

Herald the Story and Die for the Glory: Muscular Christianity, Reconstruction, and Collegiate Football in the New South

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In 1908, the Glee Club of Wake Forest College performed a piece by C. P. Weaver, an alumnus from the Class of 1904. The lyrics to “O, Here’s to Wake Forest” were later published in Wake’s yearbook, *The Howler*: “We’ll herald her story, / and die for her glory, / Old Gold and Black is ever waving high.”¹ “Heralding” and “glorifying” one’s team was emblematic of college football during the late years of Southern Reconstruction and the early years of the Victorian Era. Following the Civil War, Southern male youth culture underwent tremendous structural alteration. A focus on violence, brotherhood, and Christianity, provided the foundation for the development of collegiate sports. Collegiate football in the South, specifically at the Baptist-affiliated Wake Forest College, not only epitomized these qualities of nineteenth-century manhood, but as the game matured it began to reflect both wartime and the early post-war societal ideal for men in the New South.

Almost fifteen years before the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, the English game of rugby formalized its rules in 1845.² Rugby, with its signature oblong-shaped balls tossed between H-shaped goal posts, featured a battle between two opposing male teams. It combined wrestling, violence, and the sports of soccer and handball.³ In its earliest years, rugby was most often played between school teams at the intramural level. Competitions and tournaments were held between elite prep schools, such as Eton College, where the males of the royal family of Great Britain were educated.⁴ As the game advanced to the collegiate level, it became a focus of contest and demonstration of manliness for the young men of prestige in England, just as football would later become for American men.

The mid-nineteenth century also marked a renewed religious fervor among Christian sects in England. The revival was influenced by the Second Industrial Revolution’s emphasis on physical labor and the separation of various Protestant sects from the traditional Anglican Church.⁵ Following the creation of rugby in 1823⁶ and the establishment of the formal rules for soccer in 1848,⁷ the religious movement in England led to the development of the term “muscular Christianity.” Muscular Christianity placed emphasis on physical well-being; the more physically fit a man was, the closer to God he was considered to be. This referred not to

¹ “O, Here’s to Wake Forest.” *Wake Forest College Howler*. (Wake Forest, NC: Wake Forest Press: 1909) 88.

² “History of Football.” History of Sports. Saperecom Productions. Last updated 2006. <<http://www.historyoffootball.net/>> (accessed November 10, 2006).

³ “History of Rugby.” *Maryland Exiles Rugby Homepage*. Updated 2006.

<http://www.highschoolrugby.com/2001season/quickguide.htm> (accessed November 10, 2006).

⁴ Rebecca Blaine, “The World’s Most Beloved Sport – The History of Soccer.” *World Cup 2006: Fussball*. Updated 2006. <http://germany2006.fussballportal.de/history.php> (accessed November 10, 2006).

⁵ John Wesley, *On The Trinity*: Sermon 55. May 8, 1775. <<http://gbgm-umc.org/UMhistory/Wesley/sermons/serm-055.stm>> (accessed 10 November 10, 2006).

⁶ “History of Rugby.”

⁷ Blaine, “The World’s Most Beloved Sport – The History of Soccer.”

the “idea of the spirit made flesh, but of the flesh made spirit,”⁸ according to John Wesley, a principal religious leader of the time. In his “A Short History of the Penis,” sociologist Toby Miller explains that the origin of the term muscular Christianity derived “from a regimen of knowledge set down as an all-consuming faith in the transformability of individuals through continuous exercise.”⁹ Muscular Christianity first emerged in English public schools in the 1830s as a means of “binding mind and body together under the sign of health.”¹⁰ The physical nature of humanity was thus viewed in terms of both moral and scientific physicality.

While political conditions in England allowed the British time to focus on religious philosophy and sports, Americans were not able to enjoy such leisure as growing social tensions in the United States led to the Civil War. The Civil War affected all parts of American life: social, political, religious, educational, and even physical. Instead of strategy on a rugby or soccer field, young American men were preoccupied with battle lines and military tactics. The few wealthy American universities that remained open during wartime concentrated on promoting the regionalized political rhetoric of the period. Military academies attempted to create a balance between teaching the traditional methods of combat, such as fencing, with more modern techniques of warfare, such as the importance of engineering and technology.¹¹ According to historian Jennifer R. Green, antebellum military academies created a conception of manhood that “recognized the importance of a man’s hierarchical status but modified elite male goals of wealth, honor, and mastery over slaves, replacing the standards of valuation with ones they could attain, such as self-discipline, education, and industry.”¹²

On the homefront, many young men who had recently graduated from American universities married and began families. When men failed to return home from war within a few months, northern and southern societies began to question how long the war would persist. A total war effort began, and both sides attempted to justify their causes in religious terms, while simultaneously preparing the next generation of Christian warriors. Even “awed children learned to revere the war and the warriors of Christ who prosecuted it.”¹³

Children growing up during the Civil War, especially boys who could potentially carry on the fight of their fathers, were exposed to the same propaganda as the previous generation. The educational leaders of the Confederacy expected children to be well-versed in the “rights and duties of Confederate citizenship.”¹⁴ By reading stories about the quest for moral righteousness, the duties of Confederate men, and God’s support of the Confederacy, boys were confronted with a moral battle of virtue, manhood, and honor from an early age.¹⁵

The classroom was not the only place where boys practiced wartime southern citizenship. Games of patriotism, combat, and violence were invented by young boys and encouraged by

⁸ Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 224.

⁹ Toby Miller, “A Short History of the Penis.” *Social Text*, No. 43. (Autumn, 1995), 3.

¹⁰ T. Miller, “A Short History of the Penis,” 3

¹¹ James L. Morrison, Jr, “Educating the Civil War Generals: West Point, 1833-1861. (*Military Affairs*, Vol. 38, No. 3. (Oct., 1974)), 109.

¹² Jennifer R. Green, “Stout Chaps Who can bear the Distress: Young Men in Antebellum Military Academies.” (Friend, Craig Thompson, and Glover, Lorri. *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2004,) 175.

¹³ Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Alter of the Nation* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 101.

¹⁴ Anne Sarah Reuben, “Redefining the South: Confederates, Southerners, and Americans, 1863-1868” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1999), quoted in K. A. McConnell, “Constructing Religious Meaning for Children Out of the American Civil War,” *Journal of Religion & Society* 3 (2001): 6

¹⁵ McConnell, “Constructing Religious Meaning for Children out of the American Civil War,” 6.

their parents. Some parents even took pictures of their young sons holding swords and guns.¹⁶ American class society was transformed during the Civil War and the following decades. The working class was still responsible for providing labor to proliferate the nation, and the upper class continued to prove their manhood as they always had, by dueling and hunting. However, middle class boys left their homes to learn and exercise the standards of the other two classes. They began to labor like the working class as soldiers and defend their honor like the upper class in preparation for war. When the war ended in 1864, a generation of Confederate boys who had spent a large part of their childhood preparing for battle was left with no enemy to fight.

Lack of funding and low student population caused many colleges to close during the Civil War. The economic depression during the early years of Southern Reconstruction caused many of the remaining schools to shut their doors. The University of North Carolina was one of the few universities in the South to remain open during the duration of the war, but was forced to close from 1870 to 1875 because its buildings were in need of repair.¹⁷

Wake Forest College closed during the war but was reopened by four professors in January 1866.¹⁸ Wake Forest, a private, all-male educational institution that was originally located in Wake Forest, North Carolina, offered young men a blend of religious, philosophical, and practical study. The college relocated to Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 1956.¹⁹ Controlled by the Baptist church until 1986,²⁰ the college was originally neighbored by other private and public universities and was thus at the heart of what would become a competitive intercollegiate playground. Wake Forest College provides historians with a strong case study for examining the effects of post-war muscular Christianity on a Southern college because of the school's centralized original location, religious connections, and highly documented development from a small, local seminary to a respected liberal arts institution.

Although the financial crisis of 1873 severely hindered the growth of Wake Forest College,²¹ the school gained students and received an endowment over the next decade. The combination of the chartered North Carolina Baptist Student Loan Fund in 1877²² and the hiring of Dr. Charles Elisha Taylor as a professor of Moral Philosophy in 1880²³ was largely responsible for the successful continuation and expansion of the college. The Loan Fund allowed students from more humble backgrounds an opportunity to attend the institution. Dr. Taylor, who became the President of Wake Forest College in 1884, brought with him a personal crusade to nearly double Wake Forest's endowment from \$53,000 to \$100,000.²⁴

Changes in the private and social lives of students made nineteenth-century southern colleges the birthplaces of collegiate amusement. According to Anthony Rotundo, a leading

¹⁶ Stout, *Upon the Alter of the Nation*, 101.

¹⁷ William S. Powell, "Carolina: A Brief History." *The University of North Carolina*, Homepage. <<http://www.unc.edu/about/history.html>> (accessed 11 Nov 2006).

¹⁸ Powell, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

¹⁹ Benson, Garianne. "Half a century later, Wake thrives in Winston-Salem." *Old Gold and Black*. October 5, 2006. <http://ogb.wfu.edu/?id=3697_0_9_0_M> (accessed April 16, 2007).

²⁰ Leonard, Bill J. "Wake Forest University and Baptist History: A Matter of Conscience?" *The Divinity School at Wake Forest University Homepage*. Paper posted: January 23, 2007 (accessed 16 April 2007). <http://divinity.wfu.edu/transcript_20070123.html>.

²¹ Percival Perry, "History of Wake Forest University." Wake Forest College *Bulletin* (January, 1974.) <http://www.wfu.edu/history/HST_WFU/perry.html> (accessed November 10, 2006).

²² Perry, "History of Wake Forest University."

²³ Perry, "History of Wake Forest University."

²⁴ Suzanne Cameron Linder, *William Louis Poteat: Prophet of Progress*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 27.

historian on male identity, the nineteenth century was the first time men moved a significant distance from home. Much of this movement was a reaction to the desire for new adventures and opportunities. He says that “within a few years, comments like ‘I began to feel homesick’ and ‘I am a little homesick’ became commonplace” in young men’s diaries; these comments had rarely before been seen.²⁵ Comradery and male bonding thus became essential for collegiate men who may have been the first members of their families to travel far from home for a purpose other than fighting in a war. Sports became one of many rituals to promote unity and brotherhood across the college campus.

In 1882, a group of students at Wake Forest established *Wake Forest Student*, under the overseeing eye of biology professor Dr. William Louis Poteat.²⁶ The *Student* contained literature, news, and gossip about Wake Forest, as well as other colleges like the University of Richmond and Yale University. Released monthly, the paper began each edition by enthusiastically denoting the number of men currently enrolled at Wake; by 1905, the population reached as many as 313.²⁷ As the years progressed and the student population increased, the sports games of Wake Forest bared a strong resemblance to the military games played by children during the Civil War.²⁸

Literary societies were the primary means of establishing prestige on the Wake Forest campus, and were popular among both the students and the faculty.²⁹ Many of the men who joined the organizations were already highly educated when they came to the college. These men usually came from affluent families, especially in the difficult financial times that defined the post-war New South. Wake Forest, however, specifically sought to enroll working and middle class men. An 1890 article published by J. B. Carlyle in the *Biblical Recorder*, the newspaper of the North Carolina Baptists, appealed to men of all economic backgrounds:

And to the poor young men of the State who are prepared for our classes and have the brains, pluck, and character, I want to say come to Wake Forest... The time has come when character and not clothes, when brains and not blood, must determine a man’s standing in society and win the respect and confidence of his fellows.³⁰

Two issues are confronted in the article: first, another means of introduction and initiation were needed for Wake Forest’s men who lacked the strong debate and oratory background necessary to be accepted into literary societies. Second, a man who came into the college without an established societal standing was compelled to “win the respect and confidence of his fellows.”³¹ The desire of new students to “win respect” and old students to create a single confederation across the campus led many men to participate in hazing rituals. During the nineteenth century, most hazing was intended to cause the physical and emotional breakdown of an individual to promote loyalty to the college government as a whole, rather than to close

²⁵ Rotundo, “American Manhood,” 57.

²⁶ Linder, *William L. Poteat*, 40.

²⁷ Perry, “History of Wake Forest University.”

²⁸ Patrick B. Miller, “The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient: College Sport in the New South.” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol 24, No 3 (Fall 1997): 286.

²⁹ Williams, Timothy Joseph. “Literary Societies at Wake Forest College,” May 2002. <<http://groups.wfu.edu/debate/HistoryPages/Honors%20Paper-FINAL.doc>>

³⁰ J.B. Carlyle, “Wake Forest Letter.” *Biblical Recorder*, January, 8 1890.

³¹ J.B. Carlyle, “Wake Forest Letter.”

friends.³² Often college authorities supported hazing and flogging rites “to develop a young man’s loyalty to his class as the first step in introducing him to the hierarchal society of the college.”³³ The physical and emotional breakdown of an individual man to establish him in the group’s hierarchy and test his manliness was reminiscent of the militaristic culture experienced by his father and grandfather.

By 1908, the hazing of new students at Wake Forest College reached such extreme levels that the Southern Baptist Convention, the parent organization of the college, became concerned. Dr. Poteat, who had replaced Dr. Taylor, addressed the issue in a letter published in the *Biblical Recorder* asserting:

We have not known our students heretofore to be so united in the earnest and practical purpose to suppress hazing. On last Monday in mass meeting, with enthusiasm and absolute unanimity, they appointed a strong committee to act for them in the matter, and the committee the same day took a resolute step which finely exhibited their spirit. We can not guarantee the total suppression of the evil, and are making no announcements that it is a thing wholly of the past; but we are not anticipating any trouble from that quarter this session.³⁴

Despite Poteat’s close connection to his students, which is indicative throughout the *Student*, it is unclear whether this meeting was a sincere attempt by the students to halt hazing or whether the meeting was a formality to appease the Convention and Wake’s administration. The *Student* makes no mention of the hazing issue. By that time, athletics had become another way to prove manliness in college.

Not long after the Civil War, the *Biblical Recorder* “declared that education was a defense against moral and intellectual absorption by the conquerors, an offset to subjugation.”³⁵ “The conquerors” denotes not any conqueror, but specifically those who had recently invaded the South and forced the former Confederates to conform to the Union way of life. Education formally introduced young men to southern traditions after the war, when military training was no longer an educational focus. Athleticism continued this militaristic training, while giving young men a chance to establish their southern manhood within a college.

For years, the *Student* had petitioned the college to build a gymnasium for its students. In October 1888, an article was published in the paper examining the biological benefits of exercise, as well as the prestige a gymnasium would bring Wake Forest College:

What we need is a building constructed and equipped exclusively for gymnastic purposes, and an instructor to have charge of it and drill students in moderate exercise, especially such as will produce a healthy action of the heart and lungs. It is not necessary that the college should turn out a set of athletes, but men with vigorous and healthy bodies and well cultivated

³² Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*. (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 58.

³³ Kent, *Rites of Passage*, 58.

³⁴ W. L. Poteat, “Wake Forest Letter.” *Biblical Recorder*, September 23, 1908.

³⁵ Linder, *William Louis Poteat*, 27.

brains are needed in every walk of life.³⁶

While students were appealing for increased physical prowess, the religious community was examining the British concept of muscular Christianity. These factors, as well as Dr. Poteat's influence in the administration, were responsible for the erection of a gymnasium in 1889.³⁷

Just as the writers of the *Student* had suggested, Wake Forest used their new athletic facilities to enhance the reputation of the college. In the fall of 1889, the school changed their advertisement in the *Biblical Recorder* to read:

Wake Forest College: North Carolina
15 miles North of Raleigh. 54th annual session begins September 1
10 distinct schools. 10 instructors. 10,000 volumes in Library.
Well equipped Laboratories, Reading Room and Gymnasium.³⁸

The advertisement continued with the mention of the college's beautiful grounds followed by President Taylor's contact information. The old announcement mentioned the library and the books, which represented the academic side of the college, while the new announcement revealed the South's growing concern with the physical nature of men, by mentioning the new biology building and gym. Constructing the gym allowed Wake Forest to compete with other southern institutions, such as Richmond College, for potential students.³⁹ By this time, the southern seminary was also ready to compete on the athletic field.

Princeton and Rutgers are credited with playing the first intercollegiate football game in 1869.⁴⁰ As football flourished in the Northeast, Yale, Cornell, and Columbia began playing the sport as well. Harvard's entrance to the game two years later marked the introduction of rules more closely related to rugby than the soccer-like game that had been played in New Jersey.⁴¹

Although American historian Bruce K. Stewart notes that within a few years, football "spread west as far as Michigan and south to Virginia,"⁴² the United States Bureau of Education concluded in its 1885 *Bulletin* that "neither the general nor college public at the South manifests much interest in athletics or gymnastics."⁴³ The *Bulletin* continued by commenting that "military drill is in vogue in many places" throughout the region.⁴⁴ Even years after the Civil War, collegiate men in the South, according to the Bureau of Education, were still more interested in traditional methods of exercise than sports. Patrick B. Miller, Professor of American Studies at Northeastern Illinois University, presents an argument contradictory to the 1885 educational census. According to him, by the mid-1880s, men in the South were, in fact, devoting an "increasing amount of their leisure hours to formal competition in a variety of

³⁶ *Wake Forest Student*, Vol VIII. (Wake Forest, NC: Wake Forest Press, October 1888) 73.

