

# Alpata

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# Hurricanes: A Phenomenon

**Jace Stuckey**

Although the 2004 hurricane season in Florida has been labeled by many as a “historic year” for devastating storms, intense weather is no new phenomenon for the region. Hurricanes have long been a concern for the region. The term itself is thought to be a derivative of the Spanish word *huracán* with other Caribbean derivatives *huracan*, and *furacan* being common as well. Geologists have determined that hurricanes and major storm surges have been occurring in the Florida region for several thousand years. In addition, native cultures had significant experience with hurricanes long before the first Europeans arrived in the late fifteenth century. In fact, to this day, according to hurricane historian Jay Barnes, “some descendants of African slaves in the West Indies still tie knots in the leaves of certain trees and hang them in their homes to ward off hurricanes.”<sup>1</sup>

Although Columbus’s first voyage to the New World was hurricane free, he did encounter a major gale near *Hispaniola* in July of 1494. He would later write that “nothing but the service of God and the extension of the monarchy should induce him to expose himself to such dangers.”<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately for future explorers, this would be a sign of things to come. Ponce de León was hit by two different hurricanes in the same week. Hernando Cortés lost 70 crewmen when the first ship he sent to Mexico was destroyed a hurricane.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Barnes. *Florida’s Hurricane History*. (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill & London, 1998). p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Barnes. *Florida’s Hurricane History*, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Barnes, *Florida Hurricane History*, 41.

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During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the increased travel between Europe and the Americas the ability to forecast and avoid hurricanes did not improve. Religious festivals and banquets often delayed the departure of trading and cargo ships until the late summer and early fall (August & September), which happened to coincide with the height of hurricane season. The inability to predict and steer clear of major hurricanes has left the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coastline littered with shipwrecks. The discovery of such famous shipwrecks as the *Capitana* and the *Atocha*, as well as numerous others, excavations yielding priceless artifacts of gold and silver have inspired treasure hunters from all across the country and earned a portion of the Florida coastline the name ‘the treasure coast.’<sup>4</sup>

Hurricanes not only hindered ocean travel, but also the development of Spanish, French, and English settlements along the Florida coastline. For example, throughout the eighteenth century the Pensacola settlement suffered considerable damage from successive hurricanes. In 1711, storms devastated the coast from New Orleans to Pensacola. In 1736, hurricanes destroyed Pensacola and drowned nearly all of the inhabitants. In 1766, a storm sank six ships in Pensacola Bay, and in 1772, thirty miles of beach and all but one wharf in Pensacola was ravaged by a storm surge. Finally, in 1778, most of the waterfront and all but one ship in the harbor were destroyed by a major hurricane.

Numerous other colonies and settlements in Florida and the Caribbean suffered greatly as well. However, the deadliest year for hurricanes in recorded history came during the American Revolution. In 1780, at least eight major hurricanes (five in October alone) blew across the Caribbean and Florida. The second storm to strike in

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<sup>4</sup> Barnes, *Florida Hurricanes*, 46.

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October lasted for more than a week and claimed more than 22,000 lives. No storm of this magnitude has ever been seen since.

Even with significant technological advances, however, the modern era can claim only limited success in protecting coastal settlements from storms. The experience of storms in more recent times can attest to this. The hurricane season of 2004 was historic for a number of reasons, but primarily serves as a stark reminder of some of the more prevalent storms of the last century and to what extent humans are still at the mercy of nature.

# Florida Hurricanes of the 1920s

## Brandon Stelck

The first quarter of the twentieth century saw the state of Florida develop and mature from a sparsely populated agricultural state to a burgeoning world-class tourist attraction. Good weather, low taxes, and railroads were all reasons why runaway land sales occurred and ultimately allowed south Florida to grow at an unprecedented rate. However, by 1926 the real-estate economy had begun to collapse, and to make matters worse, the arrival of the “Great Miami Hurricane” in September of 1926 and the San Felipe -Okeechobee hurricane of 1928 stymied any further significant growth in south Florida until World War II.<sup>1</sup>

At the stroke of midnight on September 18, 1926, alarms sounded as a category 4 hurricane struck the heart

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Gannon, *Florida A Short History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 82-85.

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of Miami. Mostly unaware and definitely unprepared, the population of Miami suffered approximately 380 deaths and 6,000 injuries; and over 18,000 were left homeless. Most of the casualties occurred near Moore Haven, where one of the Lake Okeechobee dikes burst, flooding the town and destroying everything in its path. The winds of the hurricane were estimated at upward of 150 miles per hour. These winds were the highest sustained winds ever recorded in the United States at the time.<sup>2</sup>

The “Great Miami Hurricane” was not done. It passed over the peninsula and into the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, where it regained strength and sat off the coast of Pensacola two days later, on September 20. The hurricane produced tropical storm conditions for the Gulf Coast for 24 hours before it finally moved on and struck Louisiana on the September 21.<sup>3</sup> In Pensacola Bay, every boat, dock, and pier was destroyed.<sup>4</sup> The damage in the Miami area was absolutely devastating. Adjusted for inflation, the “Great Miami Hurricane” was the most expensive hurricane in history, causing \$98 billion in damage.<sup>5</sup>

Two years later, on September 16, 1928, another category 4 hurricane struck south Florida at West Palm

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<sup>2</sup> “Hurricane Preparedness, Hurricane History,” 2005. FloridaDisaster.Org.

[http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane\\_aware/english/history\\_printer.shtml#miami26](http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane_aware/english/history_printer.shtml#miami26)

<sup>3</sup> Hurricane Preparedness, Hurricane History,” 2005. FloridaDisaster.Org.

[http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane\\_aware/english/history\\_printer.shtml#miami26](http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane_aware/english/history_printer.shtml#miami26)

<sup>4</sup> Hurricane Preparedness, Hurricane History,” 2005. FloridaDisaster.Org.

[http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane\\_aware/english/history\\_printer.shtml#miami26](http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane_aware/english/history_printer.shtml#miami26)

<sup>5</sup> LeeAnn O’Leary, “Most Destructive Hurricanes” 2005. <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art18169.asp>

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Peach. Known as the San Felipe-Okeechobee hurricane, the storm dumped tons of water on Lake Okeechobee, causing the water levels to rise six to nine feet.<sup>6</sup> A small levee that had been built on the lake to store extra water for agricultural purposes was overflowed, and over 200 people drowned trying to escape waters that reached in excess of twenty-five feet.<sup>7</sup> After all was said and done, over 1,850 people perished in the disaster, most of which were black migrant farm workers who drowned around the area of Lake Okeechobee. The monetary damage in south Florida was estimated at \$25 million.

The “Great Miami Hurricane” of 1926 and the San Felipe-Okeechobee hurricane of 1928 served to end the population boom in south Florida. While the economy was weakening before the arrival of the hurricanes, the storms showed people they could not build recklessly without first planning ahead for natural disasters. It seems people had forgotten the destructive forces nature could bring upon them, as the last hurricane to hit Florida before the “Great Miami Hurricane” occurred in 1910.<sup>8</sup> These hurricanes did serve some good, however, as the public demanded that the federal government develop better warning systems and improve meteorological forecasting in order to thwart the devastation of hurricanes.

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<sup>6</sup> Hurricane Preparedness, Hurricane History,” 2005. FloridaDisaster.Org.

[http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane\\_aware/english/history\\_printer.shtml#miami28](http://www.floridadisaster.org/hurricane_aware/english/history_printer.shtml#miami28)

<sup>7</sup> “Storms of the Century: 1928 Palm Beach/Lake Okeechobee Hurricane,” 2005. Weather.com.

<http://www.weather.com/newscenter/specialreports/sotc/honorable/1928.html>

<sup>8</sup> Gannon, *Florida*, 82-85.

## Florida Hurricanes of the 1930s

### Chris Sahl

The hurricane that slammed the Florida Keys over Labor Day weekend in 1935 is the strongest storm to hit America in the twentieth century, one of two category 5 storms ever recorded by the U.S. National Weather Service.<sup>1</sup> The hurricane dealt the harshest blow to veterans at work on a bridge and tunnel project in the town of Matacumbe, in the Florida Keys. A railway train intended to remove the veterans was swept into the Atlantic Ocean. Residents across the Keys boarded up in anticipation of a storm of unprecedented ferocity. “Key West is boarded up so tight you can’t recognize it,” roared M. E. Gilford, director of the area’s emergency relief administration. Similar protective measures extended over one hundred miles up the peninsula’s mainland.<sup>2</sup>

Relief efforts brought the first indication of horrific devastation. The Red Cross rushed into the shredded veterans’ camp, where Coast Guard officials estimated death tolls ranging from 200 to 400.<sup>3</sup> Many of the victims were drowned, swept into the Gulf of Mexico, or sucked back into the Atlantic with receding fifteen-foot waves. Some people were literally sandblasted to death.<sup>4</sup> On hand

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usatoday.com/weather/wh1935.htm> (last visited on March 16, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> “Both Coasts Threatened,” *New York Times*, 3 September 1935, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> “Veterans Lead Fatalities,” *New York Times*, 4 September 1935, p. 1. The latter number would prove most accurate.

<sup>4</sup> [http://64.233.161.104/search?q=cache:\\_GPXhDc8TFIJ:www.pinnellashealth.com/CommunityNewsletter/SAFENews/JulyAugust2003.pdf+%22Who+Killed+the+Vets%22+AND+%22new+masses%22&hl=en](http://64.233.161.104/search?q=cache:_GPXhDc8TFIJ:www.pinnellashealth.com/CommunityNewsletter/SAFENews/JulyAugust2003.pdf+%22Who+Killed+the+Vets%22+AND+%22new+masses%22&hl=en) (last visited March 16, 2005).

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at the veterans' camp was Dr. Lassiter Alexander, whose first-hand account best summarized the storm's wrath. "When we found the water still rising," Alexander reflected, "we made our way to the railroad track. ... [A]t daybreak Tuesday we found a tank full of water. ... [T]here we remained until later in the afternoon."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunate traveler Charles van Vechten spent his vacation visiting a friend at the veterans' camp. "You can't imagine how sudden—and how awful—it was," van Vechten said. "There was a big wall of water. ... it swept over those shacks and messed them up like they were match boxes."<sup>6</sup> For a storm with such massive casualty figures, the death toll was remarkably centralized. The failure to evacuate the veterans brought instant political attention. "They had plenty of notice," remarked Congressman J. Hardin Peterson, "and I want to fix the responsibility."

Concern about disease dominated relief efforts. Governor Dave Scholtz ordered the cremation of all bodies "in order to avoid pestilence and the danger of disease,"<sup>7</sup> while suggesting that blame lay with Weather Bureau.<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant J. E. Fairbanks advised further protection. "I recommend that the entire keys from Snake Creek to and including lower Maticumbe be burned."<sup>9</sup> While state officials debated viral spread and whom to blame, the *Dixie*, an oil-burning ocean liner carrying several hundred –

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<sup>5</sup> "Survivors Tell How Hurricanes Levelled Veterans' Camps," *New York Times*, 5 September 1935, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> "Survivors Tell How Hurricanes Levelled Veterans' Camps," *New York Times*, 5 September 1935, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> "3 Inquiries Start In Florida Deaths," *New York Times*, 7 September 1935, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert B. Nichols, "Weather Bureau Defends Warning," *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 September 1935, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> "3 Inquiries Start In Florida Deaths," *New York Times*, 7 September 1935, p. 3.

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passengers, remained grounded on a shoal off the Florida coast.<sup>10</sup>

On September 7, the cremations began. At that point, official death tolls eclipsed at three hundred. One pyre burned the bodies of thirty-six men at Snake Creek, while Gov. Scholtz assured reporters that “I’m not looking for any goat.”<sup>11</sup> All told, the storm killed 461 people, including 259 veterans.<sup>12</sup> In Washington, veterans marched in demand of pensions for the relatives of those killed by the hurricane.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Rescuers Delayed By Gale And Error,” *New York Times*, 4 September 1935, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> “Cremations Begun In Key Gale Area,” *New York Times*, 8 September 1935, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> <http://floridakeystreasures.com/Weather/h.shtml> (last visited March 16, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> “Deaths Put At 300 In Veteran Camps,” *New York Times*, 7 September 1935, p. 3.

## Florida Hurricanes of the 1960s

### Daniel Vazquez

“A terrifying, angry shriek announces Camille's arrival. The deafening scream seems to come from everywhere. My heart races wildly as the building takes its first strike. . . . Loud crashing continues as the large metal objects become airborne and smash into who-knows-what. No one has to be told to get under the mattresses.”

The memoir of commissioned naval officer, Gregory Durrschmidt, vividly recount the rainy, windswept night of August 17, 1969. Durrschmidt was on vacation in Biloxi, Mississippi, as Hurricane Camille engulfed the port city. Camille, with winds gusting over 200 miles per hour, was the second strongest hurricane to strike the United States mainland. It was the last hurricane in a decade of storms known for their irregular strength and haphazard tracks.<sup>1</sup>

The 1950s was a relatively sleepy period for hurricane activity. Then, on September 10, 1960, a powerful hurricane named Donna struck the Florida Keys and awakened its citizens from their long respite. While the "Labor Day" hurricane was much stronger than Donna, far fewer people lived in the Florida Keys in 1935 than in 1960. Thus, Hurricane Donna's impact was deeper and more widespread than the "super-hurricane" of 1935. Donna ended the opportunity for many citizens of the Florida Keys

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Durrschmidt, "Hurricane: Paradise Lost (a Narrative about Hurricane Camille)," Weatherwise 52 (July-August 1999):32; "A look back at Hurricane Camille," USA Today, 7 November 2000.

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to purchase insurance as companies refused to provide underwriting facilities in an area they felt was too risky.<sup>2</sup>

Hurricane Donna cut across Florida and re-entered the Atlantic Ocean south of St. Augustine. Donna remained a powerful storm despite crossing land. Hurricane Donna's strength could easily be seen as military radar tracked a flock of seagulls that became trapped in the eye of the storm. The seagulls were forced to fly north with the storm for several hundred miles to Cape Fear, North Carolina. There, eye-wall winds dissipated enough to allow the seagulls to escape.<sup>3</sup>

August 1964 brought Hurricane Cleo, the next major storm of the decade. Cleo demonstrated again the increasing problem of south Florida's expansion amidst a common pathway for hurricanes. However, Cleo is better known for her unusual track and heavy rainfall. It did what no other hurricane in recorded history has ever done, in that it traveled up the entire east coast of Florida from Key Biscayne to Fernandina Beach.<sup>4</sup> Following Hurricane Cleo was Dora, a storm with an equally strange track. Hurricane Dora slammed into Florida's east coast at St. Augustine and established a direct westbound path. For two days, Dora crept closer to Tallahassee. After passing Florida's capital city, it made an almost perfect 180-degree turn and began traveling directly east toward Savannah, Georgia.<sup>5</sup> The final erratic hurricane of the decade was Hurricane Betsy in 1965. Betsy zigzagged toward Cape Canaveral, stalled for two days in open water, looped back down toward the Bahamas, stalled again, and finally settled

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<sup>2</sup> Broward Williams, Florida Hurricane Survey Report, 1965, (Tallahassee: Cabinet of the State of Florida, 1965), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Jay Barnes, "Creatures in the Storm: Effect of Hurricanes on Animals," Weatherwise v51 (September-October 1998) : 27.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, Florida Hurricane Survey Report, 1965, 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, Florida Hurricane Survey Report, 1965, 29.

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on a direct westbound track, striking Plantation Key.<sup>6</sup> Betsy was also unique in that after buffeting south Florida, it crossed the Gulf of Mexico and caused significant damage again, this time near New Orleans, Louisiana.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, 1969 brought Hurricane Camille, a storm so severe that it brought national attention to woefully regressive disaster relief policies that often discriminated on the basis of race and class. A 1969 civil rights report by the American Friends Service Committee revealed flawed private and government disaster relief efforts. Recent memories of soldiers and Red Cross volunteers dispensing supplies and medicine to countless south Floridians following Hurricane Andrew in 1992 lie in stark contrast to August 1969, when the federal government almost completely neglected the immediate needs of storm victims. Federal agencies devoted primary attention to the restoration of public facilities over the immediate needs of private citizens. Storm victims were expected to travel great distances to sources of aid, exploitation and fraud were rampant, and Mississippi's all-white Governor's Emergency Council allotted only a small percentage of federal reconstruction loans to African Americans. Federal and state governments were not alone in setting policies that today seem irrational and unjust. The official aid disbursement policy of the American National Red Cross was based upon a "graduated scale of income; if you had more, you got more; if you had less, you got less."<sup>8</sup> The aftermath of Hurricane Camille ushered in sweeping

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<sup>6</sup> John M. Williams, Fred Doehring, and Iver W. Duedall, "Heavy weather in Florida: 180 Hurricanes and Tropical Storms in 122 Years," Oceanus 36 (Spring 1993) : 19.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, Florida Hurricane Survey Report, 1965, 21, 23.

<sup>8</sup> The American Friends Service Committee, Southern Regional Council, In the Wake of Hurricane Camille: An Analysis of the Federal Response, (24 November 1969), 28 - 30.

changes that worked relatively well until Hurricane Andrew exposed more critical failures in 1992.

## **Hurricane Andrew**

### **Kate Herbenick**

Destructive by force and catastrophic by nature, hurricanes are the costliest atmospheric storms to prey on coastal communities. Hurricane Andrew, the most expensive natural disaster in United State's history, crippled the coasts of the northern Bahamas, south Florida, and south-central Louisiana before ultimately ending its deadly journey over the mid-western United States. The low death toll can be attributed mainly to the success of coordinated programs of hurricane preparedness and modern evacuation measures that allowed residents of the densely packed coasts to escape Andrew's direct path of fury. Similarly, the economic devastation left in the wake of the treacherous cyclone is a testament to the awe-inspiring consequences of the continued residential and commercial development of the world's vulnerable shorelines.

The first Atlantic hurricane to develop from a tropical wave in almost two years, Andrew fortified to its peak intensity, the lower margin of a category 5, during the last few hours preceding landfall off the Straits of Florida. A category 4 upon crossing over Eleuthra Island in the Bahamas on the 23 August 1992, Hurricane Andrew abruptly intensified before striking the south-eastern coast of Florida at dawn the following day. The eye of the storm targeted Homestead, Florida: a modest agricultural community boasting thirty thousand residents and located thirty miles south of the heavily populated metropolis of

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Miami. Striking only a few nautical miles to the north, Andrew's torrential floods and unassailable winds, that reached upwards of 180 mph, would have destroyed Dade County's commercial and residential sector in catastrophic proportion.

Within four hours Andrew's eye had traversed the Florida peninsula, leaving an estimated \$28 billion worth of structural damage in its path. As the most economically destructive United States hurricane on record, Andrew revealed inadequacies in existing structural regulations and addressed the need for more stringent building codes to provide protection of the weather envelope. In addition to the residential and commercial tracts that suffered from Andrew's crushing winds, the storm's parameter encompassed numerous environmental preserves including Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, and Biscayne National Park. Inflicting a devastating blow to the geographical region, the hurricane damaged thirty-three percent of Biscayne Park's coral reefs and over ninety percent of south Florida's native pine lands, mangroves, and hardwoods. Without delay, Andrew continued on a north-west course upon entering the Gulf of Mexico, striking a sparsely populated coastline of south-central Louisiana as a category 3 on the morning of the 26 August. Although it left the densely populated and historic region of New Orleans unscathed, the storm inflicted over \$1 billion worth of property damage and hastened the already severe coastal erosion suffered by the state.

The complex nature and social vulnerability of hurricanes leaves an enduring legacy to the inhabitants that fall victim to the catastrophic tropical storms. With modern-day levels of unprecedented shoreline development, the toll of destruction will likely increase regardless of evolving climatic patterns and shifts. Hurricane Andrew is a reminder of the tremendous impact awe-inspiring tropical storms have on the historical and societal development of

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coastline communities when exposed to such severe weather.

Elsner, James, *Hurricanes of the North Atlantic: Climate and Society* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 178.

Cook, Ronald, *Hurricanes of 1992: Lessons Learned and Implications for the Future* (New York: The American Society of Civil Engineers, 1994), 70-83.

Davis, G. E., *Effects of Hurricane Andrew on Natural and Archeological Resources* (Denver, Col.: United States Department of the Interior, 1996).

# A Look at the 2004 Hurricane Season

## Jessica Smith

Florida is no stranger to hurricanes, which threaten its environmental health, economic stability, and the welfare of its populace. The 2004 hurricane season was exceptional, however, with four hurricanes slamming Florida's coastline in the period of forty-four days. Not since 1886, when four hurricanes plowed Texas in one season, has such a storm sequence occurred in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John-Thor Dahlburg and John M. Glionna, "Jeanne Delivers More Misery; Fourth hurricane in six weeks hits Florida with 120-mph winds and pounding rain. At least six are killed and power is out for 2 million," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 September 2004. <http://proquest.umi.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/pqdweb?did=700046901&sid=7&Fmt=3&clientid=20179&RQT=309&Vname=PQD>> (28 February 2005).

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Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne left little time to recover, provide relief, or rebuild between their assaults. These hurricanes of August and September left 126 dead and damage estimated at more than twenty billion.<sup>2</sup> On August 13<sup>th</sup>, Charley made landfall near Cayo Costa as a category 4 hurricane, the strongest hurricane to hit the United States since Andrew in 1992 and the second costliest in US history.<sup>3</sup> Frances followed, making landfall as a category 2 hurricane over Hutchinson Island on September 5. Space and military facilities of Cape Canaveral reported an estimated \$100 million in damage as a result of Frances.<sup>4</sup> Hurricane Ivan made its US landfall in Gulf Shores, Alabama, as a category 3 hurricane, but still caused extensive devastation in Florida. Ivan reached category 5 strength three times in its course as a hurricane and caused the outbreak of twenty tornados in Florida. Ivan also disrupted timber and offshore oil operations.<sup>5</sup> Jeanne, the last of the four hurricanes, made landfall on Hutchinson Island as a category 3 hurricane, five miles from Hurricane Frances's initial landing site. A negative storm surge of approximately four-and-a-half feet below normal tides was reported at Cedar Key.<sup>6</sup> The historical

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<sup>2</sup> Neil Johnson, "44 Days of Dread," *Tampa Bay Online*, 26 November 2004. <<http://news.tbo.com/news/MGBR1YKN02E.html>> (28 February 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Pasch et al. "Hurricane Charley 9-14 August 2004," *National Hurricane Center*, 5 January 2005. <<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/2004charley.shtml?>> (28 February 2005).

<sup>4</sup> John L. Beven II, "Hurricane Frances 25 August- 8 September 2004," *National Hurricane Center*, 17 December 2004. <<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/2004frances.shtml?>> (28 February 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Stacy R. Stewart, "Hurricane Ivan 2-26 September 2004," *National Hurricane Center*, 11 February 2005. <<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/2004ivan.shtml?>>. (28 February 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Miles B. Lawrence and Hugh D. Cobb, "Hurricane Jeanne 13-28 September 2004," *National Hurricane Center*, 7 January 2005.

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significance of these hurricanes can be seen by their affect on Florida's citrus economy, their destruction of Florida's beaches, and their influence on the 2004 presidential election.

Three of the four 2004 hurricanes affected Florida citrus production. Charley, Frances, and Jeanne swept over the 80,000 acres of citrus groves, tearing fruit from the trees, destroying delicate branches, and soaking the ground. In fact, the flooding associated with these hurricanes may even cause permanent root damage.<sup>7</sup> Bruised and punctured fruit is impossible to sell, prompting the US Department of Agriculture to estimate a 31 percent decline in the production of oranges and the grapefruit yield, the lowest since the Great Depression.

Growers are not the only Floridians to suffer from the damage to citrus crops. Ninety-thousand residents, including migrant workers, rely on the citrus industry for economic survival.<sup>8</sup> Twenty-five thousand of those are citrus pickers, of which 70 percent are illegal immigrants.<sup>9</sup> Already living on wages often below minimum and residing in less than adequate housing, these illegal immigrants are some of the hardest hit by the 2004 hurricane season. According to the Farmworker Justice Project of Florida

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<<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/2004jeanne.shtml?>>. (28 February 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Grunwald and Manuel Roig-Franzia, "Storms Latest Setback for Fla. Citrus Growers; Pressure to Sell Land to Developers is Rising," *The Washington Post*, 11 September 2004. <<http://proquest.umi.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/pqdweb?did=690694521&sid=7&Fmt=3&clientid=20179&RQT=309&Vname=PQD>>. (28 February 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Dahlburg, "The Nation; Hurricanes,".

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer 8. Lee, "Lost Fruit in Central Florida Means Lost Jobs for Migrants," *New York Times*, 10 September 2004.

<<http://proquest.umi.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/pqdweb?did=690217921&sid=7&Fmt=3&clientid=20179&RQT=309&Vname=PQD>>. (28 February 2005).

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Legal Services, close to 40 percent of legally occupied migrant housing was destroyed.<sup>10</sup> Without other occupational options, and fear that coming forward to report damages will result in the questioning of their status, illegal immigrants will arguably have the most difficult recovery from the 2004 hurricane season.

In addition to diminishing citrus yield, the hurricanes created storm surges that displaced coastal sand, narrowing beaches and destroying dunes.<sup>11</sup> This coastal erosion was more widespread on Florida's east coast than its west. With loss of sand, beaches resembled their winter profile conditions, more vulnerable to the threat of winter storms.<sup>12</sup> How fast Florida beaches can return to their pre-storm shapes will be determined by their initial hurricane damage, the amount of chronic erosion, and the density of their development. Artificial beach renourishment is an option being implemented to speed up the rebuilding process. Overwashed sand, which was carried inland by the hurricanes, has been collected and cleaned of debris and returned to beaches. New dunes from inland sand sources and bulldozed beach sand have been created, but offer far less protection than natural dunes.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lee, "Lost,".

