A Cloak to Hide the Heart of a Viper: The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793 in Philadelphia

Ena Scott
James Madison University

Philadelphia was in the midst of political crisis in 1793 as Republicans and Federalists fought for control of the newly formed capital. A darker crisis, however, loomed as summer arrived. Issues of politics were swept away as the largest city in the United States was ravaged by a yellow fever epidemic. The sickness took its bloody toll as friends, neighbors, and families witnessed each other succumb to gruesome death. The fever lasted a few days, beginning with a raised temperature and followed by severe pain and chills. Then it declined, only to reappear with a deadly vengeance. The victims turned yellow, vomited blackened blood, and eventually reached a state of stupor from which they usually did not return. Ten percent of the population died this way, and about half of the population of more than 40,000 people fled, leaving Philadelphia and all of its previous problems by the wayside. Those who remained in the city had little time to devote themselves to anything beyond the fight for survival. Yet out of the macabre and gloom, heroism emerged in the form of the medical community's response led by Dr. Benjamin Rush, as well as the African-American community and many other citizens. Through their collective efforts, Philadelphians learned how to manage the fever, cleanse the city, and grow once more from the decay. However, the fever instilled a somber sense of mortality as well as emotional and religious piety throughout the population. The once lively, thriving, young capital quickly donned a mask of somber morbidity.

To understand the daunting task facing the physicians of the eighteenth century, one should know that while there is a vaccination today, there is still no specific treatment for yellow fever. It is a virus transferred by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. After being bitten by the infected insect, one starts the three terrible stages of yellow fever, beginning with three to six days of the infection stage. During this time, the victim experiences extreme headaches, fever, lower back pain, nausea, dizziness, malaise, yellowing of the eyes, and discoloration of the tongue. After

this stage comes the period of remission, which lasts anywhere from two hours to two days. The fever subsides and the symptoms abate. Many will go on to complete recovery after this phase, but for fifteen to twenty-five percent of people affected, the period of intoxication follows. For three to eight days temperatures spike once more, jaundice turns the victim a sickly shade of yellow, and hemorrhaging causes blood to ooze from his or her orifices. The victim expulses black vomit thick with blood, has kidney failure, and eventually reaches a stupor and coma.[1] It is an incredibly intimidating virus to fight today, and was all the more disheartening for the people of Philadelphia in 1793.

Scholarly medicine at the end of the eighteenth century was little more than folk medicine combined with sophisticated vocabulary and complex theoretical justification. The theory of humoral physiology proposed by Greek philosophers and used since the Middle Ages still dominated medical thought. This theory put forth that bodily health was a result of a proper balance of the four humors: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. There were many different schools of thought that debated how to balance these humors, and therefore the medical community was greatly lacking in unity. William Cullen, a teacher of the eminent Dr. Benjamin Rush, revolutionized medicine by speculating that the nervous system was the source of all life. All disease and bodily failures were the result of either the exaggeration or weakness of all nervous system functions. [2] While these modes of thought gave directions as to how to cure illness, they did not help the medical community agree upon nosology, or the systematic classification of diseases. Doctors sought to classify all illnesses into classes, genera, and species according to superficial symptoms. Therefore, a slight difference in symptom created an entirely new malady.

---

[1] Thomas P. Monath, "Yellow Fever: An Update," *The Lancet: Infectious Diseases* 1, no. 1 (13 September 2001): 1.
[2] Mark Workmen, "Medical Practice in Philadelphia at the Time of the Yellow Fever Epidemic, 1793," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 27, no. 4 (1978): 33-39.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, however, believed that all sickness had a common cause and that classification was not therefore as important as treatment. A highly political figure, Rush was the premier physician in Philadelphia. He had represented Pennsylvania in the Continental Congress and had also signed the Declaration of Independence. After his involvement in the Congress, he was commissioned surgeon general of the Middle Department of the Continental Army. He did not hold this post for long, however, as he was greatly outraged by the disorganization and corruption plaguing army hospitals. He resigned from the army and returned to Philadelphia for his practice and professorship at the University of the State of Pennsylvania.[3] Here, Rush conceptualized his beliefs drawn from Cullen's work and began his practice of "heroic" medicine, so named because of its domineering style of treatment.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia, the newly formed nation's capital, was in the midst of political crises. Tension rose between Republicans and Federalists after Britain's declaration of war against revolutionary France. The Republicans wanted to offer aid to France, as France's political ideals seemed similar to their own, whereas the Federalists felt Britain was standing against revolutionary anarchy. The capital thus became sharply divided by partisan politics.[4]

Otherwise, Philadelphia was the nation's largest and most cosmopolitan city, boasting a population of over 40,000 people.[5] Spring came early and was uncommonly wet in 1793. Relentless rain caused streams to overflow and to create new marshes and swamps in the lowlands. Then summer arrived extremely hot and arid, causing many of the rivers and streams to dry up, leaving behind stagnant pools, the perfect breeding ground for death. In July, fleets of ships containing refugees from Santo Domingo (now Haiti) unloaded in the harbors of Philadelphia. They brought news of revolution in the sugar plantations, and of carnage, warfare,

[3] Robert B. Sullivan, "Rush, Benjamin," *American National Biography Online* (February 2010): 1.
[4] Larry Gragg, "'A Most Critical Time': Philadelphia in 1793," *History Today* 29, no. 2 (1979): 80-87.
[5] Eric Niderost, "Capital in Crisis 1793," *American History* 39, no. 3 (2004): 64-71.

and a pestilential fever that had ravaged their island.[6] They thought they had escaped Hell, but little did they know that they had brought it with them. Unbeknownst to them, they had carried the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito to Philadelphia, and with her, yellow fever.

Between mid-August and mid-November, an estimated 5,019 people died in the horrible epidemic.[7] The exact figures are uncertain, as it was the duty of residents to report deaths, and with entire families being wiped out as well as countless of the poor dying in the streets, many deaths may have gone unreported. While the disease killed indiscriminately, poor people seemed to die at greater rates than the privileged.[8] This was most likely because they spent more time outside, putting them at greater risk of being bitten, and because they could not afford to flee the city. However, many at the time believed that yellow fever was a plague sent to punish moral failings, and therefore found the poor more deserving of death. Others, such as citizen and writer Mathew Carey, thought that the poor's higher mortality was due to their "neglect of cleanliness and decency."[9] These were incredibly misguided views, however. Neither soap nor moral purity would have protected any of the citizenry from *Aedes aegypti.* Indeed, many upper-class Philadelphians fell victim, including the family of Dolley Payne Todd, who later became first lady Dolley Madison. She lost her first husband, the middle-class lawyer John Todd, and her five-month-old son, William Temple, in the same day to yellow fever. She fell ill herself but fortunately recovered, saying that the thought of Payne, her surviving child, gave her the will to live.[10]

---

[6] J.H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (New York: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 3-4.
[7] J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith, *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic* (Canton: College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1997), 166.
[8] *Ibid.*, 170.
[9] Mathew Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1793), 74.
[10] Eric Niderost, "Capital in Crisis 1793," *American History* 39, no. 3 (2004): 64-71.

Benjamin Rush lived down the street from the Todds, tirelessly seeking a cure for the malignant fever. For the first several weeks of the epidemic, the medical community fought over whether the pestilence was actually yellow fever or another malignant fever. When they finally reached the conclusion of yellow fever, they then became embroiled in a debate over its source. Rush asserted that the atmosphere was responsible. He therefore blamed the "putrid exhalations" emanating from shipments of spoiled coffee that were left behind on Water Street near the Delaware River, where the outbreak appeared to originate.[11] With new cases presenting themselves at his doorstep at an alarming rate, and with no clue as to how to treat them, Rush fearfully offered only these words of wisdom: "Fly from it."[12] Most of those who were able to take his advice did so. Religious leaders, public administrators, doctors, key politicians, and George Washington himself fled the city. They had little choice. Almost half of the population of Philadelphia left,[13] the federal government came to a standstill, and infrastructure within the capital halted.[14] The people continued to get sick.

The doctors were beside themselves. No treatment they attempted appeared to have any effect. Still, Rush refused to believe that the disease could not be cured. Although his religious allegiances had been erratic, he had always been a staunchly pious man.[15] He was convinced that Divine Providence had not failed to provide a cure for every illness, and so he fervently threw himself into his books in search of an answer.[16] Eventually, he discovered an intriguing source: a letter written by Doctor John Mitchell of Virginia in 1741. After examining the corpses of people

---

[11] Powell, 37-46.
[12] *Ibid*., 50.
[13]Robert B. Sullivan, "Sanguine Practices: A Historical and Historiographic Reconsideration of Heroic Therapy in the Age of Rush," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 68, no. 2 (1994): 218.
[14] Powell, 110-115.
[15] *Ibid*., 133.
[16] Benjamin Rush, *An Account of the Bilious Remitting Fever, as It Appeared in the City of Philadelphia in the Year 1793* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1794),196–97.

who died of yellow fever, Mitchell noted that the abdominal viscera were filled with blood. It appeared that the body was packed with vicious humors, and the only way to stabilize it was to evacuate the offensive matter.[17] Rush was deeply inspired and his imagination piqued. Thus began the practice of heroic therapy in the treatment of yellow fever. For years, doctors had perceived themselves as assistants to nature, but what Mitchell had suggested was not only to ignore nature, but to overpower it. They had been attempting to strengthen and restore their patients, yet the patients were dying in spite of their best efforts. Instead, it appeared that the best method was to weaken the patient in order to weaken the disease; to dominate nature in order to bend her to one's own will. Purging appeared to be the answer.[18]

Rush's treatment—excessive purgation and venesection, or bloodletting—was incredibly controversial. He started by offering fifteen grains of jalap, the tuberous root of a plant in the morning glory family, and ten grains of calomel, a tasteless mercurial powder, to his patients. Both functioned as toxically aggressive cathartics. After purging their systems, patients were then subjected to copious amounts of bloodletting.[19] Quite regrettably, Rush was under the impression that the human body contained somewhere between twenty-five and twenty-eight pounds of blood—almost double the actual amount. He also told his students that they could safely remove four-fifths of the twenty-five pounds of a patients' blood, which in actuality was more than human adults even had.[20] It is very likely that his treatments were the cause of many deaths of his patients. However, his method appeared to work in some way. Rush joyfully reported that his technique "perfectly cured" four out of five patients. He began sharing his discovery with other doctors. Many physicians were captivated by what seemed to be an

[17] Paul E. Kopperman, "'Venerate the Lancet': Benjamin Rush's Yellow Fever Therapy in Context," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78, no. 3 (2004): 542.
[18] Powell, 81.
[19] Sullivan, "Sanguine Practices", 218.
[20] Kopperman, 551.

innovative new principle in medicine. With confidence, Rush offered a popular, new remedy to the citizens who were undoubtedly on the verge of hopelessness. The unfaltering resolution behind his ideas must have brought a ray of hope to the despairing city.

The method was not without opposition; in fact, a great number of doctors recoiled with aversion, calling his use of the purgatives "a murderous dose."[21] There were five leading doctors who rivaled Rush: Dr. Adam Kuhn, Dr. William Currie, Dr. Jean Deveze, Dr. David Nassy, and Dr. Edward Stevens. In general, these doctors offered mild treatments, contrasting with Rush's heroic approach, and followed a gentle or natural school of thought. Rather than attempting to dominate the fever, their treatments consisted of feeding their patients a mild diet of fruits and vegetables, chamomile tea, salts, and tree bark; giving them cold baths; and keeping them in fresh air.[22]

Unfortunately, the public was caught in the midst of a mêlée within the medical community. As Dr. Robinson of Washington State University noted, "Dr. Rush truly embodied all contradictions of the early republic: He was an iconoclastic crusader whose many reform efforts all too often ended in ridicule or bitter public battles."[23] Benjamin Rush viewed his challengers with extreme distaste, seeing their resistance as nothing other than unenlightened self-interest.[24] Indeed the opposing viewpoints were not particularly civil, and the physicians refused to collaborate with one another, adding to the chaos. However, little else could be expected. Medicine was a competitive practice at the time. There was no single accepted medical system, and different physicians therefore warred with each other over theory. It is no wonder

---

[21] Powell, 83-84.
[22] Arthur Thomas Robinson, "The Third Horseman of the Apocalypse: A Multi-disciplinary Social History of the 1793 Yellow Fever Epidemic in Philadelphia" (Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 1993), 300-314.
[23] *Ibid*., 8.
[24] Eve Kornfeld, "Crisis in the Capital: The Cultural Significance of Philadelphia's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic," *Pennsylvania History* 51, no. 3 (1984): 197.

that the physicians of Philadelphia lacked unified direction.[25] The five opposing physicians were correct in assuming that Rush's treatment was murderous, but it is likely that the people were running out of energy and needing to focus on something that gave the semblance of progress. As the disease ravaged the city with near apocalyptic vigor, they sought something more than just "gentle" opposition. They needed a champion, and Rush was their man, there to encourage heroic therapy.

As soon as hope reappeared, it was time for the panicking and flight to cease. Rush begged people to stop abandoning the city and remain to offer aid to those who had fallen ill. He quickly turned to the African-American community, especially the Free African Society led by Methodist Reverends Richard Allen and Absalom Jones.[26] He was under the mistaken impression that people of color could not catch yellow fever. In fact, they did experience lower death rates compared to European-Americans, perhaps due to some innate resistance resulting from their origins.[27] By mid-September, however, Rush was forced to abandon these false beliefs as African-Americans started becoming infected.[28] Yet the African-American community largely remained in the city and continued their valiant efforts, as encouraged by Allen and Jones. Whereas one out of every four Europeans fled the city, only one out of every ten African Americans left. [29]

Both Allen and Jones were born into slavery and took the long, arduous route of purchasing their own freedom. Jones had learned to read and write while still a slave, and somehow found time to attend night school. After buying his wife's freedom and a home, at the

[25]Robinson, 244.
[26]Powell, 100-03.
[27] While some were born in the South, the majority of black people in Philadelphia were born in Africa or the Caribbean where yellow fever was more common. Therefore, they were more likely to have immunity due to previous exposure. See Powell, 102.
[28] *Ibid*., 105.
[29]Estes, 167.

age of thirty-eight, he bought his freedom. Allen made his way through the world with the sheer strength and beauty of his spiritual force. He began preaching Methodism to blacks and whites alike at the age of seventeen, learned to read and write, and like Jones, purchased his freedom. At twenty-six, he came to Philadelphia and began preaching at St. George's Methodist Church. There, he and Jones founded the Free African Society, and quickly grew famous for their piety, honesty, and ability.[30] When approached by Rush on September 5, Allen and Jones immediately set about finding members of their community to help. Eager to take an opportunity to forge fresh bonds between members of their race and the larger community, they supplied nurses on demand and hired five men to gather the dead and see to their internment.[31] Rush even trained Allen, Jones, and a man named Billy Grey to bleed and administer treatments. Whatever time they could spare from carrying the dead, they spent visiting the sick, helping to bleed over eight hundred people according to Rush's prescriptions.

Yet, African-Americans were still deemed as predatory by Philadelphian media. It appeared that "no conduct, however heroic, could expiate the original sin of a dark skin."[32] Doctors opposed to Rush's treatments attacked African Americans for practicing his cure, and many citizens accused them of profiteering, plundering, and extorting the ill. One such accuser was Mathew Carey, with whom Jones and Allen later engaged in a written dispute. Carey was a Philadelphian printer who produced one of the most popular pamphlets during the crisis, which went through four revisions between November 14 and December 20. He minimized the efforts of the African-American community based on the assumption that they had a complete immunity

[30]Powell, 101-03.
[31] Thomas E. Will, "Liberalism, Republicanism, and Philadelphia's Black Elite in the Early Republic; The Social Thought of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen," *Pennsylvania History* 69, no. 4 (January 2002): 558.
[32] Powell, 104.

to the virus.[33] He went on to accuse them of extortion, saying, "The great demand for nurses afforded an opportunity for imposition, which was eagerly seized by some of the vilest of blacks…Some of them were even detected in plundering the houses of the sick."[34] Jones and Allen did not take this accusation lightly, responding with their own pamphlet entitled, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in the Year 1793*. In it, they identified many examples of African-American heroism throughout the epidemic, and gave a list of incomes procured and expenses incurred. Contrary to Carey's accusations, the Free African Society actually reported a net loss rather than a gain. For their services, including burying the dead and their beds, they received a total of £233.10. For the procurement of coffins, as well as the expenses of hiring hands, they spent £411. This left them a net loss of £177.90.[35] Despite their tireless efforts and investments, their hopes of creating bonds between races were nullified in the public eye. Instead, they pleaded to other free Africans-Americans, even in their miserable conditions, to continue to do selfless good works in the name of an all-seeing God. They begged that their dispiriting situation not discourage others, but inspire other people of color to carry on their efforts for the betterment of black people throughout the United States.[36] The last thing they wanted was for anyone to affirm Carey's attacks.

Despite his defaming comments, Mathew Carey left one of the most complete accounts of the epidemic. His pamphlet gave an excellent depiction of the proceedings within the city after the majority of its people had fled. On September 10, Mayor Mathew Clarkson beseeched the remaining citizenry to stay behind. By September 12, a meeting was held and a committee of ten

---

[33] Will, 565.
[34] Carey, 78.
[35] Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in the Year 1793, and a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown Upon Them in Some Late Publications* (Philadelphia: Independence National Historical Park, 1993), 4-6.
[36] *Ibid*., 26-27.

men were appointed to organize assistance for the ill and poor: Israel Israel, Samuel Wetherhill, Thomas Wistar, Andrew Agate, Caleb Lownes, Henry Deforest, Thomas Peters, Joseph Inskeep, Stephan Girard, and John Mason. With the government having vacated the city, these men were all that remained of an organized infrastructure. The first item on their agenda was the reform of Bush Hill, the hospital in charge of attending the sick.[37] It was overcrowded and understaffed, but Girard and Mason managed to restore order to the dreaded place. The city slowly began to put itself back together piece by piece.

Meanwhile, those that fled encountered their own problems. The majority had escaped to the Pennsylvanian countryside, but such an act was not met without conflict. New York and other nearby cities hired guards to keep people from Philadelphia out. Many were forced into quarantine or strictly denied admittance.[38] They were not even welcome to return to their homes. The committee asked that those who had fled not return to the filthy city until the fever was cleansed. They came back anyway, causing people to fear that cases would increase again. Therefore, on November 15, the committee resolved that all of the houses and stores in areas where yellow fever prevailed be aired, limed, and purified. If citizens did not comply, they could be tried for endangering the public welfare. The people came flocking back, since Governor Mifflin had returned the day beforehand. He proclaimed that God had put an end to the calamity, and that it was the duty of those who had survived to express penitence, submission, and gratitude for divine mercy. He named December 12 a day of thanksgiving and prayer. [39] Throughout the nation, cities and towns therefore fasted and prayed.

A massive outburst of piety followed the epidemic. Religious activity had suffered quite a blow during the worst months. Like doctors, prostitutes, servants, and the poor, the clergy had

[37] Carey, 40-50.
[38] *Ibid*., 62-64.
[39] *Ibid*., 52-54.

suffered an alarming mortality rate. A reverend had passed on from each of the Protestant Episcopal, German Reformed, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches. Two Roman Catholic priests died, and the Society of Friends lost four noted preachers. Another seven clergymen had fallen ill, but recovered.[40] Those who had attempted to hold a congregation were scorned. As people crowded the churches, they were considered to have endangered the public welfare by coming together and spreading contagion.

In other parts of the country, congregations preached against the shortcomings of Philadelphia that had led her to the calamity. Reverend J. Helmuth of the German Lutheran Congregation in New York published a sermon which identified the pestilence as a sign of God's wrath. According to him, the fever was a just and deserved punishment from God, due to several mistakes on Philadelphia's part. Its citizens' love of luxury and theatre had led them to withhold wealth that should have been spent on widows and orphans, and they had broken the Sabbath. Analysis of those greatest affected seemed to prove it was God's wrath, as yellow fever mostly preyed on gluttons, drunkards, and rambunctious youth according to his account. They needed punishment. Indeed it had been a merry, sinful summer, which had led to a wicked autumn. He urged his congregation that salvation was in their own hands, and that they should act with piety if they cared for their souls.[41] His attitudes were mirrored by John Mitchell Mason in his sermon before the Scotch Presbyterian Church in New York City, in which he entreated the people to prostrate themselves before God's wrath and beg for mercy for their sins.[42]

---

[40] *Ibid*., 75-76.
[41] J. Henry C. Helmuth, *A Short Account of the Yellow Fever in Philadelphia for the Reflecting Christian* (Philadelphia: Jones, Hoff, & Derrick, 1795), 10-19.
[42] John Mitchell Mason, "A Sermon Preached September 20, 1793; A Day Set Apart, in the City of New York for Public Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, on Account of a Malignant and Mortal Fever Prevailing in the City of Philadelphia" (New York: Samuel Loudon & Son, 1793), 6-10.

A shadow had fallen over the citizenry. They were told that emotional outburst increased the likelihood of infection. In Dr. Rush's *Observations*, he stressed the importance of a meager diet and rigorous self-control in preventing the fever.[43] Throughout the early modern period, disease was considered a product of sin, and was therefore considered as much a religious concern as a medical one. As the population witnessed the wrath of God felling many people who they knew and loved, the community underwent a heartrending transformation. While the medical community repeatedly stressed the importance of moderating one's passions—especially anger, fear, greed, grief, and pride—they also encouraged the suppression of extreme love and joy.[44] So the people developed into a populace of introverts. As their city fell into shambles, inhabitants focused a large amount of their energy on containing their fear. When their loved ones died, they stifled their grief. Only when the disease had them in its grasp was it finally acceptable to express negative emotions. Like zombies, the infected lost themselves in fits of madness. One Philadelphian merchant, Samuel Breck, wrote that "the burning fever occasioned paroxysms of rage which drove the patient naked from his bed to the street, and in some instances to the river, where he was drowned. Insanity was often the last stage of its horrors."[45]

Despair riddled the residents of Philadelphia, but they dared not show it. Fearing for their lives, they hid their true countenances behind a mask of moderation and eerie stability. This sentiment was well described by victim Isaac Heston, a member of the Religious Society of Friends, in a letter to his brother on September 19. In it he described the calamitous state of Philadelphia, as everyone was "a Dieing on our right hand and on our Left." He listed the

---

[43] Benjamin Rush, *Observations Upon the Origin of the Malignant Bilious, or Yellow Fever in Philadelphia and Upon the Means of Preventing it: Addressed to the Citizens of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson 1799), 27-28.
[44] Jacquelyn C. Miller, "An 'Uncommon Tranquility of Mind': Emotional Self-Control and the Construction of a Middle-Class Identity in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 1 (1996): 131.
[45] Powell, 184.

numbers of the dead and the location of their burial plots, and he praised the Negroes, for he did not know what the people would have done without them. After he recounted a particularly tragic story of a widowed daughter who sought her father's comfort only to be locked out of her family's home upon suspicion of harboring contagion, Heston's tone changed entirely. He said the lack of duty from father to daughter made his blood run cold, and caused him to disavow every show of religion "as only a cloak to hide the heart of a viper."[46] The epidemic took not only countless lives, but people's sense of humanity as well. People became mere shades of human beings, withholding tenderness, emotion, and compassion for survival's sake. Heston himself perished ten days after writing the letter and was interred along with ten others in the Quaker plot at Third and Arch Streets on September 29.

As Carey presented, "The whole of this disorder, from its first appearance to its final close, has set human wisdom and calculation at a defiance."[47] While it is entirely true that the epidemic caused economic, social, and political chaos, the city gained from the experience in some ways. For instance, due to the epidemic, Philadelphia formed the nation's first Board of Health. Health regulation had never been part of the government's concern before 1793, but the formation of this board set the precedent for emphasis on the "collective good" of society. Health policies were instituted in Philadelphia that other cities would not establish for another fifty years. Quarantine laws were strengthened and hospitals improved. Plans for tent cities were established if the public was ever encouraged to flee again. Waste collection and public sanitation became a crucial concern, and a desire for a clean water supply led the city to construct a new pumping station for fresh water. The disease even spurred the disarrayed

[46] Edwin B. Bronner, "Letter From a Yellow Fever Victim: Philadelphia 1793," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 86, no. 2 (Jan. 1, 1962): 204-207.
[47] Carey, 61.

medical community to move towards unity and towards the use of scientific understandings rather than the previous method of competing logics.[48]

After such extreme losses, Philadelphia still managed to survive and thrive as the capital of the United States of America. Although the medical community had been embroiled in dispute, the epidemic had been an educating, albeit humbling, experience. Heroic therapy would become a uniquely American practice, despite its faults. Outbreaks would ensue in the following years, but Philadelphia was more prepared for the challenge when it returned. The Free African Society did not immediately forge the bonds between races that they had hoped to create, but it is unlikely that all of their sacrifices went unnoticed. It is impossible to tell how long the mask of somber humility the citizenry had assumed remained, but it certainly did not hinder the city's ability to revitalize itself after the adversity had passed.

[48] Taylor P. Sean, "We Live in the Midst of Death: Yellow Fever, Moral Economy, and Public Health in Philadelphia 1793-1805" (Ph.D. diss., Northern Illinois University, 2001).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bronner, Edwin B. “Letter From a Yellow Fever Victim: Philadelphia 1793.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 86, no. 2 (Jan. 1, 1962): 204-207.

Carey, Mathew. *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1793.

Helmuth, J. Henry C. *A Short Account of the Yellow Fever in Philadelphia for the Reflecting Christian*. Philadelphia: Jones, Hoff, & Derrick, 1795.

Jones, Absalom, and Richard Allen. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in the Year 1793, and a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown Upon Them in Some Late Publications*. Philadelphia: Independence National Historical Park, 1993.

Mason, John Mitchell Mason. “A Sermon Preached September 20, 1793; A Day Set Apart, in the City of New York for Public Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, on Account of a Malignant and Mortal Fever Prevailing in the City of Philadelphia” New York: Samuel Loudon & Son, 1793.

Rush, Benjamin. *An Account of the Bilious Remitting Fever, as It Appeared in the City of Philadelphia in the Year 1793*. Philadelphia: Dobson, 1794.

Rush, Benjamin. *Observations Upon the Origin of the Malignant Bilious, or Yellow Fever in Philadelphia and Upon the Means of Preventing it: Addressed to the Citizens of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1799.

Secondary Sources:

Estes, J. Worth, and Billy G. Smith. *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Canton: College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1997.

Gragg, Larry. “'A Most Critical Time': Philadelphia in 1793.” *History Today* 29, no. 2 (1979): 80-87. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=A000148358.01&site=ehost-live&scope=site (accessed April 21, 2010).

Kopperman, Paul E. "'Venerate the Lancet': Benjamin Rush's Yellow Fever Therapy in Context." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78, no. 3 (2004): 539-74. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=A000561031.01&site=ehost-live&scope=site (accessed April 21, 2010).

Kornfeld, Eve. "Crisis in the Capital: The Cultural Significance of Philadelphia's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic." *Pennsylvania History* 51, no. 3 (1984): 189-205. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=A000229742.01&site=ehost-live&scope=site (accessed April 21, 2010).

Miller, Jacquelyn C. "An 'Uncommon Tranquility of Mind': Emotional Self-Control and the Construction of a Middle-Class Identity in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia." *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 1 (1996): 129-47. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=A000422010.01&site=ehost-live&scope=site (accessed April 21, 2010).

Monath, Thomas P. "Yellow Fever: An Update." *The Lancet: Infectious Diseases* 1, no. 1 (13 September 2001): 11-20. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6W8X-43YY2JC-J&_user=650596&_coverDate=08%2F31%2F2001&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_searchStrId=1265980782&_rerunOrigin=scholar.google&_acct=C000035098&_version=1&_urlV (accessed April 21, 2010).

Niderost, Eric. "Capital in Crisis 1793." *American History* 39, no. 3 (2004): 64-71. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=A000557000.01&site=ehost-live&scope=site (accessed April 20, 2010).