³⁷ Advertisement. *Biblical Recorder*, October, 24 1888.

³⁸ Advertisement. *Biblical Recorder*, October, 24 1888.

³⁹ *Wake Forest Student*, 73.

⁴⁰ Bruce K. Stewart, "American Football." *American History*, Nov 1995. Accessed 10 Nov 2006.

<http://wesclark.com/rrr/yank_fb.html>.

⁴¹ Stewart, "American Football."

⁴² Stewart, "American Football."

⁴³ P. Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient," 287.

⁴⁴ P. Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient," 287.

athletic endeavors” mostly in the form of baseball.⁴⁵ Eventually, however, football moved its way into the states of the Deep South.

Football expanded quickly across North Carolina during the 1880s, as students from Wake Forest College, Davidson College, State University (now the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), and Trinity College (now Duke University) began playing intramural games.⁴⁶ P. Miller comments that football was well received by the elders of the institutions. He writes, “Elders – educational authorities prominent among them – began to articulate a formal justification for athletics, praising sport for its contributions to the building of ‘manly’ character and strengthening regional pride.”⁴⁷

The presence of football provided several welcome additions to college life. During a period when hazing and outright violence faced incoming first-year students,⁴⁸ football at the intramural level gave upperclassmen a more constructive way to assert domination over the new class and also built teamwork. If a student, particularly at Wake Forest, was not accepted into the two literary societies, he had to be faster, stronger, and more coordinated than his classmates in order to establish a favorable reputation within the college. Additionally, the design of a football field, the structure of lines of scrimmage, and the idea of directly charging at the “enemy” were prominently reminiscent of a battlefield. By the late 1880s, the colleges of North Carolina were ready to apply all of this to a real, intercollegiate match.

The *Biblical Recorder* notes that the first intercollegiate football game involving Wake Forest was held on October 18, 1888: “A feature of the Fair, and one over which everybody became interested and almost enthusiastic, was a game of ‘foot ball’ between the teams of Wake Forest College and the State University, in which the former [the University of North Carolina] was victorious.”⁴⁹ In the three weeks leading up to the game, the papers constantly discussed and advertised the state fair, but failed to mention the football game. Even in the weeks following the game, there were no editorials or further comments about the match.

The *Biblical Recorder* may have been silent, but Wake Forest’s the *Student* was anything but quiet after the game. The October 1888 edition was abuzz with remarks, observations, and critiques of the game, most of which were justifying Wake’s 33-0 loss against “The University:”

Our team played a very spirited game considering the heavy odds against them. The University had [sic] better training, was better organized and showed more skill and acquaintance of the rules, and the result was clearly foreseen after the first few minutes.⁵⁰

The students’ excitement at the thought of formally organized athletics is clear. Others, however, had reservations.

Feelings regarding the establishment of football in the South were mixed during the 1890s. The faculty of Wake Forest College held a meeting the day after the first game and

⁴⁵ P. Miller, “The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient,” 286.

⁴⁶ Hal D. Sears, “The Moral Threat of Intercollegiate Sports: An 1893 Poll of Ten College Presidents, and the End of ‘The Champion Football Team of the Great West.’” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol 19, No 3, (Winter 1992).

⁴⁷ P. Miller, “The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient,” 286

⁴⁸ J. Edwin. Hendricks, *History of Wake Forest College: 1834-1967*, CD-ROM. (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Press, 2003). Digitized by Historical Database.

⁴⁹ “Raleigh.” *Biblical Recorder*, October 24, 1888.

⁵⁰ *Wake Forest Student*, 264.

vowed to ban the sport on campus.⁵¹ Although as many as fifteen demerits could be given to anyone caught playing football, any restrictions were ineffective during the remainder of the 1888-89 school year.⁵² The students hailed the sport as a method of physical release, defense of the honor of one's college, and expression of power and violence that was only previously seen by their fathers during the Civil War.⁵³ A prominent Virginian man once asked Professor J. M. Bandry of Trinity College, "Who are these youths with such athletic mastery and where did they come from and who taught them to play such football?" Professor Bandry's responded with:

They are the sons of men who fought in the charge of Pickett and Pettigrew at Gettysburg; of men who laid down their arms with Lee at Appomattox. As their fathers learned of themselves and their leaders how to fight, so have these young men learned of themselves and their leaders how to play football.⁵⁴

Professor Bandry was correct; many southern teams held remnants of the Civil War that extended beyond the general nature of football.

The University of Virginia named their team the Cavaliers after the elite soldiers of the war. The school's colors were originally silver gray (intended to represent the glory of the Confederacy) and cardinal red (died in the blood of the fallen).⁵⁵ Georgetown, too, chose colors that cast a memory on the Civil War. Because of its location on the Potomac River, the students had been divided during the war. The school therefore chose silver and blue to represent both the Union and the Confederacy.⁵⁶ Mascots were also named after various infantry units from the war. Trinity College, a Methodist school, met with religious opposition, however, when it attempted to name its mascot after a division of the French military: the Blue Devils.⁵⁷

Wake Forest took a religious approach when it named its team the "Baptists."⁵⁸ This name was never quite sufficient, however, since any faithful and willing man could be a Baptist. The term "*Demon Deacon*" may not have been coined until the twentieth century,⁵⁹ but for several decades prior, Wake Forest's mascot, the Deacon, represented the sort of men that the college wished to attract: men with "brains, pluck, and character."⁶⁰ Wake Forest sought to install these men with a sense of duty, dignity, and responsibility so they would eventually become 'Deacons' in the Church.

The three main collegiate sports programs in North Carolina (Wake Forest, Trinity College, and the University of North Carolina) established the Intercollegiate Football Association, which met in Raleigh on November 29, 1888 to construct formal rules for football and a constitution like that of the Northeastern schools' American Intercollegiate Association.⁶¹ Despite these formalities, school officials remained unconvinced of the necessary safety

⁵¹ Hendricks, *History of Wake Forest College*, CD-ROM.

⁵² Hendricks, *History of Wake Forest College*, CD-ROM.

⁵³ P. Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient," 289.

⁵⁴ P. Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient," 285.

⁵⁵ P. Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient," 298

⁵⁶ P. Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient," 298

⁵⁷ P. Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient," 300

⁵⁸ J. Edwin Hendricks. "The Demon Deacon: A Proud Tradition." *History of Wake Forest University* Online. Accessed 12 Nov 2006. <http://www.wfu.edu/history/HST_WFU/deacon.htm>

⁵⁹ Hendricks. "The Demon Deacon: A Proud Tradition."

⁶⁰ J.B. Carlyle, "Wake Forest Letter."

⁶¹ Hendricks, *History of Wake Forest College*, CD-ROM.

measures to properly execute the game. Professors at Wake Forest had qualms about safety in intercollegiate football; they did not disapprove of the game itself, but feared getting sued for the players' massive number of injuries. The University of Virginia even had a player die during a game because of insufficient safety pads and equipment.

In November 1889, the Board of Trustees, led by President Taylor, voted that the team should no longer be allowed to travel out-of-state for games. Meanwhile, the Baptist community as a whole remained supportive of men in physical activities, as seen in the *Biblical Recorder's* published literature supporting the ideal muscular man:

Boys of spirit, boys of will / Boys of muscle, brains and power, / Fit to cope
with anything, / These are wanted every hour / Not the weak and whiny drones /
Who al troubles magnify; / Not the watchband of "I Can't!" / But the noble
one "I'll try." / Do whate'er you have to do / With a true and earnest zeal /
Blend your sinews to the task, / Put your shoulder to the wheel. / Though your
Duties may be hard / Look not on it as an ill, / If it be an honest task, / Do it
with an honest will. / In the workshop, on the farm, / At the desk, where'er you be /
From your future efforts, boys, / Comes a nation's destiny.⁶²

Despite Baptist support, in June 1890, President Taylor proposed to the Board of Trustees that a ban be placed intercollegiate football; the vote was passed.⁶³ One year later, permission to resume the game was granted because athletic endeavors promoted the image of the college, and ultimately, collegiate ranking won over safety. The faculty members of Wake Forest demanded to be released from any liability from ensuing injuries,⁶⁴ but the Board of Trustees refused, reluctant to admit the dangers of a sport that was bringing the college prestige and donations. On October 18, 1895, the continued threat of injury to students and the liability of the Wake Forest faculty were too much for the school's administration; football was banned on the Wake Forest campus and would not reappear for over twenty years.⁶⁵

Rotundo notes, "In the early 1800s, self-made manhood became the dominant cultural form, and it was later in the same century that passionate manhood developed."⁶⁶ The generation of the early to mid 1800s made their own way; they established a middle class, initiated the American Industrial Revolution, and become entangled in a great Civil War. The next two generations, however, were defined first in terms of their excess violence and manhood and later for their attempts to conform to the intense restrictions dictated by the society of the Victorian Era. Through football, collegiate men, like those of Wake Forest College, strived for a balance between the honor of their fathers and the restrictions of the ridged religious community of the New South.

⁶² "Boys Wanted." *Biblical Recorder*. May 14, 1890.

⁶³ Hendricks, *History of Wake Forest College*, CD-ROM.

⁶⁴ Hendricks, *History of Wake Forest College*, CD-ROM.

⁶⁵ Hendricks, *History of Wake Forest College*, CD-ROM.

⁶⁶ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 7

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Scurrying Alongside Humanity: A Co-Evolutionary History of Rats and Humans

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“History is everything when it comes to looking at rats—though it is not the history that you generally read; it is the unwritten history. Rats wind up in the disused vaults, in long underground tunnels that aren’t necessarily going anywhere; they wind up in places that are neglected and overlooked, places with a story that has been forgotten for one reason or another. And to find a rat, lots of times you have to look at what a place was.”

Robert Sullivan¹

¹ Robert Sullivan, *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City’s Most Unwanted Inhabitants*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), 21.

The history of the rat does not belong in the disused vaults, or in the long underground tunnels inhabited by them.² Relegating this creature to the disregarded annals of history ignores the complex and interwoven relationship human beings have shared with rats. As a popular understanding of global ecology develops, humans can no longer deny animals like the rat their rightful place in history. Throughout history, non-human organisms have profoundly impacted humans, at times aiding in the rise or fall of a civilization. Of the myriad of creatures who share the story of humankind, the rat deserves special consideration. But instead of attention and respect, they have largely been overlooked—consigned instead to widespread feelings of disgust and hatred. Perhaps this is because, on the surface, the lifestyle of the rat appears so contrary to that of humans. The rat chooses to reside in filth, squats below its neighbors without permission or care for the damage it causes, acts without a conscience or deliberation, and takes endlessly without giving anything except disease and destruction. In response, human beings banish this creature, inspiring hatred bred of misunderstanding. This hatred has become immortalized in literature and folklore over the centuries. A close examination reveals the parallelism of rat and human existence.

Archeological records show quantities of mice or rat fossils in ancient human inhabited regions, and as Hans Zinsser writes, “[Although] offspring of widely divergent evolutionary direction, men and rats reached present stages of physical development within a few hundred thousand years of each other.”³ For centuries, rats have employed the same ships used by human beings to traverse the world, most of the time without the crew’s knowledge or permission. Whenever human societies suffer famine and population loss, so do the rats that live among them. Rats are even wiped out en masse by the same epidemics they impart upon humans.

Together, rats and humans are two of the most adaptable and geographically diverse organisms, the Polar Regions being the only habitat rats do not share with humans.⁴ Both men and rat are omnivorous—in desperate measures both are cannibalistic. Each reproduce until Malthusian limits force populations to collapse and are two of the only species that continually make war with their own kind,⁵ typically for resources, though sometimes with no easily discernable motive. Most of all, rats and humans are destructive organisms, repeatedly failing to achieve a balance with their respective ecosystems. As Hans Zinsser points out in his study on typhus, “All that nature offers is taken for their own purposes, plant or beast.”⁶ In the world of rats and humans, consumption is king.

Rats were not predestined to share human history, nor adapt so readily to human lifestyles. Throughout the course of history, human beings have created habitats conducive to thriving rat populations. Rats have unintentionally entered into a co-evolutionary relationship with human beings, in which adapting to human lifestyles has significantly affected their genetic development. This co-evolutionary strategy is not new to history, and rats are not the only life-form on the planet to employ it. Humanity’s tendency to reshape the natural world has forced the hand of evolution to play new cards. Michael Pollan, author of *The Botany of Desire*, writes, “Partly by default, partly by design... all of nature is now in the process of being domesticated—

² “The rat” will henceforth denote two specific species: *Rattus rattus* (the black rat) and *Rattus norvegicus* (the brown rat). Individual distinctions will be made as needed.

³ Hans Zinsser, *Rats, Lice and History*, (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1935), 207.

⁴ Robert Hendrickson, *More Cunning than Man: A Social History of Rats and Men*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 2.

⁵ Zinsser, *Rats, Lice and History*, 208.

⁶ Zinsser, *Rats, Lice and History*, 208

of coming or finding itself under the somewhat leaky roof of civilization.”⁷ Even though this roof may need patching, it is still safer to weather the occasional drip among humans than brave the rapidly changing environment outside. This house of civilization—the wood cut down to build it, the fuel mined to heat it, and the food harvested to feed its inhabitants—was built upon a legacy of environmental destruction. For years, environmental historians have focused heavily on this degradation, especially its impact on the organisms that lived among it. However, the creatures that reside alongside humankind in the house, both those brought in intentionally and those who stowed away are affected differently. Living in such close proximity to human beings forced adaptation, in turn affecting the ways humans must interact with these species.

In his article “Evolutionary History: Prospectus for a New Field,” Edmund Russell calls upon historians, biologists, and anthropologists to join in fusing evolutionary biology with history. He writes, “Together as evolutionary history, they offer understanding of the ever-changing dance between humans and nature.”⁸ By historicizing various organisms, he argues, humans can reevaluate how anthropogenic changes in regional environments throughout history have altered the evolution of species existing in those environments. More importantly, people can begin to understand how this resulting evolution has forced humans to interact with these developing species in radically different ways. For centuries rats have followed successive courses of human migration, adapting successfully to every kind of civilization. Throughout history rats have fed off human civilizations and over time have learned the mannerisms of civilization so well that they can exploit people almost scientifically. By analyzing the history of rats and humans through a co-evolutionary lens, history can be revised by granting co-evolutionary organisms their proper place alongside humans and reveal why the rat is such an important species to study within this new discipline.

Few authors have attempted to construct a co-evolutionary history of humans and other species. Those who have attempted tend to reaffirm the concept rather than focus on a particular species. There have been various episodes throughout history where the rat co-existed and co-migrated with human populations, consequently intertwining the two species into a co-evolutionary bond. However, a co-evolutionary relationship does not always imply a mutually beneficial arrangement. Throughout nature, parasitic organisms survive by exploitation, extracting their sustenance at the expense of their host. In the case of rats and humans, rats clearly play the “parasitic” role, ultimately receiving the better end of the relationship: favorable habitats, a steady food supply, and ample conditions for widespread reproduction.⁹

Rats do not provide benefits to humans, as do other organisms engaged in the co-evolutionary dance, but rather cause damage and injury.¹⁰ The nefarious qualities of the rat most often manifest themselves in the spread of disease, the consumption of human food stores, and threats to native biodiversity. There are several events throughout history in which the introduction of rats precipitated these disastrous consequences. The black plague—arguably the rat’s most insidious contribution to history—provides an excellent example of the rat’s ability to spread disease within human populations. Furthermore, examining several instances over the last several centuries where human beings unintentionally introduced rats to fragile island and

⁷ Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s-Eye View of the World*, (New York: Random House, 2002), xxiii.

⁸ Edmund Russell, “Evolutionary History: Prospectus for a New Field,” *Environmental History* 8, no. 2 (April 2003): 225.

⁹ I would additionally like to note that while the rat’s evolution has largely been biological, human beings has been of a cultural and technological nature.

¹⁰ One could argue however, that despite the myriad of negative consequences created by rats, laboratory study of the creatures has provided some of the greatest advances in human nutrition and medicine in the last century.

costal populations demonstrate this creature's tendency to disrupt food stores and biodiversity. The important historical theme to note is the necessity of humans to be the vectors of transportation. While rats may seem to be everywhere in the modern world, this was not always the case. Allying with human populations, particularly seagoing nations, was essential to spreading the rat's influence around the world. Analyzing these historical events will not only indicate the injurious tendencies of rats, but also the necessity of human populations in facilitating the process.

Abundant references to rats in folklore and literature are further evidence of the co-evolutionary history of rats and humans. These cultural references, often vilifying, illustrate how rats have impacted human populations. The cornucopia of references to this creature offer first hand evidence of the rat's ability to transcend culture and geography, surviving everywhere from Indonesia to Oregon. In depicting rats in folklore and literature, human beings across the world have taken the final step in solidifying the co-evolutionary bond with the rat by granting it immortality through language.