<sup>11</sup> Abby Goodnough, "After 4 Hurricanes, Trailers and Homelessness," *New York Times*, 25 November 2004. <<http://proquest.umi.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/pqdweb?did=700046901&sid=7&Fmt=3&clientid=20179&RQT=309&Vname=PQD>>. (28 February 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Cornelia Dean, "As Weather Shifts, Beaches May Pay a Heavy Price," *New York Times*, 14 September 2004. <<http://proquest.umi.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/pqdweb?did=691782591&sid=7&Fmt=3&clientid=20179&RQT=309&Vname=PQD>>. (28 February 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Cornelia Dean, "Sand Lost in Storms Leaves Beaches at Risk," *New York Times*, 21 September 2004. <<http://>>

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Popularity of beach renourishment has been hindered by its cost, in the tens of millions, and by its requirement of constant maintenance.<sup>14</sup> Luckily, nature often aids beaches in returning to their pre-storm conditions. Sand swept away during a hurricane can end up in or near the surf zone, eventually returning to beaches with the high tides. This process, however, is slow and difficult to measure.<sup>15</sup>

Something not difficult to measure is the importance of tourism to Florida's economy. Beach closures resulting from hurricane damage threatened this \$ 50 billion industry.<sup>16</sup> Road closures and the cancellation of Amtrak and airline services limited the number of tourists flocking to Florida this hurricane season.<sup>17</sup> Limited beach access, the suspension of beach horseback riding, and stricter regulations for driving on beaches lessened the attraction of Florida's coastline to visitors.<sup>18</sup> With four hurricanes in less than two months, the coast earned the unwanted nickname

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proquest.umi.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/  
pqdweb?did=695991471&sid=7&Fmt=3&clientid=20179&RQT=309&Vname=P  
QD>. (28 February 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Dean, "As Weather,".

<sup>15</sup> Dean, "Sand,".

<sup>16</sup> John-Thor Dahlburg, "The Nation; Florida Expected to Feel the Wrath of 2004 Hurricanes for Years to Come; Effects pose daunting economic consequences for the state, and in some cases, the entire U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 October 2004.

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<sup>17</sup> Dahlburg, "Jeanne,".

<sup>18</sup> Amy Gunderson, "The Sand is Still There, Somewhere," *New York Times*, 10 December 2004. <<http://proquest.umi.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/pqdweb?did=744261611&sid=7&Fmt=3&clientid=20179&RQT=309&Vname=PQD>>. (28 February 2005).

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of “Hurricane Alley.”<sup>19</sup> Journalist Cornelia Dean argues the problem with Florida tourism is its focus on the shoreline for business. With heavy coast development, the coastal elevation, usually less than five feet, does not offer adequate protection against hurricane storm surges.<sup>20</sup> Because beachfront businesses cannot move inland with the sand, they bear the brunt of hurricane damage. Flooding from storm surges coupled with heavy hurricane rain caused black mold, often with visible airborne spores, to develop in coastal properties this season. This mold rendered hotels unlivable and forced businesses to close for repairs.<sup>21</sup>

President Bush visited Florida after each hurricane, touring disaster areas, talking to victims, and promising speedy and generous federal aide.<sup>22</sup> This promise allowed judgment to be placed on the president concerning the success or failure of federal relief. With 25,000 homes destroyed and 50,000 damaged, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set right to work on providing temporary housing of trailers on wheels and mobile homes for displaced persons.<sup>23</sup> Complaints that FEMA was not providing relief quickly enough emerged.<sup>24</sup> Bush also sent 150 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staffers, in addition to normal disaster relief workers, to Florida. Complaints regarding the tasks given to the EPA workers, mainly that they were being used to fuel Bush’s re-election campaign, raised questions about their place in hurricane relief efforts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dahlburg, “The Nation; Florida,”.

<sup>20</sup> Dean, “As Weather,”.

<sup>21</sup> Goodnough, “After 4,”.

<sup>22</sup> Dahlburg, “The Nation; Florida,”.

<sup>23</sup> Goodnough, “After 4,”.

<sup>24</sup> Dahlburg, “The Nation; Florida,”.

<sup>25</sup> John M. Glionna, and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, “The Nation; The Race to the White House; Politics Off Radar in Battered-Ground State; After weathering two storms and bracing for a

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Four hurricanes in forty-four days. From August 13<sup>th</sup> to September 25<sup>th</sup> of 2004, Floridians experienced high winds, heavy rains, powerful storm surges, and tornados from Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne. The damage was unfathomable. Twenty-six counties were declared disaster areas by the end. The Florida hurricanes of 2004 will remain a notorious part of state history. As years go by, more information will be gathered, and extensive studies of the hurricane season of 2004 will be conducted. As for now, Floridians have fresh memories of the devastation hurricanes can cause and will be keeping a wary eye on the developments of next season.

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# **Moment or Process**

## **Developments in Augustine's Understanding of Conversion**

**Christopher Ryan Fields**

### **Introduction**

“You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.”<sup>1</sup>

In these powerful and evocative words from his landmark autobiography, *Confessions*, the highly influential church father, philosopher, and theologian Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) reflects on his own conversion to Christianity and the drama of divine redemption and re-creation. While many Romans converted to Christianity during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Augustine left an account of his conversion experience. Today, Augustine's account serves as a guide to interpreting and understanding much of his powerful philosophical and religious transformation. In addition to documenting this experience, Augustine spent much time reflecting on the meaning of conversion. He experienced conversion within himself, but he also saw it occur in many others, especially as the bishop of Hippo. In this role, Augustine was the

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<sup>1</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*, Translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), x. xxvii, 201.

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spiritual overseer of thousands who professed conversion to the Christian religion. Augustine is one of the greatest sources of insight into conversion as it was understood in the late antique world.

This article attempts to elucidate Augustine's understanding of conversion, especially as it is manifested in his explanations of his own conversion and the conversion of his later congregants. Like many aspects of Augustine's thought, his understanding of conversion changes with the tides of his influences and life experiences. In particular, this paper explores whether Augustine's understanding of conversion changed from his early life and writings (386-401) to his later life and writings (402-430) with regard to the dynamic of time. It will be argued that the younger Augustine viewed conversion primarily as a momentary event, while the later Augustine viewed conversion primarily as a process. However, this transformation was subtle and incomplete. Augustine never understood conversion to be completely a singular moment or a prolonged process. Instead, he believed it occurred somewhere in the middle of this temporal spectrum. As his life progressed, however, his understanding of conversion shifted along this spectrum from emphasizing the moment over the process to emphasizing the process over the moment.

First, we do well to clarify the meaning of "conversion." Historians, theologians, religion scholars, sociologists, and psychologists offer an array of definitions in an attempt to explain the dynamics and characteristics of conversion as they have been exhibited across various times and places. We seek a definition of conversion that makes sense to us and would similarly have made sense to Augustine's contemporaries in the late antique world. Unfortunately, Augustine never defines conversion and seems to assume its meaning is understood by his readers

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(he rarely uses the word, even in his *Confessions*).<sup>2</sup> We must therefore depend on scholars of Augustine and the late Roman world for a definition that satisfies both ancient and modern parties. Historian Ramsay MacMullen offered this definition of conversion: conversion is the change of belief by which a person accepts the reality and supreme power of God and determines to obey Him.<sup>3</sup> Augustinian scholar Frederick Russell contributes a definition of conversion that involves a necessitated “turning toward” a particular worldview while “turning away” from a previous worldview (aversion).<sup>4</sup> Alan Kreider, director of the Center for the Study of Christianity and Culture at Oxford University, defines conversion as a process of multidimensional change affecting belief, belonging, and behavior.<sup>5</sup>

These definitions and the plethora of others offered up by academics, while insightful, do not match the simplicity and inclusiveness of Arthur Darby Nock’s definition of conversion which can be found in his seminal study of conversion in the ancient world entitled, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. In it, Nock defines conversion as “the reorientation of the soul of an individual.”<sup>6</sup> He goes on to explicate his definition thus:

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<sup>2</sup> Karl F. Morrison, *Conversion and Text* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), viii.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick H. Russell, “Augustine: Conversion by the Book.” In *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages*, edited by James Muldoon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), xv.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1933), 7.

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“(it is the) deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right.”<sup>7</sup> Here we have a definition and understanding of conversion that satisfies the ancient context and the modern mind because of its generality and explanatory power (even if some modern scholars reject it as overly simplistic). Nock’s definition will be utilized as the definition of conversion for the rest of this paper, though we must eventually evaluate whether this was the definition that Augustine had in mind when writing and reflecting on his and others’ conversion. Heeding MacMullen’s warning not to cling dogmatically to a static definition of conversion that cannot incorporate the multifarious developments within the socio-political-religious world, Nock’s definition has been chosen because of its inherent fluidity and inclusiveness.<sup>8</sup>

One other note of clarification concerns the vocabulary used in describing the issue of conversion being dealt with in this study; what do we mean by conversion as a “moment” or “process?” Strictly speaking, temporal (though relative) designations assist one in understanding the timeframe of conversion. Applying that definition, they become designations which help us understand how much time is involved in the reorientation of the soul of an individual. Did this reorientation occur and come to completion in a single moment, or did it occur over a much longer period of time and involve a series of events or temporal moments? Again, these terms are relative. A moment has no specific time designation, but is understood to occur quickly and without any enduring element. A process also has no specific time designation but is understood to occur more slowly than a moment and

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<sup>7</sup> Nock, *Conversion*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, 5.

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endure through time via a series of moments (however long or short).

The “moment or process” debate has waged since the study and analysis of the phenomenon of conversion began, and it will most likely continue for some time. Anne Hunsaker Hawkins’s *Archetypes of Conversion* has been particularly helpful in summarizing the points of debate and the tenets of both sides. Hawkins utilizes William James’ terminology of “crisis or lysis” to describe conversion, the former referring to a more sudden moment, the latter to a gradual process.<sup>9</sup> Hawkins and her analysis of the “moment or process” debate will frequently be referenced within this study. The endurance of the debate should warn us to acknowledge how quickly we can attempt to simplify the inherent complexity and mystery of the divine work within the mundane. Conversion is difficult to understand and analyze, primarily because it is an experiential phenomenon that seems to differ from individual to individual.<sup>10</sup> Many historians and scholars of religion have given their own account of conversion as either a moment or process. However, we should be cautious in accepting these simplified views which create a dichotomy: conversion as either strictly a moment or strictly a process. Augustine never expressed a simplistic understanding of conversion. We must remember that it is his view of conversion that we hope to understand. To accomplish this we must look closely at his own writings in addition to those of modern interpreters.

### **The Early Augustine (386-401 CE)**

Turning to the early Augustine (386-401) one attempts to discover his understanding of conversion. It

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<sup>9</sup> Anne H. Hawkins, *Archetypes of Conversion* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1985), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Karl F. Morrison, *Conversion and Text* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 2.

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should be made clear that this investigation is not be concerned with the pre-conversion Augustine. While his African background and his involvement with the Manichees are referenced from time to time, it is the post-conversion Augustine with which we are primarily concerned. Thus, the time designation for early Augustine begins in 386, with his Milanese garden conversion experience. Augustine's subsequent baptism in 387 helps to confirm the historicity of this event. The completion of *Confessions* in 401 (he began writing it in 397) signifies the end of the "early Augustine," mainly because the completion of his autobiography was such a landmark accomplishment that marked the completion of an intense time of self-reflection and definition. During the period from 386-401, Augustine retreated to Cassiciacum (386), lost his mother Monica (387), was ordained a priest (391), and was consecrated as a bishop (395).

The best place to start searching for the early Augustine's view of conversion lies within the first documents he produced as a Christian. These are the works he composed during his retreat at Cassiciacum in the winter of 386, immediately after his conversion but prior to his baptism. For Augustine, Cassiciacum served as a secluded retirement from the world, a place of rest and relaxation where he could recover from recent ailments and separate himself from the Pagan interferences associated with his professorship of rhetoric in Milan. During this retreat he produced several conversational writings that closely resemble Plato's dialogues in form and tone. These works included *Against the Academics*, *On the Happy Life*, *On Order*, and *Soliloquies*, all of which preserve some of Augustine's first reflections on Christian theology and its interaction with Neo-Platonic philosophy. However, they do not include any references to his conversion, or any discussion of conversion in general, causing some scholars to question the historical validity of the Milanese garden experience and Augustine's genuine commitment to the

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Catholic faith during the time of these writings (late 386-early 387).<sup>11</sup> But as one will see, Augustine's conversion is implied in much of what was written, a fact that favors an understanding of conversion that is much more sudden than gradual.

For instance, *Against the Academics* is a discussion between Augustine and his companions regarding the "New Academy" of skepticism defended by Cicero in *Academica*. Here, Augustine sought to convince his interlocutors that the negative and skeptical outlook of the academy should be rejected, and a new authority embraced, an authority which can reveal truth to humanity and enable humanity to grasp and assent to it. This authority is none other than the Trinitarian God of the Christian faith. At the end of the discussion, Augustine states with confidence, "I, therefore, am resolved in nothing whatever to depart from the authority of Christ- for I do not find a stronger."<sup>12</sup> Here one sees Augustine's reliance upon Christ for intellectual stability, a stability which he has only recently attained.

It is Augustine's *Soliloquies* that are perhaps the best preservation of his early dedication to the Christian faith. In them, Augustine engaged in a private conversation with Reason, whom Augustine implored for knowledge of God and the soul. But from the beginning of the dialogue Augustine openly acknowledged his dependence on God for intellectual and spiritual insight, saying, "O God, Framer of the universe, grant me first rightly to invoke Thee; then to show myself worthy to be heard by Thee; lastly, deign to set me free."<sup>13</sup> What is more, *Soliloquies* are filled with praise

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<sup>11</sup> John J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine* (Staten Island: Alba House Publishers, 1965), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *Against the Academics*, Translated by John J. O'Meara, From *Ancient Christian Writers*, No. 12 (New York: Newman Press, 1951), 150.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, Translated by C. C. Starbuck, From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, St. Augustine

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set forth because of the work that God has done in Augustine's life. He confessed his new orientation and thankfulness toward God thus: "Henceforth Thee alone do I love, Thee alone I follow, Thee alone I seek, Thee alone am I prepared to serve, for Thou alone art Lord by a just title, of they dominion do I desire to be."<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, Augustine expressed the fact that for the sake of God he has rejected riches, honors and women noting, "Then (before conversion) there was in me a veritable craving for those things; now I utterly condemn them all."<sup>15</sup>

The dialogues written at Cassiciacum never present a definitive statement of faith, nor even a direct reference to Augustine's conversion experience, and so one must be hesitant to conclude much regarding his understanding of conversion. But the fact that these writings contain so many explicitly Christian references so soon after his conversion experience in Milan (no more than two or three months) seems to argue for an understanding of conversion which is momentary and sudden. Augustine scholar W. J. Sparrow Simpson noted in his *St. Augustine's Conversion* that the Cassiciacum documents, especially the *Soliloquies*, indicate a very early form of Augustine's devotion to the Trinitarian God and Christian self-understanding.<sup>16</sup> Simpson points to four specific elements which testify to Augustine's newly established faith: a constant recognition of the Fatherhood of God, an acknowledgement of distinctions in the Deity, a note of penitence, and an anticipation of the Christian doctrine of grace.<sup>17</sup> If one understands that Augustine became a Christian before writing these documents, it is fair to assume that Augustine

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Volumes, Volume VII (1886), Retrieved October 25, 2004.  
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf107.v.i.html>, 537.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, 538.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, 544.

<sup>16</sup> W. J. Simpson, *St. Augustine's Conversion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 130.

<sup>17</sup> Simpson, *St. Augustine's Conversion*, 150.

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understood himself as being a Christian while he tested out the waters of Christian theology. This, then, is what argues for Augustine's understanding of conversion as being momentary, for his self-understanding almost requires it. He had not undergone a long journey of exploring the tenets and implications of the faith; nor had he had an intensive catechumenal process overseen by the church; he even had yet to be baptized. Augustine did understand that his life had changed in a dramatic fashion. For him, this change occurred, not through a gradual process of transformation, but through a sudden moment of God's graciousness and Augustine's repentant faith.

Still one has no better picture of early Augustine's understanding of conversion than in the work that was written as an autobiographical reflection on his entire journey toward Christian faith: *Confessions*. *Confessions* reveals much about Augustine's background and pre-Christian development, as well as Augustine's own view of how he came to faith. Thus, it is crucial in helping to understand how Augustine viewed the temporal dynamic of conversion during the early part of his Christian life. Augustine converted in 386, but *Confessions* was written between 397 and 401, so his views regarding conversion represent those held in the later portion of his early Christian life (after he was consecrated bishop). John J. O'Meara echoes Pierre Courcelle, arguing that the autobiographical portion of *Confessions* (books I-IX) was written earlier than the philosophical and theological reflections that follow (books X-XIII), thus making it likely that Augustine composed his conversion account in 397 or 398.<sup>18</sup> O'Meara also argues that Augustine wrote his conversion account because of the early conflicts he experienced as bishop of Hippo. At that time he may have had to silence his opponents' criticisms and further legitimize his episcopate by producing an account of his

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<sup>18</sup> John J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine*, 14.

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conversion which proved his authenticity as a truly committed Catholic.<sup>19</sup> One does well to keep these underlying factors in mind as we delve into *Confessions*.

As Hawkins notes, the hallmark of the moment (crisis) conversion was the dramatic and sudden turning point that represents the crescendo of the salvific story.<sup>20</sup> As expected, Augustine presents his life as simply leading up to the climactic moment within a garden in Milan where he finally converted to Christianity. This is the epitome of conversion being understood as “moment.” This is not to say that there were no other turning points, granted smaller and less significant ones, that served to bring about the larger, more significant one. In fact, Hawkins notes that most individuals who understand their conversion through the crisis paradigm generally explain their path to that final conversion as being composed of miniature, less pronounced, “conversions.”<sup>21</sup> Carl Vaught, a professor of philosophy, echoes this sentiment, stating that Augustine’s final conversion is dependent on a series of stages that he must pass through in order to reach his final destination.<sup>22</sup> Nock advances with a similar idea, comparing the road to Augustine’s conversion with the addition of necessary reactants in a chemical reaction that is sparked by the addition of the crucial catalyst: the final, ultimate conversion moment.<sup>23</sup> Here we see an important point about Augustine’s *Confessions*: though it could be argued that the various stages of Augustine’s life portrayed in the first seven books (ardent philosopher, Manichee, skeptic, Neo-Platonist, etc.) was part of a larger conversion process, it is better to argue that these stages simply served as

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<sup>19</sup> O’Meara, *The Young Augustine*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Hawkins, *Archetypes of Conversion*, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Hawkins, *Archetypes of Conversion*, 46.

<sup>22</sup> Carl G. Vaught, *Encounters with God in Augustine’s Confessions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 78.

<sup>23</sup> Nock, *Conversion*, 266.

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components that allowed the ultimate conversion moment to occur. The focus of *Confessions* is undoubtedly on the climactic conversion moment in the Milanese garden. All other portions of Augustine's life rose to and fell from that mountaintop moment.

This is confirmed by several elements within Book VIII, in which Augustine described the "birth pangs of conversion" and the climactic moment itself. First, Augustine prefaced his conversion experience with stories of other Christians who were saved in the very sudden manner characteristic of the crisis model. When visiting Simplicianus, he heard the story of Victorinus, a famous Roman philosopher and tutor who experienced an intellectual conversion to Christianity but could not bring himself to go to church or make public confession of faith until "suddenly and unexpectedly he said to Simplicianus, 'Let us go to the Church; I want to become a Christian.'"<sup>24</sup> Next, upon a visit from Ponticianus, Augustine heard the story of an Egyptian named Antony who, upon the instant of hearing Matthew 19:21 read aloud, converted to Christianity, sold everything he had, and became a monk for the cause of Christ.<sup>25</sup> Ponticianus also told the story of two men in the emperor's service who converted once they heard the story of Antony. These men told their fiancées, who become Christians as well. All of these narratives prepared the way for Augustine's moment of conversion; they reminded Augustine of God's power to change the unwilling heart suddenly and without warning, and they served to foreshadow Augustine's imminent salvation. The story of Victorinus's salvation is especially appropriate, for Augustine too had already given intellectual assent to Christianity because of the influence of Neo-Platonic

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<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. ii, 136.

<sup>25</sup> "Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'"

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thought and the teachings of Ambrose. Like Victorinus, Augustine remained unconverted because he was unwilling to submit his will to Christ's authority and to face the associated consequences. And like Victorinus, Augustine's will was no match for God's.

The language used to describe the garden scene makes the best argument for Augustine's conversion as more of a moment than process. While he put off the pressing decision to submit his will to that of Christ, he realized at the end of Book VIII that he could put off the decision no longer. In a "flash of crisis," as Hawkins put it, Augustine notes, "Lord, you turned my attention back to myself ... so that I could see how vile I was, how twisted and filthy, covered in sores and ulcers."<sup>26</sup> The crisis had come about suddenly, and was now inescapable until Augustine was reconciled to God. Augustine's encounter with God was wrenching, and caused him much mental, emotional, and physical malady. He escaped to the famous garden, eventually falling beneath a fig tree where he wept freely over the "bitter agony" of his heart.<sup>27</sup> Here, the climactic moment can be felt, as Augustine received the divine directive to "pick up and read, pick up and read."<sup>28</sup> The first verse that Augustine opened to was Romans 13:13-14, and in obeying the command, he encapsulated the moment in a single statement: "I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if light of relief from anxiety flooded into my heart."<sup>29</sup> All the shadows of doubt were dispelled."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. vii, 144.

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. xii, 152.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. xii, 153.

<sup>29</sup> "Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." NRSV

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. xii, 153.

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Here, the conversion moment, which had only recently begun, was now fully complete. There was no long, arduous process that lay ahead for Augustine before he could be fully reconciled to God or could completely embrace the faith. The conversion was completed as suddenly as it began, as Augustine already began to count the effects of God “converting me to yourself” (past tense).<sup>31</sup>

Of particular importance to note is how much Augustine’s conversion account is based on the archetype of Paul’s conversion as told in the Book of Acts, chapter nine. Hawkins points out that St. Paul’s conversion was the greatest representative of the crisis conversion paradigm, changing him from the most zealous Christian enemy to the most pronounced Christian missionary in one divine moment on the road to Damascus.<sup>32</sup> It was no secret that Augustine was under the influence of Paul’s writings during the time of his conversion. Ponticianus found him reading Paul’s epistles in his search for truth, and it was to one of Paul’s letters that he turned when he was commanded to take up and read. In addition, as Augustine became further immersed in the Catholic tradition, and even began training others in the Catholic faith as a priest and bishop, he certainly would have become even more familiar with Paul’s theology and understanding of conversion. It thus makes sense to understand that the early Augustine, upon reflecting on his conversion experience, would have posited it in the Pauline paradigm of salvific moment or crisis. This connection, which is no doubt well founded, argues very strongly that Augustine understood his conversion as much more of a sudden moment than a gradual process when he presented it in his *Confessions*.

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<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. xii, 153.

<sup>32</sup> Hawkins, *Archetypes of Conversion*, 21.

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**The Later Augustine (402-430 CE)**

The years from 402 to after his completion of *Confessions* to his death in 430 are considered the later portion of his Christian life. It was during this time period that Augustine became a well-founded and highly respected bishop in Hippo as well as a renowned theologian and defender of the Catholic faith. While one may know him for the highly influential works that he completed during this time in his life (including *On the Trinity* and *City of God*), his congregants knew him for his intimate involvement in their day-to-day affairs and in the particular happenings of the local churches. As the recently discovered Dolbeau sermons and Divjak letters make clear, Augustine was not the stand-offish intellectual he is often characterized to be.<sup>33</sup> Instead, he cared deeply for the good of his congregations and eagerly sought to assist them in their concerns. This was especially true in defending his congregations, and the Catholic Church in general, from the heretical doctrines of the Donatists and the Pelagians. Though his debate with Pelagius brought him fame and recognition throughout the Roman world, his priorities were always for the faithful in his congregations with whom he had been entrusted. Perhaps of top priority for him, as Kreider hints in his illuminating chapter on the later Augustine, was the responsibility for the salvation of souls, the conversion of the “chaff” within his congregations.<sup>34</sup>

With regard to the change that occurred in Augustine’s understanding of conversion (from moment or crisis to process or lysis), two main points will be highlighted that help explain the transition. The first point is that Augustine’s understanding of conversion changed because Augustine became more and more involved in the

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 445.

<sup>34</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 59.

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Christian community, particularly as an increasingly authoritative and influential member of the clergy. With this increasing involvement and exposure to “the lame church,” he became aware of many other stories of conversion, accounts of various types of people becoming reconciled to God in various ways.<sup>35</sup> Many of these stories did not match up with his understanding of conversion (which, earlier in his career as bishop, would have been more momentary rather than gradual). As time went on, Augustine heard lots of accounts of conversion that were more gradual, conversion stories that were based more on the lysis model than on the crisis model with which he was more familiar. Simply hearing more of these gradual conversion accounts may have had something to do with the change in Augustine’s own understanding, and they certainly made their way into his teachings.<sup>36</sup>

Augustine also saw the differing outcomes of these “conversions.” He saw the congregants who were professing transformation as either “wheat” or “chaff,” “good trees” or “bad trees.” Some of these accounts involved momentary conversions much like his own, of people who experienced a crisis conversion outside of any official program sponsored by the church. Contrastingly, he heard conversion accounts that spanned a much longer period of time and took place under the guidance of the church (generally through catechetical instruction). Once enough time had passed, Augustine began to see that it was primarily those who were under the instruction of the church, who experienced their conversion more gradually and intentionally, that persevered in their faith. These converts, Augustine felt, proved themselves to be the “wheat.” Many of those who had experienced the individualistic and

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<sup>35</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 65.

<sup>36</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/3*, Translated by Edmund Hill, From *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1994), Sermon 80.3, 354.

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momentary conversion did not endure, proving their experience to be a pseudo-conversion. This being the case, it is understandable that Augustine, who was deeply concerned about the salvation of his congregants and their endurance until the coming judgment, would begin to prefer the more formalized and process-oriented conversion experience provided by the church for inquirers and seekers. This preference undoubtedly changed the way that he viewed conversion and began to be expressed in Augustine's sermons. For instance, in an Easter sermon given sometime between 405 and 411, Augustine utilized the analogy of baking bread to describe the phenomenon of conversion.<sup>37</sup> It was only those who underwent the long and arduous process of being "carried to the Lord's threshing floor ... threshed by the labor of oxen ... stored in the barn ... ground(ed) by fasts and exorcisms ... (brought) to the water ... moistened into dough ... made into one lump ... baked, and made into the Lord's loaf of bread," that were considered true converts.<sup>38</sup> The "process" (a trial by fire) served to separate the wheat from the chaff in a way that the "moment" could not, causing Augustine to slowly discard the crisis paradigm in favor of the lysis paradigm.

