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A Virgin Queen, But Not by Choice

Emily Abdow

This paper was written in Tudors and Stuarts, 1485-1707 (HIST 361), taught by Dr. Pollnitz.



“A Virgin Queen, But Not By Choice” explores the the question of why Queen Elizabeth I never married. The essay argues that Elizabeth’s gender required her to have the full support of both her privy council and parliament to tie the knot on a marriage, which proved an impossible feat. In addition, the essay argues the debates surrounding each potential match - including fears of a Catholic suitors influence in Protestant England - were political repercussions of her womanhood. The failed courtships of Robert Dudley, Charles Archduke of Austria, and Francis, Duke of Anjou, serve as case studies that illustrate Elizabeth’s inability to proceed with any match due to divides among her councilors. Ultimately, the essay demonstrates how Elizabeth’s very virginity was a decision made by for her by her male councilors.

TODAY, QUEEN ELIZABETH I IS IMMORTALIZED AS “THE VIRGIN QUEEN,” but for much of her reign cultural works depicted her not as a virgin, but as England’s Deborah, the only female judge in the Bible and the wife of Lapidoth. It was not until 1578, twenty years into her reign, as Elizabeth contemplated marriage with Francis, Duke of Anjou, that opponents of the marriage glorified the iconography of chastity for which she is known. Before 1578, when Sir Robert Dudley appeared a potential match, theatrical performances privileged marriage and producing children as the higher and more natural state than celibacy.¹ Susan Doran argues Elizabeth would have wed on two occasions had her privy council reached a consensus on either suitor.² This essay will further the argument that while Elizabeth expressed preference for the celibate life, she pursued marriage with the hopes that the right husband would not only solve the issue of the succession but also strengthen England’s position on the continent. However, her marriage negotiations were hindered by councilors who could not reach a consensus over any of her potential suitors. While Doran argues the queen’s marriage negotiations failed not because of Elizabeth’s gender but because of the political debates surrounding each courtship, the privy council’s debates and the power of such disagreements to derail Elizabeth’s marriage negotiations were direct political consequences of her womanhood.

Queen Elizabeth I expressed an (albeit grudging) willingness to wed in response to a request from Parliament in 1559. Speaker of the Lower House Thomas Gargrave delivered his request couched in flattery for his majesty: “[t]here is nothing which with more ardent affection we beg of God in our daily prayers, than that our happiness hitherto received by

your most gracious government may be perpetuated to the English Nation unto all eternity.”³ According to Gargrave, such a prayer could only be granted if Elizabeth ruled forever, an impossibility, or if she provided England with an heir.⁴ In the 1560s, an heir appeared crucial for the subjects of Protestant England when Elizabeth refused to exclude the Roman Catholic Mary Stuart from the succession. For Parliament and the Privy Council, an heir was the only way to preserve Protestantism in England and provide an unchallenged succession.

Elizabeth’s response to Gargrave has perhaps contributed to popular images of the Virgin Queen determined never to wed, but is in fact evidence of the contrary. “I have already joined myself in marriage to a husband, namely, the Kingdom of England,” Elizabeth replied. “And do not upbraid me with miserable lack of children: for every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are children and kinsmen to me.”⁵ Such a declaration depicts a queen content to rule alone, but Elizabeth did not end her response on this decisive note. Instead, she added an additional sentiment: “Nevertheless, if it please God that I enter into another course of life, I promise you I will do nothing which may be prejudicial to the Commonwealth, but will take such a husband, as near as may be, as will have as great a care of the Commonwealth as myself.”⁶ Elizabeth’s initial response reads like a reprimand to a member of parliament for raising a subject as touchy as the succession, while her concluding concession reveals her willingness to both consider a match with a man whose kingship would benefit her country and produce an heir to ensure a peaceful transition of power upon her death.

Elizabeth’s courtships in the following decade offer evidence that the queen listened to the entreaties of Parliament and her Privy Council. Yet, her failure to tie the knot is a result of division within these two bodies. An analysis of her courtships reveals Elizabeth refused to conclude marriage negotiations without the full support of her advisors, particularly those in her trusted Privy Council, and thus, each courtship ended when her councilors failed to reach a consensus. Susan Doran argues that “to appreciate why these negotiations failed, we have to turn our eyes away from the character and gender of the queen and focus instead on the debates surrounding the courtships.”⁷ According to Doran, Elizabeth did not reject any marriages due to “political reasons associated with her gender,” and yet, Elizabeth’s reliance on full support from her privy council is, in fact, a political reason associated with her gender.

The political repercussions of Elizabeth’s gender are exemplified in the works of John Knox and John Aylmer, two religious leaders divided over the danger of female rule. Knox’s *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* is a scathing objection to female rule, arguing that a woman in power is a sick corruption of nature.⁸ In *True Haborrowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects, against the late blowne Blaste concerninge the Government of Women*, Aylmer refutes Knox’s claims and defends female rule. One pillar of Aylmer’s argument is that England is especially suited for female rule given its governmental structure: “The regiment of England is not a mere monarchy, as some for lack of consideration think, nor a mere oligarchy, nor democracy, but a rule mixed of all there, wherein each one of these have or should have like authority,” Aylmer wrote.⁹ For Aylmer, a “rule mixed” where bodies of men including Parliament and the Privy Council could provide a check on their

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female ruler's power, protected England from the harmful effects of female rule. Stephen Alford argues that under the influence of Privy Council member William Cecil Lord Burghley, both the Privy Council and Parliament were elevated to active participants in running the realm.¹⁰ Thus, the queen's demonstrated need for full support of her Privy Council arose from the knowledge that even those amenable to female rule would only view her choice of husband as legitimate if she had the backing of the men in England's "rule mixed."

In his defense of female rule, Aylmer also drew upon the image of Deborah, the biblical married judge, revealing his belief that marriage was in Elizabeth's future.¹¹ Aylmer's choice of allusion is significant because it shows even he, who refuted claims that a female ruler was unnatural, assumed marriage was the natural course for a female ruler. In fact, in his argument that a representative, "rule mixed" government would keep a female ruler in check, Aylmer employed imagery of marriage. "The rule and kind of government betwixt the man and the wife ...is like the government ...of a Senate," Aylmer wrote. "For the man according to his worthiness, ruleth in such things as becommeth him, and the wife in such is meete for her."¹² Thus, in ensuring the queen exercised sound judgement, the Privy Council and Parliament acted as her husband. Aylmer believed not only that Elizabeth would marry – as evidenced by his allusion to Deborah – but also that a true husband could serve as the ultimate protection against any actions stemming from her lesser qualities resulting from her gender. For Aylmer, marriage was not only the natural course dictated by the Bible, it was the best course for England. Aylmer could not have foreseen that members of Elizabeth's Privy Council, lavishing in their role as Elizabeth's proxy husbands, would not want a true husband to usurp their political influence.



A true husband could serve as the ultimate protection against any actions stemming from her lesser qualities resulting from her gender.

Sir Robert Dudley, known as "The Queen's favorite," appeared to be Elizabeth's clear choice for a husband in the early 1560's. The case of Dudley reveals not only Elizabeth's openness to marriage, but her belief that she could garner support from her counselors. However, support for a Dudley match proved difficult. First, there was the mysterious death of his wife Amy Dudley, followed by rumors of illegitimate children between Dudley and the queen. In addition, Dudley's rise above his fellow council members at court sparked fears of factionalism amongst Elizabeth's advisors. To allay concerns regarding the queen marrying one of her subjects, Dudley commissioned plays such as the Play of Patient Grisell, written by John Phillip in 1560, in which Prince Gautier gives up a life of celibacy to marry for the good of his kingdom and takes a peasant girl as his wife. Phillip aimed to assuage fears of factionalism and paint Dudley as a humble and worthy choice by describing the peasant as a peacemaker.¹³ Another play, which Dudley intended to present Elizabeth while she visited his

castle in 1575, portrayed the nymph Zabeta who had to choose between Diana, the goddess of chastity, or Juno, the goddess of marriage. The play's conclusion, with goddess Iris praising marriage, was meant to serve as Dudley's allegorical proposal to the queen and provides evidence that images of marriage trumped those of celibacy.¹⁴ Therefore, images of marriage, not celibacy, dominated the period of the Dudley courtship.

Unfortunately for Dudley, Privy Council members such as William Cecil undermined his courtship efforts. Cecil's opposition to Dudley stemmed from his own political ambitions to be Elizabeth's chief advisor, which he accomplished when Elizabeth appointed him to the coveted Master of the Court of Wards in 1561. To thwart Dudley, Cecil played upon the very fears he would try to allay with later suitors Archduke Charles of Austria and Francis, Duke of Anjou; those of a Catholic suitor threatening the prosperity of Protestant England. Dudley had turned to Spain to seek international backing for his suit and decided to pursue the position of papal nuncio to England to gain support for his potential union with the Queen. When a Catholic priest was arrested and a letter found in his home expressing hopes the papal nuncio would bring toleration for English Catholics, Cecil defeated the papal nuncio and Dudley's efforts to gain support abroad.¹⁵

The debate surrounding the Dudley match was a product of the political repercussions of Elizabeth's gender. In opposing the marriage on the grounds that Elizabeth should not wed one beneath her in her own court, members of the Privy Council acted upon fears that Dudley would rise above them. As Aylmer wrote, the Privy Council members played the role of proxy husbands, but a true husband would become the ultimate check on the queen's power. Thus, advisors such as Cecil, who saw their favor with the queen threatened, sparked unresolvable debates over the match. Elizabeth's need for full Privy Council approval in order to move forward with the match – yet another repercussion of her womanhood – forced her to look elsewhere for her husband due to opposition within her court. After Dudley, Elizabeth broadened her search from within her court to outside of her country.

With a broader search came broader fears than court factionalism. The Archduke Charles of Austria's courtship of Elizabeth, commenced in 1563, caused councilors to divide over the danger of his Catholicism. Cecil supported the match, believing the Archduke's commitment to the Catholic faith to be only moderate. But when the Archduke insisted on holding mass within the royal household, support for the match dwindled, with Dudley playing upon fears of Catholic influence to subvert negotiations.¹⁶ While Charles offered potential benefits – the opportunity for Elizabeth to gain an international ally and produce an heir with Hapsburg blood – religious incompatibilities proved insurmountable in Elizabeth's courting of the archduke. Evidence that English male royalty could marry a Catholic is provided by the case of Charles I, who became king of England in 1625 and wed the Catholic Henrietta Maria of France. But for Elizabeth, her womanhood caused her Privy Council to fear she would be unable to wield greater religious influence than her Catholic husband. For a queen reliant upon a body of men to approve her marriage, such fears destroyed her chance to wed.

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The foreigner the queen came closest to marrying was Francis, Duke of Anjou, a Catholic who was twenty-two years her junior. Anjou sparked similar fears of Catholic influence when Elizabeth, attracted by the benefits of an alliance with France, opened marriage negotiations with him in 1579. Like Archduke Charles of Austria, Anjou refused to give up holding mass. However, he conceded to forgoing public exercise of his religion, banning the queen's subjects from his mass chamber, and attending English church services.¹⁷ Despite these concessions, Elizabeth's council remained divided over Anjou's Catholicism. The council also remained divided by debates over Anjou's effect on England's foreign relations. In 1579, Spain sought to conquer the Netherlands, and an Anglo-French alliance appeared strategic to stop a Spanish victory. Thomas Radcliffe promoted the match with Anjou to counter French intervention in the Netherlands while Cecil argued the marriage would break up the international Catholic coalition of France and Spain.¹⁸ However, Francis Walsingham pointed to Anjou's failed campaign in the Netherlands as evidence England could stand alone against its enemies. Instead of benefiting England, Walsingham claimed the marriage could exacerbate relations with Scotland by ending James VI's hopes of claiming the crown upon Elizabeth's death.¹⁹ Anjou's failed ventures in the Netherlands did little to sway the queen's councilors who argued a French alliance would only entangle England in unnecessary wars. Thus, the queen's marriage was again halted by dissent amongst her advisors. Once again, the dissent was gendered, stemming from fears that a female ruler could not control her foreign husband's influence, both in regard to his religion and his military operations.

The debate over Anjou's Catholicism is evidenced in letters by Elizabeth's councilors including William Cecil, who wrote for the match, and Phillip Sidney, who wrote against it. Cecil's letter to the queen, sent in 1579, argued life is not as full without a companion as even God made the angels to keep himself company. Next, Cecil argued Anjou's marriage to Elizabeth would not give him the power to overthrow Protestantism. Finally, Cecil wrote that Protestants could not help but support the match out of love for Elizabeth, and Catholics would support the match, not to see their religion reign supreme but to have protection from persecution.²⁰ Philip Sidney countered Cecil in his own letter in 1579, arguing the match would have two devastating effects: alienating Protestants and providing papists with a platform to voice their discontent. "If, then, the affectionate have their affections weakened and the discontented have a gap to utter their discontentation, I think it will seem an evil preparative for the patient (I mean your estate) to a greater sickness," Sidney wrote.²¹ Sidney's letter demonstrates a failure by Elizabeth to gather the necessary full support for her marriage. While Cecil believed the match could succeed, his argument was unrealistic, relying on the full support of England's men, both Protestant and Catholic, just as Elizabeth relied upon the full support of her Privy Council to affirm her actions. Sidney voiced the prevailing opinion: Elizabeth was not powerful enough to mitigate the influence of a Catholic husband.

Unlike with Archduke Charles, the response by opponents to the Anjou match extended to the public sphere. John Stubbes authored the most famous publication in opposition to the match: *Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf*. Stubbes argued Elizabeth's marriage to a papist would breach God's law and harm both the state and Elizabeth. Furthermore, Stubbes played upon



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Elizabeth's gender in his attack. He portrayed Elizabeth as Eve, the weak woman tricked by Anjou, the serpent. "Because she is also our Adam and sovereign Lord, or lordly Lady of this land, it is so much the more dangerous," Stubbes wrote.²² While Stubbes' attack centered on religion, he also sought to stir up fear of a foreign influence and extol English independence. He wrote, "it is natural to all men to abhor foreign rule as a burden of Egypt," and argued France posed a far greater threat than Spain.²³ The spread of Stubbes' publication to churches in England suggests a public sphere existed in opposition to the Anjou match. Natalie Mears argues Elizabeth saw a divide between the public sphere and her advisors, and only subjects she appointed to her council had the right to weigh in on policy-making issues.²⁴ Unlike Elizabeth's advisors who voiced opposition to the match, a lawyer such as Stubbes could not invoke such an inflammatory opinion without also invoking the wrath of the queen.

In his pamphlet, Stubbes echoed the sentiments of John Knox, writing that because of Elizabeth's gender, she must accept advice from her male councilors. "It is a faithless careless part, to leave her helpless in her choice of the person and personal conditions of her husband to her own consideration," Stubbes wrote.²⁵ Knox, knowing the seditious nature of his publication, had penned it anonymously, while Stubbes took public ownership of his work and suffered for it at the scaffold. On September 27, 1579, Elizabeth issued a proclamation ordering the Lord Mayor of London to collect and burn every copy of Stubbes' pamphlet. Aylmer himself gathered forty ministers and urged them to speak out against the work. Elizabeth's fury did not abate until both Stubbes and one of his printers, Hugh Singleton, had their right hands chopped off and were locked for months in the tower.²⁶ Elizabeth's public fury at Stubbes and his printers is evidence of her belief that a common man had no right to dissent to her marriage negotiations or comment on her womanly need for counsel. While Elizabeth could not punish her male councilors or risk confirming Knox's notions of women as weak, foolish, and lacking judgement, she could exact her revenge on a member of the public sphere. Elizabeth's punishment of Stubbes sent a message to her kingdom that, far from being a Virgin Queen, she was determined to wed, and she would not allow men outside of her council to stand in her way.

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A letter to Anjou, likely penned by Elizabeth in February 1580, described how Parliament's Anti-Catholic sentiment and opposition to the match was exacerbated by recent arrivals of Jesuit missionaries in England. "I pray you tell me your will honestly, and what you think about these misfortunes," Elizabeth wrote.²⁷ By distancing herself from Parliament

in this letter, Elizabeth reveals she did not share in “the fear and murmuring.” However, her letter also reveals the importance of Parliament’s opinion of her marriage negotiations. In another unsent letter written for Anjou in 1579, Elizabeth discussed how their potential marriage threatened Spain by writing, “the King of Spain, his eldest son, are planning day by day ... to hinder this marriage, thinking it of ill omen for the advancement of evil in this Kingdom.”²⁸ Elizabeth’s words are evidence that, despite dissent from her councilors, she saw the Anjou match as beneficial to England’s foreign policy. However, in the same letter she acknowledged the effort was likely to fail. “If the marriage does not happen, I don’t see a better path to set my steps on, than by the way of close friendship, such as human understanding can compose between us two: in which the fortune of the one takes the same form as that of the other,” she wrote.²⁹ Recognizing her inability to gather full support, Elizabeth set her sights on an alliance with France outside of a marital one. While the marriage negotiations ultimately failed, Elizabeth’s persistence despite popular anti-Catholic sentiments and fear of international entanglements offers compelling evidence that she was open to marriage.

The divisiveness of the Anjou marriage negotiations is evidenced by the multitude of cultural works on both sides of the debate. Councilors such as Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex commissioned plays extolling the virtues of marriage. In 1579, Sussex entertained the queen at New Hall with a performance involving Jupiter, which according to a letter by Sir Edward Clere, encouraged the queen to marry. The next day at New Hall, Sussex again provided the queen with an entertainment urging her to marry. This time, the play involved a knight who needed to be rescued by a virgin queen. Neil Younger explains the knight was Anjou and he could only obtain release from his captivity by marrying the queen, an even more appealing bride due to her virginity.³⁰ However, Elizabeth ultimately remained celibate and, as a result, the cultural works in opposition to the Anjou match are the ones that prevailed. Such opposition works included plays by Thomas Churchyard performed during Elizabeth’s stay at Norwich in 1578. Churchyard’s entertainments, which criticized the Anjou match, also stressed virginity as a virtue, particularly through the goddess Diana who praised the Virgin Queen as pure and perfect.³¹ Other opposition works included the sieve portraits of the queen painted from 1579 to 1583. In these portraits, Elizabeth holds a sieve associated with Tuccia, the Roman Vestal Virgin who proved her virginity by carrying a sieve of water from the Tiber to the Temple of Vesta. Painter George Gower inscribed parts of Petrarch’s *Triumph of Chastity* glorifying Tuccia on his 1579 sieve portrait.³² In discussing such works, Doran demonstrates how Elizabeth did not create the cult of virginity, but instead reclaimed the image created by writers and painters as her own when she saw the Anjou marriage negotiations would fail.³³ One way Elizabeth achieved this goal was by appointing Gower to serve as her Serjeant Painter in 1581.³⁴ Thus, she created the illusion that chastity was an image she had commissioned for herself.

Ultimately, Queen Elizabeth’s inability to tie the knot on any marriage suit while her Privy Council remained divided was a political consequence of her womanhood. Her openness to wed is evidenced both by her response to Parliament’s entreaty of marriage and by her persistence in pursuing potential husbands. She was particularly persistent with her

favorite, Robert Dudley, and with the French Francis, Duke of Anjou. However, as evidenced by the writings of both John Aylmer and John Stubbes, her subjects could only rest assured in their female ruler as long as she was kept in check by England's "rule mixed," and thus any match would only be legitimate with the approval of both Parliament and the Privy Council. The Privy Council's unresolvable political debates, which caused them to remain divided over every potential match, were repercussion of Elizabeth's gender. In the case of Dudley, councilors feared a king usurping the Privy Council and with Anjou, they believed their queen could not hold her own against the influences of a foreign king. Thus, Elizabeth's celibacy was a choice made for her by her male counselors, and the image of her virginity that emerged was created by men who opposed her marriage. While some historians laud Elizabeth as an early feminist heroine who chose to forgo men to keep her autonomy, the truth is far less appealing. Her very virginity was a choice made for her by men.

