakluyt’s emphasis on the navigation lectures situates him in an exploration community not unlike that experienced by actual explorers and it underlines his career-long focus on knowledge. He believed in the benefits an informational education in navigation could provide sailors and he possessed contacts in the navigation community to inform him of Spain’s lecture series. Moreover, he did not hesitate to look toward Spain, even at the heights of the Armada Wars, to urge England to follow Spain’s example. Hakluyt may have participated in the process of discovery from his home but he understood the pragmatic value in crossing boundaries for discovering the world.

An interest in discovery itself, not simply for English expansion, appeared early in Hakluyt’s life, at least according to his account. Richard Hakluyt told the story of his interest in geography in his Dedication to the 1589 edition of the Principal Navigations. He wrote:
I do remember that being a youth, and one of her Majesties scholars at Westminster that fruitfull nurserie, it was my happie to visit the chamber of M. Richard Hakluyt my cosin […] at a time when I found lying open upon his boord certeine books of Cosmographie, with an universall Mappe: he seeing me somewhat curious in the view thereof, began to instruct my ignorance, by shewing me the division of the earth into three parts after the olde account, and then according to the latter, & better distibution, into more: he pointed with his wand to all the known seas, Gulfs, Bayes, Straights, Capes, Rivers, empires, Kingdomes, Dukedomes, and Territories of ech part, with declaration alsso of their special commodities, & particular wants, which by the benefit of traffike, & entercourse of merchants, are plentifully supplied. From the Mappe he brought me to the Bible, and turning to the 107 Psalm, directed mee to the 23 & 24 verses, where I read, that they which go downe to the ships, and occupy by the great waters, they see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deepe, &c. Which words of the Prophet together with my cousins discourse (things of high and rare delight to my yong nature) tooke in me so deepe an impression, that I constantly resolved, if ever I was preferred to the University, where better time, and more convenient place might be ministered for these studies, I would by Gods assistance prosecute that knowledge and kind of literature, the doors whereof (after a sort) were so happily opened before me.55

His story does not suggest a revelation from God telling him to serve the Protestant purpose by expanding English possession overseas nor does it relay a deeply held conviction in the necessity for England to undertake overseas ventures; Hakluyt explained simply that he realized his own fascination with geography and discovery. The religious verse in the account convinced him that God filled the world with wonders and that man may discover those wonders by exploring on and across the oceans. Wonders such as the icebergs in the north or the heat in the West Indies may have proven the verse correct for Hakluyt.

According to the same 1589 dedication, Hakluyt understood from the moment he began to study geography that the subject represented a European as well as an English discovery. He read all the discovery accounts he found and he did so in “Greeke, Latine, Italian, Spanish, Portugall, French, or English.” Such accounts laid the basis for his early geography lectures. Hakluyt only later developed contacts with the English navigation community. He described the way that he established contacts with the best English navigators; he wrote, “I grew familiarly acquainted with the chiefest Captaines at sea, the greatest Merchants, and the best Mariners of our nation.” Such contacts would have brought him into the English discovery enterprises and they would have balanced a patriotic focus with the international.

Both Hakluyt’s foreign contacts and his English contacts revolved around his interest in gaining material on geographic discoveries. Hakluyt situated his attainment of knowledge from English navigators as a rite of passage in the 1589 dedication. Only once he possessed such information did he go to France; he described “by which means having gotten somewhat more than common knowledge, I passed at length the narrow seas into France with sir Edward Stafford.” We might imagine that Hakluyt’s contact with explorers encouraged him to continue to envision the extent of the unknown and to gather knowledge on it. We might also assume that Hakluyt’s practical connections to mercantile activity emphasized information since merchants needed to know where and with whom to trade for what. Regardless of the specific motivations for Hakluyt’s focus on knowledge, the management of geographic material accompanied the patriotic promotion of overseas enterprises throughout his career.

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54 Hakluyt’s intellectual interest in discovery itself is also supported by the number of documents he collected but did not publish. Samuel Purchas included many documents, particularly documents dealing with the Eastern world, from Hakluyt’s collection in his Hakleyus Posthumus. Mancall, Hakluyt’s Promise, 301.
57 Hakluyt, Principal Navigations (1589), *2.
58 Ibid. He writes that he was “In my publike lectures […] the first, that produced and shewed both the olde imperfectly composed, and the new lately reformed Mappes, Globes, Sphareas, and other instruments of this Art for demonstration in the common schools, to the singular pleasure, and general contentment of my auditory.”
59 Ibid.
60 Fuller argues for the importance managing information played in Hakluyt’s career and suggests that his focus on managing information undermines his patriotism. Mary Fuller, “Richard Hakluyt’s Foreign Relations,” 38-50. Mancall argues that Hakluyt provided information on the New World in order to promote an English presence there. Mancall, Hakluyt’s Promise; Peter C. Mancall, “Richard Hakluyt’s Problem,” in Recent Themes in Early American History: Historians in Conversation, ed. Donald A. Yerxa, 37-52 (Columbia, SC: 2008).
61 Hakluyt, Principal Navigations (1589), *2.
Hakluyt undertook many activities that within an attempt to find and produce knowledge on the world. He, for instance, translated Peter Martyr’s *De Orbe Novo* not into vernacular English as a proto-nationalistic exercise but into Latin. He lived in France for several years and he nurtured contacts with foreign geographers. Hakluyt supported the publication of a Malayan dictionary; he also encouraged John Pory’s translation of Johannes Leo Africanus’ *A Geographical History of Africa* as well as a number of translations and books by other authors and translators. The publications he supported mainly dealt with European exploration but they did not all provide information on the Americas, as Pory’s translation and the dictionary suggest. Hakluyt also worked with both the Virginia Company and the East India Company. His role with the Virginia Company situated him in colonial enterprises in the Americas but his role as an advisor for the East India Company emphasized his position handling knowledge. Even Hakluyt’s most commonly discussed promotional works evoked the tension between the English and the foreign in discovery. The *Principal Navigations* provides the most commonly cited example of his proto-nationalistic ideas. However, the work does not represent a “prose epic,” as Froude described it. Hakluyt included several ruttiers, patents and commodity lists within the book as well as the travel narratives most often discussed. The second edition, while it included mainly English sources, also contained several foreign sources in the third volume and Hakluyt devoted considerable space in the volume’s dedication to discussing the foreign sources. Similarly, Hakluyt cited foreign sources as evidentiary and exemplary support throughout the *Discourse on Western Planting*.