Of much greater significance, however, in influencing Augustine's transition is the second point: that Augustine became much more involved in the catechetical process and gained confidence in its ability to produce genuine converts. Kreider is adamant that under Augustine's leadership Hippo became a bastion for formalized and ritualized (and thus gradual) conversion experiences.<sup>39</sup> The growing emphasis on a set of rituals and steps being required for conversion can be attributed primarily to Augustine's

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<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/6*, Translated by Edmund Hill, From *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), Sermon 229.1, 265.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/6*, Sermon 229.1, 265.

<sup>39</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 64.

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continuance of, and increased reliance upon, the classical four-stage form of catechetical instruction.<sup>40</sup> Stage one was that of the “inquirer,” one who expressed an interest in the Christian religion and simply wanted to learn more. Stage two was that of the “catechumen,” who had given intellectual assent to the teachings of stage one and wanted to attend the readings and sermons of the congregation and further explore the implications of joining the Christian community. Stage three was that of the “competentes,” or those who wanted to “ask together” and attend frequent sessions with their sponsors where they would prepare themselves for the coming change of belief, behavior, and sense of belonging (often through multiple exorcisms, memorization of creeds, etc.). Stage four was that of the “neophytes,” those who had endured to the end of the process and were ready to join the Christian community through baptism. Stage four ended with an eight-day reflection on their baptism and communion experience, which completed the conversion journey. Catechumens transitioned slowly through the four stages, taking as short as a Lenten season (50 days or so) and as long as several years. Many catechumens never completed the entire catechetical process, and, thus, in the eyes of the church and of the later Augustine never became converts. This fact is shown in Augustine's vivid appeal for catechumens to “put your name down for baptism” for fear that “suddenly his wrath will come, and at the time for vengeance he will destroy you.”<sup>41</sup> For Augustine, the catechetical process was of utmost importance to ensure that his congregants experienced a genuine conversion: one that required a process of investigation, exploration, communal questioning, and ultimately baptism and communion.

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<sup>40</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 57.

<sup>41</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/2*, Translated by Edmund Hill, From *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), Sermon 40.5, 223.

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This fact is evidenced in Augustine's *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, also known as *The First Catechetical Instruction*. Written in 405, the document was an answer to a fellow clergyman's inquiry as to the best method of catechizing. In his response, Augustine made several comments that betray an understanding of conversion that is at least in transition, if not significantly changed from his understanding of conversion expressed in *Confessions* some seven years before. He noted that the catechetical process served to "weed out" those who "wish to become a Christian who have not been smitten with some sort of fear of God... (who seek) some advantage from men whom he deems himself unlikely to please in any other way."<sup>42</sup> In the same way, Augustine viewed catechism as a vessel through which divine grace operates, such that, by the same process that removes the "chaff" from the "threshing floor," the "grain" was enabled to "seek the glory of God and not their own... follow him in piety... (and) belong to one fellowship."<sup>43</sup> In fact, Augustine viewed the catechetical process as such an efficacious impetus to conversion that even some of the catechumens who began the process seeking only "the favor of men from whom they look for temporal advantages" were dramatically persuaded to become people who "wish to become in reality that which (they) had made up in (their) mind(s) only to feign."<sup>44</sup> Conversion was not taking place in a divine moment, but instead in a slow process of testing, of prodding, and questioning. Only after the catechumens had passed through the various stages of the process could their

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<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, From *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume II (1907), Retrieved November 17, 2004,

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1303.htm>, V, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, XIX, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, XVII, 26 & V, 9.

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conversion be declared and their identity as true “grain” be confirmed.

But if the change in Augustine's understanding of conversion is only hinted at in *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, it is blatant by the time he composes *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed* in 425. By this time in his life, Augustine was an aged bishop who had seen all there was to see of Christian conversion and God's work in his congregants' lives. He wrote this sermon for a particular group of catechumens on the importance of the Apostles' Creed as a summary statement of the Christian faith. As the sermon builds momentum, Augustine's understanding of conversion, which had now significantly departed from his earlier understanding, comes more and more to the forefront. He noted in the introduction that, while they may have “heard that God is Almighty,” they must be “born by the church... your mother” in order to “begin to have (God) for your father.”<sup>45</sup> Later, he exhorted the catechumens, for the sake of the kingdom of God and its associated blessings, to “prepare yourselves, for these things hope, for this live... for this believe, for this be baptized, that it may be said to you, ‘Come ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom of God prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”<sup>46</sup> Here, Augustine hinted at the integral connection between actual conversion and its context within the church's prescribed process of conversion (the four stages of the catechumenal process, including baptism). At the end of the sermon, Augustine made a more explicit reference to this: when discussing the catechumens (those who completed stage one, who prayed, and who practiced penance), he asked, “For how can they say, ‘Our Father’ who are not yet born sons? The

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<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed*, From *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume II (1907), Retrieved November 17, 2004,

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1307.htm>, I.

<sup>46</sup> Augustine, *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed*, XII.

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Catechumens, so long as they be such, have upon them all their sins."<sup>47</sup> Here is a direct statement that catechumens, even though they have begun the conversion process, the church did not yet consider them to be fully converted. Augustine implied that something was missing, namely the saving waters of baptism that signified the end of the catechumen's journey and full entrance into the church. The early Augustine, who wrote *Confessions* and boasted of his conversion in a divine moment before he had gone through the catechetical process and partaken of the waters of baptism, was not the Augustine found here. The later Augustine, now a well established churchman, would not entertain the possibility of a momentary conversion outside of the church's guiding influence. After all, it was none other than the later Augustine who exalted the phrase of his predecessor Cyprian: "no salvation outside the Church."<sup>48</sup>

Kreider draws much insight from these texts, illuminating the later Augustine's understanding of conversion with great brevity in his study entitled "Augustine the Converter."<sup>49</sup> Kreider emphasizes that Augustine understood conversion as a journey that could either come to completion quickly or be extended for many years. This view becomes especially clear in Augustine's comments regarding "catechumens," those who were in stage two of the catechetical process. Kreider rightly notes that "catechumens were not authentic Christians," citing one of Augustine's sermons in which he bluntly stated, "(catechumens) haven't yet been forgiven, because they are only forgiven in holy baptism."<sup>50</sup> They were in an

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<sup>47</sup> Augustine, *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed*, XVI.

<sup>48</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 55.

<sup>49</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 54.

<sup>50</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/4*, Translated by Edmund Hill, From *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City

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indeterminate state, “Christian” yet unconverted, “catechumen” yet uncatechized.<sup>51</sup> Stage three also betrayed Augustine’s favoring of the lysis model of conversion, for he viewed the memorization of the creeds and the proper ritualistic responses as crucial to the continuing of the journey. Repetitive exorcism was also emphasized; Augustine assumed it was required for the proper change of behavior that was necessary for catechumens to receive the waters of baptism and join the Christian community.<sup>52</sup> Exorcism was yet another component of a long, arduous process required in becoming a full Christian. Even when the religious journey was almost over, an intensive ritual (including a pre-Easter vigil, fasting and repeated exorcism, a final, climactic exorcism, a renunciation of the devil and all his angels, a reciting of the Creed, an anointing, and baptism) was required before the catechumens were finally considered converted.<sup>53</sup> All of this to say that Augustine’s understanding of conversion must be viewed as one that emphasized the “process” of conversion, the gradual acclimation to the Christian faith that required time and the guidance of the church over and above the sudden “moment” of conversion.

William Harmless, a recognized scholar of Augustine and the late antique period, also provides an insightful analysis of the later Augustine’s view of conversion in *Augustine and the Catechumenate*. Harmless observes that Augustine understood the catechetical process to be community oriented.<sup>54</sup> The class of catechumens was not

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Press, 1992), Sermon 97A.3, 41.

<sup>51</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 59.

<sup>52</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 62.

<sup>53</sup> Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, 63.

<sup>54</sup> William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 267.

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simply a conglomerate of individuals, but a cohesive body that moved through the stages of conversion together. This communal emphasis was much more compatible with the lysis paradigm as a whole. Harmless also notes that Augustine often utilized the labor/new birth motif to describe conversion, an image which is imbued with the gradual process characteristic of the lysis paradigm.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, in one of his sermons to “competentes” Augustine addressed them as “a people being born” and exhorted them to “Strive to be brought forth in health, not fatally aborted. Look, mother Church is in labor, see, she is groaning in travail to give birth to you, to bring you forth into the light of faith. Do not agitate her maternal womb with your impatience, and thus constrict the passage to your delivery.”<sup>56</sup> Notice that Augustine warned them not to be impatient and rush the process; he wanted them to experience the gradual changes of conversion much as a baby experiences the gradual changes of physical development within the womb, eventually leaving it through birth. Harmless also points to Augustine’s fondness for agricultural images, which illustrate the large amount of time needed for a seed to grow into a plant.<sup>57</sup> As Augustine’s usage of the “wheat” and “chaff” analogy has been noted, but in the same sermon to the catechumens mentioned above he also alluded to the “Parable of the Sower,” where time reveals the fate of the seed that fell on various types of soil.<sup>58</sup> This agricultural emphasis further solidified the position that Augustine understood conversion as a process required quite a bit of time rather than a moment that required a comparatively short amount of time.

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<sup>55</sup> Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 268.

<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/6*, Sermon 216.7, 171.

<sup>57</sup> Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 269.

<sup>58</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/6*, Sermon 216.3, 168.

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### **Further Considerations**

The question naturally arises: if this change in Augustine's conversion actually occurred, what was its impetus? The answer is obviously complicated, but has been hinted at in various documents. First, elements in Augustine's life predisposed him toward a changing view of conversion. As an early Christian, and during his first years as a priest and bishop, Augustine was much less concerned about the traditions, rituals, and liturgy of the church. Thus, he was easily able to conceive the possibility that individuals such as himself could experience God's grace outside the direct and dominating grip of the local church. The Augustine of the Cassiciacum dialogues and *Confessions* was much more likely to exalt the individual, with his intellectual achievements and autonomous will, than the church and its "one-size-fits-all" program of guided conversion. Therefore, the climactic event in an individual's life known as conversion made the most sense occurring primarily as a moment or crisis like Augustine's Milanese garden experience. As Augustine became older, however, he became more convinced of the church's crucial role in the guidance of individuals from disbelief to faith and from doubt to confidence. It makes sense that Augustine's view of conversion conformed to incorporate the church and its regulating guidelines. It makes even more sense when one considers that as time went on, and Augustine had a growing influence within the church and in his congregants' lives, he maintained an escalating vested interest in the church's centrality to the Christian life (a genuine concern for his congregants' well being, financial stability, further recognition, etc.). Thus, it became important for Augustine to emphasize the community over the individual, the guided ritual over the independent thought attainment, and the gradual process of conversion over the sudden moment.

In addition, Augustine's own conversion experience was one that could easily be interpreted within either the

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crisis or the lysis paradigm. The early Augustine understood his pre-conversion life as consisting of steps or stages, even “miniature conversions,” which led to the climactic conversion moment in the garden. With this understanding, everything that came before his “final conversion,” though crucial to that climactic moment, was not actually part of the conversion itself. It is helpful to keep in mind Nock’s analogy of the chemical reactants, which are all necessary for the chemical reaction to take place, but are nothing without the catalyst (the crisis conversion moment), which is really what causes the change. Thus, in early Augustine’s presentation of these events in the Cassiciacum dialogues and *Confessions*, the crisis paradigm was emphasized. In contrast, the later Augustine could just as easily look back on his own earlier conversion experience and emphasize the lysis paradigm by viewing the preceding events as part of the conversion process. Here, instead of conversion occurring in a single moment in the Milanese garden, it began with Augustine’s theft of pears as a child and culminated in the reading of Romans 13:13-14, much like a catechumen’s conversion begins with their initial inquiry or desire to learn more about the Christian faith and culminates in baptism on Easter Sunday. The inconsistencies (such as Augustine not going through the church’s catechetical process or being baptized) could simply be explained with the argument that God is gracious and that Augustine’s conversion experience was rare. It is unfortunate that Augustine did not leave any reflections on his own conversion after *Confessions*. This forces one to speculate and accept cautious conclusions.

Such a thought process raises further problems that must be addressed. This paper has argued that there was a change in Augustine’s understanding of conversion, and this argument is based on assumptions that the early Augustine understood conversion as primarily a moment and the later Augustine understood conversion primarily as

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a process. However, there is evidence to the contrary in both cases.

With regard to the early Augustine, there are several objections to consider. The first is that the texts (*Against the Academics*, *Soliloquies*, and *Confessions*) simply do not provide enough definitive evidence and explicit comments to venture a guess as to how Augustine understood conversion. This objection is especially leveled against the Cassiciacum dialogues, which never deal explicitly with the issue of conversion or make any direct reference to Augustine's own recent conversion. But even in *Confessions*, Augustine never offered an explanation of his pre-conversion events such as Nock's chemical reaction analogy; one reads that analogy into the text because of certain emphases and themes. Augustine never explicitly stated that his conversion in the garden took place within a sudden moment of crisis; that assumption derives from the language that he used to describe his anguish and sense of spiritual bankruptcy. Perhaps more importantly, it is debatable whether Augustine actually became a Christian and had a true conversion experience in the Milanese garden; some observers postulate that he became a Christian through a much slower process as he rose higher within the church hierarchy, while others even hint that it is possible Augustine never became a Christian (O'Meara and Courcelle among others).<sup>59</sup> Two reasons are often proposed to support this thesis. The first is that the Cassiciacum dialogues show a preponderance of Neo-Platonic thought in comparison with the relatively few explicitly Christian references and statements that are made, which, as Hawkins argues, suggests that Augustine was much more of a Neo-Platonist than a Christian and that his "conversion experience" in the Milanese garden was therefore much less pronounced and impacting than the

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<sup>59</sup> O'Meara, *The Young Augustine*, 13.

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later *Confessions* made it appear.<sup>60</sup> Some scholars argue that Augustine authored *Confessions* not to detail his dramatic conversion experience or expound on his understanding of conversion as a sudden moment of crisis, but to fend off critics in Hippo who claimed that his conversion to Christianity was not genuine and that he was either a Manichee or a Neo-Platonist in Catholic guise. The implication of this view is that *Confessions* does not necessarily represent the historical truth about Augustine's life, including his conversion, and thus should not be looked to in attempting to understand his actual view on conversion.

The later Augustine and his view of conversion is similarly complicated. The same criticism of ignorance is leveled again, and perhaps more legitimately here, for *Confessions* is surely the closest that Augustine ever came to dealing specifically with the issue of conversion and expounding his particular understanding of it. Though *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed* and *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed* deal with the larger issues of Christian beginnings and the church's prescribed catechumenal process, they are not treatises on conversion and should not be viewed as such. In addition, the texts include several statements here and there that seem to contradict an understanding of conversion as process, and would match much better with Augustine's proposed earlier view of conversion. For instance, in *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed* (which is more of a transitional text, written in 405 toward the beginning of what has been classified as Augustine's later life), Augustine hinted at the inward and momentary nature of conversion when he stated, "It is true, indeed, that the precise time when a man, whom we perceive to be present with us already in the body, comes to us in reality with his mind, is a thing

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<sup>60</sup> Hawkins, *Archetypes of Conversion*, 52.

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hidden from us.”<sup>61</sup> But even in Augustine’s late *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed*, he quoted the Apostle Paul saying, “With the heart believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”<sup>62</sup> In another sermon given in 419, Augustine implored his congregants to convert *immediately* if they had not already done so, asking, “Why isn’t it today? Why not as you listen to me? Why not when you cry out? Why not when you applaud?... Why not today? Why not now?”<sup>63</sup> These statements and others similar to them are surely hard to reckon with other statements directly citing baptism and a full catechetical process as being required for salvation. They do imply a view of conversion that emphasized the gradual process of the lysis paradigm.

Conflicts on both ends of Augustine’s Christian life and writings make us hesitant to come to unquestioned conclusions with regard to both his early and later views of conversion. However, all that has been claimed in this paper is that the early Augustine understood conversion *primarily* as a moment of crisis and that the later Augustine understood conversion *primarily* as a gradual process. The argument was not that the early Augustine understood conversion *strictly* as a moment, or that the later Augustine understood conversion *strictly* as a process. To do so would be impossible, for as Hawkins rightly points out, Augustine was familiar with both the crisis and the lysis model of conversion and drew upon a particular model as he saw fit to promote his agenda and express his ideas.<sup>64</sup> For instance, during his early life Augustine explained Paul’s conversion (and his own) using the crisis paradigm.<sup>65</sup> Later in life when preaching to his congregations, Augustine referred to Paul’s conversion as a more gradual occurrence

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<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, V, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Augustine, *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed*, I.

<sup>63</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/2*, Sermon 20.4, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Hawkins, *Archetypes of Conversion*, p. 51.

<sup>65</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. xii, 153.

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that should be viewed through the lysis paradigm.<sup>66</sup> Augustine did not understand conversion in black and white terms, but as the mysterious interaction of the divine with the mundane that could not necessarily be explained through generalized paradigms that oversimplify the beautiful grace given by God to humanity. It can be maintained that during his early Christian life, Augustine put more emphasis on the divine moment of crisis, which stood in contrast to his later Christian life when he put more emphasis on the gradual process or lysis that took place over the course of many divine moments.

Lastly, one must return to evaluate whether Nock's definition can be applied to Augustine's understanding of conversion. Nock's seminal definition was of great influence in the fields of historical and religious study, but received criticism for being overly simplistic and for emphasizing a particular understanding of conversion that seems to favor the crisis model over the lysis model. Nock's definition does not include or imply a time dynamic, which is the issue this paper has pursued with regard to Augustine's understanding of conversion. In fact, both the beauty and utility of Nock's definition is its open-endedness, which encompasses the changes that developed within our understanding of conversion during the last 1500 years without stifling the insight of either Augustine's generation or our own. Kreider's definition seems to provide a similar breadth with regard to an all-encompassing change an individual experiences. However, his definition tends to emphasize the time dynamic more than Nock's and tends toward the lysis paradigm over the crisis paradigm. Even so, it seems as if Kreider's definition would provide us with similar results and conclusions, as

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<sup>66</sup> Augustine, *Sermons III/8*, Translated by Edmund Hill, From *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1994), Sermon 279.10, 66.

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would many other definitions of conversion. Nock's definition was chosen and successfully applied to Augustine because its inherent fluidity and inclusiveness have enabled it to endure as one of the most meaningful definitions of conversion ever proposed.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, one would do well to remember that the change in Augustine's understanding of conversion occurred on a spectrum of temporal paradigms; the change was not from an exclusive option of "moment" to an exclusive option of "process," as if they were in conflict. Augustine's views were always found somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, though it has been shown that the early Augustine tended toward the crisis paradigm, while the later Augustine tended toward the lysis paradigm. Augustine expressed his views of conversion in subtle ways, emphasizing gradual trends in his mode of thought rather than well-defined "laws of conversion." Most importantly, Augustine's understanding of conversion, as with every aspect of his philosophy and theology, was deeply influenced by his particular background, needs, experiences, and desires.

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# From 'Forbidden-Fruit' to 'Ruby Red'

## The Invention of Grapefruit, 1750-1933

**Rob Lever**

On May 23, 1930, in an effort "to promote the Progress of Science," President Herbert Hoover signed into law the Townsend-Purnell Plant Patent Act, which legally redefined the patent laws of the United States to include "invented" plants.<sup>1</sup> Fifteen months later, on August 18, 1931, the new law was put into action. On that date, the United States Patent Office issued the first plant patent to Henry F. Bosenberg of New Jersey, recognizing his "improvements" to the Dr. Van Fleet Climbing Rose.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the year, four additional plant patents would be awarded. Within two years of Bosenberg's award, the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Starr Allyn, "Plant Patent Queries: A Patent Attorney's Views on the Law," *The Journal of Heredity* 24 (Feb., 1933): 55; "A Plant Patent Bill Before Congress," *The Journal of Heredity* 21 (Feb., 1930): 81. The Townsend-Purnell Plant Patent Act specified that plant patents could only be obtained for asexually reproduced plants, excluding tubers and/or self-reproducing plants.

<sup>2</sup> Bosenberg's claim was to "a climbing rose . . . characterized by its everblooming habit." Department of Commerce: United States Patent and Trademark Office, "Plant Patent 1: H. F. Bosenberg: Climbing or Trailing Rose," 1931, 1.

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Patent Office boasted of seventy-eight such patents, including the “Ruby Red” grapefruit.<sup>3</sup>

The patenting of plants raises a number of questions. What prompted the U.S. government to award patents for plants? What did they hope to inspire or create? And, what did the “inventors” of these plants hope to achieve? Through an analysis of the history and cultivation of grapefruit through the “invention” of the Ruby Red, this study endeavors to examine the factors contributing to the “invention” of nature and the meaning behind the plant patent law. Since its appearance in 1750, grapefruit has steadily become an integral part of the citrus industry and a mainstay of breakfast tables worldwide. Its popularity, coupled with consumer demands for increased availability and “improved” characteristics, has led to the “invention” of several varieties. What these adaptations were and why they were made will be the focus of analysis. Where pertinent, other citrus fruits will be discussed and analyzed alongside grapefruit. The crossing of various citrus species will be of particular interest, especially in cases in which the hybridization was “imposed” in order to meet consumer interests.

Like most citrus species, the origin of grapefruit is shrouded in mystery. Unlike most varieties of citrus, however, grapefruit cannot be traced back to the tropics of Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago. Instead, the biological and documentary evidence for grapefruit suggests an American origin. The first recorded reference to grapefruit--identifying the species as the “forbidden fruit”--was made in 1750 by the naturalist Griffith Hughes on the island of Barbados.<sup>4</sup> Six years later, Patrick Browne

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<sup>3</sup> The “Ruby Red” grapefruit is U.S. Plant Patent number 53.

<sup>4</sup> Hughes likely borrowed the term “forbidden fruit” from the Barbadians he encountered in his travels. Indeed, his matter-of-fact tone in discussing the species, suggests that the fruit and its name had been established for some time. The origins and/or intended meanings behind this particular name, however, are

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reported a similar species in Jamaica, alternately referring to his subject as "forbidden fruit" or "smaller shaddock."<sup>5</sup> Browne would confirm the species' existence again in 1789. Between 1789 and 1814, when it was next referenced, Jamaica's "forbidden fruit" would acquire its third and best-known cognomen, grapefruit.

There seems to be some confusion in the historical record, however, regarding the origin of this third name. In 1814, botanist John Lunan, writing in *Hortus Jamaicensis*, argued that "the name . . . 'grapefruit' [came about] on account of its resemblance in flavor to the grape."<sup>6</sup> As horticulturalist H. Harold Hume asserted in 1934, it seems more likely that the name was derived from the tendency of the species' fruit to develop "in grape-like clusters"--a characteristic observed in "the forbidden fruit, or lesser

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unclear. Despite this lack of clarity, the Edenic suggestion of the name is not all too dissimilar from the mythological appropriations of the orange. As journalist/author John McPhee points out in *Oranges*, oranges were "the golden apples of the Hesperides," a wedding gift from Gaea to Hera, "which were [later] stolen by Hercules." Also of note are the mentions, mostly in Arabic literature, of a pummelo-like fruit in Palestine, circa. 1200, known as "Adam's Apple." Griffith Hughes, *The Natural History of Barbados*, (London, 1750), 127; John McPhee, *Oranges* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1967), 7. See also, "History and Development of the Citrus Industry," in *The Citrus Industry*, vol. 1, *History, Botany, and Breeding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 16.

<sup>5</sup> Walton B. Sinclair, *The Grapefruit: Its Composition, Physiology, and Products* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 1; Walter T. Swingle, "The Botany of Citrus and Its Wild Relatives of the Orange Subfamily," in *The Citrus Industry*, vol. 1, *History, Botany, and Breeding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 418.

<sup>6</sup> H. Harold Hume, *The Cultivation of Citrus Fruits* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1934), 91; Swingle, "Botany," 418.

shaddock” by French botanist Chevalier de Tussac in 1824.<sup>7</sup>

Although Tussac’s observations connect a known characteristic of modern grapefruit with Hughes’s and Browne’s “forbidden fruit”—thereby providing scholars with an approximate temporal and geographic origin of the species—considerable doubt remains regarding the genesis of grapefruit. On this, two main theories dominate the literature. First, it has been postulated that grapefruit developed as a hybrid of the pummelo and the sweet orange.<sup>8</sup> In support of this theory, pomologists have pointed to several characteristics exhibited by grapefruit that are reminiscent of observable traits in either of the supposed parent species. For example, grapefruit’s bitterness, “golden rind, . . . thick skin, large size, and habit of growing on trees in clusters or bunches” are commonly attributed to the fruit’s supposed pummelo lineage.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the fruit’s “small” and “delicate” vesicles, “thin” segment walls, and “sweetness”—compared to the pummelo—along with its leaf and seed shape have been presented as evidence of a sweet orange lineage.<sup>10</sup> However, as pomologist Walter T. Swingle observed, “the absence of any breakup of self-pollinated grapefruit seedlings into orange-like and pummelo-like

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<sup>7</sup> Hume, *Cultivation*, 91. H. Harold Hume was one of the leading horticulturalists of his time. In 1934, when *Cultivation of Citrus Fruits* was published, Hume was an active researcher and professor at the University of Florida’s College of Agriculture.

<sup>8</sup> Some horticulturalists have argued for the sour orange rather than the sweet on the similarity in seed shape of the grapefruit and the sour orange. E. N. Reasoner and Frank Kay Anderson, “The Origin of Grapefruit,” *The Citrus Industry* 5, no. 3 (1924): 36.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Kay Anderson, “The Florida Grapefruit,” *The Citrus Industry* 5, no. 2 (1924): 20.

<sup>10</sup> William C. Cooper, *In Search of the Golden Apple: An Adventure in Citrus Science and Travel* (New York: Vantage Press, 1982), 123; Swingle, “Botany,” 418.

