

On the cover: Matt Morgan's, *Florida Memory*, drawing in Frank Leslie's newspaper personifying yellow fever dragging down Florida. Florida's yellow fever epidemic reached its peak in 1887. *Alpata's* 2014 board chose to highlight the theme of diseases in history in the editorial section.

State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/31518>



“Alpata” is the Seminole-Muscogee word for alligator.

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Editorials

On Diseases: An Introduction

Rachel Walkover

The recent outbreaks of the Ebola virus in Liberia and Guinea have prompted commentators to ask questions about modern society's ability to deal with devastating diseases.¹ Yet the threat of epidemiological catastrophe is hardly new. As a historical phenomenon, it is all too familiar. Since the beginning of recorded history, humans have been battling diseases without the benefit of a modern understanding of how they are transmitted. The following section examines four different outbreaks and how the societies in which they occurred reacted to them.

By analyzing an outbreak of the plague in 251 CE, Daniel Conigliaro explores the relationship between death and spirituality. Concentrating on the writings of Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, he demonstrates some of the methods the Church used to comfort believers as thousands of people died each day from the plague. Rachel Walkover further examines the religious and socioeconomic impact of the plague, albeit in a later period. While life in Europe during the Middle Ages was fraught with a variety of hardships ranging from malnutrition to Viking raids, it had settled down considerably by the fourteenth century. This relative stability was interrupted by the arrival of the plague in Europe in 1347, an event which claimed the lives of approximately thirty percent of the population and exacerbated preexisting divisions.

The catalytic effect of disease, however, was not confined to the Middle Ages. Modern societies have likewise responded to epidemiological threats in ways that reflected contemporary issues. As Jackson Loop demonstrates,

¹ Terrence McCoy, "The African Ebola outbreak that shows no sign of slowing," *The Washington Post*, 23 April 2014. Accessed 29 April 2014 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/04/23/the-african-ebola-outbreak-that-shows-no-sign-of-slowng/>. For an opinion on the world's preparedness for a pandemic, see Robert Roos, "Fineberg: 5 years after H1N1, world still not ready for pandemic," Center for Infectious Disease and Policy at University of Minnesota, 9 April 2014. Accessed 29 April 2014. <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2014/04/fineberg-5-years-after-h1n1-world-still-not-ready-pandemic>.

the 1832 outbreak of cholera in New York City heightened class tensions. Although local officials understood the biological mechanisms of the disease, this did not mean that the society was free from danger. Daniel Fernández-Guevara offers a parallel example with respect to nineteenth-century Cuba, a place where cholera outbreaks coincided with political crises. These modern case studies in turn recall the medieval relationship between religion and disease. Whereas religion had provided a place for people to turn to in times of despair, more recent instances of potential catastrophe have resulted in a greater reliance on governmental and secular institutions.

In these four cases, it is clear that disease has produced a major impact on civilization. Our societies may be imperfect, but we are resilient and compassionate in the face of devastation. These four cases demonstrate four different reactions to disease—clinging to religion, questioning religion, exacerbating class differences, and looking to the government—which illuminate deeper issues within each respective society. As much as death and disease can be depressing, their manifestations reveal continuities about the human condition across space and time.

Pestilence and Plague in the Roman World: A Christian Response

Daniel Conigliaro

Disease forms a central part of the human experience.¹ It unites us across time and space and has had a major impact on the course of history. Every culture, every nation, every people has been forced to respond to the problem of sickness, famine, plague, and countless other physical ills, on a practical, emotional, and spiritual level. How should we take care of the sick? How can we cope with the suffering of those closest to us? Why would God or the gods allow such evil? All of these are questions fundamental to the human experience. Modern medicine has greatly mitigated, if not eradicated altogether, some of the most horrific human diseases. Yet most cultures throughout history have not been so fortunate. How did pre-modern cultures, and particularly pre-modern religions, answer these perplexing questions?

One response comes from Carthage in the year 251.² An outbreak of plague ravaged the Roman Empire, resulting in massive loss of life—five thousand people per day are thought to have died in Rome alone.³ The epidemic was particularly deadly in cities like Carthage, where people lived in close proximity. The Christian bishop of Carthage, Cyprian, provides us with one of the most vivid accounts of the ravages of the disease in his treatise *On the Mortality*:

That now the bowels loosened into a flux exhaust the strength of the body, that a fever contracted in the very marrow of the bones breaks out into ulcers of the throat, that the intestines are shaken by continual vomiting, that the blood-shot eyes burn, that the feet of some or certain parts of their members are cut away by the infection of diseased putrefaction...all this contributes to the proof of faith.⁴

Cyprian was forced not only to comfort his suffering flock but also to deal

¹ For an overview of the history of disease, see William H. McNeil, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998).

² See Samuel Philip Julien, “Cyprian and His Plague: A Christian Response to Sickness and Death in Third-Century Carthage” (Undergraduate thesis, University of Florida, 2008) for a fuller explanation of Cyprian’s role in the plague of 251.

³ McNeil, 131. Most scholars believe the disease to be an outbreak of smallpox or measles. See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (New York: Harper One, 1996), 73.