So we see Hakluyt negotiating between a European world discovery and an English enterprise. Hakluyt could have conceptualized the ignorance with which Europeans encountered the world’s expanse and he may have imagined the wonder and fear with which explorers faced the discoveries. He certainly, by his own account, understood the necessity for crossing country lines in the process of discovering the world. Indeed, we might imagine Hakluyt to have been undertaking the same world discovery as the explorers with whom he associated and revealing the same broad, European experience but simply doing so from the confines of a European study. As Parmenius sat on the boat and penned his letter to Hakluyt, Hakluyt stared out a European window and wondered about the world that lay beyond.

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63 Both Fuller and Mancall mention some of these activities. Fuller, “Richard Hakluyt’s Foreign Relations;” Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*.
64 E. G. R. Taylor includes the work’s Latin preface as well as a translated English version in *The Original Writings and Correspondence*. Hakluyt, in *The Original Writings & Correspondence*, 356-369. Peter Mancall discusses why Hakluyt may have produced the Latin publication. Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*, 174-178.
65 Hakluyt, in *The Original Writings & Correspondence*, ed. Taylor.
67 E. G. R. Taylor mentions Hakluyt’s involvement with the Virginia Company and probable participation in producing instructions for the colony; Taylor, in *The Original Writings & Correspondence*, 492. Hakluyt’s notes provide an image of the advising he did for the East India Company; Hakluyt, in *The Original Writings & Correspondence*, 476-482. E. G. R. Taylor describes the company’s payment for the notes; Taylor, in *The Original Writings & Correspondence*, 476.
69 Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations* (1589); Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations* (1598-1600), A2v-A3.
70 Hakluyt, in *The Original Writings & Correspondence*, 211-326.
Boiled Boyfriends and Scalded Spouses: Love, Pain, and Devious Behaviors in 20th Century Black America

Lauren Henley

In the January 6th, 1941 edition of the African American newspaper, the Chicago Defender, readers turned the pages to find an article entitled “He Was Hot, So She Scalded Him”:

“Charles Jones, 34, 4800 Indiana avenue, really got angry with his girl friend Christmas so the two rolled up their sleeves and starting batting one another around following a jealous argument at 4500 Vincent avenue. The girl friend, Miss Ora Proctor seized a kettle of boiling water and drenched him from head to foot. So Jones, scalded in every conceivable place but the roof of his mouth, is cooling his temper and aching limbs in a ward at Cook county hospital.”

This article, discreetly placed between the surrounding headlines reading “Janitor Slugged In Pastor’s Study” and “St. Louis Man Kidnaps Wife, Knifes Hubby,” addresses a rather unique trend occurring in predominately northern urban cities, not necessarily bound by this time period. Indeed, the idea of domesticity gone awry, particularly with regards to black women using boiling hot water to stake claims against their male counterparts, appears as a phenomenon during much of the early twentieth century. The essay that follows provides a nuanced angle into African American history by foregrounding stories of black women who articulated their romantic discontent by scalding their significant others with boiling water during the 1930s and 1940s. Tracing the trends temporarily and spatially, these historic cases filter into and between Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia, to reveal how tensions that emerged between public (urban spaces) and private (domestic spheres) became visible in often violent altercations forged between black women and their male companions. Evidence of such disputes reveals the range of African American experiences to encompass more than racial uplift, geographical movement, and evolving notions of beauty. The intention of this paper is twofold: it explores the lives of multiple black women frustrated with their partners, while also taking into consideration the role of black newspapers as a subjective administrator of knowledge and “news.” As St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton note, “if we examine the Defender’s front page to learn what kinds of personalities made the headlines over a five-year period (during the Depression), we find political leaders, criminals, famous athletes, [and] murder victims.” Although the authors are situating the types of articles published in this particular newspaper in the confines of an earlier time period, the resonance for this essay remains intact in the perceived criminality of these autonomous yet aggressive black women. Not only did their actions flash across headlines in the Chicago Defender, but black newspapers across the country printed and reprinted these sensational narratives, locating the perpetrators in a unique space to be morally judged in a gendered, racialized, and arguably urbanized context. Therein, black newspapers determined where and how African Americans women fit into the larger social context by casting these episodes of female aggression as “atypical” within the larger quest for black respectability and promotion of traditional domesticity. At the same time, unboth- ered by public scrutiny of their romantic obstacles, these women defied, and in many ways renegotiated, the meaning of femininity and domesticity through the autonomy and subsequent violence they inflicted against their partners.

From the early 1930s to the late 1940s, the fundamental landscape of America changed drastically as the country experienced recovery after the Great Depression, political turmoil during World War II, and the beginning of a multi-decade struggle in obtaining civil rights for black Americans. Against the backdrop of these national landmarks, many African Americans continued to encourage the Great Migration, settling into urban (northern) cities in search of educational opportunities, employment prospects, and elusive equality. Yet in these years of change, the uncertainties exhibited in the global world were reflected in the shifting relationship between black women and black men. Not only did the novelty of life in northern cities create tensions between idealized notions of ruralness and critiques of industrialization, but the realities of racial segregation weighed heavily on African Americans within these developing urban spaces. According to Deborah Gray White, “disenfranchisement, Jim Crowism, lynching, and race riots seemed to be spreading unchecked.” Thus, individualized and systemic racial disparities were still omnipresent in northern urban experiences, offering a sense of disillusionment to black women and men who sought to escape the blatant racism of the South by migrating to bustling cities like Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia.