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forms” makes such a hypothesis unlikely.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, attempts to “re-create grapefruit” by crossing its supposed parents have similarly met “without success,” resulting in fruits of “great variability; some of them . . . grapefruit-like and others somewhat orange-like.<sup>12</sup> It should also be noted that all known grapefruit specimens have either been located in or exported from the Americas. If grapefruit could indeed be “created” through hybridization then chances are that it would have arisen in more than one location.<sup>13</sup> This, as far as scholars know, has never occurred.

The evidence against hybridization has been used by some scholars to construct an alternative theory. That is, that grapefruit resulted as a bud-sport, or mutation, of the pummelo--a somewhat common phenomenon among citrus, yet one that is seldom duplicated naturally.<sup>14</sup> While the mutation theory seems more plausible than the pummelo-sweet orange hybrid theory, given the absence of a “proto-type” or parent tree, there is no way to be certain.

In comparison to its enigmatic beginnings, the history of grapefruit’s commodification is relatively well documented, particularly after the center of production shifted from the Caribbean to Florida in the mid-nineteenth century. It should be noted, however, that 132 years would pass between Hughes’s identification and its emergence on the open market. During this time, it appears that

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<sup>11</sup> Swingle, “Botany,” 418.

<sup>12</sup> T. Ralph Robinson, “Aspects of Florida Citrus History: The Seedless Grapefruit and the Hybrid Tangelo Among Florida’s Contributions to World Markets,” *Citrus* 8, no. 4 (1945) 12.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that the earliest records are split between Barbados and Jamaica is not enough to support the hybridization theory, particularly given curiosity with the “forbidden fruit” and the interconnectedness of the intra-Caribbean trade, particularly between the British islands.

<sup>14</sup> Larry K. Jackson, *Citrus Growing in Florida*, 3d ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1991), 30; Swingle, “Botany,” 418.

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grapefruit was primarily grown as an ornamental, its fruit--closely associated with the pummelo in the minds of those aware of its existence--was deemed by many to be a mere curiosity, unfit for consumption. Horticulturalist George Don reported the species' to be "the least useful" of citrus fruits.<sup>15</sup> Alexander Watson stated that it was "curious, but worthless."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, J. S. Adams, cataloguing the citrus of Florida in 1869, had this to say: "The Shaddock . . . [is] of little value. . . . The Grapefruit is similar to the Shaddock."<sup>17</sup> And, Charles Downing, writing in 1885, found the grapefruit to be "more showy than useful," although he did find the pulp "sweetish" and the juice "rather refreshing."<sup>18</sup> Hume would dismiss these criticisms as based on ignorance and confusion; Frank Kay Anderson, writing a decade prior to Hume, was not so dismissive. As he reported, the earlier grapefruit were different . . . from [those] of . . . today. The rind was thicker, there were more seeds, and the skin of the inner segments was thick, tough, and extremely bitter.<sup>19</sup>

Despite these criticisms, grapefruit was not without a loyal following during its early development. Hughes reported that the fruit "hath somewhat the Taste of a

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<sup>15</sup> George Don, *A General History of the Dichlamydeous Plants, Comprising Complete Descriptions of the Different Orders; Arranged According to the Natural System*, vol. 1, *Thalamifloræ* (London, 1831), 596.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Watson, *The American Home Garden: Being Principles and Rules for the Culture of Vegetables, Fruits, Flowers, and Shrubbery, To Which are Added Brief notes on Farm Crops* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859), 363.

<sup>17</sup> J. S. Adams, ed., *Florida: Its Climate, Soil, and Productions with a Sketch of Its History, Natural Features and Social Condition: A Manual of Reliable Information Concerning the Resources of the State and the Inducements to Immigrants* (Jacksonville: Edward M. Cheney Publishers, 1869), 49.

<sup>18</sup> Hume, *Cultivation*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Hume, *Cultivation*, 97; Anderson, "The Florida Grapefruit," 20.

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Shaddock; but far exceeds that, as well as the best Orange, in its delicious Taste and Flavour."<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Browne, in 1789, reported that "the fruit . . . is agreeable to most palates and of a pleasant grateful flavor."<sup>21</sup> One can only speculate as to why Odette Philippe--credited with introducing grapefruit to Florida--chose to make the species a feature of his plantation near Safety Harbor in the early nineteenth century. Given his entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to the groves, it seems unlikely that grapefruit was a mere curiosity to the Frenchman.

Whereas a few individuals recognized and appreciated "the merits of the new fruit," for the most part "it failed to meet popular approval."<sup>22</sup> While some of this is clearly the result of negative publicity and the wrongful conceptualization of grapefruit as yet another variety of pummelo, one cannot preclude the influence of widespread consumer ignorance. Most consumers simply were not aware of the existence of grapefruit. Of course, the possession of such knowledge did not necessarily make the fruit any more accessible. As Hume pointed out, for much of the nineteenth century, Florida possessed "crude" and unreliable systems of transportation, which made it difficult for growers, if not outright cost-prohibitive, to bring new products to market.<sup>23</sup> Growers' disinclination to cultivate grapefruit in mass, due to perceived risks and/or costs, translated into limited product availability, and thus limited product knowledge and consumer demand. Under such conditions, a stand-still developed, lasting through most of the century. As long as consumer demand was slight, growers would not propagate the species. Conversely,

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<sup>20</sup> Hughes, *The Natural History of Barbados*, 127.

<sup>21</sup> Herbert John Webber, "Cultivated Varieties of Citrus," in *The Citrus Industry*, vol. 1, *History, Botany, and Breeding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 570.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, "Aspects," 12.

<sup>23</sup> Hume, *Cultivation*, 96.

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demand could not be fostered on any meaningful scale as long as production remained minimal.

This is not to say that demand for grapefruit was static. Slowly, but steadily, beginning in the late eighteenth-century, demand increased as visitors to the tropics--particularly wealthy patrons from the industrial centers of the northern United States--acquired a taste for grapefruit. Upon returning home, those who could afford to do so, incorporated the fruit into their social lives, impressing their peers with the "new" and "strange" fruit from the tropics. In a short time, "a breakfast food fad" had developed.<sup>24</sup> By the 1920s, demand for Florida grapefruit, coupled with "its high quality" and durability in terms of shipping, would bring regular shipments as far westward as Montana and the north Pacific coast of the United States.<sup>25</sup> As popularity increased, growers observed that grapefruit did indeed have a market. Subsequently, growers sought ways to increase production. For Florida, the recognition of and response to consumer demand for grapefruit would result in the emergence of a multi-million dollar industry--one that, incidentally, would dominate global production into the twenty-first century.

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<sup>24</sup> Anderson, "The Florida Grapefruit," 20.

<sup>25</sup> F. L. Skelly, "Extending the Market for Florida Citrus Fruits," *The Citrus Industry* 5, no. 1 (1924): 32.

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By the 1880s, Florida's citrus growers had established a rudimentary system of exportation. In 1882, the first mass shipments, departing from groves in Marion County, Florida, were sent out to the nation.<sup>26</sup> Initially, sales "netted . . . only about fifty cents per barrel," but as demand increased, so did profits.<sup>27</sup> Reflexively, escalating profits inspired an expansion of production and distribution. By the turn of the century, consumers throughout the United States had access to grapefruit. American consumers, however, were certainly not the only ones to benefit from the commodification of Florida's latest fruit sensation. As Frank Ostrander, then residing in Paris, France, wrote in 1924:

It has been most interesting to note the remarkable change in the citrus fruit situation since living here in 1921-2. Then, I found grapefruit practically unknown, only one place carrying . . . [it, and then only] when they could obtain it. There was none on the menus of any hotel. Now[,] I find . . . grapefruit at all the principal hotels, and all the little groceries, fruit shops [and] delicatessens.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to rising interest in grapefruit as an exotic, consumer demand for the fruit surged in an era obsessed with "[p]erfection, purification, and power" as industry scientists and pharmacologists promulgated grapefruit's supposed medicinal qualities.<sup>29</sup> By the 1920s, the "findings"

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<sup>26</sup> Anderson, "The Florida Grapefruit," 20.

<sup>27</sup> Webber, "History and Development of the Citrus Industry," 31.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Ostrander, Paris, to American Fruit Growers, Incorporated, Pittsburgh, 15 July 1914, transcript in the hand of Frank Ostrander, *The Citrus Industry* 5, no. 2 (1924): 21.

<sup>29</sup> R. Marie Griffith, "Apostles of Abstinence: Fasting and Masculinity During the Progressive Era," *American Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2000): 631.

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of industry-affiliated scientists would be augmented by what Frank Kay Anderson determined to be “the unqualified endorsement” of the American medical profession.<sup>30</sup> It was an endorsement the citrus industry was elated to have, and one they were quick to capitalize upon. As one advertisement targeting housewives and mothers boldly proclaimed, “Grapefruit is a Body-Guard! . . . “A Gold mine of vitamin C - to fortify the MAN-POWER in your home.”<sup>31</sup> The advertisement would continue, appealing to women’s maternal sense: “What a sensible plan it is . . . to please your family, and protect your family . . . by serving Florida grapefruit[.]”<sup>32</sup> Between 1938 and 1939, Florida’s Citrus Commission launched a massive advertising campaign--canvassing 106 newspapers serving eighty-nine venues--with the latest in citrus health news. Of the five grapefruit advertisements running between the week of 11 October and the week of 21 November, four specifically targeted female audiences and all of them detailed the

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<sup>30</sup> It is unlikely that the “unqualified endorsement,” contrary to Anderson’s remark, was without reservations. Indeed, though medical professionals were willing to “admit [that] there is very likely a constituent in the grapefruit which has valuable [medicinal] properties,” as late as 1918, a mere six years before Anderson publicly appropriated the medical profession for grapefruit marketing, pharmacologist Harper F. Zoller reported that other than grapefruit’s “antiscorbutic” properties, medical scientists could not point to any “real [medicinal] value” of the fruit with “definiteness.” Zoller’s limited endorsement, among others, however, was evidently sufficient for Anderson and industry publicists. Harper F. Zoller, “Some Constituents of the American Grapefruit (*Citrus Decumana*),” *Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 10, no. 5 (1918), 364, 366-367; Anderson, “The Florida Grapefruit,” 20; and “The Pomelo, or Grapefruit,” *JAMA* 79, no. 21 (1918), 1537.

<sup>31</sup> Florida Citrus Commission, “Grapefruit is a BODY-GUARD!,” advertisement, *Citrus* 8, no. 5 (Jan., 1946): 1.

<sup>32</sup> Florida Citrus Commission, “Grapefruit is a BODY-GUARD!,” 1.

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fruit's healthful aspects. "I just found out how to take the coat off my tongue," exclaimed one. The small print, would clarify: "I like to have a fresh, clean feeling in my mouth . . . [a]nd I just discovered that the best of all ways to wake up those taste-buds is to start a meal with grapefruit."<sup>33</sup> Another advertisement emphasized that grapefruit "alkalizes your system . . . protect[ing] you from colds and other infectious diseases."<sup>34</sup>

The Citrus Commission was not just selling a commodity, it was selling a way of life, one that "nutrition wise" consumers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries would easily recognize.<sup>35</sup> As Maire Tietgen, home economist of Florida's Citrus Commission, stated, "there's nary a northern shopper who doesn't think of Florida's . . . golden fruit as 'musts' in her family's fare."<sup>36</sup> Recent studies on the era indicate that by the turn of the century, upwardly mobile Americans were more than acquainted with the "scientific gospel[s]" of self-improvement, efficiency, order, sanitation, and health.<sup>37</sup> R. Marie Griffith demonstrates in her study on fasting the ubiquity of these principals:

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<sup>33</sup> Florida Citrus Commission, "Florida Orange - Grapefruit," advertisements *Citrus* 1, no. 8 (1938): 10.

<sup>34</sup> Florida Citrus Commission, "Florida Orange - Grapefruit," 10.

<sup>35</sup> Mabel Richardson, "Smart Cooks Use Citrus," *Citrus* 9, no. 9 (May 1947): 10.

<sup>36</sup> Marie Tietgen, "'Golden Dozen' of Citrus Fruit Recipes," *Citrus* 8, no. 3 (1945): 10.

<sup>37</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 115.

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Vegetarianism, hydropathy, exercise, temperance, and pulverizing mastication had been so ardently advocated [during this time] that . . . consumers must have wondered whether the farthest reaches of nonpharmaceutical therapy systems had not been scoured.<sup>38</sup>

In such an atmosphere, grapefruit just made sense. Moreover, the fact that the fruit was from Florida, America's "fountain of health and new life" during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, undoubtedly made a positive difference in consumer opinion.<sup>39</sup>

The spirit of improvement and reform and the quest for perfection that pervaded American thought also influenced corporate and government behavior. Indeed, was not one of President Hoover's motivations for signing the Townsend-Purnell Plant Patent Act to promote "Progress"? Long before Hoover was elected president, however, Florida's Citrus Industry--in part to expand its market share and in part out of scientific curiosity--began to investigate various methods of improvement and self-betterment.

One avenue for accomplishing this goal was the replacement of unproductive and/or unprofitable citrus groves with grapefruit. As planter F. G. Sampson observed, "Grapefruit was selling so high that . . . we decided to bud half [our] lemon grove at Bay View," which had been in

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<sup>38</sup> Griffith, "Apostles of Abstinence," 599.

<sup>39</sup> John W. Ashby, ed., *Alachua, The Garden County of Florida, Its Resources and Advantages* (New York: The South Publishing Company, 1888) 6. See also, J. S. Adams, ed., *Florida: Its Climate, Soil and Productions . . . the Resources of the State and the Inducements to Immigrants* (Jacksonville: Edward M. Cheney, 1869).

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steady decline, "into grapefruit."<sup>40</sup> Another popular industry solution involved the actual "improvement" of citrus fruit, thereby attracting those consumers who were turned-off by one or more "unfavorable" characteristics. After all, as George Tippin observed, "better fruit brings more money."<sup>41</sup> To achieve optimum efficiency, the Citrus industry looked to standardization and "invention."

The standardization of grapefruit incorporated several adjustments to existing methods of production, advertising, marketing, and distribution. Of these, the most important seems to have been the standardization of production. The Industry reasoned that there should be a certain level of consistency--flavor, quality, appearance, texture, size, price--each time a consumer experienced grapefruit. Consistency, after all, creates expectations which can only be satisfactorily maintained with a standard product. As H. Harold Hume stated regarding flavor, the flavor should be characteristic [and distinct]--a pleasant indescribable blending of bitter, sweet, and acid . . . lacking this, it falls short of the standard of excellence[.]<sup>42</sup> Absolute homogeneity of any specific characteristic in grapefruit--or any citrus for that matter--is an impossibility. Variations in soil composition, fertilization, climate, water-intake, sunshine, rootstock, and time of harvest--to name a few--cause minute differences among the fruit. Journalist and writer John McPhee pointed out in 1966 that "taste and aroma" are contingent upon the fruit's position within "the framework of the tree on which it grew."<sup>43</sup> Purportedly, taste

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<sup>40</sup> F. G. Sampson, "Pioneering in Orange and Lemon Culture in Florida," p. 7. Special Collections, P. K. Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville.

<sup>41</sup> George Tippin, "Better Fruit Brings More Money," *The Citrus Industry* 2, no. 7 (1921): 14.

<sup>42</sup> Hume, *Cultivation*, 98-99.

<sup>43</sup> McPhee, *Oranges*, 8.

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even fluctuates within a given specimen--top to bottom, center to outside.<sup>44</sup>

Aware of these tendencies, the industry, nevertheless, attempted to control what factors it could. Rind color, for example, could be manipulated, fruit size controlled through grading systems, and standards imposed upon fertilizer composition, watering techniques, harvest times, and variety planted.<sup>45</sup> Any attempt by growers to circumvent these standards was certainly looked down upon. Indeed, writing in April 1924, L. B. Skinner, then president of the Florida State Horticultural Society, called the production and sale of inferior quality grapefruit “a crime--against the law and against humanity.”<sup>46</sup>

Beyond standardization, growers also exhibited an interest in developing new varieties of grapefruit--among other citrus varieties--either in a laboratory or by propagating naturally occurring hybrids and sports that they believed would be welcomed by consumers. Documentary evidence indicates that the intentional citrus breeding and experimentation first developed in Florida under the guidance of Walter Swingle in 1893. According to T. Ralph Robinson, then senior physiologist for the Bureau of Plant Industry's Division of Fruit and Vegetable Crops and Diseases, Swingle's work was commissioned by the Department of Agriculture “in the attempt to create hardier sweet oranges.”<sup>47</sup> By his own disclosure, Swingle made 212 different crosses by 1897.<sup>48</sup> Though most of these

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<sup>44</sup> McPhee, *Oranges*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Until the emergence of the Marsh grapefruit, most growers cultivated the Duncan variety, its flavor being found most favorable to consumers.

<sup>46</sup> L. B. Skinner, “The Seedless Pink Marsh,” *The Citrus Industry* 5, no. 4 (1924): 5-4, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Robinson, “Aspects,” 13.

<sup>48</sup> Swingle, “New Citrus Fruits: Successful Hybrids--The Citrange, Tangelo and Limequat--Cold Resistant Substitutes for the Lemon

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failed to produce anything worth mentioning, thirteen "true hybrids" did result from this work.<sup>49</sup> Among the new variations developed were several varieties of citranges, including two bearing peach-like fuzz, and the tangelo, the resultant cross of tangerines with grapefruit.<sup>50</sup>

While Swingle was fascinated with the citranges, particularly noting that their "abundant acid juice" made them "a very good substitute for lemonade," his focus centered on the tangelo.<sup>51</sup>

Tangelos show little of the grapefruit and almost nothing of the tangerine, but are in effect new types of oranges showing a greater variability as to size and color and having, as a rule, a more sprightly flavor. . . . There can be no doubt that these hybrids . . . constitute an important source of new and improved citrus fruits for commercial culture.<sup>52</sup>

Swingle, in partnership with F. W. Savage, would later conduct "extensive hybridization" tests on the tangelo, gauging its suitability for mass production and commodification.<sup>53</sup> In 1913, he reported "thousands of new types of tangelos" in various stages of experimentation.<sup>54</sup> He also reported on the successful crossing of the kumquat with the West Indian lime, creating the limequat.<sup>55</sup>

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and Lime--Future Possibilities," *American Breeders Magazine* 4, no. 2 (1913): 83.

<sup>49</sup> Swingle, *New Citrus Fruits: Successful Hybrids*, 83.

<sup>50</sup> Swingle, *New Citrus Fruits: Successful Hybrids*, 85.

<sup>51</sup> Swingle, *New Citrus Fruits: Successful Hybrids*, 85.

<sup>52</sup> Swingle, *New Citrus Fruits: Successful Hybrids*, 88-89.

<sup>53</sup> Swingle, *New Citrus Fruits: Successful Hybrids*, 88-89.

<sup>54</sup> Swingle, *New Citrus Fruits: Successful Hybrids*, 88-89.

<sup>55</sup> Limequat's do not have a distinct size, shape, or flavor.

Instead, they exhibit a wide assortment of characteristics drawn from either parent species.

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Swingle's "inventions," though sometimes constructed out of scientific curiosity, demonstrate a desire to improve citrus and open up new markets for various fruits. For example, by crossing the kumquat and the lime, Swingle effectively mixed the most cold resistant citrus fruit with one of the more cold reactive. Through this "intermediate" variety, Swingle made it possible for the production of lime-like fruits to be extended into regions traditionally unsuited for lime cultivation, thereby permitting larger annual "lime" yields. The tangelo was similarly advocated as a marketable alternative. As botanist Herbert John Webber described, tangelos are "usually highly colored, aromatic, richly flavored, sprightly acid, only slightly bitter, and very juicy."<sup>56</sup> More importantly, the tangelo could be easily removed from its peel and seldom contained seeds. It must have seemed like the dream fruit had been created. Unfortunately for tangelo advocates, the fruit tends to be "very delicate," a quality making its shipment somewhat difficult, delaying its distribution until such characteristics could be overcome in the late 1930s.<sup>57</sup>

Swingle was certainly not the only horticulturalist experimenting with citrus hybridization. Various professional and amateur pomologists worldwide conducted such business. In the United States, citrus hybridization developed into a multifaceted business, with the Bureau of Plant Industry, corporations, private individuals, and academic institutions funding and housing such research. By the 1940s, citrus experiment stations had been established in Florida, California, Texas, and Arizona. Among their yields were hybrids of almost every citrus combination imaginable, including such diverse creations as tangors, citrangequats, tangemons, lemandarins, mandelos, and lemelos--each experiment determined to find

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<sup>56</sup> Webber, "Cultivated Varieties of Citrus," 644.

<sup>57</sup> Webber, "Cultivated Varieties of Citrus," 644; Robinson, "Aspects," 13.

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the next big product. A comic appearing in *Citrus* in 1947 comments tongue-in-cheek on the strange combinations experimenters developed in the laboratory. It also illustrates, albeit in an exaggerated fashion, the fundamental interest scientists had in creating “practical” fruit variations. The comic depicts the stunned, but elated reaction of an anonymous scientist to an “exploding” citrus fruit, which he heated only moments before with a blow-torch. Accompanying the image is the caption, “Eureka! Crossing the Valencia with popcorn gives us a self-peeling orange!”<sup>58</sup>

As previously demonstrated, since the commencement of citrus breeding and experimentation by Swingle, in 1893, a number of new citrus varieties have been constructed in controlled settings. Hybridization, however, has also occurred “naturally,” that is, apart from prolonged and directed human intervention. Most “natural” hybridizations, as with intentional crossings, tend to be of inferior quality, a characteristic that must have certainly irritated growers’ expectations, even if they were amused with crossings. The writings of the eighteenth-century naturalist John Lawrence illustrate this point. In his 1717 publication *The Clergy-Man’s Recreation: Shewing the Pleasure and Profit Of the ART of GARDENING*, Lawrence stated, “great Care must be taken in the right ordering and

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<sup>58</sup> “Eureka!,” comic, *Citrus* 10, no. 1. (1947): 7. *Citrus*, the magazine in which “Eureka!” appears was a monthly publication for citrus growers and aficionados published by the Florida Citrus Exchange in Tampa, Florida. Thus, the regular readers/viewers of “Eureka!” seem likely to have been industry insiders and not necessarily the general public. With this in mind, it is likely that “Eureka!” was intended as entertainment and not as a criticism of the experiment sector of the industry as one might expect if the audience were comprised of outsiders, who might be either disaffected by industry growth/progress or disenchanted with scientists “playing God.” Indeed, similar comic appear throughout the magazine during the 1930s and 1940s.

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disposing [of] your young Trees; for if they be not planted according to Art . . . your Expectations may be in great measure defeated.”<sup>59</sup> Richard Bradley, also writing in 1717, similarly warned his readers about the risks of placing different fruit trees close to each other. “[T]he *Fruit* of any *Tree* may be adulterated” by nearby species “of the same Sort, which [may] . . . cross our Expectations when they come to grow up.”<sup>60</sup> Bradley went on to clarify his position: “These Couplings are not unlike that of the *Mare* with the *Ass*, which produces the *Mule*,” which is a “Monster.”<sup>61</sup>

It is well established that the vast majority of crosses resulted in “inferior” and/or undesirable fruits.<sup>62</sup> In 1915, horticulturalist Lindsay S. Perkins recorded the “discovery” of the pomerange--the cross of the pummelo and an orange--among the orange groves of the late E. D. M. Perkins in Winter Garden, Florida. Though Perkins described the pomerange favorably, particularly noting its “good shipping qualities,” the fruit never seems to have garnished much interest. In fact, Hume, Swingle, and Webber did not even mention the fruit’s existence in their writings. Also found among Perkins’s groves was a fruit assumed to be the cross of the pummelo and a lemon. Perkins immediately dismissed this hybrid as being too “tart and . . . [of] bitter taste.”<sup>63</sup> From time to time, however, hybrids will appear that capture the imagination and tastes of scientists and consumers alike, such as the tangelo, limequat, and variety

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<sup>59</sup> John Lawrence, *The Clergy-Man’s Recreation: Shewing the Pleasure and Profit Of the ART of GARDENING* (London: 1717), 6.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Bradley, *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening, Both Philosophical and Practical. Explaining The Motion of the Sap and Generation of Plants* (London, 1717), 35-36.

<sup>61</sup> Bradley, *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening*, 35

<sup>62</sup> Bob Doyle, ed., *Citrus* (Menlo Park: California: Sunset Publishing Company, 1996), 56.

<sup>63</sup> Lindsay Perkins, “The Pomerange,” *The Journal of Heredity* 6 (Apr., 1915): 192.

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of variegated lemon characterized by its green and yellow striped rind and pinkish-purple flesh.<sup>64</sup>

It should be noted that even "unintentional" hybridization requires a certain amount of agency on the part of humans. After all, to date there has been no recorded incidence of plants abandoning their natural habitats in order to re-establish themselves into patterned landscapes for human convenience. For humans to assume that the environment can be radically transformed--species ordered into existences unintended by nature--without the occurrence of undesirable or unexpected consequences, reflects a disconnect with reality. Hybridization is simply one of the risks humans must deal with as long as they continue to manipulate nature into regularized plots.

Nature does not respond bizarrely only to human action; it also acts on its own accord. One example of this is the phenomenon of bud-sports, mutations at the bud-level that result in alternative characteristics in fruit. If viable seeds are produced, these changes can result in entirely new species, making bud-sports an exciting phenomenon among horticulturalists interested in constructing "perfect" fruits and vegetables.

The first documented occurrence of a bud-sport in fruit was made in 1741 by Peter Collinson, who noted the development of "a russet apple . . . on a green-fruited tree."<sup>65</sup> Collinson also reported observing "peaches and nectarines produced on the same tree."<sup>66</sup> Since Collinson's observations, bud-sports have been described in a number of different fruits throughout the world. Indeed, between 1741 and 1936, A. D. Shamel and C. S. Pomeroy found

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<sup>64</sup> Doyle, *Citrus*, 81.

<sup>65</sup> A. D. Shamel and C. S. Pomeroy, "Bud Mutations in Horticultural Crops," *The Journal of Heredity* 27 (Dec., 1936): 487.