NOTES

1. Susan Doran, "Juno versus Diana: The treatment of Elizabeth I's marriage in plays and entertainments, 1561-1581," *Historical Journal*, 38:2 (1995), Cambridge Journals Online. 259-262.
2. Susan Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony: The courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 5-12.
3. Elizabeth I, Queen of England and Simonds D'Ewes, *The Marriage Speech* (extemporaneous version), 1559 (Boston: Northeastern University Women Writers Project, 2001).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony*, 11.
8. John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women* (Geneva: J. Poullaine and A. Rebul, 1558).
9. John Aylmer, *True Haborrowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects, against the late blowne Blaste, concerninge the Government of Wemen, wherin be confuted all such reasons as a stranger of late made in that behalfe, with a breife exhortation to obedience* (Strasburg, 1559).
10. Stephen Alford, *The early Elizabethan polity: William Cecil and the British succession crisis, 1558-1569*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 212.
11. Aylmer, *True Haborrowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects*.
12. Ibid.
13. Doran, "Juno versus Diana," 259-260.
14. Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony*, 68.
15. Ibid., 50.
16. Ibid., 73-98.
17. Ibid., 134.
18. Ibid., 159.
19. Ibid., 160.
20. William Cecil, "Letter to the Queen Regarding Her Proposed Marriage" (1579) in *Elizabeth I and her age: Authoritative texts commentary and criticism*, ed. Donald Stump and Susan Felch (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 2009), 274-276.
21. Philip Sidney, "From A Discourse of Sir Philip Sidney to the Queen's Majesty Touching Her Marriage with Monsieur" (1579) in *Elizabeth I and her age: Authoritative texts commentary and criticism*, ed. Donald Stump and Susan Felch (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 2009), 274-276.
22. John Stubbes, *The discoverie of a gaping gulf vvhreinto England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage, if the Lord forbid not the banes, by letting her Maiestie see the sin and punishment thereof* (London: H. Singleton for W. Page, 1579) on EEBO.
23. Ibid., 165.
24. Natalie Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship: John Stubbs's 'The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf', 1579," *The Historical Journal*, 44:3 (2001), 649. JSTOR.
25. John Stubbes, *The discoverie of a gaping gulf vvhreinto England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage, if the Lord forbid not the banes, by letting her Maiestie see the sin and punishment thereof* (London: H. Singleton for W. Page, 1579) in "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship: John Stubbs's 'The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf', 1579," Natalie Mears, 642.
26. Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony*, 164-168.
27. Elizabeth I, "Letter 4 - Translation," in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric, and Politics*, eds. Carlo Bajetta, Guillaume Coatalen, and Jonathan Gibson, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 47-48.
28. Elizabeth I, "Letter 2 - Translation," in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric, and Politics*, eds. Carlo Bajetta, Guillaume Coatalen, and Jonathan Gibson, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 38.
29. Ibid., 38.
30. Neil Younger, "Drama, politics, and news in the earl of Sussex's entertainment of Elizabeth I at New Hall, 1579," *Historical Journal*, 58:2 (2015), 353.

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31. Doran, "Juno versus Diana," 270-273.
32. "The Plimpton "Seive" portrait of Queen Elizabeth I," *Folgerpedia*, accessed December 13, 2017, https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/The_Plimpton_%22Sieve%22_portrait_of_Queen_Elizabeth_I.
33. Doran, "Juno versus Diana," 274.
34. "The Plimpton "Seive" portrait of Queen Elizabeth I."

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**Author: Emily Abdow**

Jones College, Class of 2019

Emily is a junior at Jones College studying Mathematical Economic Analysis. She is also a current news editor and incoming co-editor-in-chief for the Rice Thresher. She loves reading and writing fiction and plans to pursue her goal of becoming a published author after graduation.

**Contributing Artist: Anna Fritz**

Baker College, Class of 2020

Anna is an Architecture student also majoring in Visual Arts and Art History, and would love to pursue these same fields in the future. She hopes to one day be a practicing architect with a focus on creating artistic installations and engaging with historic sites. Also, she would love to one day publish a fiction novel!

Stranger Lands: Politics, Ethnicity, and Occupation on the Eastern Front, 1914-1918

Gary Dreyer

This paper was written in Germany 1871-1945 (HIST 355), taught by Dr. Caldwell.

This seminar paper seeks to reconstruct how ethnic politics and inter-communal relations in Eastern Europe during World War I were central to the war's conduct and legacy. Examining different popular and institutional understandings of ethnicity in the Russian and German Empires prior to 1914 and during the war proved to be key to understanding the breakdown of relations between occupying Germans, local nationalists, and Jewish communities, paving the way for the contentious ethnic politics of interwar Europe, which in-turn played a key role in driving Europe towards the destruction of World War II.

FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, the northeastern corner of Europe, encompassing all or much of the Baltic States, Poland, and Belarus, was the scene of almost continuous political upheaval. Tucked in the contested borderlands between Germany and Russia, the two powers at either end of the territories sought to claim and remake these lands as a critical component of their respective state ideologies and expansionist designs. In the name of achieving their aims by any means necessary, both German and Russian policies unleashed a potent cocktail upon the inhabitants of the region, mixing radical nineteenth century political thought with twentieth century weaponry and timeless ethnic animosities, radicalizing the politics of the region along ethnic lines.

The end of the Cold War and the opening of archives in post-Soviet states have created opportunities for scholars to research and understand the origins of the ethno-political violence that engulfed Eastern Europe throughout this period. However, most of the research has been devoted to studying the political conditions and ethnic tensions that paved the way for the almost unprecedented ethnic cleansing campaigns that rocked the region during the 1930s and 1940s. This focus, as defined most explicitly in Tim Snyder's acclaimed *Bloodlands*, presents a valuable contribution to understanding the nature of the violence that engulfed Eastern Europe during this period – but it does not adequately explain the political, social, and intellectual origins of this mass bloodletting, especially in terms of its disproportionate impact on Eastern European Jewry (Ostjuden).¹

Indeed, the political, social, and cultural milieu that shaped interwar Eastern Europe and defined the tensions that would explode in ethnic cleansing from 1939-1945 was the offspring of the interactions between Germans, Jews, Balts and Slavs during World War I. These interactions in the borderlands of Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia took place against the backdrop of the German occupation of the collapsing Russian Empire's northwest corner, and were shaped by the experience of occupation, deportation, and re-drawing of borders. It was from this chaos that the radicalism and systematic violence that came to

characterize the subsequent history of Eastern Europe during the twentieth century emerged, soon giving rise to new and ever more destructive forms of despotism and barbarism.

As new scholarship on the ethnic politics that drove World War I has come to light, the importance of understanding pre-1914 conceptions of ethnicity in both Imperial German and Russian society and how these conceptions drove wartime policy has become a critical component for understanding the nature of the war itself, particularly in the context of its medium-to-long-term consequences. On a fundamental level, my core objective is to understand how these earlier preconceptions, which have been hashed out most ambitiously in the work of Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius of the University of Tennessee, clashed with the complicated and harsh realities of a drawn-out and destructive war and in its chaotic aftermath, which unleashed a potent cocktail of frustrations and prejudices that spilled over into an even more disastrous conflict two decades later.

The 1905 Russian Revolution was a watershed moment in European politics, whose legacy provided the foundation for the ethnic and political tensions that Imperial Germany came into intimate contact with as an occupying force in the East during the First World War.² The 1905 revolt against the reactionary government of Nicholas II presented itself as a political and economic uprising by non-Russian ethnic nationalists, Social Democrats, and liberals against the Baltic German and ethnic Russian political and economic elites at the top of the Empire's social hierarchy.³

In one of the most potent episodes of ethnic-tinged political violence in 1905, Jewish Bundists (Socialists) in Latvia, through which the Eastern Front would slice during most of World War I, joined forces with Latvian Social Democrats to strike against the power of ethnic Russian and Baltic German officials and aristocrats.⁴ As protests took the form of violent demonstrations in urban areas and staged burnings of Baltic Germans' "baronial estates," Social Democrats, Marxists, Latvian nationalists, and liberals echoed the demands of other opposition parties throughout the empire as they called for greater national autonomy, an end to tsarist absolutism, and the abolition of de-facto serfdom that entrenched the power of Russian and Baltic German interests.⁵

Although squashed by Tsar Nicholas' generals, the 1905 Revolution divided the heterogeneous societies of the northwestern Russian Empire among ethnic lines, fueling a culture of resentment and political radicalism that exploded after 1914. Moreover, in the 1905 Revolution's aftermath, the Russian state, especially its army, redoubled its existing obsession with ethnicity, classifying nationalities as either reliable or unreliable in their faithfulness to the nation and planting the seeds for a forthcoming campaign of ethnic cleansings.⁶

At the outbreak of World War I, less than a decade later, German bureaucrats, military planners, and ordinary soldiers came to project all their existing fears, anxieties, and prejudices onto a conflict in the East that they were woefully unprepared to fight and even less prepared

to be victorious in. To most Germans, the War in the East was perceived as more than merely a war of conquest for a land that many Germans saw as dirty, underdeveloped and enveloped in anarchy. Indeed, to many Germans, the War in the East also took on the dimension of being a war of liberation, although the kind of liberation that was being sought varied enormously across diverse of German society. For the German Left, war against tsarism was a war for Europe's liberation from the armory of its reactionary and absolutist elements.⁷ Meanwhile, for the country's conservatives, war with Imperial Russia meant a war for the liberation of the Baltic Germans from foreign rule and even more consequentially, of the German nation through the realization of its expansionist destiny.⁸ Above all, for Germany's political elites, war with Russia meant the Kaiserreich's liberation from an omnipresent political and military foe, whose pan-Slavist ideology and designs for homogeneity in Eastern and Central Europe represented a direct challenge to German geopolitical ambitions and security.⁹

These conceptions blended with a broad ignorance about the true nature of the political and ethnic conditions of the East, as most Germans, including most senior officials, did not recognize the intense ethnic diversity of the lands they would soon be occupying, believing all its inhabitants to be "vaguely Russian in character" and resembling long-established stereotypes about Poles from East Prussia.¹⁰ As General Erich Ludendorff himself commented, he and his soldiers "knew little of the conditions of the land and people [Land und Leute] and looked out on a new world" upon crossing the historic German-Russian frontier.¹¹



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From the war's earliest days, the German forces' confused to non-existent understanding of the political and strategic role of ethnicity in the East clashed with the Russians' obsession with it. During the brief Russian occupations of East Prussia in late 1914 and early 1915, tsarist troops systematically targeted ethnic German civilians in some of the earliest atrocities of the war, killing at least 1,491 people, raping hundreds more, and taking nearly 13,000 people (almost half of them women and children) hostage to the Russian interior, nearly a third of whom died in captivity.¹²

In the tsarist army's eyes, first and foremost among the suspect nationalities, other than ethnic Germans, were Jews. Russians officials' decision to target Jewish civilians was driven as much by a fear of potential Jewish affinity for the Germans, stemming from linguistic similarities between Yiddish and German, as it was by a core belief that Jews were a foreign and hostile social element, whose very presence near the frontlines presented a threat to the tsarist army's ability to successfully wage war. This explicitly racialized conceptualization of violence against civilians, which tsarist forces were the most deliberate in developing during the First World War, served no military purposes whatsoever, but it did succeed in

fundamentally changing the ethno-political landscape of Eastern Europe.¹³

As the war progressed, tsarist officials' abuse of their almost unchecked power over civilians intensified as their means of acting on their pervasive fear of spies changed. Part and parcel of the Russian military's scorched-earth tactics, Russian commanders sought to foment chaos in areas proximate to the front, confusing the German troops upon their capture of depopulated towns and villages and depriving them of human and physical capital that could be used to further the Kaiserreich's war aims. In hastily organized and poorly planned mass deportations, which peaked in April-October 1915, the Russian army ordered the expulsion of "all Jews and suspect individuals" from points near the front lines.¹⁴ In the Kovno province, nearly 150,000 Jews were deported within two weeks in May 1915, while Kurland, in what is now Western Latvia, saw the deportation of 26,000 Jews by early June 1915 as Russian commanders sought to "cleanse" their fiefdoms of the "unreliable element."¹⁵

Concurrently, Russian Army commanders in the Dvinsk and Kovno districts were establishing clear policies for the taking of hostages and carefully drawing up lists that targeted "the most influential members of the [Jewish] community, including Rabbis."¹⁶ The area's depopulation extended much further than the deportations of Jews, as millions of both "reliable" and "unreliable" subjects retreated to the Russian interior (some voluntarily and some by force) while other groups of "unreliables," such as Lithuanian Lutherans and over 200,000 ethnic Germans from Russian Poland and Ukraine, also faced mass deportations and atrocities.¹⁷ Boxcars transporting vulnerable ethnic minorities to the hinterlands of an unapologetically racist, reactionary empire first appeared on the rail tracks of Eastern Europe during the tsarist deportations of 1914-15. These horrors represented one of the earliest modernized, systematic, and forced mass movements of people in the region on explicitly ethnic terms – a phenomenon that Eastern Europeans would come to experience many more times throughout the coming century.

The depopulated and destabilized lands where German troops arrived as an occupying force created an impression that would color their subsequent attitudes towards "East," exacerbate the problems of administering it, and lay the groundwork for far-reaching historical consequences. The German victory in the February 1915 Winter Battle of Masuria ended the Russian presence in East Prussia for the duration of the war.¹⁸ From that point onwards, the entirety of the northeastern front snaked through pre-war Russian territories, running through towns bearing different names in Russian, Polish, Yiddish, and at least one more tongue – encompassing a massive, underdeveloped, and sparsely populated area.¹⁹ German troops rapidly concluded that the East was rife with *Unkultur*, defined as "the sheer absence of culture," as one lieutenant wrote of "deepest Russia, without a trace of central European culture, Asia, steppe, swamp, spaceless underworld, and a godforsaken slime-desert."²⁰ This mixture of physical and cultural chaos presented a stark contrast to the uniformity that they had earlier perceived, thus encouraging Germans to take on attitudes that mixed derision with curiosity.²¹

Throughout their occupation of the East, Imperial German officials sought to Germanize the newly acquired territories, building on already-existing East Prussian policies designed to coercively assimilate ethnic Poles and encourage German settlement along the frontier.²² At its core, German policy aimed to bind the peoples of the occupied East, who were seen through a paternalistic lens as lacking the skills and culture for self-governance, into economic and cultural, and hence political, dependency on the Kaiserreich.

For German planners, the proverbial low-hanging-fruit of the occupied territories were the Ostjuden, who could communicate far more readily with German troops and officials than their Slavic or Baltic neighbors because of the relative intelligibility between German and Yiddish, and whose longstanding persecution under Russian rule initially endeared them to German troops as a liberating force. General Ludendorf himself considered the Ostjuden “indispensable” to a successful occupation, and German military planners and bureaucrats would exert much effort into crafting policies that placed Ostjuden at the center of German efforts to control and develop the occupied East.²³ This relationship was not driven by benevolence or Judeophile sensibilities, but by German officials’ pragmatic interests in securing the region for later colonization and development, as well as their pervasive ideology of cultural imperialism and superiority. However, the intimate interactions between the Ostjuden and their German overlords during the occupation would play a definitive role for decades to come in the intertwined histories of Germany and Eastern Europe.

German policy towards the Ostjuden was largely developed in coordination between the Office of Jewish Affairs and the Propaganda Department, both housed in the Kaiserreich’s Foreign Office, and the German High Command in the East, whose thirteen Army rabbis and nearly 40,000 German Jewish soldiers played critical roles in the effort to create “positive working relationships with the local Jewish communities.”²⁴ In the months and years to come, the Foreign Ministry would coordinate with German civilian relief agencies to direct resources (largely funded by American Jews) towards hundreds of thousands of destitute Ostjuden under German occupation while developing close relationships with the Jewish Emergency Committee for Poland and Lithuania and the Committee for the Liberation of Russian Jewry.²⁵ German bureaucrats and the Army Rabbis worked in tandem to provide healthcare and education to Jewish communities throughout the occupied East, as the German administration encouraged secular education for Jewish boys and girls in the region, endorsed dialogue between Polish Jews and their Catholic neighbors, and encouraged rabbis to advocate for German political positions in their sermons.²⁶

However, from the outset, German policies in the East were inherently self-contradictory, undermining the aim of creating “client nationalities” that embraced German material and political culture.²⁷ On the one hand, the “German Work “(Deutsche Arbeit) initiative saw the army devoting “astonishing effort in time of war to cultural improvement behind the front: newspapers in native languages, publication of dictionaries, folk museums, school regulations, archeological and historical investigations, and theater.”²⁸ Yet, on the other hand, the Deutsche Arbeit policy was rather transparently organized to serve German war

aims by manipulating local ethno-political dynamics, particularly to create a bulwark against Polish cultural dominance and national aspirations. This included the deliberate fostering of Belarusian (White Ruthenian) culture, a nationality that was previously “invisible” to the German army, and the German promotion of Lithuanian culture and political aspirations as a buffer against the potential Polish ethno-political encirclement of East Prussia.²⁹ Concurrently, the Verkherspolitik policy, which sought to grant the German military complete control over economic activity and movement in the occupied territories — involving the requisitioning of forced labor, harvests, and livestock, as well as the establishment of a “regime of passes, censuses, and bans on movement,” fueled an anti-German resentment throughout the occupied territories that transcended ethnic divides.³⁰

For the most part, German Jews’ interaction with the Ostjuden made them even more sensitive to their established identity as “Germans of the Mosaic confession.”³¹ Some, like writer Arnold Zweig, came to admire “the authenticity of the Ostjuden” while others shared the sentiments of German-Jewish diarist Viktor Klemperer, who wrote that after his encounter with the Ostjuden he “thanked his creator for being a German.”³² Klemperer’s views, which were reflective of the growing disdain and frustrations shown by all groups in the complicated ethnic politics of the occupied East, marked the beginning of the end of the alliance between Germany and the Ostjuden. Driven by a combination of factors, by late 1916 and early 1917 Germany’s attempt to bring stability to the East through cultural and economic imperialism would collapse spectacularly – with dire consequences for all involved.



By late 1916 and early 1917 Germany’s attempt to bring stability to the East through cultural and economic imperialism would collapse spectacularly - with dire consequences for all involved.

As wartime conditions deteriorated, anti-Semitic sentiments blossomed in the German homeland, ultimately leading to the infamous “Jew count” of October 1916 and the end of German policies encouraging Jewish cultural and humanitarian development in the East.³³ Moreover, behind the front lines of the occupied East, locals across ethnic lines came to view the German occupation as “even worse than Russian rule” as the East experienced chronic shortages of food and medical supplies, massive epidemics of disease, and a complete breakdown of law and order that made living conditions truly unbearable.³⁴ German troops responded to the exacerbated chaos by descending to anti-Semitic stereotypes that conflated the Ostjuden with the poverty, disorder, and disease – defining the East as decisively un-German. Against this same backdrop, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians found themselves emboldened by Germany’s deteriorating position in the West as well as the Russian collapse of early 1917, and soon began to press the case for their national ambitions, thus putting them on a collision course with each other, German forces, and more often than not, local Jewish communities as well.

By the war's final months, even in the aftermath of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and Russia's exit from the war, German troops in the East found themselves surrounded by a landscape that was even more chaotic than the one they had entered in 1914 and 1915. The experience of occupation served to fundamentally radicalize the political dimensions of ethnicity in the East, as different nationalities began to present overlapping claims for territory and cultural dominance while the German position in the region crumbled. The botched and increasingly repressive German occupation regime fomented viscerally anti-German and anti-Semitic sentiments among local ethnic nationalists who, during the course of the war, came to see the Ostjuden as "pawns of the Germans," even after the German abandonment of the Ostjuden in 1916-17.⁵⁵ Amidst these policy changes, the Kaiserreich sought to develop new alliances with other ethnic groups due to increasingly vocal anti-Semitic incitement among German political and military elites, rooted in a fear of Jewish Bolshevism and disloyalty despite all the evidence to the contrary.⁵⁶ But perhaps the most enduring and fateful legacy of the occupation in the East was the intellectual imprint it left behind on the German soldiers who served there. Driven by their initial ignorance and the official position of their commanders that emphasized the "lack of culture" among the inhabitants of the occupied area, German troops came to see the peoples of the East (especially the Ostjuden), as fundamentally inferior and associated with squalor, poverty, and chaos, and their homeland as a tabula rasa that needed to be remolded and altered – a task that they set out to complete barely twenty-one years later.