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1 “He Was Hot So She Scalded Him,” Chicago Defender, January 6, 1941, 9.
2 More information regarding challenging the positioning of black women in historical narratives is available in Deborah Gray White’s Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994.
4 For scholarship regarding migratory patterns and northern urban spaces, refer to St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton’s Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in A Northern City.
The 1930s: Death by Domesticity

On May 3rd, 1930, the shocking headline “Boils Husband Alive” ran across the first page of Baltimore’s Afro-American. A mere sentence-long blurb explaining the tragedy which occurred in Detroit remarked, “Jealous of her husband’s attention to others, Mrs. Cleveland McCreary poured boiling water on her husband as he lay asleep and scalped him to death last week.” Additional information detailing the nature of the case went unoffered, yet the diction used set the tone for the other cases examined in this article. First and perhaps most obvious is the sheer sense of intentionality put forth by Mrs. Cleveland McCreary, indicated by the sentence structure which chooses to name the motive (jealousy) before the action (pouring boiling water). Thus, even though the headline gives away the basic gist of the story, the narrative constructed through emphasizing the motive from the very beginning underscores the deliberateness with which the scalding took place. Moreover, the vulnerability of McCreary’s husband is signified through the fact that “he lay asleep” during this entire ordeal. Yet because of the brevity and structure of the article, there is no way to know what actually transpired before he retired to bed or in the days, weeks, months, or even years leading up to his fatality. The idea that jealousy motivated these actions reveals the extent to which extra-marital relationships, no matter how benign, became a deadly threat some wives used to presume power within the domestic sphere. Therein, choosing to throw boiling hot water was a literal reclamation of authority – both physical and romantic – exercised not only by Mrs. Cleveland McCreary, but by numerous other black women during this decade and beyond.

Despite the seemingly heinous nature of this altercation, the excerpt creates a tension between femininity, “politics of respectability,” and malicious intent or deliberate injury. On one hand, the female perpetrator is not only identified by the term “Mrs.” to indicate her married status, but she is further identified by her husband’s name, Cleveland McCreary. While it is possible to ignore these basic grammatical markers as simple 1930s newspaper rhetoric, it is more productive to consider how this language characterized the victimizer as both a once-dutiful wife and a once-traditional representation of femininity. On the other hand, the title offers the most succinct description of intentionality by implying a heterosexual relationship in which the wife has assumed the role of aggressor/criminal and the brutality of being boiled alive casts the husband as the victim. Thus, the tension between passive “Mrs. Cleveland McCreary” and the arguably anguishing woman who “poured boiling water on her husband as he lay asleep” is visible in the literal language implored to discuss this case. This example, however, only represents one of numerous incidents during this period in which various definitions of femininity, criminality, and even urbanity were articulated through black northern newspapers.

On October 10th, 1931, the Chicago Defender ran the headline “Angry Woman Throws Boiling Water on Mate” on the eleventh page of the Saturday morning edition. The article recalls that 33-year-old Mildred Thompson “was held in $500 bail for trial in special sessions on a charge of assault” for having tossed boiling water on her estranged husband, William, after he “called to see his wife in her home.” According to William, “a dispute arose and she threw the boiling water over him...scalding him about the head, face and body.” Surviving sources do not recount what actually happened during the altercation, yet the language implored by the newspaper speaks to the construction of both Mildred and William as a role-reversed untraditional “couple” living separately on the Southside of Chicago in Washington Heights. By exploring how accrue and accused are implicated by the newspaper’s rhetoric, it is clear that politics of domesticity, masculinity, and regulation of the idealized notion of a “traditional” heterosexual relationship are all at play in this brief article.

The sheer notion of throwing boiling water, as is evidenced in other cases examined throughout this article, speaks directly to the reappropriation of domestic tools for autonomous purposes. Although these two categories are not mutually exclusive, the consciousness Ms. Thompson asserted to use boiling water, a staple of most domestic spheres, testifies to the way in which this seemingly harmless cooking basic would be used as a literal weapon, serving as a marker of power shifts within the relationship. While it is hard to interpret intentionality from the article as a whole, the linguistic nuances present in the phrase “he charges” suggests that William believed his wife deliberately “threw the boiling water over him.” Thus, the supposed purposefulness of the actions plus the intimate association of (black) womanhood with domesticity implies that Ms. Thompson understood her expected role in traditionally feminine spheres could be simultaneously used to articulate her autonomy against her husband. The decision to throw boiling water in the ironic heat of a dispute is, in actuality, a manifestation of these understandings intertwined with the external realities of living in an urban environment.

Although the brief article only gives a sliver of information regarding the setting of the alleged altercation, the mention of Washington Heights along with an address for Ms. Thompson at 100 W. 116th St. reveal that the couple was immediately surrounded by the urbanity of Chicago’s Southside. During the 1930s, however, the realities of living in booming cities like Chicago were oftentimes overshadowed by unrealistically glamorized images of industrialization, progress, and fast-paced life. These biased accounts of the city’s potential attracted even more individuals to flock north, convinced that the romanticized notions of urban potential, independence, and freedom were guaranteed to all residents. Thus, major
concerns of this time stemmed partially from the fact that many individuals believed the influx of even greater numbers of people into the urban cities of the north contributed to a general moral decline of the population. It was thought that more people meant more drinking, more late-night socializing, more unchaperoned youth, more women in the workforce, more children employed at young ages, and more of a disconnect with the “ wholesomeness” of idealized rural farm life. For Mildred and William, then, the experiences of living in Chicago’s Washington Heights would have been influenced tremendously by tensions between the realities and expectations of urbanity. Moreover, and arguably more importantly, this neighborhood was, as of 1930, approximately 99.6% white.14 Thus, not only did this couple have to contend with the contradictions that city life almost inevitably imposed, but they also were surrounded by a community whose racial biases may have contributed to even more external tensions present in their relationship. Although it is impossible to recover precisely what caused or even influenced the dispute between Mildred and William, it is not unreasonable to consider that stresses from outside factors could have added to what would eventually become a rather tense and unconventional narrative as articulated through the Chicago Defender.