Powell, J.H. *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793*. New York: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970.

Robinson, Arthur Thomas. "The Third Horseman of the Apocalypse: A Multi-disciplinary Social History of the 1793 Yellow Fever Epidemic in Philadelphia." Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 1993. In ProQuest, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=746003821&SrchMode=2&sid=1&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1268751738&clientId=50078 (accessed April 20, 2010).

Sean, Taylor P. "We Live in the Midst of Death: Yellow Fever, Moral Economy, and Public Health in Philadelphia 1793-1805." Ph.D. diss., Northern Illinois University, 2001. In ProQuest, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=3&did=728928621&SrchMode=1&sid=2&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1268751939&clientId=50078 (accessed April 20, 2010).

Sullivan, Robert B. “Rush, Benjamin.” American National Biography Online. http://www.anb.org/articles/15/15-00926.html (accessed April 21, 2010).

Sullivan, Robert B. “Sanguine Practices: A Historical and Historiographic Reconsideration of Heroic Therapy in the Age of Rush.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 69, no. 2 (1994): 211-34.

Will, Thomas E. “Liberalism, Republicanism, and Philadelphia's Black Elite in the Early Republic; The Social Thought of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen.” *Pennsylvania History* 69, no. 4 (January 2002): 558-76.

Workmen, Mark. “Medical Practice in Philadelphia at the Time of the Yellow Fever Epidemic, 1793.” *Pennsylvania Folklife* 27, no. 4 (1978): 33-39.

A Golden Myth: The Truth Behind California's Gold Rush

Eric Rapps
McGill University

The California Gold Rush of 1848 was one of the most transformational events in American history. In terms of America's demographics, California became one of the most attractive destinations for Chinese, French, and Latin American immigrants, in addition to the 250,000 American migrants who moved there in search of gold.[1] The abundance of gold in California and the economic contribution that gold mining made to the American economy in the second half of the nineteenth century were the main reasons why California earned statehood after only three years as a territory.[2] From a social history perspective, Californians developed an identity based on materialism because their sole motivation for moving out west had been to get rich off of gold—the ultimate symbol of wealth.[3] However, popular romanticism of the Gold Rush overlooks the environmental impacts of the event. Not only did the hydraulic mining associated with the Gold Rush destroy some of California's most important water sources, but the mining and dredging that went along with it led to the deforestation of significant portions of California's landscape as well. While it seemed that America's major corporations at the time were willing to sacrifice the environment for financial gain, the Southern Pacific Transportation Company played an important role in promoting environmental regulations. It was largely thanks to their activism that the federal government adopted legislation to preserve sites like Yosemite, Sequoia, and the Sierra National Forest, which successfully prevented mining companies from further damaging California's landscape.

Throughout the Gold Rush, mining companies experimented with different types of mining, including river mining, lode mining, and dredging, but no method had more profound

---

[1] H.W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 193.
[2] Clark Spence, "The Golden Age of Dredging: The Development of an Industry and Its Environmental Impact," *Western Historical Quarterly* (1980), 401-414.
[3] Robert Dawson and Gray Brechin, *Farewell, Promised Land: Waking From the California Dream* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 46-47.

effects on California's rivers than did hydraulic mining. Equally disastrous was the increase in tensions that hydraulic mining caused between Californian farmers and miners supported by America's major mining corporations. In the initial stages of the Gold Rush, argonauts—people who moved to California in search of gold—correctly assumed that water carried gold, and subsequently mined along rivers.[4] Once the first wave of gold rushers explored all the land along water currents, the second generation of argonauts faced a much greater task in excavating the dry land located farther away from water currents. Therefore, they decided to practice river mining, a type of mining that involved ditching, damming, and manipulating streams in other ways to elevate sand bars and access the rocks and soil of the riverbed.[5] As the Gold Rush progressed, advanced mining techniques were introduced, and in 1853 hydraulic mining became the predominant type of mining throughout California. Hydraulic mining used the erosive power of water to penetrate bedrocks, which facilitated the digging stage.[6] It accomplished in minutes what it would have taken multiple workers several weeks to remove.[7]

However, the water pressure was so powerful that entire mountainsides broke loose, causing debris flows and flooding in the towns located below the mountains where hydraulic mining was practiced.[8] Prior to hydraulic mining, the Yuba River, which runs from the Sacramento Valley to Feather River in Marysville (the middle region of California), had steep banks ranging on average between 15-209 feet high, depending on the seasonal water level. The land located along the Yuba River consisted of black alluvial soil where, as one judge characterized it at the time, "some of the finest farms, orchards, and vineyards in the state" were

[4] Brands, 220-221.
[5] *Ibid*., 222-225.
[6] "A Great Gravel Mine," *The Daily Transcript*, Nevada City, CA, July 30, 1879.
[7] Brands, 227-228.
[8] Carolyn Merchant, ed., *Green Versus Gold: Sources in California's Environmental History* (USA: Island Press, 1998), 112.

located.[9] However, once miners began practicing hydraulic mining, runoff filled the Yuba River with soil up to 25 feet high, destroying the previously rich land with sand and mining debris. Consequently, farmers were forced to abandon their farms and search for new plots of land that would yield sufficient amounts of produce to ensure their subsistence. Moreover, the water from the Yuba River became useless for irrigation because it was filled with clumps of debris and sand.[10] From 1843 to 1913, 600 million cubic yards of mining debris were deposited in the river. The inordinate amount of debris altered streams by cutting new channels, creating sandbars and islands, and causing severe flooding. "Floods have always been a normal periodical natural phenomenon of the California rivers," geographer Randall Rohe has noted. "Mining debris, however, exaggerated flooding on the lower rivers. The periodicity, the destructiveness, and the area of inundation all increased."[11]

It was at this point when tensions between miners and farmers intensified. Miners in the Sierra Nevada formed the Hydraulic Miners Association and farmers formed the Anti-Debris Association of the Sacramento Valley.[12] Their antagonistic relationship is a clear illustration of the interconnection between the environment, American industry (in this case, gold mining), and social coherence. To appease both sides the State Engineer proposed a solution in which the North Bloomfield Mining and Gravel Company was to build dams around the north bank of the Yuba River to hold the debris, and farmers were to build levees to constrict rivers. The State Engineer's recommendations were entrenched in the Drainage Act of 1880.[13] While the problem appeared to be resolved, the dams eventually overflowed with debris that continued to fall into

[9] Judge Lorenzo Sawyer, "Woodruff versus North Bloomfield Gravel and Mining Co.: The Sawyer Decision of 1884," *The Federal Reporter* (1884).
[10] *Ibid*., 753-818.
[11] Randall Rohe, "Man as Geomorphic Agent: Hydraulic Mining in the American West," *Pacific Historian* (1983): 14.
[12] Robert Kelly, "The Mining Debris Controversy in the Sacramento Valley," *Pacific Historical Review* (1956): 341-342.
[13] Kelly, 341-345.

the Yuba River, damaging farmers' land. Even worse, excessive rainfall broke the levees and resulted in mass flooding throughout Marysville.[14]

To protect their property, Marysville farmers rallied behind a local farmer named Edward Woodruff and filed a lawsuit against the North Bloomfield Mining and Gravel Company in 1882. In *Woodruff v. North Bloomfield Mining and Gravel Co.*, the defendants argued that upon admitting California to the Union, Congress authorized "the use of the navigable waters of the Sacramento and Feather Rivers for the flow and deposit of mining debris."[15] However, Judge Lorenzo Sawyer of the U.S. Circuit Court ruled that mining companies were not permitted to "mine in such a manner as to destroy or injure the property of others, even in the district or diggings where the local customs and usages of miners are sanctioned by the statutes."[16] Judge Sawyer's famous ruling officially ended hydraulic mining in the Sacramento Valley.

To understand the magnitude of Judge Sawyer's ruling, it is necessary to look at its national implications. Sawyer's ruling went beyond protecting Californians' property from the destructive effects of gold mining, a regionally myopic view; it was a fundamental departure from East Coast adjudication that served the best interests of the corporation rather than the individual. For example, from 1850 to 1870 a New Hampshire-based waterpower company named Lake Company won all five of its lawsuits against individuals claiming that their property rights (farmland and use of water) were damaged as a result of Lake Company's damming and milling.[17] Environmental historian Ted Steinberg explains the harmonization of adjudication and corporations' interests when he states, "In all, they [eastern water law cases] were part of that new corpus of water law emerging after 1850, a flexible body of ideas more consistent with

[14] Sawyer, 770-818.
[15] *Ibid*., 786.
[16] *Ibid*., 802.
[17] Sawyer, 156-162.

economic development."[18] Judge Sawyer's ruling in *Woodruff vs. North Bloomfield Mining and Gravel Co.* not only defended the individual against industrial capitalists, it also established precedent for how Californians, and to a certain extent all Americans, should treat their environment.

What hydraulicking and other forms of mining had in common, besides their detrimental impact on the environment, was that they required large amounts of timber to fuel mining machinery. Miners converted oak, juniper wood, pinyon pine, and mountain mahogany into charcoal to fuel machinery, and in the case of lode mining, to fuel stamp mills and smelters. The problem was that lumber had always been scarce in California, even prior to the Gold Rush.[19] Yet, when nearby sources of lumber were depleted, miners did not question how their quest for gold and wealth was transforming their landscape. Instead, they traveled as far as was necessary in their search for more lumber. In Comstock, Nevada, the sight of one of the first major ore discoveries in the U.S. (located along the eastern slope of Mount Davidson), lumber became so scarce that American and Chinese laborers had to travel over 20 miles to the Carson River and the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada to cut wood. In an average season, woodcutters sent more than 150,000 cords of wood floating down the Carson River. Over a thirty-year period, the Comstock Lode consumed more than 800 million feet of lumber.[20] Essentially, the Gold Rush drastically accelerated the rate at which miners deforested California.

Whereas various types of mining were similar in that they required timber for fuel and construction purposes, they differed in the degree to which they otherwise affected vegetation. The quality of the soil on which mining was practiced also influenced whether or not an area

---

[18] Theodore Steinberg, *Nature Incorporated: Industrialization and the Waters of New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 156.
[19] Randall Rohe, "Man and the Land: Mining's Impact in the Far West," *Arizona and the West* (1986): 300-319.
[20] Rohe, "Man and the Land: Mining's Impact in the Far West," 310-338.

fully returned to its pre-mining conditions. For instance, Clark Spence, an expert in western and mining history, has found that dredging for gold spoiled fertile farmland, prevented animals from grazing, and caused phylloxera throughout California's vineyards.[21] However, Rohe argues that within 50 years after dredging halted near Hornitos the land was overgrown with grass. Similarly, once dredging ended south of Jacksonville (California), an abundance of digger pine, scrub oak, and berry vines sprung up.[22]

Unlike the impact of dredging, there is greater consensus among environmental historians on hydraulic mining's effect on vegetation. As a result of hydraulicking, landscapes in Columbia and Springfield, California, were unrecognizable, as large masses of white limestone covered the soil and mountains.[23] As several nineteenth-century observers of hydraulic mining commented, "Certainly by no other means does man more completely change the face of nature than by this method of hydraulic mining. Hills melt away and disappear under its influence… The desolation which remains…is remediless and appalling."[24] While these comments clearly confirm hydraulicking's baneful ecological consequences, they also reveal that there were Californians sympathetic to the degradation of the area's landscape.

It is misleading to assume that Californians and all major corporations that conducted business in California were blinded by their pursuit of wealth to such an extent that they neglected the environmental damage of their actions. Obviously, agriculturalists living in California during the Gold Rush were more conscious of the effects of gold mining than argonauts, since agriculturalists' livelihoods were fundamentally transformed as a result of the

---

[21] Phylloxera is a plant disease in which insects feed off of the roots and leaves of grapevines, resulting in deformations to the roots of grapevines, and consequently blocking the flow of water from the root to the rest of the vine. See Spence, 401-414.
[22] Rohe, "Man and the Land: Mining's Impact in the Far West," 320-334.
[23] Rohe, "Man as Geomorphic Agent," 11.
[24] *Ibid*., 5-9.

ecological damage caused by mining. However, a minority of miners recognized that their gold-seeking endeavors were altering California's landscape in ways unseen in the history of the American West. Ironically, towards the end of the nineteenth century, miners tried to restore California's terrain and save it from further erosion by adopting new mining techniques and equipment that were popular in New Zealand. These new techniques kept the ground level and its soil on top, thereby preserving the fertility of the land. Additionally, New Zealand-imported sluices, suction machinery, and sand pumps were used. Ultimately, the New Zealand style of mining proved practically ineffective. Nonetheless, Californian gold miners' willingness to adopt new mining techniques for the preservation of California's agriculture proves that there was a legitimate concern among Californians to safeguard their environment from the wounds that their mining inflicted.[25]

No person, politician, or company did more to protect California's environment than the Southern Pacific Transportation Company. In understanding the role of the Southern Pacific as an agent for conservation and preservation it is necessary to distinguish between the contributions made by the company, and those made by prominent environmentalists such as George Perkins Marsh, Gifford Pinchot, and John Muir. At their inception, both conservation and preservation lacked widespread appeal, and as a result Marsh, Pinchot, and Muir, the intellectuals of these movements, allied with politically influential groups to bring about the changes that they advocated. Southern Pacific was one such group.[26] For instance, as a result of California's deforestation (caused by the need for lumber to fuel mining machinery), flammable dry underbrush grew in the place of forests, which made wildfires more prevalent and destructive. Working in conjunction with Nevada Senator William Stewart, Southern Pacific's

[25] Spence, 408-414.
[26] Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West: 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 349-352.

Land Agent William H. Mills lobbied for the creation of a national park at Lake Tahoe and the preservation of Lake Tahoe's forests. Mills' efforts paid off in 1899 when President McKinley established the Lake Tahoe Forest Reserve.[27] Mills, working on behalf of the Southern Pacific, became instrumental in convincing Congress to pass the legislation that ultimately placed Yosemite, Sequoia, and the Sierra National Forest under the federal government's protection.[28]

However, it was not only Mills, the company's land agent, who supported environmental groups and their causes. Even the highest-ranking members of the company, its presidents and executives such as Leland Stanford and Charles Crocker, promoted agricultural development and a permanent end to gold mining. For example, Southern Pacific Vice-President, Chief Counsel, and Political Manager William F. Herrin worked with John Muir from 1904-1906 to persuade Congress to include Yosemite Valley as part of Yosemite National Park, and hence, under the federal government's ownership.[29]

What made Southern Pacific's environmental initiatives so surprising was the fact that in constructing the transcontinental railroad the company was responsible for "an unprecedented assault on natural ecological systems" as they damaged hills, blocked watercourses, and excavated sand.[30] Was the company's support of environmental organizations just a front—a type of repentance for the environmental destruction its own actions caused? Anti-corporatists might make that argument, but such an accusation is incorrect. Southern Pacific recognized that agriculture was the best way to develop the West. As Richard J. Orsi, author of *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West: 1850-1930*, states, "…the railroad's future depended on the replacement of mining and open-range livestock raising

[27] *Ibid*., 372.
[28] *Ibid*., 373.
[29] Orsi, 369.
[30] *Ibid*., 349.

with diversified farming as the basis for economic development…."[31] From this viewpoint critics of the company likely pointed out that there was no difference between Southern Pacific and mining companies such as North Bloomfield since they both relied on the environment for economic gain. However, mining companies *abused* California's ecology to generate higher revenues while the Gold Rush lasted; Southern Pacific *promoted* California's ecology because agriculture was the most efficient way to develop the West over the long-term. Moreover, as Southern Pacific executives realized, this development would attract more visitors to California, and they would undoubtedly use the railroad to get there.

But Southern Pacific was not only unique because it encouraged the American public, and state and federal governments, to reconsider how they used America's landscape; the company was distinguished because it represented California and the West's environmental interests at a time when corporations, primarily mining companies, had legal justification for abusing the environment. Orsi puts it best when he writes that "the hydraulic companies, aided especially by mining towns and the San Francisco business community, remained entrenched in the legislature and state courts, and almost all attempts to end, or even control, the debris went for naught…" Southern Pacific, on the other hand, "attacked hydraulic mining on environmental grounds that were surprisingly broad for the time."[32]

Reinterpreting the California Gold Rush from an environmental history perspective is thus significant for several reasons. First and foremost, it allows people to understand the extensive ecological consequences of gold mining. For example, over 10 million cubic meters of mining debris were dumped into the San Francisco Bay from 1853 to 1884, resulting in a drastic

[31] *Ibid*., 51.
[32] Orsi, 208-209.

decrease in the bay's salmon population.[33] Besides causing the reduction of fish in the Sacramento River and San Francisco Bay, hydraulic mining contaminated California's water with arsenic and mercury.[34] Secondly, retracing the Gold Rush helps explain 150 years of environmental damage in California that has required the state to implement clean air and water policies to this day. Lastly, analyzing the Gold Rush provides a compelling narrative about the abuse and protection of California's environment by American corporations, and how it took a progressive company like the Southern Pacific to make state and federal courts and legislatures reconsider their approach to the environment.

[33] Fredric H. Nichols et al., "The Modification of an Estuary," *Science* 231, no. 4738 (1986): 567.
[34] Charles N. Alpers et al., *Mercury Contamination from Historical Gold Mining in California*, U.S. Geological Survey, Sacramento.

Bibliography

Alpers, Charles N, Michael P. Hunerlach, Jason T. May, Roger L. Hothem. *Mercury Contamination from Historical Gold Mining in California*. U.S. Geological Survey: Sacramento, http://walrus.wr.usgs.gov/infobank/programs/html/factsheets/pdfs/2005_3014.pdf.

Brands, H. W. *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream*. New York: Doubleday, 2002.

Dawson, Robert, and Gray Brechin, *Farewell, Promised Land: Waking From the California Dream*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.

Kelly, Robert. "The Mining Debris Controversy in the Sacramento Valley." *Pacific Historical Review* (1956): 331-346.

Merchant, Carolyn, ed. *Green Versus Gold: Sources in California's Environmental History*. USA: Island Press, 1998.

Nichols, Fredric H., James E. Cloern, Samuel N. Luoma, and David H. Peterson. "The Modification of an Estuary," *Science* 231, no. 4738 (February 7, 1986), http://www.jstor.org/pss/1696456.

Orsi, Richard J. *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West: 1850-1930*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Rohe, Randall. "Man and the Land: Mining's Impact in the Far West." *Arizona and the West* (1986): 299-388.

Rohe, Randall. "Man as Geomorphic Agent: Hydraulic Mining in the American West." *Pacific Historian* (1983): 5-16.

Sawyer, Lorenzo. "Woodruff versus North Bloomfield Gravel and Mining Co.: The Sawyer Decision of 1884." *The Federal Reporter* (1884): 753-818.

Spence, Clark. "The Golden Age of Dredging: The Development of an Industry and Its Environmental Impact." *Western Historical Quarterly* (1980): 401-414.

Steinberg, Theodore. *Nature Incorporated: Industrialization and the Waters of New England*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

"A Great Gravel Mine." *The Daily Transcript*, July 30, 1879, Nevada City, CA.

Big Screen, Little Boxes: Hollywood Representations of the Suburban Housewife, 1960-1975

Kara Peruccio
Wake Forest University

Following the post-World War II flight from the city to the suburbs, Hollywood frequently produced films representing life in the suburbs during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The female roles restricted actresses to play sweet, feminine housewives, often lacking interests outside the home. The publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 provided at least one forum for a discussion of the middle-class housewife's inner secrets: boredom, disappointment, and loneliness. Studios, however, ignored new gender developments in society until 1967 when some movies started to portray housewives rebelling against their suburban surroundings: women having affairs, seeking therapy (whether with a psychiatrist or a bottle of vodka), and experiencing mental breakdowns. Films attempted to articulate women's frustrations but often failed to provide prescriptions for the housewives' turmoil. These movies presented new views with women questioning their societal roles as opposed to following traditional models from the 1950s and early 1960s. By the mid-1970s, some movies openly discussed feminist goals and issues, presenting women's concerns to a wide audience. These changes culminated in 1975 when *The Stepford Wives* infuriated feminists and signaled the decline of housewife-focused films. These suburban stories faded into the background of Hollywood despite enjoying financial and critical success. From 1960 to 1975, Hollywood belatedly tried to address the issues and concerns of the suburban housewife by breaking away from stereotypes perpetuated in earlier domestic humor roles, but ultimately forcing these women into suburban boxes.

In recent years, research has rarely touched on the role of the suburban housewife in Hollywood films. One notable exception is *The Stepford Wives*. Despite feminist outrage from figures such as Betty Friedan, who called the film a "rip-off" of the women's movement, Anna Krugovy Silver believes the film helped disseminate second-wave feminist ideals to mainstream

culture.[1] Jane Elliott, in her article "Stepford U.S.A.," discusses philosophical themes demonstrated in *The Stepford Wives* including automation and time.[2] As a result of Bryan Forbes' 1975 film, the repetitious life of the housewife, along with the image presented by Stepford wives, remains prominent in popular culture. Although there is a lack of research focusing on suburban housewives on the big screen, much research has been done on two separate but related fields: gendered spaces and film usage in history. Historians often ascribe gendered characteristics to various locations in society. Susan Saegert argues that American culture has constructed polar opposites: the city against the suburb, man against woman.[3] Many historians argue that the suburbs created an undeniable bond between domesticity and the housewife. Laura J. Miller writes that many Americans believed that the suburbs were the most promising place for the family to flourish, but often led to the isolation of the housewife from larger society.[4] Similarly, recent research studying women in film frequently focuses on movies produced from 1940 to 1960 and then often ignores most women, including housewives, until the 1980s. One exception is the "sexploitation" films that concentrated on the sexual activities of housewives, such as the 1964 film *Sin in the Suburbs*. This paper will not deal with such films; instead, it focuses only on movies that portray the lives of suburban middle-class housewives. While there is a dearth of research focusing on this topic, there are scholars who emphasize the importance of using film in the study of history. Ray B. Browne writes in the foreword to *Hollywood as Historian*, "If a picture, as we generally agree, is worth a thousand words, then a

---

[1] Anna Krugovy Silver, "The Cyborg Mystique, *The Stepford Wives* and Second Wave Feminism," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 30 (2002): 60.
[2] Jane Elliott, "Stepford U.S.A. Second-Wave Feminism, Domestic Labor, and the Representation of National Time," *Cultural Critique* 70 (2008): 33.
[3] Susan Saegert, "Masculine Cities and Feminine Suburbs: Polarized Ideas, Contradictory Realities," *Signs* 5 (1980): S96.
[4] Laura J. Miller, "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal," *Sociological Forum* 10 (1995): 394.

motion picture or a movie, is worth millions of words because it is *words in action*."[5] Many historians agree that Hollywood during the 1960s was hesitant to portray the housewife's dilemma on screen. Few films positively and accurately portrayed the changing demands and struggles of housewives. Molly Haskell writes that newly liberated women were nowhere in sight, particularly citing Anne Bancroft's character of Mrs. Robinson as "the villain" in the 1967 hit film, *The Graduate*.[6] Hollywood, continuing the trend of the "happy housewife" from earlier films during the first half of the 1960s, belatedly attempted to address the concerns of suburban housewives but ultimately cemented their image as women trapped in suburban isolation.

In the post-World War II decade, young, married, middle-class couples, often with children, joined a mass exodus to settle in the suburbs. By definition, a suburb is a community within a metropolitan area outside the core city.[7] Many white city-dwellers found their lives lacking meaning while living in cities with hundreds of thousands and even millions of people.[8] Affordable automobiles allowed urbanites the flexibility to move to new, decentralized suburbs.[9] Families, in particular, sought to create new lives away from perceived inner-city decay, constructing their own oases in the idyllic suburban area. In the 1960 film *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, Kate Mackay (Doris Day) and her husband Larry (David Niven) discuss moving to the "country" to leave behind the city's chaos.[10] In the suburbs, white, middle-class families enjoyed opportunities to nurture their children and allow them to grow in a positive environment.

---

[5] Ray B. Browne, *Hollywood as Historian* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), ix.
[6] Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 328.
[7] Lois Craig, "Suburbs," *Design Quarterly* 132 (1986): 6.
[8] "AMERICANA: The Roots of Home," *Time*, June 20, 1960, 14.
[9] Miller, "Togetherness," 409-10.
[10] *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, Joe Pasternak (Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, 1960).

A suburban housewife traditionally followed a standard life route: student, wife, and mother. Before marriage, she generally attended college during her search for a husband.[11] Consequently, forty percent of suburban women possessed a BA or BS degree.[12] Kate Mackay, for instance, was her husband Larry's theater student before marriage.[13] In *The Graduate*, Mrs. Robinson pursued a degree in art before marrying Mr. Robinson.[14] Mrs. Robinson explicitly announced that she did not finish her degree; Kate Mackay never clarifies. Mary Wilson, the protagonist in the 1969 film *The Happy Ending*, dropped out of college to marry her husband, Fred.[15] Joanna Eberhart in *The Stepford Wives* received her degree from New York University.[16] These housewives represented in film were intelligent, educated women who abandoned careers to become devoted wives and mothers. This choice conformed to the rhetoric espoused by "experts" (usually doctors and psychologists) that emphasized a need to "rebuild" the family.[17] Just as the government called women to work during World War II, contemporary literature in the postwar decades called for women to return home. In the 1968 comedy, *Yours, Mine & Ours*, Lucille Ball's Helen North, despite working as a naval nurse for many years, returns to her home to care for her eighteen children.[18] *Time* heralded the suburban housewife as "the thread that weaves between family and community--the keeper of the suburban dream."[19] Though positive language in popular culture promoted the role of the housewife, women fulfilled their feminine duties at the expense of educational and professional advancement.

---

[11] Marjorie Rosen, *Popcorn Venus* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973), 302.
[12] Helena Znaniecki Lopata, *Occupation Housewife* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 153.
[13] *Daisies*, Pasternak.
[14] *The Graduate*, Joseph E. Levine and Lawrence Turman (Embassy Pictures, 1967).
[15] *The Happy Ending*, Richard Brooks (United Artists, 1969).
[16] *The Stepford Wives*, Gustave M. Berne and Edgar J. Scherick (Columbia Pictures, 1975).
[17] Kim V. L. England, "Changing Suburbs, Changing Women; Geographic Perspectives on Suburban Women and Suburbanization, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 13 (1993): 25.
[18] *Yours, Mine & Ours*, Robert F. Blumofe (Universal, 1968).
[19] "AMERICANA," 16.