⁴ Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Mortality*, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/SOURCES/MORTAL.TXT>, chapter 14.

with the question of why Christians were suffering as much as their pagan neighbors. Was not the hand of God supposed to protect His chosen people from the ills that affected the pagans? Cyprian first attempted to calm the fears of his fellow Christians by insisting that they need not fear death as it will only bring them to their eternal home in heaven. For the Christian, it was better to “hasten to the joy which can never be taken away” than attach himself to “the world’s afflictions, and punishments, and tears.”⁵ His mind and spirit should be constantly centered on God even though he is physically tied to this world in a corruptible body. Indeed, this is why Christians and pagans both suffer equally the effects of disease, for “until this corruptible [body] shall put on incorruption, and this mortal receive immortality, and the Spirit lead us to God the Father, whatever are the disadvantages of the flesh are common to us with the human race.”⁶

What distinguished a Christian from a pagan was not the experience of sickness and death in this life, but rather the fate of the soul in the next, for while “the righteous are called to their place of refreshing, the unrighteous are snatched away to punishment.”⁷ The Christian should abandon his fear of the plague and look on it as a grace. God has freed his fellow believers who have died from the trials of this world so that they may rejoice in the joys of the next. Even the most innocent victims of the plague, such as young virgins and children, “depart in peace, safe with their glory, not fearing the threats of the coming antichrist” and thus they “escape the peril of their unstable age, and in happiness attain the reward of continence and innocence.”⁸

This ambivalence towards death did not prevent Christians from caring for the sick and dying in their community. Cyprian insisted that the plague provided an opportunity for Christians to serve one another, and to test “whether they who are in health tend the sick; whether relations affectionately love their kindred; whether masters pity their languishing servants; whether physicians do not forsake the beseeching patients.”⁹ The simple act of nursing

the sick distinguished Christians from pagans during the plague, and allowed for a higher survival rate for Christians.¹⁰

Furthermore, Cyprian insisted that it was not enough for the Christian to care only for other Christians. Cyprian’s biographer, Pontius the Deacon, recounted how the pagans, “shunning the contagion, impiously exposing their own friends,” abandoned the sick and cared only for their own health and wellbeing.¹¹ This, according to Cyprian, was not how the Christian was to react. Instead, he insisted that the Christian “might become perfect who...loved even his enemies” and “would pray for the salvation of those that persecute him, as the Lord admonishes and exhorts.”¹² Christians, thus, had a responsibility to nurse their pagan neighbors as much as their fellow Christians.

Although the epidemic would last until 266, the Christian community of Carthage survived, strengthened and emboldened by the words of its charismatic bishop. Cyprian’s response to the plague is emblematic of how Christians in the early Roman Empire responded to the problem of disease. Christians had no need to fear the physical sufferings of this world for they were ensured of spiritual blessings in the next. This did not mean that Christians were unafraid of death—if that were the case, Cyprian would have had no need to write his treatise—but Cyprian’s words gave them strength and helped them to be resilient in the face of suffering and to care for the sick and dying both within and outside of the Christian community. Indeed, Christians survived the disease in greater numbers than their fellow pagans and benefited from a strong community during times of suffering. As a result of this, many pagans converted to Christianity.¹³ Cyprian’s treatise is one example of how humans across time and space have responded to the problem of disease, particularly from a religious perspective, and testifies to humanity’s determination and ingenuity in overcoming the challenges it faces.

⁵ Cyprian of Carthage, *The Writings of Cyprian*, trans. Robert E Wallace, vol. 8 in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1882), 455.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁷ Cyprian of Carthage, *The Writings of Cyprian*, trans. Robert E Wallace, vol. 8 in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1882), 455.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 461.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 461.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² McNeil, 135-6; Stark, 83-8.

¹³ Pontius the Deacon, “The Life and Passion of St. Cyprian,” accessed 12 November 2013, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0505.htm>, paragraph 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ For an overview of the role epidemics and disease played in the spread of Christianity, see Stark, 73-94; McNeil, 135-7.

A Pestilence and a Catalyst: The Fourteenth-Century Black Death

Rachel Walkover

Most people probably know about only one epidemic: the Black Death, which reached Europe in 1347 and continued in sporadic waves until the eighteenth century. It has generated substantial scholarship, and for good reason. The Black Death's first fourteenth-century wave, from 1347 to 1350, was a watershed moment in world history. The fact that this devastating plague did not cause catastrophic social collapse is a testament to the resilience of fourteenth-century people of all social classes.¹ Yet life in the Western world changed: the Black Death had a high death toll and catalyzed changes that would reverberate in its wake, including socioeconomic shifts such as the strengthening of the middle class and religious transformations such as the separation of personal faith from institutionalized religion.

Although it is impossible to determine the exact population of Western Europe during the Middle Ages, historians generally agree that during the first half of the fourteenth century, about a third of Europe's population died from the plague.² In major cities the plague took as many as sixty percent of the population, though the death toll was substantially lower in the countryside.³ However, Europe's population was already declining during the century before the crisis, and this downward trend was already well on its way to changing society; the Black Death's arrival simply accelerated the process.

Society as a whole had become stagnant in the half-century before the Black Death's arrival: population growth and economic development had ground to a halt.⁴ After the Black Death, the socioeconomic changes that

had previously stalled picked up pace significantly. The decline in population meant there were no longer enough hands to work the fields. This new power asymmetry between workers and owners of manors enabled serfs, who had been tied to the land, to improve their situation.⁵ If a lord or overseer would not pay them what they wanted, they could—illegally—move to a different manor and work for a different landowner.⁶ Another major shift concerned how peasants paid their rent. The in-kind rent they had paid to the landowners, which had already started to be phased out, changed entirely to monetary payments.⁷ This change benefitted peasants. The landowner, lacking the previously abundant labor supply, had to pay higher wages to his workers, because they now had the edge in bargaining.⁸

Just as the physical basis of society—the manors producing food—changed after the plague, so, too, did its spiritual basis—the laity's faith in Church teachings. The people of the Middle Ages (c. 400-1450) took their religion seriously. The fate of their immortal souls had been of great importance to them since the dawn of Christianity—pilgrims would flock to relics, pray to saints so that the saints might intercede on their behalf, and travel thousands of miles on foot in the hope that things would be better, both in the afterlife and on earth.

At the center of this, the Catholic Church directed the behavior and beliefs of the populace. The masses believed that the Church and its clergy were holy because it was through them that the laity received the word of the Bible. Reading in the vernacular or in Latin were not common skills outside of the nobility and clergy. As a result, the masses who sought to be

¹ Nancy Siraisi, "Introduction," in *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague: Papers of the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies*, Daniel Williman, ed., (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 17. Siraisi also offers the thought that their seeming resilience in our eyes during this episode fails to take account of how difficult life in the Middle Ages was, especially for peasants. Infant mortality rates and the average lifespan remind us that life was brutal in the Middle Ages.

² Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (New York: John Day Co., 1969), 224-225.

³ *Ibid.*, 231. Population records were rarely kept, so while exact numbers cannot be determined, historians agree on fatality rates during the first wave of the Black Death.

⁴ J. M. W. Bean, "The Black Death: The Crisis and Its Social and Economic Consequences," in *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague: Papers of the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Daniel Williman (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 31-32. Lords increasingly needed money rather than agricultural products of the demesne, because they wanted to

purchase goods from foreign lands. Since the peasants still needed to pay rent to their lords, the lords were able to fulfill their needs for cash by requiring cash rents. Ziegler, *Black Death*, 235. Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe, 1050-1320* (London: Routledge, 1992), 48.

⁵ The majority of the laity who were not nobles worked on the demesne of a lord and were tied to the land through various laws. There were groups of non-noble laity that did own land, but they were few and far between. The peasants who were not tied to any land were forced to squat on someone else's property and sometimes worked in the houses of other peasants as servants. For more information, see Barber, *Two Cities*, 45-49.

⁶ Ziegler, *Black Death*, 233.

⁷ Under the manorial system of the Early Middle Ages, serfs paid rent to the lord of the manor they lived on in a combination of three ways: in labor (working the lord's personal fields), in-kind (a percentage of the goods produced on the land rented by the serfs), and in money (coins). Before towns began to grow, serfs had in-kind or labor payments. Barber, 48.

⁸ Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *The Black Death, 1346-1353: The Complete History* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2004), 389; see also Ziegler, *Black Death*, 233.

good Christians relied upon the clergy to lead them into salvation through the Bible.⁹

The Church's authority over spiritual matters proved detrimental to the relationship between the clergy and laity in the aftermath of the Black Death. For people with no knowledge of bacteria, the best apparent explanation of the plague was that it was a divinely sent pestilence intended to punish humans for their sins. The priests, who had condemned their parishioners for their sins and reminded them that they were responsible for their predicament, also fell victim to the plague. If these supposedly holy men were as righteous as the people thought, why were they also punished? This confusion planted a seed of doubt, not about the validity of faith but about the Church as an institution. Prior to the plague, the general consensus was that the Church and the faith were two sides of the same coin. After the plague, confidence in the Church faltered.¹⁰ Additionally, while there was a diminution in the authority of the Church, there was a simultaneous augmentation of religious zeal, particularly expressed in the construction of new churches.¹¹ The distance between faith and institution had already been noticed on several occasions.¹² With a tendency toward critiquing the Church already established, the disaster of the Black Death would magnify this conflict.

It is not surprising that the rapid and unexpected death of one-third of the population would lead to significant changes throughout society. Indeed, it would have been shocking if the definition of "normalcy" had not

changed. In the aftermath of the plague, the distribution of the population across various socioeconomic classes shifted the balance of power away from landowners and toward laborers. This accelerated the rise of cities and created a distinct middle class as the former serfs were now able to negotiate with their employers for higher wages, buy their freedom, and relocate to urban centers. Not even religion remained unchanged; doubt in the omnipotence of the Church lingered in the minds of the laity and sparked an understanding of the difference between personal faith and institutionalized religion, which may have been one of the sources of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. These socioeconomic changes after the first wave of the plague, combined with the significant loss of lives, make the Black Death of 1347 a memory which still haunts us to today.

⁹ Ziegler, *Black Death*, 260. While sermons in church would have been delivered in Latin, there were spiritual movements that featured preachers who used the vernacular to communicate with the masses. For more information, see G.R. Evan, *The Church in the Middle Ages* (New York: Tauris, 2007), 78-82.

¹⁰ We can see the impact that the Black Death had on the separation of the Church and faith in contemporaneous works, the most famous of which is Boccaccio's *Decameron*. This collection of one hundred stories, written in the years immediately following the first wave of the Black Death, follows seven escapees from Florence who return to nature in order to survive the plague. Some of the stories argue that the Church and faith are no longer one and the same, that it is possible for someone to have faith but not access that faith through the Church. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, trans. John Payne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

¹¹ Ziegler, *Black Death*, 260-267. A possible later consequence could be Martin Luther's complaints against the Church. Luther was not the first to notice the discrepancy between clerics' words and actions, nor was he the first to respond to it. Such thoughts were already circulating in the years following the first outbreak of the Black Death.

¹² The most notable would be the reforms of Pope Gregory the Great and the monastic movements, all of which sought to cleanse the Church and the clergy of the taint of the secular and return them to what was deemed their sacred origin.

Class, Religion, and Disease: Cholera in 1832 New York City *Jackson Loop*

In 1832 an outbreak of cholera humbled the thriving metropolis of New York City. America was in the midst of a boom. Culturally, politically, and economically the new nation was solidifying its identity, with New York beginning to rival the strength of Old World epicenters like London and Paris. Cholera, however, slowed these developments, and brought the most unsightly, divisive traits of early American democracy to the forefront. Classism, individualism, and religious fervor dominated the discussions of public health and the city's recovery.

A brief description of cholera and its symptoms is necessary in order to develop a fuller understanding of exactly why New York fell into such a panic in 1832. Many, including historian Charles E. Rosenberg, compare nineteenth-century cholera outbreaks to fourteenth-century plague epidemics. Rosenberg describes cholera's symptoms as "spectacular," including, at the outset, "diarrhea, acute spasmodic vomiting, and painful cramps."¹ Continual expulsion of bodily fluids led to dehydration, and death followed usually within a day.