NOTES

1. Tim Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
2. Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.
3. Andrew Ezerгалis, *The Holocaust in Latvia 1941-1944: The Missing Center* (Riga, The Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996), 37, 64.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Alexander Watson, "Unheard-of Brutality: Russian Atrocities against Civilians in East Prussia, 1914-1915," *The Journal of Modern History* 86 (December 2014), 798.
7. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 22-3.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 22, 25
11. Ibid., 22.
12. Watson, "Unheard-of Brutality," 822-3.
13. Ibid.
14. Eric Lohr, "The Russian Army and the Jews: Mass Deportation, Hostages, and Violence during World War I," *The Russian Review* 60, no.3 (July 2001), 410-12.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1999), 23; Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 20, 33.
18. Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2009), 132..
19. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 6.
20. Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East*, 137.
21. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 22.
22. Gregor Thum, *Megalomania and Angst: The Nineteenth-Century Mythicization of Germany's Eastern Borderlands in Shatterzone of Empires*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2012).
23. Tracey Hayes Norrell, "Shattered Communities: Soldiers, Rabbis, and the Ostjuden under German Occupation: 1915-1918" (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2010), 2.
24. Ibid., 8.
25. Ibid., 9-10.
26. Hayes Norrell, "Shattered Communities," 9-11.
27. Liulevicius, *German Myth of the East*, 139.
28. Ibid.
29. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 121, 127.
30. Liulevicius, *German Myth of the East*, 139.
31. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 41.
32. Liulevicius, *German Myth of the East*, 140.
33. Hayes Norrell, "Shattered Communities," 13.
34. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 180.
35. Hayes Norrell, "Shattered Communities," 170.
36. Ibid., 168-170, 239.

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**Author: Gary Dreyer**

Hanszen College, Class of 2018

Gary Dreyer is a senior at Hanszen College majoring in History & Policy Studies and minoring in Business. Throughout his time at Rice, Gary has served as Hanszen College Chief Justice, worked as a political activist on behalf of multiple campaigns and causes on-campus and around Harris County, and been an active member of the Jewish community at Rice. This fall, Gary will begin pursuing a Master's Degree in International Relations at the University of Cambridge in the U.K., where he hopes to research contemporary Russian media and foreign policy in the Middle East. While in Europe, Gary intends to take the opportunity to visit the places he has studied in-depth as a History major at Rice, including spending a month in the Baltic States (which were featured so prominently in *Strangers Lands*) as a Garside Prize winner.

Race, Labor, and Class in Interwar New York

David Ratnoff

This paper was written in The Evolving American City (HIST 410), taught by Dr. Shelton.



Black urban politics in New York City blossomed as black migrants found employment in the industrial North during the Great Migration. Publishing its first issue in 1917, the black radical newspaper the Messenger, sought to raise race-and-class consciousness among its readership. Heralding the “New Negro,” the Messenger promoted Socialist politics and encouraged trade unionism. An important interlocutor with other black periodicals, the Messenger argued that racial advancement was predicated on class consciousness and labor organization. Yet the Messenger’s short lifespan reflected the limits of Socialist politics as a vehicle for black political mobilization.

“AS WAGE SLAVES WE HAVE RUN AWAY FROM THE MASTERS IN THE SOUTH, BUT TO BECOME THE WAGE SLAVES OF THE MASTERS OF THE NORTH,” THE MESSENGER, 1919.¹

Black Labor Consciousness: On the Agenda

Black labor relations in New York City during the interwar period reflected tensions between race-based and class-based consciousness, intensifying unionism, and the lure of socialist politics. At the turn of the century, New York was the beneficiary of massive in-migration from the South—part of the nationwide “Great Migration” of blacks from the rural South to rapidly industrializing Northern cities. Since Reconstruction, unions had enforced the color line—denying membership to black laborers while providing support to whites. The Great Migration, which coincided with American participation in World War I (WWI), made union racism salient in Northern cities. The war effort spurred stronger federal government intervention in resolving labor disputes, as labor stability was privileged to the advantage of black workers who could leverage their labor for higher wages.² During the interwar period, black political leaders and social critics debated the status of black workers and their exploitation, and the extent to which race leaders advanced the cause of black laborers. From 1917 through the next decade, these debates took shape on the pages of the *Messenger*, a black radical newspaper based in New York with a circulation reaching about 5,000 readers at its peak.³ Published by Asa Phillip Randolph, a Socialist who, in 1925, organized the first black-led labor union in the country to be recognized by the American Federation of Labor—

the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—the *Messenger* sought to agitate its readership to develop class consciousness.⁴ In the following three sections, I demonstrate how the *Messenger* developed from a small newspaper to an influential voice in black politics. First, I describe the paper’s efforts to raise race and class consciousness in its readers. Second, I turn to black exclusion from labor unions and trace the newspaper’s arguments for biracial unionism—in essence, harnessing both race and class consciousness. Finally, I examine the *Messenger*’s direct participation in promoting Socialist politics, serving as a platform to both endorse candidates and mobilize voters. By publicizing the color line in organized labor, the *Messenger* raised awareness of the poor conditions black workers faced in industrialized cities and challenged preeminent black intellectuals to incorporate both race and class consciousness into their designs for improving black life.

Race and Class Consciousness

As black laborers entered the industrial workforce, they formed a race-and-class consciousness. Frustrations with poor working conditions, long hours, low wages, and other class-based concerns took shape in editorials and articles published in the *Messenger*, a black radical newspaper published in New York City beginning in 1917. The newspaper described its mission as fostering a mass movement through “(a) labor unions; (b) farmers’ protective unions; (c) cooperative business enterprise; (d) and the Socialist party organizations for political action.”⁵ Edited by A. Phillip Randolph, the newspaper often criticized contemporary black intellectuals and leaders, including Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. DuBois, for not forcefully advancing the interests of black workers alongside their anti-lynching campaigns.⁶ In the *Messenger*’s view, these dominant leaders were at fault for failing to promote black labor solidarity in their wide-reaching, public writings; DuBois’ periodical, the *Crisis*, reached an average of 50,000 subscribers in the 1920s.⁷ Signaling its radical political orientation, the *Messenger* expectantly monitored the global advance of Socialism. In the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, writers in the *Messenger* compared racial politics in the United States to Russia; Soviet progress was often used to justify a turn toward socialist politics.⁸ The newspaper was outraged when the New York Legislature, including the sole black Republican legislator, refused to seat five Socialist delegates in January 1920.⁹ The *Messenger* criticized mainstream political parties as inimical to progress, noting: “Neither white nor colored representatives of the old parties have any initiative, independence, or freedom of action. Neither group of the old parties represents the people—white or colored. The only political hope is the Socialist party.”¹⁰ Criticism of mainstream political parties morphed into broader calls for a realignment of black politics that emphasized labor.

Embracing race-labor dual consciousness, the *Messenger* used its platform for dialogue to emphasize that politics should achieve racial progress by increasing black representation in public office and organized labor. As a publisher of radical content and a site of interaction between different race leaders, the *Messenger* actively participated in the formation of a new radical politics that prioritized racial advancement and labor consciousness at strategically appropriate times. Articles written by the editor of the *Negro World* (published by the Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association) were published alongside commentaries

on the *Crisis*, the NAACP's mouthpiece. Simultaneously, the magazine's editors published criticisms of the American Federation of Labor and reported the meeting times and locations for newly-formed black labor unions in the city. By selectively deploying race-and-class-based language to incite readers to action, the *Messenger's* writers and editors harnessed the dual consciousness developed by industrial black workers in the North and farmers in the South during the Great Migration. The *Messenger* did not criticize the *Crisis*, but instead aimed to pick up where it left off, advancing a more radical vision of racial advancement.¹¹ The newspaper's rising influence coincided with broader discussions of the "New Negro" and the racial implications of urbanization.¹² The cover of the May 1923 edition of the *Messenger*, which featured Rodin's *The Thinker*, reflected the magazine's acceptance of education and action (enmeshed in new definitions of black masculinity) as crucial in a movement toward racial progress. Once calling itself the "Only Radical Negro Magazine in America," the *Messenger* only relinquished its title when a Communist interlocutor, the *Crusader*, joined the ranks of black radical newspapers.¹⁴ In articulating its vision for the "New Negro," the *Messenger* prompted discussion of black labor consciousness among race leaders.

“ In articulating its vision for the “New Negro,” the *Messenger* prompted discussion of black labor consciousness among race leaders.

The *Messenger* selectively emphasized labor conditions, class, and race, to increase black political participation. Early in its circulation, the *Messenger* published a call to blacks and whites to organize into unions because “[a]s workers, black and white, we all have on common interest, viz., the getting of more wages, shorter hours and better working conditions.”¹⁵ At the same time, the *Messenger* often spoke directly to the black experience and the memory of slavery as an enduring example of how the black body can be exploited by white capitalists. The authors noted, “[t]o him [the boss] the worker is but a machine for producing profits, and when you, as a slave who sells himself to the master on the installment plan, become old, or broken in health or strength, or should you be killed while at work, the master merely gets another wage slave on the same terms.”¹⁶ By using the imagery of slavery to describe working conditions for black laborers, the authors questioned the progress black workers could make without organizing into unions and criticized the fate of the race under its current leadership. Addressing both its general circulation and specific leaders' competition for support and resources within the black political community, the *Messenger* aspired to recalibrate black politics through its reportage.

The *Messenger* and other Northern black newspapers participated in boosterism that encouraged Southern blacks to migrate to northern industrial centers. *Messenger* editors indicated that migration would not solve Southern blacks' problems, but instead would give them “something to fight about.”¹⁷ They argued that, “[w]ith better industrial opportunity the Negroes secure information. They then have light to see how to fight—a lamp for guidance. With the possession of the ballot the Negroes have political power—ammunition.

They then have something to fight with.”¹⁸ While understanding the broader race goals of gaining political power and improving social status, the editors of the *Messenger* viewed labor protections as a linchpin for racial progress. Fusing race and class consciousness, the *Messenger* articulated a vision for a New Negro, along with a New Patriotism. A full-page advertisement for the New Patriotism in March 1919 explained: “[t]he new patriotism is color blind. Flag-blind. Kaiser-blind. It would not lynch, burn, or disfranchise a man because of his race or color. It never sees the color, form, or flaunting of a flag; it is too busy exacting the justice, protection and liberty which that flag should ungrudgingly give.”¹⁹ Laden with a nationalism influenced by the black experience in WWI, the New Patriotism represented a hope for racial justice. In the postwar international context, this patriotism was viewed along labor lines. While *Messenger* proclaimed, “[t]his is the day of the workers, the organized worker. In Russia, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and America,” it offered a call to action.²⁰ It reminded readers that “industrial action [w]as the most effective weapon which the Negro can employ, both in the interest of himself as a worker, and as a race.”²¹ By unionizing, black workers could protect themselves, make their links to white workers more explicit (in opposition to capitalists) and play a significant role in American politics.

The “New Negro” invoked by the *Messenger* editors symbolized a division within the African American community about whether blacks should overcome discrimination in America or move to Africa to begin anew, as Marcus Garvey advocated. Marcus Garvey, a race leader trained in Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, asserted that black Americans, deprived of their rights in the United States, should return to Africa, the “motherland,” instead of focusing their energies on obtaining rights and equal treatment in American society.²² Conversely, the *Messenger* advocated for using education and organization to achieve radical changes to the treatment and quality of life for African-Americans. Emphasizing racial uplift through class consciousness raising and the agitation of black workers against capitalist domination, editors of the *Messenger* regarded Garvey and his message of escapism as toxic to racial progress. In 1922, the *Messenger* appraised Garvey as “[a] menace to sound, democratic racial relations, a race baiter and a race traitor, Garvey must go. The sooner the better.”²³ Importantly, the language deployed by the *Messenger* to address readers featured labor-based language. The same author wrote, “it is time for all decent, self-respecting Negroes to league together for the purpose of driving out that Negro.”²⁴ The *Messenger*’s language intended to promote the recognition of a common interest and the association of people who share this common interest; the *Messenger* promoted a unionization strategy for all black readers, not just workers, to mobilize against race discrimination. As the *Messenger* characterized it, Garvey’s desire to “return” to Africa aligned him with the Ku Klux Klan.²⁵ More than bickering between two race leaders, the exchange between the *Messenger* and Garvey represented how strategies for racial uplift could be contested within a milieu shaped by labor relations.

The *Messenger* provided a platform for race leaders to develop and critique each other’s positions on how to improve black social, political, and economic conditions. An exchange of letters between Garvey and William Pickens, an essayist who worked for the NAACP,

demonstrated how Garvey was distanced from “mainstream” race leaders in the black press. Garvey invited Pickens to receive an award from his organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1922. In response, Pickens declined the invitation and accused Garvey of, “conceding the justice of its [the Ku Klux Klan’s] aim to crush and repress colored Americans.”²⁶ Pickens continued:

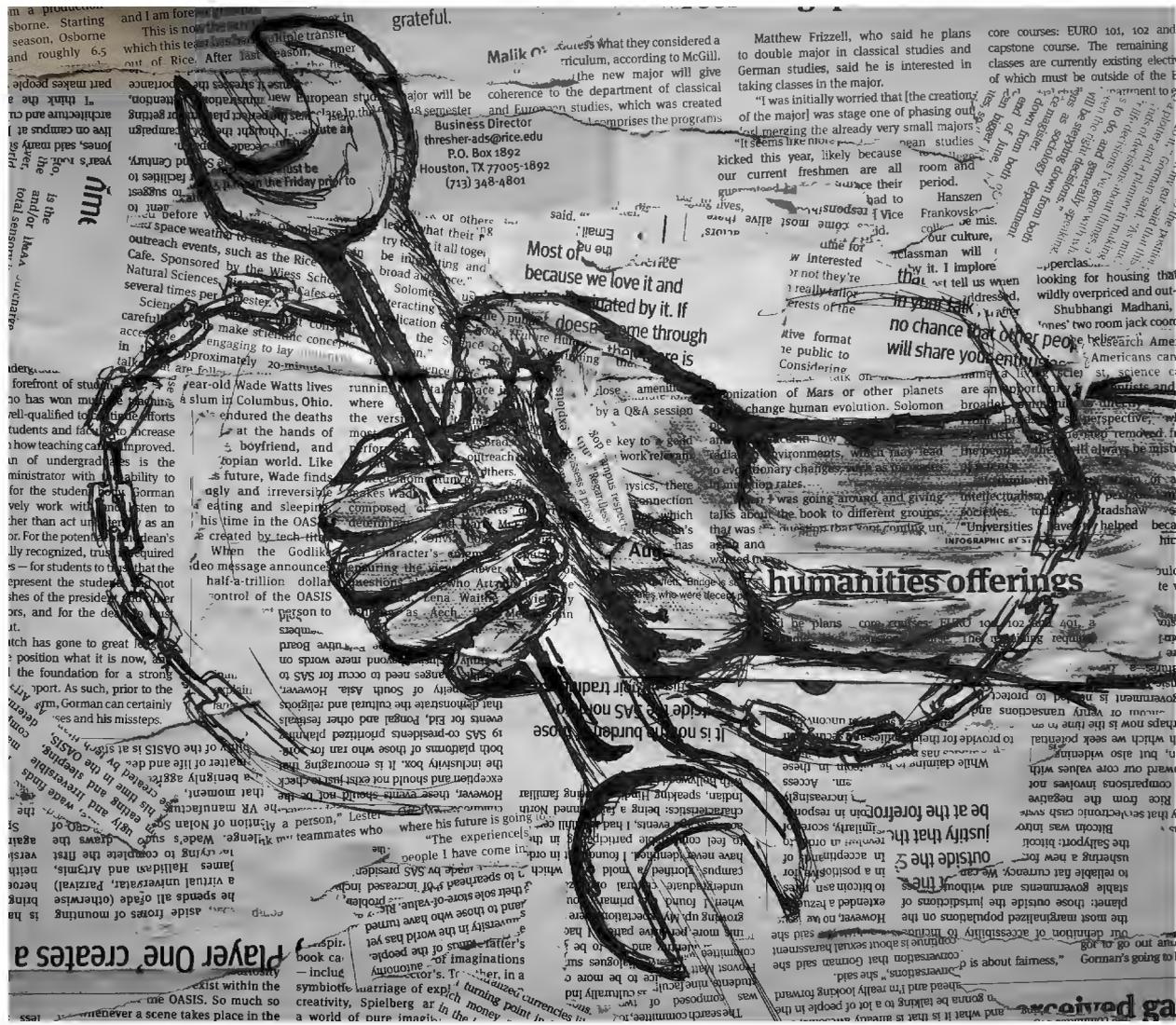
You say in effect to the Ku Klux Klan: All right! Give us Africa and we in turn concede you America as a ‘white man’s country.’ In that you make a poor deal: for twelve million people you give up EVERYTHING and in exchange you get—NOTHING. *For the Klan has nothing to “give up” in Africa....* But the Negro American citizen has everything to give up in America.... We will give up our homes, our rights, our lives, our past and our future in our native land, provided the Klan will give us a free and undisputed title to the moon.’ In fact, the Klan can give you a much less troublesome title to the moon today than it can give you to Africa. The moon is, of course, a little further away, but so much the better for protection against the long-range guns of England, France, and Portugal.²⁷

In combating the “Back to Africa” movement spearheaded by Garvey, Pickens defended the possibility of improved race relations in the United States, which the *Messenger* embraced with its endorsement of unionization and labor agitation.

Black, White, and Biracial Trade Unionism

Confronted by racist policies in white trade unions that restricted membership, black workers often agitated for a liberalization of membership policies in white unions, and sometimes organized themselves into labor unions. White unions in New York City were affiliated with city and state organizations that connected similar unions, attaching local attitudes to national organizing bodies.²⁸ Unions gained new prominence as black migrants entered northern cities. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s (NAACP) New York Field Secretary, James Weldon Johnson, observed in 1918, “the Negro comes up against a problem he has never had to face before, and that is union labor. In the North, in almost every field the unions shut him out.”²⁹ Establishment race leaders, like Johnson, viewed labor unions as threatening to black workers’ ability to obtain any employment in the North. The *Messenger*’s editors, by contrast, were concerned by the exploitation of black workers at the hands of capitalists, and thought organizing against the controllers of capital was essential to ensuring black labor was fairly compensated and workers were treated humanely. The following year, in 1919, the *Messenger*’s editors identified common interests of all workers:

There is but one question, which, more than any other, presses upon the mind of the worker today, regardless of whether he be of one race or another, of one color or another—the question how he can improve his conditions, raise his wages, shorten his hours of labor and gain something more of freedom from his master—the owners of the industry wherein he labors.³⁰



Frances Williamson (2018)

The *Messenger's* writing signified an understanding of class politics that transcended racial lines; the challenge for black labor agitators was to gain support from black workers and navigate hostile white labor unions that sought to extend the reach of Jim Crow and segregation to labor organizations.

After first generating class consciousness among readers by identifying how labor exploitation is common to black and white workers, the *Messenger's* editors proposed biracial unionism to protect all workers' interests. An article listing several reasons that biracial unionism would be advantageous to black workers cited bargaining advantages and the threats workers face from non-unionized "scabs."³¹ Much of article's language is not targeted toward black workers so much as it is directed to white labor organizers. The article holds black workers' exclusion from labor unions as "the only reasons why colored workers scab upon white workers or why non-union men scab upon white union men."³²



The challenge for black labor agitators was to gain support from black workers and navigate hostile white labor unions that sought to extend the reach of Jim Crow and segregation to labor organizations.