Following the path directed by social rhetoric, Hollywood films used the suburban housewife to contrast an older female stereotype, the blonde bombshell. The sexy, voluptuous image oozed by stars such as Marilyn Monroe gave way to images of wholesome housewives, opening the door for successful careers for actresses including Doris Day, Debbie Reynolds, and Sandra Dee.[20] The movie industry dedicated itself to reinforcing the conventional and socially acceptable view of the passive, sweet housewife.[21] Hollywood and other media outlets in the 1960s worked to convey the message that the best means for women to find happiness and fulfillment was in the role of a housewife and mother.[22]

Doris Day gained great success by playing such characters. Day began her career in the 1950s when films "were all about sex, without sex."[23] She transitioned into the 1960s with roles that portrayed her as independent and optimistic yet trivialized and objectified.[24] Though she was widely popular, critics often disparaged Day for her looks and saccharine charm. Film critic Dwight MacDonald in 1962 coined the phrase "the Doris Day syndrome": she was "as wholesome as a bowl of cornflakes and at least as sexy…I suspect most American mothers would be pleased and relieved if their daughters grew up to resemble Doris Day."[25] She lacked the sex appeal of Marilyn Monroe, allowing female viewers to identify with her morals and domestic pratfalls. When Day portrayed housewives, she posed no immediate danger to male-dominated society. Additionally, she helped reinforce the ideal of femininity that many men sought in their wives. Husbands and Hollywood constructed femininity as passive, nurturing,

---

[20] Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffen, *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender & Sexuality at the Movies*, 2nd edition (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2009), 232.
[21] Haskell, *Reverence*, 2.
[22] Benshoff and Griffen, *America on Film*, 232.
[23] Haskell, *Reverence*, 235.
[24] Dennis Bingham, "'Before She Was a Virgin…': Doris Day and the Decline of Female Film Comedy in the 1950s and 1960s," *Cinema Journal* 45 (2006): 5.
[25] *Ibid*., 5.

emotional, non-aggressive, and dependent.[26] Day deftly portrayed these characteristics and added a quiet sexuality that starkly contrasted bombshell roles. In *The Thrill of It All,* an actress built much in the mold of Marilyn Monroe loses her spokeswoman job for Happy Soap after the company's owner believes that his customers will better identify and connect with Day's shiny housewife, Beverly Boyer, rather than the Monroe lookalike.[27] Through the characters portrayed by actresses such as Day and her counterparts, Hollywood helped perpetuate the image of the ideal woman created in the 1950s: the suburban housewife.[28]

As a result of moving to the suburbs, the many family lifestyles changed due to men's new work-travel constraints. Husbands commuted by train (if available) or by family car to their jobs in the city, thus leaving their wives home to care for their children and the house. Once Larry Mackay becomes a successful theatre critic, his wife proposes a move to the suburbs, a plan he accommodates reluctantly. The tension between wife and husband reflects the gendered space of postwar society with the suburbs as female space and the city as male space. On the morning of his first trip to the city from home, he laments his new living situation. He says, begrudgingly, "Here I am about to start a long life as a commuter."[29] Similarly, Rock Hudson's George Kimball in *Send Me No Flowers* takes the train to and from the city with wife, Judy, picking him up in their single car.[30]

As the 1960s progressed, suburban men settled into their routine of driving or taking the train into work each day and returning home in the evening. Various arenas of popular culture tried to represent the father role as growing beyond that of breadwinner and husband.[31] Gerald

---

[26] Benshoff and Griffen, *America on Film,* 214.
[27] *The Thrill of It All,* Ross Hunter and Martin Melcher (Universal Pictures, 1963).
[28] Robert A. Beauregard, *How America Became Suburban* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 139.
[29] *Daisies,* Pasternak.
[30] *Send Me No Flowers,* Harry Keller (Universal Pictures, 1964).
[31] Anne McLeer, "Practical Perfection? The Nanny Negotiates Gender, Class and Family Contradictions in 1960s Popular Culture," *NWSA Journal* 14 (2002): 90.

Boyer in the 1963 film, *The Thrill of It All*, for example, works as an OB/GYN doctor in the city and comes home willing to put the children to bed and assist with household tasks.[32] Film and television showed more fathers having greater interactions with their children, providing them with emotional as well as economic security. This development in the expansion of the father-role beyond one of authoritarian figure counterbalanced the role of the over-protective mother who gained power through her time spent with children. Child psychology, revised by Dr. Benjamin Spock in the 1950s, encouraged fatherly involvement so that sons would follow their father's example and so that daughters would gain confidence through fatherly approval.[33] The new emphasis on father-child relationships corresponded to husbands affirming their authority in the household. In *Yours, Mine & Ours*, Frank Beardsley, following his marriage to Helen North, implements a military organizational plan to ensure their household runs smoothly with eighteen children living together.[34] Films presented increasing father participation, ignoring the sometimes calculated motives behind this involvement to solidify the male head-of-household role in the face of increasing female influence.

While commuting to work limited daily male participation in the growth of the suburban family, society associated the suburban home with women and domesticity. In the postwar period, the male establishment perceived women in the work force as a danger to the social order.[35] Resulting from this mentality, society firmly cemented the home as feminine. Both sexes believed women had the primary responsibility to care for their children and home.[36] Many middle-class women saw being a housewife as their sole occupation with the move to the

---

[32] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[33] McLeer, "Perfection," 90.
[34] *Ours*, Blumofe.
[35] Glenna Matthews, *Just a Housewife: the Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 210.
[36] Beauregard, *Suburban*, 126.

suburbs as integral to this role. Between 1950 and 1960, seventy-eight percent of women believed suburbia improved their quality of life and allowed them to satisfy the role of homemaker, "the normal family role."[37] In comparison with the "dangerous" cities associated with men, many people viewed the suburbs as feminine largely because women spent a majority of their time in the home.

The physical space of the suburbs encouraged uniformity and privacy. Lois Craig writes that suburban towns were "a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads."[38] In the 1968 comedy, *Send Me No Flowers*, George Kimball (Rock Hudson) visits a suburban cemetery to pick out plots for his wife, Judy, and for himself. The owner explains the site's set-up: all headstones uniformly measure four feet tall and are organized in an unvarying fashion, similar to many suburban communities. George remarks that the cemetery sounds like the "Levittown of hereafter."[39] While such conformity allowed families in the suburbs to enjoy increased privacy, it also removed them from the communal aspects of living in a large urban apartment building. In the 1963 film *The Thrill of It All*, the Boyer residence reflects the uniformity of suburban neighborhoods. Each house on their street has driveways, garages, front yards, and backyards. Suburban families maintained their privacy through white picket fences and front lawns.[40] They became ubiquitous symbols of the middle class contentedly living in suburbia.

The layout of the suburban home generally provided families with space to grow and flourish. In *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, moving to the suburbs was a logical choice for Larry and Kate Mackay and their four young sons. Their cramped New York City apartment provided

---

[37] Nancy Walker, "Humor and Gender Roles: The "Funny" Feminism of the Post-World War II Suburbs," *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 107.
[38] Craig, "Suburbs," 14.
[39] *Flowers*, Keller.
[40] Miller, "Togetherness," 401.

no room for the boys to run around, and despite its fine furnishings, it emitted a sense of disorder. By moving out to "Hooten on the Hudson," the Mackays are able to renovate a home filled with many rooms and enjoy a backyard perfect for their boys and dog.[41] The suburbs afforded couples a clean slate to create their new lives and accommodate expanding families. Inside, the Boyers' large home features three floors with a small spiral staircase connecting the first and second levels. Rooms such as the kitchen, foyer, and living room occupy the first-floor while the upstairs features a master bedroom with two separate beds and rooms for their children and live-in housekeeper.[42] The interior divisions of the house varied depending upon the family's economic situation. The Robinsons in the 1967 film, *The Graduate*, reside in an affluent neighborhood, and their large home reflects their wealth and desire for space. Their home features a bar for entertaining, expansive rooms, and enough space for Mr. and Mrs. Robinson to sleep in separate bedrooms.[43] Additionally, the construction of the suburban house contributed to the creation of gendered space. Homes with large windows, open-plan settings, fireplaces, and galley kitchens helped enforce high standards of cleanliness and the housewife's work.[44] Men had private studies for work and a quiet place to escape. In truth, the man's suburban home became a refuge from his day job, but remained the housewife's endless series of rooms to clean.[45]

The uniformity of neighborhoods created a distinct suburban culture, one filled with homogeneity and affluence. John Milligan, a real estate broker who spoke in 1983, said, "People don't buy a house. They buy a neighborhood. People will buy a backyard, they'll buy friendly neighbors who smile, they'll buy well-kept lawns. People buy attics (I've always wanted an attic).

---

[41] *Daisies*, Pasternak.
[42] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[43] *Graduate*, Levine and Turman.
[44] England, "Perspectives," 26.
[45] Miller, "Togetherness," 413.

Or a woman will buy a kitchen facing the street. People buy birch trees. We're all the same."[46] With the creation of modern suburbs, many Americans saw images of white, middle-class suburbanites as national icons.[47]

Such uniformity can be seen in a lack of racial and ethnic diversity in films. Of the nine movies examined in this paper, only two featured any diverse characters, both of which occurred well after the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s: *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974) and *The Stepford Wives* (1975). In *A Woman Under the Influence*, three of Nick Longhetti's African-American coworkers and one Mexican-Indian coworker come to the Longhetti house for pasta.[48] Nick is a married, Italian-American homeowner; it is unknown where his coworkers reside. Although Nick drives the men to his house, the men walk away from the Longhetti house after the meal. His co-workers perhaps live within walking distance from the Longhetti house or use public transportation to go home. Director John Cassavetes never fully elaborates on the workers' neighborhoods, but their inclusion demonstrated greater racial integration within suburban households. Cassavetes portrays one African-American man singing at the table in Italian with a beautiful opera voice, confirming that African-Americans were culturally as sophisticated as Euro-American men.[49] A year later, *The Stepford Wives* briefly featured an African-American husband and wife at the end of the film. Silver believes the introduction of this couple indicates that black middle-class women faced the same pressures as their white counterparts.[50] The minority characters appeared as side notes in comparison with the movies'

[46] John Milligan in Craig, "Suburbs," 19.
[47] Wendy Kozol, "Fracturing Domesticity: Media, Nationalism, and the Question of Feminist Influence," *Signs* 20 (1995): 651.
[48] *A Woman Under the Influence,* Sam Shaw (Faces International Films, 1974).
[49] *Ibid*.
[50] Silver, "Cyborg," 69.

predominantly white casts. Though greater integration appears in the 1970s, most films focused solely on suburban, middle-class, white women.

The uniformity, racial or otherwise, led to other shared values in suburban culture such as consumerism and materialism. Both existed symbiotically as a result of the material needs of suburban households. These homes needed furnishings, appliances, and supplies for daily living. The role of housewife required women to possess knowledge and skills in several fields including interior decorating, washing, dusting, sewing, and cooking.[51] Suburban living created gendered consumerism because women needed to purchase items to fulfill all of their chores and to make the home as welcoming as possible. Wives additionally sought to display the status of their husbands' careers. Consequently, families poured money into their homes, buying not only necessities but also luxury items including televisions and flashy cars. While men purchased the more expensive items, such as the actual homes, cars, and lawn mowers, films depicted the housewives buying everyday items and products specifically benefitting the household. Kate Mackay shops for curtain fabric; Beverly Boyer buys groceries for family meals. This gendered consumerism demonstrated that women possessed the capability to buy smaller, more necessary household items, leaving larger purchases and financial knowledge to their husbands. When George Kimball believes he only has two weeks left to live, he tells his wife, Judy, that he wants her to attend night school to learn accounting, banking, and book-keeping. Judy responds that she has no interest in these subjects and says, "That's your department."[52] Men provided the money; women spent it.

[51] Lopata, *Occupation*, 151.
[52] *Flowers*, Keller.

Suburban culture dictated that men continually acquire wealth and maintain or elevate their financial status within their social circle.[53] In the 1967 comedy *Divorce American Style,* Barbara Harmon (Debbie Reynolds) complains to her husband Richard (Dick van Dyke) that following his promotion, he only talks about money. Richard represents a "nouveau riche" suburbanite, concerned with finances and appearances. He counters her complaints of his need for "things" by arguing that they moved to their home because they "needed a place for their washer and dryer."[54] While men dictated the purchase of expensive and luxury items, men technically served as the buyers of domestic items as well, because women possessed no income of their own. The argument between Richard and Barbara over household items and tasks is a byproduct of Barbara asking her husband to help her organize their home. Richard's refusal to help his wife demonstrates the emphasis on chores as women's work. By Barbara asking for assistance, screenwriter Norman Lear indicated that by the mid-1960s some women, who toiled daily within their homes, were becoming tired of their household duties.

Even before this time, however, many housewives felt frustrated with their position in society, but silently carried their secret unhappiness. In movies produced before the mid-1960s, housewives frequently touched upon their frustrations yet continued to conform to the stereotype of the happy housewife. Kate Mackay and her husband Larry argue over leaving New York City. Kate is unhappy with Larry's new social crowd after he becomes a prestigious theatre critic. She says, "Darling, interesting people don't want to make friends with housewives."[55] She pinpoints the dichotomy between the influential theatre types with whom Larry associates and herself. Kate has no career outside the home; she provides a comfortable, clean, and happy home to her husband and children. Kate, similar to many housewives, had few hobbies and activities solely

[53] Beauregard, *Suburban,* 139.
[54] *Divorce American Style,* Norman Lear (Columbia Pictures, 1967).
[55] *Daisies,* Pasternak.

her own. Larry responds to Kate's situation, "I wish you wouldn't call yourself a housewife. You're so much more than that."[56] Representing many husbands, Larry wants Kate to be comfortable with her role as the homemaker and the supportive influence on her family, without feeling unhappy or dejected. Although she questions her lifestyle as housewife, by the film's end, Kate firmly accepts her responsibilities as Larry's wife and her children's mother and promises to support his every endeavor.

Shortly after this film, concerns such as those raised by Kate Mackay gained national attention with the publication of Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique.* It provided a watershed event for society to discuss the housewife's dilemma.[57] Friedan believed "that something [was] very wrong with the way American women [were] trying to live their lives."[58] Deeming it "the problem that has no name," Friedan linked housewives' dissatisfaction with their lives to their role as a housewife:

> Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – "Is this all?"[59]

"The problem that has no name" began primarily as a result of isolation in the suburbs and household work patterns. By working in and around their homes, housewives faced limited social outlets beyond their immediate family and neighbors. In suburban culture, the family increasingly isolated itself due to single family homes and possessions such as the television and the automobile.[60] The housewife's world view was often limited her to her neighborhood. Her

---

[56] *Ibid.*
[57] Nancy Walker, "Humor," 98.
[58] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963), 12.
[59] *Ibid*., 15.
[60] Miller, "Togetherness," 410.

social circle primarily consisted of her husband, her children, friends who were guests in her home, and neighbors; these people utilized the results of her work as a homemaker.[61]

Doris Day's comedy *The Thrill of It All* provided an interesting juxtaposition with Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Both released in 1963 (Friedan's book in February and the film in July), *The Thrill of It All* covered many of the topics discussed in Friedan's book, but adhered to the traditional model of the housewife on film. Day plays Beverly Boyer, the wife of OB/GYN Dr. Gerald Boyer. The film opens with Beverly performing various chores: bathing her young daughter, cooking a roast for dinner, and cleaning as she bustles throughout their house. She appears the image of perfection, completing her tasks efficiently and maintaining a positive attitude about her chores. When the owners of the Happy Soap Company offer her the spokeswoman job, she responds, "I'm not an actress. I'm a housewife." Beverly views herself only in this capacity; even after accepting the job, she continues to maintain that she is just a housewife. In her aired endorsements, she introduces herself: "My name is Beverly Boyer and I'm a housewife."

Beverly's new career raises many key issues regarding the woman's role in society. When she and Gerald discuss her job offer, she cites an article he wrote for a magazine: "In some cases, household duties, as important as they are, are not sufficient to gratify a woman's desire for expression."[62] His article ties in with the message that Friedan and other experts emphasized: many women who stayed at home often failed to find the promised fulfillment of happiness and contentment.[63] Gerald tells his wife that he did not refer to her when writing the article. He assumes she is content with caring for their two children, participating in the PTA, and engaging in her hobbies, which include bottling homemade ketchup. Beverly assures him she is quite

[61] Lopata, *Occupation*, 137.
[62] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[63] Becky M. Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese, *The Suburb Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 258.

happy and that she would "never conscientiously go out looking for a job."[64] Though Gerald does not completely approve of her career, Beverly promises it will not interfere with her wifely duties and they agree she can become the Happy Soap spokeswoman.

Financial issues abound in *The Thrill of It All* over Beverly's new career and the issue of providing for one's family. A major reason she accepts the spokeswoman job is because of its salary. The Happy Company offers to pay her $80,000 a year to appear on television once a week.[65] The proposal floors Beverly—she actually falls into a basket of tomatoes—but she quickly realizes how this additional income could benefit her family. Beverly wants to feel useful and contribute to her family's well-being beyond the conventional roles of mother and wife. In addition to having a break from her home once a week, Beverly can now financially contribute to the Boyer household. Widely accepted cultural practices, however, enforced the idea of the husband as the wage-earner and the wife as a full-time homemaker.[66] Gerald, though hesitant over the spokeswoman job and surprised by its salary, allows Beverly to continue since he sees it makes her happy. Frustrations, however, come to blows after the Happy Soap Company buys the Boyers a $5,000 swimming pool, unbeknownst to both Beverly and Gerald. He believes that she purchased the pool with her money and he is furious. She cannot buy a pool with "her" money. "If the family wanted a swimming pool," Gerald explains, "it would be purchased with 'our' money."[67] "Our" money by Gerald's definition comes from his earnings as a doctor. He does not want to accept or use her salary money for household expenses; Gerald feels emasculated and abandoned. Though with good intentions, Beverly inadvertently threatens

[64] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] England, "Perspectives," 26.
[67] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.

their relationship when accepting the job, thereby overstepping the boundaries established for the typical housewife.

Such identity crises often plagued suburban housewives. Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* encouraged them to ignore the question of "Who am I?" as many women responded with answers such as "Tom's wife…Mary's mother."[68] Beverly Boyer confronts the changing nature of her identity when women recognize her in a restaurant as the Happy Soap "girl". She, not Gerald, receives recognition and acclaim from people, and they inquire as to who Gerald is. Beverly calls him "Mr. Beverly…Dr. Beverly…no Dr. Boyer."[69] Following a fight with her husband, Beverly worries over her identity; she wonders if she is still a doctor's wife.[70] Similarly, as late as 1968, Frank Beardsley addresses his wife, Helen, as "dearest mother of eighteen."[71] In the early 1970s, society became especially cognizant of the identity crises facing housewives. Marjorie Franco in the popular woman's magazine *Redbook* wrote, "Take a woman who is a wife and mother. Subtract the husband and the children. She is nothing you can name. She is dependent on others for her identity."[72] Beverly, living in the 1960s, chooses to maintain the social identifications as someone's wife and mother because she fears losing both her husband and children as a result of her busy career.[73]

The Thrill of It All provided a timely lens on the status of suburban marriages and illustrated many of the issues raised by *The Feminine Mystique*. The film, however, firmly maintained societal notions of housewives, doing little to advance the ambitions of its protagonist, Beverly. When her husband, Gerald, can no longer support her career, he devises a

---

[68] Friedan, *Mystique*, 71.
[69] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[70] *Ibid*.
[71] *Ours*, Blumofe.
[72] David Degener, "Director under the Influence," *Film Quarterly* 29 (1975-6): 10.
[73] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.

plan for them to have another child, thereby requiring Beverly to return to their home full-time. They then fight over their rights. He wishes to deny her the ability to contribute financially to their family and Beverly demands to know why she cannot participate in their financial security. She questions, "What happened to my rights as a woman?"[74] In this moment, Beverly represents the thousands of housewives who identified with *The Feminine Mystique*.[75] Yet, *The Thrill of It All* ignores Beverly's question and instead deals with Gerald's plight as the husband whose wife left the household. He rages that she suffocates his rights as a man and needs to get reacquainted with her children; he then deems her job "an asinine career." Gerald finally tells Beverly to "go back to being a wife." Following this fight, Gerald decides to fake an affair with another woman (by rubbing lipstick on his shirts, among other machinations), hoping jealousy will force Beverly to abandon her career. As a result, Beverly does give up the spokeswoman job and pronounces that she is "just a doctor's wife." The film ends with Beverly and Gerald implying that they will have another child and that Beverly is no longer a career woman.[76]

Despite *The Feminine Mystique* voicing the concerns of many housewives, Hollywood evaded portraying women's struggles on screen in a positive light. Studios sought to avoid controversy and displayed little interest in producing films that seemed feminist.[77] Prior to the release of Friedan's book, films from the 1960s followed the same moral and cultural patterns from the 1950s.[78] Historian Molly Haskell believes that the ten-year span between 1963 and 1973, from a feminist's point of view, was the most disheartening in screen history. The

---

[74] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[75] Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 230.
[76] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[77] Benshoff and Griffen, *America on Film*, 280.
[78] Paul Monaco, *History of the American Cinema: the Sixties* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001), 122.

burgeoning demands of the women's movements caused backlash in commercial films.[79] As Marjorie Rosen wrote in 1973, "the sixties' woman may have seized on a more productive life-style than ever before, but the industry had turned its back on reflecting it in any constructive or analytical way."[80] Witnessed in *The Thrill of It All*, couples often stayed together under the pressures of convention, and the man continually overshadowed his female counterpart.[81] Into the middle half of the decade, Hollywood focused on producing films with the safe, sweet, and familiar female leads in the guise of popular musicals including *The Sound of Music, Mary Poppins*, and *My Fair Lady*.[82] The public preferred these happy tales set in bygone days rather than seeing their own troubles on screen.

Although films highlighted many changes in American society, common motifs identifying the suburban housewife persisted in many films produced between 1960 and 1975. Everyday tasks and actions associated with the suburban housewife appeared on the big screen. In many films, the housewife served breakfast to both her husband and children. Kate Mackay, for instance, prepares the first meal of the day for her family, during which Larry complains about the bread.[83] Judy Kimball's hypochondriac husband George refuses to eat to prevent his stomach from feeling upset; she says, "I don't know why I bother to cook." Following this exchange, George changes his mind and eats a slice of toast.[84] During one of the trysts featured in the 1967 film, *The Graduate*, young Benjamin Braddock asks Mrs. Robinson what she did that day. She responds, "I got up, fixed breakfast for my husband."[85] Mary Wilson's husband in *The*

---

[79] Haskell, *Reverence*, 323.
[80] Rosen, *Venus*, 341.
[81] Bingham, Virgin, 22.
[82] Rosen, *Venus*, 319.
[83] *Daisies*, Pasternak.
[84] *Flowers*, Keller.
[85] *Graduate*, Levine and Turman.

Happy Ending barely looks up from his morning paper to ask her to start cooking eggs.[86] Similarly, in *The Stepford Wives*, Joanna Eberhart serves breakfast to a noisy table filled with children while her husband Walter sits reading the newspaper. The only conversation Walter interjects is, "Honey, can I have some more coffee please?"[87] No matter when the movies were released, they linked women from Kate Mackay to Joanna Eberhart together in the bond of fellow housewives.

Unlike many ordinary suburban women, many housewives featured in Hollywood movies received assistance from housekeepers. When the Boyers receive an invitation to a dinner party, Gerald tells Beverly to hire a babysitter; Beverly does not want to do so when they already pay a housekeeper (to whom she gave the evening off).[88] Similarly, in *Divorce American Style*, Richard Harmon raises the issue of the housekeeper and finances following a party that he and wife Barbara host. After the departure of their guests, Barbara asks him to help her clean up. Richard quips that he pays $250 a month for a housekeeper and now must work as "a houseboy."[89] These comments called attention to the fact that movie families possessed flexible incomes that allowed them to afford outside assistance. Including housekeepers in Hollywood films helped emphasize the fact that the suburbs excluded families below certain income levels.[90] Housekeepers additionally stressed the endless chores associated with maintaining the home and the idealized suburban image of successful wife, mother, and homemaker.

Many films often praised and glorified the values and responsibilities of the suburban housewife. It was her unexpected sex appeal, however, that received much attention in films.

---

[86] *Ending*, Brooks.
[87] *Stepford*, Berne and Scherick.
[88] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[89] *Divorce*, Lear.
[90] Margaret Marsh, "Historians and the Suburbs," *Magazine of History* 5 (1990): 46.

Hollywood historically maintained a strict double standard for the appearance of stars. Unlike males in the profession, an actress's career hinged as much on her acting ability as on her "acceptable" looks.[91] Doris Day's success derived from her "girl next door" appearance.[92] The image of the housewife in the early 1960s, according to Betty Friedan, was often "young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine."[93]

Housewives in film repeatedly focused on their physical appearance, suggesting both conformity to contemporary styles and insecurity. Before a play opening, Kate Mackay proudly announces to her children's babysitter, "I've lost five pounds and bought a new dress for it."[94] The new dress and weight loss suggest Kate's desire to appear attractive in the eyes of the theatre crowd. Barbara Harmon in *Divorce American Style* wears a hair piece to give herself a more fashionable style.[95] In 1969, Mary Wilson went the furthest of the film housewives to date; she received a facelift, but dejectedly informed her friend that "no one noticed." Mary also joined a health club and started an intense exercise regime following her husband's affair and her own mental breakdown. The women she encounters at the club share similar misgivings about their appearances and the fast approaching reality of old age. One acquaintance called all of the women at the club, "zombies killing time."[96] In *Yours, Mine & Ours,* before going on her first date with Frank Beardsley, Helen North receives style advice from her teenaged daughters. When she expresses concern over fake eyelashes, her daughters remind her that she was younger when she married their father and now needed help.[97] The robotic double in *The Stepford Wives* shares many similar characteristics with Joanna but with one exception: a noticeably enhanced

[91] Anne E. Lincoln and Michael Patrick Allen, "Double Jeopardy in Hollywood: Age and Gender in the Careers of Film Actors, 1926-1999," *Sociological Forum* 19 (2004): 627.
[92] Monaco, *the Sixties*, 122.
[93] Friedan, *Mystique,* 36.
[94] *Daisies,* Pasternak.
[95] *Divorce,* Lear.
[96] *Ending,* Brooks.
[97] *Ours,* Blumofe.

chest.[98] *The Stepford Wives* presented interesting ideas about women's image in the first half of the 1970s. The Stepford men replace their wives with robots designed to cater to their sexual desires.[99] These "Stepford wives" represented some male opinions of what made a woman desirable in the eyes of men.

The fashions worn by housewives throughout the long decade provided commentary on their daily activities as well as the image projected to society. When staying at home with their children, the housewives primarily wore comfortable attire. Kate Mackay renovates her home in denim pants and a button-up shirt.[100] Beverly Boyer bottles ketchup and bathes her daughter wearing jeans and a cotton shirt.[101] Helen North Beardsley dons a loose pink housecoat to hide her pregnancy and finish her family's laundry.[102] In the privacy of their own homes, housewives felt comfortable wearing relaxing attire not always befitting the external image they presented to their neighbors and friends. While preparing a roast for dinner, however, Beverly dons a dress and an apron, presumably because Gerald is on his way home from work.[103] Moreover, women often changed their dress when leaving the house and encountering those outside their immediate social circle. While shopping in a department store, Kate Mackay wears a fashionable "Jackie O" suit.[104] Similarly, when Beverly Boyer represents the model housewife in her Happy Soap advertisements, she wears tailored and professional dresses.[105] When golfing at the country club, Judy Kimball looks polished in a sweater and skirt ensemble. At the club dance in the evening, she switches into a classic white dress and white cardigan.[106]

---

[98] *Stepford*, Berne and Scherick.
[99] Silver, "Cyborg," 72.
[100] *Daisies*, Pasternak.
[101] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[102] *Ours*, Blumofe.
[103] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[104] *Daisies*, Pasternak.
[105] *Thrill*, Hunter and Melcher.
[106] *Flowers*, Keller.

Fashion also separated women conforming to the housewife mold and those rebelling against it. In *The Graduate*, Mrs. Robinson uses her clothing as a means to ensnare Benjamin Braddock. After promising him that she has no intentions of seduction, she asks that he please unzip her dress, revealing a leopard print bra.[107] Her patterned undergarment hardly implies the demureness associated with housewives of her time. In *Send Me No Flowers*, George Kimball imagines his wife Judy taking up with their dry-cleaning delivery boy. In his dream, Judy dances around in pants and navy blue sweater, an outfit much different from her normal, more styled ensembles.[108] Mabel Longhetti in John Cassavetes' 1974 drama, *A Woman Under the Influence*, dresses differently than the housewives portrayed by Doris Day. Unlike the prim and proper styles of women such as Kate Mackay and Beverly Boyer, Mabel wears a sweater over a comparatively short dress. The outfit appears disjointed, representing her quirky personality, contrasting her with the put-together wives of the early 1960s. Mabel, however, links the continuity of the accepted housewife-image when her husband's co-workers come to her house for spaghetti. She wears an apron to suggest femininity and also comfort in her domestic domain.[109]

Similar to Mabel, Joanna and Bobbie in *The Stepford Wives* make fashion decisions that decisively separate them from the rest of the women in their new town. Carol van Sant, their seemingly perfect neighbor, first greets the Eberharts to Stepford with a casserole. In comparison to Joanna, who wears a bandanna, large hoop earrings, relaxed attire, and no bra, Carol van Sant dons a frilly apron and appears quite polished. Bobbie, Joanna's best friend, often wears daring fashions including cut-off shirts baring her midriff. Following her transformation into a Stepford wife, Bobbie dresses in long sleeves, a long skirt, and a padded uplift bra. She

[107] *Graduate*, Levine and Turman.
[108] *Flowers*, Keller.
[109] *Women*, Shaw.

tells Joanna, "Dave turned me loose in Bergdorf [& Goodman]…I went mad." Her new clothing alarms Joanna, but Bobbie responds to Joanna's qualms by stating, "I want to look like a woman."[110] *The Stepford Wives* indicated to society that if women wanted to be viewed as feminine and proper, they needed to follow fashions resembling Carol van Sant and not the quasi-liberated Bobbie and Joanna.