With the assistance of retrospective science, the most widespread outbreaks of cholera have been attributed to poor water supply. If waste water and drinking water were not properly separated, as was the case in many of New York's poorer communities, the disease could spread quite rapidly. However, before people had this knowledge, many blamed cholera on a variety of other factors, including sin, intemperance, or over-indulgence in sex.² This essay focuses on these beliefs, and the role cholera played in exposing America as "no longer a city set upon a hill," but instead a place heavily shaped by avarice and mysticism.³

The troubling responses to cholera can be noted at its very arrival. In the thick of America's "Market Revolution," the city's Board of Health seemed to be more concerned with New York's money than the health of its citizens.⁴

In their incredibly exhaustive work, *Gotham*, Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace state that the Board "certainly had authority to act," but was "under constant pressure not to render too hasty a diagnosis that would cut off the flow of trade and profit."⁵ On June 26th, an Irishman named Fitzgerald fell ill, survived, but lost two of his children to "identical agonizing stomach cramps." The Board was lobbied to declare the deaths to be nothing beyond cases of diarrhea, but many physicians believed—quite reasonably—that Asiatic cholera had found its way to New York.⁶

The Medical Society, a private committee of doctors representing two-thirds of the city's physicians, published a statement about the outbreak and was subsequently castigated by the upper class. One banker, as reported in Rosenberg's book, discusses the Society's report as an "impertinent interference" with the Board of Health.⁷ For some, the threat that quarantining the harbor posed for businesses was far worse than massive loss of life in the city's slums. Regardless of their griping, both occurred. At the height of the outbreak, House of Representatives Member Edward Everett boldly visited New York, and later published what he saw: "Business seemed almost wholly at a stand; more than half the population had gone into the country; many houses and shops were shut up; ready-made coffins were exposed at every corner. It happened to be the day of the greatest mortality—two hundred and twelve persons had died that day."⁸ The fears of the bankers and merchants had been fully realized, but, as Everett noted, most who had the means to leave did so. It was the poorest individuals that suffered most. Merchant, philanthropist, and freemason John Pintard welcomed this trend, describing the lower classes as "dissolute and filthy people huddled together like swine," and noting that once "the scum of the city" had died off, so, too, would cholera.⁹ In this way, the comments of Pintard and others demonstrated the residual classism that "egalitarian" America repeatedly attempted to ignore.

Furthermore, coinciding with this intersection of poverty and mortality was a full-fledged reactionary religious movement, melding issues of ethnicity, class, and worship. Alan M. Kraut discusses these themes at length in his

¹ Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 2.

² Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press 2000), 590.

³ Rosenberg, 7.

⁴ The Market Revolution is a title given by many historians to revolutions in transportation and communication, as well as the economic boom that ensued.

⁵ Burrows and Wallace, 590

⁶ Rosenberg, 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸ "Edward Everett on New-York in Cholera Time, 1832," *New York Times*, 30 April 1866.

⁹ John Pintard, *Letters from John Pintard to His Daughter Liza Noel Pintard Davidson 1813-1833* (New York: Little & Ives, 1941), IV, 75.

book *Silent Travelers*, developing a strong juxtaposition of two unwelcome guests in early nineteenth-century New York: cholera and Irish Catholics. The Irish immigrated to New York in droves, more often than not ending up in run-down shanties and slums, the ideal breeding grounds for cholera. However, Protestants electrified by the Second Great Awakening discovered a different cause than slovenly living for the epidemic.¹⁰ As Kraut explicates, “Irish immigrants felled during the 1832 cholera epidemic were believed by many of the native-born to have died of individual vices typical of their group, a divinely determined punishment that might be spread to those undeserving of such retribution.”¹¹ The hierarchy associated with the Catholic Church led many to believe that poor Irish communities were inherently dependent and limited both mentally and physically in their ability to stave off vice and disease alike.

The religious rhetoric moved beyond simply chastising Catholics. Cholera itself was referred to as a “scourge, a rod in the hand of God.”¹² Charles Finney, a prominent figure of the Second Great Awakening, described the wealthy exodus from the city as “a great many Christian people.”¹³ Some prayed and fasted in an attempt to stave off the disease. Death by cholera was both inexplicable and terrifying, and thus, for many, God’s involvement was obvious.¹⁴

Not all in New York pitted themselves against the victims. Some blamed poor city planning for exacerbating the effects of poverty. One merchant group donated money to employ displaced workers in the formation of new hospitals and soup kitchens, or in the incineration of blankets used by the sick. By August, the outbreak had abated.¹⁵ However, these fleeting moments of humanity were little consolation for many. The death toll in New

York City alone reached 3,513.¹⁶ Those who were blatantly denied care by the private New York Hospital most likely died, and never witnessed the effects of merchant charities.¹⁷ The epidemic had already tarnished the city’s image, characterizing American capitalism and religion as divisive and unsympathetic. It was now clear that the stock exchange and church attendance were not the only tools for measuring America’s success.

¹⁰ The Second Great Awakening was a massive, mostly Protestant religious movement that occurred throughout the early nineteenth century.

¹¹ Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the “Immigrant Menace”* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 33.

¹² Gardiner Spring, *A Sermon Preached August 3, 1832: A Day Set Apart in the City of New-York for Public Fasting Humiliation and Prayer on Account of a Malignant and Mortal Fever Prevailing in the City of Philadelphia* (New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1832).

¹³ Charles G. Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text*, ed. Richard A. G. Dupuis and Garth M. Rosell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 357.

¹⁴ Adam Jortner, “Cholera, Christ, and Jackson: The Epidemic of 1832 and the Origins of Christian Politics in America,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 27:2 (2007): 233-264.

¹⁵ Burrows and Wallace, 593.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 591.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 592.