Yet during this decade, incidences of domestic discord were repeated nationally in a variety of northern urban cities. In 1935, for example, the New York Amsterdam News, a well-known black newspaper started in 1909, offered the following headline: “Scalding Fatal; ‘Wife’ Arrested.”15 The subheading, perhaps even more illuminating, reveals that a “25-Year-Old Man Dies in Harlem Hospital.”16 Like the circumstances detailed in the two previously described cases, it is more than fair to reason that intentionality, journalistically labeled as criminality, sat at the core of 30-year-old Emma Gordon’s decision to throw boiling hot water at her common-law husband, Hughdell Sweeney.17 Readers learned that “he had been severely burned when his mistress allegedly hurled a pot of boiling water over him during an altercation at their home,” resulting in his hospitalization and subsequent death five days later.18 The language invoked to describe Emma Gordon simultaneously as both Sweeney’s “wife” and his “mistress” creates an ambiguity in the couple’s relationship, suggesting that the power dynamic between the two was blurry if not contentious. Although it is possible to read this article as a purely sensationalized account of the actual events, it is more productive to analyze terms like “hurled” as veiled insinuations of deliberate action on behalf of Ms. Gordon. If, in fact, the water was “hurled” or thrown in a forceful manner, then Ms. Gordon’s behavior aligns with Mrs. McCreary’s and Ms. Thompson’s conduct as well, revealing that all three women (un)consciously articulated their independence through reappropriation of their traditional domestic identities. In fact, the article explicitly calls Hughdell Sweeney “her victim” (referring to Emma Gordon), suggesting a linguistic and literal submission of the male fatality to a female oppressor. It is as though Ms. Gordon is given an autonomous yet criminalized label through the victimization (read: helplessness) of her common-law husband. Not only does the newspaper, perhaps unknowingly, highlight the power held by women engaging in these seemingly atypical domestic disputes, but it also connects the actions of this singular woman to broader trends in exercises of autonomy for black women in urban spaces during the early twentieth century.

Closely aligned with the themes of reappropriating domesticity and the potential for heterosexual role-reversal, the case of Matthew and Lyda Parker explores these ideas while also introducing a new concept, namely the role of alcohol in these domestic altercations. On November 27th, 1937, the Chicago Defender printed a blurb on page four simply entitled, “Scalded By Wife.”19 Taking place in Detroit like the Cleveland McCreary case, the article reports, “Matthew Parker, 26, of 1466 Maple Street told police from his hospital bed that his wife, Lyda came home intoxicated. While he was in bed sleeping, Parker alleges that his wife threw boiling water on him.”20 First, it is important to acknowledge the general trends that this report maintains with the three previously examined cases. Not only have all of the articles taken for granted the possible effects of urbanity on these domestic altercations, but the perpetual victimization of the scalded/boiled man subverts traditionally understood gender roles about which partner in a heterosexual relationship is expected to wield a particular type of power. Thus the articles attempt to engage the readership in sympathetic emotions towards the male partner while dismissing the female’s actions as unfeminine, dangerous, and perhaps more importantly, abnormal. What is particularly abnormal, not to mention unfeminine and dangerous, about the Matthew and Lyda Parker case is the addition of alcohol into the domestic sphere. Whereas the three previous examples imply a deliberate and conscious exertion of autonomy through reappropriation of their traditional domestic identities. In fact, the article explicitly calls Hughdell Sweeney “her victim” (referring to Emma Gordon), suggesting a linguistic and literal submission of the male fatality to a female oppressor. It is as though Ms. Gordon is given an autonomous yet criminalized label through the victimization (read: helplessness) of her common-law husband. Not only does the newspaper, perhaps unknowingly, highlight the power held by women engaging in these seemingly atypical domestic disputes, but it also connects the actions of this singular woman to broader trends in exercises of autonomy for black women in urban spaces during the early twentieth century.

First and perhaps most problematic is the association of drinking with unfeminine or otherwise masculine behaviors. During the early decades of the twentieth century, particularly with the prevalence of the temperance movement and Prohibition in urban spaces, drinking alcohol was viewed as an unsavory behavior associated with troubling morals and lack of judgment.21 Viewing Lyda’s actions in this context therefore would have instantly distanced the readership from sympathizing with her plight, instead choosing to associate her conduct with questionable virtues and unfeminine standards. If, in fact, she was intoxicated, concerns regarding how she comported herself in public, the company she kept while drinking, and the time of day during which these actions occurred would have all been under strict scrutiny.

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14 This data was located in the Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago, and was compiled based on the following sources: Chicago Fact Book Consortium, ed. Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990. 1995. Chicago Historic Resources Survey: An Inventory of Architecturally and Historically Significant Structures. 1996. The URL at which additional information can be found is as follows: http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1318.html.


16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.


20 Ibid.

Second, it is necessary to discuss Lyda’s actual act of having thrown water at her sleeping (read: victimized) husband. Some could argue that the article offers the potential for doubt by commenting, “however may be the facts in the case, Parker is suffering from first, second and third degree burns on his face, neck, back, head and right arm.” In one sense, Parker’s burns are severe enough that there is the very real possibility that he was deliberately scalded despite his wife’s inebriated state. By implying that the facts in the case are not certain, the newspaper gives leeway to contend that Lyda’s ability to go out, drink somewhat excessively, and then return home to physically injure her spouse all reflect tensions between autonomy, domesticity, and even urbanity. Given the inferable hour at which this altercation took place, it is likewise not unreasonable to assume that the water had to be deliberately boiled before being poured on Matthew’s sleeping body. Equally worth noting is Lyda’s nighttime outing which would have not only been viewed as uncharacteristic of a “traditional” (black) wife, but quickly commuted to be of a particular type and class of woman to keep such hours. To be sure, the possibility that the action was premeditated, either being helped along or hindered by the inclusion of nighttime drinks, speaks to the reappropriation of domestic ideals for autonomous purposes. While the use of alcohol in this case speaks to multilayered concerns regarding dangerous drinking and impaired judgment, the similarities between Lyda Parker’s actions and those of Mrs. McCreary, Ms. Thompson, and Ms. Gordon all speak to public – yet historically unacknowledged – trends of black women literally boiling their significant others to gain respect, autonomy, and in many respects, even revenge.