Traces of the 1960s social movements began to impact the lives of suburban housewives, demonstrating that these women were not completely immune to change. Mabel Longhetti's welcoming of her husband Nick's African-American coworkers reveals the strides the Civil Rights movement made into the suburbs.[111] *The Stepford Wives* most prominently exhibited the social changes that impacted women in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Joanna and Bobbie attempt to start consciousness raising sessions but meet resistance from their robotic (and anti-feminist) neighbors. During their investigations of Stepford, Joanna and Bobbie believe there might be something in the water and send a sample to a lab in New York City.[112] Their suspicions demonstrate the growing acceptance and understanding of the environmental movement. Although the films did not outwardly comment on the diverse social movements, the changes brought to society resonated in the daily existences of suburban women.

As the 1960s progressed, suburban housewives frequently voiced frustration with their lives and marriages, which were often the origin of their unhappiness and struggles. Unhappiness often stemmed from remaining confined to the household and abandoning ambitions after marriage to become wives and mothers. Benjamin finds out that Mrs. Robinson married Mr. Robinson out of necessity: she was pregnant with their daughter, Elaine.[113] In *The*

[110] *Stepford,* Berne and Sherick.
[111] *Woman,* Shaw.
[112] *Stepford,* Berne and Sherick.
[113] *Graduate,* Levine and Turman.

Happy Ending, Mary and Fred engage in premarital sex, and following their encounter, Mary calls their actions "immoral." They decide to get married, and while at the altar, Mary envisions scenes from old Hollywood romance films.[114] For most housewives, their lives often diverted from the scripted ones presented in films such as *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* and *The Thrill of It All*. Their lives in the suburbs lacked the happy endings promised by society and found by Doris Day and Debbie Reynolds. As Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* commented, "if a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 1960s, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage or with herself."[115]

As a result of their marital unhappiness, some suburban housewives turned to adultery. These films focused on women initiating the affairs as well as the private anguish suffered by the housewives as a result of these transgressions. Housewives having affairs often became vilified for their role as "sexually aggressive" women. British film critic Alexander Walker, in his review of *The Graduate*, wrote, "Bancroft, from the word go, has the in-heat imperiousness of the man-destroying woman with whom Mike Nichols obviously finds some aghast fascination. She's not concerned with love, only sex."[116] Mrs. Robinson reflects the supposed "new woman," breaking away from the constructed gender ideals, versus Friedan's housewife who "was not even expected to enjoy or participate in the act of sex."[117] Mrs. Robinson shatters this stereotype by engaging in behaviors usually reserved for men, although at the price of being labeled a wanton woman. Studios found that the best response to the women's movement was to emphasize sexual elements in their message, and as a result, films began to exploit the female

---

[114] *Ending*, Brooks.
[115] Friedan, *Mystique*, 19.
[116] Alexander Walker, *Double Takes: Notes and Afterthoughts on the Movies, 1956-1976* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1977), 227.
[117] Friedan, *Mystique*, 81.

body with increasing nudity.[118] Walker's reading of Mrs. Robinson, though harsh-sounding, reflects the new mentality of Hollywood in dealing with women's sexuality. Mrs. Robinson locks Benjamin into Elaine's room while she stands before him, naked. She tells him that she is available (for sexual acts) and that they can form some kind of arrangement. While she propositions the young man, director Mike Nichols' camera flashes on different parts of her body.[119] Unlike Doris Day's housewives, Mrs. Robinson uses her sexuality to achieve her aims, embodying the new, sexually aggressive woman feared by society. Her mimicking of male behavior poses a threat to the stability of marriage and family.

Released four years after *The Feminine Mystique*, *The Graduate*'s sexual content represented a drastic change in the direction of Hollywood film. Nichols, in fact, originally offered the role of Mrs. Robinson to Doris Day, who refused the character. Day in her memoirs wrote, "I realized it was an effective part…but it offended my sense of values." She also declared, "I can't picture myself in bed with a man, all the crew around us…I am really appalled by some of the public exhibitions on the screen by good actors and actresses."[120] As the 1960s ended and the 1970s began, housewives in films often faced the decision of committing adultery with varying degrees of responses. Mary Wilson in *The Happy Ending* ponders the notion but reveals that the thought of having an affair frightens her.[121] After Mabel's husband, Nick, falls through on their date, she gets drunk at a bar and a man named Garson (O. G. Dunn) brings her back home.[122] Given that he has to half-carry her into the house and that she sobers up for a moment to fight him off, their sexual encounter appears to be a rape. Mabel is devastated after

---

[118] Ron Briley, "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, as Viewed through the Lens of Hollywood," *The History Teacher* 23 (1990), 232.
[119] *Graduate*, Levine and Turman.
[120] Doris Day and A.E. Hotchner, *Doris Day Her Own Story* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1979), 199-200.
[121] *Ending*, Brooks.
[122] *Woman*, Shaw.

realizing the events of the evening. These films demonstrated that affairs endangered the housewife's morality and happiness, often leading to severe and damaging consequences. Although Mabel's husband, Nick, never discovers her drunken encounter, her anguish further initiates her descent into despair and unhappiness.

For the housewives in film, their affairs presented the idea that their needs were solely physical. Before a sexual encounter, Benjamin Braddock asks Mrs. Robinson, "Can we say a few words to each other?" She snappishly replies after a small fight over the issue, "I don't think we have much to say to each other."[123] In their limited conversation that follows, Mrs. Robinson reveals that her life is one of boredom: waking up, fixing her husband breakfast, and staying in the house. She further divulges the fact she and Mr. Robinson sleep in separate bedrooms.[124] Mary Wilson, when fighting with her husband, deems their bed a "no man's land", telling her husband that they have "nothing to say to each other." In her attempted affair, she believes she looks for "just" sex, when in fact, Mary wants someone to listen to her thoughts and opinions.[125] Both Mrs. Robinson and Mary are products of an American culture that denied women the opportunity to fulfill their potentialities, "a need which is not solely defined by their sexual role."[126] Adultery was a theme used to illustrate the perils of the freedoms housewives sought when fighting their stereotype. In early films echoing *The Feminine Mystique*, Molly Haskell writes that "women were torn between the mind-numbing and soul-destroying confines of domestic duty on the one hand, and that exhilarating call to independence."[127] Housewives used adultery as a means of escape and comfort, but films consistently focused on the negative aspects of engaging in these relationships.

---

[123] *Graduate*, Levine and Turman.
[124] *Ibid*.
[125] *Ending*, Brooks.
[126] Friedan, *Mystique*, 81.
[127] Haskell, *Reverence*, 378.

Heavy drinking and alcoholism also became a predominant motif in housewife films as the 1960s progressed. In stark contrast to the Doris Day films, where women participated in light social drinking, the housewives, beginning with Mrs. Robinson, turned to the bottle as a way of numbing their pain. The rise of drinking corresponded with the growing devaluation of housework. In earlier times, housework required more effort, time, and skill, thus receiving greater recognition; with the rise of modern technologies, housewives worked less and gained less satisfaction from their daily chores.[128] The housekeeper began to disappear from films as fewer families required assistance from an extra domestic hand. Housewives frequently lacked activities to fill this spare time, turning to drinking as a means to pass the day.

Women also openly admitted their drinking as a fault. After Benjamin drives Mrs. Robinson home, she offers him a drink. She asks him, "What do you think of me?" He responds that he thinks she is a very nice person. She then drops a bombshell: "Did you know I was an alcoholic?"[129] The film never mentions her alcoholism again but features several scenes in which Mrs. Robinson drinks, albeit moderately. Mrs. Robinson's admission of her former condition supports the belief that being an alcoholic makes one a "bad" person. This vice lends to Nichols' characterization of Mrs. Robinson as *The Graduate*'s villain. When Helen North meets Frank Beardsley's children for the first time, she asks for a light screwdriver to loosen her nerves. Acting as bartenders, the Beardsley sons spike Helen's drink, and consequently, she gets drunk in what Frank deems "an alcoholic Pearl Harbor." She sobs over her behavior and for "acting like an idiot."[130] Despite Mrs. Robinson representing a reformed alcoholic and Helen North a one-time slush, Mary Wilson in 1969's *The Happy Ending* is an alcoholic and a very

[128] Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, "Hidden Protest: The Channeling of Female Innovation and Resistance," *Signs* 4 (1979): 666.
[129] *Graduate*, Lawrence and Turman.
[130] *Ours*, Blumofe.

unhappy housewife. Her husband, Fred, searches her belongings for hidden stashes of alcohol until finding a bottle of vodka in her snow boot. Her drinking poses a problem as Fred appears concerned over his discovery. One of her first lines in the film is "I could use a vodka."[131] At one point in the movie, Mary causes a car accident and fails the sobriety test.[132] She does not, however, check into rehab to deal with her issues and insecurities.

Few films, however, featured the same extent of alcoholism as Mary's. Many movies focused more on the escapist necessity of drinking. Mabel keeps telling the bartender to pour her Seagrams; her intoxication leads to a one-night stand.[133] In *The Stepford Wives*, Joanna and Bobbie break into Walter's scotch to relieve the monotony of their day. The film, however, issued a strong statement about women and drinking. When Carol van Sant malfunctions at a party while drinking a cocktail, her husband afterwards demands that she apologize to Joanna and Bobbie. Carol explains that she was once an alcoholic; the van Sants moved to Stepford because her husband blamed the city for her alcoholism.[134] Her apology and the control of the Stepford men indicate that the image of an inebriated woman was socially unacceptable and unbecoming.

Some films prominently featured the mental turmoil of housewives and presented psychotherapy and hospitalization as prescriptions for their problems. Barbara Harmon in *Divorce American Style* sees Dr. Zenwin, a "marriage therapist and lay psychiatrist," although her husband, Richard, opposes her therapy. Barbara tells Richard that he would not understand her problems but does warn him, "We're choking to death." The film emphasized that the issue

[131] *Ending,* Brooks.
[132] *Ibid.*
[133] *Woman,* Shaw.
[134] *Stepford,* Berne and Scherick.

is almost solely Barbara's. In one scene, she tells Richard, "I'm nutty."[135] While Richard, albeit begrudgingly, accepts his wife's psychotherapy, Fred Wilson in *The Happy Ending* denies Mary's suggestion of seeking professional help. Mary recognizes her need to speak to someone outside of their marriage, but Fred believes the problem is Mary. He suggests that she find a hobby.[136] Mary suffers in her depression until finally overdosing on pills. Conversely, Walter Eberhart tells Joanna to seek therapy when she questions living in Stepford. Joanna, who believes that something is happening to the women in Stepford, tells Walter she does not need help. He, however, "wants a second opinion."[137] Joanna concedes to her husband's demands but sees a female psychiatrist who urges her to get out of Stepford. The films demonstrated that women, not men, needed therapy and proved Friedan's theory that housewives and their spouses viewed the wife as the problem in marriages.

In the most serious of instances, housewives on film found themselves struggling for their lives. Mary Wilson, after discovering that her husband had an affair, takes twenty-eight sleeping pills. The film often flashes to Mary thinking of the ambulance and the events that transpired.[138] In *A Woman Under the Influence,* Mabel Longhetti's quirks and eccentricities become the cause of concern for her family members. Following the film's release, *The New York Daily News* critic Rex Reed wrote, "Blanche DuBois is alive and sick and living in the suburbs. She's called Mabel."[139] Though Mabel admits to her doctor that she has anxieties, she firmly rejects the idea that she needs hospitalization. She, however, gets put into a hospital against her will after being given a sedative injection at her husband's directive.[140] The housewives' prescription drug abuse

---

[135] *Divorce,* Lear.
[136] *Ending,* Brooks.
[137] *Stepford,* Berne and Scherick.
[138] *Ending,* Brooks.
[139] Degener, "Director," 6.
[140] *Woman,* Shaw.

and breakdowns represented understandable reactions to their restrictive domestic roles.[141] Women, such as Mary and Mabel, are "mad" because of their limited social position as housewives. As director John Cassavetes of *A Woman Under the Influence* said after the release of the film, "I really believe that all women are crazy. They've been driven crazy by playing a role they can't fulfill."[142] Following hospitalizations, Mary and Mabel take varying approaches to restarting their lives. Mary, unlike many of her contemporaries, makes a break with her past life as she remains separated from her husband, finds a job, and attends night school classes.[143] Mabel, who reveals that she received shock treatment during her stay in the mental hospital, returns to her husband and family in completely different dress, controlled and quiet. After she asks guests to leave her party, she promptly starts her household duties where she left off by cleaning.[144] Husbands, such as Nick Longhetti, tolerated some childlike and dependent behaviors from their wives who returned from hospitals as long as their wives began doing their chores again.[145] From the wives' perspective, they needed serious medical treatment such as shock therapy to resume their gendered roles.

Later films broached the controversial issue of divorce. In *The Graduate*, Mr. Robinson visits Benjamin and tells him the consequences of the young man's relationship with Mrs. Robinson: "My wife and I are getting a divorce soon."[146] For a marriage that lasted many years, often without the physical relationship, the outcome of Mrs. Robinson's philandering seemed shocking. Benjamin even tells him the sex did not mean anything. Despite Mr. Robinson's pronouncement, the couple sits next to each other at their daughter Elaine's wedding, saving

---

[141] Susan Faludi, *Backlash* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991), 124.
[142] Degener, "Director," 6.
[143] *Ending*, Brooks.
[144] *Woman*, Shaw.
[145] Degener, "Director," 12.
[146] *Graduate*, Levine and Turman.

public face for their family and friends despite their private struggles.[147] Released in the same year as *The Graduate*, *Divorce American Style* presented the inner-workings of a divorce in the 1960s. When Barbara Harmon seeks legal advice following a blow-up with her husband, the attorney mentions divorce. Barbara displays shock at his suggestion; the lawyer responds that she acts as though she had never heard the word before his announcement.[148] Divorce in the 1960s was tantamount to a disgrace.[149] Not shockingly, after many years of marriage, Barbara appears reluctant. Unlike Barbara, the Harmon sons seem unfazed by the announcement of their parents' divorce. One informs her that many children come from "broken homes." The movie, though presenting the issues associated with divorce (custody, alimony), harkened back to older Hollywood models with Barbara and her husband, Richard, getting together again after their year-long divorce.[150]

Few housewives gained the strength and resolve to make permanent changes in their lives. In *The Happy Ending*, Mary remains separated from her husband following her escape to the Bahamas. When he comes to visit her at her night school classes, he asks if she would marry him again. Mary tells him that although she still loves him, love is not enough: "We're not the same anymore."[151] The film ends ambiguously, implying that the Wilsons remain separated, but divorce receives no mention. Through *The Graduate* and *Divorce American Style,* Hollywood presented the belief that divorce created more problems than it solved. As with many issues facing housewives during the fifteen-year span under analysis, movies skimmed along the edge of women's problems.[152] With housewives beginning to pursue life-changing choices,

---

[147] *Ibid*.
[148] *Divorce,* Lear.
[149] Stephen R. Marks, "Teasing out the Lessons of the 1960s: Family Diversity and Family Privilege," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 615.
[150] *Divorce,* Lear.
[151] *Ending,* Brooks.
[152] Rosen, *Venus*, 347.

Hollywood addressed some of their concerns, but failed to provide clear answers for a way to self-fulfillment and happiness.

Later housewife films began to reflect the social issues raised by the growing feminist movement. Prior to the emergence of the Third Wave, women became involved in a myriad of social protests including the Civil Rights movements, welfare rights activism, university protests, and the antiwar movement opposing the Vietnam War.[153] As a result of female activities in reform organizations, particularly the Civil Rights movement, many women started to recognize the limitations of being a woman.[154] A raised consciousness over their status and position in society ignited the feminist movement. Betty Friedan's 1963 opus, *The Feminine Mystique*, resonated among middle class housewives who Susan Hartmann says "embodied a contradiction between the intellectual and social stimulation of their college years and the isolation and routine of domesticity."[155] Women began to work together, forming organizations to fight for their liberties. Coalitions such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) championed many causes, in particular the Equal Rights Amendment of 1972.[156] By 1975 women such as Joanna Eberhart gained beneficial knowledge and power as a result of the efforts of the feminist movement. Although *The Stepford Wives* and other housewife films represented backlash against the burgeoning women's movement, the influences of many different social movements found themselves entering suburbia and the big screen.

The release of these housewife films sparked various critical reactions and financial outcomes. Doris Day, for her early housewife comedies, received praise for her work as she elicited laughter, maintained the status quo of women, and combined style and wit to defend

---

[153] Susan Hartmann, *From Margin to Mainstream* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989): 23-4.
[154] *Ibid*., 24.
[155] *Ibid*., 56.
[156] *Ibid*., 103.

virtue.[157] Her wholesomeness and enterprising spirit allowed Day a long and successful career.[158] Mrs. Robinson, played by Anne Bancroft, became the first housewife on film to achieve great success critically and financially. Compared to Doris Day's housewives who were often the primary focus of films, Mrs. Robinson received consideration as a supporting character as the seductive older woman. *The Graduate*'s popularity stemmed from the public's acceptance of the film as Benjamin Braddock's coming-of-age tale as opposed to the housewife's story. Roger Ebert, reviewer at *The Chicago Sun-Times*, heralded *The Graduate* as "the funniest American comedy of the year."[159] *The Graduate* was the highest grossing film of the 1960s with $44.1 million in domestic rentals.[160] Produced for just $3 million, it broke house records for attendance in nearly ninety percent of the theaters in which it played.[161] Unlike *The Graduate*, Richard Brooks' *The Happy Ending* focused solely on Jean Simmons' unhappy Mary Wilson and received disappointing results; the move was a financial failure.[162] *A Woman Under the Influence* approached the status of a hit.[163] Although critics disliked the film, the public bought into Cassavetes' gritty image of a broken housewife. Within six months of its opening in New York City, the movie made close to $15 million.[164] *The Stepford Wives*, addressing contemporary feminist issues in a stylish and clever fashion, barely broke even, returning just $4 million in rentals.[165]

Following some of these films that questioned the societal role of women, *The Stepford Wives* (1975) unwittingly led to the reinforcement of the suburban housewife stereotype. The

---

[157] Rosen, *Venus*, 303.
[158] Haskell, *Reverence*, 263.
[159] Mark Harris, *Pictures at a Revolution* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 381.
[160] David A. Cook, *History of the American Cinema: Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000), 67.
[161] Monaco, *Sixties*, 184.
[162] Haskell, *Reverence*, 336.
[163] Cook, *Illusions*, 200.
[164] Degener, "Director," 9.
[165] Cook, *Illusions*, 243.

film faced tremendous outrage from leading feminists. Betty Friedan deemed the movie a "rip-off of the women's movement," a notion Anna Krugovoy Silver disputes; she believes the film is indebted to Friedan's groundbreaking work. The movie chronicled Joanna Eberhart's move to Stepford, Connecticut, with her husband and two children, but there seems to be something too perfect about the wives in the small town.

The film, targeting key points in feminist literature such as *The Feminine Mystique*, emphasized the plight of the dissatisfied housewife, the artificiality of female beauty and the critique of the nuclear family.[166] Many critics denied that the movie was in fact faithful to popular feminist discourse of its time.[167] These robotic wives recall older days when housewives felt fulfilled working in their homes. In Stepford, they constantly clean, polish, and bake.[168] In actuality, their repetitious lifestyle is not their choice; the Stepford Men's Association murders and replaces the women with robots created to fulfill their husbands' image of the ideal wife.[169] When Joanna discovers the conspiracy, she demands to know the men's logic behind the replacements. The Men's Association leader, Dis, explains, "Think of it the other way around. Wouldn't you like some perfect stud waiting on you around the house, praising you, servicing you, whispering how your sagging flesh was beautiful, no matter how you looked?"[170] The husbands found a way to turn away the tides of feminism and locked the wives into a frozen landscape in "The Town that Time Forgot."[171] In controlling their wives, the men created the sanitized and standardized image of the suburban housewife. *The Stepford Wives* stressed the loss of individuality of these women. The wives are interchangeable and conform to exaggerated

[166] Silver, "Cyborg," 60.
[167] Elliott, "Stepford U.S.A.," 33.
[168] Silver, "Cyborg," 65.
[169] Berne and Scherick, *Stepford*.
[170] Silver, "Cyborg," 71.
[171] Elliott, "Stepford U.S.A.," 41.

images of feminine beauty and behavior.[172] In the final scene, the women all shop in the grocery store wearing sunhats, gloves, and frilly dresses.[173]

One of the major factors for feminist anger over the film was the manner in which the director and writer displayed their ideals. They believed it condensed their analysis. Jane Elliot writes, "[the film and its novel basis] push second-wave feminist discourse through the sieve of the uncanny and what comes out the other side is in essence a 'feminist' remake of a preexisting story of social domination."[174] Feminists including Friedan saw the film as a parody, co-opting the important principles of their agenda.[175] The primary goal of the liberal feminist movement by the time of film's release was the consolidation of power between different groups to disseminate the goals of the movement into political legislation and American culture.[176] Groups such as NOW and figures such as Friedan believed that *The Stepford Wives* hindered their efforts through its presentation of the housewives. The robotic doubles emphasized male reaction to women's feminist consciousness and served to turn back the clock to fulfill men's needs above those of women. The Stepford wives raised feminist issues and concerns until men took action against these independent women by murdering them and then replacing them with robots. The robots, programmed by men, all share the same vocabulary, domestic interests, and manner of dress, as well as the same desire to gratify men's sexual desires while ignoring the reality of women's sexual drive.[177] The film reinforced the stereotyped image of the suburban housewife wearing an apron and cleaning her kitchen. The uniformity and domesticity of the wives seen in the movie added to the contemporary lexicon. The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of the

[172] Silver, "Cyborg," 72.
[173] *Stepford*, Berne and Scherick.
[174] Elliott, "Stepford U.S.A.," 49.
[175] Silver, "Cyborg," 63.
[176] *Ibid*., 62.
[177] *Ibid*., 73.

adjective, Stepford, reads, "robotic; docile, acquiescent; (also) uniform, attractive but lacking in individuality, emotion of thought."[178] Elliott writes that the Stepford vision of the housewife continues to persist in the popular imagination.[179] The societal image of the suburban housewife returned to one of domestic perfection and wholesome, syrupy, feminine beauty as a result of the 1975 thriller.

The suburbs, though viewed as the best location for families to flourish, became a place of exile for many housewives. The ideals of uniformity and repetition plagued the women living there and served as the basis for both propaganda and criticism. While sources such as *Time* praised the new suburban culture, singer-songwriter Malvina Reynolds in 1962 sang out against its conformity. She sang, "Little Boxes on the hillside,/Little boxes made of ticky-tacky/Little boxes, little boxes,/Little boxes all the same."[180] The housewives featured in films produced between 1960 and 1975 were products of the suburban society that confined them to becoming homemakers and abandoning career opportunities in the name of upholding traditional roles for women. Doris Day's domestic humor roles in *Please Don't Eat the Daisies, The Thrill of It All*, and *Send Me No Flowers* addressed many issues women faced but still adhered to societal customs. Although questioning their rights, Day's housewives consistently followed the gender roles ascribed by American society. In the late 1960s, beginning with *The Graduate*, films challenged the view of housewives in their frank and naturalistic portrayals of depressed and discontented women. Of the women on screen, only Mary Wilson of *The Happy Ending* makes a break with expectations and chooses to remain separated from her husband. In *The Stepford Wives*, the men affirm the idea that the ideal woman reflects the older stereotype of the

[178] Oxford English Dictionary, "Stepford," 1.
[179] Elliott, "Stepford, U.S.A.," 33.
[180] Margaret Marsh, "Reconsidering the Suburbs: An Exploration of Suburban Historiography," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112 (1988): 582.

housewife as exemplified by Doris Day. Though unintentionally, the "Stepford" wife remains the current example of the suburban housewife living during this fifteen-year time span. After waiting many years to address "the problem with no name," films continued to uphold the status quo for housewives. Despite presenting serious issues of these women, the vision of the suburban housewife represented in Hollywood films produced between 1960 and 1975 ultimately became one of a woman happily wearing an apron, living in her little box.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

A Woman Under the Influence. Directed by Sam Shaw. Faces International Films, 1974.

"AMERICANA: The Roots of Home." *Time* (June 20, 1960): 14-18.

Day, Doris and A.E. Hotchner. *Doris Day Her Own Story*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1979.

Divorce American Style. Directed by Norman Lear. Columbia Pictures, 1967.

Degener, David. "Director under the Influence." *Film Quarterly* 29 (1975-6): 4-12.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique.* New York: Norton, 1963.

Lopata, Helena Znaniecki. *Occupation Housewife*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Please Don't Eat the Daisies. Directed by Joe Pasternak. Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, 1960.

Rosen, Marjorie. *Popcorn Venus*. New York: McCann & Geoghegan, 1973.

Send Me No Flowers. Directed by Harry Keller. Universal Pictures, 1964.

The Graduate. Directed by Joseph E. Levine and Lawrence Turman. Embassy Pictures, 1967.

The Happy Ending. Directed by Richard Brooks. United Artists, 1969.

The Thrill of It All. Directed by Ross Hunter and Martin Melcher. Universal Pictures, 1963.

The Stepford Wives. Directed by Gustav M. Berne and Edgar J. Scherick. Columbia Pictures, 1975.

Walker, Alexander. *Double Takes: Notes and Afterthoughts on the Movies, 1956-1976.* London: Elm Tree Books, 1977.

Yours, Mine & Ours. Directed by Robert F. Blumofe. Metro-Goyldwn-Meyer, 1968.

Secondary Sources

Books:

Beauregard, Robert A. *When America Became Suburban*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Benshoff, Harry M. and Sean Griffin. *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies*, 2nd edition. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2009.

Browne, Ray B. Foreword to *Hollywood as Historian American Film in a Cultural Context*, ix-x. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983.

Cook, David A. *History of the American Cinema: Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000.

Faludi, Susan. *Backlash*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Harris, Mark. *Pictures at a Revolution*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2008.

Hartmann, Susan. *From Margin to Mainstream*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

Haskell, Molley. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Matthews, Glenna. *"Just a Housewife": The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Meyerowitz, Joanne. "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958." In *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, edited by Joanne Meyerowitz, 229-62. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

Monaco, Paul. *History of the American Cinema: the Sixties*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001.

Nicolaides, Becky M. and Andrew Wiese. *The Suburb Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Articles:

Bingham, Dennis. "Before She Was a Virgin…": Doris Day and the Decline of Female Film Comedy in the 1950s and 1960s." *Cinema Journal* 45 (2006): 3-31.

Briley, Ron. "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, as Viewed through the Lens of Hollywood." *The History Teacher* 23 (1990): 215-36.

Cloward, Richard A. and Frances Fox Piven. "Hidden Protest: The Channeling of Female Innovation and Resistance." *Signs* 4 (1979): 651-99.

Craig, Lois. "Suburbs." *Design Quarterly* 132 (1986): 1, 3-32.

Elliot, Jane. “Stepford U.S.A. Second Wave Feminism, Domestic Labor and the Representation of National Time.” *Cultural Critique* 70 (2008): 32-62.