While numerous species deserve credit for filling this co-evolutionary niche with humans, such as microbes and insects, the rat possesses numerous ecological and physiological characteristics that have allowed it to enter quite easily into a co-evolutionary relationship. Rats have adapted to every climate on earth, with the exception of the poles. The brown rat is present on all continents and the black rat appears throughout Africa, southern Asia, Australia, and the Southeastern coast of the United States. This widespread geographic dispersal is especially fascinating considering that both species originated from Central and Southeast Asia.¹¹ The rat conquered the world primarily due to its impressive flexibility as a species. In his survey of twentieth-century global environmental history, historian J.R. McNeill used the rat as a metaphor to explain the history of evolution, wherein "rat species" were defined as organisms that were adaptable and pursued diverse sources of subsistence to maximize their resilience.¹² Further proof of this resilience is evident in an article published in the *New York Times*, in which rat specialist E. Randy Dupress discussed the ability of rats to swim underwater, scale great heights, survive falls from those heights, and basically conquer any obstacle humankind throws in their way.¹³ In terms of environmental adaptability, the rat is one of evolution's greatest accomplishments.

Rats are cautious homemakers and will not permanently settle down until they have completely familiarized themselves with an area. Any rat, wild or tame, will ignore hunger until it has ensured the burrow is near a steady source of food and free from danger. All species of rats are even known to create elaborate contingency plans, such as constructing secondary exits called "bolt holes" for expediently thwarting danger.¹⁴ Once established, rats continue to explore and are sensitive to change. This quality inspired the famous French proverb, "rats desert sinking ships," as a simple change in buoyancy could cause them to flee. Rats rely on the piloerection of their whiskers to sense movements and changes to their environments, allowing them to easily sense even the minutest changes. In one example, Peter Simon Pallas in *Zoographica Rosso-Asiastica* records how great hoards of rats swam across the Volga

¹¹ Sullivan, *Rats*, 13. The black rat once dominated the world, but it has since been pushed out by the stronger more aggressive brown rat.

¹² J.R. McNeil, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), xxii.

¹³ Steven Erlanger, "In New York, Rats Survive the Man Race," *New York Times*, November 2, 1987, sec. B, p.1.

¹⁴ Samuel A. Barnett, *Behavior of Animals and Man*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 41.

immediately following an earthquake in 1727.¹⁵ Sensing the slightest tremors beneath the ground, these rats uprooted their colonies and migrated to safety in the face of imminent danger. Rats also possess a strongly developed sense of taste and smell, which allows them to detect traces of poison minute as one part per million.¹⁶

James E. Childs, an infectious disease specialist working at Johns Hopkins Medical Hospital, observed that if any rat in a colony became sick after ingesting something, the entire colony and successive generations would thenceforth avoid the food.¹⁷ This is possible because rats have highly advanced methods of communication and genetic transference. Any acquired trait is easily passed down in a very short number of generations.¹⁸ Passing on these adaptations is an easy task because the rat epitomizes the prolific reproducer. Typical litters consist of eight to ten pups with five litters a year. Since the female's gestation period is less than a month, and a female can become pregnant immediately after birthing, two rats can create a colony of 60 in just a few months.¹⁹ A mathematical model utilizing birth potentials of the brown rat indicated that, given ideal conditions, two rats could easily produce 50 quadrillion progeny in as little as ten years.²⁰ Human checks, such as city-wide extermination programs, keep the rat population from reaching these levels; although they continue to prosper in spite of this onslaught.

Despite the rat's vast potential for procreation, exploration, intelligence, curiosity, and adaptation, all species do not typically wander more than 200 yards from the burrow at any given time.²¹ Rat migration requires provocation of some sort—a change must occur in their daily environment and routine. When rats are forced to move, they typically do so by either following the migrating human populations they previously lived among or gravitating toward the nearest source of food, which is often found around humans. Throughout history, these disruptions frequently led rats to unintentionally migrate across seas, hitching rides on ships that were transporting large quantities of food. Normally, this act of hitchhiking resulted in little more than some contaminated food stores and several befuddled sailors. But in the mid-fourteenth century, it permanently altered the course of human history.

Human Vectors Part I: The Black Plague

Epidemics, like the successive plagues that ravaged Europe until the seventeenth century, require a blend of favorable ecological and societal conditions. Climate, quantity of host carriers, human susceptibility to disease, and the city layouts all determine the duration and impact of epidemics. During the Black Plague, which ravaged Europe from 1348-1351, an ecological disruption in Asia precipitated a mass exodus of rodent species in all directions. The black rat, following its preference for human civilizations, employed sea travel to infiltrate Europe. Combined with the structural layout and poor sanitation of European cities, this co-migration helped spread the bubonic plague throughout Europe, initiating arguably the deadliest epidemiological disaster of human history. Since entire books have been written about the consequences of the Black Plague, but only chapters are dedicated to the rat's role, it is important give the rat its due credit. It was, after all, the rat's preference for co-evolution among humans

¹⁵ Peter Simon Pallas, *Zoographica Rosso-Asiastica*, 1811, referenced in Zinsser, 201.

¹⁶ Sullivan, *Rats*, 5.

¹⁷ Jane E. Brody, "In Rats, More to Admire, More to Fear," *New York Times*, July 3, 1990, sec. C p. 1.

¹⁸ Barnett, *Behavior of Animals and Man*, 41.

¹⁹ Sullivan, *Rats*, 11.

²⁰ The estimate is made in Joan Druett, *Exotic Intruders: The Introduction of Plants and Animals Into New Zealand*, (Auckland: Heinemann, 1983), 213 and is referenced in J.R. McNeill, "Of Rats and Men: A Synoptic Environmental History of the Island Pacific," *Journal of World History* 5, no.2 (1994): 317.

²¹ Hendrickson, *More Cunning than Man: A Social History of Rats and Men*, 14.

that allowed the disease to spread so widely, and it is only when rats inhabited urban areas populated by humans that widespread plague transfer occurred.²²

The general consensus among scientists and historians is that plague originates from three major foci: the Himalayan foothills between India and China, the Central African region of the Great Lakes, and across the length of the Eurasian steppe from Manchuria to the Ukraine.²³ Sometime during the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century, the ecological balance of Eurasia was disturbed, and the plague bacillus, *Pasturella pestis* (interchangeably referred to as *Yersin pestis*) exploded from one of the permanent loci east into China, south into India, and west across Central Asia to the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basins.²⁴ Somewhere near India, *Y. pestis* and a community of burrowing rodents had long before united to form a symbiotic community. These rodents became the initial carriers of the plague, immune to its effects, and eventually bore the disease to successive black rat populations.²⁵ Plague historian Dr. Pollitzer speculates that these initial rodent carriers were most likely tarbagans or Manchurian marmots.²⁶

When a plague is enzootic within a rodent population, and the population reaches a certain density, there soon follows a concentrated transfer among different species of rodents and the bacteria.²⁷ This mass transference occurred around the same time as ecological disturbances in Central Asia. Evidence suggests that a drought or overpopulation in these rodent communities may have contributed heavily toward the rodent's spreading outward in this specific time period. In addition, Sirocco winds from the Sahara blew hot, dry air pushing Mongol and Turkid nomads, as well as their rodents, in search of food and water.²⁸

Scholars speculate that these ecological disturbances pushed the rodents into China in the 1330s. Moving eastward, these migratory rodents probably came in contact with numerous black rat populations indigenous to India and China. From here, the rats carrying the disease stowed away on the ships that would gradually carry them westward.²⁹ There are numerous speculations for why rats boarded these ships. One hypothesis indicates that the rats were attracted to large grain stores and food supplies, which is plausible, since their movement coincided with an opening of trade between Europe and East Asia.³⁰ Consequently, the opening of trade allowed the plague bacillus to move inland from the seaports into vast underground rodent cities, allowing it to sustain itself indefinitely.³¹ Medieval historian Philip Zeigler observes, "It is remarkable in this as in every other epidemic of bubonic plague, how closely the disease followed the main trade routes."³² Viewed from a co-evolutionary perspective however,

²² Susan Scott and Christopher J. Duncan, *Biology of Plagues: Evidence from Historical Populations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 55.

²³ Scott and Duncan, *Biology of Plagues*, 48.

²⁴ Robert S. Gottfried, *The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe*, (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 33.

²⁵ William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1976), 139.

²⁶ Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*, (Stroud: Sutton, 1991), 15.

²⁷ Gottfried, *The Black Death*, 3. The term Enzootic refers to the instances in which hosts of the disease are immune to its effects. Epizootic refers to populations who are not immune, and consequently are effected by disease.

²⁸ Gottfried, *The Black Death*, 34.

²⁹ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World system A.D. 1250-1350*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 171.

³⁰ Fact about the allure of ship's food stores is suggested in Michael McCormick, "Rats Communications, and Plague: Toward an Ecological History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 1 (2003): 4, while information about trade openings can be found in Gottfried, 17.

³¹ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 175.

³² Zeigler, *The Black Death*, 30.

this pattern may not be as “remarkable” as Zeigler believes, since trade routes often provided the easiest path toward the mass quantities of food on which rat populations depended.

The disease most likely reached Europe through Crimea in 1346. The most circumstantial evidence of this can be found in the records of Gabriel de Mussis, who witnessed the effects of the plague in the Tartar lands of Asia Minor. Mussis described the scene in which the Tartar army prepared to lay siege to the Genoese settled city of Caffa (now Feosia). Their plans were disrupted, however, when the plague infiltrated their camp, drastically reducing their numbers. Mussis wrote, “The whole army was affected by a disease which overran the Tartars and killed thousands upon thousands every day.”³³ The Tartars ultimately capitulated in the face of catastrophic losses, but not before ordering the corpses to be catapulted into the city in hopes that the “intolerable stench would kill everyone inside.”³⁴

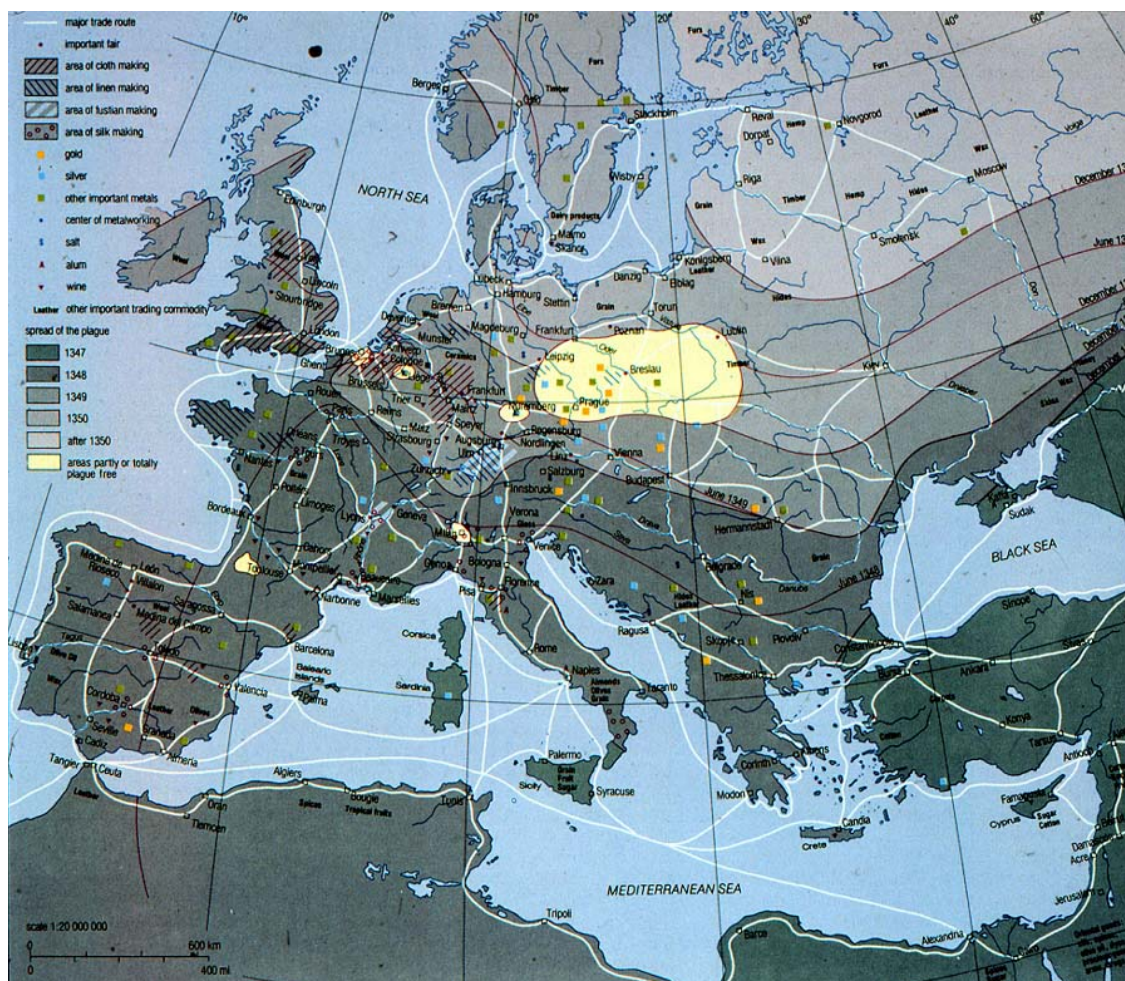


Figure One: A map indicating trade routes of the mid-fourteenth century, and the areas in which plague outbreaks were most severe.³⁵

³³ A. W Henschel, ‘Document zur Geschichte des schwarzen Todes’, in *Archiv für die gesammte Medicin* ed. Heinrich Haeser, II, Jena, 1841, pp 48 quoted in *Manchester Medieval Sources, The Black Death*, translated and edited by Rosemary Horrox, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 17.

³⁴ Horrox, *Manchester Medieval Sources, The Black Death*, 17.

³⁵ “Leaving the Medieval World: Images of Death and Mortality,”

<http://www.ithaca.edu/faculty/clancy/221/death05.html> (accessed December 18th, 2006). To find image scroll down and click picture entitled “Map of the Spread of the Black Death.”

From Crimea, ships carried the rats and their plague toward Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, Southern Italy, and finally the Atlantic seaboard. Figure One demonstrates how plague outbreaks were most potent in areas of heavy trade, while locations with fewer trade routes experienced outbreaks to a lesser degree. However, this may be less a product of inadequate trade routes and more determined by ecological factors. Bohemia, for example, was surrounded on most sides by mountains, and therefore had fewer potential rodent hosts, while Hungary, situated upon a plain with abundant species, suffered greater from the outbreaks.³⁶

Favoring human trade routes allowed the rat to infiltrate Medieval European societies, but once on land, the conditions of European villages and cities sustained the existence of both the black rat and its flea, *Xenopsylla cheopis*. The flea is especially important because plague transfer to humans cannot occur without a flea bite. After ingesting the bacillus from the rat's blood, the flea's gut becomes blocked, preventing it from digesting its meal. In a hopeless quest to satisfy its insatiable blood-thirst, the flea jumped from rat to rat until all potential hosts in the village succumbed to the plague. In this final moment of desperation, the ravenous flea resorted to biting Europeans and their livestock, regurgitating large quantities of plague bacillus into their bloodstreams.³⁷ Fleas also needed the rats so they could ingest a sufficient amount of the bacillus in order to infect humans. Colonel MacArthur, a scientist who studied blood cultures from fatal cases of bubonic plague in humans, discovered "bacilli so sparse that theoretically one could have fed twenty thousand fleas on such a case and yet have infected none."³⁸ Rats, on the other hand, are capable of withstanding an enormous concentration of plague bacillus in their bloodstream. Therefore, in order for the plague to spread as it did, the fleas would need the continuing presence of rats or another rodent species to act as carriers of the infection and a sufficient supply of replenishment.³⁹

Normally, fleas require stable climates, and cannot survive the harsh winters and summers of Europe. However, numerous plague chroniclers indicate that the winters of 1348 and 1349 were relatively mild.⁴⁰ In addition to favorable climates for the fleas, the layout of European villages and cities proved ideal for thriving rat populations. Ninety percent of Europeans lived in small, closely quartered hamlets at the time.⁴¹ Rats delighted in these quarters, stowing away comfortably within the roofs of people's homes. The layout of these villages allowed the plague to move at the quickened pace it did and is further evidence of the involvement of rats. Scholars indicate that a human-carried epidemic spreads swiftly and haphazardly, while a rat-borne epidemic moves at a more gradual pace—village to village, like it did in the fourteenth century.⁴² Additionally, European villages were even more favorable to flourishing rat populations due to inadequate sanitation, such as tainted water and fetid air.

³⁶ Gottfried, *The Black Death*, 75.

³⁷ David Keys, *Catastrophe: An Investigation into the Origins of the Modern World*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 22,23.

³⁸ W. MacArthur, "Old Time Plague in Britain", *Transcript of the Royal Society of Trop. Medicine* vol XIX, pp 335, quoted in Zeigler, 16.

³⁹ Information about bacillus quantity in rat blood is found in McCormick, 2. The necessity of a "rodent reservoir" is discussed in McNeill, 138.

⁴⁰ John Aberth, *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1248-1350: A Brief History with Documents*, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2005), 26.