The 1940s: Scalding Suspicions

Although the new decade arrived in the global context of the Second World War, the incidents of African American women being criminalized in black newspapers for using boiling water as a tool of agency in their domestic relationships continued unabated. In Philadelphia, for example, Anna Fields threw scalding water on her husband after piecing together what she believed to be an inappropriate relationship forged between her spouse and another woman. The Afro-American ran the headline “Gets Letter from Girl; Wife Scalds Him in Bed” in the October 19, 1940 edition of the paper. The article explains that Anna intercepted a letter “from an unnamed woman friend” addressed to her husband, Edward Fields. As the text reveals, the letter “precipitated an argument that ended with the enraged mate’s tossing a pan of boiling water on him while he lay in bed.” Just like many of the specifics of the previously analyzed cases, the context in which Anna asserted her autonomy includes the possibility of jealousy, suspicion, confrontation/argumentation, and intentionality. She, like her female comrades, had a seemingly explicit motive, which not only justified her literal actions, but also enabled her to use her knowledge of domestic domains advantageously, leaving her husband physically and arguably emotionally injured.

Yet perhaps the most distinctive aspect that marks this story decidedly different from those previously discussed emerges with the very last sentence of the piece. It reads, “In the meantime, his spouse, Anna, described as 5 feet 2 inches tall, weighing 210 pounds fled.” In context, the sentence reveals that Anna did not accompany Edward to the hospital (he was taken by his daughter-in-law); rather, she left the scene during this time. This interesting turn of events creates three points worth noting. Foremost, this is the first case in which the assumption of children (or at least a son) is mentioned, giving greater insight into the familial structure of this couple and the reality that one or both members of the pair are of age to have a married child. Unlike Lyda Parker’s actions taken against her 26-year-old husband, the logistics offered in this article suggest that Anna and Edward are significantly older than the aforementioned couple. Second, the fact that Anna fled the scene, as opposed to staying by her husband’s side, creates a sort of criminalized callousness about her behavior, further implying guilt/intentionality and an unnatural female/motherly reaction. During this era, women were expected to take care of their houses and ensure the physical wellbeing of all family members was constantly monitored. It was often argued that if a spouse, child, or even friend fell ill or was hurt, the “natural” nurturing role of the female would instinctively take over, allowing the utmost care and attendance to be given to the sick individual. Anna literally abandoned this identity by leaving the scene of the altercation and not going with her burned husband to the hospital. Not only did she reappropriate her traditional position as the domestic housekeeper by throwing boiling hot water on her significant other, but she continued to assert her autonomy and subvert normalized gender roles by not standing by him in times of obvious physical and emotional distress.

Finally and most interesting is the physical description the newspaper offers of Anna as “5 feet 2 inches tall” and “weighing 210 pounds.” None of the heretofore examined articles explore physical markers in association with the propensity to engage in such activities that would result in, for example, a scalded husband. Instead, the idea that Anna’s literal appearance contributed to her behavior is subliminally suggested with these physical descriptors. While her average or slightly below average height is a generally accepted feminine characteristic, her weight instantly connotes a larger and thus stronger, almost masculine-like woman. Anna is journalistically painted as an aggressor not only because she intercepted the mysterious letter, threw “a pan of boiling water” on Edward, and evaded going to the hospital with him in the aftermath, but also because she is described as physically capable of inflicting such harm given her size. Anna, therein, literally epitomizes black women who engage in these trends of reappropriating domestic tools for assertions of autonomy, agency, and independence because she is mentally, physically, and emotionally the opposite of what the idealized black wife should be. While her physical description could possibly serve the additional purpose of finding
her whereabouts in order to charge her with a crime, the importance of Anna’s physical makeup viewed in contrast to respectable – and one could argue, middle class – understandings of blackness, femininity, and domesticity cannot be overlooked.

Much like previously discussed narratives of domesticity being used as a source of critical negotiation of power, the story that appeared in the October 19th, 1946 edition of the New York Amsterdam News reveals even greater descriptions of circumstantial realities involved in these assertive altercations. The headline explains, “Common-Law Wife Scalds Mate Over Girl.” Based purely on this title, then, themes from the earlier articles are obvious in the potential motive of jealousy, the concept of extra-marital affairs, and intentionality. The article opens, “In an argument with her common-law husband about another woman she accused him of having an interest in, Marie Brown, 32, 191 Lefferts Pl., Brooklyn, threw a large pot of scalding water on her spouse, causing him to receive second degree burns about the face, arms and neck late Tuesday night.” The text then names her 43-year-old common-law husband as Robert Pegram, revealing that he had actually been “ordered to move his belongings out of the apartment by Miss Brown” and was in the process of doing so when she “picked up a pot of boiling water from a burning gas stove and tossed it on him.” It continues, “temporarily blinded, the man is reported to have staggered down the stairs, into the street and around the corner,” where he was able to eventually get help summoning an ambulance to get to the Cumberland Street Hospital. Like Anna Field, however, Marie Brown “fled, leaving her belongings,” before a detective went by the apartment to make an arrest, revealing a particular level of socially-unacceptable criminality associated with her actions. This article provides significant detail aligned with earlier narratives of black women asserting their autonomy in domestic disputes which offers greater insight into motives, the role of urbanity, and the power dynamic previously established in the relationship between Brown and Pegram. Moreover, the sensationalized description of the victim’s suffering serves, as in other instances, to evoke sympathy for the male’s physical pain while distancing the reader from the aggressor’s troubling and abnormal actions.

According to this article, there was another woman who was waging a wedge between Marie Brown and Robert Pegram, though the extent to which this unidentified individual was actually involved in this relationship remains unknown. Yet the perceived notion of female competition, at least from Brown’s perspective, was enough to spark a dispute which turned both physical and seemingly violent. The narrative later reveals that Pegram was not in good graces with his common-law wife before the incident occurred, evidenced by the fact he was removing his belongings from the apartment at her insistence. Thus, Brown’s demands suggest not only that she was not pleased with her relationship during that time, but that she also had enough clout in the relationship to make certain demands with ease of enforcement. Given the gendered nature of common-law and legal marriages during this time, the power dynamic between Pegram and Brown suggests that traditional roles of domesticity and masculinity may not have factored heavily into this partnership well before this altercation.