England, Kim V.L. “Changing Suburbs, Changing Women: Geographic Perspectives on Suburban Women and Suburbanization.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 14 (1993): 24-43.

Kozol, Wendy. “Fracturing Domesticity: Media, Nationalism and the Question of Feminist Influence.” *Signs* 20 (1995): 646-67.

Lincoln, Anne E. and Michael Patrick Allen. “Double Jeopardy in Hollywood: Age and Gender in the Careers of Film Actors, 1926-1999.” *Sociological Forum* 19 (2004): 611-31.

Marks, Stephen R. “Teasing out the Lessons of the 1960s: Family Diversity and Family Privilege.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 609-22.

Marsh, Margaret. “Historians and the Suburbs.” *Magazine of History* 5 (1990): 43-9

Marsh, Margaret. “Reconsidering the Suburbs: An Exploration of Suburban Historiography.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112 (1988): 579-605.

McLeer, Anne. “Practical Perfection? The Nanny Negotiates Gender, Class and Family Contradictions in 1960s Popular Culture.” *NWSA Journal* 14 (2002): 80-101.

Miller, Laura J. “Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal.” *Sociological Forum* 10 (1995): 393-418.

Saegert, Susan. “Masculine Cities and Feminine Suburbs: Polarized Ideas, Contradictory Realities.” *Signs* 5 (1980): S96-111.

Silver, Anna Krugovoy. “The Cyborg Mystique: “The Stepford Wives” and Second Wave Feminism.” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 30 (2002): 60-76.

Walker, Nancy. “Humor and Gender Roles: The ‘Funny’ Feminism of the Post-World War II Suburbs.” *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 98-113.

Other:

Oxford English Dictionary. “Stepford.” Oxford English Dictionary Online. <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00335022?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=stepford&first=1&max_to_show=10>.

The Wolf in the Red Square: Chechen Terrorism in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Rachel Phyllis O'Donnell
Appalachian State University

On January 24, 2011, an explosion shook the Domodedovo Airport in Moscow, Russia, one of the city's main travel hubs. Shortly after yelling "I will kill you all," a single suicide bomber blew himself up in the international arrivals hall of the airport.[1] Both the United States and the Russian Federation declared the attack an act of terrorism, and many suspected that it was orchestrated at the hands of Chechen terrorists. The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) later reported that Chechen terrorist leader Doku Umarov claimed responsibility for the attack, warning that the "war in the Caucasus was coming to Russia's main cities."[2] This attack serves to remind the people and government of the Russian Federation that the vengeance of the Chechens—and the terrorism that accompanies it—is still a legitimate cause for concern in the twenty-first century. The Chechens are slowly bringing the fight to Russia. Russian soil is no longer safe. The oppressive Russian response to Chechen bids for autonomy has forced the Chechen resistance to defend themselves, their culture, and their ethnic identification. As a lesser power fighting a greater power, the Chechens have elected to use terrorist tactics, after a failure at traditional warfare, to seek retribution against the Russians and to gain their long sought after freedom.

Chechnya is a semi-autonomous republic in the Northern Caucasus region of Russia, and its people are largely Muslim, a minority within the Russian Federation. Though it has been ruled by Moscow for the past two centuries, Chechnya has made numerous attempts to gain independence from the Russian Federation since 1991.[3] In the early 1990s, Chechnya moved for sovereignty with the creation of the Chechen All-National Congress.[4] Following a failure to achieve autonomy, however, a "terrorist ideology that sought to separate Chechnya from Russian

---

[1] "Moscow Bombing: Carnage at Russia's Domodedovo Airport," *BBC News*, January 24, 2011.
[2] "Chechen Warlord Doku Umarov Admits Moscow Airport Bomb," *BBC News*, February 8, 2011.
[3] Lisa M. McCartan, et al., "The Logic of Terrorist Target Choice: An Examination of Chechen Rebel Bombings from 1997-2003," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (2008), 61.
[4] Preeti Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)," Council on Foreign Relations.

control in order to make the country a sovereign nation" developed in the region.[5] As a result, Chechen nationalists have been collectively dubbed Chechen rebels, and terrorism against the Russian nation has become widespread.

Chechen terrorism gained international notoriety due to the escalation of violence in the region as a result of the Russo-Chechen Wars of 1994-1996 and 1999-2006.[6] To combat the Russian invasion, the Chechen resistance implemented guerilla warfare traditions, especially by means of "asymmetrical and unconventional terrorist tactics."[7] There were reports from the Russian front that it was difficult to distinguish between a Chechen warrior and a civilian, and the terrorist tactics the rebels employed made that distinction practically pointless in Western eyes.[8] However, before delving into the complex issue of terrorism in the Northern Caucasus, it is important to understand the background and driving ideology behind Chechen terrorism. This requires an examination of the First and Second Russo-Chechen Wars, which reveal what the Chechen people are fighting for today and how they developed and implemented their combat strategies.

The First Russo-Chechen War began in December 1994. Russian troops entered the Caucasian territory under the orders of Boris Yeltsin. This was a response to Chechen attempts in 1991 to gain independence, efforts led by then-Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev.[9] After a disastrous attempt to invade the Chechen capital of Grozny on New Year's Eve 1994, the Russian tank divisions succeeded in taking the city during the opening week of January 1995.[10]

---

[5] Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)".
[6] British Broadcasting Company (BBC), "Time Line: Chechnya".
[7] Richard H. Shultz Jr. and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 127.
[8] Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 136.
[9] BBC, "Regions and Territories: Chechnya".
[10] Tom de Waal, "Chechnya: The Breaking Point," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa (London, Anthem Press: 2005), 182.

Due to the heavy destruction caused by the Russians' heavy artillery and bombing, Grozny was nearly unrecognizable when the fighting subsided. "Chechnya's main urban center… home to its university and oil institute — was totally destroyed… at a stroke Russia's bombers set back Chechnya two generations."[11] To add to the horror of such stark devastation, the approximately 100,000 Chechen civilians living in Grozny had not been evacuated.[12] Despite the desire of the Russian armed forces to target predominantly hostile combatant threats, Chechen civilians had been, and later continued to be, caught in the crossfire. This lack of respect for human rights caused great outrage in Russia and the West and is still being examined today.[13]

The fighting in Chechnya, specifically in urban Grozny, took on the tendencies of old tribal "forest warfare." Anatol Lieven defines this as the replacement of the natural forest by the modern "forest" of a different sort: the city.[14] Thus, urban guerilla warfare emerged as a predominate characteristic of the First Russo-Chechen War. This new urban warfare gave the advantage to the Chechen resistance, who already excelled in guerilla tactics that stemmed from their traditional tactics of tribal warfare. The "new urban forest" offered the Chechen forces many of the same advantages as traditional forest warfare: "opportunities for sniping, mines, booby-traps, and ambushes."[15] In addition, Chechens made good use of their knowledge of the city's layout and of new technology such as the rocket-propelled grenade (RPG), which they used to destroy Russian tank regiments.[16]

---

[11] de Waal, 183.
[12] *Ibid*., 182.
[13] Lieven, 107.
[14] *Ibid*., 113.
[15] *Ibid*., 114.
[16] Lieven, 117.

Attempts at peace between Russia and Chechnya came in two waves: once in 1996 and again in 1997.[17] The first peace treaty initiated between the Chechen resistance and the Russian government under Yeltsin came as a response to a critical attack led by the Chechen war hero Shamil Basayev. On June 14, 1995, an armed brigade under Basayev moved through Russian-controlled territory to the town of Buddennovsk, forty miles from the Russian-Chechen border.[18] The town was assaulted and approximately 1,600 hostages were held at a local hospital. Basayev threatened to kill the hostages unless Russian forces withdrew from Chechnya. One hundred and five people were killed in this example of terrorism during the first Chechen War.[19] Despite accusations and cries of terrorism, Basayev maintained that his actions had been honorable. As he stated, "I am not a terrorist or gangster. I am an ordinary Chechen who rose up in arms to defend his people."[20]

The no-holds-barred attack on Buddennovsk signaled to the Russian government that the Chechens were not going to abandon their dreams of autonomy without a prolonged, bloody fight. Car bombs in Grozny and the notorious planting of radioactive materials in Moscow provided the final push for a cease-fire. In April 1996, Chechen President Dudayev was assassinated in a Russian missile strike, and one month later, his successor agreed to sign informal cease-fire accords with Yeltsin.[21] Later, on May 12, 1997, Yeltsin and newly elected Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov signed a formal peace accord, bringing an official end to the First Chechen War.[22] The accord, however, failed to address the issue of Chechen independence. The Chechen desire for freedom from Russian control had been temporarily

---

[17] "Timeline: Chechnya."
[18] Lieven, 124.
[19] Emma Gilligan, *Terror in Chechnya: Russia and the Tragedy of Civilians in War* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 2010), 127-129.
[20] Gilligan, 129.
[21] "Territories and Regions: Chechnya."
[22] Lieven, 145-146.

checked, but their hopes for independence had not disappeared and resentment of the Russians continued to simmer under the surface.

Following the end of the First Chechen War, there was an unstable period of peace between Russia and the Chechen resistance as the accords hung precariously in the balance. However, the peace did not last longer than the fall of 1999, when the Chechens provoked the Russians into the Second Chechen War. Contrary to the first conflict's origins, this second war was the result of Chechen aggression rather than Russian entry into semi-autonomous Chechen territory.

On August 17, 1999, a band of Chechen resistance fighters, once again led by Shamil Basayev, crossed the border into neighboring Dagestan "in pursuit of the proposed Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus."[23] The Chechen fighters, however, met Russian resistance in the region, inciting two months of violence across the Russo-Chechen border with very few periods of peace. The Russian government was taken aback by the emergence of a new Chechen extremism among the rebels that contained aspects of radical Islamism. "The existence of linkages between the Chechen resistance and transnational radical Islamic organizations expanded, fueled by religious ideology."[24]

Following the invasion of Dagestan, the combat of the Second Chechen War took a drastic turn from the urban guerilla combat of the First Chechen War, and solitary acts of terrorism became the *modus operandi* of the Chechen resistance forces. Instead of outright aggression, Russia responded with more political and reactive measures; the Russian government did not, for instance, make an official declaration of war.[25] In 2000, then-President Vladimir Putin made a move regarding negotiations with Chechen leadership that "in effect defined all

[23] Gilligan, 31.
[24] Shultz and Dew, 144.
[25] Gilligan, 32.

Chechen nationalists as terrorists and isolated the Chechen resistance fighters, leaving them with little alternative… [but] to sabotage and [use] terrorism."[26] The Second Chechen War was sold as a Russian counter-terrorism operation to the public.

It is important to note that during the early years of the Second Chechen War, the Chechen people suffered greatly at the hands of the Russian *zachistka*, a word that literally means to clean something out. During a *zachistka*, or sweep operation, Russian troops surrounded a Chechen village and barred locals from entering or leaving. The troops then conducted thorough searches of every house. The resident Chechens were grouped together "to be checked, detained, or executed, usually on the outskirts of a targeted village." The program was therefore eerily similar to the ethnic cleansing programs of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany or the *dekulakization* campaigns of the 1930s in the then-Soviet Union.[27] Nevertheless, the Russian government seems to have believed that violating the Geneva Convention's rules of war was a small price to pay in order to "clean up" terrorism in Chechnya. With the Chechens' tradition of blood feud and the tribal customs of Caucasian *adat*, it is easy to see how *zachistka* added fuel to the fire of hatred towards the Russians, demanding exact retribution.

Acts of Chechen terrorism against the Russians have continued from the 1999 Moscow apartment bombings to the recent attack on the international arrivals hall of Moscow's Domodedovo Airport on January 24, 2011.[28] The Chechen dilemma has moved from the time period directly associated with the Second Chechen War (1999-present) into a period of sustained Chechen terrorism (2002-present) with the same objective of independence in mind. Terrorism in Chechnya has now gained international notoriety, and according to the Center for

---

[26] John Russell, "A War by Any Other Name: Chechnya, 11 September, and the War Against Terrorism," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 253.
[27] Gilligan, 50-54.
[28] "Timeline: Chechnya."

Strategic and International Studies, violence in the Caucasus has markedly increased since 2008.[29] The Caucasians are a proud and independent people who have been subjected to foreign control for most of their existence, and in the past fifteen years, Chechen terrorism has undergone a unique transition from an ethnocentric nationalist force to a resistance with vestiges of Islamic radicalism. "It [had become] customary in the mid-1990s to define oneself and others by ethnic affiliation," and therefore, during the course of the First Chechen War, the Chechen opposition developed an ethnocentric viewpoint.[30] By 2002, during the Second Chechen War, "currents within the movement had abandoned the self-image of a national separatist movement and began to adopt an increasingly strong Islamist discourse."[31]

In examining the ethnocentric tendencies of the Chechen resistance in the mid-1990s, one must first understand the chosen traumas and shared memories of the Chechen people concerning Russia. The Chechen people have been fighting against the Russians since the late 1700s, and their "detailed memory of past defeats and traumatic losses"[32] has carried over into the current Chechen-Russian conflict; they remember the brutality they suffered at the hands of the Russians. The Chechens as an ethnic group feel violated by the Russians due to the Russians' total disregard for local religion, customs, and beliefs. They specifically resent the Russians' disrespect of the traditional *adat* culture of the Caucasus.[33] Amazingly, the Chechen people have managed to retain these basic values that make up traditional Caucasian culture "throughout the intense changes that [Chechnya] has undergone since its first contact with

[29] Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Seperatist)."
[30] Anatoly Isaenko, *Polygon of Satan: Ethnic Traumas and Conflicts in the Caucasu*s (Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2010), 87.
[31] Gilligan, 123.
[32] Isaenko, 60-61.
[33] *Ibid*., 63.

Russia: Islamisation, adherence to the Sufi brotherhoods, modernisation, urbanisation, [and] Russification."[34]

Adat is the ethical and moral code of the Caucasus area that has garnered more respect in the area than the Russian legal code could ever hope to achieve. Predating Islam in the region, and still remaining an integral part of Chechen heritage today, *adat* addresses the appropriate responses after one community member kills another. In such a case, *adat* dictates that the victim's family take the life of a member of the killer's family in recompense. In this way, *adat* resembles the idea of "an eye for an eye" from Hammurabi's Code of ancient Babylon: a demand of equal retribution for the slightest or most grievous of crimes. *Adat* sometimes instigated a string of revenge killings that eradicated an entire clan from the area; it was therefore not a matter to be taken lightly. Although non-Chechens are not usually included in the law of *adat*, one can see the Chechens' blood vendetta against the Russians as a form of intercultural *adat*.[35]

Similar to the cultural *adat*, there are five building blocks of ethnicity that mark cultures such as that of the Chechens. These blocks are the following: biology, language, shared history, religion, and nationality.[36] When these building blocks are "threatened or damaged more than once, or regularly, then the memory of victimization" on the part of the Chechens becomes acute.[37] The Russians, as previously stated, have repeatedly violated the sanctity of Chechen culture throughout history. Nikita Khrushchev, for example, created a policy revolving around the idea of a "Soviet Nation" that "closed all native-language schools in all autonomous republics … such as all Chechen schools in Chechnya."[38] With this policy, the Russians violated

---

[34] Moshe Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2006), 7.
[35] Peter Ford, "Chechens' Eye-for-Eye Vendetta Shape War," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 8, 1995.
[36] Isaenko, 98-99.
[37] *Ibid*., 115.
[38] Isaenko, 81.

the Chechens' language autonomy, sparking tensions between the two groups. Another example of block violation—specifically that of the nationality block—can be seen in the *pogroms* of deportation following World War II. In 1939, there were approximately 407,690 people living in Chechnya, and 387,229 people were forcibly deported via railways.[39] The Chechens were thus uprooted from traditional tribal lands and forced onto lands with which they did not historically identify.

To add fuel to the fire, when the Chechen people were repatriated, they found that their traditional lands had been overrun by people of other ethnic identities.[40] Again, tensions between the Chechens and Russians grew as the Chechens continued to see nothing but abuse at the hands of the Russians. Consequently, their aims became ethnocentric, and their organized resistance was born. The famous Chechen Sheikh Kunta-Haji Kishiev highlighted the need to preserve the Chechen culture no matter what the cost: "If they touch your wives, force you to forget your native language, culture, and customs, stand up and fight to the very last man!"[41] A call to action was issued on the basis of preserving basic cultural values that serve as the foundations for Caucasian and Chechen society.

Because the Russians had trampled upon the Chechen ethnicity for so long, the Chechens' objective became the achievement of independence from the Russian Federation. Purportedly, after this independence was achieved, the Chechen people would be free to practice their traditions and culture freely. Following this move, their ethnocentric nationalism would shift from an initial violent stage to a later democratic stage. Nevertheless, as events during the Second Chechen War prove, such a transformation did not take place.

---

[39] *Ibid*., 84, table 2-1.
[40] *Ibid*., 84-86.
[41] Emil Souleimanov, *An Endless War: The Russian-Chechen Conflict in Perspective* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007), 69.

With the start of the Second Chechen War in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Chechen ideology experienced a shift from ethnocentrism to radical Islamism. This shift had its roots in the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. The Soviet Union was presented as an atheistic nation, and after its fall, a wave of Islamic revivalism swept across the Northern Caucasus. This revival was mainly of the Sufi brotherhoods that had survived the Soviet Union and the Salafist influence from the Middle East.[42] In Chechnya and most of the Northern Caucasus during the First Chechen War, Islam proved to be a distinguishing factor and a uniting force against the Orthodox Christian Russians. The shift from ethnocentrism to radicalism may have been accelerated by the *zachistka* cleansing programs. Brutalized families were recruited to the "green banners of professional jihadism with an accent on *shahidism* (martyrdom)."[43] In turn, radical Islamist tendencies crept into the methodology and justification of Chechen terrorism. In addition to these changes, the Chechen resistance during the Second Chechen War began receiving outside assistance from *mujahidin* guerilla fighters from other Islamic countries. Most of this *mujahidin* aid came from men who had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets in 1979-89, and were therefore well acquainted with hatred for the Russians.[44]

In addition, the influence of the Saudi Arabian Wahhabism has recently spread, and Chechen leaders such as Shamil Basayev have embraced this new radical Islamist ideology.[45] Wahhabism is a puritanical Sunni Islamic movement from Saudi Arabia that was developed by Muhammad bin Abd al Wahhab in the eighteenth century and that seeks to purify Islam.[46] In Chechnya, however, the religious practices associated with Wahhabism are not emphasized as

---

[42] Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Assessing Unholy Alliances in Chechnya: From Communism and Nationalism to Islamism and Salafism," *Journal of Communist Studies & Transition Politics* 25 (2005): 83.
[43] Isaenko, 287.
[44] Gilligan, 128-129.
[45] *Ibid*., 127.
[46] U.S. Congress. Congressional Research Service. *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafism.* (C. Rpt. 21695). Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2008.

strongly as its elements that promote the resistance movement; instead, is "deeply entangled with the radical nationalism of [rebel] field commanders," who use it to advance personal goals and the goal of the Chechen cause.[47] The young men of the Caucasus who are fighting this war embrace the Wahhabi idea of armed jihad rather than the Islamic doctrines it promotes, which go against the traditional Sufi Islam of the Caucasus.[48] Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, ethnically Saudi and born in Jordan, is often cited as a prominent reason for the rise of radical Islam and Wahhabism in the Caucasus. After marrying into neighboring Dagestan, he established a school that offered "ideological indoctrination as well as training in combat and guerilla warfare."[49] When Khattab, Shamil Basayev, and other leaders discovered that they could use Islamic discourse to gain the support of other actors abroad, they did so. Thus, the Chechen resistance movement took on radical Islamic characteristics.

The Dubrovka Theater crisis in 2002, during which the resistance stormed the theater and took hundreds of hostages while demanding the freedom of Chechnya, is widely regarded as the first operation truly to showcase these new radical Islamist tendencies. Reports from the theater tell of banners written in Arabic, militants reading passages from the Koran, and Arabic music playing during the siege. In addition, the demands video with the conditions for the release of the hostages was shown first by Al Jezeera. The female terrorists present wore black veils and *jilbabs*. With all the accouterments of an al-Qaeda operation, one must "note the union of Islamism and nationalism—a call for the cessation of the war in Chechnya packaged in Islamist discourse."[50] In 2007, Doku Umarov gave a statement calling for jihad in Chechnya

---

[47] Elise Giuliano, "Islamic Identity and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnya and Dagestan Compared," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11(2005): 210.
[48] *Ibid*.
[49] *Ibid*., 211-212.
[50] Gilligan, 132.

against Russia. Even if it was not intended to do so, the statement publicly cemented the transition from nationalism to Islamic radicalism.

The move from ethnocentric nationalism and the definition of people by ethnicity to the justification of radical Islam and its accompanying terrorism still begs the question of why the Chechen resistance changed stances. Did the concept of *jihad* in Islam give the rebels the justification they needed for the bloody fight against the Russians? Or did the resistance simply need support from outside of the Caucasus to make the Chechen plight known? The answer appears to lean toward the latter, but either way, the Chechens have employed terrorist tactics more readily since the start of the Second Chechen War. Hostage situations and suicide bombings have become increasingly common since 1999.

When discussing the terrorist actions of a nation or resistance fighters, it is vitally important to understand the major actors and groups that participate in the conflict. There are three prominent Chechen rebel leaders throughout the course of this conflict: Shamil Basayev, Omar Ibn al-Khattab, and Doku Umarov. In addition, a relatively new terrorist phenomenon known as the Black Widows has become influential in Chechen terrorist operations.

Shamil Salmanovich Basayev was Russia's most wanted man during the course of the Second Chechen War and until his death in 2006. Basayev was a "leading Chechen field commander behind some of the most violent and high-profile attacks in the war for Chechen independence."[51] The United Nations Security Council officially designated Basayev as a terrorist in 2003 after the United States declared him a threat.[52] Basayev's involvement with

[51] Elisabeth Smick, "The Chechen Separatist Movement," Council on Foreign Relations.
[52] "Obituary: Shamil Basayev," *BBC News*, July 10, 2006, accessed December 1, 2010.

many large scale terrorist attacks has led nations to brand him as an extremist rebel; this label has also caused polarization within the Chechen resistance, which varies in degrees of violence. Going back further in his history, it is evident that Basayev was heavily involved in the terrorist actions in the First Chechen War, including the siege of Buddennovsk. Later, he was the leader of the 1999 Chechen charge into Dagestan, which led to a direct shooting conflict with Russian troops and helped start the Second Chechen War.[53]

Shamil Basayev was most notable for his major roles in the June 1995 Buddennovsk hostage crisis and hospital siege, the October 2002 seizure and hostage crisis of Moscow's Dubrovka Theater, and the September 2004 Beslan School Hostage Crisis, although he participated in many other smaller terrorist attacks as well. In 2006, he was elected vice president of the Chechen rebel movement.[54] On July 10, 2006, however, he was killed in an explosion in Ingushetia believed to have been orchestrated by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).[55] Since Basayev's death, the Chechen resistance has lacked a strong figurehead and leader. Until late in the decade, this had resulted in a decrease in terrorist attacks in the Northern Caucasus.

There has long been a search for connections between Islamic radical groups in the Middle East and the Chechen resistance groups in the Caucasus. Evidence of this connection can be found in the personage of Omar Ibn al-Khattab. Al-Khattab joined the Chechen resistance movement in 1995. Previously, he claimed to have fought the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1979-89 Soviet-Afghani war. Al-Khattab was a native of Saudi Arabia, the motherland of al-Qaeda, and a follower of the radical Wahhabi Islamic movement.[56] Whether or not al-Khattab

---

[53] Gilligan, 31.
[54] Smick, "The Chechen Separatist Movement."
[55] Steven Lee Myers, "Explosion Kills Chechen Rebel Tied to Carnage," *The New York Times*, July 11, 2006.
[56] Shultz and Dew, 129.

actually knew any of the leaders of al-Qaeda (i.e. Osama bin Laden), he was ideologically and financially supported by the terrorist group.[57] Until his death in 2002, when he was poisoned by a letter sent from the Russian FSB, Al-Khattab served as Shamil Basayev's right-hand man.[58]

After his death in 2006, Shamil Basayev was succeeded by Doku Umarov. Umarov fought in the First Chechen War, and during the interim peace of 1996-1999, he served as the head of the Chechen Security Council.[59] In 2006, Umarov became the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Early on in his combat and political career, Umarov rejected the use of terrorist tactics in the fight against the Russians. However, insurgent groups under his command have recently claimed responsibility for the November 2009 "Nevsky Express" derailment and other smaller terrorist acts. As of April 2010, Umarov himself claimed responsibility for the March 2010 Moscow metro suicide bombings.[60] In June 2010, the United States Department of State formally designated Umarov as a terrorist.[61] In August 2010, Umarov appeared in a video stating that he was retiring and that he was going to name his successor. A few days later, however, Umarov appeared in another video in which he asserted that the first video was fraudulent and that he was not retiring.[62] As of early 2011, Doku Umarov was still the leader of the Chechen resistance, although the movement has lost much of the clout that it had gained under Shamil Basayev.

In the last case of examining people and groups of the Chechen resistance, it is important to look at a group that is predominately unique to the Chechen movement: the Black Widows. The Black Widows are defined as "women who have lost a husband, child or close relative to the

---

[57] *Ibid*., 144.
[58] Smick, "The Chechen Separatist Movement."
[59] Liz Fuller, "News Profile: Who is Doku Umarov?," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 1, 2010.
[60] "Timeline: Chechnya."
[61] United States. Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Designation of Caucasus' Emirate Leader Doku Umarov* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 2010).
[62] "Timeline: Chechnya."

[Russian] 'occupation' and killed themselves on [terrorist] missions to even the score."[63] The infamous Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev boasted on several occasions that he was the one to train the Black Widows of the Northern Caucasus.[64] The first noted case of a Chechen Black Widow terrorist attack was in June 2000. A woman named Hawa Barayev killed 27 people when she and a male companion drove an explosive-laden vehicle into a structure housing Russian Federal Security operatives.[65] According to a study by the Chicago Project on Security in Terrorism, an astounding forty percent of Chechen suicide bombers are women. In addition, eight out of ten terrorist attacks on Moscow have been carried out by women.[66] These women often feel that they are being humiliated in front of the world as a result of living under Russian occupation. With such a dismal existence, they see the paradise described in the Koran and by Islamic extremists as a place where all of their problems will be resolved; consequently, they willingly give up their lives to attain it. For these women, the peace that accompanies the death of a martyr is preferable to a life of war, grief, and violence.[67] Their actions thus underscore the transition of Chechen nationalism into Islamic radicalism.

This radicalism can be seen in a number of Chechen terrorist attacks conducted in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. On September 9, 1999, a block of apartment buildings Moscow suddenly exploded. Sixty-four people died as a result of the bombings, and although responsibility has not formally been claimed for the attacks, it is widely believed that they are the responsibility of Chechen terrorists.[68] These bombings, in combination with the invasion of

---

[63] Robert A. Pape, Lindsey O'Rourke, and Jenna McDermit, "What Makes Chechen Women So Dangerous?," *The New York Times*, March 30, 2010.
[64] "Obituary: Shamil Basayev."
[65] Debra Z. Zedalis, "Female Suicide Bombers," *U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute*, June 2004.
[66] Pape, O'Rourke and Jenna McDermit, "What Makes Chechen Women So Dangerous?"
[67] Anne Nivat, "The Black Widows: Chechen Women Join the Fight for Independence—and Allah," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005): 418.
[68] Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)."

Dagestan (led by Shamil Basayev and Omar Ibn al-Khattab), are believed to be the two main provocations for the Russian instigation of the Second Chechen War.