A History of Cholera in Cuba: Nationalism and Colonial Politics

Daniel Fernández-Guevara

The recent wave of cholera outbreaks has reignited concerns that had disappeared from the hemisphere for almost a century, after the disease wrought havoc in the nineteenth century. The 2012-13 cholera outbreaks in Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Cuba have resulted in hundreds of confirmed cases.¹ Though cholera attracted a lion's share of media attention in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, the Cuban case presents an interesting mix of environmental factors and changes in the relationship between the individual and the state since the transfer of power from Fidel to Raúl Castro. Government intervention prevents the spread of cholera; fifty percent of untreated cases are fatal, yet adequate treatment reduces mortality to less than one percent.² The treatment of diseases, specifically cholera, indicates the vulnerability of society's poorest sectors, the strength of the state's ability to respond to crises, and the impact of public discontent surrounding outbreaks on policy changes. For over a century, the marriage between Cuban medicine and nationalism has politicized disease.

Cholera, a bacterial disease spread through contaminated food or water, causes severe diarrhea, vomiting, and dehydration. If left untreated, cholera can be fatal in a matter of hours and it is most prevalent in places where poverty, war, or natural disasters create crowded conditions lacking adequate sanitation.³ Medical historians recognize seven major outbreaks, or pandemics, of cholera. Four occurred in Latin America in the nineteenth century. The Cuban case is one of these notable outbreaks.

The Latin American Wars of Independence (1810-1825) fragmented the Spanish Empire and forced authorities to liberalize trade in the remaining colonies. Greater contact with the industrialized world exposed Cuban ports during this period when medical understanding of bacterial disease trans-

mission was in its infancy.⁴ The first cholera outbreak in Cuba (1833-1838) coincided with the beginnings of Cuban national character formation: the creation of the distinguished *Revista Bimestre* in 1831, the founding of the Cuban Academy of Literature, and nationalist reactions to Spain's refusal to allow native-born Cubans' election to the Spanish parliament. As a result, magazines like *La Revista Bimestre* became heralds for a specifically Cuban literature and medicine. The disease spread in 1833, alongside treatises, flyers, novels, poems, and dissertations regarding cholera. From the inception of Cuban medicine, cholera provided a fertile ground for study and discussion among creoles.

The cholera outbreak rattled the foundations of Spanish imperial medicine. American newspapers were flooded with letters from the island describing the outbreak, for example: "cholera is raging here with much fury; it is impossible to form any correct opinion of its ravages; I even question whether the Government itself has returns of the number of interments."⁵ In 1833, Cuba's first public health institution, the Royal Protomedicato Tribunal of Havana was incapable of handling the mortality caused by cholera, and it delegated its authority to the Royal Academy of Medicine, Physics, and Nature of the University of Havana.⁶

Implicit in the text of American newspapers and journals was the growing desire for Cuba's annexation to the United States. The disease returned to Cuba in 1850, when some U.S. policy makers, underscoring the Spanish failure to contain the outbreak, hoped cholera would become an agent of empire.⁷ From 1850 to 1854, 18,000 Cubans died,⁸ which signaled the weakness of Spain's imperial defenses, and roused the attention of U.S. policy makers and slave owning southern states. In 1854, President Franklin Pierce attempted to purchase Cuba. If Cuba could not be purchased, then the United

¹ Some of the confirmed cases have led to death. See the Pan American Health Organization, *Actualización Epidemiológica: Cólera* (Washington: World Health Organization, 2013), 1.

² Jaime Sepúlveda, José Luis Valdespino, and Lourdes García-García, "Cholera in Mexico: The Paradoxical Benefits of the Last Pandemic," *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* 10 (2006): 5.

³ Mayo Clinic, "Diseases and Conditions: Cholera," <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/cholera/DS00579>, accessed 29 December 2013.

⁴ The English scientist John Snow discovered that cholera could be transmitted through contaminated water in 1854. The German physician Robert Koch developed pure cultures of harmful bacteria and described their life cycles. In 1884, Koch identified the cholera bacillus, *Vibrio cholera*. Koch's discoveries opened the door for researchers to identify organisms responsible for diseases. There would be no cholera vaccine until Spanish physician Jaime Ferrani Clua developed one in 1885, the first to immunize humans against a bacterial disease.

⁵ "Foreign News: Cuba. Cholera in Matanzas," *Western Luminary*, 15 May 1833, 3.

⁶ Letier Pérez Ortiz and Ramón Madrigal Lomba, "The Cholera in Cuba. Historical Notes," *Revista Médica Electrónica* 32:6, Supl 1 (2010): 4. accessed 24 December 2013 <http://www.rev-matanzas.sld.cu/revista%20medica/ano%202010/vol6%202010/suplemento1vol62010/tema02.htm>.

⁷ "Foreign News: Cuba. Cholera in Matanzas," 3.

⁸ Pérez Ortiz and Madrigal Lomba, "The Cholera in Cuba. Historical Notes," 4.

States was “justified in wresting” the island away from Spain. Southerners not only lobbied the president, but also financed filibuster missions.⁹ Filibustering missions by Narciso López and John Quitman to Cuba gained notoriety in the U.S. press. In 1850, *The Baltimore Sun* openly championed such filibusters: the Cuban people are in high hope, considering the time most propitious for the landing of the expedition from the United States. They are burning with anxiety to know if General Lopez is acting punctually to his arrangements... [Cubans] would be struck with the contrast, now that the barracks are almost deserted, the guards greatly reduced, and only one of the gates having troops stationed around it. Doubtless the authorities consider it better to take the risk of doing without the soldiers in town for the present, than to lose them by cholera.”¹⁰

Narciso López was eventually captured and executed by Spanish authorities. The end of the American Civil War ended the possibility of the annexation of Cuba as a slave state.