⁴¹ Gottfried, *The Black Death*, 1.

⁴² Andrew B. Appleby, "The Disappearance of Plague: A Continuing Puzzle," *The Economic History Review*, New Series 33, no2. (May 1980): 163.

While these conditions could not themselves infect a person with the plague, they did create the optimum environments for black rats, which prefer to reside in squalid conditions.⁴³

The most compelling evidence of the co-evolutionary factor involved in the rat's role in plague distribution is in the details of the plague's disappearance after the London outbreak of the late seventeenth century. While many theories, such as improved sanitation and human immunity, attempt to explain the sudden disappearance, there is an alternative theory posed by historian Andrew Appleby. Appleby argued that rats living in the cities of Europe and in London, where the greatest concentration of plague struck, eventually became resistant. The argument follows the simple logic of evolution and adaptation; "most of the non resistant rats may have died leaving only resistant rats."⁴⁴ Even if these newly evolved "immune rats" traveled to the countryside where the disease was still largely epizootic, the impact would have been small and localized. If rats stopped ailing from the plague, they would stop dying. Therefore the fleas would never have need to jump to human beings as an alternative, but would rather continue to suck the rat's blood until death, or perhaps evolve to withstand ingesting the plague bacillus themselves.

The very adaptation and co-evolution of rats, which initially caused the plague, ultimately helped usher its decline. Overtime, living en masse in overcrowded cities and villages, the rats developed immunity to the plague. Susan Scott and Christopher Duncan in their book, *Biology of Plagues*, discuss how epizootics begin to wane when rodent populations grow immune. Black rats created a balance with their fleas, and in the eighteenth century, when brown rats out-competed the black rats for territory, there was no longer an epizootic reservoir capable of infecting humans.⁴⁵ Though the plague continues to exist, and outbreaks are still common in various sections of the world, it requires a favorable blend of human and rat coexistence to present a danger. However, the Black Death has proven that this is not impossible, and perhaps the coming decades will see a resurgence of the plague through rats or another rodent species.

For over one hundred years, the Black Plague decimated both human and rat populations. They continued to exist in smaller numbers, each slowly rebuilding their fractured societies. At the dawn of the fifteenth century, when humans had rebuilt their strength enough to journey outside of Europe to the seas beyond, the rats stowed away beneath them in the same ships. The next several hundred years of human history would again be categorized by human and rat co-migration, and consequently, co-evolution.

Human Vectors Part II: Food Depletion and Island Invasions

In the centuries following the Black Plague, Europeans began migrating to the Americas and the Pacific. Through a process of trial and error, and help from "native experts," these first sailors succeeded in mastering the trade winds, which, when harnessed, could easily cart European vessels across the globe.⁴⁶ Extending the reach of human migration unintentionally influenced a massive restructuring of the earth's species. Europeans supplanted native civilizations, claiming dominance in foreign lands, and facilitated a wide-scale biotic exchange. The consequences of these successive "biotic invasions" are still apparent today. Biologists studying the problem in 2002 estimated that there are more than 120,000 non-native species of plants, animals, and microbes that have invaded principal nations around the world, yielding

⁴³ Zeigler, *The Black Death*, 119.

⁴⁴ Appleby, "The Disappearance of Plague: A Continuing Puzzle," 164.

⁴⁵ Scott and Duncan, *Biology of Plagues*, 55.

⁴⁶ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 108.

almost \$315 billion in damages and control costs per year.⁴⁷ Of these 120,000 invaders, the rat is one of the most damaging to both human civilization and ecological stability.

The era of European expansion is crucial to understanding the co-evolution between humans and rats. Rats needed human vessels to transport themselves across the world. Even land based migrations for the rat are difficult without the assistance of human beings. Historian Michael McCormick discusses the improbability of large scale migration in the absence of humans by estimating that it would take a rat population approximately five generations to move a kilometer and an entire century to move twenty.⁴⁸ Once a rat has arrived at its destination, it tends to only thrive and damage human populations in areas that have established agricultural infrastructures or possess reliable food storages. Rats require humans to be both the vectors of transportation and the mainland hosts.

While it took other invasive species centuries to make the journey across the seas, rats followed human beings almost immediately. It appears that the conditions of Europe that pushed and pulled Europeans toward the New World had a similar effect on rats. While Europeans were largely drawn by promises of material gain, rats were lured by the promise of food-rich ships. People departing for the colonies required enormous stores of food to survive the journey and life abroad until sustainable agricultural practices were put into place. When the Iberians voyaged to South America in the sixteenth century, they accidentally brought great hoards of rats with them, which have since overrun the continent. Describing the chaos of a rat outbreak that ravaged Brazil in 1572, Garcilaso de la Vega pronounced, “They bred in infinite numbers, overran the land, and destroyed the crops and standing plants, such as fruit trees, by gnawing the bark from the ground to the shoots.”⁴⁹ Rats also nearly extinguished the colony of Jamestown when they consumed the entirety of their food supplies. Fortunately, the colonists were able to rely on basic hunting and gathering skills until more supplies arrived.⁵⁰ Other civilizations, like the inhabitants on Rona Island off the coast of Scotland, were not so fortunate. Anthropologists speculate that in 1685, rats brought ashore by ships in need of repairs completely consumed the tiny island’s limited food supplies, causing every inhabitant to perish.⁵¹

Pacific bound vessels transported the rat eastward. In the Pacific however, rats not only contributed significantly to the damage of food supplies, but also decimated the biodiversity of many fragile island ecosystems, requiring billions of dollars in government spending to repair.⁵² Two Pacific nations that have seemingly been at war with rats since their arrival in the eighteenth century are Australia and New Zealand. The two main vessels of transport to these land masses were whaling ships and those of English colonists. Sparked by the industrial demand for sperm whale oil and years of excessive whaling, which had significantly reduced Atlantic sperm whale populations, American and European whalers flocked to the Pacific. Rats frequented these ships, lured by the promise of food and the rich abundance of whale meat. Rats were so persistently a disturbance on whaling ships that Herman Melville chronicled their devious tendencies in *Moby*

⁴⁷ David Pimentel, ed., *Biological Invasions: Economic and Environmental Costs of Alien Plant, Animal, and Microbe Species*, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2002), 7.

⁴⁸ McCormick, 10. McCormick bases his calculations on 200 meters being the absolute maximum dispersal rate for wild black rat populations. This number is significantly decreased for rats living beneath human populations where threats are far more prevalent.

⁴⁹ Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru*, trans. Harold V. Livermore (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), I, 589-90, in Crosby, 191.

⁵⁰ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 192.

⁵¹ Hendrickson, *More Cunning than Man*, 34.

⁵² Franck Courchamp, Jean-Louis Chapuis, and Michel Pascal, “Mammal Invaders on Islands: Impact Control, and Control Impact,” *Biological Reviews of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 78, no. 3, (2003): 347-349.

Dick. He wrote, “They stood in their holes, peering at you like old grandfathers in a doorway. Often they darted in upon us at meal times and nibbed our food...every chink and cranny swarmed with them; they did not live among you but you among them.”⁵³

In one instance, a whaling ship introduced rats to Campbell Island off the coast of New Zealand in the mid-nineteenth century. Despite the minimal level of human occupancy, these rats still thrived, further proof of their astounding ability to adapt. However, their introduction to the fragile island ecosystem still created numerous problems for human beings. Over time they decimated local bird populations, most notably the rare flightless teal. In response, the New Zealand government began spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in control efforts, and by 2002 had imported over 120 tons of rat poison to stop the invasion. This created greater problems when a tanker carrying eighteen tons of poison sank in a whale breeding ground, and continues to damage local marine populations.⁵⁴ In another invasion, on Big South Cape Island, rats caused the complete extinction of a bat and two bird species. New Zealand faced further complications when the introduction of weasels, cats, and ferrets, which were intended to control the rats, led to further losses in biodiversity.⁵⁵

When Cook and the English first voyaged to Australia in the eighteenth century, rats were among the many colonists. In 1790, Sydney was overrun with rats that depleted food stores and contaminated an estimated 12,000 weight of flour and rice.⁵⁶ The rats that infested Australia came in such astounding numbers that an early nineteenth-century Tasmanian newspaper wrote, “The Number of Rats leaving the convict ship now tied up in the bay has to be seen to be believed.”⁵⁷ Little more than a century later, rats and mice introduced a terrible plague to the wheat districts of New South Wales and Victoria. During its height in the winter of 1917, so many rats were killed that they had to be measured in tons. At Sheep Hills, in Mallee, seven tons were poisoned in one night.⁵⁸ The rat continues to wreak similar havoc on Australian macadamia orchards. One study estimated that losses in Australian orchards are as high as thirty percent each year, which can annually cost the Australian government millions in Australian dollars (AUD) to remedy.⁵⁹

In one of the most bizarre examples of invasive rat destruction, rats introduced to the Philippines centuries earlier have evolved a ritual regarding the decennial bamboo crop. The natives refer to this swarm as the “ratada,” in which thousands of rats flock toward the villages and consume the bamboo crop every ten years. When the bamboo crops are depleted, the rats tend to devour everything else in the farmers fields precipitating widespread famine and illness.⁶⁰ Scholars are unsure of exactly when the rats were introduced to the Philippines, but they have proven to be yet another example of the consequences of rats adapting to human populations.

⁵³ Carolyn King, *Immigrant Killers: Introduced Predators and the Conservation of Birds in New Zealand*, (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1984): 68 quoted in McNeill, *Of Rats and Men*, 317.

⁵⁴ Sullivan, *Rats*, 10.

⁵⁵ Big Cape Invasion is discussed in Courchamp et al., 356. Information regarding biological control methods of New Zealand is found in McNeill, *Of Rats and Men*, 318.

⁵⁶ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 192.

⁵⁷ Eric C. Rolls, *They All Ran Wild; The Story of Pests on the Land in Australia*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1969), 330.

⁵⁸ Rolls, *They All Ran Wild*, 331.

⁵⁹ David Elmoultie and John Wilson, “The Potential Importance of Nut Removal by Rodents from Australian Macadamia Orchards,” *Journal of Environmental Management* 77, no. 1 (2005): 79.

⁶⁰ Hendrickson, *More Cunning than Man*, 31.

The impacts of these invasions are immense. It is estimated that black and brown rats, combined with Polynesian rats, have colonized eighty-two percent of the 123 major Pacific Island groups and are responsible for the decimation of at least 53 rare bird species.⁶¹ Conservative estimates have previously indicated that one fourth of the world's food supply is damaged annually by rats, and recent evidence from Turkey suggest that rats help consume up to fifteen percent of Turkey's grain and legume storage.⁶² Prosperous and food-rich nations, such as America, suffer high losses because of the rats. In one estimate, food losses incurred due to rats cost almost nineteen billion dollars a year for Americans.⁶³ In America, the costs are largely monetary, as food supplies are too massive to be consumed in their entirety. On the contrary, small island nations struggling against Malthusian limits face far greater peril when confronted with the bottomless appetite of the rat.

Rats did not unite several centuries ago and collectively decide to swim across the oceans. Their migration across the globe is a consequence of their co-evolution with human populations, as is the subsequent dependence on the vast food resources humans produce. Co-evolution caused them to rely on a steady supply of food, and rather than brave the harsh conditions of the wild, they follow the source of this food—humans. Consequently, both small island nations unprepared for invasions and mega cities with seemingly inexhaustible food supplies have been damaged by the rat's destructive tendencies. The same ships that brought the rats to and from the Pacific gradually spread their influence, and everywhere rats went, they persuaded humans to immortalize them in word.

Human Vectors Part III: Language as a Vessel

In *Vicious*, Jon Coleman analyzes the wolf's place in American folklore over time. In an astute point, Coleman equates folklore to a means of societal transference and genetic transcendence. He writes, "Like wolves, human beings participated in the Darwinian struggle to transmit a genetic legacy to future generations. Unlike wolves, people also sought to pass on their possession and ideas. Progeny, property, and folklore offered three pathways to transgenerational immortality."⁶⁴ Folklore and literature take on an important role in this regard; they are a way of transferring previous societal ideals in hopes of influencing future generations. Humans inherit stories as readily as eye color. Immortalizing animals through folklore and literature is important not only because it provides evidence of an animal's physical presence, but because it conveys the manner in which a society perceived the beast. The abundant references from medieval literature to twenty-first century popular culture are further evidence that rats and humans have co-evolved throughout history. As numerous examples vilify the rat, they also demonstrates the tendency of rats to be injurious to human populations.

The *Pied Piper of Hamelin* is an excellent example of the nefarious rat. The story, based on the life of an actual rat-catcher in the town of Hamln, Germany, was most famously chronicled by Robert Browning in 1824, although most scholarly estimates place the original penning in 1284.⁶⁵ The *Pied Piper* is especially important because it proves rats inhabited the town of Hamln in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and that the rats grew to such mighty

⁶¹ Courchamp et al., "Mammal Invaders on Islands: Impact Control, and Control Impact," 356.

⁶² The world wide estimate is found in Hendrickson, 11, the information about Turkey is found in McCormick, 3.

⁶³ David Pimentel, et al., "Environmental and Economic Costs of Nonindigenous Species in the United States," *BioScience* 50, no. 1 (2000): 54.

⁶⁴ Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 6.

⁶⁵ Hendrickson, *More Cunning than Man*, 138.

numbers that actual rat catchers were employed to remedy the problem. In one line, Browning's retelling describes the sight and sound of swarming rats:

You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.⁶⁶

This is important, not only as further proof of a rat presence, but because of the negative image it attempts to convey of rats swarming like an army upon the townspeople.

Some historians, such as Michael McCormick, believe that rats have been depicted since antiquity, and the problem with uncovering sources is largely conceptual. He argues that "even though the black rat is irrefutably documented in the ancient world, classical Latin and Greek lacked a word for "rat" that would distinguish it from what we call a mouse. Latin *mus* and Greek *mys* may designate either rats or mice."⁶⁷ It was not until the early thirteenth century that the first distinction between rats and mice was made by Giraldus Cambrenis, and thereafter it did not appear in the English language until 1378, when William Langland wrote in *Piers Plowman*, "No-one can rest, with rats out at night."⁶⁸ Further examination reveals that the absence of Linnaean classification of the rat was a problem in antiquity as well.

Throughout antiquity, numerous cultures have worshipped and feared mouse-like gods, which in appearance and description more closely resemble rats. Various scholars, such as McCormick and Robert Hendrickson, believe these were used to classify both rats and mice. Natives of Bassora forbade the destruction of these "hybrid rodents," believing them to be good luck. The Egyptians symbolized them as bringers of both utter destruction and wise judgment. In China, the "Year of the Rat" is considered an unlucky year to be born. Additionally, numerous cultures around Ancient Greece revered "mice" as both the protectors and destroyers of crop.⁶⁹

Since 1378, when the word "rat" first entered into the English language, writers of lore have immortalized the rat through language. Interestingly, history and geography are not essential factors in the depiction of rats through folklore and literature. It does not matter whether a country is at peace or war, or if a culture is primitive or modern. Rats do not distinguish between a thriving civilization and a declining one. The omnipresence of the rat in folklore is a strong indication of the frequency of rats to be everywhere and remain in significant numbers. In England, George Orwell cast the rat as the villain that brought Winston Smith to his knees in capitulation in the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker instilled Dracula with the power to materialize into a rat at will, and rats were his minions of darkness.

When the rats flocked to America, they appeared almost instantly in American literature. Perhaps one of the darkest accounts of rats was given by Edgar Allan Poe in *The Pit and the Pendulum*. In it he writes:

⁶⁶ Robert Browning, Illustrated by Kate Greenaway, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (London: Frederick Warne and Co, 1888) 18. Prepared electronically by Jian Liu, March 1998 Reference Department, Indiana University Libraries. Accessible online at: <http://www.indiana.edu/~librcsd/etext/piper/>

⁶⁷ McCormick, "Rat Communications, and Plague," 4.

⁶⁸ Rat/mouse distinction is discussed in Zinsser, 198. Reference to *Piers Plowman* is found in Richard Corliss, "That Old Feeling: Rats!," *Time Magazine*, March 20, 2003.

⁶⁹ Hendrickson, *More Cunning than Man*, 142.

They pressed—they swarmed upon me in ever accumulating heaps. They writhed upon my throat; their cold lips sought my own; I was stifled by their thronging pressure; disgust, for which the world has no name swelled my bosom and chilled, with a heavy clamminess, my heart.⁷⁰

When writing of Manhattan rats, Dickens indicates the propensity of rats to devour men in their tombs. In Salem Massachusetts, Henry Kutter's "The Graveyard Rats" depicts the gruesome scene in which vicious rats assault a caretaker who has unwisely stepped into their lair. In *Ben and Willard*, hyper-intelligent, vicious rats swarm in unbelievable numbers in small town America.⁷¹ *Ben and Willard* are especially terrifying because they convey a sense that the inhabited town could be any small town in the world, as though rats have conquered the final frontier and become so ubiquitous they are both everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

Through literature and popular culture, the rat has transcended cultures, geography, and most importantly, time. A large proportion of these stories cast the rat in a sinister role. Sociology professor Orrin E. Klapp believes that "making villains is part of a societal reaction to certain kinds of deviance."⁷² In portraying rats this way, human beings have attempted to convey to successive generations that the rat is a creature of which to be wary. The rat therefore reaches a state of "transgenerational immortality," as new generations of humans are reminded of the proper manner in which to perceive this creature. But regardless of whether the rat is portrayed as villain or hero, it still conveys the point that rats were present alongside mankind so frequently throughout history that numerous people, across geography and time, felt compelled to immortalize them in lore. Just as fossils, scholarly analysis, and metropolitan records are important to understanding the rat's presence throughout history, so too can the rat's place in literature and folklore help illuminate its co-evolutionary presence alongside human beings.