The activities of major unions, including the AFL and International Workers of the World (IWW), and later the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), signified the different racial policies white labor unions could enforce during the era of mass industrialization. While other labor unions actively attracted black members in the years following Reconstruction, the AFL excluded black workers from joining its ranks up to World War II. Blacks were able to join the Knights of Labor in the 1880s, the IWW began admitting black members in the 1910s, and the CIO notionally admitted members of various skills, races, and genders after it broke away from the AFL in 1935.³³ Recently, scholars have reevaluated the inclusivity of the CIO; though its break from the AFL traced along a racist fault line, the CIO's member unions—especially the United Mine Workers of America—were more open to accommodating black laborers, especially in the South, than the various craft unions affiliated with the AFL.³⁴ Most exclusion of black workers in the CIO actually occurred in the white northern unions; as WWII exerted pressure on the union, it failed to forcefully articulate a vision of racial labor equality.³⁵ In the 1920s before the CIO was formed, however, the AFL was subjected to sustained attacks from the *Messenger's* authors. In 1919, the newspaper appraised the values of the AFL and the IWW to black workers; the AFL was exhorted for being "criminally negligent and recreant to its duty, in either ignoring or opposing Negro workers."³⁶ By contrast, the I.W.W. was celebrated for its "admission of all races" and its goal of achieving "AN INJURY TO ONE AN INJURY TO ALL."³⁷ Through the I.W.W.'s progressive practices, *Messenger* writers hoped, it would "end slavery and oppression forever and in its place [would] be a world of workers, by the workers and for the workers; a world where there will be no poverty and want among those who feed and clothe and house the world; a world where the words 'master' and

‘slave’ shall be forgotten.”³⁸ Though the Great Migration represented a path for poor, often rural, blacks in the South to escape Jim Crow laws and agricultural labor, the *Messenger* made clear that true liberation rested on the realization of both race and class consciousness; labor unions like the I.W.W. were necessary to the lasting liberation of blacks in America.

The American Federation of Labor’s Racism, Discussed

Unions were central to developing black Americans’ sense of belonging in a country that had long excluded them from its society. Since its founding in the 1880s, the American Federation of Labor embraced racial discrimination as a strategy to reinforce its reputation for representing real Americans, not foreign immigrants. Unlike the Knights of Labor and other early unions, the AFL used decentralization to insulate racist local union leaders to accommodate the racist attitudes of their localities.³⁹ This discrimination was compounded by the denial of admission of black workers to skilled unions, which enforced a color line across professions to limit black access to higher paying jobs.⁴⁰ The *Messenger’s* editors excoriated the AFL for its failure to reach out to black workers, but some readers advocated reform of the union. In a letter to the editor, one reader suggested, “I believe that if we could concentrate our efforts to that end that we could organize every colored man and woman employed in industry into organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, we can have a strong, formidable force that will drive the reactionary element out of the labor movement altogether.”⁴¹ The *Messenger’s* editor, A. Philip Randolph, joined the ranks of militant labor organizers—including the administrators of Brookwood Labor College in New York—in condemning the practices of the AFL.⁴² By attacking exclusionary labor unions, but promoting the organization of workers and alignment with white radical labor leaders, the *Messenger* offered a vision of politics that used capital, not race, to align interests.

Black workers strategically used their exclusion from unions to gain short-term employment and develop a mass movement toward labor organization. For example, when white unions did choose to strike, their exclusion enabled nonunionized black workers to find employment, meeting the demand of desperate firms in the North seeking labor; black workers used their strikebreaking capability to secure a pathway to stable employment, as in the Great Steel Strike of 1919 for example.⁴³ The Director of the National Urban League’s Department of Industrial Relations, T. Arnold Hill, wrote an open letter to the AFL explaining that while the union enforced racist policies:

Negro workers have been branded as scabs. They were wanted in the union only after they had entered industry as strikebreakers. Denied opportunity to work under normal conditions they have been conscious of opposition from white workers and have resorted to strike-breaking as much to retaliate as to find employment....Thus, whites arrayed against blacks and blacks against whites have kept up a constant warfare to the detriment of labor and the advantage of capital.⁴⁴

Citing the lack of enforcement of anti-discrimination policies among the AFL’s federated unions, Hill noted that in the decade beginning in 1919 the number of unionized black

workers dropped from 169 to 23 as racism thrived in the organization.⁴⁵ Even in the worrisome racial climate of the late interwar period, Hill persisted to suggest that solving labor tensions between whites and blacks could contribute and reinforce the “spirit of interracial goodwill that is moving forward in other circles.”⁴⁶ Hill suggested that black workers engaged in strikebreaking as a retaliatory measure to unions’ racism and called on the AFL to reform its practices. Conversely, the director of the of the AFL called in 1934 for a “constructive attitude” that predicated progress on the “growing acceptance of responsibility on the part of Negro workers.”⁴⁷ Green’s foisting of responsibility on black workers to comply with the goodwill of whites reflected the root challenge of interracial unionism: white union leaders were unwilling to commit resources to achieving integration and equal treatment of workers. An open letter directly responded to Green by exclaiming, “[a]nd yet, how largely your A.F. of L. is responsible for forcing the Negroes to ‘accept substandard conditions,’ by *keeping them out of the unions of more highly-skilled workers!* Your policy of ‘unofficial exclusion,’ ... is harmful to Negroes and the A.F. of L. alike.”⁴⁸ This debate about culpability for the plight of black workers represented the tension between race and class-consciousness within the broader labor movement. Socialist politics, which deployed racial and class-based messages to recruit support, offered an artificial space for race leaders and labor leaders discuss their apprehensions of each other with the explicit aim of achieving better conditions for *workers* (defined by each group differently).



Figure 1. “Why Negroes Should Be Socialists”

Black Participation in Socialist Politics

Once black workers recognized their class and racial interests in organizing against capitalist exploiters, the *Messenger*’s editors represented Socialist politics as a natural home for black political expression. The race and class dimensions of black labor and the

Messenger's consciousness-raising efforts were expressed in a cartoon published in 1920 (Figure 1). The cartoon depicted how white and black workers fought each other for access to employment (represented by a bone) while employers and capitalists—managers who controlled laborers—gained exclusive access to capital (represented by a ham), which was of significant value. Each party was represented as dogs in a fight; a warning from the “agitator dog” read, “Drop that bone and get the ham! You are just working dogs!” The agitator dog, who represents the Socialist party and other labor-based political movements, admonished black and white workers and encouraged them to subordinate a long history of racism to contemporary class conflict, which should unite their interests. The cartoon accompanies a series of articles written by the editors under the header “Why Negroes Should Be Socialists.”⁴⁹ Going beyond publishing advertisements for Socialist candidates, which the *Messenger* did early in its tenure, the series on identifying black citizens’ interest in Socialist Politics represented an endorsement of Socialist Party politics as a departure from a racist past. The shrill caution from the agitator dog suggested that the early 1920s were a crucial moment for moving past bitter race relations toward a class-based society; the *Messenger* did not want to waste time participating in less radical politics that would perpetuate black workers’ subordination to white workers or their exclusion from labor unions.

In discussing the benefits black workers—who confronted restricted labor market access, low wages, and few savings—stood to gain from participating in radical politics, the *Messenger* echoed the Socialist Party agenda of alleviating class-based suffering. The anti-poverty aims of the Socialist Party were articulated in a political advertisement, run in the *Messenger* in 1917, for a black mayoral candidate in New York, Morris Hillquit, who had been nominated by the Socialist Party. Hillquit lost the 1917 campaign but still managed to win nearly 150,000 votes citywide. Hillquit’s performance was certainly an impressive milestone for the Socialist Party of America, and he regarded his vote tally as a sign that the “Socialist Party [w]as an important and permanent factor in the politics of the city.”⁵⁰ His campaign’s messaging emphasized the poverty suffered by many New Yorkers of all races, but specifically resonated with black voters who were exceptionally sensitive to price increases due to low wages and unstable employment. The advertisement in the *Messenger* suggested that his opponents’ victory would mean “high rents, high prices, 10-cent bread, 14-cent milk, hungry school children and a high death rate among the babies of the poor.”⁵¹ Hillquit’s emphasis on the prices of consumer goods and staple items, like bread and milk, reflected the challenges posed by low wages to black life in New York City, as across the nation.⁵² Racism in employment sharpened black class consciousness because limited access to capital made it difficult for black workers to “keep from poverty,” which in turn, “strangles and suffocates the mind.”⁵³ Hoping to reach black readers and their brethren in poverty, the *Messenger* condemned the possibility that mainstream politics could offer material improvement to black voters; the editors cautioned, “Republicans and Democrats support this system that raises property rights above human rights.”⁵⁴ Another article in the series spoke directly to the black experience:

You are suffering from injustices. That's a fact, isn't it? Well, over 3,000 Negroes have been lynched in this country since 1882. You are still denied the right to vote in the South and you are still jim-crowed[sic], segregated and discriminated against...You need a Federal law against lynching. The Republican Party, your friend, has had both the power and the opportunity....Has it done it? Point us to it.⁵⁵

Indeed, the Republican party's leadership under President Teddy Roosevelt reflected his discriminatory attitudes that regarded African Americans as inferior to whites.⁵⁶ Building on these frustrations, the editors condemned Lincoln for only emancipating slaves because he needed to save the Union, and for no other humanitarian or moral compulsion. By asserting that 50 years of racial progress since Reconstruction were built on pragmatism and not a change in attitudes on race, the *Messenger* suggested that capital has the power to change voters' opinions (i.e., the power of class-consciousness). Despite these efforts, a contemporary of the Randolph noted that black readership of the *Messenger* was comparatively low and that the prime audience of his targeted race-specific endorsement of Socialist Party politics were, in fact, "white liberals and radicals."⁵⁷ In his letter to Randolph and the *Messenger*, Eugene V. Debs was sympathetic to "the Negro...[who] was stolen from his home, landed here like an animal, and sold into slavery from the auction block."⁵⁸ Despite his sympathy, Debs also failed to submit an article to the newspaper for circulation in the radical black press. Indeed, the main thrust of Socialist politics into black life was mobilized by the editors of the *Messenger*, not the leaders of the Socialist Party itself. Still, the inability of the *Messenger* to convince black readers to vote for Socialists was reflected by the losses Socialist candidates suffered in subsequent New York City mayoral elections.

Conclusion

The *Messenger* provided a critical platform for the formation of black labor consciousness, growing demands for trade unionism, and black support for Socialist politics in interwar New York. Radical race leaders used the *Messenger* as a mouthpiece to articulate a vision of labor organization that fused race and class consciousness. By seeking to activate the "New Negro," the *Messenger's* editors also sought to catalyze black workers in New York to make common cause with white laborers to form interracial unions. Concerned with improving race relations in the United States via class consciousness, A. Philip Randolph and the editors of the *Messenger* criticized Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement as a concession to white supremacists. At the same time, the *Messenger* was critical of W.E.B. DuBois and other race leaders for failing to advance the cause of black workers, especially in negotiations with the AFL and other vanguard labor organizations. Invoking imagery of slavery and exploitation, the *Messenger* promoted black laborers' economic and political organization. Socialist politics offered an outlet at the intersection of race and class consciousness for race leaders to advocate for a significant shift from usual politics to advance racial progress in America. Seized by the *Messenger* as a path forward in the interwar period, Socialist politics had a limited shelf life for racial progress entrepreneurs. Socialist leaders' cursory treatment of racial discrimination in favor of prioritizing class-consciousness left black labor relations in the hands of race leaders, in the pages of the *Messenger*, instead of in the hands of Socialist Party leaders in nationwide labor organization.

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3. Caroline Goeser, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 59.
4. Preston Valien, "The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," *Phylon* 1, no. 3 (1940): 227–28.
5. Roi Ottley and William J. Weatherby, eds., *The Negro in New York; an Informal Social History* (New York: New York Public Library, 1967), 226.
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7. Goeser, *Picturing the New Negro*, 59.
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14. "Pickens," *The Messenger* II, no. 2 (March 1920): 11.
15. "Reasons Why White and Black Workers Should Combine in Labor Unions," *The Messenger*, July 1918, First edition in *Black Workers: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 354.
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17. "Migration and Political Power," *The Messenger* II, no. 7 (July 1918): 9.
18. *Ibid.*
19. "The New Patriotism," *The Messenger* III, no. 3 (March 1919).
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21. *Ibid.*
22. Corbould, *Becoming African Americans*, 18-19.
23. "Time to Go," *The Messenger* III, no. 8 (August 1922): 457.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. "Marcus Garvey to William Pickens and William Pickens to Marcus Garvey," *The Messenger* III, no. 8 (August 1922): 471.
27. *Ibid.*, 472.
28. Andrew Strouthous, *US Labor and Political Action, 1918-24: A Comparison of Independent Political Action in New York, Chicago, and Seattle* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 13.
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32. *Ibid.*
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Author: David Ratnoff

Martel College, Class of 2018

David Ratnoff is a Martel College senior pursuing a B.A. in Political Science and History with honors and a minor in Politics, Law, and Social Thought. His history honors thesis, completed under the supervision of Dr. Peter C. Caldwell, examined the development of Euroscepticism in Britain across the postwar period. David served as President of the Baker Institute Student Forum, Head Organizer of the inaugural Houston Centered Policy Challenge, and Training Manager at Rice Coffeehouse. After Rice, David will join the Teach for America Corps.



Contributing Artist: Frances Williamson

Brown College, Class of 2020

Frances Williamson is a sophomore from Brown College pursuing a History and EBIO double major. Following graduation, she plans to attend veterinary school and specialize in large animal medicine but will continue to pursue her love for both art and history.

A Carefully Constructed History: Gregory of Tours and the Observation of Societal Shift in Merovingian Gaul

Oliver Lucier

This paper was written in The Age of Attila (HIST 401), taught by Dr. Maas.



*Gregory of Tours, a powerful sixth century French bishop, was also an influential historian. His major work, *The History of the Franks*, provided a detailed account of politics and society in fifth and sixth century France. By focusing on several key passages of this text, I argue that Gregory used his position as an historian to argue for a complementary religious and political order where secular, Merovingian rulers and religious leaders worked in concert. Gregory believed that this combined order was necessary to provide security and stability in the tumultuous aftermath of the fall of Rome.*

IN GREGORY OF TOURS' INFLUENTIAL WORK *THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS*, numerous passages detail both the subtle and overt changes coming into effect as Roman Gaul faded into the past and a new Merovingian Gaul emerged. These changes occurred in many separate yet overlapping spheres, including the economy, political systems, religious influence, and the geography of urban centers. Gregory, who wrote between 574 CE and 594 CE, chronicled the aftermath of the Fall of Rome with remarkable clarity and dexterous skill. The Fall of Rome, traditionally defined as the piecemeal dissolution of the Western Roman Empire, carried vast consequences for the Merovingian world. As the episodes related by Gregory clearly illustrate, a distinct transformation of Gaul occurred during the 400s and 500s as Roman-influenced societal structures were transformed, and in some cases superseded, by militaristic, heavily Christian, Merovingian societal structures. Furthermore, Gregory's writings provide insight and clarity into how he, a prominent bishop, a prolific writer, and an astute historian, viewed the quickly changing world around him. This research paper shall examine six specific passages in *The History of the Franks*, and analyze how and why Gregory of Tours portrayed the increasing militarization of Merovingian society, the gradual blurring and reorganization of ethnic identities between Gallo-Romans and other ethnic groups, the reworking of the urban sphere as a unity of religious and secular power, and the development of small-scale political units conjoined with localized economic networks. Gregory's observations on these

trends were purposeful. In the six passages, which I am entitling *The resting place of Saint Martin*, *The imperial entrance of Clovis*, *The judicial process of Marseille*, *Gondovald gathers oaths*, *The armies of Gontran pursue Gondovald*, and *Gontran attacks the Goths*, we shall see how Gregory advocated for a combined and complementary religious and political order in which Merovingian rulers and religious leaders to worked in concert.

Gregory of Tours was born in the year 538 CE and died in the year 594 CE. He was born to an aristocratic Gallo-Roman family, and many of his direct ancestors had served as bishops.¹ He served as the Bishop of Tours between the years 574 CE and his death in 594 CE, during which time he wrote prodigiously and produced his seminal work *The History of the Franks*. In addition to *The History of the Franks*, he wrote extensively on miracles performed by holy men, the lives of early Christian saints, and other Christian topics.²

The History of the Franks is divided into ten books, organized chronologically. The historian Walter Goffart accurately summarizes the subjects of the papers, noting: “[t]he first book hastens from the Creation to about A.D. 400; the next three proceed briskly to 575; and the last six, at a comparatively different, leisurely pace, span a mere fifteen years.”³ The series provides a compelling history of Gaul, with a very heavy focus on events that took place during Gregory’s lifetime. However, it must be noted that Gregory’s chronology was not particularly precise. He typically preferred rounded figures for dates, often using *lustra*, or five-year periods, as his timekeeping unit.⁴ Interestingly, while the modern translation of Gregory’s works is *The History of the Franks*, this title is based off the translated Latin title, *Historia Francorum*. In fact, Gregory refers to his own work as *Historiae*, which is better translated as *Histories*.⁵ In this sense, it becomes clear that Gregory’s intention was not to crystallize an ethno-cultural origin for the Franks, but rather to create a wide-ranging history of Gaul. The broad scope of *The History of the Franks* allows Gregory to chronicle a variety of disparate events, including the violent wars between Merovingian kings, the increasing Christianity influence in daily life, and the complex social and political relations between Franks, Gallo-Romans, Goths, and Burgundians.⁶ As a result of this, *The History of the Franks* can be viewed as a composite of the principal events and trends shaping Merovingian society, allowing for a complex and comprehensive analysis of the Merovingian world.

Although Gregory’s account is generally accepted as accurate by historians, it is not without errors. Notably, there are chronological omissions and oversimplified hagiographic and religious explanations found throughout.⁷ In his capacity as bishop and historian, Gregory was interested in explicitly demonstrating divine influence in Merovingian society. If at times *The History of the Franks* includes explicit religious zeal and oversimplification, this is not simply a function of Gregory’s naïveté as a historian or religious occupation.⁸ Indeed, Gregory was a powerful actor in the sixth century Merovingian world, consciously shaping the political perceptions of others with his representations of Merovingian society.⁹ In his volumes, Gregory forcefully advocates for the need for secular and religious leaders to work together to create an ordered, religious society. Gregory was perhaps motivated to construct this narrative because of the difficulties he faced as the Bishop of Tours.¹⁰

This society that Gregory portrays with such detail, dedication, and craft is the world of Merovingian rule. The Merovingians were a Frankish dynasty established in the aftermath of the gradual dissolution of the western Roman Empire that came into prominence with the reigns of Childeric I and the Clovis in the late 400s and early 500s.¹¹ The Merovingian kings gradually established a loose hold on the power vacuum created by the decline of Roman authority.¹²

Several key trends emerged and developed during the tail end of the Roman Empire during the second half of the fifth century, and continued through the heyday of the Merovingian dynasty in the sixth century. As previously mentioned, these trends included an increasing militarization of society,¹³ the gradual blurring and reorganization of ethnic identities replacing the outdated dichotomy of Romans and barbarians,¹⁴ the evolution of cities as centers of combined religious and secular power,¹⁵ and the development of small-scale states conjoined with localized economic networks.¹⁶ These four intertwined phenomena actively reinforced each other.



The disintegration of Roman bureaucracy resulted in new political and economic systems based around local landholding elites.