In 1867, an outbreak of cholera once again coincided with the onset of potential political change on the island. On 10 October 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, an eastern plantation owner and one of the richest men in Cuba, freed his slaves and declared independence, initiating the first Cuban War of Independence, otherwise known as the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878). Again, nationalism and medicine converged. Cuban physicians like Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Barrés read and supported English physician John Snow’s theory that cholera was transmitted by contaminated water. In the presentation of his findings to the Royal Academy of Medical and Natural Sciences in Havana, he described an exhaustive study of the neighborhood of El Cerro that opened up debate as to the origin, transmission, and treatment of cholera.¹¹ From 1867 to 1872, the disease caused 5,940 deaths. Yet, from 1872 to 1882 only 86 died. The drastic decrease in fatalities is indicative of the transformation of Cuban medicine from a medieval institution to a modern health system as a result of the contributions of Carlos Finlay. In 1882, it was popularly held that the last reported death from cholera had occurred. Some estimate that 30,000

⁹ Filibusters, or freebooters, led unauthorized military expeditions into a foreign country to foment political change.

¹⁰ “Cuba News: Increase of Cholera—Expedition of Lopez,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 18 May 1850, 1.

¹¹ Pérez Ortiz and Madrigal Lomba, “The Cholera in Cuba. Historical Notes,” 5.

deaths occurred as a result of cholera outbreaks between 1833 and 1882, in a country whose inhabitants barely exceeded a million.¹² In the 1880s, the second war of Cuban independence, La Guerra Chiquita, coincided with the last diagnosed case of cholera in Cuba; a new war and a new relationship with a northern neighbor would underscore the junction between disease and politics.

Cuba’s partial and conditional independence from Spain in 1902 resulted from a U.S. invasion that was partly justified by the presence of yellow fever in Cuba. Under American stewardship, the new Cuban constitution was amended to adopt the Platt Amendment of 1901. The Platt Amendment stipulated that the U.S. could intervene in the case of excessive foreign debt or internal political strife, and in Article V, included sanitary regulations to protect the Cuban people and American ports from infectious diseases.¹³ Ships entering Cuban ports were subjected to rigorous scrutiny. New Cuban sanitary regulations, mirroring U.S. attitudes that blamed immigrants for diseases, would return any infected ship or immigrant to its place of origin.

The Platt Amendment was abrogated in 1934, yet with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and Cuba’s turn toward Communism, the politicization of diseases continued. The 1961 U.S. embargo against Cuba, which was intended to increase internal pressures on the revolutionary government following the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, blocked U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturers from selling medical supplies to Cuban hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics.¹⁴ Only in recent years have these restrictions been pared down.

Cuba’s Health Ministry reported at the end of 2012 a cholera outbreak that infected 417 Cubans and resulted in three deaths.¹⁵ The Pan-American Health Organization reported 678 confirmed cases of cholera in Cuba with three deaths in January through October 2013.¹⁶ The Cuban government

¹² Pérez Ortiz and Madrigal Lomba, “The Cholera in Cuba. Historical Notes,” 6.

¹³ “The Platt Amendment,” in *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, vol. 8, ed. C.I. Bevans (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 116-17.

¹⁴ Public health and universal access to free medical care have been priorities of the Cuban Revolution. The current state of the Cuban health system is a polemical topic. See *Health, Politics, and Revolution in Cuba Since 1898* by Katherine Hirschfeld, or Michael Moore’s 2007 documentary film, *Sicko*.

¹⁵ Patrick Oppmann. “Cholera Outbreak Over, Cuban Government Says,” *CNN*, 11 July 2012. Accessed 8 January 2014 <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/28/world/americas/cuba-cholera-outbreak/>.

¹⁶ Pan-American Health Organization 2013, 1.

has remained tightlipped on the recent outbreak since October. The return of cholera to Cuba coincides with a newfound push to liberalize the Cuban economy under Raúl Castro's economic reforms. Cuba's twenty-first century outbreaks present a series of challenges and questions for the Cuban state. Are Raúl Castro's attempts to "reduce" economic restrictions on the individual going to weaken state intervention in the spread of disease? What are the costs and benefits? Though there is no crystal ball to foretell state and local reactions to policy changes surrounding the current outbreak, an understanding of the deep correlation between disease and political flux in Cuba augments our insight into factors that effect and shape public policy.

Featured Articles

Sway and Scandal: The Sexual Politics of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Melisende of Jerusalem during the Second Crusades

Holly Soltis

It is hard to find early medieval queens who were paragons of power. Two twelfth-century queens who built power through politics and effective use of their sexuality provide rare examples. The name Eleanor of Aquitaine is recognizable to those interested in medieval history. She is famous for her fierce independence as Queen of France and, later, England. This is in stark contrast to Melisende of Jerusalem, the relatively unknown Queen of Jerusalem in the twelfth century. These two women controlled their destinies with verve and confidence, unlike the typical medieval woman, and became examples of the different ways women could use their sexuality to gain political prominence.

This article deals with the deeds of Melisende of Jerusalem and Eleanor of Aquitaine during the Second Crusade in 1145-1149 CE and subsequent decades.¹ By this point in history, Frankish pilgrims had already settled in the area named Outremer, which means "across the sea." The term "Outremer" arose in twelfth-century France to describe the region of crusader states in the Mediterranean Levant, and included Antioch, Jerusalem, Edessa, Tripoli, and Cyprus. Jerusalem had been under Christian control since the First Crusade in 1096-1099 CE, but its monarchy—as well as the crusader states as a whole—was suffering from a lack of male heirs and an overabundance of female ones. King Baldwin II of Jerusalem had no male heirs when he died, thus leaving the throne of Jerusalem to his eldest daughter, Melisende. Meanwhile in France, Eleanor of Aquitaine married the king, Louis VII—an unsurprising match considering that her position as heiress to Aquitaine made her one of the wealthiest women in Christendom at the time.