Conclusion: When the Beast Walks In

Since rats are physiologically land-based creatures, unwilling to wander more than 200 meters without provocation, they required human intervention to help them dominate the six great continents of the world. Human beings, in their era-spanning quest to reorganize the world, have unintentionally restructured the way certain species are evolving. By largely replacing the principles of natural ecology with the steadfast rules of industry, human beings are forcing numerous species to either adapt or face the consequences of extinction. In few species is this more evident than the rat.

Rats have proven to be prolific human colonizers, repeatedly influencing disasters within human populations. They have leveled civilizations with their epidemics, brought about wide-scale biological extinctions in fragile ecosystems, depleted food resources, and cost governments billions of dollars annually in control. Rats have not accomplished this feat on their own. Without the assistance of human beings, the wide-scale dispersal of rats that is evident today would have been impossible. Fully stocked trade ships conveyed the rats and their fleas throughout Europe during the Black Plague. Rats could never have become categorized as a threatening invasive species without those first maritime heroes to introduce them to foreign soil. The rat's consumption of human food stores would not be so severe if civilizations did not

⁷⁰ "The Pit and the Pendulum by Edgar Allan Poe," <http://www.literature.org/authors/poe-edgar-allan/pit-and-pendulum.html>, (accessed December 18, 2006).

⁷¹ Corliss, "That Old Feeling".

⁷² Orrin E. Klapp, "American Villain-Types," *American Sociological Review* 21, no 3 (1956): 337.

provide such accessible smorgasbords. Despite all of mankind's efforts at removal, the rat is just as much a part of modern societies as it was when the very first rat left the forest in favor of the village. Through a long and intricate history of co-evolution, rats have expertly learned how to exploit humanity's vast resources to sustain themselves indefinitely. In many ways, the rat now understands human behavior far better than humankind will ever understand the behavior of rats.

Perhaps the rat, as Hendrickson points out, is simply the karmic price we must pay for despoiling the environment—the consequence of fracturing ecology.⁷³ Perhaps the rat demonstrates the iron will of evolution to work for no cause other than its mysterious own. Regardless of the reasoning behind the co-evolution of rats and humans, the rat is now a permanent member of human history. In the coming generations, further understanding of history requires listening to the voices of the non-human organisms that share the planet, and ultimately, the story of humankind. Perhaps it is the greatest flaw of humanity to consider ourselves the pinnacle achievement of Earth's four billion year experiment. It is important to remember, as Coleman does, that “human beings do not represent the apex of evolution. Evolution works toward no end for no one, it just works.”⁷⁴ To welcome the rat is not just to welcome another voice into the symphony of history, but to welcome a new a venue of thought, in which the history of human beings is inseparable from the history of every other species.

⁷³ Hendrickson, *More Cunning than Man*, 1.

⁷⁴ Coleman, *Vicious*, 7.

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The cover image depicts a sanitation employee of Bombay, India inspecting dead rats for bubonic plague during the small outbreak which struck in 1994. The image is courtesy of photographer Sherwin Crasto and can be located through The Associated Press

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The Image of White Womanhood in the South: How it Affected Violence Towards Blacks After the Civil War

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The emancipation of slaves in the United States marked a distinct shift in the life of the country's citizens, and none of the non-black population felt the change more than the southern white plantation owners. The life they had known in the antebellum era was completely disrupted economically, politically, and perhaps most importantly, socially. In the years following the Civil War, a movement of violence against blacks by southern white supremacists emerged and grew quickly. On the surface, the violence might seem to have stemmed from the hatred rooted in the disturbance that black freedom caused in the South. However, the ideal of white womanhood decried by the planter-class in the antebellum South affected upper-class white southern men, leading them toward racist violence in the years following the Civil War.

In his memoir on plantation life, James Battle Avirett reminisced over antebellum society, saying, "In the reverence paid to womanhood and the inviolable respect in which woman was held, the civilization of the old slave *régime* in the South has not been surpassed and perhaps will not be equaled among men."¹ The respect and admiration given to women was also noted by the women themselves. Letitia Burwell recalled her years in the antebellum South:

Although presenting an infinite variety of mind, manner, and temperament, all the gentlemen who visited us, young and old, possessed in common certain characteristics, one of which was a deference to ladies which made us feel that we had been put in the world especially to be waited upon by them. Their standard for woman was high. They seemed to regard her as some rare and costly statue set in a niche to be admired and never taken down.²

A statue is placed on a shelf for safe-keeping and admiration. Off the shelf, it can be broken or harmed. Burwell's use of this analogy helps explain upper-class white southern men's reaction to women's goodly characteristics: they felt white women must be protected.

References to white women assisting with the management of the plantation reveal themes of piety and a connection to Christian religious ideals. Thomas Nelson Page, in his book about antebellum life in Virginia, commented on the plantation mistress: "Her life was one long act of devotion, -devotion to God, devotion to her husband, devotion to her children, devotion to her servants, to her friends, to the poor, to humanity."³ Avirett also associated his mother with religious ideals, describing her as his father's "other half, the blessed woman he had led from the neighboring county to grace his home and bless his life."⁴ Similarly, Burwell described plantation wives as "model women" who "managed their household affairs admirably, and were uniformly kind to, but never familiar with, their servants. They kept ever

¹ James Battle Avirett, *The Old Plantation: How We Lived in Great House and Cabin Before the War* (New York, 1901), 20.

² Letitia M. Burwell, *A Girl's Life in Virginia Before the War* (New York, 1895), 36.

³ Thomas Nelson Page, *Social Life in Old Virginia before the War* (New York, 1897), 38.

⁴ Avirett, *The Old Plantation*, 44.

before them the Bible as their constant guide and rule in life.”⁵ The plantation southerners attached a great significance to women’s purity and piety that is typically promoted by Christianity.

To the southern plantation class, the most important aspect of the woman’s role in managing the plantation was caring for her family. Historian Karin Zipf explains that society preferred women to “remain in the private sphere where they could cultivate the moral character of the family.”⁶ Southern society recognized women as moral compasses for the men of the family, which contributed to the “worship that mothers garnered from men during most of the antebellum years.”⁷ Fathers believed their wives were responsible for their offsprings’ moral character, and sons viewed their mothers as the creators of the family’s moral values.

Not only did plantation wives embody the ideals of white womanhood, but so did the plantation daughters. Page explained, “[Plantation daughters] were like the mother; made in her own image....They held by a universal consent the first place in the system, all social life revolving around them.”⁸ He continued, “[The daughter] was not versed in the ways of the world, but she had no need to be; she was better than that; she was well bred.”⁹ The plantation daughter was the ultimate embodiment of Burwell’s proverbial statue placed on the shelf. She was the focus of southern society, with the entire society gazing admiringly upon her. The daughter was pure and innocent, in contrast to the realities of the world, and ideally would remain so, if protected from outside harm.

White womanhood was prized at every age. The upper-class male understood the high status of white womanhood in southern society and felt compelled to protect it from any threat. In Page’s account of life in the antebellum South, he declared:

[The plantation master] was fully appreciative of...the responsibilities of his position. He believed in a democracy, but understood that the absence of a titled aristocracy had to be supplied by a class more virtuous than he believed any aristocracy to be. He purposed in his own person to prove that this was practicable.¹⁰

The planter believed himself to be a model, leader, and protector for the rest of southern society. His actions and decisions had to align with his professed virtue. It was essential for a planter-class male to fulfill his responsibility of protecting the ideals of white womanhood.

Along with the emphasis on virtue described by Page, honor played a prominent role in southern life. Mary Polk Branch described her father, a plantation owner, as being “noted for the purity and integrity of his character – his word being considered ‘as good as his bond.’”¹¹ If a southern plantation owner gave his word, he staked his character on it. Historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown explains more generally:

White Southerners reared children to value honor as much as, if not more than, godly conscience. Like the Puritan conscience, honor could be internalized, and when it

⁵ Burwell, *A Girl’s Life in Virginia*, 34.

⁶ Karin L. Zipf, “‘The Whites Shall Rule the Land or Die’: Gender, Race, and Class in North Carolina Reconstruction Politics”, *The Journal of Southern History*, 65 (1999), 508.

⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982), 243.

⁸ Page, *Social Life in Old Virginia*, 52-53.

⁹ Page, *Social Life in Old Virginia*, 53-54.

¹⁰ Page, *Social Life in Old Virginia*, 45.

¹¹ Mary Polk Branch, *Memoirs of a Southern Woman “Within the Lines” and a Genealogical Record* (Chicago, 1912), 7.

was violated, guilt was likewise the response. It did require self-restraint, but based upon pride, not divine commandment.¹²

Pride was the driving force of the southern gentleman's honor. His actions resulted from pride in his character, and by extension, pride in his associations.

The character of a southern planter was defined by his role as master. As Historian Stephanie McCurry explains, "Manliness, [and] masterhood [of the planter class male]...were based upon the domination of dependents."¹³ The virtue of domination was challenged with the emancipation of the slaves. After the removal of slavery, their wives and daughters were the only dependents left to the white men. According to Zipf, since dependents were "emotional rather than intelligent and passionate rather than rational," white southern men believed that their "nature dictated that they depended upon others for support."¹⁴ Thus, their responsibility was to protect their dependent women and maintain the honor of both their women and themselves. The southern white males' emphasis on responsibility and honorable character continued to hold true after the Civil War, and they sought to protect their women from the group who had challenged the planter's own masculinity by becoming independent: the former male slaves.

When blacks were enslaved, the plantation owners mastered every aspect of their lives. Even if a planter felt that a slave had threatened white womanhood, black men were prosecuted with relative fairness by their masters. There was, as historian Peter Bardaglio explains, "an adherence to legal formalism – the notion that the law was an autonomous body of rules that had to be applied equitably – thus significantly influenced the judicial treatment of criminal cases involving African Americans."¹⁵ White men were secure in their position as masters and therefore could afford to treat blacks equitably in the judicial system; blacks presented no great challenge to the white population. However, it was more than legal formalism that gave blacks access to a fairly equitable legal system prior to emancipation. Historian Martha Hodes characterizes black men in the slave system as being protected because they were "the property of white people," and free black men as being protected because they had "the potential...to become property or to be treated as such."¹⁶ If for no other reason, white southerners valued the lives of black men because of their monetary value. With the end of slavery, white southerners no longer saw any fiscal benefit from the life of a black man. Thus, emancipation removed a system with an integral buffer on violence towards blacks.¹⁷

The removal of this check on violence toward blacks did not bode well for the period of Reconstruction following the Civil War. With the South already in an aggrieved state after the loss of the war, they felt themselves being attacked again with the implementation of Radical Republican rule. Military supervision was instituted as southern state constitutions were rewritten and an attempt was made to reshape the "Old South" into the northern ideal. Southern whites were forced to live as equals with the blacks, whom they saw as beneath them socially, and indeed, in value of moral character and life worth. Granting freedom to

¹² Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 129.

¹³ Stephanie McCurry, 'The Politics of Yeoman Households in South Carolina,' in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York and Oxford, 1992), 35.

¹⁴ Zipf, 'The Whites Shall Rule', 501.

¹⁵ Peter W. Bardaglio, 'Rape and the Law in the Old South: "Calculated to excite Indignation in every heart,"' *The Journal of Southern History*, 60 (1994), 765.

¹⁶ Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men* (Binghamton, 1997), 5-6.

¹⁷ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, and Bardaglio, 'Rape and the Law in the Old South,' 765.

the descendants of “the naked, savage Africans”¹⁸ presented a threat to the ideal of white womanhood. If black men were allowed to take the ideal white woman “off of the shelf” and interact with her as an equal, it seemed to white male southerners that it would only be a matter of time before the black man’s heathen nature ruined the white woman’s moral purity. This would threaten the entire southern white upper-class, as white women were the moral compasses of the class. Thus, by extension, black freedom posed a challenge to the honor of the upper-class white southern men.

Understandably, the planter-class of southerners were disturbed by having their traditional way of life interrupted; but, was it logical for them to create violent racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan? In a perverted sense, it was. An examination of the importance of both honor and the ideal of white womanhood to white southern males, show they were closely tied to the violence against blacks that resulted in the years after the Civil War. William Pettigrew, a Southern gentleman, advised his brother, “As far as it can be done, we should live peaceably with our associates; but, as we cannot always do so, it is necessary occasionally to resist. And when our honor demands resistance, it should be done with courage.”¹⁹ The need to maintain honor and protect the ideal of white womanhood gave planter-class men a strong motivation for racist violence.

Thus, Reconstruction saw the emergence of racial violence in the form of white supremacist groups. According to historian E. Merton Coulter, the Ku Klux Klan “had been organized before the end of 1865 by Confederate veterans for amusement and prank-playing, but not until 1868 did it spread and become generally known.”²⁰ Though the Klan targeted white men who attempted to support rights for blacks, the greatest violence was reserved for the blacks themselves, more specifically black males. As Martha Hodes explains, “White Southerners conflated the political rights of black men with sexual transgressions [toward pure white women] in justifying the Klan-led violence that terrorized freed people between 1868 and 1871.”²¹ The Ku Klux Klan was most active in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Alabama. In 1869, Congress gave both North Carolina and Alabama permission to create state militias to control Klan violence.²² While the Ku Klux Klan is the most well known white supremacist group formed after the Civil War, it was not the only one. The Knights of the White Camelia gained support in Louisiana, while other smaller organizations sprung up across the South. Though they were separate organizations, people still associated these factions with the general group of the Ku Klux Klan.²³

The objectives of the Ku Klux Klan were described by President Ulysses S. Grant in a speech to the House of Representatives on April 19, 1872. As Grant outlined, the Klan sought “by force and terror to prevent all political action not in accord with the view of the members; to deprive colored citizens of...the right to a free ballot...and to reduce the colored people to a condition closely akin to that of slavery.”²⁴ Indeed, the violence of 1868 reached

¹⁸ Burwell, *A Girl's Life in Virginia*, 43-44. Burwell discusses her thankfulness to her ancestors. She declares: “For what courage, what patience, what perseverance, what long suffering, what Christian forbearance, must it have cost our great-grandmothers to civilize, Christianize, and elevate the naked, savage Africans to the condition of good cooks and respectable maids!”

¹⁹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 130. Wyatt-Brown quotes Pettigrew, which he obtained from Dickson Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin, 1979), 64-65.

²⁰ E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction: 1865-1877*, (Baton Rouge, 1947), 165.

²¹ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 151.

²² John Hope Franklin, ‘Reconstruction and the Negro,’ in Harold M. Hyman (ed.), *New Frontiers of the American Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1966), 70-72.

²³ Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction*, 169. Some of these groups include the Red Jackets, the Native Sons of the South, the Society of the White Rose, the Knights of the Black Cross, and the Whitebrotherhood.

²⁴ J.D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington, 1898), VII, 164, as cited in Herbert Shapiro, ‘The Ku Klux Klan During Reconstruction: The South Carolina Episode’, *The Journal of Negro History*, 49 (1964), 43

a peak on Election Day, when the Klan made tremendous efforts to prevent black men from voting.²⁵

However, while President Grant was correct in stating that the basic purpose of the Klan was to deny political rights and thus reduce blacks to a lower status, it is important to recognize that these efforts were being made as an attempt to protect white womanhood. Giving voting privileges to black men was seen as giving them full equality with white men, and thereby giving them equal access to white women. Martha Hodes explains from Klan writings, "As a male-only organization, one of the Klan's stated purposes was that 'Females, friends, widows, and their households shall ever be special objects of our regard and protection.'"²⁶ By limiting black voting rights, southern men believed they were doing just that. Bertram Wyatt-Brown draws on Klan writings when discussing the early robes of the Klan: they "were white, 'the emblem of purity for the preservation of the home and for the protection of the women.'"²⁷ The Ku Klux Klan set about its regime of violence believing that it was protecting the ideals of white womanhood that were prized by the southern planter class.

Northerners seemed surprised that all classes of white southerners were involved in the Klan. An unidentified woman from South Carolina wrote to a northern newspaper, the *Boston Traveller*, to describe the membership of the Klan:

[The Ku Klux Klan] is not as you [northerners] suppose, composed of 'border ruffians,' but its members are from what might be called 'respectable families' and the different bands are 'always headed,' says one of the Southern matrons near us, 'by a gentleman;' many of its members are ex-Confederate soldiers and officers, and their organization and discipline is perfect.²⁸

The organizations and violence they perpetrated were primarily driven by the upper-class: the class motivated by the pursuit of honor and the protection of the ideal of white womanhood.