This pattern is exemplified in the development of localized autonomous political units. The disintegration of Roman bureaucracy resulted in new political and economic systems based around local landholding elites.¹⁷ The new, increasingly self-dependent, landholding elite hired their own military protection, often consisting of migrating barbarian groups, and thus were not dependent upon the Roman army for military protection.¹⁸ This propensity for small landholders to build their own military might and source of power allowed for a gradual balkanization in late Roman and Merovingian Gaul.¹⁹ Smaller economic and political units, typically concentrated around an urban center, sprang up throughout Gaul. These independent political units, governed by a local aristocracy, engaged in frequent warfare on behalf of opposing factions of the Merovingian dynasty.²⁰

Another essential component of the societal change of Merovingian Gaul was the rise to prominence of bishops, and the resulting delicate balance between secular and religious sources of power.²¹ As Christianity spread and flourished throughout Gaul, bishops assumed more prominence, and they became powerful political actors who often struggled against or worked with Merovingian kings.²² The episcopate began to fill a power void left by the dissolution of the Roman city council, and gradually became an influential voice in city government. Thus the city became the tool by which the growing religious power of the episcopate and the secular power of the Merovingian kings and their vassals came together.²³

Additionally, as the Merovingian kings asserted their authority throughout Gaul, their efforts at unification led to a continuation of the late Roman reconfiguration of identities and

border zones.²⁴ During the late Roman Empire, various ethnic groups had been settled within the empire as *federates*. These groups included the Franks in Northern Gaul, the Burgundians in Eastern Gaul, and the Visigoths in Aquitaine. These groups adapted, with differing levels of success, to the encompassing Gallo-Roman society.²⁵ During the Merovingian era, this gradual blurring of the peoples of the *federates* with the vastly larger Gallo-Roman population continued, particularly amongst the Franks, who both assumed positions of power and cultural influence throughout Merovingian Gaul.²⁶ The political and military emergence of the Franks led to the simultaneous development of Frankish identity, which asserted itself throughout Northern Gaul and was an amalgamation of Frankish ethno-identity, Gallo-Roman identity, and late Roman constructs of the barbarian world.²⁷

Recent literature has placed new emphasis on the agency of Gregory, taking his account as a reference and critically examining his viewpoints and motivations. Gregory did not just naively observe the world around him, but consciously analyzed and described events as a historian with a “far wider frame of reference than the Merovingian age.”²⁸ Goffart argues that Gregory explicitly portrayed the failings, weaknesses, and violence of Merovingian society, as well as the miracles and virtuous actions of famous saints, in order to show how true history had an objective character.²⁹ Innes disagrees, postulating that “Gregory’s own view of history” was “a manifestation of God’s will.”³⁰ This research essay builds off previous critiques by taking the view of Gregory as a religiously motivated historian with agency. However, this paper counters the notion that Gregory simply strove to show how God controlled and acted in Merovingian society or the objective nature of history. Instead, I argue that Gregory’s main motivation to write *The History of the Franks* was much more specific and political. In short, Gregory used the text to argue for a combined and complementary religious and political order where Merovingian rulers and religious leaders worked in concert with one another. By clarifying Gregory’s motivation and overarching moral and detailing how Gregory advocates and supports this moral in *The History of the Franks*, this research essay breaks new ground by examining how Gregory used his position as a historian, to selectively portray and argue for a restructuring of Merovingian society.

Gregory’s intended audience for *The History of the Franks* further supports the notion that he wrote to affect temporal and political change. In the preface to *The History of the Franks*, Gregory recognizes his audience, noting “in order for the memory of the past to be conserved, it must come to the knowledge of men to come.”³¹ However, considering the limited knowledge of Latin in Gregory’s period, Gregory must have known *The History of the Franks* would be only accessible to a select group of literate bishops, ecclesiastics, and advisors. Thus, Gregory was consciously directing the carefully cultivated history found in *The History of the Franks* to this small and powerful group, which largely determined the political agendas of secular and ecclesiastic rulers. In this sense, *The History of the Franks* served as a political and societal template for the powerbrokers of Merovingian society.

Book I, Chapter XLVIII, The resting place of Saint Martin

Among the many passages in *The History of the Franks* which demonstrate the changing

structure of Merovingian society, one of the most informative is Gregory's narration of the imbroglio over the burial of the body of Saint Martin of Tours. Martin was a predecessor to Gregory as Bishop of Tours and a renowned performer of miracles in late Roman Gaul.³² Martin held tremendous power while he lived and after he died his body remained a prized relic for Christians, particularly for those of Merovingian Gaul.³³

The episode begins when Gregory recounts the aftermath of the death of Martin in 397 CE. First Gregory establishes the saintliness and thus legitimacy of Saint Martin of Tours by noting, "Saint Martin, Bishop of Tours, full of saintly miracles, great benefactor of the weak, passed away in the eighty-first year of his life."³⁴ Although it must be admitted that Gregory, a devout bishop himself, was keen to accentuate and moralize other prominent Christian figures, this description nonetheless provides an interesting look at how Gregory conceptualized bishops as persons of power, particularly in a religious sense. Gregory describes bishops playing an active role in administering justice and being a direct link between God's power and society.³⁵ Here and throughout *The History of the Franks* Gregory remarks upon the saintliness, miraculous abilities, and generosity of Christian figures, especially of bishops, as a way to establish their connection with God's power.

Gregory's demonstration of the temporal power and virtue of bishops touches upon the broader theme of the presence of bishops, and more generally ecclesiastic authority in Merovingian power structures. In practice these power structures were often most clearly manifest in urban centers where bishops occupied roles of power and prestige, and churches or other religious structures dominated the urban space both in terms of spatial prominence and grandeur.³⁶

Gregory then writes about how the different provincials of Gaul, the Poitevins (in Latin *Pectavi*), the people of Poitou, and the Tourangeaux (in Latin *Toronici*), the people of Touraine, fought over possession of the body of Martin.³⁷ Gregory concludes by describing how the Tourangeaux "apprehended the burden of the saintly body, some threw it from the window, others collected it outside, and placing it on a boat the whole group sailed went down the river."³⁸

This episode illustrates the increasing militarization and factionalism present within late Roman and early Frankish Gaul. While it would be a stretch ever to have considered Gallo-Roman a homogeneous identity, the dispute between the Poitevins and the Tourangeaux shows how divisions within Merovingian Gaul reflected the prevalence of provincialism within political maneuverings rather than larger ethnic or cultural differences. This pattern certainly reflected the increasingly localized political structures that developed during Merovingian rule. It is interesting to note that the designations Tourangeaux and the Poitevins, although representative of groups of people from particular provinces in Merovingian Gaul, also connotes division between the provinces' eponymous urban centers: the cities of Tours and Poitiers respectively. This shows how groups in Merovingian Gaul defined their identity in smaller political units based around local urban centers. By emphasizing the temporal



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prestige of bishops, and how secular political entities revered bishops and fought over religious reliquaries, Gregory implicitly argues for the need to coordinate and consolidate religious and secular temporal power structures, so disputes such as the one over the body of Martin need not take place.

Book II, Chapter XXXVIII, The imperial entrance of Clovis

In Book II of *The History of the Franks*, Gregory of Tours describes how Clovis, King of the Franks, received the Eastern Roman Emperor, Anastasius, in the city of Tours. To greet the emperor and to make an impression on his subjects in Tours, Clovis flaunted his extravagant wealth, and “mounted on horseback, he generously distributed gold and silver on the road between the gate of the vestibule (of the Basilica) and the church of the city.”³⁹ This ostentatious display served to remind the populace that wealth in Merovingian Gaul was heavily concentrated within its ruling elite.



Urban centers played a crucial role in edifying and preserving the fragile equilibrium between secular and religious forces and the continued functioning of local economies.

Additionally, this passage reveals quite a lot about how the structure of the Merovingian city reinforced hierarchical power relations. By analyzing this passage and the architecture of Merovingian Tours, the urban historian Hendrik Dey observed that “the three preeminent loci of spiritual and temporal prestige in Tours, the places where distinguished residents and visitors alike would congregate from the sixth century through the Carolingian period, were all arrayed along the stretch of road that began with St. Martin [the church of St. Martin] and led, via the city gate, to the cathedral/*episcopium* and royal palace.”⁴⁰ This highly explicit physical connection, a single road between the bases of spiritual and temporal power in Tours, demonstrates the interaction between secular and religious sources of power in Merovingian Gaul. The rule of the Merovingian kings such as Clovis depended heavily upon support from the Church and especially local bishops. The relationship the kings and ecclesiastic leaders developed also benefited the Church because the prestige of the Church depended upon the patronage and protection of the Merovingian kings. Urban centers played a crucial role in edifying and preserving the fragile equilibrium between secular and religious forces and the continued functioning of local economies.⁴¹

Later, Gregory notes how “from that day onwards [Clovis] was called consul or *Augustus*.”⁴² This phrase demonstrates the pretensions upon imperial power that the Merovingian kings, and particularly Clovis, still held on to. Clovis not only met with the Eastern Roman Emperor, but he chose to adopt an imperial Roman title. In doing so, Clovis hoped to emulate Roman traditions such as the triumphal entrance of the emperor and the cult of imperial victory.⁴³ As Clovis’ behaviors demonstrate, even if Roman power had long since disappeared in Gaul, new

power structures attempted, at least in name, to emulate the highly ordered power structure of the Roman Empire. Nonetheless, it should be observed that while Clovis did adopt some imperial pretensions, he did so on a much smaller political scale; the Merovingian kingdom never controlled more than a portion of Roman Gaul.

Finally, this passage presents an indication to the later urban structure of medieval France. Gregory relates how Clovis “left Tours in order to come to Paris where he established the seat of his kingdom.”⁴⁴ The establishment of the center of Merovingian and later Carolingian power in Paris allowed the city to quickly become the dominant urban center in medieval France. It is interesting to note that Paris, the center of political and religious power, and not Tours, another center of religious power, became the dominant urban center of medieval Gaul. This demonstrates how the most successful urban centers in Merovingian Gaul integrated both religious and secular power structures. Agathias, when describing the prosperity of Merovingian society, notes that the Franks “have magistrates in their cities and priests and celebrate the feasts.”⁴⁵ Here, by accentuating the benefits of the physical integration of religious and secular power structures in urban spaces, Gregory makes the case for a combined religious and secular political order.

Book IV, Chapter XLIII, The judicial process of Marseille

In chapter XLIII of Book IV of *The History of the Franks*, Gregory of Tours recounts an economic affair that sheds light on the reformed economic, political, and legal systems that were gradually taking root throughout Gaul. In this episode, Gregory describes the efforts of a certain merchant of Marseille to recover his goods, which had been stolen by “the men of the archdeacon Vigile who stole without the knowledge of their master.”⁴⁶ As a result of this theft, the merchant investigated the theft and eventually the governor of the Provence, Albin, arrested the archdeacon Vigile on the holy day of the nativity. Vigile’s arrest was evidently unpopular with the local citizens and “the population unanimously exclaimed that the archdeacon be permitted, after having given his guarantee, to celebrate the holy day with the other and that the accusation which was the object of the inquiry be discussed afterwards.”⁴⁷ However, Albin paid no heed to this outcry and instead kept the archdeacon prisoner before eventually fining him four thousand *sous*.⁴⁸

This episode is informative primarily with regard to the tension between religious and secular power in Merovingian Gaul. Whereas in Roman times, urban power was located in the city council, Gregory relates how power had become increasingly more associated with religious authority. As Geary relates “[t]he only potential rival that bishops faced for authority in the city was the count, but with the disappearance of civil government the rivalry was no equal contest,” and furthermore that the “office of count lost progressively in prestige and power to that of bishop in the sixth century, partly due to the higher social background bishops tended to have.”⁴⁹ Gregory of Tours himself is a prominent example of this shift. In this episode there is a clear conflict of power between the archdeacon Virgile, a religious authority just below the rank of bishop, and Albin, the secular governor of Provence. Gregory states that “the unanimous voice”⁵⁰ of the local population supported freeing the bishop

during the holy day, and that therefore Albin acted rashly and unwisely when he arrested the archdeacon. However, Gregory does not go so far as to defend the archdeacon; in fact, he seems to support the evenhanded legal conclusion of the incident. Gregory understood the need for delicate balance between religious and secular forces in Merovingian cities and his historical account actively advances this viewpoint.

Additionally, this episode reveals much about the larger societal context of Merovingian Gaul. Gregory relates that this episode took place in the port city of Marseille, under the Frankish king Sigebert, who ruled from 561 CE to 575 CE.⁵¹ Although Marseille and Provence were heavily Romanized under the Empire, there is no mention of Roman identity in this passage. This episode shows how Merovingian kings had established direct rule over the previously Roman-dominated regions of Southern Gaul by the mid sixth century, and co-opted the power structures of their Roman predecessors. Agathias records how the Merovingian “system of government, administration and laws are modelled more or less on the Roman pattern, apart from which they uphold similar standards with regard to contracts, marriage and religious observance.”⁵² Thus Roman Gaul, at least in political terms, had ceased to hold a distinct identity from the largely Frankish regions of Merovingian Northern Gaul. This broad trend is symptomatic of the gradual reconfiguration of Frankish, Burgundian, and Gallo-Roman political identities.

Lastly, this episode attests to the relative durability of certain regional trade networks. In one passage, Gregory refers to shipments of incoming oils into Marseille.⁵³ This shows how trade networks retained a larger scale in Southern Merovingian Gaul. As Patrick Geary notes, “reduced in size as the population of Frankish cities was, a diverse population of merchants continued to exist.”⁵⁴ Trade continued in Merovingian Gaul, and networks that had existed in Roman days continued to exist, although on a smaller scale. By detailing how trade networks and political stability depended upon a reasonable balance of power between secular and religious authorities in Marseille, Gregory again stresses the importance of a combined and coordinated religious and secular political order.

Book VII, Chapter XXVI, Gondoald gathers oaths

In Book VII of *The History of the Franks*, Gregory relates how a Frankish usurper, Gondoald, tried to strengthen his support and tighten his hold on political authority. Gondoald travelled around the region of Poitiers forcing the prominent citizens of each of the major urban centers to swear loyalty to him. However, “in the towns which had belonged to King Sigebert, he gathered oaths (of loyalty) in the name of King Childebert,” while “in the towns which had belonged to Gontran or Chilpéric it was to his own name that one swore loyalty.”⁵⁵ This passage depicts how claims to power in Merovingian Gaul depended largely on how well a single ruler, in this case Gondoald, could unite and hold sway over separate urban centers. Here Gondoald reaffirms his authority over cities that had been controlled by his predecessors, Sigebert and Chilpéric, while attempting to weaken support for his rival to the Frankish crown, Gontran.

Furthermore, in each of these separate urban centers a set of prominent citizens, both secular and religious, controlled affairs. This notion of a prominent group of citizens harkens back to the Roman institutionalization of the city council. Gregory later notes how Gondoald first plied these prominent citizens with gifts in an attempt to curry their favor and loyalty. This informal power structure shows the importance of cities as nodes of personal connection and power in Merovingian Gaul, and how society was fractured into small city-state units, which had to be bound together through oaths and largesse or by force.

The passage continues by describing how Gondoald, after gathering oaths from the other prominent members of the town of Angoulême, specifically went to the town's bishop. Gondoald "only left the bishop after grievously injuring him because the bishop had not welcomed him honorably."⁵⁶ This fascinating passage provides insight into the difficulty secular rulers had in maintaining their distinction and position above others, particularly bishops. Evidently there existed rather strict hospitality norms for those of different ranks and when the bishop did not comply with these norms, Gondoald reaffirmed his power and superiority over the local bishop. Once again Gregory advocates for a delicate balance between secular and religious power.

This episode also shows how easy it was for usurpers, like Gondoald, to gain a foothold in Merovingian Gaul. Additionally, throughout *The History of the Franks*, Gregory often describes the many violent uprisings and civil wars that occurred between claimants to the Merovingian crown. This political instability added to the factional conflicts that engulfed Merovingian Gaul.⁵⁷ Here, by demonstrating how religious and secular power structures could both reinforce and harm each other, Gregory forcefully advocates for a combined and coordinated power structure that could constrain violent civil wars and political uprisings.

Book VII, Chapter XXXV, The armies of Gontran pursue Gondoald

In this informative episode in the seventh book of *The History of the Franks*, Gregory details the armed struggle between the Frankish usurper Gondoald and the Burgundian and Frankish king Gontran. In this passage, the dukes of Gontran cross the Garonne River with their armies in pursuit of Gondoald. They pursue Gondoald and manage to entrap him in the city of Comminges. However, while en route the armies of Gontran discover the Basilica of Saint-Vincent, and "they found it full of various treasures belonging to the inhabitants; since it was the hope of the inhabitants that the Basilica of such a venerable Saint would not be sacked by Christians."⁵⁸ Unfortunately for the inhabitants of the town, the troops did pillage the Basilica, taking away large amounts of its treasure. However, Gregory is keen to stress that "divine vengeance stuck the same place, since a great number of the troops' hands were miraculously burned."⁵⁹

This episode is extraordinarily compelling, and it clearly details the increasing militarization of Merovingian Gaul and the influential role of Christianity in society. Throughout *The History of the Franks*, a large number of active military groups were constantly moving against each other, fighting and killing each other and civilians, and pillaging

surrounding towns and fields. As noted before, political instability and smaller political factions undoubtedly contributed to this trend. The fact that the people of the town put their wealth and their hope in the religious protection of the Basilica, and not in secular protective measures, demonstrates the powerful influence Christianity had over the diverse warring factions of Merovingian Gaul. However, the fact that the Basilica was ultimately plundered and that citizens were harmed shows the lack of monopoly on violence that any one faction, even the Church, possessed in Merovingian Gaul.

In this episode the troops destroyed a revered Christian site, the Basilica of Saint-Vincent, where the wealth of the urban center was concentrated.⁶⁰ Regardless of Gregory's assertion that the raid was an unwise choice that was duly and divinely punished, the disregard of Frankish troops for Christian holy sites points to a sense of lawlessness within Merovingian Gaul, and to the lack of political and military influence that the Church possessed. By referring to divine retribution, Gregory again stresses the need for the Merovingian troops to respect the temporal power of the Church.

At the conclusion of the passage, the armies of Gontran lay siege to the town of Comminges, and "all the surrounding region was pillaged; but some men of the army, pricked by the powerful sting of greed, having strayed too far, were then killed by the local inhabitants."⁶¹ This passage again attests to the terrible effects that local wars had on the peasantry of Merovingian Gaul. Additionally, the lack of central authority in Merovingian Gaul is thrown into sharp relief. Gondovald was a usurper against Gontran, and he conducted his campaign within Merovingian Gaul. The actions of Gontran's troops show that even the subjects of the Merovingian kings were not safe from being pillaged by the Merovingian armies. The lack of a single political authority with a monopoly on force, along with the everyday danger that threatened Merovingian peasant life, demonstrates the increasing factionalism of Merovingian society. In this passage, Gregory critiques the violent and unstable political climate of Merovingian Gaul and argues for the creation of a new, stable political order that respected and incorporated religious authority.

Book VIII, Chapter XLV, Gontran attacks the Goths

In Book VIII of *The History of the Franks*, Gregory relates a rather long history concerning diplomacy between Spain and the Frankish king Gontran, along with an account of an expedition Gontran led against the Goths. Gregory begins by analyzing how "ambassadors came frequently from Spain to meet with Gontran and being able to obtain the mercy of any peace, the hostility only grew."⁶² This observation demonstrates how larger scale political networks continued to exist in some form in Western Europe and how diplomacy was utilized as a tool to establish alliances. Gontran had evidently succeeded in establishing a state that was powerful enough to be recognized outside of Gaul. Nonetheless, this Merovingian state had many interior weaknesses and was quite susceptible to civil war or rebellions within its borders, as seen by the many battle testimonies and war descriptions provided by Gregory in *The History of the Franks*. However, the fact that diplomacy did exist between Gontran and the Spanish shows that even during an era of increasing factionalization and smaller political

subunits, larger political entities could exist by binding together these smaller political divisions.

In this passage, Gregory also discusses reconfiguring and blending ethnic identities. Gontran, perhaps influenced by the ultimately detrimental efforts of diplomacy by the Spanish, decided to lead an expedition against the Goths, more particularly the Visigoths, in their southern kingdom of Toulouse. Gontran, “with all his possessions, mobilized an army and positioned himself to march against the Goths.”⁶⁵ This passage is interesting because it provides an example of ethnic strife in post-Rome Western Europe. During the later stages of the Roman Empire there existed a large amount of conflict between the Empire, and the many different groups at the Empires’ borders and within the Empire. These groups, the Franks, the Burgundians, and the Goths among them, all held different identities. However, these identities were not clearly defined and were comprised of a number of qualities, including language, ethnicity, and the practices of its elite. Identities were also heavily reinforced by Roman interactions and Roman construction of barbarian identities.⁶⁴



By late 1916 and early 1917 Germany’s attempt to bring stability to the East through cultural and economic imperialism would collapse spectacularly - with dire consequences for all involved.