<sup>66</sup> Shamel and Pomeroy, "Bud Mutations in Horticultural Crops," 487.

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2,761 documented cases of bud-mutations.<sup>67</sup> Of these, 1,664 were observed in citrus fruits--thirty-two of which concerned grapefruit.<sup>68</sup>

While the number of bud-sports Shamel and Pomeroy found involving grapefruit is relatively small in comparison to those found in oranges and lemons, the impact they would have on the grapefruit industry would be significant. Indeed, four mutations in particular--resulting in the Marsh, Foster, Thompson, and Ruby Red varieties--would completely redefine grapefruit, both as a cultigen and a commodity.

The bud-sport resulting in the Marsh grapefruit variety--with the possible exception of the supposed mutation bringing about the origin of the species--was probably the most significant "improvement" of grapefruit in the United States. In comparison with the Duncan and Walters varieties, which dominated Florida's grapefruit cultivation through the first-quarter of the twentieth century, the Marsh is a particularly attractive fruit. It tends to be of a smaller, more manageable size than the Duncan and Walters varieties, and, according to T. Ralph Robinson, exhibits a "good holding quality," thus permitting the fruit to be shipped farther and stored longer than was typical at the time.<sup>69</sup> These qualities allowed larger shipments to be made, resulting in supply surpluses. Not wanting to be stuck with large stockpiles of rotting fruit, economically minded retailers and restaurateurs lowered their prices, effectively opening up the grapefruit market to low-income consumers.<sup>70</sup> As consumers became attuned to the pleasures of grapefruit, demand rose, and with it prices.

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<sup>67</sup> Shamel and Pomeroy, "Bud Mutations in Horticultural Crops," 489.

<sup>68</sup> Shamel and Pomeroy, "Bud Mutations in Horticultural Crops," 489.

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, "The Origin of the Marsh Seedless Grapefruit," *The Journal of Heredity* 24 (Jan., 1933): 437.

<sup>70</sup> Robinson, "The Origin of the Marsh Seedless Grapefruit," 437.

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More importantly, particularly for grapefruit aficionados and certainly for the industry, Marsh grapefruit is seedless. That is, each specimen contains less than six seeds. When compared with the Duncan and Walters varieties, which typically contain between thirty and fifty seeds, this was quite an improvement. Once consumers became aquatinted with Marsh, it seems to have become an instant sensation.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Robinson reported that by 1933 Marsh grapefruit had become the "dominant commercial variety" not only in the United States, but also in "South Africa, Palestine, Australia, and South America."<sup>72</sup>

Given the demand for the Marsh variety after its commodification, it is ironic that it was not marketed earlier. After all, the documentary record indicates that growers in and around Lakeland, Florida--where the variety is supposed to have originated--had known about the variety since at least 1862, thirty-three years before it arrived on the market.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, as Robinson indicated,

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<sup>71</sup> For example, between the 1941 and 1945 seasons, Florida reported average grapefruit sales, processed and fresh, of 24,840,750 boxes. A standard box containing eighty pounds of fruit. Of these, 10,055,750 boxes, or forty percent were "seedless" with 14,785,000 boxes, amounting to sixty percent, being seeded. While seeded varieties certainly comprised more of the total production, it should be noted that approximately two-thirds of all sold grapefruit were processed. Though the sources do not explicitly state so, it seems safe to assume that most of the processed fruits came were of the seeded variety, with fresh-fruit market obtaining mostly "seedless" varieties. J. C. Townsend, "Florida Citrus Production and Utilization Crops of 1941-42 to 1944-45," *Citrus* 8, no. 2 (Oct., 1945), 5.

<sup>72</sup> Robinson, "The Origin of the Marsh Seedless Grapefruit," 437.

<sup>73</sup> Specifically, Marsh first developed on the estate of one Mrs. Rushing, sold in 1862 to William Hancock. The estate was twelve miles north of Lakeland, outside the town of Socrum. Webber, "Cultivated Varieties," 579-80; Robinson, "The Origin of the Marsh Seedless Grapefruit," 437.

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Lakeland area growers were not only aware of the fruit's existence, many of them propagated the strain for themselves, being permitted by the Hancock's to freely take from the tree's bud-wood and seed. By 1895, such sharing had resulted in a number of simultaneous cultivation centers. Until C. M. Marsh introduced the variety to consumers later that year, however, it seems to have been cultivated merely as a curiosity. Hume offered a suggestion for why this may have been the case: "This pomelo [grapefruit] has not the distinct pronounced flavor of the typical fruit."<sup>74</sup> Webber agreed, although he did not believe that consumers would be able to distinguish the taste.<sup>75</sup> He also suggested that its smaller size may have initially been a hindrance to its propagation.<sup>76</sup>

While the emergence of "seedless" varieties, such as the Marsh grapefruit, demonstrated to growers the random possibilities that could result from mutations, nothing could have prepared them for the discovery of R. B. Foster at the Atwood Grove in Manavista, Florida, during the winter of 1906-1907. That winter, Foster, the grove's foreman, noticed that several fruits on a particular Walters variety tree--one limb to be specific--had matured early. Moreover, they displayed a rouge-tint on the rind, atypical of grapefruit at that time. Curious, he cut into one of the fruits to check its quality. When he did, Foster discovered that not only had the rind coloration changed, but the fruit's flesh lacked its familiar yellow-tinge. Instead, it was pink.<sup>77</sup> Further investigation would reveal similar coloration of all the fruit borne on that limb. What had resulted was a particularly rare mutation known as a limb-sport. As later reported, "about seven-eighths of the tree

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<sup>74</sup> Hume, *Cultivation*, 102.

<sup>75</sup> Webber, "Cultivated Varieties," 480.

<sup>76</sup> Webber, "Cultivated Varieties," 479.

<sup>77</sup> Technically, Foster's grapefruit is not pink, but clear. It is the membranes of encasing the pulp that are colored, the pulp being translucent simply reflect this color in light.

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[bore traditional] Walters, the" remaining eighth, bearing the pink mutation.<sup>78</sup> The unique coloration of the fruit captured the imagination of Florida's grapefruit cultivators, particularly E. N. Reasoner of Oneco, Florida. By 1914, after extensive testing to determine the viability and permanence of the fruit's "pink" flesh, Reasoner included the variety among his catalogue, naming the fruit for its "founder," R. B. Foster.<sup>79</sup>

Any dreams Reasoner had about the Foster's variety revolutionizing the grapefruit industry as the Marsh variety had, however, were short-lived. In 1913, "not more than five miles south of the Atwood Grove," where the Foster's variety originated, a second pink-fleshed grapefruit was found.<sup>80</sup> Similar to the "discovery" of its predecessor, this new mutation was identified by the grove's foreman as he tested the quality of several "choice" fruits to fill a special order.<sup>81</sup> "On cutting one of the fruits he found it to be pink-fleshed and seedless. He knew at once that it must be something unusual."<sup>82</sup> And indeed, it was. Whereas the Foster's variety had been a mutation of the Walters grapefruit, this second variation had resulted from a bud-sport of the Marsh "seedless" variety.

For those aware of the mutation, the implications must have been mind-boggling. In theory, once its permanence could be confirmed, consumers would be able to choose between pink and white "seedless" grapefruit--receiving everything they enjoyed about the Marsh variety, but now with the novelty of exotic coloration. As he had

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<sup>78</sup> Robinson, "The Bud-Sport Origin of a New Pink-Fleshed Grapefruit in Florida," *The Journal of Heredity* 12 (May, 1921): 195.

<sup>79</sup> Robinson, "Pink-Fleshed," 195.

<sup>80</sup> This would be cultivated as the Thompson grapefruit. Unlike the Foster's variety, the coloration of Thompson is due to pigmentation in the pulp.

<sup>81</sup> S. A. Collins was the founder of the Thompson variety.

<sup>82</sup> Robinson, "Pink-Fleshed," 197.

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done when the Foster's variety appeared, E. N. Reasoner quickly acquired, tested, and commodified the pink-Marsh, marketing it under the name Thompson in 1921.<sup>83</sup> To say that grapefruit cultivators were delighted with the appearance of the Thompson variety would be an understatement. They were ecstatic. Indeed, in April 1924, just three years after the variety's formal commodification, L. B. Skinner dubbed the Thompson grapefruit to be "the queen of all grapefruit" and admiringly proclaimed "her beauty and excellence."<sup>84</sup> Despite industry hopes, however, the Thompson variety, as the Foster's before it, failed to significantly alter the industry.

At first glance, it may seem odd that both the Foster and Thompson varieties failed to develop into mass-marketable products. But the reasons are not complicated at all, and indeed, fit snugly within the citrus industry's obsession with perfection and standardization. For growers concerned with consistently meeting consumer expectations, the Foster and Thompson grapefruits would become too much of a liability. In the case of the Thompson grapefruit, the mutation, while resulting in radically different flesh color, did not significantly alter any other quality or characteristic of the parent variety. This feature made it difficult, if not impossible to distinguish between the Marsh and Thompson fruits. Short of cutting open each specimen, there was no definite way to guarantee flesh coloration. Consequently, by marketing these varieties, the industry risked disappointing consumers. The potential fallout should a consumer order a pink-grapefruit and receive yellow--or vice versa--was more than most growers wanted to deal with. This anxiety would only be exaggerated as cultivators discovered soon after the variety's commodification that as Thompson grapefruits

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<sup>83</sup> Thompson was the name of the grove's proprietor.

<sup>84</sup> Skinner, "Seedless Pink Marsh," 19.

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aged their flesh faded from a "beautiful pink" to a "shade of amber."<sup>85</sup>

In terms of the Foster variety, growers had to consider the path of progress. Given the advent, cultivation, and developing consumer demand for Marsh "seedless" grapefruit, marketing the Foster grapefruit, with its high-seed count--a result of its Walters variety heritage--was somewhat defeatist. For most growers, selling a dependable, popular variety was more important than marketing yesterday's fruit in a novelty color.

This is not to say that Florida's grapefruit growers were not interested in marketing a pink-grapefruit. For certainly they were. However, for such a variety to be viable it would have to be guaranteed. As W. H. Friend pointed out, what growers wanted was a grapefruit "that would possess the desirable characters of the Thompson . . . but . . . also be possessed of the attractive pink 'blush' on the outside of the fruit, characteristic of the Foster variety."<sup>86</sup> To the disappointment of grapefruit growers, attempts to synthesize such a variation failed; either the crosses resulted in seeded fruits or they lacked the desirable rind tint.<sup>87</sup>

In August 1929, as the clouds of depression and hard-times gathered on the horizon, the sun shined brightly on the grapefruit industry. That month, while grower Albert E. Henninger toured the grapefruit orchards of his ranch in McAllen, Texas, he "discovered" what fruit industry experts had been attempting to "invent" since the arrival of the Thompson--a dependable and identifiable seedless pink grapefruit.

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<sup>85</sup> Webber, "Cultivated Varieties," 582.

<sup>86</sup> W. H. Friend, "The Origin of a Superior Red-Fleshed Grapefruit: Bud Mutation of the Thompson Variety of Possible Horticultural Value," *The Journal of Heredity* 25 (Sept., 1934): 358.

<sup>87</sup> Robinson, "Pink-Fleshed," 198.

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As W. H. Friend of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in Weslaco observed, the bud-sport Henninger found not only “possess[ed] the desirable characters of the Thompson grapefruit but . . . also [exhibited]. . . the attractive pink ‘blush’ on the outside of the fruit, characteristic of the Foster variety.”<sup>88</sup> More importantly from an Industry standpoint, the lycopene that caused the rind’s coloration, also resulted in a “ruby red” coloration of the fruit’s “membranes and vesicle walls,” effectively deepening the flesh color of the fruit.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, as Henninger observed to the U.S. Patent Office in 1932, the variation was able “to hold its color longer on the tree and in storage, fading less than does the Thompson.”<sup>90</sup>

To say that Henninger was overjoyed with his “discovery” would be an understatement. He knew full well the implications such a fruit would have upon the grapefruit industry. Indeed, within three years of his initial observation of the variety, Henninger would submit an application to have his “invention” patented. On January 24, 1933, the U.S. Patent Office consented to Henninger’s request, making the “Ruby Red” grapefruit the fifty-third plant to be patented in the United States.

The “invention” of the “Ruby Red” revolutionized the grapefruit industry. At last, planters had at their disposal--barring, of course, any further mutations--a species possessing each of the desired characteristics; that was, a “seedless,” pink-fleshed fruit bearing discernable rind pigmentation suitable for handy identification. No longer would citrus developers, marketers, grocers, and restaurant entrepreneurs risk the embarrassing presentation of the “wrong” colored fruit to consumers. Based on these traits,

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<sup>88</sup> Robinson, “Pink-Fleshed,” 198.

<sup>89</sup> Department of Commerce: United States Patent and Trademark Office, “Plant Patent 53: Albert E. Henninger, Colored Seedless Grape Fruit,” 1933, 1; Webber, “Cultivated Varieties,” 583.

<sup>90</sup> Department, “Henninger,” 1.

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once firmly established and marketed, the “Ruby Red,” seemed poised to revolutionize breakfast tables across the nation. It would, however, take some time, as growers transitioned into cultivation of seedless, pink-grapefruit. The Florida Department of Agriculture estimated in 1950--the earliest date for which such statistics could be found for this study--that only eight percent of grapefruit sales were of “Pink Seedless Grapefruit.”<sup>91</sup> By the 1962-63 season, this total would rise to twenty-five percent.<sup>92</sup> Forty years later, such fruits would comprise sixty-percent of Florida’s grapefruit production.<sup>93</sup>

Throughout the United States, citrus growers and consumers would sing praises to Henninger’s creation, but not everyone would. There were many, particularly among the scientific community, who felt that the patenting of plants derived from mutations and other “fortuitous events over which the discoverer has no control” was “absurd” and a reckless misuse of the Townsend-Purnell Plant Patent Act.<sup>94</sup> One such person was Robert C. Cook, an editor of *The Journal of Heredity* during the 1930s. Between the advent of the Townsend-Purnell Plant Patent Act and Henninger’s “invention” in 1933, Cook devoted much of his time and work challenging the validity of such patents. At the crux of his argument, Cook demanded to know how a naturally occurring phenomenon or thing could be “invented,” and thus patented. After all, he argued, had not

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<sup>91</sup> Florida Citrus Mutual, *Annual Statistical Report . . . Covering the 1949-50 and Prior Seasons* (Lakeland, Florida: Statistical & Economic Department, 1965), 15.

<sup>92</sup> Florida Citrus Mutual, *Annual Statistical Report . . . Covering the 1963-64 and Prior Seasons* (Lakeland, Florida: Statistical & Economic Department, 1965), 1.

<sup>93</sup> Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, *Florida Agricultural Statistics: Commercial Citrus Inventory* (Tallahassee: Florida Agricultural Statistics Service, 2002), 2.

<sup>94</sup> Robert C. Cook, “Other Plant Patents,” *The Journal of Heredity* 24 (Feb., 1933): 49, 53.

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the U.S. Court of Customs and Patent Appeals rejected applications endeavoring to patent uranium, tungsten, thorium, and polished oyster shells on the principal that the “applicant[s] [were] not entitled to a patent” of naturally occurring items and/or “natural qualities”?<sup>95</sup>

Cook had a point. By his count twenty-two of the first fifty-three plant patents, including the “Ruby Red” grapefruit, did not require direct human intervention to occur.<sup>96</sup> They were not, in the traditional sense of the word, “invented.” Indeed, Bosenberg’s inventive process, as he would later admit under oath, amounted to nothing more than observing a difference in one particular rose that he had purchased “for use in his work.”<sup>97</sup> As he maintained after the fact, he “did nothing to originate the new form” of Dr. Van Fleet Climbing Rose that he had received patent for. Nevertheless, in spite of this seemingly damning evidence, the Patent Office stood by its decisions. In fact, in a letter to Cook in 1933, Commissioner Thomas E. Robertson suggested that Cook had erred in his judgment of the plant patents. He wrote, “no patents [had been] granted on ‘varieties of plants newly found by plant explorers and others growing in a cultivated or wild state.’”<sup>98</sup> A lie? Perhaps, but certainly not a case of ignorance.

The main difference between Robertson’s and Cook’s arguments seems to be one of interpretation of the intended purpose of the Townsend-Purnell Plant Patent Act. If that purpose, as President Hoover declared, was “to promote the Progress of Science,” what did that mean? Whose “science” was to be the beneficiary of state-patronage? And, why? From Cook’s perspective, the only plants that deserved

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<sup>95</sup> Cook, “First Plant Patent,” *The Journal of Heredity* 22 (Oct., 1931): 317.

<sup>96</sup> Cook, “The Commissioner Replies,” *The Journal of Heredity* 24 (Apr., 1933): 164.

<sup>97</sup> Cook, “First Plant Patent,” 313.

<sup>98</sup> Cook, “Commissioner,” 163.

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patents were those--like Swingle's citranges, tangelos, and limequats--that were actually created by some action on the part of an individual. As he repeatedly maintained, simply finding or discovering a natural object did not amount to "invention." Such activities were things that practically anyone with an observant eye could detect and certainly did not qualify as science. After all, how much scientific skill did it take for Bosenberg and Henninger to note that they had in their possession something unique?

In contrast, to the government, as argued by Robertson, the purpose of Townsend-Purnell was not necessarily to recognize "inventions." It was, instead, a method to "more . . . adequate[ly] recompense" plant breeders "for the often arduous, persistent, and ingenious efforts he must put forth in originating a new form" including bringing that new form to market.<sup>99</sup> As David Fairchild, head of the United States plant introductory station in south Florida observed, "[p]lant breeding is a strange combination of exciting instants and long periods of watchfulness."<sup>100</sup> Each time a mutation is observed or discovered, it could not be touted immediately as the next big thing. Rather, the mutated species had to be tested; its viability and permanence verified. It was a difficult process, long, arduous, boring, costly, and most of the time provided less than satisfactory results. From the governments perspective, those individuals who invested their time in improving the nation's plants in this manner deserved some kind of reward, hence Townsend-Purnell.

The rhetoric of Townsend-Purnell fit nicely with the Darwinian spirit of improvement and perfection that characterized the era, particularly appealing to the emerging science of eugenics. If growers had not

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<sup>99</sup> Cook, "Other Plant Patent," 49.

<sup>100</sup> David Fairchild, "The Fascination of Making a Plant Hybrid: Being a Detailed Account of the Hybridization of *Actinidia arguta* and *Actinidia chinensis*," *The Journal of Heredity* 18 (Feb., 1927): 49.

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considered it before, Townsend-Purnell inspired them to cleanse the plant kingdom, purging undesirable species and uplifting those deemed to be of utmost importance. Moreover, it appealed to humanity's sense of environmental control. Whereas before Townsend-Purnell plant growers could only "improve" the land through ordering it, by offering them patents growers could become "creators," accomplishing what only God had done before.

# Folklore and the Creation of Indian Womanhood

Nancy Tran

## Introduction

The history of India cannot be separated from its folklore. These tales, myths, songs, some written, others passed along orally, carried with them the bits and pieces that made up India's ancient past. Sri Chittaranjan Chatterjee, the vice chairman of Calcutta's All-India Folklore Conference (1964), voiced the influence of folklore, stating, it "touched every aspect of traditional and cultural life."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, by examining folklore, insight can be gained on the views and the cultural ideology of the people.

Folklore was always a significant part of India, but its importance arose during the nineteenth-century with the popularization and proselytization of the Vedic past and the myth of the Aryan women by Orientalists. These ancient stories and texts were used as evidence to support the idea of India's 'golden age': an era when women held a high status and the sexes were equally educated. Sophia Wadia, president of the Indian Folklore Society, stated that "no mythological story, no traditional event in the folklore of a people has ever been ... pure fiction."<sup>2</sup> Her statement signified the firm conviction that these ancient stories held certain truths. Folklore was thus brought to the forefront

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<sup>1</sup> Sankar Sen Gupta, ed., *Folklore Research in India: Official Proceedings & Speeches at the All-India Folklore Conference*, Calcutta (Calcutta: Nabasakti Press, 1963), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Gupta, p. 81.

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and tied into the debate on the women's question that monopolized the nineteenth-century reform movement in India. It was proof of the historical prominence of Indian women.

Folklore was used in a variety of ways. Of the most important aspects of folklore was its ability to construct ideals and standards for women. According to Bharati Ray, the image of the 'ideal' woman was formed out of the 'classical' Hindu tradition.<sup>3</sup> Through the portrayal of women in these stories a model was set up creating the "ideal woman." Proper decorum and behavior were also set along with the birth of the paragon woman. Asko Parpola, author of *Changing Patterns of Family and Kinship in South Asia*, points out that Savitri, one of the most important models of proper behavior for Hindu women, continues to exert much influence.<sup>4</sup> These stories were seen as guides for Indian women to live up to and used as measures to be judged against. These portrayals of women characters, like Sita of the *Ramayana*, symbolized womanhood and defined what it meant to be a woman.

These images from folklore were consequently capitalized on by reformers and nationalists in India. They were a means to obtain change and used as a rallying tools for reformers' and nationalists' causes. Folklore was also a crucial tool for early feminists, who sought to improve the condition of Indian women. By invoking India's 'glorious' past, the reformers could prove that women were once educated and could be again. Therefore they were not breaking away from tradition. This was an important side of the argument used in the attempts to pass social reforms. Furthermore, by summoning the image of the mother

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<sup>3</sup> Bharati Ray. *Early Feminists of Colonial India: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Asko Parpola and Sirpa Tenhunen, eds., *Changing Patterns of Family and Kinship in South Asia: Vol 4*. (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1998), 169.

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goddess and of other strong female personas, Indian women were roused to join and support reformers and nationalists.

Therefore, folklore played a vital part in India and its move towards gaining some degree of equality between the sexes. On the one hand, it assisted woman in obtaining certain privileges, like education. On the other hand, it hampered women's progress in that these same tales and myths set up boundaries which were difficult for women to break through. Folklore's role is thus significant because it was an approach to advance the women's movement; however, it also set up limitations and restrictions on the movement's progress.

### **Folklore and the Portrayal of Indian Women**

Indian folklore painted women in two paradoxical images. In some instances, women were revered as goddesses, the honored mother of mankind and country. Samjukta Gombrich Gupta indicates that it was during the fourth- and fifth- centuries that a number of religious texts glorified the Great Goddess.<sup>5</sup> These were the Vedic Age stories which included the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and other mythological tales. According to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, these epics and myths "constituted [India's] religious history."<sup>6</sup> They contained certain women who were portrayed as powerful and clever. Bharati Ray pointed out that Hindu scripture recognized women-power as the *adyashakti* (primordial force) and of women's creative, protective, and destructive capabilities.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, according to Madhu Khanna, one of the most important religious documents on the subcontinent, the *Devi-*

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<sup>5</sup> Samjukta Gombrich Gupta. "The Goddess, Women, and their Rituals in Hinduism," in *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India*, ed. Mandakranta Bose (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93.

<sup>6</sup> Shamita Basu. *Religious Revivalism as Nationalist Discourse* (New Delhi: The Oxford University Press, 2002), 63.

<sup>7</sup> Ray, 58.

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*Mahatmya* (5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> C A.D.), was judged to be a classic Hindu goddess text.<sup>8</sup> This implied the honored status that goddesses occupied in Indian culture. These images elevated the position of women into god-like proportions. Females, portrayed in this light, were to be feared and worshipped. From Hindu mythology there were certain goddesses and women who epitomize these traits. These include Durga, Kali and Satyvati.

Durga, the warrior goddess, was created to slay the buffalo demon, Mahishasura. This tale began with the inability of the gods to defeat the powerful demon, who drove them out of their celestial homes. These gods, in their failure to rid the demon, created the goddess by combining their energy. Durga's embodiment of the *sakti* gave her special powers which enabled her to destroy Mahishasura and thereby save the gods.

This is a perfectly good example of the empowerment of women through folklore. Due to the inadequacy of the male gods, a female deity was produced to accomplish the feat. Here, it is important to note that a woman was created, not a man, to protect the gods. Durga, worshipped as the battle queen, was neither submissive nor subordinate. Khanna highlighted the point that Durga "assumed an independent and autonomous status." Furthermore she was "not portrayed in a domestic context." The gods honored her as the highest principle of the cosmos. She was the "power of creation, preservation and destruction."<sup>9</sup> Durga was a representation of the self-sufficient women. She did not rely on the male patriarchy, nor did she answer to the male gods. In addition, her powers of destruction portrayed her as someone to be reckoned with and feared.

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<sup>8</sup> Madhu Khanna. "The Goddess-Women Equation in Sakta Tantras," in *Faces of the Feminine*, 111.

<sup>9</sup> Khanna, 111-112.

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Kali, another martial goddess, also embodied that image of the dominant woman. And like Durga, she too was worshipped as a destroyer. “The black one” as she was often called, was commonly painted with a long red lolling tongue and a cavernous mouth ready to devour her enemies. Kali was equally feared and appeased by the other gods, and in earlier Tantric cults she was seen to embody the power of the godhead. Although she was considered one of the most terrifying deities in Hinduism, Kali was still revered as the *mother goddess* who protected the world from evil. The ferocious image of annihilation was balanced by the image of the mother guardian. However, the portrayals of Kali, dancing on her husband’s corpse, suggesting her superiority over him, showed that she remained outside the ambit of the male dominated sphere. Thus, Kali, the primordial version of Durga, encapsulated the divine woman power.

Female divinities were not the only ones who demonstrated the ability and supremacy of women. Satyavati, the matriarch of the *Mahabharata* was portrayed as a dependable and wise queen of *Kurusjungal*. According to Jayatri Ghosh, she was the nation’s savior. The queen, after the death of her two sons, plotted out the course to continue the male line and save the *Kuru* dynasty. Satyavati was as the locus of ethical perception and judgment. Ghosh’s article underlined the unique situation held by the Queen, for it was Satyavati, rather than any male figure, who was the decision maker.<sup>10</sup>

An interesting fact to note was Satyavati’s low caste and mortal status which differentiated her from the aforementioned goddesses. Before her ascension to become queen, Satyavati was a poor fisherwoman who ferried people across the river. Yet, through her beauty and her intelligence, she rose “from outcaste to revered

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<sup>10</sup> Jayatri Ghosh, “Satyavati: The Matriarch of the *Mahabharata*,” in *Faces of the Feminine*, 40-42.