At the onset of the Second Crusade, the Catholic Church was able to convince Louis VII to become a crusader for Jerusalem. Eleanor's initial involvement in the Second Crusades was significant because of her forceful

¹The main sources consulted for this paper are Latin primary sources, especially William of Tyre's *Chronicle*. Some historians have commented on women in the crusades, but none have compared Eleanor of Aquitaine and Melisende of Jerusalem. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are done by Holly Soltis.

demand to be included. It was widely preached that women were not allowed to go on crusades to the Holy Land, so Eleanor's insistence on accompanying her husband was highly disapproved of by the Church. The influence Eleanor wielded over her husband, along with her disregard for social conventions, were Eleanor's avenue to political power, but it came at the cost of making many enemies in the Church and the French court. Melisende, on the other hand, acquired political legitimacy by fostering female prudence while seizing male forms of power. This gave her the ability to assemble allies in the Church and in the nobility of Outremer, which enabled her to weather the storm of an adultery scandal, whereas Eleanor was not as successful in upholding her feminine honor, and this left her easily exposed to accusations of adultery.

Eleanor and Melisende were thus armed with the political tools to further their influence and power as queens—Melisende to acquire political autonomy, and Eleanor to gain a foothold in French politics and the Second Crusade. Women in powerful positions were uncommon and usually opposed by the Church and other men, so it should come as no surprise that Melisende and Eleanor both suffered personal attacks in the most typical way women experienced challenges to their credibility—attacks on their sexual reputation. Slurring a woman's good name was the easiest and most effective way to push her out of the sphere of influence. Nobility and clergy alike participated in this particular form of slander towards women. To understand the subtleties and implications behind the adultery scandals that Melisende and Eleanor faced, one must know how these two women gained their power and clout in a man's world.

The primary duties for aristocratic wives during the twelfth century were to listen to their husbands and to bear male heirs. Bearing male heirs was especially important for females in the upper ranks of the social hierarchy, and it was essential for queens. Melisende fulfilled her duty quickly. Only a year after her marriage to Fulk, she gave birth to a son who would be dubbed Baldwin III.² In contrast, Eleanor gave birth only to two daughters, which meant that they were hardly considered stable heirs in France. The two queens' production of heirs contributed to the varying degrees of support they received from their respective courts and husbands, which affected the way each queen sought to influ-

² William of Tyre stated Baldwin III was two years old when he saw Baldwin II on his deathbed in 1131, placing his birth in 1129. The year of Fulk and Melisende's marriage was calculated from Baldwin II's death and the assertion that Fulk had stayed as a count for three years after their marriage until they ascended the throne. See William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 630-4.

ence her husband and the court. Melisende's success in producing a male heir was perceived as the fulfillment of an important female duty, and allowed her to cross other boundaries politically. This was in contrast to Eleanor, whose inability to produce a male heir, combined with her dismissal of the conventions for women, left her with less political support from the Church and nobility.

Eleanor's introduction into northern France of the so-called Provençal style of verse and southern fashions outraged the king's courtiers. Provençal verse was in the southern French dialect, *langue d'oc*, whereas the northern portion of France used the *langue d'oïl* dialect.³ Certain ideas expressed by the troubadours⁴ that Eleanor brought to the French court in the north aggravated both clergy and husbands alike.⁵ This was most likely because troubadours not only spoke of courtly love, which demanded more gallant and refined behavior from husbands, but also brought up questions concerning political and social life. Troubadours did not amuse the clergy or nobles whom they satirized.⁶

There was also strife between Eleanor and some of Louis' advisors, most notably Thierry Galeran.⁷ Eleanor's levity and importation of southern culture made her few friends at court and a handful of opponents, but she compensated for this by keeping a firm hold over her husband. A main point of leverage that Eleanor had over Louis was the large amount of territory she had brought to their marriage. Southern France had long resisted the will of what it thought was a "northern king," and Louis finally had an excuse to assert his dominance more strongly over the south. Gascony and Poitou were included in Eleanor's inheritance, which transferred to Louis upon his marriage to her. This allowed Louis to expand charters in Gascony and lead campaigns into Poitou and Toulouse in the name of defending Eleanor's interests. Louis' justification for invading Toulouse was Eleanor's claim to Toulouse through her grandmother Philippa, who was the daughter of Count William of Toulouse.⁸ By acquiring the duchy of Aquitaine, which his ancestors had never held before, Louis gained legitimacy for his throne and for his campaigns to unite the provinces of France.

³ H.J. Chaytor, *The Troubadours* (Cambridge: University Press, 1912). Dialect also varied by provinces in medieval France. The literary language of the troubadours began in the Limousin dialect and was fostered by those of neighboring Poitou and Saintonge. These regions were the birthplace of what misleadingly became known as Provençal lyric poetry.

⁴ Medieval minstrels and poets from southern France.

⁵ Desmond Seward, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (New York: Times Books, 1979), 28-9.

⁶ Chaytor, *Troubadours*, 8.

⁷ Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, eds., *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 6.

⁸ Wheeler, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 6.

While the wealth and influence Louis had gained from Eleanor were not necessarily what inclined him to consider her opinions, his apparent infatuation with her certainly made him do so. William of Tyre described Louis' desire for Eleanor as "immoderate," suggesting that the king's love for his wife was a key factor in his political decisions.⁹ This would become the foundation for why later sources and the Church attacked Eleanor's sexual reputation, because in a way she was using sex as a means to gain political prominence. To have such a desire for one's wife was disparaged and discouraged at the time, as marriage was intended to temper the sin of desire and to focus sexual activity on procreation alone. Aside from undermining the religious reasoning behind marriage, strong desire emanating from the husband disturbed the social order where the man was meant to be in control. Desire was perceived as a loss of control, and as in the case of Louis and Eleanor, it was a way to allow the wife to wield power improperly.¹⁰ Louis' "immoderate desire," as noted by William of Tyre, explains why Louis allowed Eleanor to accompany him on the Second Crusade, why he backed her causes, and why he gave her limited freedom to issue charters for Aquitaine. The desire Louis had for Eleanor let her control him in ways that made Louis her main avenue of power, and this was her most important tool of political influence during her reign as Queen of France.