The Ku Klux Klan did not consist entirely of southern planter-class men. Just prior to the Civil War in 1860, approximately one-fourth of southern white families were slaveholders, and many of those families only held one or two slaves.²⁹ With a maximum of one-fourth of the white male population involved, the Klan and other white supremacist organizations would not have been able to spread wide scale racial violence throughout the South. However, that percentage of men was the "leaders of all phases of life: social, economic, and political."³⁰ After the Civil War, lower-class southern whites attached themselves to the upper-class. The upper and lower-class whites were now associated from fighting together for the Confederacy. Also, in a southern society where all men were now free, white men did not want to associate with the blacks, and thus the upper and lower-class white men separated themselves from blacks by allying themselves through a bond of whiteness. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown explains, for southern whites, "the war experience provided memories and myths upon which a sense of sacred collectivity was based."³¹ The bond that resulted from the fight for "The Cause" of the Confederacy was compounded by the fact that southern men saw "Reconstruction more and more a question of the survival of

²⁵ Shapiro, 'The Ku Klux Klan,' 37.

²⁶ Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 160.

²⁷ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 454.

²⁸ 'Extent of the Organization in South Carolina and Character of Its Members: From the Boston Traveller, May 31,' *New York Times* (3 June 1871), 2.

²⁹ Robert R. Russell, 'The Effects of Slavery Upon Non-Slaveholders,' in Edward Magdol and Jon L. Wakelyn (eds.), *The Southern Common People: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Social History* (London, 1980), 139.

³⁰ John Samuel Ezell, *The South Since 1865* (New York, 1975), 8.

³¹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 111.

the integrity and dignity of the Caucasian race.”³² Because of their uncertainty over the survival of the “great” white race, the link of whiteness grew stronger in an attempt to resist what they saw as a black takeover. Finally, the emancipation of slaves meant that many lower-class southern whites were put on the same economic level as blacks. This economic equality with blacks was a condition that was intolerable to many whites, and so they sought to distinguish themselves from blacks by allying with the southern planter-class.³³ The alliance gave the former planter-class a solid support base in their white supremacist groups; indeed the *New York Tribune* described lower-class whites as “ready tools” for the upper-class leaders of these groups.³⁴

Though there is a logical connection between the upper-class southern male’s view of white womanhood, in no way is the highlighting of this connection an attempt to excuse the behavior of the Ku Klux Klan and other individuals who committed racist violence. The exploration of the ideal of white womanhood in regard to the racist violence that emerged in the South after the Civil War is an attempt to understand how seemingly respectable gentlemen could have both allowed this violence to occur and perpetrated it in the post-Civil War South. It appears, quite simply, that the foundation for racist violence was there, and unfortunately, upper-class white southern males chose to build upon it.

³² Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction*, 164.

³³ Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction*, 163. Coulter explains: “After the war, the nearer a former nonslaveholder came to the status of a poor white, the more intolerant of the Negro he became.”

³⁴ Shapiro, ‘The Ku Klux Klan,’ 49. He cites *The New York Tribune*, November 14, 1871.

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The Yahudim and the Americans:
The Leo Frank Affair as a Turning Point in Jewish-American History

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Historians have often described the Jewish-American past as exceptional, mostly because anti-Semitism has played a conspicuously less important role in America than in any other country in the Diaspora. As American Jewish historian Jonathan Sarna concludes, if the United States “has not been utter heaven for Jews, it has been as far from hell as Jews in the Diaspora have ever known.”¹ If such a statement is true, then the Leo Frank affair becomes even more egregious in Jewish American history. For Jews who had come to see America as the land of unencumbered opportunity, the “*Goldene Medina*,” the false conviction and subsequent lynching of a prominent Jew in Atlanta in 1913 resembled contemporaneous anti-Semitic attacks in Europe. Looking back on this incident from a Jewish as well as an American perspective, and despite admirable attempts by previous historians to make sense of this muddled event, the Frank affair has not been given proper attention. Typically, historians seeking to stress the ease with which Jewish immigrants became “Americanized” have ignored or downplayed the Frank affair, while even those historians who acknowledge the severity of the anti-Semitic event have failed to grasp its widespread significance; for the latter group, the Leo Frank affair was an isolated southern incident.²

The Leo Frank affair is arguably the single-most loaded event in Jewish American history, touching on multiple issues that have defined the rise of Jews in America: “Americanization,” labor, upward mobility, gender, immigration, nativism, and anti-Semitism.³ The facts of the Leo Frank “affair,” the term employed by Albert Lindemann to describe Frank’s conviction, imprisonment, and lynching, are clear.⁴ In April 1913, Leo Frank, the superintendent of a pencil factory in Atlanta, was arrested for the murder of Mary Phagan, a child laborer in the factory. The court, mysteriously convinced by the testimony of black janitor Jim Conley, convicted Frank and sentenced him to death. After nearly two years, Georgia Governor Slaton commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. The people of Marietta, Georgia, Phagan’s hometown, could not handle such a decision. They broke into the jail, kidnapped Frank and lynched him on 17 April 1915.

Though the literature on the Frank affair is copious, the historiography of this watershed moment in Jewish American life still lacks what may be called a “co-religionist interpretation.”

¹ Jonathan Sarna, “Anti-Semitism and American History,” *Commentary* 71, no. 3 (March 1981): 47.

² See Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003); Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978). For a general history of anti-Semitism in America, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

³ For an excellent and concise work on the late nineteenth century, which deals with many of these issues without specific regard to Jews, see Nell Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987).

⁴ Albert Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank), 1894-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Unfortunately, historians have focused solely on the events of the Frank affair themselves, on the development of anti-Semitism in the South, or on the history of the American South. There has not yet been a careful study on the effect of the Leo Frank case on the Eastern European Jewish immigrants concentrated in New York. In order to fill that void, it is critical to define the Frank affair as a turning point in Jewish American history. The Frank affair, which was the single-greatest episode of anti-Semitism in America, presented a unique moment for solidarity, or “ethnic cohesion,” between German and Russian Jews, whose relationship had previously been markedly strained at best. By sheltering themselves from further anti-Semitism, Jews of different ethnic, religious, and class backgrounds came together in response to Frank’s lynching. Before a serious Zionist movement developed to bring them together, and before the era of a unified response to the Holocaust, German and Russian Jews were united in their reaction to the Frank affair. Simultaneously, as the Frank affair forced Jews inward, it also garnered them outward acceptance in the American milieu. Put simply, the Frank affair was a opportune moment for “Americanization.”⁵ Generally, the process by which immigrant groups, like Jews, were transformed into Americans entailed two components. First, Jews had to *become* American, through shared values, language, and concern about national affairs. Tantamount to this transformation, Jews had to be *accepted* by Americans. In turn, these minority groups actually influenced the very definition of “American.” Thus, in the context of the Frank affair, by distinguishing themselves from blacks, Jews became “white.” By espousing the American justice system (instead of the violent vigilante ethos of the South), Jews became “American.” When they stood by Frank’s side they became Americans, while reaffirming themselves as Jews. Thus, counter-intuitively, the Frank affair offered an opportunity for Americanization, and simultaneously, ethnic cohesion.

The historiography of the Frank affair truly begins with Leonard Dinnerstein’s *The Leo Frank Case*, which is widely regarded as the seminal work on the event itself.⁶ Beyond a description of the events themselves, Dinnerstein presents a complex portrait of southern Jewish in the 1910s. But despite the tremendous value of Dinnerstein’s well-researched work, his overemphasis on anti-Semitism in the South creates the illusion that the Frank affair had little effect on Jews in the North. With the exception of Louis Marshall and the American Jewish Committee’s (AJC) involvement in the trial proceedings, Dinnerstein’s book leaves readers thinking that the Leo Frank case occurred in a vacuum, during which time northern (especially Yiddish-speaking, Eastern European) Jews lived undisturbed lives. In actuality, the Leo Frank affair caused a fundamental change in national Jewish relations by smoothing the German-Russian Jewish relationship.

The German Jews arrived in the United States *en masse* in the mid-nineteenth century.⁷ By the time huge waves of Eastern European Jewish immigrants began arriving in 1881, the German Jews were already widely accepted in mainstream American society. According to Gerald Sorin, “The German Jews became relatively affluent and influential....They also became

⁵ The term “Americanization” is slightly problematic, as its definition is in constant flux and often seems impossible to define. For our purposes, the best definition may be: “That particular variant of assimilation by which newcomers or their descendants come to identify themselves as ‘American,’ however they understand that identity” (Russell Kazal, “Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History,” *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 [April 1995]: 440).

⁶ Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

⁷ The following paragraph relies heavily on Naomi Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1984) and Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

more acceptable to their fellow Americans.”⁸ The reasons for such acceptance included visible hard work, which “real” Americans valued; vast efforts of philanthropy; and a reformed version of Judaism that blended nicely within America’s religious spectrum.⁹ Thus, because they arrived earlier and were better integrated into America society, German Jews generally looked down upon their Russian co-religionists. From the opposite perspective, the stereotypically more devout Eastern European Jews called the rich Germans “Uptown Jews” or *yahudim*. The lower class Jews of the Lower East Side, the “Downtown Jews,” blamed the *yahudim* for “many of the difficulties that the immigrants encountered, for their paternalistic attitude toward philanthropy, [and] for their use of *shtadlones* [intercession] instead of open protests.”¹⁰

The Germans feared the new immigrants would ruin their hard-won place in American society. The Russians resented their rich, non-religious brethren. The relationship between the two groups was contemptuous, to say the least. However, the greatest positive connection between the two immigrant groups was philanthropy. Organizations like *B’nai Brith*, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Immigrants Aid Society (HIAS), the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the Educational Alliance all sought to help the new immigrants in America. In this top-down schema, *tsedoke* [charity] formed the basis for religious group cohesion while simultaneously facilitating “Americanization”—defined as integration into greater American society though shared values, language, culture, and politics. In an effort to “Americanize” the new Eastern European immigrants (oftentimes called “greenhorns”¹¹) in an era of increasing nativism, German Jews provided newcomers relief, shelter, and employment, as well as help in the form of schools, charities, and hospitals.¹²

Most histories of the period tend to treat the interaction between the two groups as the relationship between the established Jews and the ethnic immigrants. Historian Selma Berrol has critically argued against earlier historians like Oscar Handlin and Moses Rischin, who sought to “minimize the negatives and emphasize the charitable efforts of the German Jewish community and the eventual coming together of the different kinds of Jews living in a city that was full of promise for all of them.”¹³ While Berrol is correct that Handlin and Rischin as well as Irving Howe have downplayed German-Russian tensions, Rischin does acknowledge that established German Jews—Americanized, reformed, and socially accepted—were “faced with the prospect of a mass migration of co-religionists from Eastern Europe, whose coming seemed to threaten their hard-won respectability.”¹⁴ To the German Jews, Rischin continues, “immigrant dress, ceremonials, and rabbinical divorces were anathema. Yiddish theaters were barbarous; Yiddish

⁸Sorin, *Tradition*, 31. Sorin notes that new discrimination against Jews was based on social acceptance, not class (i.e. the “Seligman Affair”).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31-60.

¹⁰ Zosa Szajkowski, “The *Yahudi* and the Immigrant: A Reappraisal,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Sept. 1973):13.

¹¹ This disparaging moniker was used to describe a new immigrant in the late nineteenth century, whose social habits clashed with “real” American ones.

¹² Sorin, *Tradition*, 99; Christopher Sterba, *Good Americans: Italian and Jewish Immigrants During the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25. German Jews who wanted their Eastern European brethren to Americanize were guided by a combination of “Progressive Era” nativism and altruistic paternalism. On the narrowness of the former, see James Barret, “Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930,” *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 997. On nativism generally, see Roger Daniels, *Not Like Us: Immigrants and Minorities in America, 1890-1924* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1997).

¹³ Selma Berrol, “Germans Versus Russian: An Update,” *American Jewish History*, 73, no. 2 (December 1983): 144.

¹⁴ Moses Rischin, *The Promised City* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1977), 95.

newspapers, collectively stigmatized as ‘socialistic,’ even worse.”¹⁵ Despite the limitations of Berrol’s critique, a well-articulated compromise regarding the relationship between the German and Russian Jews has been devised by historian Gerald Sorin, who claims that the two groups “entered into and sustained a relationship marked ultimately by cooperation.”¹⁶

One Eastern European Jewish immigrant in New York who was personally fascinated and outraged by the Frank affair was Abraham Cahan. As Yiddish journalist, English fiction writer, and labor leader, Cahan was, in the words of Sorin, an “agent of acculturation,” whose life “was inextricably linked with the destinies of the more than two million Jews who landed in the United States between 1881 and 1924.”¹⁷ Born in Vilna, Lithuania, Cahan came to America in 1882, helped start the United Hebrew Trades in 1888, and founded (and continued to edit) the largest Yiddish newspaper in the world, the *Jewish Daily Forward* (*Forverts*) in 1897. Though he was a European-born Socialist, Cahan was so disturbed by the anti-Semitism of the affair that he made several trips to Atlanta in 1914 to interview Leo Frank.¹⁸ To a large degree, Cahan, who had escaped persecution in Vilna, felt threatened that a Jew was no longer safe in America either.

Thus, in a real sense, Cahan serves as a representative for the Eastern European, Yiddish-speaking Jew of the early twentieth century *vis-à-vis* the Frank affair. Though he was not the “average” Eastern European Jew in New York, Cahan’s position at the head of the *Forward* (which had the largest circulation of any ethnic press) constantly forced him to present, and represent the *Yiddishe kultur* (Yiddish culture) of the Lower East Side.¹⁹ Because he held such a position, his decision to cover the Frank case so closely in the North’s Eastern European press illustrates how the Frank affair offered an occasion for both Americanization and ethnic cohesion. Though largely ignored by historians, the Frank affair, in which Abraham Cahan was so intimately involved, allows the perfect opportunity to investigate German-Russian relations and the “Americanization” of the new immigrant Jews.

Abraham Cahan and Leo Frank could not have come from more different worlds. Cahan embodied precisely that which German Jews despised: an urban, northern, Eastern European, Yiddish-speaking labor unionist and socialist.²⁰ Leo Frank was a bourgeois industrialist and Reform German Jew living in the South (though both men were highly irreligious). Cahan was the founder of the Yiddish newspaper *Forverts* and the United Hebrew Trades; Frank was the president of the Atlanta *B’nai Brith* chapter. Cahan had been educated in the Vilna Teachers Institute; Frank had attended Cornell. That Cahan would have been interested at all in the Frank case is astounding. Frank, after all, had purportedly maltreated underage laborers, but Cahan, the interminable labor leader, was unquestionably drawn to his case. Analyzing Cahan’s personal correspondence with Frank opens a window into the mind of a man who cared so much about his

¹⁵ Rischin, *Promised City*, 97.

¹⁶ Gerald Sorin, “Mutual Contempt, Mutual Benefit: The Strained Encounter Between German and Eastern European Jews in America, 1880-1920,” *American Jewish History* 81, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 34.

¹⁷ Gerald Sorin, “Tradition and Change: American Jewish Socialists as Agents of Acculturation,” *American Jewish History* 79, no. 1 (1989): 39.

¹⁸ Theodore Pollock, “The Solitary Clarinetist: A Critical Biography of Abraham Cahan, 1860-1917” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1959), 366.

¹⁹ See Charles Jeret, “The Greek, Italian, and Jewish American Ethnic Press: A Comparative Analysis,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 47-70. For an interesting analysis of how this culture was not simply a stepping-stone to Americanization, but a vibrant and dynamic entity of its own see Tony Michels, *A Fire in their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

²⁰ For the most recent biography of Cahan, see Sanford Marovitz, *Abraham Cahan* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

German co-religionist, which debunks the traditional historical interpretation of discordant German-Russian Jewish relations.

The correspondence between Frank and Cahan conveys a camaraderie that defies conventional thinking about how German and Russian Jews regarded one another. These epistolary sources are particularly useful for analysis because such personal conversations emit the true feelings of these co-religionists, without the often necessary self-censorship of a published work; they honestly convey uninhibited and uncensored affection. That Cahan and Frank exchanged letters and telegrams is significant in and of itself, since it is an example of harmonious German-Russian relations earlier than most historians' analyses will acknowledge. But the most revealing aspect of this camaraderie can be found in the language of the letters themselves. In a 27 March 1914 letter, after calling him "Honorable Abraham Cahan," Frank thanked Cahan for sending him copies of the *Forward* and explained, "The attention and sympathy of friends and well-wishers is the source of much inspiration to me."²¹ Frank conveyed to Cahan that he was "in good spirits...willing to await the verdict of Truth!" Frank ended the letter like any true friend: "With warmest regards and every good wish, in which my dear wife joins me, I am, dear sir, yours cordially, Leo M. Frank."²² Frank and Cahan enjoyed a special relationship. Historian Jeffrey Melnick, paraphrasing and quoting Cahan's autobiography, explains that, "Cahan grew quite fond of Frank in his many visits to the jail; upon their parting, Cahan wished he could kiss the younger man in 'our old-fashioned manner' but refrained because he knew that 'American men don't kiss like this.'"²³ The Frank affair provided a unique moment for such genuine camaraderie. These two men, who were as different as any two Jews could be, put aside their German or Russian identities in favor of a *Jewish* one.