The graphic description, however, of both the actual act of burning Pegram and the aftermath of the attack serves both to create a dichotomy between victimizer and victimized and to elicit a compassionate response for the “helpless” husband. The notion that the water was removed directly from a “burning gas stove” and poured instantly on human flesh heightens the sense of physical torment Pegram must have endured while simultaneously emphasizing the deliberateness of Brown’s actions. She undoubtedly understood the seriousness of her intentions well before engaging in the act, however she decided to follow through with inflicting this particular type of injury. The results, as visible in Pegram’s blindness, staggering walk, and second degree burns, attest to the physical agony experienced through widespread wounds. More in this article perhaps than others discussed is the correlation between exercising domestic autonomy and physical repercussions for male victims which is readily apparent. Through this connection, the audience comes to sympathize with the physical sufferer while growing alienated from the potential emotional, mental, and possibly even physical suffering of the aggressor. Regardless, Brown employed personal knowledge of domestic tools, namely boiling water, in order to negotiate even further her position in her relationship with Pegram.

The importance of urbanity should not be overlooked as a potential factor in the actions undertaken by these black women in their domestic disputes. Living in Brooklyn in 1946, Marie Brown’s experiences would have arguably been translatable to most of the other black women living in northern urban cities discussed here. Although it is impossible to expound on the extent to which living in urban environments affected how these women articulated their romantic relationships and thought of themselves in these often unfamiliar spaces, literature on urbanization, migration, and increased industrialization reveals that city life during the early-to-mid twentieth century offered very real stressors which impacted daily experience. Whether they were living in predominantly black, predominantly white, or mixed-race neighborhoods, the urban reality itself in all probability significantly influenced how these women navigated their day-to-day existence both within and outside of the domestic household. With the prospect of working outside the home and maintaining some level of control or independence externally, the tension between autonomy in public and traditional gender roles in private might have impacted the black women mentioned in these newspaper stories. It seems more than fair to reason that the tensions they felt between public versus private became exacerbated by their significant others’ seemingly unacceptable

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 To learn more about the theoretical frameworks of conceptualizing and articulating (physical) pain, see Elaine Scarry’s The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.
36 For a broad range of scholarship discussing urbanization and its intersection with race, gender, and class, refer to: St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton’s Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in A Northern City; Karen Ferguson’s Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta; Andrew Weise’s Paces of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century; and Sarah Deutsch’s Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940.
37 For discussions of the private v. public dichotomy as it relates to black female domesticity, see Cindy L. White and Catherine A. Dobris’s “The Nobility of Womanhood: ‘Womanhood’ in the Rhetoric of 19th Century Black Club Women,” in Centering Ourselves: African American Feminist and Womanist Studies of Discourse. Also refer to Megan Taylor Shockley’s “We, Too, Are Americans”: African American Women in Detroit and Richmond, 1940-1954.
behavior, resulting in part of the impetus to use boiling water to articulate agency. Thus, Marie Brown falls in line with the handful of other cases discussed so far: her motive relates to jealousy/competition, she understood the consequences of her choice of boiling water, and she resided in an urban environment which posed a unique set of challenges for black women during the 1930s and 1940s.

Conclusion: Patterns of Participation

Although this paper has examined a selective number of cases over two decades during the twentieth century, these trends of black women contesting the traditional bounds of their domesticity were not anomalies isolated in the 1930s and 1940s. Rather, black women have consistently asserting their independence throughout history, and even after the 1940s incidents continued unabated. In fact, a brief glance at headlines in the early 1950s reminds us that these behavioral patterns not only remained sensationalized in black media outlets, but that the women who engaged in these activities were part of a longer trajectory of domestic agency. In 1950, the Pittsburgh Courier ran “Pays Ten Dollars: Pours Boiling Water on Her Hubby, Fined” on the first page of the newspaper. The Chicago Defender headlined “Doused By Spouse” the next year. Following suite, the Philadelphia Tribune offered “Jealous Wife Held After Hot Water Douses Husband” in 1953. The stories continued in the Afro-American, the Cleveland Call and Post, and the New York Amsterdam News, revealing the widespread nature of these seemingly violent disputes that remain silent within the annals of African American history. By noting the prevalence of these occurrences outside of the decades analyzed in this article, it is possible to contextual these women’s actions in the larger historical frameworks of (black) American culture.

Indeed, narratives of domesticity, autonomy, agency, intimacy, intentionality and even urbanity are woven throughout these newspaper articles chronicling black women’s use of boiling water as a tool of leverage, if not power, in altercations with their significant others. While these two decades represent only a microcosm in the country’s historical imagination, the realities of Mrs. Cleveland McCreary, Mildred Thompson, Emma Gordon, Lyda Parker, Anna Fields, and Marie Brown speak to the deliberateness of their actions as simultaneously individualized and arguably popularized. Thus, these women (un)consciously used their personal predicaments to express discontent, assert agency, and engage with a collective identity of other black women utilizing the same domestic tool, namely boiling water, to address their individual experiences of frustration, pain, and intolerance. The binary of the female aggressor and male victim woven throughout these articles challenges preconceived notions of traditional gender roles while suggesting a reconsideration of behaviors cast as abnormal given the multitude of cases similar across the twentieth century. By examining the descriptions, meanings, and outplay of romantic disruption espoused in these six cases, constructing narratives about black women who reappropriated domesticity to obtain independence, power, and control in their personal relationships is not only a productive intervention into current scholarship on black women’s history, but it also connects these individuals to a historical legacy of asserting and even demanding autonomy.

“Boiling Water, Chemicals Used to Injure Two,” Cleveland Call and Post, August 22, 1953, 4D.
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Solidarity and Betrayal: Recontextualizing Anne Boleyn within the Boleyn-Howard Family