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matriarch.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, this portrayal of Satyvati permitted all women, from every caste to identify with this image of an exceptional and courageous female.

These myths idealized and empowered women by relating them to the goddesses of great strength and women of wisdom. The *Sakta* Tantras claimed that “woman is the creator of the universe ... [and] the foundation of the world.”<sup>12</sup> These representations projected a positive image for women. One who was not only powerful, but also was a creator, guardian, and savior, a goddess in her own right. The woman was thus exalted because she was a woman and has innate powers, like the *sakti*.

Nonetheless, these empowering feminine images were balanced and in a way reigned in by the opposing depiction of the devoted and sacrificing woman. Thus, the counterpart of the dichotomy was portrayed by these female characters that placed the male patriarchy above themselves. Sangeeta Ray stated that the “women’s power is celebrated *and* curtailed in its evocation of a glorious Hindu past.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, although some of these female characters were portrayed to possess awesome powers, they were repressed and curbed by their steadfast devotion to husbands, propriety, and chastity.

Ann Grodzins Gold and Gloria Goodwin Raheja state that students of South Asian studies frequently view the cultural image of Hindu woman as inherently split. The opposing and oftentimes contrasting models of the goddesses revealed this noted divide. On one hand, there was the dangerous Kali; on the other hand, there was Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, luck, and of the home. The stately Lakshmi was “paired with and tamed by a divine

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<sup>11</sup> Ghosh, p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Khanna, p.115.

<sup>13</sup> Sangeeta Ray, *En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonialism and Postcolonial Narratives* (London: Duke University Press, 2000), 19.

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mate," Vishnu.<sup>14</sup> The image of an autonomous goddess, Kali, was now counterbalanced by the domestic Lakshmi, who continually followed her husband to serve.

This paradigm of the devoted and self-sacrificing wife was fortified by the story of Sita, the human incarnate of Lakshmi. Her renowned fame was won through the dedication and chastity she demonstrated to her husband. As the wife of Rama, from the epic, the *Ramayana*, Sita, followed her husband through the fourteen years of exile. She remained true to Rama even during her capture by the demon Ravana. Following her rescue, doubts arose about her purity and virtue. This led to a trial by fire in which she emerged unscathed but not exonerated from further suspicions. Consequently, Sita was exiled by her husband, whom she worshiped. In the end, she was acquitted of all false offenses once Rama discovered their twin sons. Her motherhood thus signified her innocence and Sita was returned to mother earth.

During these trials and tribulations never once did Sita utter a grievance or blame Rama for the injustice done to her. Sita enshrined the embodiment of the chaste and devoted Hindu wife. Her silent sufferings for uncommitted sins and her acceptance of this fate was actually admired by women. According to Raheja and Gold, Sita personified the "ideal womanhood for both men and women in Hindu society."<sup>15</sup> Parpola stated:

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<sup>14</sup> Gloria Goodwin Raheja and Ann Grodzins Gold, *Listen to the Heron's Words Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 30.

<sup>15</sup> Raheja and Gold, pp. 33-34.

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Sita represents ideals that live in the heart of millions of Indians today. Countless wives struggle to follow without complaint the dictates of often inconsiderate husbands, and Sita's example helps many to suffer their lot bravely.<sup>16</sup>

The portrayal of Sita was as a woman who remained faithful while accepting her tragic destiny and in a way triumphed at the end as her innocence was discovered through her motherhood.

Other examples of the self-sacrificing and devoted wife ideal were Savitri and Draupadi from the epic, the *Mahabharata*. The former, was one the most famous models of the chaste and faithful wife in Sanskrit literature. Savitri married Satyavan while knowing that he will meet his demise in twelve months. She then left her wealth behind to live in the forest with her husband and his parents. As the time came nearer to her husband's death, his wife "took the terrible vow that was known as the *three vigils*" in which she prayed and fasted in order to reach a state when the soul could hear and see things mortals cannot. When the day finally came and Yama, the god of truth and death, arrived to lead her husband's spirit to the afterworld, Savitri trailed him. Yama, attempting to get rid of Savitri, granted her a wish which eventually led to the restoration of her husband's kingdom, birth of sons, and his return to life.<sup>17</sup>

Draupadi was the devoted wife of the five Pandava brothers. She was to spend each year serving each brother as his wife. Yudhishtira, one of the brothers, in a game of dice, lost his kingdom and his freedom, along with those of his brothers. As a result, Draupadi was publicly humiliated

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<sup>16</sup> Parpola, 171.

<sup>17</sup> Sister Nivedita, *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* (Calcutta: Swami Anayananda, 1988), 51-63.

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and molested. A long exile ensued and afterwards an eighteen-day battle in which the Pandavas were victorious. Draupadi took her revenge by washing her hair in the blood of the man who humiliated her. Afterwards, in the fairy tale-like ending, Draupadi provided each of the five brothers a son, thereby continuing the family line.

Both of these women shared the same nature of absolute commitment and duty in their role as a wife. Each had to make some sort of sacrifice which eventually led to triumph. Savitri went through the *terrible vow* and then fearlessly followed the god-of-death to rescue her husband. This feat earned her the admiration of Yama who praised her as “peerless amongst women...the brave heart that follows the husband even into the grave.”<sup>18</sup> Savitri’s actions of fidelity were commended and admired. Draupadi was ignobly gambled away and publicly humiliated. Yet she remained by the side of her five husbands. As Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay states, she could, with “pride, tell Satyabhama how she served even the other wives of her husband just to please him.”<sup>19</sup> These two tales within the *Mahabharata* were pedagogical in the sense that they outline the duties and responsibilities of a wife and more broadly a woman’s role and character.

In extolling Savitri’s and Draupadi’s sacrifices, these tales expounded the idea that a woman must first and foremost serve her husband and his family. Next, they were to continue the family line by providing sons. Constant sacrifice and wifely servitude would consequently bring fulfillment, happiness, and reverence. A woman following in the footsteps of Sita, Savitri, and Draupadi would win her place and get rewarded if she was able to forgo her self-interest in the name of the family. Ray wrote that in the

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<sup>18</sup> Sister Nivedita, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates Publications, 1977), 190.

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new model *grihalakshmi* (goddess of the home) there would be an automatic improvement in the quality of life if a woman, like Lakshmi, worshiped her husband.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the female was placed in the domestic context, which was her sphere of obligation and her path to veneration and worth.

This same model was also portrayed in more colloquial folktales concerning the lives of ordinary women, such as the story, *The Daughter-in-Law who Got Her Way*. This was a popular tale with the endemic theme of the tyrant mother-in-law and the abused daughter-in-law. In the story the daughter-in-law was constantly abused by her husband and his mother. She was overworked and suffered from starvation. One day, unable to withstand her hunger, she tricked her mother-in-law into leaving the home and ate her fill in front of a statue of Kali. The goddess, in her astonishment at seeing the speed with which the stew disappeared gasped and raised her stone hand up to the own mouth. The statue's new position caused an uproar and fear throughout the village. In the end, the daughter-in-law's ability to 'fix' magically the statue dramatically changed her lot. "From that time on, the husband and his mother made sure they were kind and respectful to the daughter-in-law."<sup>21</sup> Once again, a wife's devotion and toil to her family paid off. After years of suffering, the daughter-in-law was repaid for her commitment to her wifely duties. She then lived the rest of her life 'happily ever after' at the price of years of abuse.

The aggrandizement of these latter tales created a shift from the self-reliant female to a woman dependant on the patriarchy. The two portrayals of women were the independent and warrior goddesses versus the sacrificing and utterly devoted wife. The former was strong willed and lived outside the patriarchy; the latter resided inside the

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<sup>20</sup> Ray, .39.

<sup>21</sup> Krishnaswami, 34.

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patriarchal territory. These latter women needed the patriarchy in order to attain worth and identity as they were defined by how well they accomplished their wifely duties. Samjukta Gombrich Gupta identified the two most important roles of women in society were wife and mother.<sup>22</sup> Thus, these latter tales show and identify the 'essence' of being a woman as devotional, virtuous and altruistic by praising those qualities in Sita, Savitri, and Draupadi. Women were, according to Nancy Martin-Kershaw, to adhere to the ideology of suffering, self-sacrifice, virtue, and absolute devotion.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, this led to the creation of the image of the ideal woman as all those characteristics, which would later on hamper the progress of the women's movement. Initially, folklore was very useful in the progress towards women's rights.

### **Folklore and the Women's Question**

In the early beginnings of the women's movement, Vedic folklore was used to advocate women's education. According to Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), there were four methods open to reformers to obtain change. The method of tradition, adopted by many, was practiced by reinterpreting old texts to suit the needs of the present. Therefore, the Vedic age stories were popularized and its heroines glorified. Vina Mazumdar noted that the much vaunted position of women in the 'glorious' past had its darker side, like in the trials of Sita.<sup>24</sup> Then there was also the *Code of Manu*, which observed that "verily a woman

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<sup>22</sup> Gombrich Gupta, 92.

<sup>23</sup> Nancy Martin-Kershaw, "Mirabai in the Academy and the Politics of Identity" in *Faces of the Feminine*, 168.

<sup>24</sup> Vina Mazumdar, "The Social Reform Movement in India-From Ranade to Nehru" in *Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity*, ed Nanda, , B. R. (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), 43-48.

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does not deserve freedom.”<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, these issues and points were ignored and eclipsed by the more positive tales in the fight for women’s rights by reformers in the early nineteenth century and later on by nationalist and feminists.

Education was the top priority that reformers were trying to obtain for women. Women of the Vedic past were compared to Indian women of the nineteenth-century. Mahesh Chundra Deb’s “Sketch of the Condition of the Hindoo Women” pointed out the bleak differences between two. The author laments the “decline of [women’s] ancient fame and grandeur” from being valued. They are “punished from ungrounded jealousy or a tyrannical whim”<sup>26</sup> Not only was folklore used as proof of the high status of women, it was popularized to show that education for women was acceptable. According to Alf Hildebeitel, there was an appropriation of the popular as the eternal truth of the country.<sup>27</sup>

Another significance of folklore in the fight for women’s reform was the fact that by celebrating the high status of women, these tales also showed the splendor that was India. Again the tie between woman and nation was made. According to James Mills’s theory, the women’s status can be the measurement of a country’s and society’s advancement. Therefore, the uplifting of women would accordingly lead to the progress of the others. Furthermore, the myth of the Vedic age lent support and credence to Mills’s idea. Thus, the need to educate women was

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<sup>25</sup> Veena Das, “Indian Women: Work, Power, and Status” in *Indian Women*, 130.

<sup>26</sup> Mahesh Chundra Deb. “A Sketch of the Condition of the Hindoo Women: January 1839,” in *Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century (selected documents)*, ed. Chattopadhyay and Goutam (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1965), 94.

<sup>27</sup> Alf Hildebeitel, *Rethinking India’s Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadi among Rajputs, Muslims, and Dalit.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 295.

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important to restore India's glory; the movement was geared towards a return to the past.

These ancient stories also provided evidence for reformers that women were capable of being educated. The idea was that women were as capable as men to learn and furthermore excel in their studies. However, it is important to note that the reformers, the new educated middle class, also known as the *bhadralok* in Bengal, only intended women's education to mean 'cultural refinement.' This was viewed as a necessity to run the new type of household of the new middle class. Education meant basic math ability and domestic administrative skills, which dealt with the management of the servants and other domestic help. Nonetheless, examples of extraordinary women were mentioned to stress the idea of women's mental competence to create educational opportunities for them.

Essays and articles were written to highlight the academic excellence of historical Indian females. Reverend K. M. Banerjia's essay, "Native Female Education," singled out Avyar, a female philosopher. According to Banerjia, she outshone all her brothers and sisters, who were all very educated. A contemporary of Kambun (9<sup>th</sup>C.), the author of *Tamul Ramayan*, Avyar's works, including poetry, arts, and sciences, were much admired by the poet who employed her "elegant pen."<sup>28</sup>

In Baboo Peary Chand Mitra's commentary on Banerjia's essay, he borrows instances from folklore. According to the author, there was once a:

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<sup>28</sup> Baboo Peary Chand Mitra, "A Few Desultory Remarks on the 'Cursory Review of the Institution of Hindooism Affecting the Interest of the Female Sex,' contained in the Rev. K.M. Banerjia's Prize Essay on Native Female Education: January 1842," in *Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century (selected documents)*, ed. Chattopadhyay and Goutam (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1965), 277.

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Kingdom governed by a female, called the Kingdom of the women of the east, 100 miles to the north, into mountains about the source of the Jumna and Ganges. In Renaudot's Ancient Accounts of India, by two Mohammedans, who came here in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Maladive Islands were governed by a queen....The Rajah Balli speaks of Premdevee, the wife of Gobind Chunder, having held the sovereign power at Delhi before the Mohammedan invasions.<sup>29</sup>

These examples of strong and powerful women again accentuated the low position of Indian woman during the nineteenth-century. From being philosophers and queens, women were now a subjugated and uneducated class. In the past, as Mittra implied, women had a political and public role in society, which was obviously not the case in nineteenth-century India. However, by stating these examples, the author acknowledged that Indian women can be instructed in the fine art of education and participate in the public arena as Avyar and Premdevee.

Raja Rammohun Roy was considered the champion of women's education and the founder of the Brahmo Samaj. He believed and fought for equality between the sexes and in addition, to remove women from purdah. He used folkloric conceptualization of women as well in his quest to achieve those reforms. In his *Apology for the Pursuit of Final Beatitude*, women of ancient times were said to be qualified to acquire divine knowledge and were "knowers of the Supreme Being."<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Roy remarked that:

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<sup>29</sup> Chand Mittra, 290.

<sup>30</sup> Rammohun Roy, *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1978), 130.

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Lilavati, Bhanumati, the wife of the prince of Karnat, and that of Kalidasa, are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Sastras: moreover in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of the Yajur Veda it is clearly stated that Yajnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Maitreyi, who was able to follow and completely attain it!<sup>31</sup>

Folklore provided the evidence that women were not only educated but they were as intelligent as men. Consequently, by exposing the fallacies of traditional ideas about the incapability of women, Rammohun Roy set the stage for further reforms, like the abolition of Sati along with female education

By the mid-1800s, advancements were made in the female educational sector. The “new woman” was educated in homes and then sent to a girls’ school. Organizations like the Calcutta School Society (1816), was established to promote female education. Female schools for upper-caste girls received support from Hindu gentlemen.<sup>32</sup> The uses of folklore demonstrated that female education was compatible within the Hindu religion and, furthermore, it illustrated that women had the potential to learn and achieve. Folklore had the effect of changing the mentality of the people. William Adam’s “Report on the State of Education in Bengal” (1836) explained that there was the superstition that existed in a majority of Hindu families that “a girl taught to read and write will soon after marriage become a widow.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, many women, along with men, discouraged female education. Yet, the popularization

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<sup>31</sup> Roy, 361.

<sup>32</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 37-39.

<sup>33</sup> Forbes, p. 33.

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of tales of scholarly women aided in weakening these cultural beliefs and led to increasing acceptance of females learning. This was seen in the progress of women's education during the nineteenth century.

Female education gradually became proliferated among the upper and middle classes by the late-nineteenth century India. By the early twentieth century, Indian women began to form their own feminist consciousness and realized the limitation of male-dominated reform institutions. These same Indian women with new interests beyond the household stood up and formed their own societies. Sarala Devi Chaudhurani (1872-1945) was from a Hindu-Brahmo community that played a major role in the reform movements in Bengal during the nineteenth-century. She came from a well-to-do family background and was related to the Tagores on her mother's side. Coming from a family whose women were all very learned, Sarala Devi had the opportunity to pursue higher learning and opted to study science. As a result of her background, Sarala Devi was also a staunch nationalist. According to Ray, her single contribution lay in the encouragement of a martial, heroic culture in Bengal that would serve the nationalist cause.<sup>34</sup>

Sarala Devi greatly utilized folklore to rally those around her to join and support the nationalist movement. She encouraged and enhanced local history and brought to the forefront the martial and heroic culture of Bengal. Sarala Devi elevated the once unknown local king, Pratapaditya, "into a local hero" and created a "political consciousness [that] became one of the most effective proponents of Bengali nationalism."<sup>35</sup> However, she also

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<sup>34</sup> Ray, pp.1-16.

<sup>35</sup> Chakravarti, Uma, "Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi: Orientalism, Nationalism, and a Script of the Past." in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. Sangari, Kumkum and Sudesh Vaid (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 63.

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utilized folklore to inspire women to take a stand and realize their potential. She was living at a time when the incipient participation of women was growing. Though stories of heroic women, she encouraged them to transform their lives.

Bharati Ray's *Early Feminists of Colonial India* states that Sarala Devi's central task was to make women conscious of their latent power, and rekindle it. She reminded Indian women that they were the incarnate of Sita and Kaushalya:

When I look at women I am reminded of many legendary women of our country-Kaushalya, Sumitra, Kunti, Satyvati and Gandhari. ...women of my country..., have you ever pondered to realize that you yourself are all incarnations of these very celebrated women.<sup>36</sup>

Sarala Devi used these heroines to empower Indian women, synthesizing into their mentalities that they too are "goddesses." Through these images women began to identify themselves with these courageous females. The ideal figures of Lakshmi, Durga, Sita, Savitri, and Drapadi became role models and the impetuses for women to act and organize. Vir Bharat Talwar noted that women often used examples from the Hindu Puranas and history to support their demands for women's liberation.<sup>37</sup> Societies and publications also began to sprout during the early twentieth-century marking the fact that women were undertaking a role in their civil rights movement. Organizations like the Large Circle of Indian Women and

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<sup>36</sup> Ray, pp. 56-59.

<sup>37</sup> Vir Bharat Talwar, "Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi: 1910-1920" in *Recasting Women*, 223.

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National Women's Organizations like the Women's India Association (1917) were formed.

This method of discourse that harkened back to ancient and puranic India was very much a nationalist tradition. Nationalists projected that image of women as goddesses in conjecture with motherhood. India became the mother goddess, and women were viewed as the mothers of the nation. *Bande Mantaram* (hail mother) was the new mantra of the people. By engendering India nationalists were able to unite women into the fight for independence. As a result, women left the domestic sphere to join in on the movement. The *Swadeshi* movement (1905-1908) marked the first time women went out into the public sphere and participated on a wide scale.

Nationalists urged contemporary women to emulate the qualities of the ancient Indian women. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) called out for Indian women to "continue the tradition of Sanghamitra, Lila, Ahalyabai, and Mirabai-women fit to be mothers of heroes."<sup>38</sup> Nationalist were using these mythic characters to bring women out of the homes to support their cause.

None was able to wield this tool better than Gandhi, who brought masses of women to participate in his Satyagraha and non-cooperation movements. Tripti Chaudhuri stated that Gandhian leadership brought more women to the nationalist movement but also widened the women's movement platform.<sup>39</sup> He upheld Sita and Draupadi as the ideal, wanting to re-imbue "women with the purity, firmness, resolve and spirit of self sacrifice" that represented them. This ideal, according to Talwar, found great favor with lower and ordinary middle class women.<sup>40</sup> These myths and tales were very influential in generating

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<sup>38</sup> Ray, 59.

<sup>39</sup> Tripti Chaudhuri. "Women in Radical Movements in Bengal in the 1940's," in *Faces of the Feminine*, 306.

<sup>40</sup> Talwar, 231.

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female support and participation as indicated by the large number of women who joined the Gandhian movements.

Nonetheless, Gandhi, although a supporter of women's rights, did not encourage women to question their traditional roles. One of his staunch followers from Madras, Shrimati Ambujammal, said that Gandhi did not want women to "go against their nature," which was embodied in women like Sita.<sup>41</sup> He encouraged women to emulate these primeval heroines for the struggle for independence, but he did not envision them as productive and salaried workers, independent of the patriarchy. He said, "I do not believe in women taking up jobs or business after education."<sup>42</sup> Chaudhuri contended that by popularizing the archetype of womanhood as Sita, "the obedient follower of her husband, [Gandhi] also prevented the growth of radical and independent ideas among his women followers." As a result, women, during the Gandhian era, shied away from opposing the patriarchal society. This also hindered the feminist ideological discourse.<sup>43</sup>

Although headway was made in the women's movement during the nationalist struggle, this progress was impeded because of the idealization of womanhood that was created through the use of folklore. By choosing to depict Sita and Draupadi as models to be emulated, Indian women were trapped within the framework of tradition. Ergo the women's moment was permitted to only go far as this framework allowed, which viewed women as innately self-sacrificing. Indian women were to maintain and remain inside this patriarchal system where the home and family were their first priorities.

Folklore was thus insufficient to take the Indian women's movement to new heights. Geraldine Forbes comments that as women broadened their scope, the

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<sup>41</sup> Forbes, 160.

<sup>42</sup> Talwar, 232.

<sup>43</sup> Chaudhuri, 306.

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identification with the goddess was abandoned.<sup>44</sup> In order for Indian women to continue to obtain further social reform they had to remove themselves from the nationalist concept of a woman that was taken from folklore. Thus, folklore could only take them to a certain point. Emancipation from the patriarchy meant liberation from the Sita-Savitri-Draupadi paradigm.

### Conclusion

The dual representation of women in folklore, from the *Mahabharata* to the *Ramayana* to other minor mythological tales, progressed and limited the advancement of India's women's movement. These stories both empowered and limited women through its idealization of certain folkloric characters. Indian women were reminded that they were the incarnate of Durga and Kali. These goddesses were the epitome of the strength, will, and power created to protect the world from evil. Therefore, Indian women were, in a sense, "goddesses," possessors of the awesome *sakti*, or divine woman power.

However, this image of the mighty woman was restrained by the popularized picture of the self-sacrificing and devoted woman. These characters like Lakshmi, Sita, Savitri, and Draupadi were women who maintained certain behaviors. They were admired for their submission to their husbands whom they worship. In addition, personas like Sita and Draupadi were valorized for their victimization by injustice as divinities.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, this aided and hampered the women's movement. These folkloric women, many from the Vedic Age, were used in a variety of ways which allowed social reforms to be passed. Early reformers used stories of ancient learned women to obtain educational reform. Sarala

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<sup>44</sup> Forbes, 222.

<sup>45</sup> Lindsey Harlan, *The Goddesses' Henchmen: Gender in Indian Hero Worship*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9.

## Folklore and the Creation of Indian Womanhood

Devi invoked the image of the goddess and heroic women from the epics to remind women of their latent powers. By utilizing these female characters women were encouraged to leave the domestic sphere, many for the first time, and participate in the struggle for independence. The nationalists played a large role in popularizing folkloric women and employed it as a tool to gain support. Gandhi was also a large proponent of this method.

Nonetheless, it was the image of women like Sita who were greatly popularized and extolled. The women's movement was able to progress and advance with the use of folklore and its valorization of ancient Indian women and goddesses. However, by bringing these images of females to the forefront of the public consciousness, boundaries were created which limited how far the women's movement could go. Ideals were set and the paragon woman created. This model and archetype were females like Sita, Draupadi, Savitri, females that were marked by their devotion and sacrificial ways. Although intelligent and very capable, they fit into the traditional frame work that women should place her husband and family above all things. Yet again women were resigned to the domestic sphere. They could gain certain rights and enter certain venues as long as they did not break down the mold of the traditional female. Progress was permitted to go only as far as these boundaries. Consequently, the image of the domestic goddess had to be partially abandoned so that the women's movement could continue to evolve.

Nancy Tran

# Dueling with the Law and Defending Honor Benjamin Rush's and Aaron Burr's "Interview" with Civil Libel

Gary Wickerd

During the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, political elites acted in accordance with cultural norms of their day. In an effort to describe this culture, historian Joanne Freeman suggests that violent acts such as caning, nose tweaking, and dueling functioned as outward representations of a multi-faceted agonistic honor culture that existed among early nineteenth-century politicians. Violence was not the only or the most common means of defending one's personal and political honor. To accomplish their purposes, elite politicians normally employed less violent means such as pamphlets, newspapers, historical writing, personal journals, and broadsides. Although Freeman maps out in detail the honor culture that existed among national politicians of the early nineteenth century, she leaves space to further investigate how an appeal to the law might have functioned in this culture of honor.<sup>1</sup>

Preceding her work and in the same vein as Freeman, Norman Rosenberg argues that national politicians viewed legal defenses of reputation as violations of the accepted norms "that distinguished public leaders

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<sup>1</sup> Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001).

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from ordinary members of the political community.” However, at the same time, he notes that Benjamin Rush and George Clinton defended their reputations this way. Rosenberg regards these cases as exceptions to the normal behavior of late eighteenth-century prominent political figures. The Revolutionary political circumstances required a free press to criticize and turn public opinion against English government; libel suits, criminal or civil, set precedents to suppress speech at such a crucial time. In fact, most American politicians of the Revolutionary era associated libel with English attempts to silence their criticisms of the colonial government. After the Revolution, Federalists employed seditious libel to quash Democratic-Republican opposition in the press. Seditious libel was short lived. One reason voters elected Thomas Jefferson in 1800 was their disapproval of the Federalist seditious libel prosecutions that stemmed from the Sedition Act of 1798. After the rejection of seditious libel at the federal level, Rosenberg claims, politicians employed civil libel law as “the most prevalent restraint on political expression.” Without the stigma of suppression of speech and criminal penalties associated with seditious prosecution, civil libel became a viable alternative for elite politicians to protect their reputations. Regardless of whether civil libel was a possibility, some change in the political culture must have induced these politicians to transgress their traditional taboo to defend their reputations at court. Rosenberg suggested that the rise of partisan politics and an increase of defamation from the politically partisan press led elite politicians to civil libel litigation beginning around 1800. It appears that politicians were willing to fight their political duels with whatever weapons necessary, even the previously uncustomary: legal action.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this paper “honor” and “reputation” are synonymous. Rosenberg was describing a cultural phenomenon of politicians competing to increase their reputations, which

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The initial cultural shift to civil libel as a means to preserve the reputation and honor of the political elite begs more examination. First, a general outline of the honor culture of the political elite at the turn of the nineteenth century is needed. With this cultural portrait, this essay will then describe how the political elite came to venture civil libel suits against their own standard cultural practices. Finally, in an effort to elucidate how elite politicians actually adopted civil libel into honor culture, the cases of Benjamin Rush in 1799 and Aaron Burr in 1804 will be examined. These two elite politicians appear to have been the first to step into the uncharted territory of civil libel suits to defend their honor. In order to understand more fully the expanding use of civil libel in the nineteenth century noted by Rosenberg, it is vitally important to understand these “exceptional” cases because they seem to have inaugurated civil libel’s acceptability among members of the political elite. These cases will reveal that the dueling customs and norms of honor culture laid out by Freeman gradually included civil libel. This study will clearly show that, although Rush and Burr were successful on some level, they ultimately underestimated the impacts of their “interviews” with the law.