When these different groups were settled in Gaul, typically as *federate*, they claimed their own political independence and ethno-cultural identity. For example, the Visigoths established a Gothic kingdom around Toulouse in Aquitaine, while the Burgundians established Burgundian kingdom in eastern Gaul and the Franks established a kingdom, the Merovingian dynasty, originally in Northern Gaul.⁶⁵ However, it is important to note that these kingdoms were not ethnically homogeneous and were in fact much more nuanced, complex, and diverse political organizations.⁶⁶

However, after the gradual withdrawal of the Roman military and direct Roman interference in Southern Gaul, new identities began to form. The success of the Merovingian kings led to a gradual mixing, particularly among the elite, of Gallo-Romans (the Roman citizens who inhabited Gaul throughout Roman times and who constituted a vast majority of the population), together with the Burgundians and the Franks.⁶⁷ Agnès Graceffa notes how “according to Gregory” there existed “the quasi-absence of any real attention to terms pertaining to nationalities (at least in an ethnic sense).”⁶⁸ The old ethnic dichotomy between groups of barbarians and the civilized Romans was replaced by a much less clear amalgamation of identities.⁶⁹ This ethnic blurring in Merovingian Gaul started largely with alliances of marriage between elites, but also resulted from mixing simply due to proximity and cultural exchange. The pursuit and eventual defeat of the Goths by the Merovingian

rulers show how the Merovingian rulers reorganized ethnic divisions in Roman Gaul through conquest and expansion.

Finally, this episode again illustrates important characteristics of the early medieval city. Gregory describes in detail how the Duke Didier, one of the followers of Gontran, pursued the Goths to a fortified town, and having “reached the gates of the town, he was pinned down by the inhabitants who were inside the walls, and killed along with all who had followed him.”⁷⁰ This passage illustrates how the increasing militarization of Merovingian society influenced developments in the urban sphere, principally in the construction of walls and other fortifications surrounding cities. These walls proved successful in defending cities from attack, as in this case, and deterred other possible assaults. By noting the violence of the Merovingian political order and the role identities played in Merovingian politics, Gregory advocates for a more stable political order that eschews ethnic divisions.

Conclusion

Throughout *The History of the Franks*, Gregory of Tours carefully chronicles the general trends that were influencing society in Merovingian Gaul. Gregory of Tours describes both indirectly and directly the increasing militarization of society, the gradual blurring and reorganization of ethnic identities between the outdated dichotomy of Roman and barbarian, the reworking of the urban sphere as a unity of religious and secular power, and the development of small-scale political units conjoined with localized economic networks.

Along with this, Gregory’s opinions on these trends demonstrate how he viewed and hoped to shape Merovingian Gaul. Gregory was an active historian who possessed political and religious motivation. When Gregory wrote *The History of the Franks* it was not just to record the happenings of Merovingian society but also to mold Merovingian society to his worldview. In sum, by writing *The History of the Franks*, Gregory stresses the need for Merovingian rulers and religious leaders to work together to implement a combined and complementary religious and political order in Merovingian society. This overarching moral is manifest in Gregory’s observations and descriptions of the trends, such as redefined urbanism and changing identities, and events, such as military encounters and political instability, shaping the Merovingian world. By clarifying Gregory’s motivation and overarching moral, and detailing how Gregory advocates and supports this moral in *The History of the Franks*, this research essay breaks new ground by examining how Gregory used his position as a historian, to attempt to influence and selectively portray Merovingian society. Modern historians can draw parallels from this study of Gregory in order to better critique their own work’s relation to surrounding society and how their position as a historian influences their writing.

NOTES

1. Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D.550-800)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 112.
2. Ralph Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity, Volume I* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), 9.
3. Goffart, *The Narrators*, 124.
4. Guy Halsall, *Cemeteries and Societies in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992-2009* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 171.
5. Ralph Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity, Volume II* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), 3.
6. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, trans. Robert Latouche (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), Introduction 8-9.
7. Goffart, *The Narrators*, 113.
8. *Ibid.*, 151.
9. Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 132.
10. Paul Fouracre, *Frankish History: Studies in the Construction of Power* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 147.
11. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 83.
12. Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900: The sword, the plough, and the book* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 271.
13. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 117.
14. Ian Wood, "Missionaries and the Christian Frontier," in *The Transformation of Frontiers; From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Pohl, Walter, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz, (Boston: Brill, 2001), 217.
15. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 132-133.
16. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 277-278*.
17. *Ibid.*, 111.
18. *Ibid.*, 125.
19. Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity AD150-750* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1971), 43.
20. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 277*.
21. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 132-133.
22. *Ibid.*, 134.
23. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 278-279*.
24. *Ibid.*, 285.
25. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 125.
26. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 115.
27. *Ibid.*, 79.
28. Goffart, *The Narrators*, 119.
29. *Ibid.*, 173.
30. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 271*.
31. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs* Book I, Preface, "je me suis dit que pour que le souvenir du passé se conservât, il devait parvenir à la connaissance des hommes à venir."
32. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs* Book I, XLVIII.
33. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs* Book I, XLVIII. "saint Martin, évêque de Tours, plein de miracles de sainteté, grand bienfaiteur des faibles, décéda dans la quatre-vingt-unième année de son âge."
34. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs* Book I, XLVIII.
35. Mathisen, *People Volume I*, 9.
36. Hendrik W. Dey, *The Afterlife of the Roman City: Architecture and Ceremony in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 11.
37. Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum*, Book I, XLVIII.
38. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book I, XLVIII, "appréhendent le fardeau du corps très saint; les uns le jettent par la fenêtre; d'autres le recueillent du dehors, il est déposé sur un bateau et avec toute la population on descend la fleuve."
39. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book II, XXXVIII, "monté à cheval, il a destribua avec une très grandes générosité de l'or et de l'argent sur le chemin qui se trouve entre la porte du vestibule (de la basilique) et l'église de la cité."
40. Dey, *The Afterlife of the Roman City*, 163.
41. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe*, 279.
42. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book II, XXXVIII, "à partir de ce jour il fut appelé consul ou auguste."
43. Michel Rouche, *Clovis histoire et mémoire: Le baptême de Clovis, l'événement*, (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris Sorbonne, 1997), XIV.
44. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book II, XXXVIII, "quitta Tours pour venir à Paris et y fixa le siège du royaume."
45. Agathias, *The Histories*, trans. Joseph Frendo (New York: De Gruyter, 1975), Book I, 2, 4.
46. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book IV, XLIII, "des hommes de l'archidiacre Vigile volèrent à l'insu de leur maître."
47. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book IV, XLIII, "la population dont la voix unanime réclamait qu'il fût permis à l'archidiacre, après avoir donné des cautions, de célébrer le jour saint avec les autres et que l'accusation qui était l'objet de l'affaire fût discuté postérieurement."
48. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book IV, XLIII.
49. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 131-132.
50. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book IV, XLIII, "la voix unanime."
51. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 120.
52. Agathias, *The Histories*, Book I, 2, 3.
53. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book IV, XLIII.
54. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 101.
55. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VII, XXVI, "dans les cités qui avaient appartenu au roi

- Sigebert, il recueillait les serments (de fidélité) au nom du roi Childebart, mais dans les autres qui avaient appartenu soit à Gontran, soit à Chilpéric c'est en son nom qu'on jurait qu'on lui resterait fidèle."
56. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VII, XXVI, "ne quitta l'évêque qu'après l'avoir gravement injurié parce qu'il n'avait pas été accueilli par lui honorablement."
 57. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe*, 285.
 58. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VII, XXXV, "ils la trouvèrent remplie de divers trésors appartenant aux habitants, car c'était l'espoir des habitants que la basilique d'un si grand saint ne pourrait être violée par des Chrétiens."
 59. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VII, XXXV, "a vengeance divine en écrasa sur le lieu même, car le plus grand nombre eurent les mains miraculeusement brûlées."
 60. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VII, XXXV.
 61. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VII, XXXV, "[t]oute la région alentour fut pillée; mais quelque hommes de l'armée, que l'aiguillon puissant de la cupidité avait piqués, s'étant égarés trop loin, furent assassinés par des indigènes."
 62. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VIII, XLV, "des ambassadeurs étaient venus fréquemment d'Espagne auprès du roi Gontran sans pouvoir obtenir la grâce d'aucune paix, mais qu'au contraire l'inimitié grandissait."
 63. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VIII, XLV, "avec tous ses biens, il mobilise une armée et se dispose à marcher contre les Goths."
 64. Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 78.
 65. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe*, 290.
 66. Ian Wood, "Conclusion: Strategies of Distinction" in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, (Boston: Brill, 1998), 302.
 67. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe*, 285.
 68. gnès Graceffa, *Les Historiens et la Question Franque: Le peuplement franc et les Mérovingiens dan l'hisoriographie française et l'allemande des XIXe-XXe siècles* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 19, "la quasi-absence d'une réelle attention aux termes relatifs aux nationalités (tout au moins dans un sens ethnique."
 69. Ian Wood, "Missionaries," 217.
 70. Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Book VIII, XLV, "[p]arvenant alors à la porte de la ville, et cerné par les habitants qui étaient à l'intérieur des murs, il fut tué avec tous ceux qui l'avaient suivi."

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Author: Oliver Lucier

Brown College, Class of 2018

Oliver will graduate this May with a B.S. in Earth Science, a B.A. in History, and a minor in Poverty, Justice, and Human Capabilities. He attends Brown College, and in his spare time he likes to play soccer, travel, and read. After college he plans to attend graduate school for geography or history of science.



Contributing Artist: Isabel Samperio

Hanszen College, Class of 2021

Pursuing a double major in Art History and Visual and Dramatic Art with a concentration in Studio Art, Isabel is interested in the relationship between art as a practice and academic area of study. She plans on pursuing art full time post-graduation as a visual artist.

How to Build a Villain: Aurangzeb, Temple Destruction, and His Modern Reputation

Maximilian F. Murdoch

This paper was written in Spatial History and Historical GIS (HIST 207), taught by Mr. Kennedy.

This paper is a study of the spatial relationship between temples destroyed in the reign of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1618–1707) and other significant spatial characteristics of the Mughal Empire in his time, including its southern border and the geographic distribution of religious groups. It also places these relationships in the context of the contemporary political narrative as well the current one. Using an ArcGIS project built to explore the spatial relationship, this paper tests the hypothesis that temple destruction under Aurangzeb was religiously motivated, and concludes that this hypothesis ought to be rejected. Work from other scholars in the field illustrates why this hypothesis is none the less deeply ingrained in India's modern political landscape, and how that came to pass.

IN THE HISTORY OF INDIAN KINGSHIP there is perhaps no one as controversial as the man named Mohi-ud-Din Muhammad Aurangzeb Alamgir I, Sixth Emperor of the Mughal Empire, and known to historians as simply Aurangzeb. Often considered the last effective Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb was an iron-fisted authoritarian, gifted general, and wily political actor under whom the Mughal Empire reached its greatest geographic extent and saw the highest degree of state centralization. This complex individual is noted for his deep devotion to the religion of his ancestors: Islam. Somewhat breaking with the tradition of his immediate predecessors, he espoused a far more traditional approach to Islam and its place within the Mughal Empire. When his father, the illustrious Shah Jahan, became ill, it ignited a succession war between all four sons, with the final struggle coming down to Aurangzeb and his older brother Dara Shukoh. Dara, the eldest, had been the heir apparent and favorite child of his father, and was noted for his deep interest in the Hindu faith. He wrote extensively about it, kept the company of prominent brahmins and yogis, and considered the Upanishads to be the textual origin of monotheism. Upon his defeat and capture by Aurangzeb, he was summarily executed on charges of heresy. For the execution of his brother, among other reasons, Aurangzeb is often considered a religious zealot and backwards thinker because of the actions he ostensibly took on account of his devotion.¹

Nowhere is this sentiment stronger than in modern India herself, where decades of religious dogma have taken their toll on Aurangzeb's reputation, and his denouncement is just shy of being doctrine. So fervent are Aurangzeb's detractors that any author who suggests the accusations against Aurangzeb are blown out of proportion often faces calls for a ban, and can fall victim to retaliatory mob violence against the origin of the perceived slight.² The charges include forcing conversions, destroying temples, reinstating the jizya tax, and the wholesale murder of non-Muslims. But contrary to the rhetoric espoused by Bharatiya Janata Party pundits on the matter, examples of these actions are few and far between. This study demonstrates that these claims are in fact overstated and entirely misunderstood,

particularly the issue of temple destruction. Though contemporary government documents often place the number of ruined temples in the thousands, proper historical analysis puts the true number at only sixteen.

In this way, GIS becomes important to our understanding of one of the most revered and reviled figures in Indian history today. More complex methods of analysis are possible when historians add critical context to the source material in question. By adding clarity about the origin and contemporary interpretation of the sources, we end up asking more complex questions: in the case of Aurangzeb, we can explore not only whether the temple destruction claims have merit, but what relationship temple destruction had to other factors, such as mosque construction, changing political landscapes, and expanding borders.

These statistical methods are intended to supplement the existing historiography on the issue done primarily by Truschke and Eaton. In large part, the work these scholars have done has come to similar conclusions. Contrary to the simplified narrative traditionally espoused by conservative pundits in both India and Pakistan, the reality of Aurangzeb's reign and motivations is far more complex than is often recognized. Nevertheless, they find Aurangzeb's conservatism has been generally overstated.

In examining how his reputation fails to reflect historical reality, these scholars have noted the continued religious pluralism under Aurangzeb's Mughal Empire, in addition to his conflicts with Islamic religious authorities. Despite pressures from the international Islamic community to adhere to more traditional forms of Islam in line with the wishes of the *ulama*, the imperial state filled its official positions not only with Muslims, but with substantial numbers of Hindus as well, and often clashed directly with religious authorities over matters of state. The sheer size of the Mughal imperial state made it impossible to staff exclusively with Muslims, and the Mughal nobility had no desire to do so either. Though Muslims dominated numerically, Hindus occupied positions at all levels of the bureaucracy, had opportunities for advancement, and shared the goals of their Muslim colleagues in expanding the power and authority of the state.³ Truschke also reports on conflicts with several subsequent *qazis* (Muslim judges) that refused to officially sanction different activities, including when Aurangzeb overthrew his father Shah Jahan and made war against the Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda.⁴ These conflicts resulted in their removal from office and replacement with individuals more willing to take their lead from the emperor.

The one action that most clearly demonstrates Aurangzeb's conservatism is his reinstatement of the *jizya* tax on non-Muslims in the empire. Although the tax had fallen out of use for over a hundred years, Aurangzeb began to levy it once more, perhaps in an attempt to increase his control over the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) who were responsible for collecting it. Additionally, the *jizya* would demonstrate that the Mughal Empire was a proper Islamic state to an international community suspicious of Aurangzeb's and his predecessor's intentions.

On the matter of temple destruction, Truschke is explicit in correcting the misunderstandings around how contemporaries represented the intent of the action. “This Islamic proclivity was perhaps rooted in the idea that government interests do not justify harming religious institutions under Islamic law, whereas such acts were arguably permissible for spreading Islam. This logic was culturally appropriate, but it is not historically persuasive for explaining temple demolitions in Aurangzeb’s India.”⁵ In short, the contemporary contextualization was intentionally misleading, and continues to mislead until this day.



Aurangzeb’s motivation for temple destruction was not primarily religious; political considerations were the determining factor.

The overarching question I am interested in answering is which parts of the modern narrative about Aurangzeb are factually accurate and interpreted correctly. A key part of the modern narrative is that temple destruction was religiously motivated.⁶ This study analyzes the spatial patterns of primary sources to uncover the motivation behind temple destruction, incorporating analysis of the patterns between temples, imperial borders, and the distribution of religious groups.

For this study, I utilized a dataset containing information about the destruction of sixteen temples destroyed during the reign of Aurangzeb. The primary reason for the wide disparity in the common numbers and those found in the data is a consistent failure to contextualize the primary sources and cross reference their claims.⁷ The majority of the translations of the original Persian sources recent scholars have used as evidence comes from *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, edited by Sir Henry M. Elliot in 1849. According to Richard Eaton, Elliot was “keen to contrast what he understood as the justice and efficiency of British rule with the cruelty and despotism of the Muslim rulers who had preceded that rule, [and] was anything but sympathetic to the ‘Muhammadian’ period of Indian history,” resulting in exaggerated and unfounded claims that supported the existence of the Raj. This, Eaton claims, is merely one instance in a now long tradition of using selective translations of Persian sources to establish a trend in the behavior of Muslim conquerors, Aurangzeb being no exception. Evidence that may seem explicit on the matter is often suspect due to dating: in some cases, the first written record of an instance of temple destruction does not appear until 400 years after the events described.⁸ Because of the lack of contemporary sources and physical evidence, it is possible to confirm only sixteen temple destructions.

Aurangzeb’s motivation for temple destruction was not primarily religious; political considerations were the determining factor.⁹ In India especially during this time, temples had a political as well as religious bent. Though they served as places of worship, their patronage was usually associated quite strongly with a particular individual, usually a member of the court or regional power player. As was Mughal tradition, these people would, on occasion,

go into rebellion in attempts to force policy decisions by the emperor. Armed conflict accompanied periods of civic unrest, but there were no successful challenges to Aurangzeb's authority from within the Mughal empire while he lived. After suppressing a rebellion, Aurangzeb punished the leaders by erasing the markers of their authority. With armies vanquished and leaders imprisoned or dead, what remained were their sites of patronage. It would have been unacceptable to allow anything associated with traitors in a positive way to remain, so temples, as markers of their involvement in the community, were torn down.

Beginning with the assumption that temple destruction was religiously motivated, this study examines the whereabouts of the destruction to test the spatial distribution of newly conquered Hindu states compared to Hindu dominated areas of the Mughal heartland such as Rajasthan. If we believe the theories of the most vocal proponents of the religiously motivated temple destruction, then we would expect to see a uniform distribution of ruined temples across the Hindu dominated areas of the Mughal Empire

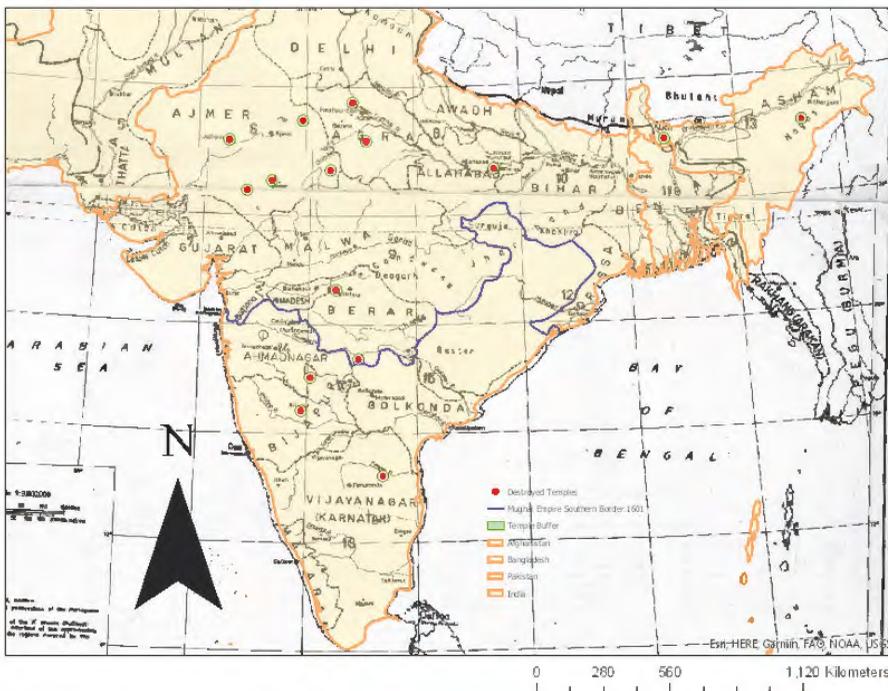
The temporal scope of this study encompasses the years 1636-1707, the years of Aurangzeb's reign as Emperor and Governor of the Deccan. Though there are more recorded instances of temple destruction, this study is only interested in investigating those carried out under Aurangzeb's watch. The geographic scope includes the modern nations which were within the borders of the Mughal Empire at its greatest extent. These include the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan.