In another letter, dated 31 March 1914, Frank congratulated Cahan for his journalistic work. Frank wrote, "I get the '*Forward*' which you send me, and I congratulate you on the literary value, and attention to truthful details."²⁴ Weeks later, Frank similarly thanked Cahan, "I appreciate the kind wishes you and your readers so thoughtfully sent me."²⁵ But perhaps the richest letter between the two men was Frank's New Year's letter, sent with the "assurance of my warm personal regards," in which he thanked Cahan, "the publishers, staff and readers of the *Jewish Daily Forward*" because their support "of my cause has been inspiring."²⁶ Though both men were highly irreligious, Frank's letter to Cahan on the Jewish New Year indicates that their relationship was based on common religion, not country of origin, class, or economic ideology. In his biography of Cahan, Sanford Marovitz's similarly explains that, "Long a secular Jew, Cahan gave little attention to the Hebrew faith per se after immigrating." Nevertheless, writes Marovitz, "Cahan and the *Forward* were outspoken in attempting to gain a legitimate trial for [Frank]."²⁷ That Cahan and Frank were both Jewish was enough to forge a bond between these

²¹ Leo Frank, Atlanta, Georgia, to Abraham Cahan, New York, 27 March 1914, YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, RG 1139, New York City.

²² Leo Frank, Atlanta, Georgia, to Abraham Cahan, New York, 27 March 1914, YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, RG 1139, New York City.

²³ Cahan, in his autobiography, quoted in Jeffrey Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 36.

²⁴ Leo Frank to Abraham Cahan, 31 March 1914, YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, RG 1139. In the various secondary literature, there is no indication that Frank could read Yiddish. It is theoretically possible, given that Frank was raised in the North, but unlikely. Regardless, there were Eastern European Jews in Atlanta who could translate the Yiddish newspapers Cahan sent.

²⁵ Leo Frank to Abraham Cahan, 18 April 1914, YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, RG 1139.

²⁶ Leo Frank to Abraham Cahan, 11 September 1914, YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, RG 1139.

²⁷ Marovitz, *Cahan*, 30-1.

two radically different men in a moment of extraordinary difficulty for American Jews. Frank's experience in Atlanta served to unite German and Russian Jews in ethnic cohesion.

The period of smooth relations that began in 1915 did not die with Leo Frank. Cahan's interest in the Frank case, which seems to have bordered on obsession, lasted even after Frank was killed. In a series of letters from 1930, Cahan corresponded with Henry Alexander, who had served as one of Frank's lawyers. From Alexander's responses, it is possible to deduce that Cahan had asked the lawyer questions about the case, including questions about Governor Slaton's statements, the parasol and ball of cord found in the elevator shaft, Conley's testimony, Jews in Atlanta, and the status of Mrs. Frank.²⁸ Cahan's interest in the case fifteen years after Frank's lynching reveals the degree to which the Frank affair had affected the relationship between German and Russian Jews—at the very least in Cahan's own mind. According to Gerald Sorin, the events in Atlanta so greatly affected Cahan that he devoted almost the entire last volume of his autobiography to the Frank affair.²⁹ In fact, after finishing the fifth volume of his autobiography, *Bleter fun Mayn Lebn* ("Leaves of My Life"), Cahan sent a copy to Alexander.³⁰ The Cahan-Alexander letters reveal how greatly the Frank case influenced Abraham Cahan, but the potential problem with these letters is apparent if one understands Cahan's personality. Cahan was calculating, almost to a fault. There is no way to know, given his personality, whether he was truly still interested in the case in 1930, or if he simply needed to make his autobiography more factually correct, for Cahan always viewed himself as a great American realist writer. Although the answer is unknown, the fact remains that Cahan sent Alexander a copy of his autobiography. Regardless of his later intentions, in 1915 Cahan was obsessed with the case, seemingly revising the way in which historians have described the antagonistic relationship between German and Russian Jews in the early twentieth century.

Abraham Cahan was not the only Eastern European Jewish newspaper editor who became involved in the Frank affair. Herman Bernstein, editor of the Yiddish daily *Der Tog* (*The Day*), also became a fierce advocate for Frank's innocence. Like Cahan, his close relationship with Frank is surprising according to the traditional understanding of contentious German-Russian relations. The similarity of their experiences only further supports the contention that the Frank affair created an opportunity for smoother German-Russian relations among Jews in America. After such a revision to the traditional history, Bernstein's actions seem to make more sense. "It occurred to me," Bernstein wrote to Georgia Governor Slaton in late 1914, "that you may feel like saying a few words about the general feeling of anti-Semitism in Georgia [where] anti-Jewish feeling has grown to dangerous proportions and have blinded the unthinking masses."³¹ Bernstein's emphasis was on Jewish solidarity in opposition to "the unthinking masses." Also like Cahan, Bernstein sent Frank copies of his newspaper.³² In some instances Bernstein went further than Cahan. In 1915 (either just before the lynching or just after Frank's death), Bernstein started a "Leo Frank Fund."³³ Thus, Bernstein and Cahan were both personally connected with the Frank affair, and each man's intimate relationship with Frank

²⁸ Henry Alexander to Abraham Cahan, 8 October 1930, YIVO, RG 1139.

²⁹ Gerald Sorin, *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 113.

³⁰ Henry Alexander to Abraham Cahan, 5 November 1931, YIVO, RG 1139.

³¹ Herman Bernstein, New York, to Governor John Slaton, Georgia, 29 November 1914, YIVO, RG 713, Box 9, Folder 300.

³² Leo Frank to Herman Bernstein, 16 January 1915, YIVO, RG 713, Box 9, Folder 300.

³³ Herman Bernstein (letter received with acknowledgment of a check made out to the "Leo Frank Fund" by the Robinowitz Brothers in Texas on 7 September 1915), YIVO, RG 713, Box 9, Folder 300.

seemingly dispels the conventional wisdom that German and Russian Jews were not ethnically cohesive.

Using this new interpretation, three eras of German-Russian relations can be defined. First, from the period of great migration in 1881 until the 1903 pogroms in Eastern Europe, the relationship was certainly tenuous, if not hostile. During the period, Sorin writes:

Germans believed that the ‘contemptible’ Russians were the reason for the new anti-Semitism; the Russians in turn thought the ‘arrogant’ Germans were deceiving themselves about their acceptance in the host society and about the positive qualities of rapid assimilation.³⁴

Germans were against further immigration, prompted mostly by concerns over nativist American views about the new immigrants. Sorin believes that the German Jews of the era “were apparently too insecure to feel comfortable with the poverty, the Yiddish, the Orthodoxy, and the socialism of the new arrivals from Eastern Europe.”³⁵ Following the pogroms of Eastern Europe, tensions between the two groups in America cooled, and the establishment of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in 1906 marked a tremendous step toward reconciliation between the two groups. Whereas previous differences over culture, language, and religiosity, as well as economic antagonisms had separated the two groups, the common enemy of anti-Semitism in the Old World was enough to unite them. This proved even more effective when anti-Semitism occurred in America. Finally, 1915 marked the start of the third period, in which German and Russian Jews were united against anti-Semitism in the American South.

Despite the Frank affair’s special position as a moment of ethnic cohesion, it simultaneously offered a true opportunity for Jewish “Americanization.” In no area was this shift more pronounced than in the ethnic and national press. The process of Americanization during the Frank affair hinged on three factors. First, as historians Jeffrey Melnick and Eric Goldstein argue, the Jews had to become “white.” This marked a shift from the Jewish position during the Atlanta race riots of 1906, in which the *Forward* called local racial disturbances “Negro pogroms.”³⁶ Goldstein points out how Jews sought to define themselves against blacks in 1915 (the same year in which D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* premiered):

During the Frank trial...the editors of Northern Jewish papers who covered the Frank Case...liberally reprinted anti-Conley editorials from the [non-Jewish] daily papers that used statements such as ‘black human animal,’ ‘depraved negro,’ ‘treacherous negro’ and ‘negro dope fiend.’³⁷

³⁴ Sorin, *Tradition*, 103.

³⁵ Sorin, “Mutual Contempt,” 36.

³⁶ Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 81.

³⁷ Goldstein, *Whiteness*, 66. Similarly, “During Frank’s 1913 trial, some non-Jewish Atlantans promoted a boycott of Jewish shops by distributing small cards that read: ‘Now is the time to show your true colors; to show your true American blood.’ As southern Jews watched the trial and lynching of Frank unfold, they became more convinced than ever that the key to social acceptance lay in demonstrating *their* ‘true colors’ as whites” (Goldstein, *Whiteness*, 62).

Second, because a shared value system was crucial to their assimilation, the Jews' Americanization was facilitated by their calls for "justice." In a letter to the editor, *Der Tog* reader Morris Blauk wrote:

It seems to me that if the *New York World* found it necessary to appeal to the Governor for the criminal Falk Brandt for a pardon it is only proper for you to appeal for our innocent brother as Justice has committed a crime against him because of technicalities.³⁸

Lastly, the mere fact that Jewish dailies—German, but especially Russian—were reporting on the *same events* as the non-Jewish American dailies was a sign of and vehicle for acculturation. Those who wanted to be "American" had to care about national issues. This type of Americanization—here defined as the process by which Jews sought to integrate into American society *and* influence American society to accept them—was achieved through small acts by individuals. Even something as seemingly insignificant as reading a specific newspaper was part of the transformation. The Frank affair was not only a Jewish issue, but the "American Beilis."³⁹ Thus, the proper way to assess such a moment of shifting allegiance and identity is to examine the reaction of the Yiddish press (like Cahan's *Forward*) to the Frank affair.

The American press at the time—in Atlanta, around the nation, and distinctly the "yellow" journalism—could not report on anything, it seemed, but the Frank affair. Each new turn of events led to new articles and fierce editorials. Surprisingly, Frank had overwhelming support in the American press, even from, according to historian Eugene Levy, "such solidly WASP papers as the *Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Post* and *Baltimore Sun*." Editorials from around the nation opined about the degree of anti-Semitism in the South, Frank's innocence, and the odd maltreatment of a white (though Jewish) man in favor of a black man. The *New York Tribune* wrote that "the red band of anarchy is dangling from Frank's nose."⁴⁰

In his article, Levy compares the reactions of the black press to the Frank affair with the German Jewish press. He finds that "the bulk of discussion in [German] Jewish papers revolved around the extent and significance of anti-Semitism during the trial and its aftermath."⁴¹ An editorial from the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent* supports his contention, as it stated, "Frank is clearly the victim of the most malicious form of anti-Semitism."⁴² That newspaper went on to call Frank's lynching "Georgia's Lasting Disgrace."⁴³ In a 1915 editorial, the Boston *Jewish Advocate* wrote, "What should make for thought is that there has happened in Georgia what could not happen in darkest Russia."⁴⁴ In an article entitled "The Shame of It," the newspaper declared: "Lynching is nether a crime nor an outrage in the South...Why was the community of Atlanta so incensed against the Jew Frank that it could even forget its anti-negro attitude?"⁴⁵

³⁸ Morris Blauk (letter to the editor *Der Tog* on 7 December 1914), YIVO, RG 713, Box 9, Folder 300.

³⁹ Letter to the editor of *Der Tog*, 26 January 1915, YIVO, RG 713, Box 9, Folder 300. It referred to Menahem Mendel Beilis, who was accused of blood libel and ritual murder in Russia in 1913.

⁴⁰ Eugene Levy, "Is the Jew a White Man? Press Reactions to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915," *Phylon* 35, no. 2 (1974): 213. Other papers that supported Frank were *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Raleigh News and Observer*, *Florida Times-Union*, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Enquirer*, *Houston Post*, *Washington Post*, *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

⁴¹ Levy, "White," 218.

⁴² Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent*, 23 July 1915, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library.

⁴³ Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent*, 20 August 1915, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library.

⁴⁴ Boston *Jewish Advocate*, 20 August 1915, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library.

⁴⁵ Boston *Jewish Advocate*, 20 August 1915, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library.

Furthermore, in an editorial called “Back to First Causes,” the *Advocate* wrote, “Southern Jewry is the type that should please the ardent assimilationist and the dispersionist.”⁴⁶ Through editor Jonah Wise, the *American Israelite*, according to Levy:

Damned men like Hugh Dorsey and Tom Watson for deliberately contriving Frank’s murder, so as to ‘protect themselves against the truth that must have come out at some time their guilty knowledge.’⁴⁷

The reason for such vitriolic language, Levy claims, is that the German Jewish newspapers were guided by the major “American” dailies. The German Jewish newspapers had little direct access to the events and were left dependent on such dailies for stories. Furthermore, Jewish editors, cognizant of rising anti-Semitism in America, “chose not to emphasize that the American elite, at least as reflected by the majority newspaper, overwhelmingly supported Frank.”⁴⁸ Levy notes that instead “they dwelt on the apparent rise of anti-Semitism, so familiar from the European model.”⁴⁹

Cahan and the *Forward* echoed, both in content and tone, the German-Jewish and non-Jewish American newspapers. It is surprising that Cahan acted in this way if one accepts the traditional interpretation that Russian Jews were at odds with German Jews. With regard to the press, there is some truth to that interpretation, though, but only earlier in the twentieth century. According to historian Ronald Sanders:

The *Forward* at first gave more attention to the trial of Mendel Beilis going on at the time in Russia than it gave to the Frank case in Georgia; Beilis, a simple workingman, a victim of Tsarist persecution and of the oldest anti-Semitic weapon in the history of Europe—the ritual-murder charge—was a far more appropriate martyr from the *Forward*’s point of view than a German-Jewish bourgeois who seemed at first to have been legitimately found guilty by an American court. But Cahan soon became persuaded, as many liberal Northerners did, that Frank was innocent.⁵⁰

After Cahan’s change of heart, the *Forward* filled its pages with news of the Frank affair. The *Forward* ran articles entitled “Dead Bodies Found Hanging From Tree: 100 Bullets Shot into Frank,” and “Frank Has Been Brought to Eternal Rest.”⁵¹ That same day, an article on the front page read: “The Governor of Georgia admits that in his state they hate Jews.”⁵²

⁴⁶ Boston *Jewish Advocate*, 20 August 1915, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library.

⁴⁷ Cincinnati *American Israelite*, 19 August 1915, quoted in Levy, “White,” 219. Dorsey was the prosecuting attorney in the Frank case. Watson was a populist and Congressman from Georgia who sensationalized the Frank affair in his publication *The Jeffersonian*.

⁴⁸ Levy, “White,” 221.

⁴⁹ Levy, “White,” 221; The New York-based *American Hebrew*, an English-language German Jewish newspaper, ran articles in the years of the Frank affair entitled, “Why the Jews Have Succeeded,” (26 September 1913), “Judaism and Culture,” (13 May 1913), “Jews as Builders of New York,” (30 May 1913), and an editorial called “Assimilation True and False” (4 July 1913), Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library.

⁵⁰ Ronald Sanders, *The Downtown Jews: Portraits of an Immigrant Generation* (New York: Dover Publishers, 1987), 428.

⁵¹ *Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts)*, 17 August 1915, 1. Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library. My thanks to Rivka Schiller at YIVO for helping me translate the Yiddish. All translations are our own.

⁵² *Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts)*, 17 August 1915, 1. Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library.

In an editorial, which Pollock believes Cahan himself wrote, the *Forward* was explicit about the brutality of the Frank affair. In Cahan's signature literary style, the poetic piece began, "Frank is dead. The tragedy has ended in blood and death." In a nod to the American justice system, and a condemnation of the Southern vigilante ethos, Cahan believed that Georgia had "locked all the doors of justice and allowed only one way out—the electric chair." Like his non-Jewish editorial colleagues, Frank stressed "barbaric racial hatred; fanatic, glowing hatred of all things 'foreign.'" In this invocation, Cahan was comparing the North, in which Jews were welcomed as "Americans," with the backwards South in which they were still "foreign." The South, then, was not "real" America, because "in no other country in the world could such a thing happen this way...It was not that long ago in the same 'South,' at the same place, where they hanged two niggers." Cahan called Frank's murder "a completely anarchistic conspiracy," a complete aberration from true America.⁵³ Pollock continues, "Editorials in every language, overwhelmingly in Frank's favor, had flooded the nation. The Jewish press, understandably, was most concerned with the case."⁵⁴

Historians have identified the *Forward* as one of the most effective agents for the immigrants' acculturation. In particular, it helped introduce the Jewish immigrants to America. By integrating Anglicized Yiddish or English words into its pages, especially in articles concerning US History and Geography, its readers took their first steps towards Americanization. However, historians have failed to notice that the *Forward* helped its readers Americanize by encouraging them to read about and discuss national events—like the Frank affair. By covering the same news as the English press, the *Forward* garnered the "greenhorns" acceptance as Americans. The *Forward* did, indeed, devote "page upon page to the case."⁵⁵ Cahan, seeing how much attention the Frank affair was receiving in the mainstream press, took advantage of the moment and devised a plan to "Americanize" his *Forward* readers by simply mimicking the American press. Despite Cahan's efforts, if the *Forward* readers did not buy the newspaper, all his efforts would have been in vain; but the Yiddish-speaking immigrants could not be satiated by news of the Frank affair. On 19 August 1915, just two days after Frank's murder, the *Forward* announced its new circulation: 200,267—almost a 50% increase from the pre-Frank affair figure. Pollock correctly points out that this "act of regional insanity contributed to the growth of the *Forward*."⁵⁶ The Frank affair lent Cahan a teaching opportunity of sorts. By dwelling on the case, he forced new Eastern European immigrants to focus on the same issues as native-born Americans (and German Jews). Furthermore, that the circulation of the *Forward* increased with its coverage of the Frank affair only made Cahan more content, since Americanization was his ultimate goal.