On the other hand, the de facto free press established in America during the second half of the

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Freeman later elaborates more completely as a dueling culture to maintain honor. Norman Rosenberg, *Protecting the Best Men: An Interpretive History of the Law of Libel* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 120-21; Rosenberg cites Douglass Adair’s “Fame and the Founding Fathers,” *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair*, Trevor Colburn, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 3-26; Cf. also Rorabaugh, “The Political Duel in the Early Republic: Burr v. Hamilton,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring, 1995), 14-15; I have not been able to find any information on George Clinton’s civil libel suit. Rosenberg makes passing reference to it, but does not cite his source or discuss it further in his book.

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eighteenth century meant that those of lower social standing, such as newspaper printers and editors, could defame politicians with impunity. On the other hand, the free press also provided means for politicians of more or less equal honor to attack each other more fiercely and frequently than they had previously. Under these circumstances, Freeman argues that honor fluctuated depending on the level of deference derived from inferiors in colonial society. Honor could also be affected by the level of respect maintained among other political elites. A man saved his honor by successfully defending himself using verbal, print, or violent means to attack equals. Nose tweaking and caning put inferiors in their proper places and established the social hierarchy. An honorable politician, although self-serving in many ways, also believed that he was a savior to the weak, especially women and children. Alexander Hamilton went so far as to link his impending honor status before his duel with Burr to whether he could effectively provide for the public good anymore unless he was vindicated by the duel.<sup>3</sup>

The rising number of partisan presses around the turn of the nineteenth century increasingly allowed printers and editors to attack politicians. These men attacked so intensely that politicians, if they wanted to remain politicians, could not endure or brush off the slights to their honor as they had done customarily. However, no corresponding outbreak of canings occurred. Moreover, to attack an inferior in the press was not proper form. The question of what could be done to counter the corrosive press seems to have prompted some to seek an unused, but not completely unprecedented protection in civil libel law.

Civil libel law had been part of colonial culture long before the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the

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<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Pasley, *"Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 264-74. Freeman, 170-74, 197.

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seventeenth-century, defamation suits were frequent in courts, but over time judges gradually increased the procedural difficulties associated with civil libel suits. Consequently, civil libel declined in frequency. As the eighteenth-century political elite arose in America, libel suits were not part of their honor culture. There are several possible reasons: (1) The unsettled nature of American law and courts from 1776 to 1790 discouraged civil libel suits; (2) through more stringent procedures judges limited nuisance defamation suits during the seventeenth century; (3) in their attempt to gain freedom from England, colonists repudiated restraints on speech in the colonies; (4) political elites worried that their peers would judge them weak if they sought out a third party for something an honorable man should endure or handle himself. For any combination of these reasons civil libel was not a normal component of honor culture during the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

An episode in 1769 demonstrated the inherent problems of protecting one's honor through libel law. Thomas Hutchinson, lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, called for criminal libel charges against James Otis Jr. after he had attacked the governor and himself in print in the *Boston Gazette*. In reaction, Otis considered filing a civil libel suit against the Tory press that supported the English governors of Massachusetts. Ultimately, Otis refused to file suit to repudiate publicly the tactics that his enemy

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<sup>4</sup> There is only a fine line between defamation and libel. Early suits usually dealt with private not public reputation, so in this sense defamation seems a better description. There was no real difference between common law defamation and the later libel cases. Rosenberg, 24-28, 50-51, 120; Rorabaugh, 16 "More important, if a gentleman sued, he risked losing his standing. indeed, his very suit offered proof that he did not consider himself a gentleman. Members of an elite do not eagerly seek ways in which they can renounce their position in order to become ordinary people." Freeman, 170-71, 174.

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attempted. In a desire to maintain his freedom to criticize the government in the press, could not attempt to restrain it even if his reputation were at issue. He claimed that the slanders only improved his reputation at home and abroad. Furthermore, he stated that a libel suit could not improve or repair a person's character once it had been publicly tarnished. The ability to continue criticizing English overlords clearly influenced Otis's sentiments. From his point of view, criminal libel prosecutions, beginning with the Zenger trial in 1735, suggested that all libel, seditious or civil, was bad; it set a precedent for suppression of speech when that freedom was absolutely necessary to promote the Revolution. To bring a suit for libel, even a civil suit, endangered press freedom because it could lead to more suits and the complete suppression of speech. Only after the English threat to free speech had ended could any prominent elite politician possibly venture to use a civil libel suit to defend his reputation. Even without the threat, the rhetoric of Otis, Madison, Jefferson, and others recommended suffering affronts to honor from the press rather than pursuing their punishment through the law. These sentiments reigned supreme until after the Revolution. However, the issue of legally defending honor arose again when the free press turned its attacks on American politicians.<sup>5</sup>

Although civil libel law shared an integral relationship with seditious libel law, it blended into the background during the controversy surrounding the Sedition Act of 1798. Rosenberg states that civil libel was not generally employed as a defense of reputation until after the national seditious libel trials were put to rest at the end of John Adams's presidency. During the increasing onslaught of defamatory speech directed toward the Jefferson administration, Jefferson did not oppose state seditious libel prosecutions to damage the Federalist

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<sup>5</sup> Rosenberg, 49. *Boston Gazette*, 11 September, 1769.

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papers. Jefferson no longer ascribed to his earlier claim that politicians should simply suffer reproach to their reputations. Alexander Hamilton, in the New York *Evening Post*, similarly urged other Federalist politicians to curtail the press through civil libel suits. Both strategies were designed to close defamatory papers by putting the editor or printer in jail for criminal libel or for bankruptcy caused by monetary loss from the case or repeated cases. Historian Jeffrey Pasley notes that since Federalists had more resources than Republicans, they were generally more successful at this game. Precedent for civil libel had been around a long time, but the elite did not increasingly employ it until seditious libel fell into disrepute. Attacking newspapermen had created a precarious social quandary for their political reputations. The new partisan political circumstances became even more difficult for politicians to control because often anonymous authors wrote the caustic newspaper attacks. In such a situation, civil libel, with its virtually unprecedented use, provided a possible solution to defend honor in the changing political climate.<sup>6</sup>

According to Rosenberg, a civil libel suit might not negatively affect honor because its private nature posed less risk to reputation during the process. This was true to the extent that civil libel suits did not make news. However, any legal action taken by a prominent elite politician would certainly make local news, not to mention the rumors circulating among the political elite of the opposing party and the rumors of weakness among political partisans after losing a civil libel suit. In the end, the promise of less publicity was negligible.<sup>7</sup>

Looking at civil libel from a dueling standpoint, politicians may have desired publicity. Publicity was highly important to vindicate the honor of the winner and shame the loser. Thinking in dueling terms, these politicians may

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<sup>6</sup> Pasley, 278-279, 265. Rosenberg, 120-121, 105; Pasley, 265.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenberg, 121.

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have shortsightedly hoped that civil libel would be as swift and decisive as a duel. As Rush and Burr would both discover, it was neither swift nor completely decisive. Nevertheless, from their point of view, short term fluctuations of honor associated with negotiating a duel or a civil libel suit might not have mattered as much as the final outcome.

Notwithstanding the potential risks to honor in conducting a civil libel suit, a documented rise in state seditious libel cases and civil libel cases occurred during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, courts rendered judgments for the plaintiffs in most cases. The fact that some elite politicians saw libel suits as a new aspect in the duel for honor seems plausible. On another level, it may also reveal the decline of honor culture that Freeman maps out at the beginning of the nineteenth century. If civil libel became part of elite honor culture, it originated somewhere. Someone had to take the first steps into the uncharted territory of libel law outside the cultural norms set by the elite duel-oriented code of honor. From this perspective, without hindsight, those first steps into the court could have been even more fatal to the reputation of an elite politician than traditional dueling remedies.<sup>8</sup>

Benjamin Rush's suit against editor William Cobbett was the first notable civil libel case at the turn of the nineteenth century. An examination of this case will reveal why Rush turned to civil libel as a defense, how civil libel functioned as a new part of honor culture, and how it might have changed honor culture. Ultimately, Rush's case may have set a precedent for subsequent civil libel suits because his final victory seemed outwardly clear.

With the expansion of the partisan press, political elites were under attack more than ever. Although Benjamin Rush had, at least in his own mind, retired from

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<sup>8</sup> Rosenberg, 121; Freeman, 261.

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political life in 1796, this retirement did not insulate him from defamatory statements in the Philadelphia papers. He courted trouble when he declared support for the Republican Party in a eulogy for David Rittenhouse that same year. James Fenno and then William Cobbett, as editors of the *Porcupine Gazette*, blasted Rush's medical techniques of bloodletting and mercury drafts as "quackery." Rush commented, "My remedies for yellow fever would have met no opposition this year had I not signed the Declaration of Independence and latterly declared myself a Republican in the *Eulogium* upon Mr. Rittenhouse." For Rush and his critics, politics and Rush's medical views were inextricably linked. A community of scientifically conservative doctors wanted to discredit Rush's medical science as much as Fenno and Cobbett wanted to destroy Rush's political image. They served each other's interests. Rush inclined toward legal redress before his suit against Cobbett. After his critics accused him of mistakenly bleeding a woman for yellow fever when she really had gout, Rush revealed how his medical practice related to his reputation. He threatened suit against the accuser for defamation, not to rescue his own reputation, but on behalf of his patients that needed his treatment. He initially agreed with James Otis Jr. that a gentleman should simply endure slights to reputation from the press. Yet, he also revealed another more retributive tendency to fight back, but not according to normal tenets of elite honor culture. He wanted to prosecute for libel using his patient's wellbeing as the reason. To ascribe the entire cause for a law suit to his patients was questionable because he earned money from his practice and he still had political intentions. His motives for transgressing the norms of his honor culture in much the same way that he had transgressed the norms of medical science begs discussion.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Porcupine's Gazette*, September. 19, 1797; Binger, *Revolutionary*

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As already noted, editors James Fenno and William Cobbett, Rush's greatest attackers, were not Rush's social equals. To save his honor, Rush could choose customary options such as caning, nose tweaking, or print defenses. To stoop to attacking them personally in the newspaper was taboo. Rush could only hope that positive reports in the papers, which indeed were printed in September and early October, would save his reputation and practice. Although Rush received positive press, in a letter on October 2, 1797, he publicly announced that he would sue Fenno and Cobbett for libel. Rush's lawyers advised him to drop Fenno from the case because a jury was unlikely to convict a fellow countryman. Subsequently, Rush dropped Fenno's name from the suit and decided only to sue Cobbett, an Englishman. In his private letters before he filed the suit, Rush noted, "The city teems with scandal against my practice." The damage was even more acute for his wife, Julia. "Such was the anguish of her distress that she wished to hear of my death, rather than see me 'butchered alive.'" In his public announcement of the libel suit, Rush appealed to the papers not to defend his reputation, while privately he wanted the public to aid in his defense. In a letter to a friend, he lamented that he had "not merited the

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*Doctor: Benjamin Rush, 1746-1813* (New York: Norton, 1966), 241; Rush to Moultrie August. 27, 1797, *Rush Papers* "I have been too long and too much accustomed to scandal to feel in the present instance for myself." See also Robert Arnebeck, *Destroying Angel: Benjamin Rush, Yellow Fever and the Birth of Modern Medicine*, <http://www.geocities.com/bobarnebeck/table.html>, Chapter 12. Rush to Moultrie Aug. 27, 1797, *Rush Papers* "But it is of some consequence to my patients... at the present destroying crisis to confide in my opinions and prescriptions. I have for their sakes determined to investigate and expose every falsehood that is propagated against me and when it is actionable to prosecute the author of them." He is worried about the decreasing profits from his practice and he accepts an appointment as the secretary of treasury under John Adams.

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indifference with which the citizens of Philadelphia have witnessed the butchery of [his] character.” Rush revealed two things: first, he expected public defense of his reputation outside of himself that did not materialize. Second, the threat of the libel suit did not stop Cobbett’s damaging remarks.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, if Rush had hoped the threat of a libel suit would strike fear into Fenno and Cobbett, he was disappointed. On October 6, 1797, Fenno’s *Gazette* claimed that an authority at the Philadelphia College of Physicians judged that Rush’s treatments during the epidemic of 1793 were literally insane. Rush reflexively, but incorrectly, accused Dr. Andrew Ross for the attack. Rush’s son John who had, according to historian Robert Arnebeck, developed a strong sense of honor while at sea, subsequently on October 16 demanded that Ross publicly acknowledge authorship of the article. Ross refused and thus slighted John’s honor. John, in turn, caned Ross and disfigured his face. Ross immediately challenged the elder Rush to a duel, which Rush declined because of its illegality in Pennsylvania. Rush had Ross arrested for initiating the duel. Although maintaining his honor was still paramount, it appeared from this incident that Rush had rejected the prescribed honor culture norm of dueling. Repudiating the

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<sup>10</sup> John Rush exchanged heated words with and caned Dr. Andrew Ross who was supposedly authored an article that defamed his father, Benjamin Rush. Cobbett was the true author and he seems to have displayed no reluctance to continue his assault on Rush after the caning. See Binger, *Revolutionary Doctor*, 241. Letter to Andrew Brown, Jr. Oct. 2, 1797 in L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, Vol. 2, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), 792. Letter to John Dickinson, Oct. 11, 1797 in Butterfield, 793.

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violent aspects of honor culture left Rush with weak support. He had to do something else.<sup>11</sup>

Legal redress appeared as the best alternative. The logic behind Rush's conclusion requires speculation. Robert Arnebeck concluded that Rush may have tried to instruct his son John that "there were other stern and acceptable ways of combating pernicious innuendo better than challenging someone to a duel." Rush was not alone in his opinion. There were some, mostly religious men such as Quakers, who rejected the duel and had never accepted it as the proper way of resolving an honor controversy. While Rush was not a Quaker, it is possible that religious sentiments critical of dueling influenced Rush. Rush's appeal to the civil law courts was an exception to contemporary honor culture practice, according to Norman Rosenberg. Rush's pioneering outside the frontiers of honor culture might ultimately cost him more honor than he had already lost if the libel suit failed. He was also fighting a new battle against a relentless and unbridled partisan press that required unorthodox defenses.<sup>12</sup>

Although Fenno and Cobbett deemed the libel suit an assault on the freedom of the press, Rush did not change his mind. Cobbett kept up the attacks and his lawyers delayed the hearing of the suit until 1799. Delaying the suit denied Rush a quick and decisive victory over Cobbett. Rush's reputation and honor suffered without remedy for two years. At the trial, Rush's lawyers claimed that Cobbett was neither a medical expert nor really concerned with Rush's medical treatments to comment truthfully on their effectiveness. They also argued that Rush lost significant business from the printed attacks. As a result of these arguments, Cobbett's political game to

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<sup>11</sup> Arnebeck, Chapter 12; *Rush Light*, 18-25. On October 7 and 10 two physicians defended Rush's practice of bleeding ironically in Fenno's *Gazette*.

<sup>12</sup> Arnebeck, Chapter 12. See Rorabaugh, 19-23.

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discredit Rush was unmasked and he fled to New York before the trial concluded. The jury, without much deliberation, awarded Rush \$5,000 plus court costs. This was a clear victory, or so it seemed.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1797 and 1799 Rush kept treating the epidemics of yellow fever, and John Adams appointed him secretary of the US mint. He did not retire from his medical practice or from public life altogether. Nevertheless, the incident with Cobbett almost certainly took its toll on Rush. In the short run, he lost patients because he was a constant victim of rumors across Philadelphia. In the long run, although Rush survived Cobbett's attacks before the trial, Cobbett as editor and printer of the *Rush Light* in New York renewed his war on Rush. His son, John then challenged Cobbett to a duel, but Cobbett refused. Rush pondered filing another civil libel suit in New York, but he relented. Ultimately, he stated that he had to agree with his friend Dr. Witherspoon: "Scandal dies sooner of itself than we could kill it." His reputation was damaged, though he continued to practice medicine. Even though public opinion and his patients were against him for a few years after the trial, his medical techniques became the standard practice to all but a small group of doctors.<sup>14</sup>

Notwithstanding his esteemed medical reputation in the end, Rush believed that his honor had suffered from Cobbett. In an effort to repair the damage, Rush wrote an autobiography to vindicate his character. He followed the practice of John Adams, Aaron Burr, and Thomas Jefferson, who defended their self-perceived, lingering dishonor long after the events. Even with a verdict in his favor, Rush's battle was long and only a pyrrhic victory. Rush's reluctance to start another libel battle in New York may have revealed his true feelings about libel law's

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<sup>13</sup> Binger, 242. in Butterfield, 1210.

<sup>14</sup>Winthrop and Frances Nielson, *Verdict for the Doctor: The Case of Benjamin Rush* (New York: Hastings House, 1958), 232.

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effectiveness. Arnebeck interpreted the libel victory as a precedent for the medical profession in protecting a doctor's prerogative to practice science without enduring the criticism of the unknowledgeable. Although Rush's victory in the libel suit may support such a conclusion, the interpretation neglects the fact that the libel suit did not completely repair his honor. Arnebeck's claim does suggest that more than Rush's honor was at stake. Advances in medical science were also at stake. Although this consideration makes Rush's motives in the law suit more complicated, his honor was still center-stage. Without his personal honor, he could not earn a living, care for his patients, continue his scientific research, or be useful to his country. Fortunately for Rush, the political winds eventually blew against Cobbett and he sailed to England.<sup>15</sup>

Although Rush's civil libel suit to silence Fenno and Cobbett swiftly did not pan out as expected, its positive public results and dueling culture features set precedents for future civil libel suits. Like caning and nose tweaking it was aimed at men of lower social status. It provided a swift and decisive public humiliation of a foe. In Rush's case, the \$5,000 award signaled a decisive victory in the public eye, but it was not swift at two years. Like the dueling nature of print warfare, the courtroom set attorneys against each other instead of directly pitting a man of high status against another of lower standing. This was true for Rush to the extent that his attorney's argued and won his case. However, in the press he was clearly the one who had called Cobbett, a man of lower social status, to the "interview" at court. It appears that the ability of lower-class printers and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 233. Arnebeck, Chapter 17. Arnebeck wants his readers to believe this based on his reading of Rush's case alone. He offers no further cases to support his argument. He praises Rush as such a pioneering physician that Rush's pioneering libel case to defend science seems to overly emphasize the legendary greatness of the doctor. This also seems characteristic of the other biographies of Rush from the 1950s to the 1970s.

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editors to inflict deeper damage on public reputations than before prompted elite politicians to choose a legal solution because it had similar aspects to dueling. If a man did not subscribe to the violent aspects of dueling culture, civil libel, like elite honor culture practices, provided decisive and swift means of defeating a lower class opponent without really lowering oneself.

Although civil libel may have appeared as a good solution to the problem of dealing with printers and editors, its direct appeal to the courts, signaled a definitive change in honor culture. In the past, elite politicians had employed newspaper editors as third parties to fight their print duels. However, they had never turned over the power to decide the outcome of print war to these parties. Now the judge and the jury held that power. This appeal to a third party was a definite change from the self-help nature of honor culture to a reliance on outside authority for settling disputes over honor. This choice may have signaled the beginning of the end for the elite honor culture as it was known in the northeastern United States.

Aaron Burr, like Benjamin Rush, pioneered the use of civil libel law to defend his reputation and honor. Unlike Rush, Burr had no qualms about dueling. Yet he, like other political elites, would not have lowered himself to duel an inferior. He looked for a means of combating the onslaught of printed attacks from unprincipled printers and editors of lower social standing. Subscribing to the normal attack and riposte with rumor and writing was not enough for Burr. He opted for civil libel. Shutting down printed attacks by an appeal to the courts may have been a sign of weakness according to the honor code, but that seemed more preferable to the complete destruction of his honor for political advancement and for long-term historical judgment. Besides, civil libel had familiar honor culture characteristics that made it an acceptable defense.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Freeman, 189.

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In the New York gubernatorial election of 1804, Aaron Burr had to defeat rumors and printed attacks that he tried to steal the presidency from Thomas Jefferson in 1800. When the congressional Republican caucus selected George Clinton as Jefferson's running mate in 1804, "it became clear that [Burr] must win that election [for governor of New York in 1804] if he was to restore his reputation and remain an effective political force of any kind." James Cheetham, editor of the *American Citizen*, accused Burr of double dealing for proposed changes to the New York City charter. Cheetham claimed that Burr was attempting to win favors from New York Federalists in the forthcoming election against the Clintonian faction by undermining the authority of Mayor DeWitt Clinton. At first, Burr distanced himself from the controversy by fleeing New York at the beginning of the campaign. Silence was not enough to quiet the attacks, so Burr attacked in print. There was no Burrite newspaper in New York, so Burrites used the Federalist *Evening Post* for their defense. Then, once Burr returned to New York City, they switched to the *Daily Advertiser*, another Federalist newspaper, to avoid the *Post's* entanglements with Alexander Hamilton. Under the pseudonym "Brutus," Burr attacked the Clintonian faction's accusation that he was a threat to Jefferson in the next national election. The Clintonians only wanted to garner support for George Clinton as vice president. "Brutus" was Burr's means of hiding his direct involvement in newspaper wars which he thought would lower him to the level of an editor or printer.<sup>17</sup>

Burr's attacks and defenses involving his honor drew others into the controversy. Historian Joanne Freeman overemphasizes Burr's role in the controversy in order to show his lack of political scruples and self-serving

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<sup>17</sup> Mary-Jo Kline, ed. *Political Correspondence and Public Papers of Aaron Burr*, Vol. 2 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 827, 726.

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nature. Burr did involve other politicians, but he did so to defend himself once the contest for leadership of the northern Republicans began. These other men were actors as much as he was in the election debacle of 1800 and they were well aware of the possibilities of attack in the game of politics. In a final attempt to clear his name without breaking customary boundaries in honor culture warfare, Burr asked Jefferson to write a letter to show support for him in the gubernatorial election. Jefferson refused. Two weeks later Burr filed a libel suit against James Cheetham, the original author of the accusations of foul play in the election of 1800 and the printer of the attacks before the election in 1804. Rather than playing by the prescribed rules of honor, Burr appealed to the outside authority of the courts.<sup>18</sup>

Why Burr went outside the established norms of his elite culture and possibly risk even more damage to his reputation merit discussion. There were several reasons. Burr was under severe time constraints, and like a caning or a duel, civil libel offered the opportunity to quickly and definitively beat his opponent and thereby bolster support for his gubernatorial bid in 1804. This did not happen. Like the defense attorneys in Rush's case, Cheetham's lawyers effectively delayed the hearing past the election day. Nevertheless, Burr directed his attorney, Daniel Tompkins, to continue with the case. The hearing came before the New York Supreme Court in May of 1804. Burr had lost the battle to stop Cheetham prior to the election, but he evidently wanted to win the larger war by challenging statements that threatened his honor and political future.

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<sup>18</sup> Freeman, 254-256. "Smith, Ogden, Livingston, Green, Bishop, and Bayard all suffered guilt by association in later years, compelled to defend their names in newspapers and private letters;" These men, by their own accounts admit that they were more guilty than Burr in the Federalist deal purposed to Jefferson. Jefferson, memorandum, January 26, 1804, *Anas*, 224-228.

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According to Freeman, “what mattered to Burr was his reputation in the eyes of others, not the means by which he defended it.” Still, he did not lower himself to a duel with a common newspaper editor. Civil libel provided an acceptable compromise. The court insulated him from dealing directly with an inferior and he could, just as with caning or dueling, once and for all defeat his enemy and vindicate his honor publicly. Once Burr started his suit, witnesses, such as Robert Goodloe Harper, cleared Burr of any corrupt dealing. The initial libel suit at that point “went off by default.” Later, in 1805 or 1806, Matthew Davis filed a second “wager suit,” a test suit to determine whether Jefferson or Burr had bargained with the Federalists in order to examine Samuel Smith and James Bayard. The two men were directly involved in the Federalist decision for Jefferson over Burr in 1800. In his deposition, Bayard claimed that Jefferson accepted the Federalist bargain through Samuel Smith. Jefferson, writing in a memorandum to preserve his own reputation, accused Bayard of lying. Seen from this vantage point, only Jefferson’s or Burr’s version could have been correct, but not both. In essence, they were accusing each other of the same corrupt bargain with the Federalists.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of the “wager suit” in 1805 or 1806 Jefferson had been implicated, but not until 1830, when Richard Bayard attempted to clear his father’s name from Jefferson’s accusations, did Congress declare Jefferson the corrupt bargainer. In 1804, however, this was unclear. Burr still perceived that his honor was in jeopardy. With his failed gubernatorial bid and his rejected libel suit, he lacked decisive options. Freeman suggested that Burr dueled

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<sup>19</sup> Freeman, 256. From Richard H. Bayard, April 22, 1830 in Mary-Jo Kline, 1203. For some reason, Freeman collapsed the real suit and the “wager suit” into the same suit. This is evident because Jefferson was not upset until after Bayard implicated him in the second suit and Freeman claims that this occurred after the original suit. See page 256.