Another instance of terrorism occurred during October 23-26, 2002, in Moscow at the Dubrovka Theater. Chechen terrorists, including Black Widow female suicide bombers, stormed the theater where a sold-out showing of "Nord-Orst" was playing. Capturing 850 hostages,[69] the terrorists demanded a removal of Russian occupation in Chechnya and independence for the region. After a three-day standoff with the rebels, Russian Special Forces launched a rescue mission to recover the hostages. Opium gas was used to incapacitate the terrorists, but unfortunately resulted in the deaths of many hostages as well; at least 120 were dead by the end of the rescue operation.[70] Shamil Basayev claimed responsibility for the attack.[71]

In December 2002, the Chechen rebels posed an attack that can be connected directly to frustration with Russian occupation and control. Two explosive-laden vehicles drove into the city center of Grozny in Chechnya. The drivers broke through a government building that housed the headquarters of the Russian-controlled government. From there, the attack turned into a suicide bombing. Eighty-three people were killed and over 170 were wounded. Once again, Shamil Basayev claimed the attack, admitting that he had trained the suicide bombers.[72]

Yet another attack in December 2003 is a prime example of the type of assault mounted by the Chechen Black Widows. A female suicide bomber detonated herself in Moscow's Red Square, killing five people and wounding many others. The attack was believed to have been

[69] Isaenko, 288-289.
[70] Bhattacharhji, "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)."
[71] *Ibid*.
[72] Isaenko, 288.

aimed at the State Duma; the bomb was detonated along the west wall of the Kremlin, several hundred feet away from the Kremlin itself.[73]

The next serious instance of a terrorist attack was a prominent feature of world news in 2004. On September 1, a day traditionally celebrated as the first school day of the academic year, the students, teachers, and parents of School No. 1 in Beslan, North Ossetia, were stormed and held hostage. Chechen terrorists under the leadership of an absent Shamil Basayev took 1,254 hostages.[74] The conditions of the besiegement were abhorrent. All hostages were forced into the gymnasium and made to sit among bombs that were strung from the ceiling and attached to trip wires. The hostages were denied "food, water, medicines, and access to the bathroom."[75] Shamil Basayev released a recorded video tape in which he demanded the independence of Chechnya in return for the freedom of the hostages. Finally, on September 3, a sudden explosion in the gymnasium led to heavy fire from both sides and the flight of hostages from the building as it began to collapse. According to the contemporary figures, 339 people died, 179 of which were children. At least 600 people were also injured,[76] and almost 200 people remain missing or unidentified. The Beslan hostage crisis is still widely considered the most violent attack of Chechen terrorism.

Recently, in March 2010, two different stations of the Moscow metro were attacked by female suicide bombers during the morning commute period. The first explosion occurred at 7:56 A.M. at the Lubyanka station as a train arrived. The symbolism here lies in the fact that the Lubyanka station is located directly below the headquarters of the FSB, the Russian Federal

---

[73] Steven Lee Myers, "Suicide Bombers Kills 5 in Moscow Near Red Square," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2003.
[74] Isaenko, 289.
[75] Gilligan, 138.
[76] Isaenko, 289.

Security Service.[77] Fifteen people on the train and eleven on the platform were killed by the explosion. Almost an hour later, at 8:38 A.M., a second explosion occurred at the Park Kultury station near Gorky Park.[78] Fourteen people onboard the train there were killed. Over 100 people were injured in the explosion. When the dust had settled, the death toll from the terrorist attacks totaled forty people. Doku Umarov later claimed responsibility for the orchestration of the attacks.[79]

In October 2010, three militants entered the Chechen Parliament complex in Grozny. A suicide bomb was detonated as the men ran into the building, shouting in Arabic and firing at the guards. During the attack, six people were killed and seventeen people were wounded.[80] All three of the militants avoided capture by detonating suicide bombs. This incident is still under investigation, but it is possible that the attack took place as a statement against Russia in general, since the Russian Interior Minister, Rashid Nurgaliev, was in Grozny at the time. No group has yet been implicated in the attack.

Strangely, despite this string of attacks by Chechen rebels, the United States Department of State chose to leave the Chechen rebel group off of its terror list during the annual review in April 2010.[81] This action has been widely contested by experts of the Caucasus area who believe that the Chechen rebel force is a viable terrorist operation and that by leaving them off the list, the security community runs the risk of underestimating and undervaluing the Chechen movement. Soon after the 2010 review, a member of the House of Representatives submitted a

[77] "Moscow Metro Hit by Deadly Suicide Bombings," *BBC* News, March 29, 2010.
[78] *Ibid*.
[79] Bhattacharhji, "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)."
[80] Steve Rosenberg, "Attack on Chechen Parliament in Grozny Leaves Six Dead," *BBC News*, October 19, 2010.
[81] Josh Rogin, "State Department to Leave Chechen Rebel Group off Terror List," *Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2010.

resolution to the House urging them to designate the Caucasus' Emirate a terrorist organization.[82] However, since then, the bill has made no news and it appears to have been ineffective.

The struggle for Chechen independence over the last two centuries has been one stained by ethnocentric nationalism, blood revenge, radical Islamic tendencies, and dozens of violent terrorist attacks. As the Russians go on with their attempts to control the Chechen people, the resistance will only continue to expand until the Chechens achieve what they desire most: sovereignty. As a culture with a tradition of violence and independence, the Caucasian mountaineers continue to be a people willing to use any and all means to achieve their desired end. Although their motives and methods have evolved since the beginning of the conflict, the Chechens have time and time again shown the Russian government that they have no intention of giving up. They are willing to take the fight to the Russians, and they have. Unless Russia changes its policy in dealing with the Chechen people, the stunning and violent attacks will continue and evolve to meet new issues that arise.

The challenges that lie ahead for the Chechen resistance are not small. They must find a newer, stronger leader to fill the gap left by Shamil Basayev. They must learn how to gain both notoriety and respect for their desire of independence on the international stage. The resistance must reevaluate the use of traditional terrorist tactics as a means to an end; thought must be given to whether those tactics serve to impede or bolster the Chechen cause. Most importantly, they must determine whether they still aim for ethnocentric freedom or if they are entering into a new phenomenon of *jihad* by associating themselves with major Islamic terrorist organizations and ideology.

---

[82] House, *Urging the Secretary of State to designate the Caucasus Emirate as a foreign terrorist organization,* 111th Cong., 2d sess., H.R.1315.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ford, Peter. “Chechens’ Eye-for-Eye Vendetta Shape War.” *The Christian Science Monitor*. March 8, 1995. Accessed on January 20, 2011. A*cademic Search Complete,* EBESCO*Host.*

“Moscow Bombing: Carnage at Russia’s Domodedovo Airport.” *BBC News*. January 24, 2011. Accessed on January 24, 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12268662.

“Moscow Metro Hit by Deadly Suicide Bombings.” *BBC* News. March 29, 2010. Accessed on December 2, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8592190.stm.

Myers, Steven Lee. “Explosion Kills Chechen Rebel Tied to Carnage.” *The New York Times*. July 11, 2006. Accessed on December 1, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/11 /world/europe/11russia.html?_r=1&r ef=Chechnya.

Myers, Steven Lee. “Suicide Bombers Kills 5 in Moscow Near Red Square.” *The New York Times.* December 10, 2003. Accessed on December 1, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com /2003 /12 /10/world/suicide-bomber-kills-5-in-moscow-near-red-square.html.

“Obituary: Shamil Basayev.” *BBC News*. July 10, 2006. Accessed December 1, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4727935.stm.

Pape, Robert A., Lindsey O’Rourke, and Jenna McDermit. “What Makes Chechen Women So Dangerous?” *The New York Times*. March 30, 2010. Accessed on December 1, 2010. http://www.nytimes .com/2010/03/31/opinion/31pape.html?ref=Chechnya.

Rogin, Josh. “State Department to Leave Chechen Rebel Group off Terror List.” *Foreign Policy*. April 29, 2010. Accessed on December 2, 2010. http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts /2010/04/29/state_departmen t_to_leave_chechen_rebel_group_off_terror_list.

Rosenberg, Steve. “Attack on Chechen Parliament in Grozny Leaves Six Dead.” *BBC News*. October 19, 2010. Accessed on December 2, 2010. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11571673.

U.S. Congress. Congressional Research Service. *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafism.* (C. Rpt. 21695). Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2008.

United States. Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. *Designation of Caucasus’ Emirate Leader Doku Umarov.* Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 2010.

U.S. House. *Urging the Secretary of State to designate the Caucasus Emirate as a foreign terrorist organization*. 111th Cong., 2d sess., H.R.1315.

Secondary Sources

Bhattacharji, Preeti. "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)." Council on Foreign Relations. Last modified April 8, 2010. http://www.cfr.org/publication/9181/chechen _terrorism_ russia_chechnya_separatis t.html.

de Waal, Tom. "Chechnya: The Breaking Point." In *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, edited by Richard Sakwa. London, Anthem Press: 2005.

Fuller, Liz. "News Profile: Who is Doku Umarov?" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.* April 1, 2010. Accessed on December 1, 2010. http://www.rferl.org/content/News_Profile_ Who_Is_Doku_Umarov/1999886.html.

Gammer, Moshe. *The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule.* Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2006.

Gilligan, Emma. *Terror in Chechnya: Russia and the Tragedy of Civilians in War.* Princeton, Princeton University Press: 2010.

Giuliano, Elise. "Islamic Identity and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnya and Dagestan Compared." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11(2005): 195-220.

Isaenko, Anatoly. *Polygon of Satan: Ethnic Traumas and Conflicts in the Caucasu*s. Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2010.

Lieven, Anatol. *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

McCartan, Lisa M. et al.. "The Logic of Terrorist Target Choice: An Examination of Chechen Rebel Bombings from 1997-2003." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (2008): 60-79.

Moore, Cerwyn and Paul Tumelty. "Assessing Unholy Alliances in Chechnya: From Communism and Nationalism to Islamism and Salafism." *Journal of Communist Studies & Transition Politics* 25 (2005): 73-94.

Nivat, Anne. "The Black Widows: Chechen Women Join the Fight for Independence—and Allah." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005): 413-419.

"Regions and Territories: Chechnya." *British Broadcasting Company (BBC)*. Last modified October 9, 2010. Accessed on December 1, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.u k/2/hi/Europe /country _profiles/2565049.stm

Russell, John. “A War by Any Other Name: Chechnya, 11 September, and the War Against Terrorism.” In *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, edited by Richard Sakwa. London: Anthem Press, 2005.

Shultz , Richard H. Jr., and Andrea J. Dew. *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: Warriors of Contemporary Combat*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Smick, Elisabth. “The Chechen Separatist Movement.” Council on Foreign Relations. Last modified July 18, 2006. Accessed on November 30, 2010. http://www.cfr.org/publication /11121/chechen_separatist_movement.html.

Souleimanov, Emil. *An Endless War: The Russian-Chechen Conflict in Perspective.* Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007.

“Time Line: Chechnya.” *British Broadcasting Company (BBC)*. Last modified October 19, 2010. Accessed December 1, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_pro files/2357267.stm.

Zedalis, Debra Z..“Female Suicide Bombers.” *U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute.* June 2004. Accessed on December 1, 2010, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles /PUB408.pdf.

Theodore Roosevelt as Assistant Secretary of the Navy: Preparing America for the World Stage

David Lemelin
James Madison University

Theodore Roosevelt is often considered to be one of the most influential Presidents in the history of the United States. However, his political résumé begins well before his rise to the office of chief executive. Roosevelt's time in the Department of the Navy is an example of his early and rapid influence on the country. Appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy by President William McKinley on 19 April 1897, Roosevelt retired on 10 May 1898 to fight in the Spanish-American War in Cuba. During his brief time in the Naval Department, however, he played a huge part in readying the United States Navy for war. His expansionist foreign policy brought a new burst of activity into the Department, and his actions were instrumental in modernizing the U.S. Navy, planning for possible courses of action in the event of a conflict, and rallying like-minded expansionists to his cause. Thanks largely to Roosevelt's efforts, the Spanish-American War was one of the most successful military conflicts in the United States' history. The Assistant Secretary's story, however, begins much earlier.

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. was born on 27 October 1858 in New York City to Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. and Martha Bulloch Roosevelt. His father was a partner in a large, successful importing company and descended from a long line of Dutch settlers dating back to the founding of New Amsterdam. Roosevelt's mother was of Southern stock; her family had emigrated from Scotland in the eighteenth century and owned a large plantation in Georgia. With these overseas ties, naval history was one of young Theodore's interests very early on. Two of his maternal uncles were lifetime sea captains, and one, James Bulloch, was even a famed Confederate naval officer who played a large part in acquiring ironclad ships for the rebel navy during the U.S. Civil War.[1]

[1] Louis Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Times Books, 2002), 10; Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1979), 3-22; Wayne Andrews, ed., *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 3-12.

Being from a wealthy Northern family had its advantages. By the time he entered Harvard University as an undergraduate in 1876, Roosevelt had been to Europe and the Holy Land twice, and had seen London, Paris, Vienna, and many great Italian cities as well. He sailed up the Nile with his family, toured Jerusalem and the Pyramids at Giza, and visited many of the world's other famous places on his travels. He was also very proficient in both French and German, and had knowledge in the fields of natural history and taxidermy that was incredibly advanced for his young age.[2]

Roosevelt's time at Harvard provided a rather telling preview of the man he would later become. Devastated by his father's death in 1878, he strengthened his already iron will to succeed. Through an incredibly vigorous studying regimen that would have driven lesser men to madness, he did remarkably well in all subjects, even those like Latin and Greek that he despised. This academic fervor was an early sign of the indomitable persistence and concentration with which he would pursue goals later in life. Furthermore, it was at Harvard that Roosevelt began conceptualizing *The Naval War of 1812*,[3] a multivolume work that would become both his first published book and the first item on his résumé as a naval expert.[4]

Theodore Roosevelt entered into politics almost immediately after graduating from Harvard. After a brief stint at Columbia Law School, he was elected to the New York State Assembly as a member of the Republican Party. He was highly active in this position, vigorously proposing bills that fought corruption and seeming to derive genuine enjoyment from his new work. However, fate intervened. On a single, terrible day, 14 February 1884, Roosevelt lost his mother to typhoid fever and his beloved young wife, Alice, to childbirth. Overcome with grief,

---

[2] Morris, 21-29, 35-48.
[3] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (New York: G.P. Putnams' Sons, 1882).
[4] Morris, 54-108.

Roosevelt found himself unable to concentrate on politics. He retired and moved to the North Dakota Badlands where he lived an outdoorsman's life and raised cattle. Although he had several interesting adventures out west, a horrendous winter eventually killed all of his livestock. This forced him to return to New York, at which time he built Sagamore Hill at Oyster Bay, his now-famous lifetime estate.[5]

Roosevelt was quick to return to politics. Appointed by President Benjamin Harrison to the United States Civil Service Commission in 1889, he used his new position to combat various forms of corruption in the nation's capital. It was also during this time that Roosevelt first became familiar with the influential work of a future acquaintance:

> [Roosevelt] spen[t] one of the most important weekends of his life on 10 and 11 May [1890], reading from cover to cover Alfred Thayer Mahan's new book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*. Since the publication of his own *Naval War of 1812* he had considered himself an expert on this very subject, and had argued…that modernization of the fleet must keep pace with the industrialization of the economy…Now Mahan extended and clarified his vision, showing that real national security-and international greatness-could only be attained by building more and bigger ships and deploying them farther abroad.[6]

These ideas were of great interest to Roosevelt at the time, and were invaluable later in his life, but for the moment he was still the Civil Service Commissioner. He remained in this Washington, D.C. position until 1895, when he returned to his home state and became the New York City Police Commissioner, a post in which he tirelessly fought corruption and idleness on the police force.[7]

---

[5] Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 14-18.
[6] Morris, 434.
[7] For more information on Roosevelt's illustrious career in the Police Department see Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 22-26 and Morris, chapter 19, titled "The Biggest Man in New York."

During the presidential election of 1896, Roosevelt supported Republican candidate William McKinley. It proved to be one of the best decisions of his life, as McKinley, after winning office, appointed Roosevelt as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, a job that he had deeply desired for some time. It was in this role that Roosevelt truly shined, using his position to prepare the country for what he saw as an inevitable foreign conflict.[8]

Roosevelt's concerns about trouble abroad were not unfounded. The late nineteenth century had seen numerous tense situations that pitted foreign imperialist powers against the interests of the United States. The rise of imperialism in Europe and the modernization and increasing aggression of Japan in the Pacific meant that any of America's overseas aspirations would likely be met with foreign competition. Roosevelt and others considered Germany and Japan to be particularly dangerous. Both countries were, like the U.S., new to the business of overseas expansion and were eyeing territories whose acquisition would threaten American interests. For example, Germany expressed a desire to annex the Samoan Islands, leading to a nearly disastrous incident in 1889 that saw the deployment of German, British, and American warships. Germany also had her sights on potential colonies in Central and South America, an aspiration which Roosevelt and many others saw as a potential violation of the Monroe Doctrine. Japan also had expansionist goals that posed a threat to U.S. interests abroad. The main point of contention between the two nations was Hawaii, which had a growing Japanese immigrant population and which many Americans feared would be a dangerous addition to the rapidly expanding Japanese Empire. The island chain was desirable largely because of Pearl Harbor, an ideal shallow port for warships, located in the strategically vital mid-Pacific. Both nations contributed to the growing tension by sending warships to patrol the islands' coasts. A third

[8] Morris, 576-587.

nation with which the United States had diplomatic struggles was Spain. Americans knew about the abysmal treatment of the Cubans by their Spanish masters and the native insurrection there at the end of the nineteenth century. Many in the United States looked unfavorably on Spain's actions. Some, including Roosevelt, believed that it was the duty of the United States, under the precedent of the Monroe Doctrine, to ensure the well-being of the Cuban people by expelling their Spanish oppressors, even if it meant war. Roosevelt planned to use his job in the Department of the Navy to prepare for just such a war.[9]

Theodore Roosevelt's appointment as Assistant Secretary of the Navy on 19 April 1897 was in his eyes the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. He saw in his new post an opportunity to enhance both the United States Navy and his own career in politics. Roosevelt's absolute elation at being given a job centered on one of his great passions is evident in the volume and content of the letters he wrote in the days immediately following his appointment. One such correspondence, to naval officer Bowman Hendry McCalla, captures his sentiments particularly well: "As you know, I have always taken a great interest in the Navy, and I sincerely hope that my connection with the service will be as beneficial to it as it will certainly be to me."[10] Roosevelt wasted no time in his efforts to be beneficial to the navy. Within the first two weeks of his tenure as Assistant Secretary, he was regularly writing President McKinley to make suggestions regarding naval actions in the Pacific and Mediterranean. His opinions on these matters were remarkably insightful for his relatively low level of experience, as he delved

---

[9] David H. Burton, *Theodore Roosevelt: Confident Imperialist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 35-37; Howard C. Hill, *Roosevelt and the Caribbean* (New York: Russel &Russel, 1965), 6-7; Richard W. Turk, *The Ambiguous Relationship: Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 27-29.

[10]Theodore Roosevelt to Bowman Hendry McCalla, Washington, D.C., 19 April 1897, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Etling E. Morison (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 599. *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* is an exhaustive 7-volume collection of Roosevelt's correspondences. It presents the letters in their full, original form. Morison played a strictly editorial role, inserting his own words only by dividing the letters into chronological "chapters", and providing the occasional explanatory footnote.

directly into the specifics of particular ships' mechanical problems, strategies of countering the Japanese naval presence in Hawaiian waters, and anticipatory movements and drills of warships to prepare for any possible event.[11]

Also notable about Roosevelt's first few weeks as Assistant Secretary is the rapidness with which he engaged top naval minds of the time, notably Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, with whom he later had a close relationship for many years. In 1890, Captain Mahan had published *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, that argued the importance of naval power to the expansionistic foreign politics of the late nineteenth century, a concept which went hand-in-hand with Roosevelt's proposed direction for the U.S. Navy. Although Roosevelt had been acquainted with Mahan since the 1880s, his new position in the Navy Department opened doors for the pair to discuss and plan future courses of action, with a very real possibility of implementing them. Such discussions began shortly after Roosevelt's appointment as Assistant Secretary, and occurred in a series of personal correspondences. These private letters, all rather candid, show that Roosevelt had incredibly far-reaching plans, even at this early stage in his career:

> If I had my way we would annex those [Hawaiian] islands tomorrow. If that is impossible I would establish a protectorate over them. I believe we should build the Nicaraguan canal at once, and in the meantime that we should build a dozen new battleships, half of them on the Pacific Coast…I am fully alive to the danger from Japan, and I know that it is idle to rely on any sentimental good will towards us.[12]

This letter, written on 3 May 1897 (less than three weeks after Roosevelt's appointment), goes on to express Roosevelt's desire to annex the "Danish Islands" (now the U.S. Virgin Islands),

---

[11]Theodore Roosevelt to President William McKinley, 22 and 26 April, 1897, ed. Morison, 599, 601-602.
[12]Theodore Roosevelt to Alfred Thayer Mahan, 3 May 1897, ed. Morison, 697.

and his apprehension towards Germany as the most dangerous of the European powers. This insightful, foretelling series of ambitions and predictions is characteristic of the correspondence Roosevelt and Mahan had in later years. The two men were very like-minded in their views on foreign policy and naval history, and their relationship would help shape the events of later American history.[13]

Upon entering the Department, Roosevelt found that next to nothing had been done to prepare the Navy for a possible conflict resulting from international tension. Despite his grand aspirations and extensive knowledge, Theodore Roosevelt did not wield absolute power in the Naval Department. He was only Assistant Secretary and so he had to answer to another man: John D. Long, Secretary of the United States Navy. A kindly older man who ran the Department in a rather lackadaisical manner, Secretary Long typified the attitude taken by many Americans in the late nineteenth century towards the possibility of a foreign war. Roosevelt, with his desire for a naval buildup and expansionistic foreign policy, was therefore at odds with the Department's more cautious, laid-back approach to the navy. As Roosevelt later recalled in his autobiography, "we did not at the time of which I write take our foreign duties seriously, and…we were not taken seriously in return."[14] Roosevelt was referring primarily to the growing tension with Spain regarding Cuba.

This do-nothing attitude towards military preparation was in sharp contrast to Roosevelt's own ideology. Nevertheless, while annoyed with his boss at times for not being an expansionist, Roosevelt did not despise him as he did many other similar men. If anything, he was grateful for Long's willingness to "watch the department function according to the principles of laissez-

[13] Burton, 28-31; Morison, 607; Turk, 11, 20-37.
[14] Andrews, ed., 118.

faire."[15] This meant that Roosevelt was given a great amount of freedom within the Department. He was often put in charge of decisions regarding matters like "abstruse ordinance specifications and blueprints for dry-dock construction," as Long had little patience for such things and Roosevelt had an intimate knowledge of them, having studied naval details since boyhood. Roosevelt's fair degree of administrative freedom within the Department greatly benefited the Navy, as he spent his first few weeks working vigorously and thus earning Long's ever-growing approval. This, in turn, led to the Secretary's allocation of increasing amounts of responsibility to Roosevelt. Eventually, Long felt free to take long periods of leave, often for weeks at a time. Roosevelt, was then left as Acting Secretary for significant portions of his short time with the Naval Department. It was in this position of authority that he was able to accomplish most of his far-reaching goals, ordering such actions as: the construction of new heavy battleships, the refitting of older ships with modern equipment, and the increase in the number of American dry-docks to improve the nation's overall naval construction capability. Surprisingly, John Long did not condemn these actions, and at times even encouraged them. As Roosevelt wrote to Massachusetts Senator and lifelong friend Henry Cabot Lodge, "[Long] has wanted me to act entirely independently while he was away…and I have at times been a little nervous in the effort to steer the exact course between bothering him on the one hand, and going ahead with something too widely divergent from his views, on the other."[16]

The balance Roosevelt tried to maintain between accomplishing his goals and keeping Secretary Long's approval can be seen in his letters to his closest friends. One such letter, written to Alfred Thayer Mahan on 9 June 1897, is a rare expression of Roosevelt's deepest and most secret feelings towards his superior:

---

[15] Morris, 590.
[16] Theodore Roosevelt to Henry Cabot Lodge, 24 September 1897, ed. Lodge, 280.

> In strict confidence I want to tell you that Secretary Long is only lukewarm about building up our Navy…Indeed, he is against adding to our battleships. This is, to me, a matter of the most profound concern. I feel that you ought to write him…make the plea that this is a measure of peace and not of war. I cannot but think your words would carry weight with him.[17]

The exasperated tone with which Roosevelt discussed Long's do-nothing views on foreign policy was something he revealed on only a private level, however, and is indicative of the deep importance he gave to his political goals. Outwardly, he remained very kind and subordinate to the Naval Secretary, writing him regularly to inform him of all that transpired in the Department. He probably did this more out of common sense than true deference, as Roosevelt benefited greatly from his superior's long periods away from Washington. Regardless of his intentions, Roosevelt's amicable relationship with the Naval Secretary paid off. Long's overall happiness with his Assistant Secretary was made known to many people who knew both men. One such person was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who had occasional visits with Secretary Long. In a letter dated 27 September 1897, he wrote Roosevelt, "The Secretary told me that he was entirely satisfied with all you had done and praised in the highest the work and service you were doing for the Navy."[18] The truth of the matter was that Long's absences and trusting, easygoing demeanor gave Roosevelt an enormous amount of authority, which he likely would never have had under any other Naval Secretary. This leeway allowed him the freedom of pursuing his own expansionistic goals to a virtually unlimited extent, a freedom he used to expedite the buildup and overall improvement of the Navy.[19]

---

[17]Theodore Roosevelt to Alfred Thayer Mahan, 9 June 1897, in *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches*, ed. Louis Auchincloss (New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2004), 106.
[18] Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt, 27 September 1897, ed. Lodge, 281.
[19] Andrews, ed., 118; Lodge, ed., 280; Morris, 588-602.

Assistant Secretary Roosevelt did not hesitate to apply his goals and ideology to his new position of relative authority over the United States Navy. "Quickly, efficiently, and unobtrusively, he established himself as the Administration's most ardent expansionist."[20] Roosevelt quietly gathered together the top expansionist minds in Washington government, meeting with and writing to many Congressmen, military officers, and other influential people in his attempts to create a base of support. Publicly, he met with these gentlemen regularly at the Metropolitan Club, his favorite Washington, D.C. social location. Privately, he wrote extensively to all of them in a series of letters. This varied group of individuals included Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Judge William Howard Taft, and Captains Alfred Thayer Mahan and George Dewy, each of whom would later become a prominent figure in American politics and foreign affairs. These men were united in their expansionist (some would say imperialist) viewpoints. Topics of frequent discussion included: the annexation of Hawaii, the freeing of Cuba from tyrannical Spanish rule, the buildup of a navy to keep aggressive powers like Germany and Japan at bay, and adherence to the Monroe Doctrine, which stated that the United States must rid the Western Hemisphere of foreign intervention. Central to this expansionist foreign policy was the great importance of naval power above other military strategy. Roosevelt's insistence on naval importance is exemplified in a letter dated 16 June 1897 to the president of the Naval War College and one of his Metropolitan Club compatriots, Captain Caspar Frederick Goodrich. His words demonstrate his often-uncanny farsightedness:

> If we smash the Japanese Navy, definitely and thoroughly, then the presence of a Japanese army corps in Hawaii would merely mean the establishment of Hawaii as a half-way post for that army corps on its way to our prisons. If we didn't get control of the seas then no troops that we would be able to land after or just before

[20] Morris, 592.

> the outbreak of a war could hold Hawaii against the Japanese. In other words I think our objective should be the Japanese fleet.[21]

This anticipatory strategic talk was typical of the sorts of discussions between Roosevelt and other members of his Metropolitan Club retinue. Many people expected aggressive action from Japan, especially regarding the Hawaiian Islands. On 16 June, the same day this letter was written, President McKinley approved a treaty annexing the Hawaiian Islands, largely due to a great deal of urging by Roosevelt and his fellow expansionists. Although the U.S.'s acquisition of the islands was a great victory for the expansionist camp, it was not their only goal.