I analyzed data primarily from Richard Eaton's "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States," with the locations he gives referenced against modern maps of India, as well as georeferenced maps of Mughal India in 1601 and 1707. These historical maps are the work of Irfan Habib of the Aligarh Muslim University, from his 1982 publication *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*. Eaton provides the dates, locations, and actors who carried out the destruction. The temples used in this study range in date of destruction from 1654 to 1698, all falling within Aurangzeb's reign except for the first; Temple No. 1 was destroyed by Aurangzeb personally during his governorship of the Deccan. For this reason, I felt it appropriate to include it in the final count. Other temples destroyed in the count may not have been ordered or carried out by Aurangzeb personally, but are a result of institutional practices within the Mughal state that derived their origins from Aurangzeb's policies. Because of this, I attributed their destructions to him, even if he did not order it explicitly. The maps from Habib that I used are based on translations of Persian language primary sources referenced with modern mapping technologies and places.¹⁰

These maps show the locations of each individual temple, with a ten-mile buffer around each point on the map (Map 1). The reason for this buffer is due to the age of the maps used as reference and the inherent inaccuracy of the placement given the passage of time. I cannot pinpoint the exact location of each of the temples in question with certainty beyond this degree. Like the rejection region of a confidence interval, I wish to shrink the buffer in order to increase my confidence in the location of the temple. Additionally, the construction of

new mosques under Aurangzeb's reign was not prolific in any sense of the word, with only a handful of examples to note. This stands in contrast to his predecessors, especially his father Shah Jahan, who were prolific monument builders in their times. Instead, Aurangzeb appears to have favored the maintenance and renovation of existing mosques as a means of fulfilling his duty to God. As a result, mosques were constructed at only three of the destroyed temple locations following the ruin of the original structure. Their immediate proximity to the ruined temples makes it redundant to plot them independently.

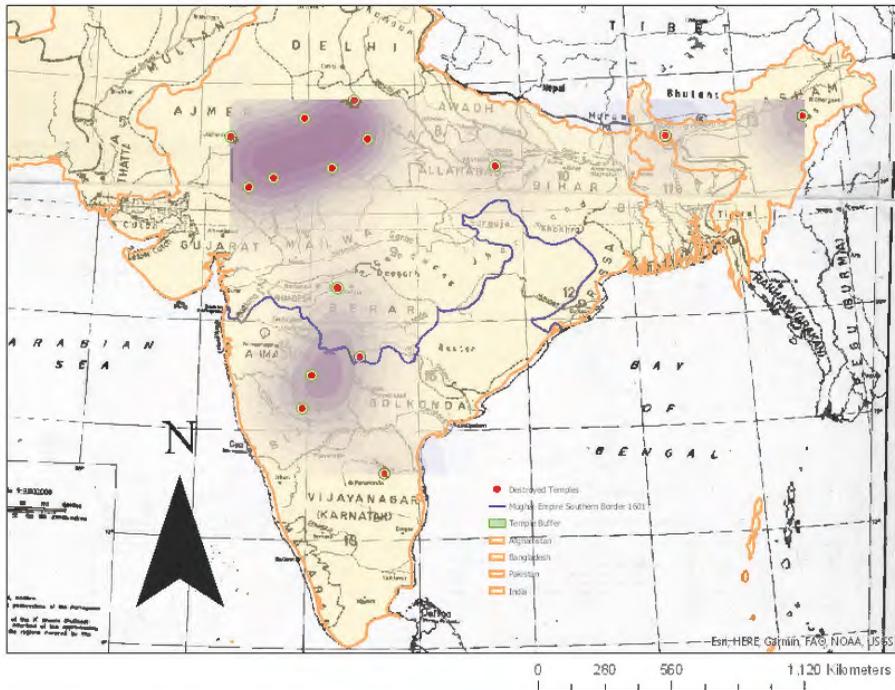
Temple destruction was concentrated in specific areas of the Mughal Empire. The KD Function uncovers the concentration of the temples and identifies the regions strongly associated with temple destruction. The results show only three temples located in Hindu-dominated regions of the southern peninsula that came into the Mughal fold under Aurangzeb. The majority are concentrated in historic Rajasthan (Map 1), where the legacy of relative autonomy from the Mughal state put the Rajput leaders in frequent political conflict with Aurangzeb.¹¹ Though these polities were controlled by Hindus, there was a significant Muslim presence and the Hindus employed Muslims in offices at all levels. Temples No. 10-13 had become associated with enemies of the imperial state for various reasons.¹² Rebel chieftains patronized these temples—the temple destroyed in Jodhpur was associated with an individual who had supported Aurangzeb's brother Dara Shikoh in the war of succession in which Aurangzeb triumphed.



Compiled by: Maximilian Murdoch

Sources: Richard Eaton "Temple Desecration" and Irfan Habib "Atlas of the Mughal Empire"

Map 1a. Distribution of Destroyed Temples in Aurangzeb's reign, showing modern South Asian states



Compiled by: Maximilian Murdoch

Sources: Richard Eaton "Temple Desecration" and Irfan Habib "Atlas of the Mughal Empire"

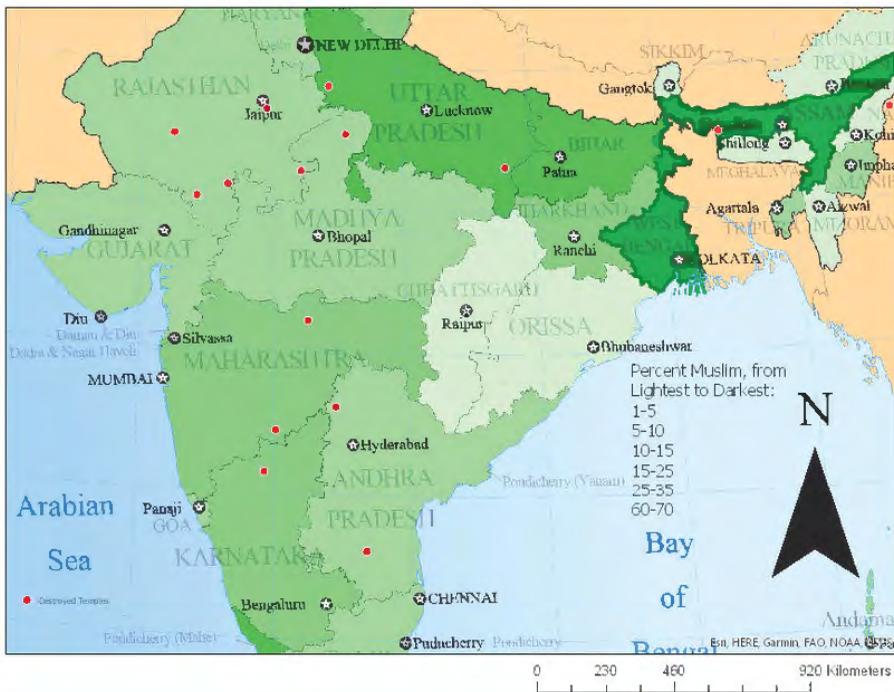
Map 1b. Distribution of Destroyed Temples in Aurangzeb's reign, showing modern South Asian states

The connection to religion as the motivating factor in destruction can be further investigated by referencing sites with modern maps of the distribution of Islam in India. The government of India publishes census data on religion in each of its states, and the results demonstrate that there is no strong correlation between the sites of temple destruction and the size of the Hindu population in those provinces. Rajasthan, where the most significant density of temples can be found, is no less Muslim than Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, or parts of Tamil Nadu, which were all incorporated into the empire in Aurangzeb's reign (Map 2). In fact, the Partition of India in 1947 resulted in a large demographic shift of Muslims out of areas bordering Pakistan and into Pakistan itself, with the reverse being true for Hindus. This means that the concentration of Muslims in Rajasthan would likely have been higher in Aurangzeb's day, contradicting the established hypothesis.

The conclusions that can be gathered from spatial analysis strongly suggest that the supposition of religious zeal as the primary motivating factor in temple destruction is false.

There is no uniform distribution in Hindu areas of temple destruction that would support the claim that temple destruction had a primarily religious motivation. If that had been the case, then regions with higher concentrations of Hindus would be expected to see equal distribution of destroyed temples. They were instead concentrated mainly in

Rajasthan, which was a politically insubordinate region even before Aurangzeb's ascension to the Peacock Throne. Had religion truly been the motivator, we would expect to see the construction of mosques widespread in the stead of these temples and on the ruins of those that were destroyed. Instead, of the temples destroyed, it is only possible to confirm the construction of a mosque immediately after in a handful.¹³ Aurangzeb only constructed a handful others besides.¹⁴ Combined with the existing historiography, the spatial analysis clarifies the picture. Temple destruction was a result of political, not religious, conflict and the modern narrative is just that: a narrative, untrue to the reality of the events. But why? What purpose does framing the Mughals and Aurangzeb in this way serve?



Compiled by: Maximilian Murdoch

Sources: Richard Eaton "Temple Desecration" and The Government of India, 2001 Census

Map 2. Locations of Destroyed Temples during Aurangzeb's reign, with percentages of Muslim citizens by state

The short answer is political expediency. The modern states of India and Pakistan are defined in opposition to each other along lines of religious identity. The tarnishing of Aurangzeb's reputation comes as part of a much larger trend within Indian society that is in keeping with the modern depiction of India as a secular, but Hindu, state. The portrayal of the Muslim rulers of pre-colonial India is to some degree as colonialists themselves: to consider them legitimate rulers would subvert the idea of India as Hindu and weaken the modern national identity that has toed the line between civic and ethnic nationalism for some time. As a result, there is an entrenchment of conservative thought on the place of Islam in Indian society and government, especially among those in power.

While a relatively recent development, this is not a new phenomenon. The legacy of communalism started long before the Partition, with its roots among the Mughals themselves. As part of the greater Muslim world, the Mughals were obligated to act in solidarity with the other Muslim dominions from Central Asia to Southern Europe, many of whom espoused a traditional approach to Muslim rule. For many outside of its borders, the Mughal state brushed far too close with heresy in the first place. As a result of attempts to placate the wider Islamic community, Aurangzeb and his predecessors framed their actions as being motivated by religious devotion. In the case of Aurangzeb, this has resulted in the consistent misinterpretation of contemporary sources, as noted by Truschke. In these sources, he is often quoted as ordering the destruction of thousands of temples and demanding the conversion of his Hindu subjects. In actuality, this amounted to little more than bluster, and his subordinates infrequently, if ever, did anything to act on or even acknowledge the decrees. This came about in part because of the contemporary interpretation of Aurangzeb's orders, but also due to plausibility: to undertake the conversion of some 200 million people would have brought the Mughal state to a swift and brutal end at the hands of a peasant revolt.

In an effort to forestall challenges to their own authority, the British actively worked to divide their Indian Empire along existing religious lines, in effect framing competition between Hindus and Muslims for British favor and cooperation as a zero-sum game. Fast forward to Indian Partition, and religion was the primary concern on the minds of those leaders tasked with building a national mythos. In the case of India, Jawaharlal Nehru compared the struggle between Aurangzeb and his brother Dara Shukoh to the emerging struggle between India and Pakistan.¹⁵ But an examination of both situations reveals that now, as then, religion is being used as a pretext to further political goals. Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb did not fight over religion, they warred over power. Dara was executed on charges of heresy, but in reality he had spent the past two years in open conflict with his brother, soliciting the support of many powerful individuals. Letting him live would have risked continuous resistance to Aurangzeb's rule. Pakistan and India are not intractable enemies by necessity, but because it is expedient for those in power to entrench their own authority.

Temple destruction was motivated by political dissent, framed because of political considerations, and is used to further political ends. But this political narrative is undeniably and demonstrably false; history does not change based on the needs of the powerful. Aurangzeb was Muslim and destroyed Hindu temples, and though one must be careful not to suggest that life was easy for non-Muslims under his rule, it is clear that Aurangzeb did not destroy temples with the intent of persecuting Hindus. His reputation is earned not from his actions themselves, but from the fiction built around them by those who would succeed him a few centuries later.

NOTES

1. The most vocal critics of the emperor tend to come from the Hindu right, particularly the Indian ruling party, the BJP. In these circles, the question of his guilt is such a closed matter that his name is used somewhat as an adjective to describe a blatantly anti-Hindu condition.
2. Audrey Truschke, author of a recent work on the life of Aurangzeb, spoke out about the calls for a ban on her travel to India and how violence has broken out before after the publication of works dealing with similarly close held beliefs.
3. Audrey Trushke, *Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).
4. *Ibid.*, 70
5. *Ibid.*, 87
6. Serious independent scholars on the matter rarely conclude that Aurangzeb was religiously motivated. Those individuals that do tend to be writing propaganda, not historical research, and are typically associated with the BJP or far right Hindu nationalist groups.
7. South Asianist Richard Eaton at the University of Arizona has done the most work translating and analyzing the primary sources to develop a comprehensive list of the temples destroyed in Aurangzeb's reign. This list, while ranging in place from Agra to Assam, ranges in number only from 1 to 16. In his article "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States," Eaton cites the history of Hindu and Muslim interactions in the recent decades as responsible in part for this willful oversight.
8. Richard Eaton, "Temple Destruction and Indo-Muslim States," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no.3 (2000): 285-286.
9. Truschke, *Aurangzeb*, 88
10. Habib himself can be credited for the majority of these translations.
11. Eaton, "Temple Destruction," 307-308
12. Eaton, "Temple Destruction," 308
13. The destruction of the Kashi Vishvanath Temple in Varanasi is perhaps the most prominent example of this. Its destruction was motivated by its patrons aiding rebels, possibly assisting Shivaji in his escape. Catherine Ella Blanshard Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India, Part 1*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008), 278.
14. The most well known mosque he constructed the is the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, which was the largest in the world at the time, and though damaged in the 19th Century, continues to impress with its size and grandeur. Truschke, *Aurangzeb*, 46
15. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis Daniyal Farqui, *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 31-32.

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**Author: Maximilian F. Murdoch**

Lovett College, Class of 2020

Maximilian is a sophomore from Lovett College studying History. He is his college's Treasurer and Orientation Week Coordinator, and his diverse historical interests include the development of the American South, the failure of the Weimar Republic, and cross-cultural interactions in medieval South Asia. After graduation, Maximilian plans to attend graduate school in one of these areas. When not among his books, this Central Texas native enjoys long drives across the state, backcountry camping, and making pottery.

Michael E. Debakey High School for Health Professions: Houston Magnet Schools and the Mandate of Integration

Benjamin Jones

This paper was written in Race and Education in the Urban South (HIST 421), taught by Dr. Byrd.

In the 1970s, the Houston Independent School District embarked on an ambitious program of voluntary desegregation driven by magnet schools. The DeBakey High School for Health Professions, which offered high quality career education to students across the district, quickly became the program's flagship institution. Forty years later, DeBakey serves a disproportionately white and Asian student body and integration is no longer a goal of the school. The language of choice, once used by segregationists, has been refashioned to suit the purposes of the magnet school. Waning commitment to DeBakey's integrative potential is emblematic of Houston's failed attempt at racial equality.

IN JULY OF 1971, Ted Freedman, a leader of Houston's Anti-Defamation League, declaimed to Houston Independent School District (HISD) officials that "we are going down the same catastrophic path as other large cities such as Chicago." Freedman made this hysterical announcement at an emergency meeting between community leaders and HISD, at a time when the district was losing more than 1000 students a month. On the agenda: "Check the white flight, correct baseless rumors, and work at making the desegregation process effective."¹ Integration, which the School Board's conservative wing had delayed and prolonged for years, was finally proceeding under the force of a 1970 court order. Many white Houstonians, faced with the prospect of sending their children to integrated HISD schools, picked up and moved to the suburbs. Between 1970 and 1980, HISD's total enrollment plummeted by almost 50,000 students, and the percentage of whites in the district, which started the decade at 50%, was halved.²

It was in this climate, in the fall of 1972, that the High School for Health Professions (HSHP), later named after renowned Houston heart surgeon Michael Debakey, was opened. The school was initially founded "in response to the educational needs of the Houston community and to relieve the critical shortage of medical and allied health personnel throughout the state and nation."³ HSHP, along with the High School for Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA), opened a year earlier in 1971, was the first HISD school to offer a high-quality, career-oriented education to student applicants from across Houston. However, the school quickly became caught up in the politics of integration. In 1975, Superintendent Billy Reagan sought and received approval from the Federal District Court to replace existing integration plans with a program of voluntary choice driven by magnet schools. Magnet schools like HSHP, it was claimed, would achieve integration by extending the carrot of high

quality premedical education to parents who were otherwise averse to mixed-race classrooms. In 1981, the district court declared that the district had met its desegregation mandate, thereby ending official federal oversight. Thirty years later, in the 2014–2015 school year, whites made up only about 10% of students both in HISD and at DeBakey, while blacks and Latinos remained underrepresented at the school. In their place, Asians and Pacific Islanders accounted for almost half of the student body.⁴ In that same year, a Houston Chronicle article praised the school’s “rigorous curriculum” and “near-perfect passing rates on standardized tests.”⁵ Yet nowhere in the article, titled “School Report Card,” were the school’s racial or class disparities critically assessed. As the political, demographic, and social landscape of Houston’s educational institutions have changed, so too have understandings of the role which this magnet school ought to play in the lives of its students. Waning commitment to DeBakey’s integrative potential is emblematic of the city’s failed attempt at racial equality.

Magnet schools emerged out of almost two decades of political struggle in HISD. The Supreme Court mandated school desegregation in 1954’s *Brown v Board*; yet many local school boards, including Houston’s, openly opposed integrated schools, and set out to stall such plans by any means necessary. The school board feuded with Federal Judge Ben Connally over the nature and extent of school desegregation in Houston throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Six years elapsed before HISD admitted any African Americans to all-white schools: in 1960, a token twelve black children were permitted to enroll in three white elementary schools.⁶ Progress remained glacially slow as the courts pushed the district to implement meaningful reforms. Conservatives positioned themselves as opponents of federally-mandated “forced integration,” instead advocating for “optional and equal” policies “conducive to the preservation of racial integrity.”⁷ Segregationists relied on the rhetoric of states’ rights and local autonomy to demonize integration programs (like school pairings) as authoritarian, expensive, “educationally unsound,”⁸ and an unwelcome “necessity.”⁹ Busing in particular became loaded with fears of racial mixing. In a 1969 report on HISD’s desegregation titled “NO MASS BUSING,” Superintendent George Carver reassured parents that while “many other cities have had to close schools and implement massive busing plans [...] Houston has maintained its neighborhood schools and avoided massive busing.”¹⁰ The busing suggested by the district court was characterized as not just disruptive, but “massive” and threatening to the white-controlled racial status quo. Houstonians were told to fear federal intervention because it would culminate in the destruction of the city’s most valued schools.

In place of affirmative integration programs like busing, which threatened to bring African American and Hispanic students into white schools, conservatives advocated for “freedom of choice.” In theory, freedom of choice would allow parents to enroll their children in any HISD school they chose. Proponents of “freedom of choice” repeatedly stressed that its “voluntary” nature would produce the necessary levels of integration and encourage whites to stay in the district.¹¹ Connally approved a freedom of choice plan in 1967, after the district proved unwilling to implement a stair-step integration program. However, bureaucratic barriers and practical considerations meant that the majority of HISD students continued to attend their racially segregated neighborhood schools. Even the staunchly pro-choice

Citizens Committee to Study Desegregation was forced to admit in 1969 that a minimum 90%–10% racial mixture was not being attained in Houston’s schools; nonetheless, they maintained that “under freedom of choice increases are resulting every year and if continued on a voluntary basis the desired ratio will certainly be obtained.”¹² However, Connally remained unconvinced by the arguments of the segregationists; thus, he ended the freedom of choice experiment in 1970, and ordered the district to implement a more proactive plan. Notwithstanding this court order, HISD continued to advocate for voluntary integration, and even presented freedom of choice as an option to voters on a 1970 ballot.