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Hamilton “to refute the claim that he was capable of ‘despicable’ actions.” Burr saw no other options for reclaiming his honor, and after he killed Hamilton, matters worsened. According to Freeman, because Burr lacked “public minded motives” and a “personal ‘theory’ of republicanism,” maintaining honor was difficult for him. He had no interest in the public good, only his reputation and honor. A political career could not last long from that point of view. On the other hand, if Burr had never dueled Hamilton, time may have vindicated him in the “wager suit.” On the other hand, his reputation would have undoubtedly suffered and his political career could have been completely compromised. Although he appeared to follow the orthodoxy of the honor culture of the time, his politics and the means that he employed to accomplish his goals, including the libel case, were unorthodox. His self-serving political agenda and his any-means-necessary approach doomed him to private life in the end. With his honor completely ruined after the duel with Hamilton, Burr became a political outcast.<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding Burr’s desperate need to vindicate his honor, there were some precedents for his appeal to the courts. He may have heard that Benjamin Rush had successfully sued William Cobbett for libel in 1799. As noted earlier, Jefferson and Hamilton suggested that state seditious libel suits and civil libel suits were acceptable means to defend honor. However, there were no notable cases of civil libel among elite politicians during the eighteenth century until *Rush v. Cobbett*. Still, strangely, Rush’s and Burr’s colleagues never questioned the cultural appropriateness of their civil libel suits. Moreover, Rush and Burr were not plowing unfamiliar legal ground in their suits. These inconsistencies leave open to question whether civil libel really lay outside the customary exchange of rumors, letters, print warfare, caning, nose tweaking, and

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<sup>20</sup> Freeman, 257.

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dueling. Although the rise of the increasingly caustic press required a new defense and although there was established precedent for civil libel, the political elite exercised caution in their choices of defense. Under these premises, if elite politicians incorporated civil libel as unnoticeably and smoothly into honor culture as the documents suggest, those men chose civil libel because of its similarities to duel-like practices.<sup>21</sup>

In the end, the appeal to civil libel was a mixed bag for Burr. The suit was useless in clearing Burr's reputation for the gubernatorial election of 1804. The negative public opinion of his honor and reputation remained. The procedural nature of the courts allowed Cheetham's attorneys to manipulate and prolong the process and thus deprive Burr a cleared name before the election. In the long run, notwithstanding the defaulted first suit, in 1805 or 1806 Bayard cleared Burr by incriminating Jefferson in the "wager suit." By that time it was too late to resurrect Hamilton for Burr to take advantage of his public exoneration. The validity of Bayard's testimony was not definitively resolved in Congress until 1830. Furthermore, isolating the importance of Burr's libel suit against Cheetham in his battle for honor is difficult because Burr maintained a self-serving political agenda with unorthodox politicking that doomed his career from the start. Close to thirty years later, the libel suit brought out the real truth of the election bargain of 1800, but the incident proved that civil libel solved the question of Burr's honor neither swiftly nor decisively. Such apparent difficulties with Burr's civil libel suit should have prompted others to think twice before they made the same mistake. Just the opposite occurred. Burr's "interview" with civil libel was an exception to the growing tendency among politicians of using civil libel as a means to duel printers and editors and maintain their social status. In Burr's case, the printer, James Cheetham,

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<sup>21</sup> Pasley, 278.

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won the duel and possibly carved out some honor for himself in political culture. In the end, such possibilities endangered the long-term social status of elite politicians.<sup>22</sup>

The question of how civil libel suit operated for Rush and Burr has a complicated answer. On one level, it seems to have helped them clear their names over the long run, but in the short run, even if, like Rush, the plaintiff won a decisive victory, the cases lingered so long as to deliver almost no positive effect. One thing clearly evident is that neither Rush nor Burr completely subscribed to the norms of the honor culture. In Rush's case, perhaps under pressure from localized religious antagonism toward dueling, or because he abhorred violence, Rush did not follow the honor system's norms of caning and dueling. Yet, it is clear that he understood the role of the newspapers, rumor, and correspondence played in forming opinions of his honor and reputation. Rush never intimated that it was the government's responsibility to prosecute defamatory speech. On the other hand, he did not have any qualms about private libel suits. In 1798, the dire circumstances of reputation as a doctor and Republican required something more than print warfare could provide. Violence was not an option. An appeal to the courts was a logical alternative. The familiar duel-like qualities of civil libel seemed made it attractive. A clear victory in the courts could stop Cobbett's criticisms and publicly clear his name in one decisive action. Furthermore, Rush's attorneys would insulate him from the taint of direct dealing with Cobbett. In the end, however, Rush admitted that the price of winning the libel suit was too high. His lamentations, although recorded long after the ordeal, reveal that civil libel was not as compatible with honor culture as he had originally thought.

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<sup>22</sup> Bayard's son thoroughly investigated the validity of Jefferson's accusation in order to publicly vindicate his father's honor before Congress.

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Burr also wandered paths outside the bounds of honor culture in ways that led him to resort to civil libel. Burr's innovative self-politicking for himself without any concern for ideals or the public good caused others to accuse him of dishonorable behavior. The election of 1800, in which he had ironically acted honorably, was the proof of his honor and future political career. Before the New York gubernatorial election of 1804, Burr had exhausted every means at his disposal to clear his reputation. Although he had no reservations about dueling, the duel with Hamilton backfired, diminishing his honor even more. The civil libel suit against James Cheetham had already passed sentence on Burr's honor. Caning Cheetham would have accomplished little in the political climate before the election. Burr had no choice but to remain aloof from direct confrontation. Conducting print warfare was difficult if not impossible with only Federalist presses available to defend and attack Clintonians. Just as it had for Rush, civil libel offered the chance of a quick decisive victory. Even the threat of the suit might silence Cheetham in the short run. The damage, however, had already been done in 1802 when Cheetham had implicated Burr in the Federalist political maneuver to steal the presidency from Jefferson. The libel suit was not just another of Burr's seemingly unorthodox methods. He chose it because it preserved his social status and promised the same results as a caning. Unfortunately for Burr, civil libel had few positive results.

Rush and Burr were probably not much different than the other political elites of their time. Honor culture, in Joanne Freeman's view, was fluid and flexible. Although political elites were restrained by the norms of honor culture, change was in the wind. The evolving dependence of politicians on political parties to protect their reputations exposed the breakdown of the elite honor culture. Personal loyalty to others was still the core binding the culture together, but the rise of the lower classes fueled the change to "party systems." Under these new political

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circumstances, Norman Rosenberg notes that immediate remedies for political reputations were necessary to avoid leaving public life completely. Civil libel seemingly offered such a remedy without noticeably compromising the honor code.<sup>23</sup>

Rosenberg claimed that civil libel suits avoided the publicity of seditious libel prosecutions and were an attractive alternative “that avoided some of the stigma that attached to politicians who used criminal sanctions against political critics.” Looking at Rush’s and Burr’s cases, it is difficult to determine whether civil libel provided a way of avoiding the revolutionary distaste for suppressing freedom of the press. Their cases were mentioned in newspapers and correspondence networks. Fenno and Cobbett even claimed that Rush attempted to suppress the press freedom in his libel suit. The insulation against public scrutiny was negligible. In fact, rather than avoiding public scrutiny, the publicity associated with a civil libel case, like a duel, may have provided the required public award of honor to the victor and humiliation to the loser.<sup>24</sup>

Rosenberg claims that partisan politics required politicians to seek immediate protection for their names if they did not want to retire from political life completely. This claim seems plausible from the standpoint of the potential sweeping victory a civil libel suit promised politicians. The experiences of Rush and Burr tell a somewhat different story. The long drawn out nature and procedural difficulties of civil libel rendered no short term results. Rush won his case, but his reputation suffered for two years in anticipation of the final victory. Burr’s first case, feckless to change the gubernatorial election of 1804 because of Cheetham’s attorneys, ultimately failed to clear his name. The “wager suit” cleared his name for posterity, but exoneration came too late to save his political career.

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<sup>23</sup> Freeman, 261. Rosenberg, 121.

<sup>24</sup> Rosenberg, 121.

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From these initial civil libel cases, the benefits seem too shallow to justify the increase of civil libel suits in the nineteenth century, unless the honor culture was undergoing a significant change. Further study of early nineteenth-century cases is needed to understand the increase.<sup>25</sup>

These cases of civil libel lowered the elite politician to the same level as printers and editors. Even though politicians chose civil libel because of its similarities to other honor culture practices, giving power to the courts to decide honor disputes was double-edged sword. An appeal to the court system brought the two parties together as equals. Both parties were subject to the procedures of the court. Although it could be argued that partisan judges sided with one party or another, on a symbolic level, both parties were equal. This equality at court was dangerous to the honor culture of the elites. Rush and Burr turned to civil libel when they had no more options. Thinking that they could figuratively gun down their opponents in court, they realized only too late that they were raising inferiors to their level in a duel for honor. In this new courtroom duel, editors and printers captured some honor for themselves or at least dissipate honor as a symbol of higher social status. The procedural nature of the courts offered the printers and editors protections not found in their previous battles with elite politicians. Ultimately, the political elite, in petitioning the courts for honor protection and social status unwittingly contributed to the rise of male equality in early nineteenth-century America.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## **Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*.**

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Peter Brown's attempted scope and depth of analysis in his biography *Augustine of Hippo* is appropriately reminiscent of that found in Augustine's own landmark autobiography, *Confessions*. Indeed, Brown's book sets out to accomplish a daunting task: to summarize and analyze Augustine's entire life, seeking expansion of the external and internal components of his development as a thinker, theologian, and bishop. Brown openly acknowledges the limitations of his broad goal, confessing in the preface that he must choose to concentrate on some aspects of Augustine's life over others. Generally, the greatest emphasis is put on Augustine's geographical movements, vocational changes, major trends and developments in thought and theology, production of important works, and confrontation with heretics. In addition, Brown seeks to provide readers with a proper understanding of Augustine's Late Antique context, especially regarding the Catholic Church's relationship to the Roman Empire and various groups within the Empire (pagans, Manicheans, etc.). Despite the vast scale of Brown's effort, his biography should not be understood merely as an overview. Rather, it is a thorough look at the mind, heart, and life of Augustine.

Brown begins by describing the African context, specifically Thagastian, into which Augustine was born in 354 and later raised. Monica, Augustine's mother, is introduced as a source of early inspiration and guidance in Augustine's Catholic faith. His education is highlighted briefly, consisting of classical studies (especially Cicero) that took him to Carthage in 371. Here Augustine experienced his first religious conversion, as he came under

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the Manicheans and their Gnostic/dualistic traditions. From Carthage, Augustine traveled to Rome in 383 to teach. He was immediately disappointed with the city and his new vocation. Soon he was appointed professor of rhetoric in Milan where the influence of Ambrose, a Catholic bishop, convinced him of Manichaeism's errors. While in Milan, Augustine dabbled in Neo-Platonic philosophy, as well as intense skepticism before fully embracing the Catholic faith in a dramatic garden conversion experience in 386. Shortly after, Augustine retreated to Cassiciacum to reflect on these recent developments. In 387, he was baptized and experienced a mystical vision with his mother before her death. Augustine then returned to Africa, eventually going to Hippo and founding a monastery. Here, he was ordained a priest and later consecrated bishop in 395. Brown views this period as a major transitional moment in Augustine's life.

Augustine began work on *Confessions* in 397 and *On the Trinity* in 399. Both were highly important in his intellectual and theological development. Meanwhile, Augustine struggled to balance the daily requirements of his fold with his desire to spend time speculating on God. As Augustine continued in his bishopric, his genius was recognized and he became an influential figure throughout the Roman world. Augustine used his influence as well as his intellectual and rhetorical giftedness to suppress the Donatist movement, which was particularly powerful in Africa. In 413, Augustine began writing *City of God*, a capstone work that he did not complete until 425. At about this time, the Donatist heresy was retreating, only to be replaced by Pelagianism. Augustine directly challenged Pelagius and his teachings through writings which were spread across the Mediterranean, eventually culminating in Pelagianism's condemnation as heresy by the Catholic Church. Julian of Eclanum arose as a new challenger, but he was defeated and condemned like Pelagius because of

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Augustine's development and defense of a doctrine of grace based upon predestination. Augustine's health began to wane as Roman Africa was overrun by the Vandals. Augustine died in 430, sure that his literary legacy would live on, but unsure of the future well-being of his congregations.

Brown achieves his purpose of providing both an overall summary and thorough analysis of Augustine by highlighting and focusing upon various themes as they arise naturally within the chronology of Augustine's life. Indeed, the success of this book stems primarily from Brown's ability to relate particular events and developments in Augustine's life under a common theme. Brown then shows that theme's connection to a subsequent theme until the entire timeline of Augustine's life has been illustrated as a chain of interconnected links. In addition, Brown excels at providing the proper historical background against which Augustine should be viewed, often taking a much needed aside to explain the particulars of a heretical group or political province. Brown also assists the reader in understanding some of the more difficult aspects of the Late Antique world by providing analogies or modern equivalents (such as his comparison of the Catholic/Donatist schism with the Cold War). Brown's language is pleasant and rarely verbose, often utilizing imagery and metaphors to communicate pre-modern truths to the modern mind.

With regard to popular success outside of the academic community, it is doubtful that many will read Brown's book, and certain that fewer will fully understand it. Despite Brown's best efforts, it is a book intended for those who have at least an introductory knowledge of the late antique world as well as Augustine's life and works. The academic is likely to have some concerns and criticisms as well, most revolving around the author's tendency to privilege themes over and above a general portrayal of Augustine's "daily life" during certain stages (professor in Milan, bishop in Hippo, etc.). In addition, Brown's

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interpretation of Augustine is influenced by the scholarly trends and emphases of the 1960s. This method of interpretation will possibly strike the twenty-first century scholar as passé. Together, these criticisms are minor and are openly acknowledged and addressed by Brown in the epilogue of the book's latest re-release. Overall, Brown accomplishes a biographical task of immense measure and great significance, providing a thorough and engaging portrayal of Augustine that will remain *the* definitive work in Augustinian studies for some time. As Augustine's *Confessions* set the tone for western autobiography, so too has Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo* set the tone for western biography.

Christopher Ryan Fields

### **Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975.***

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Thomas Hanchett's book *Sorting Out the New South City* is an admirable work of spatial history. Hanchett uses Charlotte, North Carolina, as a case study for tracing patterns of urban development and racial separation, and his research reveals startling trends contradictory to accepted notions of how Southern cities became segregated by race. *Sorting Out the New South City* reworks traditional notions of the historical origins of racially divisive urban planning practices, suggesting that the observable patterns of segregation seen in Charlotte during the Jim Crow era and beyond are actually a comparatively modern invention.

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Hanchett looks at Charlotte over a century of economic and social upheaval, and concludes that the city's racial divide became more stringently separated over the passing decades. In Charlotte's earlier history, a liberal intermixing of races was found in both commercial and residential districts. Neighborhoods were not exclusively "white" or "black" during this period of relative racial dispersal, which Hanchett describes using a "salt-and-pepper" model of diversity. This period of comparatively mixed racial distribution began with rural Charlotte's pre-Civil War roots as an agricultural community, and lasted well into the late nineteenth-century. According to Hanchett, the model that followed this agrarian "salt-and-pepper" period began in the 1890s as neighborhoods became increasingly segmented along racial and class lines, ushering in the "patchwork" era of segregated neighborhoods and business districts. The third period of Charlotte's spatial history shows a pattern of increasingly separated neighborhoods that divided according to strictly delineated racial classifications, dubbed "sectors" as patchwork patterns hardened along race lines to form distinct enclaves. (4)

Broader economic trends of rapid industrialization combined with segregationist policy at the local, state, and federal levels to support racially exclusionary neighborhoods in Charlotte and, by extension, other Southern cities. Hanchett stresses the nature and timing of Charlotte's urban development as a specifically Southern phenomenon, as opposed to the splintering into racially divided sectors "witnessed two generations earlier in cities of the Northern United States." A portion of this trend can be attributed to anti-industrialization sentiment in the South, as can Charlotte's lack of foreign immigrants, whose presence in the North has been seen as "one impetus for white-collar flight" (258).

Hanchett presents the shifts in Charlotte's racial demographics as a product of a concerted effort by

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Charlotte's "white-collar whites" to solidify their social privilege through a series of segregationist practices. These elite citizens, members of Charlotte's local government, banking and real estate communities, employed tactics of upzoning, red-lining, restrictive racial covenants, and development of neighborhoods specifically geared towards minority residents to ensure that the city's neighborhoods became increasingly homogeneous.

Hanchett illustrates that even within the confines of a segregated cityscape, African Americans in Charlotte were able to create their own thriving communities. The success of this black community structure can be seen in the vibrant neighborhoods and shopping districts that surrounded the African American college Biddle Institute, later known as Johnson C. Smith University. In contrast with the white neighborhood's stricter social stratification, Charlotte's black neighborhoods displayed considerable class diversity, with prominent professionals living beside wage laborers in a further contribution to a cohesive community identity.

In terms of quality of presentation, *Sorting Out the New South City* is an edifying and engagingly written text which melds meticulously researched statistical evidence and unpublished landmark reports with occasional commentary from Charlotte's citizens. Hanchett's organization is impressive, as he shifts from discussion of neighborhood formation to the federal government's complicity in segregationist practices without diminishing the focus on his overarching theme that "segregation by race...is not an age-old Southern constant, nor did it spring full-blown into its modern form upon the end of slavery" (257). Hanchett's liberal use of visual aids is a welcome inclusion to his narrative, and his informative charts and graphs blend smoothly with evocative photographs depicting Charlotte's urban development.

While Hanchett discusses issues of proximity to employment and transportation in his treatment of

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Charlotte's settlement patterns, he neglects any mention of aesthetic values or environmental factors as determinants in where people chose to settle. These aesthetic factors can considerably influence which areas citizens consider "a good place to live" and could have been further analyzed.

Overall, Hanchett's text is a persuasive and informative look at patterns of segregation and urban development in Charlotte. His argument for a period of comparative racial intermixture that precedes later "hardline" segregation is cogently presented, and supported with voluminous research. One of the most compelling pieces of evidentiary support is a graph which documents the relative "segregation index" of various Southern (and Northern) cities, illustrating that a general trend towards increasing segregation is observable in many modern cities. During the period from 1940 to 1970, Charlotte's rising segregation index moves the city from number 18 to the number 5 slot on this list of America's most racially segregated cities. The fact that this post-civil-rights-era Southern city has become more rather than less segregated is both surprising and sobering with regards to our understanding of racial tolerance in the New South. Hanchett's book is an exemplary contribution to the history of the built environment and of Southern race relations.

Taylor Patterson

### **Carol Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*.**

New York: Routledge Press, 2000.

The most recent attempt to analyze the Crusades from the Muslim perspective is Carole Hillenbrand's ambitious study *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*.

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Although this book is a general survey, its thorough coverage of the important aspects of the Crusades from the Muslim viewpoint makes it an invaluable resource for historians of the Crusades and the Muslim world of the high and late Middle Ages. Her exhaustive use of contemporary sources far exceeds any previous attempt at an Islamic perspective of the crusade period. This book gives a detailed interpretation of Muslim perceptions of the Crusades and the West. In addition, according to Hillenbrand, the book is intended to supplement a field whose historiography is dominated by Euro-centric studies.

In this book, Hillenbrand dedicates entire chapters to critical topics, such as “The Conduct of War,” “Aspects of Life in the Levant in the Crusading Period,” and “How the Muslim saw the Franks: ethnic and religious stereotypes” (257). Hillenbrand maintains that the Muslims formed a stereotype of the Westerners and Christians long before the first crusaders arrived in the Holy Land. Their image of the Franks can be traced to a variety of Muslim sources, but primarily from “travel accounts, oral narratives from prisoners of war, pilgrims, merchants and diplomats, geographical works and popular stories” (268).

The Muslim geographer’s division of the world created an important tool for defining ethnicity. These geographers divided the world “into seven latitudinal zones or ‘climes’ the position of a given race in a particular clime predisposed them to the possession of certain attributes” (270). This discussion of the relationship between race and attributes can be traced to the late Roman geographers, who embraced similar theories about persons living in eastern and northern Europe. Hillenbrand adds that according to Muslim scholars, “The Franks...dwelt in the sixth clime. Like the Slavs and Turks who also inhabited this zone, the Franks pursued the arts of war and the chase, were of melancholic temperament and prone to savagery. They were also filthy and treacherous” (352). In fact, for much of the medieval period, Muslim scholars

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showed little or no interest in Latin Christianity or their eastern counterparts of the Byzantine Empire. This was surprisingly unchanged during most of the crusader period.

Taking into account our modern viewpoint, along with the political uncertainties in the Middle East, the issue of perspective is an important study. It has been argued that the crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are the origins of Middle East conflict or the reason the relations between the modern Middle East and the West are so strained, but this overly simplistic model does not assess the proper historical context of the Crusades. Hillenbrand does an admirable job of discussing the relative unimportance of the Crusades in the wider Muslim world during the Middle Ages. She also rightly argues that most aspects of the Crusades have been of relatively little interest to Muslim historians until recently. She contends that “the Islamic world was slow to draw lessons from the Crusades, their first experience with European interventionism. Nor did the Muslims tap the propagandistic potential of the Crusades until relatively recently” (591).

Hillenbrand demonstrates that some of the negative ethnic and religious stereotypes of Christian and Western thought that pervade Arab and Muslim societies were born from the Crusades. These stereotypes have proved powerful enough to outlast the actual crusades by several centuries. From the Muslim perspective, the invading Christian armies represented an undeniably inferior race and culture committed to a lesser religion. The stereotypes that formed appeared frequently in the popular literature and poetry of medieval period, but also are prevalent in later works as well.

The discussion of the development of *Jihad* in chapters three and four is one of the most intriguing aspects of the book. The concepts of *Jihad* and ‘Holy War’ are the most critical and perhaps most misunderstood ideas hindering Christian and Muslim relations in the Middle Ages and to some extent the modern world.

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Hillenbrand's book aides in deciphering the origin of the concept of *Jihad*, its development, and ultimate relationship to the Crusades.

There are two problematic features of the book. At more than 600 pages, the book contains over 500 illustrations of maps, photographs, and Muslim art and architecture. This characteristic is a welcome addition to the study, but many are outside the scope of the book's chronological focus and still others leave the reader with an inadequate description making them difficult to contextualize. Certain sections of the book are arguably incomplete or offer little new insight into the issues. In addition, the recent work in archeology of the Crusader States is not considered at all.

However, Hillenbrand's exhaustive and comprehensive study is long overdue in the field of crusade history. This book may become the standard reference for the Islamic perspective for many years to come. Hillenbrand's analysis allows the Western scholar to penetrate the mindset of medieval Muslims of the crusading era. In addition, her study of ethnicity and ethnic stereotypes in the Middle Ages allows the modern reader some insight into the origins of some modern stereotypes dominating the political and religious landscapes of today.

Jace Stuckey

**Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.**

New York: Random House, 1970.

Reprint, New York: Bantam Books, 1993.

For more than forty years, Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* has received critical acclaim, but few commentators discuss its historical merits. Since the 1960s and the shift from a top-down to the bottom-up perspective of social history, writers have searched unendingly for the personal voices of previously unheard historical actors. Most impressive about Angelou's work is the book's initial publication in 1968, a vanguard of this shift at a time when historians still hotly contested the methodological approaches of social history. Even more impressive was that this book represented the sentiments of arguably the most oppressed and ignored voices in American history, those of young, black, Southern females.

Maya Angelou and the southern historian C. Vann Woodward have similar ideas on identity and irony. The thrust of Angelou's book focuses on the creation of her black female identity during the formative years of childhood and adolescence in Stamps, Arkansas. Angelou places the foundation of her identity in the "values and dislikes...first encountered...in the early environment...of childhood" (20). Similar to Woodward's Southern history in terms of a shared collective experience, she views her individuality as the "experience shared between the unknowing majority (it) and the knowing minority (you)," the shared but contrasting experiences of black and white society (20). If Woodward claims that the historical experiences of Southern white men have been filled with misery and failure, then the oppression and defeatism endured by Southern black men, let alone black women,

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have even greater depth. According to Angelou, growing up was especially painful for the Southern black girl who understands her inferior position within black society and realizes her displacement from the broader realm of white society. It “is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult” (4). Angelou contrasts traditional images of the emasculated and weakened black man, embodied in her crippled Uncle Willie, with Momma, the family’s breadwinner, matriarch, and source of strength. With ironic flare, she illustrates how religiously strong and educated women, like Momma and Angelou, strove to meet, and even surpassed, the standards of white American social and economic respectability. However, they were still emphatically shunned by even the lowest denominator of white society: young, “powhitetrash” girls living on a black woman’s property (28-32).

Angelou looks to the contrasting characters of her grandmother and mother as sources of black female strength and identity. Her grandmother “Momma,” proud, proper, and religious, embodied qualities that helped her maintain a prominent position as family, and in many respects community, matriarch. These same qualities inhibited Momma from revolting against the antagonism of white society, thereby keeping her mired in the region’s social structure. Angelou’s mother eschewed religion and tradition. She represented the modern black woman: strong, independent, and rebellious towards traditional social values. Yet her contemporaries and social conventions in general scorned her because of her independence and disregard for social norms. She was quite possibly the “whore” that Dolores, her ex-husband’s girlfriend, claimed her to be (245). Within the framework established by her matriarchal influences, each provided their own paradoxes, enabling Angelou to create her own identity.

Angelou’s irony-saturated memories expand beyond simple reflections on the creation of her “black” identity,

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covering the range of black experience across the rural South. Momma's store was the focal point of the black community in Stamps, Arkansas. It was a place where the community's pulse registered daily. Within the store, Angelou participated and observed the ups and downs of black life. She enjoyed anticipation of a new day, of the potential for a Joe Louis victory, but also the dreariness of a hard day of work completed, of racial abuse at the hands of "powwhite" children. Yet, Angelou took comfort in this setting and, despite ever-present racial animosities in the South, preferred Stamps to either St. Louis or California, two other places where she briefly resided. Based on her experiences, the South was little different than either the big-city North or the West, where racism was as prevalent as in the South, if perhaps more subtle. Neither of these "exciting" environments captured her heart like the "barrenness" of Stamps (89).

The book's title rhetorically asks, "Why does the caged bird sing?" The answer is multifaceted. Some might describe the caged bird as metaphoric pride. Black Americans maintained pride and vocalized dignity even when confined by the cage of oppression. This understanding mirrors a historical interpretation of this metaphor, that the caged bird represents black America loudly proclaiming their simultaneous enchantment and dissonance with American society from the confines of Jim Crow's cage. In this respect, Angelou's book functions as a social history and a personal account of her own identity formation. The insight into black American society, and specifically that of black Southern females, during the 1940s and 1950s broadens our historical understanding of what it meant to be a woman, a black, a Southerner, and an American.

Maury Wiseman