Throughout Roosevelt's time as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, there was much pondering among Americans as to the fate of Cuba, which was then suffering greatly from Spanish colonial abuse and mismanagement. Furthermore, Spanish-U.S. relations were quickly deteriorating as the United States demanded that Spain either improve the treatment of the Cuban people or leave the island altogether. Roosevelt's opinion regarding the Cuban matter is clearly detailed in another letter, written on 19 November 1897, to naval officer and technology pioneer William Wirt Kimball:

> I would regard a war with Spain from two standpoints: first, the advisability…of interfering on behalf of the Cubans, and of taking one more step toward the complete freeing of America from European dominion; second, the benefit done our people by giving them something to think of which isn't material gain, and especially the benefit done our military forces by trying both the Navy and Army in actual practice.[22]

He both advocated a war with Spain over Cuba, which came within the next six months, and planned how the United States military would carry it out. This sort of prediction, accompanied

---

[21]Theodore Roosevelt to Caspar Frederick Goodrich, 16 June 1897, ed. Morison, 626.
[22]Theodore Roosevelt to William Wirt Kimball, 19 November 1897, ed. Morison, 717.

by executive preparatory actions within the Naval Department, was typical of Roosevelt's time as Assistant Secretary. It is important to note, however, that there had been an expansionist subculture among American politicians for over a decade. By no means did Roosevelt originate any of the expansionist sentiment shared by those who met at the Metropolitan Club; rather, he was almost solely responsible for uniting them, and was seen by many around the world as the leader of the American expansionist movement.[23]

Roosevelt's articulation of his plans for American expansionism was not limited to his activities within his Metropolitan Club social circle. Part of his job as Assistant Secretary required him to travel to naval institutions across the country, making inspections and suggesting courses of action. He also saw in these travels a great opportunity to project his views from a public stage. His first such opportunity came on 2 June 1897, at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. The Naval War College was where many of the top military minds were taught and went to teach. Many of the faculty members were also involved with Roosevelt's club of expansionists, and some were his frequent correspondents. Not the least among these was Captain Caspar F. Goodrich, then the president of the College, and Alfred Thayer Mahan, Roosevelt's personal friend and fellow expansionist. This constant intellectual presence at that the Naval War College made it a major center for the formation and execution of United States foreign policy. Here, Roosevelt delivered a speech that ensured the United States', and indeed the world's, understanding of his position on foreign policy and the Monroe Doctrine as it related to naval buildup.

He began the speech by invoking one of America's most legendary military figures: "A century has passed since Washington wrote, 'To be prepared for war is the most effectual means

[23] Burton, 34-35; Morison, 626, 717; Morris, 591-593.

to promote peace.'"[24] Having hooked his audience by appealing to their reverence for such an iconic American as George Washington, Roosevelt then tied the first president's famous words into his own expansionistic goals, reiterating the need for war in order to secure peace:

> We but keep to the traditions of Washington, to the traditions of all the great Americans who struggled for the real greatness of America, when we strive to build up those fighting qualities for the lack of which in a nation, as in an individual, no refinement, no culture, no wealth, no material prosperity, can atone.[25]

Roosevelt then made mention of the contemporary foreign affairs that were central to his and other expansionists' goals. Making a thinly veiled reference to the injustices in Cuba, he continued, "Better a thousand times err on the side of over-readiness to fight, than to err on the side of tame submission to injury, or cold-blooded indifference to the misery of the oppressed."[26]

Inevitably, given his position and his life history, Roosevelt connected a nation's ability to live up to the ideals in his speech with its naval prowess. He tapped into his extensive historical knowledge to cite example after example of what had happened in the past to nations who failed in adequately preparing themselves for war, even going so far as to scold Thomas Jefferson for not avoiding the War of 1812 by building a more powerful U.S. Navy. Roosevelt went on to warn the members of the Naval War College that if the United States continued its current lackadaisical attitude towards its navy, it would be woefully unprepared for a conflict with any of the great powers. He thus began using his speech as a way to urge Congress to build more state-of-the-art battleships. Overall, Assistant Secretary Roosevelt's Naval War College speech served both to broadcast his expansionist ideas to the national and global communities,

---

[24] Theodore Roosevelt, "Naval War College Address, 2 June 1897," Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt.
[25] Roosevelt, "Naval War College Address, 2 June 1897."
[26] *Ibid*.

and to lobby Congress to heed his warnings regarding the expansion of the navy. For these reasons, it is generally considered to have been the first great speech of his political career.[27]

The response to Roosevelt's speech gave him the publicity he had intended. Newspapers all across the country commended him for his rousing oratory. The *Sun*, out of New York, showered Roosevelt with particular praise, lauding the speech with such adjectives as "manly, patriotic, intelligent, and convincing."[28] Roosevelt used his newfound publicity to push for expansionism even more. The speech had been a masterstroke; it focused on Hawaii and Cuba, which were the most important foreign policy issues of the day. The Naval War College address had brought Roosevelt's persuasive opinion on these issues to the forefront of national attention and, more importantly, had denounced his pacifist opponents in Washington. Roosevelt did not stop there, however. For days after giving the speech, he wrote to the editors of the many newspapers that had covered it. One letter, written to fellow expansionist and editor of the *Sun* Charles Anderson Dana, captures Roosevelt's feelings perfectly in the aftermath of his newly earned publicity:

> I very much appreciate your editorial on my speech; but upon my word I sometimes grow to fear that the Sun and a few Senators are the only representatives of true American sentiment, in naval and foreign affairs which we have in the Northeast. I feel that all true Americans should be grateful for the stand you take in these matters.[29]

The letter, written on 7 June 1897, only five days after the Naval War College speech, demonstrates both a show of Roosevelt's gratitude for the *Sun*'s positive coverage of his address, as well as a clever display of friendliness that ensured Dana's continued support of Roosevelt as he faced his opponents in the administration regarding the possibility of a foreign war. Several

---

[27] Chessman, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power*, 66; Morris, 593-596; Roosevelt, "Naval War College Address, 2 June, 1897."
[28] Morris, 596.
[29] Theodore Roosevelt to Charles Anderson Dana, 7 June 1897, ed. Morison, 621.

more letters like this one were sent out, many on the same day, to other newspaper editors. If he were going to convince the more stubborn pacifists in Washington that naval buildup was essential to the United States' well-being, Roosevelt realized that he would need all the support that he could get.[30]

Despite all of Roosevelt's warmongering and plans for expanding the navy, it was not certain that Spain and the U.S. would go to war in the closing years of the nineteenth century. President McKinley was hesitant to entertain the possibility of bloodshed, opponents of the war still had a strong presence in Congress, and there had been no single event that had pushed the legislature to issue a Declaration of War. However, a chance soon arose for the Assistant Naval Secretary's ideas to be put to the test.

The moment Theodore Roosevelt and his expansionist comrades had been waiting for occurred on the evening of 15 February 1898. The USS *Maine*, an American battleship, was anchored in the harbor of Havana, Cuba. At exactly 9:40 p.m., she exploded without warning, instantly killing 252 men and wounding many others. Pandemonium ensued in Washington the next morning. Some in the administration believed that the *Maine* was destroyed by a freak accident. Others, perhaps the most vocal of whom was Roosevelt, held that her destruction was caused by a Spanish underwater mine. The former group did not want to commit to a war with Spain, while the latter group saw it as the only logical course of action.

During this chaotic time in which the nation debated over a course of action regarding Spain, Assistant Secretary Roosevelt made his opinion known to anyone who would listen. An example of this is recalled by Charles G. Dawes, a close associate of President McKinley. While

[30] Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 27; Morison, 621; Morris, 596-597.

visiting the War Department on 19 March 1898, Dawes noted that "Theodore Roosevelt came in [to the room], urging war and emphasizing the dangers of delay."[31] The division in government between those for war and those against it was mirrored within the Naval Department as well. Long, on the one hand, did not want to be hasty in judging the Spanish guilty of the tragedy, while Roosevelt, on the other, felt that the ship's fate was "an act of dirty treachery on the part of the Spaniards."[32] Even as the United States' government assembled an official Court of Inquiry to determine the cause of the *Maine*'s explosion, the Assistant Secretary tried desperately to convince his superior of the need to prepare for war. Carefully restraining his personal opinions, Roosevelt wrote Secretary Long a very persuasive letter on 16 February, just one day after the Maine's explosion:

> The coincidence of [the *Maine's*] destruction with her being anchored off Havana by an accident such as has never before happened, is unpleasant enough to seriously increase the many existing difficulties between ourselves and Spain. It is of course not my province to in any way touch on the foreign policy of this country; but the Navy Department represents the arm of the government which will have to carry out any policy upon which the administration may finally determine.[33]

As the Court of Inquiry debated, Roosevelt did all he could to prepare the Navy in the event of war. One key preparation was made during one of Long's absences in which Roosevelt was Acting Secretary. Using his temporary power, on 25 February 1898, Roosevelt sent the following cablegram order to Commodore George Dewey, commander of the U.S. Navy's Asiatic squadron:

---

[31] Dawes, 146-147.
[32]Theodore Roosevelt to Benjamin Harrison Diblee, 16 February 1898, ed. Morison, 775.
[33]Theodore Roosevelt to John D. Long, 16 February 1898, ed. Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches*, 136.

> Order the squadron…to Hong Kong. Keep full of coal. In the event of declaration of war with Spain, your duty will be to see that the Spanish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast, and then offensive operations in Philippine Islands.[34]

Secretary Long, when informed of this cablegram, was irritated that Roosevelt had been so assuming. The Assistant Secretary was justified, however, as a month later, on 28 March 1898, the Court of Inquiry found that the *USS Maine* had been blown up "by an external device."[35] After another month of debate and worsening relations between the two countries, Spain declared war on 25 April 1898. Mr. Roosevelt finally had his war.[36]

Not long after war broke out with Spain, Theodore Roosevelt resigned as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He left his Washington office to fulfill a commitment to service that he had made months before while lobbying and preparing for the conflict. Receiving a reserve commission as a Lieutenant Colonel, Roosevelt joined the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, nicknamed "The Rough Riders," and shipped out with the U.S. Army to Cuba. Here, he eventually led the famous charge up Kettle Hill at the battle of San Juan Heights and earned himself national recognition.

Meanwhile, even though Roosevelt was no longer in the Naval Department, the legacy he had left over the past thirteen months greatly benefited the United States. Throughout the war, thanks to modern technology and improved strategic maneuvers instituted by Roosevelt, the U.S. Navy outclassed the Spanish in virtually every encounter. The most famous example of the U.S. Navy's superiority was the decisive battle at Manila Bay in the Philippines, where Commodore

---

[34] Theodore Roosevelt to George Dewey, 25 February 1898, ed. Morison, 784.
[35] Note that the Court of Inquiry did not specify that Spain was the owner of the "external device." Nevertheless, the Court's findings were enough to incriminate the Spanish in the minds of most Americans.
[36] Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 27; Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*: *Letters and Speeches*, 136; Morison, ed., 784; Morris, 625-642.

George Dewey, in an advantageous position thanks to Assistant Secretary Roosevelt's controversial yet insightful telegram of 25 February, handed a disastrous loss to the Spanish Navy.

After the war, Roosevelt returned home as the most famous man in America. He entered as the Republican Party's candidate for Governor of the State of New York, and won the 1898 election by about 20,000 votes, a significant margin. The governorship, in turn, provided Roosevelt with invaluable executive experience, as well as the opportunity to gain even more national publicity. This publicity proved to help not only Roosevelt personally, but also the Republican Party in general. In the presidential election of 1900, Theodore Roosevelt was nominated as William McKinley's running mate, and his popularity and appeal to independents played a significant part in the incumbent President's re-election. While many thought Roosevelt would be "shelved," and his career stalemated by the office of Vice President, President William McKinley was assassinated on 14 September 1901, making Theodore Roosevelt the 26th President of the United States.[37]

During his tenure as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt played an invaluable role in preparing the United States Navy for the Spanish-American War. In Roosevelt's own words, "I had preached, with all the fervor and zeal I possessed, our duty to intervene in Cuba, and to take this opportunity of driving the Spaniard from the Western World."[38] In the months before the USS *Maine* incident, and during the period of uncertainty afterwards, he was a constant (and very loud) advocate of modernizing naval technology, implementing fleet maneuvers that anticipated foreign conflicts, and taking an assertive stance

[37] Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 35-38; Chessman, *Governor Theodore Roosevelt*, 39-49, 305-306; Morris, 646-780.
[38] Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 1.

towards foreign powers over territory abroad. Roosevelt accomplished all of this to varying degrees largely because of his bold, aggressive attitude towards fulfilling goals, the unusual amount of administrative freedom he was given within the Naval Department, and his persuasive advertisement of his expansionistic ideology. Each of these factors ultimately helped to prepare the United States Navy for the eventual war with Spain. America's overwhelming success in this conflict and resultant emergence as a world power are due in large part to Theodore Roosevelt, who would go on to become one of the most famous and influential figures in modern history.[39]

[39] Andrews, ed., 117-121; Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 26-28; Morris, 588-644; Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 1.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Dawes, Charles G. *A Journal of the McKinley Years*. Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1950.

Lodge, Henry Cabot and Roosevelt, Theodore. *Selections From the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918*, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge, vol. 1. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Wayne Andrews. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Etling E. Morison, 7 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches*, ed. Louis Auchincloss. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2004.

Roosevelt, Theodore. "Naval War College Address, 2 June 1897." *Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt.* http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/trbioqf.html/.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Rough Riders*. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2004.

Secondary Sources

Auchincloss, Louis. *Theodore Roosevelt*. New York: Times Books, 2002.

Burton, David H. *Theodore Roosevelt, Confident Imperialist*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968.

Chessman, G. Wallace. *Governor Theodore Roosevelt: The Albany Apprenticeship*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

Hill, Howard C. *Roosevelt and the Caribbean.* New York: Russel & Russel, 1965.

Morris, Edward. *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1979.

Turk, Richard W. *The Ambiguous Relationship: Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan. New York:* Greenwood Press, 1987.

Visions of Vietnam, The Nationalism of the Caodai: Religious Sect and Mass Movement

Stephanie Perrin
Ryerson University

In the late 1920s, the Caodai emerged in southern Vietnam as a burgeoning religious movement. The sect drew upon historic syncretic practices, aiming to combine the best of Eastern and Western religions to bring about the restoration of Vietnam's past glory.

Colonial oppression and disenchantment with traditional religious practices provided favourable circumstances for the Caodai to appeal to both the rural peasantry and the urban elite, creating an unprecedented union between the disparate classes.[1] By unifying its followers under a distinctly Vietnamese religion, and harnessing their desire for independence, the religious sect quickly transformed into a mass movement during the 1930s. In the face of colonial and Communist powers, the Caodai pursued a vision of nationalism and their own doctrinal objectives to varying degrees of success. While taking part in nationalist rebellions throughout South Vietnam's turbulent history, the movement remained distinctly Caodai. By transforming and adapting to the social and political environment, the movement survived persecution, but also maintained its religious foundation. Caodaism unified the peasantry and elite through a unique Vietnamese religious identity that allowed them to assert nationalist resistance on a mass scale for the first time in Vietnam's history.

The cultural diversity of Vietnam had much to do with the eventual influence of the Caodai. The early settlement of Indian and Chinese populations and later French colonial rule established Taosim, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Catholicism together with indigenous practices of animism and spiritism. Because of the constant flux of migrating peoples throughout their history, the Vietnamese came to place great importance upon adopting and adapting foreign ideas in order to define and sustain their own identity.[2] Building upon the history of cultural flexibility, the Caodai came to epitomize Vietnam's cultural endurance.

---

[1] Victor L .Oliver, *Caodai Spiritism: A Study of Religion in Vietnamese Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 20, 25.
[2] Arne Kislenko, "Cao Dai Temple," in *The United States at War*, ed. Paul Pierapoli (Los Angeles: ABC-Clio, 2008), 430.

The Caodai was founded in Cholon, a suburb of Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam, by Ngo Van Chieu (1878-1932), a bureaucrat for the French colonial administration who was fascinated by religion. After Chieu performed a series of séances, God revealed himself to him as Caodai in 1921 and instructed him to establish a new religious movement.[3] Caodaism was to be a syncretic faith, one which would unite the best of the Eastern and Western religious systems present in Vietnam in order to usher in the Third Amnesty of God, or the age of renovation. This was in line with the millenarian belief that in the final cycle of history, Caodaism would "unite the world's races, save humanity and regenerate mankind."[4] The syncretic and salvationist conception of religious purpose proved to be appealing as the movement gained a small but growing group of devotees, and the religion was made public in 1926.

The Caodai belief system and organizational structure exemplified how the sect embraced elements of each seemingly disparate religion. The doctrines incorporated vegetarianism, spirit communication, séance inquiry, and self-cultivation by drawing from commonalities between Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and indigenous practices. The Caodai dignitaries organized how those practices were administrated in a structure more similar to the Roman Catholic Church by designating positions such as pope, bishop, and priest. The permanent center for the dignitaries and their activities was a massive temple, the Tanh Dia or the Holy See, which was built in Tay Ninh province from 1933 to 1955.[5] Although critics felt that the Caodai's merging of the religions was superficial and inconsistent, many adherents perceived the ambiguity as positive and recognized the potential for the movement to serve a wide variety of needs. The synchronization of the Eastern and Western faiths did in fact create a religious force that successfully established a large and diverse following.

---

[3] Kanh Phan, *Caodaism* (London: Minerva Press, 2000), 16-17.
[4] Jayne Susan Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 7.
[5] Oliver, 20, 25; Phan, 37; Kislenko, 430.

It is important to note that the willing acceptance of the Caodai's multifaceted belief system was not due to a new interpretation of religion. Rather, the movement's success is due in part to Vietnam's history of syncretic religious movements. The practice of melding diverse beliefs was a convention of Vietnamese religious culture, a custom that allowed for the redefinition of spiritual identity in the face of colonial domination.[6] Part of the Caodai's success was a result of their understanding the historic importance of religious syncretism, but also the movement's well-timed emergence during a unique historical moment.

Religious movements like the Caodai, founded by upper-class men such as Ngo Van Chieu and Pope Le Van Trung, also found themselves opposing colonial domination. [7] The desire of Caodai dignitaries to find and propagate religious syncretism posed a political threat to the Catholicism of French rulers, a threat that motivated the Caodai's following.

While the leadership of the Caodai was primarily composed of the educated elite, its adherents were largely drawn from the rural peasantry. Although Vietnamese peasants had been subjected to misery for many years, the social and political conditions of the 1930s were especially volatile. The Depression left many peasants landless or deeply indebted to landlords, while the amount of rice for consumption dropped drastically and village life deteriorated.[8] The dignitaries, searching for Caodai converts, capitalized on the mounting civil unrest, and they promised peasants both salvation and exclusion from taxes should they choose to convert. Assuring both spiritual and material protection, the Caodaist movement gained rapid momentum among oppressed peasants in southern Vietnam, amassing between 500,000 and 1 million followers in Cochinchina by 1930.[9]

---

[6] Werner 11-12.
[7] *Ibid*., 20.
[8] Blagov, 73; Werner, 5.
[9] Blagov, 73-74.

Due to the swift transformation from religious sect to mass movement, scholars debate whether the adherence to Caodaism was a revolutionary response from a non-politicized peasantry or if it fulfilled a religious need among radical peasants.[10] While questioning the role of Caodaism is compelling, there is very little definitive information to explain the motives of adherents before or during their involvement with the movement. In fact, the Caodai made deliberate efforts to conceal their intentions from authorities and outsiders of any kind, a secretive practice that was part of Vietnamese religious tradition.[11] Although the appeal of the movement to its followers is intriguing, it is arguable that the more influential dynamic of Caodaism may be the unique relationship it created between the elite leadership and the peasant adherents.

Unlike any previous movement, Caodaism successfully connected members of the upper urban class to the rural masses. While the rural peasantry received protection from exploitative French powers, the dignitaries amassed a following that allowed for the dissemination of their religious doctrine.[12] Whether converts were seeking social change or a religious outlet, it was only because of the concurrence of the urban influence and mass rural support that the faith developed into a mass revolutionary movement. Through a uniquely Vietnamese religion, the elite and peasants shared a common identity that allowed them collectively to resist colonial oppression.

Caodaist political activity was detected as early as February 1930. In a special cable from Paris to *The New York Times*, it was reported that French political agents in Vietnam believed the

[10] Blagov 73-74; Werner, 4, 6, 15.
[11] R.B. Smith, "An Introduction to Caodaism. I. Origins and Early History" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33.2 (1970): 335.
[12] Werner 15, 26.

religion was being used in "a subtle way to arouse the people to rebellion."[13] This suspicion was justified when elite members of the Caodai sought to liberalize the colonial regime during a series of anti-tax rebellions that contributed to the urban reform movement in Saigon from 1930-1931. Although the uprisings were violently repressed by the French, the Caodai were given substantial publicity as the only successfully active mass movement at the time. Through their political action, Caodaists became unified by more than their religious identity as they began to align themselves with a growing nationalist movement.

At this point, it is important to clarify the meaning of nationalism in relation to the Caodai. It has been argued that the Caodaist doctrine lent itself to nationalistic endeavours since the religion's stated purpose was partly to "restore harmony to a troubled world and revive moral rectitude in the face of declining public ethics."[14] The Caodai's millenarian mission was to re-establish Vietnamese values in society, values which had deteriorated during colonial rule. It is certainly possible that Caodai adherents with this in mind coordinated their religious goal to restore Vietnamese ideals with a desire to overcome French oppression and establish national independence.

In 1933, scholar Paul Mus referred to the Caodai's synchronization of religious and political goals as being part of "an enduring indigenous substratum" in Vietnam, a phenomenon that corresponded to nationalism's valuing of cultural endurance against colonial suppression.[15] While Caodaism created a uniquely Vietnamese identity for its followers, the desire to protect and promote that identity resonated with nationalist goals to overcome colonial influence. The Caodai held their own vision of independence, which proposed the reinstitution of the monarchy

[13]" New Religion Spurs Indo-Chinese Rising", Special Cable to *The New York Times* (Feb 28, 1930), 9.
[14] Werner, 6, 14; Blagov, 82.
[15] Philip Taylor, *Goddess on the Rise: Pilgrimage and Popular Religion in Vietnam* (Honalulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 33.

and the betterment of peasant life through religious salvation and social programs.[16] The religious group operated with objectives that were synchronous to the nationalist movement, but followers never surrendered their Caodaist goals or identity for nationalist ones. In their vision and pursuit of Vietnam's independence, the Caodai always remained distinctly Caodai.

The movement gained real political momentum in 1938 when another spirit message communicated that the Caodai had to seek support from Japan to liberate the country and restore the monarchy. Reinstating Prince Cuong De was a central part of realizing the age of renovation and an alliance with Japan became increasingly attractive as the Caodaists faced continual persecution under colonial rule.

Although the French granted Caodaism full recognition in 1939, from 1940 to1941 temples were closed, adepts were detained, and leaders, including Pope Pham Cong Tac, were arrested.[17] The need for a Japanese alliance was clear. In 1943, Tran Quang Vinh, the Caodai military commander and religious leader, signed a program of cooperation with Japan, aiming to ensure the survival of Caodaism and to achieve their vision of Vietnamese independence.

Although benefits were obtained by both sides—the Caodaists received protection from the French and the Japanese amassed military recruits for their World War II efforts—the alliance did not result in independence for the Vietnamese.[18] The situation became increasingly complicated when Caodaist forces were entangled in the coup de force executed by the Japanese on March 9, 1945, which brought an end to French rule. The independence this victory initially seemed to promise went unrealized. The Japanese did not reinstate the Prince but instead

[16] Tran My-Van,"Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists: A Wartime Relationship (1939-45)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27.1 (1996): 181.
[17] Blagov, 82-84, 91.
[18] *Ibid*., 92.

retained Emperor Bao Dai, a decision which ignored the nationalists and Caodai alike.[19] The Caodaists saw their vision of independence disintegrate as the alliance came to its final termination with the surrender of the Japanese on August 15, ending World War II and beginning the scramble for control over southern Vietnam.

Despite the creation of the Empire of Vietnam under Bao Dai in May, the communist Viet Minh entered from the north in the summer of 1945 to race for power against local political and religious groups. On August 17, the Caodai joined other anti-Viet Minh groups to form the Mat Tran Quoc Gia Thong Nhut, or the National Unified Front, in the hopes of coping with Vietnam's unstable political situation.[20] Nevertheless, victory ultimately went to the Viet Minh, and in September, Ho Chi Minh established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi, marking communist takeover. With the return of the French in 1946, however, any notions of forthcoming stability were shattered. Though the French recognized the Republic as a free state in 1946, it was an entirely superficial arrangement. By the end of the year, conflicting interests between the French and the Viet Minh led to the breakout of the First Indochinese War, and Caodai hopes for independence were dashed again.

From 1946 to 1954, the Caodai were under fire from both the French colonists and the Viet Minh. Caodai leader Tran Quang Vinh was accused by the Communists of assisting the enemy and supporting a failing monarchy, which caused him to remove himself from politics. After later being arrested and tortured by the French, Vinh agreed to a Franco-Caodaist alliance.[21] Vinh's willingness to align with a recent enemy exemplified the adaptability of the Caodai, since he took the necessary measures that would ensure the survival of the movement.

---

[19] Tran My-Van,"Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists: A Wartime Relationship (1939-45)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27.1 (1996), 187-188.
[20] Vu Ngu Chieu, "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam (March-August 1945)". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 45.2 (1986), 295, 312.
[21] Chieu, 191-192.

The Viet Minh, however, did not sympathize with such ideological flexibility and viewed the alliance as a betrayal of the goals of nationalism; by 1954, they had killed 40,000.[22] As war raged throughout Vietnam, the balance between protecting the Caodai identity and pursuing the nation's freedom became increasingly precarious.

However, even following decades of persecution, the Caodai persevered. After signing a formal alliance against the Viet Minh with the Hoa Hao Buddhist movement in 1947, the two groups covertly controlled over half the rural population of the south. Sergei Blagov, a former Soviet correspondent in Vietnam, proposed the peasant population continued to be drawn to the Caodai as a means of survival because of "the dual appeals of religious and material security that were increasingly correlated to the goals of nationalism."[23] After enduring years of oppression, the Caodai transformed into a military and political force that continued to provide adherents with a sense of security they could not find elsewhere.

The Geneva Conferences in 1954 marked the end of the First Indochinese War. During a news conference on May 25, in the midst of the agreements, John Foster Dulles, the United States Secretary of State, discussed the conditions for appropriate intervention and claimed that the United States would only enter Indochina on "defense of liberty and independence and freedom."[24] Despite the values the United States espoused, Congress refused to sign the agreements. The Geneva Accords were therefore passed without endorsement from the United States, and Vietnam was granted official independence from France and divided into North and South at the 17th parallel.

Ho Chi Minh continued his rule in the North, while the United States persisted with its

---

[22] Blagov, 95.
[23] *Ibid*., 99.
[24] United States. Department of State. "Indochina – Conditions for United States Direct Intervention in Indochina: Transcript of a News Conference of the Secretary of State, May 25, 1954 (Excerpt)". By John Foster Dulles (Washington: GPO, 1957), 1.

battle against Communism by placing all of its support behind the French-educated and Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem, the new President of South Vietnam. Unaccountable to the Geneva Accords, the United States was free to ensure the elections scheduled for 1956 in South Vietnam were never held, which guaranteed Diem's rule, repressed the possibility of a Communist win, and denied Vietnamese unification. Despite the United States' desire for the Vietnamese to understand that independence was worth fighting for, by supporting Diem, the United States effectively prevented Caodaists from realizing their autonomy.[25]

Following the Geneva Accords, the Caodai, along with the Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen, were at the height of their power and represented the most potent political forces in Vietnam. Diem's government had limited authority against the Caodai and Hoa Hao influence in rural areas, while the Binh Xuyen controlled the prostitution, narcotics, and gambling syndicates that dominated Saigon.[26] Working towards common goals with these two groups, the Caodai became associated with underground operations that were corrupting the Vietnamese ideals that the sect's millenarian belief system sought to restore. Arguably, this is the most extreme example of the sect's adaptability. Understanding the necessary steps to maintain power, and in the hopes of discovering Vietnamese independence, the Caodai engaged in the very activities they had hoped to eradicate in Vietnam.