Throughout 1915, political cartoons about the Frank affair appeared in several editions of Herman Bernstein's newspaper *Der Tog*. A cartoon in the 18 August 1915 edition showed two enormous hands hanging Frank by a rope as blood drips from his mouth. The caption read: "The *khurbon* of Georgia."⁵⁷ The language is telling, as the *Forward* frequently referred to Frank as a "*khurbon*," as well. The Yiddish, depending on its context, means "scapegoat" or "sacrifice."

⁵³ Abraham Cahan, (editorial in *Jewish Daily Forward* on 18 August 1915). My thanks for this translation are owed to Eddie Portnoy.

⁵⁴ Pollock, "Clarinetist," 366.

⁵⁵ Pollock, "Clarinetist," 366. Pollock astutely observes that, "The *Forward*, one of whose guiding principles was the Americanization of foreign-born Jewry, found itself in the unenviable—though not untenable—position of reporting a national disgrace to its new readers" (Pollock, "Clarinetist," 368).

⁵⁶ Pollock, "Clarinetist," 369.

⁵⁷ *Der Tog*, 8 August 1915, 4, Dorot Jewish Division, NYPL.

Both usages are appropriate in Frank's context. Frank, like most victims of anti-Semitism, was blamed for being a Jew, the "scapegoat" blamed for society's problems. But the latter interpretation of "sacrifice" is also meaningful, since it conveys the fact that religion and anti-Semitism played a tremendous role in Frank's demise. This was not a southern incident involving a German; it was a *Jewish* incident. Earlier, in a cartoon from 22 July 1915, shortly after Frank's sentence was commuted, the *Day* made clear the connection between Frank and the Americanization of the Jews. The title of the cartoon read: "The Victory of an Open Opinion."⁵⁸ In the cartoon, Governor Slaton was shown cutting the rope from which Frank would have hanged. As he does so, Frank cowers in the corner, consoled by Uncle Sam, who tenderly places his hands on Frank's shoulders. The message was that Frank was saved by American "Opinion." But the implication for such a cartoon printed in a Yiddish daily is profound. Bernstein illustrated that Jews had become so close to native-born, "real" Americans that they could literally embrace Uncle Sam, the patriarch of America. To stand for justice was to be American. To protect the innocent—even a Jew—was characteristic of America. It seemed to Bernstein that in times of trouble the government and the public would stand behind the Jews. Finally, that this cartoon appeared in a Russian Jewish paper indicates that it was not only German Jews who could make this leap. The Frank affair, then, provided a unique opportunity for Americanization alongside Jewish ethnic cohesion.

The idea that anti-Semitism binds Jews together, masks differences between Jews of different denominations or nationalities, and eases intra-Jewish tensions is not a new one. Historian Samuel G. Freedman has remarked that invoking "the memory of anti-Semitism serves as a balm for intra-Jewish tension."⁵⁹ In that respect, the Frank affair was just one example in which a tragic, anti-Semitic "pogrom" induced Jewish cohesion, in this case between German and Russian Jews. That the victim was a German Jew made little difference. The response of the Eastern European Jews demonstrated the connection they felt toward their western counterparts. But even this response was not one-sided. The fact that men like Cahan and Bernstein responded so viscerally was taken by German Jews as a sign of solidarity and mutuality. Likewise, their response was seen by both Jews and non-Jewish Americans as a sign of increased Americanization. Rather than subscribe to the traditional interpretation that seeks to emphasize German-Russian Jewish tensions in the early twentieth century, it may be time to consider that in the 1910s, anti-Semitism in the South may actually have helped Jews as an ethnic people in America.

⁵⁸ *Der Tog*, 22 July 1915, Dorot Jewish Division, NYPL.

⁵⁹ Samuel Freedman, quoted in Melnick, *Relations*, 4.



Cartoon showing Leo Frank being hanged (*Der Tog*, 8 August 1915).



Cartoon showing Governor Slaton commuting Frank's sentence. (*Der Tog*, 22 July 1915).

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***A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyès and What Is the Third Estate?* By William H. Sewell, Jr. (Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 1994. pp. 204. Paperback, \$22.95)**

Historians have written thousands of books and articles speculating about the causes of the French Revolution of 1789. Most of them probably include some reference to Abbé Sieyès' well-read pamphlet. *What Is the Third Estate?* In its basic form, this pamphlet asserts that the Third Estate in France (that is, everyone who was not nobility or a member of the clergy), is "everything." This pamphlet became a rallying point for the Third Estate, who wanted better representation in the Estates General, the French legislative body, and is largely cited as the text that caused the Revolution.

In his book, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution*, William Sewell examines the language of this pamphlet and of Sieyès' other writings to determine why this text had such an influence on the greater French population. Through a process of close-reading and wider political, social, and economic interpretations, Sewell analyzes Sieyès' contributions to the revolutionary philosophy within the context of the later 1790s. Sewell claims, and other historians agree, that Sieyès' influence stopped after the 4th of August, 1789. It was on this fateful night that the newly formed National Assembly declared the Old Regime to be over and did away with the privileges of the aristocracy and the clerics. Henceforth, the ideas of Sieyès were widely ignored and the revolution's motives became more radical.

Sewell divides his book into two main sections: the first dealing with the political denotations found in the 127 page pamphlet, and the second examining various inconsistencies that Sewell found while reading Sieyès.

In the first half of this book, Sewell analyzes the language and argumentative strategies of the Abbé Sieyès. Sewell effectively shows that the "distinctive figurative language" and "appeals to the emotions of the readers" was what made this pamphlet so effective and accepted among the Third Estate (41). Sieyès presents his argument in six logical points, outlining the issues and oppression facing the "everything" Third Estate, what has been done to help the Third Estate, and finally, what remained to be done to give the Third Estate the sway it deserved (41-2). Sewell ties Sieyès' arguments to his theory of political economy, a system in which those who produce the money should have the power. In a great elaboration of a "utopian" society, Sieyès divides the population into two, three, and then four classes in an attempt to show how power should be distributed. In all of these schemes, the class in control was the equivalent of the current Third Estate. Sewell claims that, by producing many different scenarios in which the Third Estate always triumphs, Sieyès' has convinced the reader of his political economy theory. In these few chapters, Sewell does little to differentiate between Sieyès' combined political writings and the singular *What Is the Third Estate* pamphlet, at times making it difficult to discern Sewell's argument

The author believes, "Texts should be seen as social products that have social consequences," therefore, in the second half of this book, Sewell carries out what he calls a "deconstruction" of the pamphlet in an attempt to discover what Sieyès truly meant when he wrote it, not merely how the French reacted to it (36-7). The last half of the book holds the author's successful attempt to uncover the political content of *What Is the Third Estate?* buried within the social context. In his close-reading, the author largely focuses on the contradictions found within Sieyès' texts, putting more emphasis on the minor inconsistencies that spatter the pamphlet than on the overarching themes of the booklet. For example, one of Sieyès' main points is to define what it means to be a representative of the French people. Sewell notes that Sieyès' definition of a proper representative is no more than an aristocrat in a Third Estatesman's clothing. Sewell then goes on to pick apart other facets

of Sieyes' argument in his close-reading rather than to explore the implications of Sieyes' proposed political philosophy to its fruition. Despite these small tangents within the book, Sewell does show what he believes to be Sieyes' philosophy, unbiased by any social connotations.

Overall, this book was a highly informative and entertaining read, shedding new light on a topic not often examined in this degree of detail. However, this book does require large background knowledge of the French Revolution, Enlightenment economic ideas, and the prevailing political attitudes of the late eighteenth century. For a scholar interested in evolving monetary theory and the notions of citizenship at the dawn of the Age of Revolution, this book makes for a wonderful read and I would recommend it to any French historian.

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***Admiral Lord Keith and the Naval War Against Napoleon.* By Kevin D. McCranie.
(Gainesville: University Press of Florida, pp. 256. Cloth, \$59.95)**

The period between the American and French revolutions onward is an area rife with enthusiasm from historians and lay readers alike. Revolutions raged on both sides of the Atlantic, but the British ruled the waves during this period known as the Age of Fighting Sail. The British Naval establishment ruled the seas, but the vast engagements in America and burdensome, comprehensive fighting against Napoleon on land required effective and tactical joint military operations between the Army and Navy.

A leader capable of engineering the necessary joint-operations was Admiral Lord Keith Elphinstone. In *Admiral Lord Keith and the Naval War Against Napoleon*, historian Kevin D. McCranie compiles over 100,000 public and private records about Admiral Lord Keith, making it the most comprehensive biography of the Admiral to date. Commanding four naval fleets over the course of his lifetime (Eastern Seas, Mediterranean, North Sea, and the Channel) McCranie is able to weave the primary sources of one Admiral through the entire British Naval establishment.

As a young captain during the American Revolution, Elphinstone often served as the envoy between the Army and Navy. Captain Elphinstone provided the planning, politically savvy dialogue and expert execution in many offensive and defensive engagements along the American coastline (17). Early on in his career, he cemented relationships with the royal family; his first being Prince William, the third son of George the Third, who served under Elphinstone's command aboard the *Warwick* (27). Elphinstone held a seat in Parliament, though for the majority of his tenure he remained on active duty (26). As an outspoken critic of the war with France, Elphinstone risked much speaking against the king, even though many of his political allies shared his sentiments. Still, Elphinstone maintained those vital connections throughout his life and reached great heights within the British Navy because of it. In his old age, Elphinstone adjusted to the comfortable life of the gentry.

Admiral Lord Keith and the Naval War Against Napoleon is well written, making a dauntingly historical niche market subject palpable for both historians and lay readers. It comfortably weaves the over 100,000 records of Elphinstone's life throughout the book creating a comprehensive depiction of the British Navy during the Age of Fighting Sail. McCranie's choice of Elphinstone was a wise choice of a focal point from which to understand the inner workings of the British Navy. Informative and a delightful read, *Admiral Lord Keith* will satisfy anyone looking for a British focus on the revolutionary period and shortly after.

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***Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam.* By David Farber. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005 Pp. 212. Hardcover, \$39.95.)**

During the 1970s, Americans faced many political and economical challenges. People were distrustful of the government after Watergate, the economy was struggling, and oil prices were extremely high. In 1976, Jimmy Carter was elected President of the United States. Although he was popular at the beginning of his presidency, public sentiment began to change when he was unable to solve economic problems and was unsuccessful in negotiating for the release of the American hostages in Iran. In his book, *Taken Hostage*, David Farber provides a very well researched account of the Iranian Hostage Crisis by giving readers a detailed background of how and why the 52 hostages were taken and held for 444 days. There are many issues discussed in the book, but some common themes include the portrayal of Jimmy Carter as incapable of either helping the hostages or improving American life; the reactions of people, both in Iran and the United States, regarding the hostage crisis; and the role the media played throughout the crisis in exciting the interest of the public.

David Farber portrays Jimmy Carter as an intelligent man, yet incapable of helping America during his presidency. Carter did not sit idle while the hostages were being held; he simply was not able to find a way to free them during his presidency. Because of the President's friendship with the Shah of Iran, relations were strained between his administration and the revolutionary government in Iran. President Carter, although he tried to prevent the Shah's exile in America, did eventually allow him to receive medical help in the United States. This action heightened tensions between the United States and Iran, and the Iranians demanded the Shah in exchange for the hostages. Farber never directly accuses Carter of making a definite error in his decisions, although the failed mission to rescue the hostages was a disaster. Carter was influenced by Henry Kissinger and others, who did not want to betray the friendship America had established with the Shah, thus sacrificing the positive relationship America *might* have had with the new Iranian government. Farber identifies this as the reason the hostages were taken and why Carter was at the mercy of the Iranians, instead of being able to negotiate freedom for the hostages.

David Farber writes frequently about the reactions of both the American and Iranian publics to the Hostage Crisis. In the United States, Iranian university students held protests at their schools and outside the White House. Americans hung yellow ribbons throughout the country and began to pay more attention to news about Iran. The longer the hostages were held, the less people approved of President Carter.

In Iran, Farber describes how the students took the hostages. Although they had only planned for a three day sit-in, the students later decided to retain the hostages until the Shah was returned by the United States. The Iranians were proud that they were able to expose the weakness of America in this way. The author mentions these reactions throughout the book, showing the origins of these sentiments by giving readers a relatively long background history of how the hostage crisis eventually took place.

David Farber also writes extensively about the media's impact on the hostage situation. He notes that before the hostage crisis, Americans knew little about American policy in Iran, although information was available concerning Iran and the Shah. The

American public was especially ignorant of the amount of power Islamic forces held in Iran and how to deal with growing threat of militant Islam. During the hostage crisis, however, the media played a large role in influencing and informing the public about Iran. The author implies that the media helped cause the increasing dissatisfaction with Carter, since people were reminded each day in the news that he was not succeeding in freeing the hostages. Farber also writes about the influence of the media in Iran, which was under Russian control. The Russians sent anti-American propaganda over the radio, broadcasted in Iran, which helped fuel the discontent Iranians felt toward Americans.

David Farber connects the themes of his book in a way that sheds an honest light on what happened during the Hostage Crisis in Iran. *Taken Hostage* is a very thorough book and is an interesting read for anyone who enjoys studying American politics in the twentieth century.

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***Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace.* By Arthur Stanley Link. (Arlington Heights: AHM Pub. Co., 1979. Pp. 138. Paperback \$12.95.)**

Woodrow Wilson had to make many difficult decisions during his presidency. Many of his decisions involved foreign policy, which was especially important during the first several years of World War I. In his book, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace*, Arthur Link writes about many of Wilson's foreign policies. The President is portrayed as a staunch pacifist, although it is mentioned that he believed war was sometimes necessary to fight oppression and tyranny. Wilson's strong desire for neutrality is evident, and even as America entered the war, his primary reason for fighting was to establish a "lasting peace." Link focuses on the dream Wilson had of establishing this peace, which he wanted to accomplish through the League of Nations. Some of the common themes of the book include the extreme mental struggle the President faced as he made decisions about the war and his foreign policies, the desire for the neutrality of the United States, and the need Wilson saw for establishing a lasting peace.

Arthur Link portrays Woodrow Wilson as a strong pacifist whose entrance into the war was the very last resort. Wilson's struggle regarding what to do about the war in Europe is written about extensively as the President engages in communication with both sides. It is evident that the author is eager to stress the point that entering the war was not an easy decision for Wilson to make, especially since his primary goal was constantly establishing a lasting peace. The President is portrayed as being relatively patient with the foreign nations, especially Germany, who were not complying with his request for the safe shipping of merchant ships. Wilson attempted compromise several times before making the final decision to join the other side in war. The mental struggles that Wilson faced in his decision making were made very obvious throughout the book, mostly because of his strong desire to remain neutral.

The author explains in detail the great lengths to which Wilson went in order to remain neutral. It is clear he did not want the war to have a victor, but rather end in a peace agreement. Wilson was willing to do whatever it took, even eventually entering the war, to ensure the establishment of peace. The book includes letters that Wilson sent to Germany, mostly regarding the safety of shipping between America and Europe. Yet even when Germany failed repeatedly to cooperate, Wilson was still hesitant to enter the war. Link defends the President's desire for neutrality by commenting that the American public was also eager to remain a neutral nation. Wilson was very eager to comply with the public in this regard. After the President had done everything in his power to remain neutral, including peace talks and numerous negotiations, the United States finally entered the war.

The author draws a lot of attention to the President's desire for a lasting, worldwide peace. The reason the United States entered the war was to establish this peace, which Wilson hoped to accomplish through the League of Nations. The author stresses in detail the extent to which Wilson went to see the League of Nations passed by Congress. The portrayal of his travel throughout the country and his speeches before Congress suggest that he did everything in his power, even beyond what his physical strength could handle, to see the United States join the League of Nations. Arthur Link demonstrates how passionate Wilson was about his agenda. He discusses the President's contact with American children during his travels, and how he desperately yearned for

them to live in a peaceful world. The author portrays the President as a caring man who wanted to see people live in peace with one another and hoped that no child would have to grow up to fight in a war.

Arthur Link portrays Woodrow Wilson as a thoughtful, intelligent man who desired lasting peace for the world. The author defends the President many times throughout the book, and he obviously favors Wilson and his decisions. He successfully portrays Wilson as a very peaceable man who was the victim of his circumstances during World War I. It is a very interesting book that causes the reader to consider the difficulty Woodrow Wilson faced when making decisions during his presidency.

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