Proponents of “freedom of choice” repeatedly stressed that its “voluntary” nature would produce the necessary levels of integration .

The High School for Health Professions was founded not on the racially charged politics of school integration, but on the initiative of Houston’s medical community to address the growing needs of the city’s burgeoning health industry. In a 1970 letter to HISD board member Eleanor Tinsley, Charles Stranger, director of St. Joseph’s hospital, expressed the need for greater health vocational training: “we need qualified persons at all levels of the hospital family. Most of the youngsters are not introduced to our industry early enough to determine whether or not they have an applicable interest.”¹³ In the same year, HISD adopted a commitment to vocational training in a number of fields, including health and medicine.¹⁴ Joseph Merrill and Michael DeBakey, executive vice president and president of the Baylor College of Medicine respectively, provided the final “impetus from the top” needed to get the school off ground.¹⁵ When HSHP was established in 1972, it was marketed as the district’s “newest occupational training school [...] designed especially for students interested in health oriented careers.”¹⁶ Many sources from the early years of the school acknowledge the integration opportunities which HSHP created, but usually in passing, as this pamphlet footnote demonstrates: “Students selected represent a broad cross section of the HISD students in ability and ethnic background.”¹⁷ Early on, the work of health education was prioritized over integration at HSHP. As late as 1974, HSHP’s academics were being praised in the Houston Post by the National Education Task Force director, Frank Brown, as “among the best he has seen in the nation.”¹⁸ Conservatives claimed that magnet schools would act as an element of freedom of choice, and the Citizens Committee suggested that four magnet schools be established in Houston’s “predominantly negro population belt” in order to draw white students.¹⁹ However, this rhetoric was never connected to the smaller HSHP which, when first founded, housed less than fifty students. HSHP’s absence from city-wide debates would soon change when the educational mission of the school collided with the ongoing political battle over integration.

Many in Houston continued to oppose federal intervention and, with the failure of freedom of choice in 1970, began to cast about for alternatives. They found their answer in

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schools like HSHP. Billy Reagan, upon entering the superintendency in 1974, pursued magnet schools as the solution to Houston's racial segregation and demographic flux. In 1975, under a program called Quality Integrated Education (QIE), the district sought and received federal approval for the creation of more than thirty magnet schools. The goals of these schools, as stated in a QIE report, were to:

1. stall or stop the flight of residents from urban schools by offering quality education
2. promote integration
3. offer more educational opportunities for students of the district
4. bring about an alternative to busing and other plans such as the pairing of schools that are no longer needs of the district²⁰

These magnet schools were opened to children from outside the district, and free transportation was provided to all students, in hopes that suburban whites would return to HISD campuses.²¹ Speaking years later, Reagan described the magnet school program as an innovative strategy: "We shifted our terminology, we shifted our actions from desegregation to integration. And everything we did, we did with the intent of integrating the schools, not forcefully desegregating them. Those are two very different strategies and very different outcomes."²² The language of freedom of choice was replicated and recast in a form that was acceptable to federal courts. Proponents of the magnet schools repeatedly stressed their "positive" and "voluntary" nature²³—a not so subtle allusion to the old freedom of choice programs. The plan HISD submitted to the courts insisted that "certain coercive requirements"—namely a required 40-40-20 ratio for black, white, and brown students for the first 15 days of the semester, followed by a mandatory minimum 10% minority enrollment for the rest of the school year, "prevented it from being a freedom of choice plan."²⁴ Yet it was marketed to the Houston public in exactly those terms. Reagan wrote in a letter to the editor of the Houston Post "one of the most fundamental reasons the magnet school plan is an attractive means of integration our schools is that it is a voluntary program."²⁵

HSHP's educational mission coincided nicely with the political aims of QIE's architects. Although HSHP's nominal goal was to provide quality health education on a meritocratic basis, racial integration became key to the school's representation in public and political discourse. HSHP was repeatedly referenced because it had "already proven the concept [of integrated magnet schools] successful."²⁶ The report submitted to the federal district court claimed that HISD's existing magnet schools "have proven to be successful as an integration technique and as an approach to providing quality education [...] each of these schools draws interested and talented students in its particular field from throughout the district. Each is integrated."²⁷ This retroactive rewriting of HSHP's purpose served the political purposes of those who wished for the end of federally mandated school pairings. In the words of one Houston Chronicle correspondent writing in 1989, "magnets first existed in HISD as enrichment programs, but evolved into tools for integration."²⁸ DeBakey continues to be cited as a model of integrated education in the 21st century. A 2006 Department of Education report praised HISD's magnet schools for both the quality of their education and their racial diversity, and cited DeBakey in particular as "an example of a magnet with a unique theme

strong enough to attract excellent students from all over this huge district.”²⁹ This enduring theme of official discourse heaps praise on the magnet program while ignoring the actual racial dynamics at work in the school.

Hidden from the public discourse which praises DeBakey and Houston’s other early magnet programs for their successful integration is a subtle bureaucratic exemption which excluded these schools from the district’s voluntary integration program. Although HSHP was repeatedly cited to justify the adoption of the magnet school program in 1975, it and the other existing magnets were designated as “alternative schools” under the terms of the plan. Alternative schools, as opposed to magnets, were exempted from both the imposed racial quotas and the federal funds which paid for the busing of far flung students.³⁰ This distinction allowed HSHP to continue its selective admissions process, and likely contributed to the school’s imbalanced demographics. It was not until 1980, with the adoption of the Voluntary Interdistrict Educational Plan (VIEP), that HSHP became subject to integration mandates. VIEP signaled a slight shift in HISD’s integration goals. The magnet programs established in 1975 had failed to keep whites in the district. By 1980 the district was only 25% white,³¹ and there were simply not enough white students to go around in HISD schools. VIEP opened all of HISD’s vocational programs to students from outside districts, in the hopes of attracting whites who had fled to the suburbs. Racial and ethnic goals for VIEP schools were set at 35% white, 45% black, and 20% Hispanic.³² HSHP’s demographics approached this ratio at its founding, but has since failed to achieve parity with Houston’s overall racial composition. VIEP represents the high point of the attempt to achieve meaningful integration at HSHP. In the years since, both the school and the district have abandoned this mission.

In June 1981, Federal Judge Robert O’Connor declared HISD a unitary district, citing HSHP’s as one of the district’s successful integration programs. The magnet schools, he explained, had “proved to be a workable method of desegregating the HISD’s schools.”³³ In the thirty years following the formal end of federal oversight in 1989, the school board and the city gave up on integration and racial equality, even as the magnet program expanded from the original 34 schools to more than 100 sites in 2003.³⁴ In 1987, a mere six years after the federal government approved Houston’s magnet schools, the Houston Chronicle announced that magnets had failed in pursuing their “seemingly hopeless desegregation goal.”³⁵ VIEP schools had proven inadequate at stemming the tide of white flight, as Houston became increasingly black and brown over the course of the 1980s. HISD Trustee Wiley Henry, in speaking on the demographic dilemma faced by the city, said “You can’t integrate the school district when only 17 percent of the students are white. Integration is no longer the issue. Education is the issue.”³⁶ Indeed, in reevaluating the magnet schools, many came to see their multiracial character as threats to the educational opportunities available for non-white Houstonians. In 1992, HISD ended VIEP and the 126 out-of-district students then attending HSHP were forced to return to their home schools. The district argued that “inner-city students are getting shortchanged in HISD’s top magnet programs -- displaced by out-of-district students who outperform them,”³⁷ and thus that HSHP’s integrative function was in fact harming Houston students. Yet spots were ultimately limited at HISD magnet schools

because the district did not want to provide more money to these schools. “There are costs of those [out-of-district] youngsters being there that our taxpayers have to pick up,” reasoned one district official, revealing the fiscal concerns underlying the policy reversal.³⁸ Integration, considering HISD’s changing priorities, had become too expensive.

In the 1990s, both the federal government and HISD retreated from their commitment to bring about racially integrated schools in Houston. The integrative potential of magnet schools like DeBakey was quickly replaced in public discourse by the language of meritocracy and academic success which had accompanied the school’s original founding. “I’m not sure how much magnets have done for integration,” said University of Houston education professor Robert Houston in 1995, “but they have done a lot for education.”³⁹ A 1993 Houston Chronicle article heaped praise on the school’s college-level academics and “high standard of excellence,” while devoting a single sentence to the school’s racial demographics.⁴⁰ As the district’s commitment to integration visibly waned, HSHP increasingly began to emphasize the role of Houston’s medical community in founding and growing the school. In 1996, HSHP was renamed after Michael DeBakey, president of Baylor College of Medicine, because he was the “driving force behind [the school’s] creation and development.”⁴¹ This name change served not only to capitalize on DeBakey’s well-deserved prestige and emphasize HSHP’s significant educational achievement, but also to symbolically distance the school from the traumatic racial politics of the integration period. Integration now plays only a small role in the way which the school imagines itself and its history.



The integrative potential of magnet schools like DeBakey was quickly replaced in public discourse by the language of meritocracy and academic success.

The rhetoric of free choice, which had earlier been used to covertly buttress segregation, crept back into the public discourse surrounding magnet schools in the 1990s as racial equality receded from the district’s mission. “I think it is a matter of the parents feeling they have a choice in the education of their child,” said HISD’s magnet program director Dee Bates in 1994 to explain the popularity of magnet schools like HSHP. “I think that’s the big thing. It’s a matter of choice.”⁴² Immediately following the Brown decision, school segregationists had advocated freedom of choice in order to ensure the survival of de facto racial apartheid. At the end of the 20th century, even as the magnet schools’ nominal commitment to integration was removed from official policy, freedom of choice was being used to justify their continued existence. Indeed, starting in the 1990s, choice became the watchword of a new breed of school reformers who believed that transforming the education system into a competitive marketplace of charter schools would provide better opportunities for all.⁴³ In 1994 HISD Superintendent Rod Paige voiced his approval of charter schools and even offered HSHP as a model for their success, saying “a school built around a focus with teachers who choose to be

there and children who choose to attend that school works.”⁴⁴ Absent from the language of choice which bolstered charter schools was an affirmative commitment to racial integration, as the district had briefly been forced to adopt in the 1970s. This suggests that choice, as implemented in Houston, did not create integrated education in the 1960s and 70s, and that it continues to perpetuate that inequality into the 21st century.

The failure of integrated education in Houston has left a lasting imprint on DeBakey High School. In 2003, DeBakey articulated five goals focused on improving test scores and increasing campus outreach; none mentioned race or integration.⁴⁵ A brief look at the school’s demographics and racial dynamics reveals that, as a result of the district’s retreat from “Quality Integrated Education,” meaningful interracial contact continues to elude DeBakey. Underrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics at the school remains strong in the 21st century, and has increased as Asian students have grown to occupy a greater proportion of the school. However, looking at total racial composition in isolation from other factors can lead to a misleading portrait of the school’s cumulative cross-racial relationships. Research suggests that variations across classrooms and clubs within a school can significantly affect the level of interracial contact.⁴⁶ Frequently, through tracking mechanisms like AP courses as well as self-segregation among students, a school’s composite racial makeup obscures the experienced interracial interactions between students. In order to better understand these dynamics, I examined the racial composition of student organization portraits found in available historic HSHP and DeBakey yearbooks from 1980, 2001, and 2013. Although poor photo quality and the school yearbooks’ unfortunate tendency to not name the students in club photos made the assessment of race difficult in the case of many individuals, the broad trends appear to be reliable.

Results from this analysis (see Figure 1) indicate that throughout DeBakey’s history black and Hispanic students have been underrepresented not only at the school level, but also within the school’s clubs. Disparity between school and district represents the difference between a racial/ethnic group’s total percentage across HISD and its representation at DeBakey; disparity between clubs and school measures the difference between a group’s size within DeBakey and its representation in the school’s clubs and organizations. Representation of blacks at DeBakey is inconsistent, and blacks have in reality been sporadically overrepresented according to both measures. Hispanics, in contrast, have experienced consistent and significant underrepresentation. In 2013 Hispanics were underrepresented by more than 40 percentage points in DeBakey’s student body, and by an additional 9 percentage points in the school’s clubs and organizations. In 2002, DeBakey’s -14.8 underrepresentation rate for blacks and Hispanics among student clubs far exceeded the average for Southern public schools, which rested at -6.2.⁴⁷ The limited data available suggests that the participation of non-white, non-Asian students at DeBakey has never reflected those populations’ overall composition in HISD, and this underrepresentation has been exacerbated by the end of the district’s commitment to integration. Hispanics especially have experienced underrepresentation at both the school and organization levels, even as they have grown to make up a majority of HISD’s population. In their place, Asians now represent a plurality

of students at DeBakey, the only high school in HISD to hold this distinction. Asians are not only massively overrepresented at DeBakey when compared to Houston as a whole, but they also enjoy favorable participation in school clubs. Whites, as a result of the end of the district's VIEP program, have accounted for a relatively tiny proportion of the school since the 1990s. HISD's failed commitment to integration has resulted in a magnet school which does not accurately reflect the racial diversity of the district.



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The changes which affected DeBakey in the 1980s and 90s extended beyond racial integration issues and into curriculum. When the high school was first founded, it was meant to be a vocational program that prepared students “to enter health careers after graduation or to continue their studies at the college level.”⁴⁸ The school placed equal emphasis on college preparation and training for “allied health professions”⁴⁹ which allowed DeBakey students without the money or desire to attend eight years of post-secondary education the chance to enter the medical field immediately after graduation. However, as the school grew in capacity and prestige, its curricular priorities began to change. Under the leadership of Charlesetta Deason, principal from 1989 to 2008, DeBakey added many Advanced Placement (AP) courses and began placing greater emphasis on pre-college standardized tests. In 1993, almost 98 percent of the school's graduating students entered higher education;⁵⁰ by 2012, that number had reached 100.⁵¹ While these impressive numbers no doubt reflect DeBakey's academic excellence, the school's focus on success in higher education excludes those students for whom time and monetary constraints make medical school impractical. Indeed, DeBakey's 2014 student body consisted of only 42% economically disadvantaged students at a time when the district as a whole enrolled more than 75%.⁵² DeBakey's emphasis on post-secondary education excludes some of Houston's most disadvantaged students, and is symptomatic of the district's failure to adequately address the need for equity in Houston's education system.

HSPVA, DeBakey's original sister magnet school for the fine arts, shares in the problems of racial imbalance. HSPVA been the whitest school in HISD since 1983 and the most socioeconomically privileged since 1988, yet Elaine Gore, in her study of the school optimistically titled *Talent Knows No Color*, concludes that HSPVA has still succeeded in lowering racial barriers because at HSPVA “the norms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class are superseded by the social category of artist.”⁵³ Much the same thing continues to be said of DeBakey which, despite its racial imbalances, is praised as “Houston's premier magnet” with “a 100 percent graduation rate and perfect to near-perfect passing rates on standardized tests.”⁵⁴ This laudatory rhetoric obscures many problems inside the school. However much the magnet schools may have fostered interracial contact, the continued

demographic imbalances at DeBakey and elsewhere point to fundamental flaws in the magnet school model. The promise of integration remains unfulfilled in Houston's schools. DeBakey, a magnet school initially founded with career education in mind, has proven a poor tool for the purpose it was turned towards: creating a racially-mixed environment representative of Houston's residents. Both in terms of its student population and in terms of the interactions those students have outside the classroom, DeBakey does not accurately reflect the city's diversity. The failure of the magnet schools, despite the best intentions and most fervent hopes of their creators, provides an important lesson about the role of choice in education and segregation. So long as freedom of choice remains the philosophy of our institutions, those with greater social and economic capital will continue to exercise that freedom to avoid those with less. Houston's preference for choice-based policies, at the expense of affirmative integration, has resulted in a well-established and durable inequality at DeBakey and within the city's education system.

School Year	1972-73		1980-81		2001-02		2013-14	
	HSHP	HISD	HSHP	HISD	DeBakey	HISD	DeBakey	HISD
Total Students	45	225397		194043	701	208297	823	210716
Black(%)	33.3	39.4		44.9	40	32	19	25
White(%)	51.1	44		25.1	11	10	10	8
Hispanic(%)	15.6	15.6		27.8	26	55	27	62
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	0	NA		NA	23	3	43	4
Disparity between school and district: Blacks	-6.1				8		-6	
Disparity between school and district: Hispanics	0				-29		-35	
Underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics at DeBakey	-6.1				-21		-41	
Student Clubs								
Average Percent Black			58.2		33.4		22.5	
Average Percent White			16.4		19.2		11.9	
Average Percent Hispanic			24.4		17.8		17.4	
Average Percent Asian			1.0		29.7		48.3	
Disparity between clubs and school: Blacks					-6.6		3.5	
Disparity between clubs and school: Hispanics					-8.2		-9.6	
Underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics in Clubs					-14.8		-6.1	

Figure 1. Race in DeBakey Clubs and Organizations

Data for the 2001 and 2013 school years was taken from District and School Profiles available online at <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/38525>. District wide data from 1972 and 1980 was taken from Kellar 1999. 1973 data for HSHP came from Gunby 1980. Yearbooks references from the years 1981, 2002, and 2014 are available in the Works Cited section; no yearbook was available for 1973.

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23. "Would you send your children to a magnet school?" *Houston Chronicle*, May 24, 1975.
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Author: Benjamin Jones

Jones College, Class of 2018

Ben is a Jones college senior studying History and Arabic. In the Spring of 2017 he studied abroad in Amman, Jordan, and experience which inspired his honors thesis, "Jordan for the Jordanians: Transjordanian Nationalism in the Mandate Period." After graduation, Ben will join the Peace Corps as a Youth Development Specialist in Morocco.

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Editor-in-Chief
Will Rice College, Class of 2019
Daniel is double majoring in history and religion and getting a minor in Jewish studies. He is also the Co-President of the Rice Club Baseball team, and he is specifically interested in Middle Eastern history.



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Brown College, Class of 2020
Jennifer is a double majoring in psychology and history, and she plans to pursue a PhD in clinical psychology after graduating. Her historical interests include 20th century U.S. history, World War II, and the scientific revolution.



Anthony Tohme

Managing Editor
Brown College, Class of 2019
Anthony is double-majoring in history and political science. Outside of academics, he enjoys reading, playing sports, listening to music, and sleeping. After graduation, he plans to attend law school.



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Secretary-Treasurer
Will Rice College, Class of 2019
Yves is majoring in history, sociology, and policy studies. He is interested in the intersection between history, political thought, and legal doctrines. As an international student, he is also interested in comparative history.



Matthew Franklin

Assistant Managing Editor
Brown College, Class of 2019
Matthew is majoring in economics and history. When not studying, he can be found watching modern and classic movies while sipping on a glass of red wine or relaxing in a hammock with a good book.



Alison Drileck

Co-Director of Podcasting
Sid Richardson College, Class of 2021
Alison is a sophomore majoring in history and social policy analysis. She is also pursuing a minor in politics, law and social thought and a certificate in civic leadership. She plans on attending law school after Rice.



Jessica Guerra

Director of Copy Editing
Jones College, Class of 2018
Jess is a History major with special interests in Japanese modern history, women's history, the rise of commercialism and beauty culture, and sociopolitical theory.



Mikayla Knutson

Co-Director of Podcasting
Duncan College, Class of 2021
Mikayla is majoring in history and political science with a minor in politics, law, and social thought. Her particular interests are early modern British history, with an emphasis in foreign relations; U.S. Civil War; and World War I.



Madison Grimes

Director of Publication
Hanszen College, Class of 2020
Madison is a Latin American studies and political science major with a minor in politics, law, and social thought. She is interested in rule of law and democratization in Latin America.



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in the Practice of English and Humanities

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