Sonia Boodram

Advisor: Derek Hirst

The mystery and intrigue surrounding the rise and fall of Anne Boleyn, one of England’s most controversial and influential Queen Consorts, has spun an impressive legend of a woman, who managed to singlehandedly and profoundly revolutionize the course of a nation’s history. As intelligent and independent as Anne may appear, she did not strategize or act in isolation, but together with her family. In sixteenth century England, social and political advancement, particularly at court, was a family affair. Kinship networks usually worked in harmony to preserve economic, social and political assets within the family; consequently, family solidarity primarily characterized the composition and functioning of the traditional noble family. Because the Boleyn family was the unit, which facilitated both Anne’s rise to prominence and her ultimate downfall, this thesis will primarily analyze the factors, both external and internal, that bolstered family solidarity or, alternately, tested its limits. Family solidarity had functioned in an enormous way to bring the family to the pinnacle of success when the King had decided to divorce his wife and marry his mistress. However, when Anne finally married the King, the very family solidarity that had facilitated such an impressive rise could only withstand so many challenges. The foremost strains on family solidarity were the redistribution of power and the upset of patriarchal hierarchy, which alienated the Boleyn and Howard patriarchs. Other external factors testing the mettle of Boleyn-Howard family included the turbulent religious climate, producing clashes over religious convictions, and social standards of female sexuality, leading to concerns about family honor and reputation. Finally, affective considerations, particularly related to marital felicity of reluctant brides or scorned wives, tended to factor into women’s decisions to betray the family. The overlap of these factors gradually contributed the disintegration of family solidarity, culminating in not only the ruin of Anne but also the demise of the Boleyn dynasty.
In January of 1919, the world descended upon Paris to create a lasting post-war settlement. Europe had been ravaged of war, and its belligerents, Allied and Central Powers alike, hoped to prevent a return to military conflict. The Big Three—Woodrow Wilson, David Lloyd George, and Georges Clemenceau—held immense power in constructing the peace. Although each possessed various nationalistic aims, they agreed peace was the most pressing consideration. Yet only three decades later, Europe returned to total war. What caused this failed post-war settlement? Could it have been avoided? And most importantly, where did things go wrong? This paper identifies the major flaws of the Versailles Treaty and their lasting political and economic consequences on the European system. In doing so, it identifies the major players at the Versailles Conference and the origins of their political ideologies. It then examines the relationship between these three leaders, focusing on their dealings touching on the League of Nations, Russia, and Germany. In order to understand the mistakes made at Versailles, this paper surveys the history of reparations from initiation to the legal abandonment at the Lausanne Conference (1932). Finally, it critiques Keynes’ The Economic Consequences of the Peace, highlighting Keynes’ failure to discuss Germany’s human capital complicates the value of his assessment. This form of resource could not be destroyed by the war or transferred in a Carthaginian Peace, ensuring Germany’s ultimate economic recovery.
Before America entered World War I, the British army had a severe shortage of medical officers. Many doctors were killed at the beginning of the war, when a large number had stayed at the battlefront to boost morale. Simultaneously, the army needed more doctors to treat the increasing number of wounded. After America declared war in April 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour requested that America lend doctors to the British army. On April 21, 1917, Washington University School of Medicine’s professor of surgery, Dr. Frederick Murphy, received a wire from the surgeon general asking if he could send a medical unit to Europe. Dr. Murphy quickly volunteered his unit, and they departed for Europe on May 19, 1917. Dr. Murphy was the commander of a Red Cross Base Hospital Unit made up of Washington University medical faculty named Base Hospital No. 21. This unit was one of fifty organized by the Department of Military Relief and the American Red Cross in July 1916. The Red Cross had wanted existing civil institutions to prepare hospital units in the case that America entered the war. Though the Washington University unit existed for almost a year before it was called to service, its doctors and nurses knew very little about military matters. In addition, they knew very little about the European people they would be serving. Base Hospital No. 21’s service at a general hospital in Rouen, France led to the development of a strong sense of internationalism among the unit’s members. This thesis explores the growth of these men and women into international humanitarians. The comradeship developed during the unit’s war service inspired them to continue helping the world after World War I. This thesis also places Washington University’s World War I involvement among the larger story of the medical school’s rise to prestige in the twentieth century.
When John Winthrop sold his hereditary estates and boarded a ship bound for New England, he joined an undertaking the likes of which Western Europe had never before seen. Winthrop and his fellow Puritans, driven out of England by their collective conscience and an increasingly authoritarian governing body, sought to create a society of purity based on a specific and supposedly homogenous interpretation of scripture. From such hopes and dreams, Winthrop dreamed of the creation of a city upon a hill. Winthrop arrived in New England in 1630; over the course of the next decade, tens of thousands would follow. New England was to be the land of the Elect, Massachusetts Bay its center and Boston its holy city. And yet, as men forged together by a common fervor against the Church of England came into this new land, their shared dream of a homogenous society began to fracture. From the shattered ruins of unity rose a party of conservative, like-minded purists. With John Winthrop at their head, this party quickly dominated the political landscape of Massachusetts Bay Colony. This paper seeks to tell the story of the challenges faced by that group of individuals, and will primarily focus on the rise of one specific, dominant sect of Massachusetts Politics in the early decades: Massachusetts merchants. It will become apparent that Massachusetts Bay Colony’s conservative party attempted to maintain the most rigid religious and political systems available to them, only deviating from such policies when the existence of the Colony required them to do so. A detailed analysis of these events will provide insight into the priorities and requirements of the developing colony, Winthrop and his allies, and Massachusetts merchants within Massachusetts Bay.
Joan of Arc was crucial to the French victory over the English in the Hundred Years’ War. Her testimonies before the inquisitions into heretical depravity, especially at Rouen, were particularly extensive in comparison to other inquisitorial records, giving insight not only into an adolescent visionary, but also into the way that inquisitors were working by the fifteenth century. Although there is significant literature written about Joan’s trials, both scholarly and popular, very few of these works capture her fundamental quality as a holy girl or the religious ethos of her inquisitors. It is all too easy to simply approach the Joan and her interrogators through a modern lens and ignore the historical complexities of medieval Europe. This study aims to grasp the meaning and practice of holiness for both Joan and her inquisitors, especially Pierre Cauchon, in order to explore the differing religious perspectives that were created by the inquisition. This analysis primarily analyzes the trial of Joan of Arc at Rouen, which lasted from February through May, 1431. It also uses secondary sources written about Joan in order to gain a greater perspective of her as a military leader and as a mystic. The intricacies of the inquisition and the discrepancies in religious understanding that it not only created but also facilitated are particularly clear through an in-depth study of Joan’s interrogation and eventual condemnation.
During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Englishmen heightened their involvement in overseas exploration and colonization. Their activities would lead to the establishment of Jamestown in 1607 and the growth of an English maritime empire. Although Richard Hakluyt never left Western Europe, he played an important role in the English expansion by translating, compiling and publishing texts on geographic discovery. The prefaces and dedications to his texts often encouraged English interest and participation in overseas endeavors. He has gained attention in modern scholarship particularly for his Principal Navigations of the English Nation, a compilation of mainly English travel accounts, and for his Discourse on Western Planting, a manuscript that argued for English colorization in the Americas. Due to such texts, historical scholars have cited Hakluyt as indicative of a growing “nationalism” in Elizabethan England. This thesis will question such assumptions about Hakluyt’s “national” focus. It explores the united, European experience that arose in expeditions to the New World and it shows that Hakluyt understood discovery as a European process. Then, it considers the communities that provided financial backing for overseas ventures as well as contemporary trends in geographic scholarship in order to establish Hakluyt’s purposes in his works. The purposes involved both encouraging English projects and proffering information about the world. Finally, the thesis examines Hakluyt’s attitudes toward foreigners to demonstrate that he held more ambiguous attitudes than modern scholars have frequently noted and that his interactions with foreigners did not always align with English interests. The thesis argues that Hakluyt and his works do not show a simplistic English pride. While Hakluyt undeniably saw the possibility for an English maritime endeavor and his writings supported such a project, he did not operate solely with English concerns in mind.
WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT NAPOLEON: THE FEDERALIST PRESS VIEWS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE’S RISE TO POWER, 1796-1800