Despite American support, Diem barely survived the sect crisis of 1955. Although he brought Caodai and Hoa Hao representatives into his cabinet, the sects joined forces in an active assault against the government when Diem refused to give the two groups autonomy or negotiate with the Binh Xuyen. In an effort to legitimize his authority, Diem struck back and by March

[25] SarDesai, 68; United States, 1.
[26] Robert D. Schulzinger, "The Postwar Political-Religious Landscape in Vietnam", *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 80.

1955, the streets of Saigon were a war zone.[27] In a rare exception to his usual refusal of American advice, Diem followed the direction of Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, who bribed leaders of the Hoa Hao and Caodai with CIA funds. To the surprise of all parties, Diem successfully overcame the Bin Xuyen forces, driving them back to Cholon and pushing the Caodai and Bao Boa underground. Full American support returned, and despite being seen as doomed to fail days earlier, Diem was believed to have saved South Vietnam from the Vietminh, and, more pertinently, from the influence of adaptable and influential religious sects like the Caodai.[28]

Diem's policies were dictatorial and served to suppress any and all forms of religious and political dissent, and the Caodai were seen as a particularly crucial target. In 1955, Diem ordered the occupation of the Holy See, crippling the movement's political activity. In early 1956, 1,000 Caodaist troops remained of the 25,000 in 1954, while another 3,400 followers were arrested between 1956 and 1958.

Under conditions of suppression until the anti-Diem coup in 1963, the Caodai was no longer the force of nationalistic opposition it had been in the 1930s. Although the movement maintained a following of 498,000 members in former Cochinchina and another 60,000 in the North, spiritualism, occultism, and superstitious phenomena were condemned by the government in 1962 to ensure the modernization of the state. With the fundamental practices of their religion denounced, and their nation caught in the Second Indochinese War from 1965 to 1973, Caodaists had increasing difficulty in gaining new converts, and the Caodai's nationalistic momentum

[27] George C. Herring, "Our Offspring: Nation-Building in South Vietnam, 1954-1961*", America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1979), 52-53.
[28] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History: The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 222; Herring, 54.

faded.[29]

After Saigon fell to Ho Chi Minh on April 30, South Vietnam was under official Communist control. On July 2, 1976, North and South Vietnam were unified to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Yet again, Vietnamese independence was not as the Caodai had envisioned it. Under the rule of the Republic, religion was banned throughout the country. The Caodai were still able to offer considerable resistance to the government and as a result, they were persecuted severely. Four of the head dignitaries were executed and the Holy See was seized. The Caodai's mission to restore Vietnam to its formal glory became impossible. Under ever increasing oppression, many adherents chose to flee, seeking refuge and religious freedom in the West.[30]

The Caodai's pursuit of nationalism had great ambition in its aim to institute the age of renovation, but the movement never succeeded in establishing such an era. Differences in colonial impact, social and economic conditions, and rates of class formation made Communism and its interpretation of nationalism more popular in Central and Northern Vietnam. While the Caodai maintained a functional administration and held practical goals such as reinstating the monarchy and implementing social programs, fragmentation within the leadership as well as continual violent persecution made the realization of a Caodaist Vietnam even more difficult. Though the Caodai united their followers behind a common vision of Vietnam's independence, due to its limited regional following and both internal and external upheaval, they ultimately failed in making that vision a reality.

Although the Caodai did not succeed in their ambition to establish the independence of Vietnam, it is tenable to claim that their fundamental religious objective was achieved. The

[29] Blagov, 107-108, 111-112; Taylor, 36.
[30] "Vietnam: Problems", *The Library of Congress Country Studies*, (Dec. 1987), 1; Kislenko, 431; Blagov, 185.

impetus for Caodaism was to synthesize world religions and create a path to unification and reconciliation between the East and West; a mission that was not limited by Vietnam's borders. In fact, the movement of Caodaists to Western nations was interpreted as fate for the religion's dissemination, a chance to share their unique identity and further unification.[31]

The success of this mission can be seen in the Caodai's sustained following, both in Vietnam and around the world. In 1997, Caodaism was officially recognized by the Vietnamese government and in 2008 there were approximately six million Caodai adherents, half of whom resided in Vietnam, making Caodaism the third largest religion in the country after Buddhism and Christianity. The Caodai continued to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances, allowing the distinctly Vietnamese movement to flourish on a global scale. While the Caodai's assertion of nationalist resistance did not achieve the independence of Vietnam, the Caodai never lost sight of how their religion could be used for the creative fashioning of a new identity, not only for individual adherents, but for all of Vietnam.[32]

[31] Werner, 59, 7; Phan, 7.
[32] Kislenko, 431; Taylor, 33.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

"New Religion Spurs Indo-Chinese Rising". Special cable to *The New York Times* 28 Feb. 1930. *ProQuest*. Web. 27 Oct. 2010.

United States. Department of State. "Indochina – Conditions for United States Direct Intervention in Indochina: Transcript of a News Conference of the Secretary of State, May 25, 1954 (Excerpt)". Washington: GPO, 1957. *The Avalon Project*. Web. 15 Nov. 2010.

---. "Indochina - Extension of Military and Economic Aid: Statement by the Secretary of State, May 8, 1950".

---. "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954.

Secondary Sources

Blagov, Sergei. *Caodaism: Vietnamese Traditionalism and Its Leap Into Modernity.* New York: Nova Science, 2001. Print

Chieu, Vu Ngu. "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam (March-August1945)". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 45.2 (1986): 293-328. *JSTOR*. Web. 4 Nov. 2010.

Herring, George C. "Our Offspring: Nation-Building in South Vietnam 1954-1961". *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*. 2nd ed. New York: Random House, 1979. Print.

Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*. 2nd ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1997. Print.

--- *Vietnam: A History: The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War*. 2nd ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1983. Print.

Kislenko, Arne. "Cao Dai Temple." *The United States at War*. Ed. Paul Pierapoli. Los Angeles: ABC-Clio, 2008. 430-431. Print.

My-Van, Tran. "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists: A Wartime Relationship (1939-45)". *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27.1 (1996): 179-193. *JSTOR*. Web. 4 Nov. 2010.

Oliver, Victor L. *Caodai Spiritism: A Study of Religion in Vietnamese Society*. Leiden: Brill, 1976. Print.

Owen, Norman G., ed. *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*. Honalulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005. Print.

Phan, Kanh. *Caodaism*. London: Minerva Press, 2000. Print.

SarDesai, D.R. *Vietnam: Past and Present*. 4th ed. Boulder: Westview Press, 2005. Print.

Schulzinger, Robert D. "The Postwar Political-Religious Landscape in Vietnam". *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Print.

Smith, R.B. "An Introduction to Caodaism. I. Origins and Early History". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33.2 (1970): 335-349. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 Oct. 2010.

Taylor, Philip. *Goddess on the Rise: Pilgrimage and Popular Religion in Vietnam*. Honalulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004. Print.

Werner, Jayne Susan. *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981. Print.

"Vietnam: Problems." *The Library of Congress Country Studies*. Dec. 1987. Web. 15 Nov. 2010.

Thomas, Jerry Bruce. *An Appalachian Reawakening: West Virginia and the Perils of the New Machine Age, 1945-1972.* Morgantown: West Virginia University Press. 2010. Paperback Pp. 470, $27.45)

Thomas' socio-economic and political study of West Virginia from 1945-1972 is largely an exploration of the state's troubled history with the coal industry and the difficulty faced in trying to modernize. Specifically, the monograph details West Virginia's attempt to catch up and partake in the advances that most of America took for granted. This focus makes sense given the economic significance that the coal industry had (and still has) in an otherwise largely rural state. However, the author's treatment of the issue reveals that mechanization and the subsequent job loss that accompanies such a rationalization project are fairly similar to what "Rust Belt" cities experienced as industry declined throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century and into the twenty first. Thus, Thomas endeavors to show that West Virginia's post-war condition was in some senses similar to much of America, but still distinctly Appalachian.

Thomas convincingly argues that West Virginia's inability to modernize and effectively partake in the post-war boom was partially tied to its economic partnership with coal. Coal operations were forced to modernize by the rise of petroleum and subsequent reduction of the value of coal in the aftermath of World War II. Consequently, the mines mechanized as much as possible which effectively reduced the number of miners.

Thomas' structure is essentially chronological, though he does develop the book along thematic lines. The opening two chapters provide the historical background for the rest of the book and detail West Virginia during the depression and the effects of New Deal programs. The chapter "American Paradox, Appalachian Stereotype" deals with providing the reader a general understanding of the state's actual and perceived economic and social conditions during the period leading up to the 1960s. Thomas goes on to detail the changes in the coal industry and its connection to civil rights in West Virginia. Chapters four, five, and six follow the War on Poverty and some of the more radical offshoots that briefly threatened to challenge the prevailing order. The book ends with chapters focusing on the Buffalo Creek disaster and debates over strip mining.

An Appalachian Reawakening demonstrates the effect modern industry has had on social issues within West Virginia. Thomas deals in depth with desegregation and the ways in which mechanization impacted black workers disproportionately. The author also looks closely at the ways in which President Johnson's War on Poverty initiative was implemented in West Virginia and the ways in which these programs failed. While Thomas notes that Head Start and VISTA were somewhat successful, he points out that public will, funding, and prevailing economic/social interests were too entrenched for significant and systematic change to occur. Moreover, the programs started and funded by the federal government were ill-designed for the rural environments, nature of poverty, and isolation that existed in the state.

The text also cites the convoluted political nature of the state legislative system and effective lobbying by the coal companies as a hindrance on economic regulation. West Virginia never succeeded in properly taxing or regulating the industry. Given the reduction of employees, and thus payroll taxes, the already cash-strapped state's attempts to improve infrastructure and build roads was hampered by both the difficulty of the terrain and lack of funding, which resulted from both the state's inability to raise taxes and the relative poverty of the state itself.

West Virginia's difficult terrain coupled with its weak working-class tax base made its efforts to modernize infrastructure very difficult.

Thomas does a very good job of covering the social impacts of changes within the coal industry and within the state in general. *An Appalachian Reawakening* makes a convincing argument that West Virginia's experience with mechanization foreshadowed what occurred throughout many industrial areas throughout the United States. However, by grafting feminism to community action and civil rights onto coal mechanization, Thomas limits the scope of his coverage and thus treats them within one particular context as opposed to a broader one. In truth, Thomas might have dealt better with issues of desegregation and feminism by simply dedicating a chapter to the subject as opposed to combining it with chapters focusing on larger issues.

An Appalachian Reawakening is at its most compelling when dealing with issues related to the coal industry as whole. That is not to say that Thomas's other sections are not compelling, but that those sections largely set the stage for the conflicts between coal operations and attempts to regulate them. Anyone interested in understanding the current issues with Massey Energy would do well to look at the longer history of the relations between the state and the companies presented in the book. Ultimately, this monograph is very informative, and anyone interested in the history of West Virginia or in recent Appalachian history will find the book useful.

Daniel Michalak
Appalachian State University

***Kids of the Black Hole: Punk Rock in Postsuburban California*. By Dewar MacLeod. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. Paper back, Pp. 136, $19.95)**

The rise of the punk scene in the 1970s and '80s speaks to the growing discontent among the nation's youth at the time. No longer content with the hippie youth culture of the 1960s, when non-violent protest, love, and peace reigned, a growing section of America's youth wanted to revolt, whether it brought real change or not. Rarely, though, will one find an official, documented, researched history of the rise of this subculture, or counterculture. As Dewar MacLeod states in his concise yet intense peek into the growth of the Hollywood scene of the 1970s, *Kids of the Black Hole: Punk Rock in Postsuburban California*, punk developed into a scene of incredible exclusivity. He tells the story of punk's growth from a stripped-down, rock'n'roll music scene to a way of life – first a refusal of popular culture, and a culture in and of itself.

From the first page, MacLeod makes it apparent that his book will not simply study the scene from an academic perspective. This scene was a part of his life, a personal excursion away from the generic, monotonous sounds of the rock music industry of the '70s. In the introduction of the first chapter, MacLeod laments missing out on the Los Angeles scene, but establishes that he spent his college years in the Bay Area frequenting punk shows. One instance in this initial chapter, he speaks of his own personal experience going to a Ramones show at the Whisky a Go-Go (a rock'n'roll venue on the Sunset Strip that rarely booked punk acts), and he tells the tales of punk shows, life, and rebellion from a third-person perspective. He describes the origins of punk rock in London and New York and then follows its slow migration to Los Angeles and the West coast.

The first sounds were on vinyl, the imported tones of other cities, but Los Angeles—a mass culture powerhouse by the twentieth century—was not content with the music of another city's scene. New Yorkers and Londoners could not speak for the troubles of Los Angeles' post-suburbanites. Thus the Los Angeles scene was born, separate and unique from the class conscious Londoners and the artsy, "pseudo-intellectual" style of the New Yorkers.

Kids of the Black Hole is short. There is no way around the feeling that MacLeod could have written more, continued his analysis, and told more of the intriguing stories that guide the entire work. MacLeod speaks with obvious passion and knowledge of the topic, though it is considerably more intriguing when he relays the growth of the scene through the stories of concerts, confrontations, and collaboration. There are multiple occasions where he awkwardly, and seemingly reluctantly, transitions from these stories to the standard historical social analysis that makes the work an historical piece. These sections not only transition suddenly, but they also drone at times. With the language evolving into the doctoral discourse that comes standard with any historical work, the lack of such language during his story-telling more accurately portrays his enthusiasm for his topic and drives the book with much greater fluidity and readability.

Through the rest of the book, MacLeod explores the evolution of Los Angeles' punk rock scene, as it moves from the inner city outward, in search of anywhere that a venue would permit the destructive force of a punk crowd. As the scene evolves, he discusses the conflicts that grew within the movement: the definition of real punks and who among them were simply poseurs, punk ideology, and the definitions of the music itself. The music was always the driving force behind the scene, but the scene itself at the same time defined the music. Moving away from the

glitter and glamour of Hollywood, the punk scene roughened. Its musical definition became "Hardcore", and the scene changed with this shift to raw speed and gritty, utterly unproduced sound. While many view punk as a violent movement, MacLeod shows how it became that way, and how that view grew through the opinions of the media.

Dewar MacLeod's firsthand knowledge and enthusiastic undertaking of a project that relates to him personally creates a powerful story-telling capacity and an easy, quick read. Unfortunately, the way he seems to force social analysis into certain sections, rather than let it flow with undeniably interesting stories, makes the book feel uneven and a bit disjointed. The works brevity creates a sense that he could have included much more. Overall, *Kids of the Black Hole* is well worth reading, providing an accessible, in-depth view into an American subculture that remains largely undocumented and widely misunderstood.

Andrew Gehlhausen
University of Illinois - Chicago

***Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. By Jackson Lears (New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 418 pp. hardcover- $27.99).**

***The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*. By Alan Trachtenberg (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982 and 2007. xvii plus 273 pp. hardcover- $99.99, paperbound- $16.00).**

Mark Twain's famous novel about the follies of late nineteenth century America revealed much about the sentiments of the time period for which he famously named. The Gilded Age was an era of major societal change that left no corner of the nation untouched. The driving force behind this change can be argued from many angles; economic, political, social, and technological themes are all relevant for analyzing this juncture in American history. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* by Jackson Lears and *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* by Alan Trachtenberg are examples of different ways in which scholars have attempted to illuminate themes of the Gilded Age through cultural analysis. Lears and Trachtenberg have attempted to make sense of the period through themes of cultural rebirth and all-encompassing incorporation. This essay will analyze their respective themes and the conclusions they draw about the Gilded Age.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, scholars began to utilize social and cultural developments as tools of inquiry when examining well interpreted historical periods. Much of the recent literature on the Gilded Age has therefore considered events and themes from this angle. Lears and Trachtenberg both successfully use the lens of culture to draw conclusions about the driving forces behind the major changes during that period. For Lears, the dominating theme is the need for average Americans to assign new meaning to their lives in the wake of Civil War. Trachtenberg on the other hand, looks at the increased connectivity of people, business, and infrastructure during the Gilded Age, which he claims essentially redefined every aspect of how people lived their lives.

The specific time periods chosen by Lears and Jackson for their publications add structure to their respective cultural analyses. Lears is more ambitious in examining a larger time frame, focusing specifically on the time between the conclusion of Southern Reconstruction and the First World War. In *Rebirth of a Nation,* Lears' strategy of bookending his work with wars is central to the theme of regeneration. Although he opts to begin serious analysis in 1877 and not 1865, his piece relies on American sentiment following the Civil War as the impetus for finding new meaning; he goes on to define that search thematically as a rebirth of the American character. His choice to end with World War I identifies the limits of this new ideal type, and by doing so he seems to argue a cyclical cycle of death and rebirth as a theme not merely constrained to his own area of inquiry, but to topics beyond the scope of his work as well.

Trachtenberg takes an earlier approach. He begins with the westward expansion of the 1840s, and posits that American culture defined in the latter half of the century was a collective desire to seek out, develop, and profit from natural resources. *Incorporation of America* culminates with the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and Frederick Jackson Turner's official announcement that the frontier had closed.[1] For Trachtenberg, this chronology best defines the

[1] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 15.

rise to power of big business and the climactic display at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair of an America thoroughly and ostentatiously incorporated by big business.

Both *Rebirth of a Nation* and *Incorporation of America* have thematic strengths and weaknesses. In *Rebirth of a Nation*, Lears' theme fits nicely with his chronology, and the cyclical nature of regeneration resonates with the ebb and flow of history as a positive way to identify trends. His organization of the book into chapters on money, race, urbanization, business, and imperialism, as well as a concluding section on culture, delineate various ways in which rebirth happened at all levels of society. Because the Gilded Age was wrought with vertically integrated change, this choice of organization makes sense, despite the limitations of the theme of regeneration.

The strength of Trachtenberg's work lies in his theme of incorporation. His separate analysis of westward migration, mechanization, labor, urbanization, and politics provide a logical and well reasoned roadmap to guide the reader through the book's purpose: an explanation of the extent to which business and the rise of the corporation influenced all areas of American culture.[2]

Trachtenberg's strength as an English professor also constitutes one of his weaknesses. In one of the final chapters, Trachtenberg weaves literary works of fiction by Mark Twain, Herman Melville, and dime novel authors into his narrative.[3] Undeniably, many Americans have read such works and so con identify with them; yet their applicability to a broader theme of incorporation is questionable. This is a small trifle for an otherwise well researched and written publication. The fact that *Incorporation of America* has been republished as a twenty-fifth anniversary edition is a testament to its relevant themes and continued importance to a broader understanding of the Gilded Age.

Lears' analysis of the Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson presidential administrations is an ideal example of his thematic limitations. Through Roosevelt's involvement in the Spanish American War, Latin American imperialistic foreign policy, and condemnation of Japan's expansionist agenda, Lears seems to scapegoat him as a wholly negative manifestation of the regeneration rhetoric.[4] Such a criticism does have legitimacy, but Lears' portrayal of Woodrow Wilson undermines his credibility.

For Lears, Woodrow Wilson's actions in involving America in World War I are well reasoned and fit nicely into the book's regenerative theme. President Wilson wanted peace, but was confronted by a "hawkish cabinet" as well as Teddy Roosevelt; in the end, as Lears concludes, were his choices not necessarily his own, but rather an outcome of Gilded Age cultural developments.[5] Roosevelt, on the other hand, was not given the cultural benefit of the doubt. Once again, this criticism has integrity and is skillfully argued by Lears.

The limitations of *Rebirth of a Nation* are illuminated in the final pages of the book, when Lears synthesizes the actions of Wilson and compares them to the post 9-11 climate of the George W. Bush presidential administration:

> "The end of the Cold War and the long bull market of the 1990s revived familiar militarist fears of peace, evoking the false comfort and complacency, the 'ignoble ease' that had enraged TR. But the terrorist attacks September, 11th, 2001,

---

[2] Trachtenberg, 3.
[3] Trachtenberg, 182.
[4] Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of A Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*, (New York: HarperCollins), 280.
[5] Lears, 338.

> brought militarism back with a vengeance, providing the idea that a regenerative war with a luster it had not enjoyed (outside fascist circles) for nearly a century. Recalling the nationalist Progressives of the 1910s, Paul Berman, Christopher Hitchens, and other 'liberal hawks' sang the praises of war from the safety of their studies. The ghost of Roosevelt returned to haunt the corridors of power. So did the ghost of Wilson, though pundits missed the mark when they called the preemptive unilateralist George W. Bush a 'Wilsonian.' Despite Wilson's failings, his reputation deserved a better fate. He hated war, and was even willing to abridge national sovereignty to avoid it. TR, not Wilson, was Bush's ideological ancestor."[6]

This is where *Rebirth of a Nation* fails as an accurate account of history and falls more into the realm of a presentist interpretation. Lears develops a complicated theme of Gilded Age regeneration and the characters of two presidents with the purpose of arguing a personal bias against the Bush administration. His opinion may resonate with some readers, yet his criticism is more appropriate for a newspaper publication than a scholarly work. Such a hidden agenda taints the work of an otherwise well written and researched work of history.

The ways in which a scholar can identify patterns and themes in a historical era such as the Gilded Age are broad and diverse. The difficulty lies in interpreting the massive cultural, social, societal, economic, industrial, and political changes in a way that can be distilled down to a single publication. Both *Rebirth of a Nation* and *Incorporation of America* are positive contributions to the field of Gilded Age American history. Lears and Trachtenberg nicely develop their respective themes and develop them in a cogent way. The difference in approach of these two scholars in interpreting the Gilded Age is a testament to the vibrant and diverse works of cultural history that have recently come to the fore. For better or for worse, they will be weighed, measured, criticized, and remembered by their themes of cultural analysis.

Joseph Otto
Appalachian State University

[6] Lears, 353.

Sutter, Robert G. *U.S.—Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010. Paperback, Pp. 333,$32.95)

As the United States de-industrializes in the first decade of the twenty-first century and China's industry develops more, the importance of stable relations between these world powers grows. *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present,* by Robert Sutter, is a thorough analysis of the history of Sino-American relations up to the present. According to Sutter, despite the areas of contention between the two nations, the overall historical trend for Sino-American relations has been positive with little indication that the few points of contention between the two nations will have a meaningful impact on their larger foreign relations policies.

The relationship between China and the United States has always been one of mixed feelings. Despite being on opposite sides of the Korean War, the two powers realized that forging a relationship would strengthen both of their positions in the 1960s. Talks between the two nations stopped when President Nixon invaded Cambodia during the Vietnam War and were further delayed by the Watergate scandal.

Sino-American relations were officially established in 1978, though the U.S. –Taiwan relationship was still a point of contention between the two countries. Secretary of State George Schultz pushed for more distant relations with China, forcing the country to be more accommodating of U.S. interests. China's harsh stance on Tiananmen Square and the fall of the Soviet Union were both factors that led the United States to move away from relations with China.

Recent Sino-American relations can be defined by a few key characteristics: the United States' policy of containment on one hand and engagement on the other; China's attempts to define the relationship on favorable terms; pressure from the United States' for China to integrate into the world market and follow established western patterns for dealing with human rights and environmental issues; and issues regarding American support of Taiwan. The relationship rests on both nations' desire to avoid conflict, cooperate in areas of mutual interest, and prevent issues from damaging the overall relationship. Both nations desire a strong relationship and will not let differences on a few issues destroy a relationship that has taken so long to build.

Sutter's experience as an analyst for various American government agencies shows in his work. He inserts his opinion of trends, points out the deficiencies with other scholarship in the field, offers analysis of the trends in Sino-American relations, and predicts future trends in relations. His argument is solid and founded on a bibliography that represents many of the best Chinese and American sources currently available.

U.S. –Chinese Relations is not without flaws. Weird phrasings and obtuse sentence constructions are not a common issue in the book; however, when they do occur, their presence is disorienting and breaks the narrative flow. Sutter assumes a basic understanding of Chinese history and of the arguments that other scholars have made.

Robert Sutter's book does an excellent job of synthesizing the history of Sino-American relations in plain English and emphasizing important trends and key concepts. As a result, the book is imbued with a readability that is rare in historical writing. Sutter's methodology is sound; by discussing each issue from the American and the Chinese perspective, he is able to create a highly informed, unbiased narrative that sets him apart from other scholars in the field.

The book's impressive coverage of the history of Sino-American relations makes it the logical first step for graduate students and scholars writing on the subject; its readability, use of bullet points, and clear organization appeal to a much wider audience.

Eric Cressy
Appalachian State University

Morsman, Amy Feely. *The Big House After Slavery: Virginia Plantation Families and Their Postbellum Domestic Experience* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010. Hardcover, Pp. 296, $49.50)

The Big House After Slavery: Virginia Plantation Families and Their Postbellum Domestic Experience, by Amy Feely, continues the long tradition of historical research on changes caused by the Civil War in the American South. However, Morsman creates her own niche by looking at the way family, marriage, and gender changed after the economic shift away from slavery began effecting wealthy Virginia planters. The author argues that the negative impact of the Civil War on the economy in postbellum Virginia altered the relationship between husbands and wives by taking away the hyper patriarchy found in antebellum society. As a result, women and men began adopting different roles in the home, in the fields, and within social circles. Ultimately, the story of Virginia planters in the postwar period is one of struggle, not just with a new labor system or with poor finances, but with their own class and gender identity.

The Big House After Slavery uses letters, plantation journals, organization records, periodicals, and newspapers from pre and postwar Virginia as a basis for the book's argument. The first chapter outlines the social and economic conditions for planters in Virginia before and during the war. The author outlines how labor was delegated and builds up the relaxing lifestyle of elite planters and their families. The following three chapters analyze how males and females adjusted to the problem of labor shortage and the resulting decline in income and social status. They look at the public and private adjustments made by the upper-class to attempt to sustain their pre-war lifestyles, and they support the critical elements in Morsman's thesis. Chapters five and six begin to look at the legacy of the problems in postwar years. They argue that mutual household and plantation responsibilities developed during the time period. The book concludes with a solid summation of the authors' main points and ends with an accurate assessment of the economic direction of the New South.

Morsman argues that roles in domescity are directly related to the socio-economic experience of antebellum and postbellum elite society. The study operates under the premise that elite planters suffered the harshest financial loss of any Southerners because of property destruction and loss of slaves. The first part of the book is highly comparative and demonstrates the relative luxury and comfort that plantation owners enjoyed before the war, in contrast to their loss of income and property in postbellum society. The crux of the argument is the loss of status in society. Without slaves, men and women were pressed into manual labor to maintain their large farms. They combatted the new workload by trying to present a lifestyle of leisure and comfort to their peers and friends. Morsman credits the increased use of technology on the farm and in the home as one way that planters proved their elite status to the community. They purchased cook stoves, sewing machines, gas chandeliers, and Hall's Improved Cleaning Cream attempted to prove their financial success and to maintain their prominence in society.

With this work, Morsman broaches a new issue in the heavily studied field of the postbellum South. The author's argument adds a new piece to the field because she looks specifically at how the Confederate defeat affected gender roles and economics in Virginia. Morsman brings new life to the sources, which were mainly written by males, by looking at them through a different lens and interpreting what white elites thought about gender. However she does make a mistake by downplaying the sharecropping system put in place by plantation owners that continued the exploitation of black labor. The book, at times, is sympathetic to the economic

troubles of Virginia planters and infers that the elite were left to fend for themselves after the abolishment of slavery. Morsman also uses a small sample of sources, mostly originating from the Piedmont region, to extrapolate her thesis to all Virginia planters. She does not address whether or not the tidewater or mountain plantation owners faced any of the same issues regarding gender, labor, or business. The suppositions made in the text are supported, but at times, the author applies her theories too broadly. Despite some overreaching by the author, *The Big House After Slavery* is useful for graduate and undergraduate students focusing on the economic and social change in the South after the Civil War.

John Aaron Akey
Appalachian State University