Brett Mead

Advisor: Venus Bivar

The Federalist press took a conflicted, yet ultimately negative stance to Napoleon Bonaparte during his rise to power from 1796 to 1800. Their reporting on him reflected deeply held Federalist values, foremost among them a self-interested approach to their international coverage. At the outset of Bonaparte’s Italian campaigns, some in the Federalist press believed his campaigns, along with France’s new government, the Directory, would lead to peace and normalize relations with the United States. However, as the relationship between France and the United States deteriorated, and as Bonaparte’s campaigns dragged on, Federalists turned wholesale against him. During the years leading up to his 1800 Coup of 18 Brumaire, Federalists used Bonaparte to harp on the evils of foreign war and French Revolutionary approaches to religion, and on the necessity of “regular” governments. Federalist coverage of Bonaparte also reveals their belief that the French Revolution would all but inevitably end in a despotism—rather than the monarchical rule which they preferred for France, if not America—with many in the Federalist press guessing that Napoleon would be at its head. Given the offenses Bonaparte had accrued between 1796 and 1799, Federalists were unwilling to support his coup or his consular government, thus demonstrating a limit in how far they were willing to go to see the hated French Revolution come to an end. Federalists used Bonaparte’s first year in power as a propaganda tool against American Republicans who had championed him and the Revolution. Despite the fact that Bonaparte ended the Quasi-War and brought about changes in France—including the persecution of Jacobins—ostensibly favorable to Federalists, their understanding of him as a demagogue-general and product of the Revolution prevented them from offering him any but tepid and occasional praise.
Following Japan’s formal surrender on August 15, 1945, an army of American occupation officials arrived on the Japanese mainland with two objectives: the demilitarization and democratization of Japan and its people. In order to achieve these goals, American planners instituted far-reaching reforms that, in conjunction with destruction from the war, became sources of destabilization. By the summer of 1946, this disarray reached its apex, and the Japanese found themselves facing a severe famine. This thesis investigates the nature of deprivation in Japanese society while undergoing this famine, focusing primarily on contextualizing the Japanese experience within the American occupation and Japanese defeat. Issues of Japanese social, economic, and political breakdown are placed within the broader context of famine as it pertains to change in society. By analyzing prominent debates that carried out in newspapers during the famine, this thesis seeks to better understand the nature of agency in the defeated Japanese population. It is clear that the Americans held undisputed control on power in occupied Japan; however, the level of support the Japanese held for the American rulers over their erstwhile Japanese leaders during the postwar period remains to be explored. This thesis argues that the population did support drastic change in Japanese society, at least during the 1946 famine, and that American policy implementation benefitted from this reality. Additionally, this thesis argues that changes in American policy toward Japan, specifically the “reverse course,” were affected not only by Cold War era fluctuations, but by endogenous Japanese developments as well.
Organic farming began as an alternative to industrial agricultural practices that included intensified monoculture and widespread application of synthetic chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides. The movement was an outgrowth of early twentieth century concerns about proper nutrition, which became connected to soil fertility in the 30s and 40s through the work of British agricultural botanist Sir Albert Howard. Howard believed in the rule of return and that a person gets from the soil what they put in it, meaning that good soil health would lead to healthy human beings. J.I. Rodale, an American writer and publisher, took Howard’s farming methods and applied them in the United States, calling for greater attention to be paid not only to the quality of the soil in which the nation’s food was grown, but also to the food that its citizens consumed. Although organic foods can now be found in most supermarkets, albeit often in a limited selection, there was a time when organic farming was primarily a fringe practice that served a small community of committed consumers. This thesis discusses the formation of the organic movement in America and its transition from alternative food networks to mainstream supermarkets like Whole Foods. Through close study of the process through which the term “organic” became defined, it becomes clear how organic production evolved from its small, independent farmer ideals to its radical roots in the 60s counterculture and ultimately grew into a multi-billion dollar industrial-organic complex. While the organic movement began as a way to provide healthy food to consumers, this thesis argues that the movement’s growing popularity pushed its members to take measures to legitimize the practice and in doing so gentrified its products. As a result access to organic products was limited to a narrow consumer base rather than expanding the movement’s overall impact on food security among low-income consumers and people of color.
Early modern English portrait miniatures were used in personal and political exchange to cultivate both a private image and a public intimacy. These objects were an integral part of foreign and domestic relationship-building in the early modern era. They functioned domestically within the Elizabethan court and abroad in diplomatic relations with Scotland, France, and the Ottoman and Mughal empires, to name just a few. Miniatures were by nature intimate objects, meant to be worn, held and sometimes hidden. But they were also visible gifts and signs of favor. In political relationships, this contrast played on tensions between public and private identity, and allowed early modern political actors to use and exploit them for political purposes. Queen Elizabeth in particular was adept at adapting the miniature’s language of courtship and intimacy to the political sphere. I examine primary source accounts of portrait miniatures along with the objects themselves to offer a nuanced view of the portrait miniature as gift, object and image. Though the portraits cannot speak, they remain eloquent symbols of the personal, political relationship in the early modern age.