Unlike Eleanor, Melisende sought to gain more personal and political freedoms through the support of the court. According to William of Tyre, Fulk and Melisende enjoyed a close relationship in the second half of their marriage, but the marriage was undoubtedly tense at the start. Melisende's father had intended her to have the status of co-ruler with Fulk, a status Fulk continually sought to deny her, which is why the marriage was tense from the beginning. One of the best examples of the conflict between the two spouses was a psalter—a book containing psalms, often with other devotional material such as pictures, a litany of saints, liturgical calendar, etc.—known as *Melisende's Psalter*. This manuscript is thought to have been commissioned by

⁹ William of Tyre was the major source for the First and Second Crusades in the eleventh through twelfth centuries. Archbishop of Tyre, William was tutor to King Baldwin IV, Melisende's grandson, and would have been familiar with the court of Jerusalem. He was legally trained, but also had certain biases of the clergy, making his extraordinary praise of Melisende something rather unusual. He fosters the traditional scorn for women by clergy in all his remarks about Eleanor.

¹⁰ Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 62-7.

Fulk as a present to Melisende. The images express notions of benevolence, forgiveness, and wifely duty. In an attempt to draw a physical comparison between Fulk and Christ, they also contain some pictures of Jesus. That Fulk gave Melisende such a psalter, with images in his likeness that evoke such feelings, means that he was attempting to coax her into political passivity, possibly even censuring her behavior.¹¹ Fulk wanted Melisende to be the benevolent and gentle queen, the forgiving and passive wife.

Seeing that her husband would not be sympathetic toward her intent to have power as a ruler, Melisende looked to her courtiers for support in her political ambitions. As heir to the throne by birth, Melisende had a legal right to the nobility's support. This was in contrast to Eleanor, whose central problem with the court was that she was constantly perceived as a foreigner. Her southern style of dress and southern way of thinking did not endear her to the northern-minded court.

Melisende's coalition of loyal nobles was particularly helpful in getting her way with Fulk. Since she was not on negotiating terms with Fulk, she gathered strength from her allied nobles to force his support. One instance of this was when Melisende barred Fulk from intervening in her sister Alice's march on Antioch by "having support from certain nobles."¹² Melisende mobilized political backing to prevent Fulk's intervention in a military operation against the wishes of her father and sister.¹³

The control Eleanor exercised over Louis, and thus over the French army during the Second Crusade, and the power Melisende could wield as she made herself into a fully realized Queen of Jerusalem, would not have gone unnoticed by the two queens' contemporaries. The struggle for power in Outremer very likely pushed people into spreading adultery scandals about the two women. The scandals surrounding Melisende and Eleanor during their ascent to power have fascinated and entertained many; however, there

¹¹ Jaroslav Folda, "A Twelfth-century Prayerbook for the Queen of Jerusalem," *Medieval Perspectives* 8 (1993): 1-14.

¹² William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, 658: "Porro modico ante tempore, postquam tamen predicti missi fuerant ut dominum Raimundum citarent, Aaliza principissa, domini quoque Milissendis regine soror, quam pater eius, civitate exclusam Antiochena, Laodicia et Gabulo iusserat esse contentam, interveniente apud regem sorore sua ne actibus eius obviaret, quorundam procerum fulva patrocinio iterum Antiochiam ingressa est, pro domina se gerens, et universa ad suam revocabat sollicitudinem."

¹³ Melisende married Fulk before her father, King Baldwin II, died. At this time King Baldwin II still ruled; however, Fulk played an active hand in major military battles and direction.

has been less discussion of the outcomes of the scandals, and why they were different from each other.¹⁴

In the twelfth century, adultery was regarded as a terrible crime because it broke the sanctity of marriage and welcomed sin and chaos into the union, since the adulterer was indulging in sexual desire and disrupting the social and religious order. This need for marriage to induce peace and order was so important that there were laws and disciplinary measures taken against sexual desire even within marriage. Civil and ecclesiastical punishments for men were dealt out when they had sex with their wives during proscribed days, in a banned position, while their wives were pregnant, or menstruating. Thus, the act of adultery was so heinous because it was direct enactment of sexual desire that promoted disharmony in spiritual and civil life.¹⁵ If adultery were indeed a crime that Eleanor or Melisende committed, then they would have been hosts for such disharmony, a quality disliked by male rulers, which could have ended support for the queens.

Melisende's adultery scandal started when rumors flew that Melisende and Hugh, the count of Jaffa, were having close "dialogues." The chronicler William of Tyre's use of *misceret*, "mixed," and *colloquia*, "dealings or dialogues," was meant to convey a sense of intimacy, as the two needed to be physically close to each other to have such intimate conversations. According to William, Fulk distrusted Hugh of Jaffa from the beginning, and the rumor of Hugh's closeness with the queen turned Fulk's jealousy into hatred.¹⁶ He may have thus attempted to turn Melisende's allies against her by slurring her reputation. Prior to the adultery scandal, Melisende used to gather together nobles whose support helped push her agenda with Fulk, but the intimate conversations with Hugh could point to Melisende's creation of an opposition party with Hugh as the head. This would explain the mistrust Fulk was said to have for Hugh, and why Melisende was in such close contact with Hugh. Jaffa was also a very powerful fief in Outremer, adding to the reasons Hugh was a viable leader of the opposi-

¹⁴ Desmond Seward, Peggy McCracken, and Connor Kostich all discuss Eleanor's adultery scandal with an individual rather than social focus. Hans Eberhard Mayer studies Melisende as a single subject quite closely too, but none of these scholars compares the difference in outcome of these two adultery scandals or why it might be significant.

¹⁵ Duby, *The Knight*, 53.

¹⁶ William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, 652: "Dicebatur a nonnullis quod dominus rex suspectum nimis haberet comitem ne cum domina regina familiaria nimis misceret colloquia cuius rei multa videbantur extare argumenta; unde et maritali zelo succubantur inexorabile odium adversus eum dicebatur concepisse."

tion for Melisende. Spreading rumors about an adulterous liaison between the count and the queen could have contributed to her alienation from her allies and thereby severed her from her most important collaborator.

Fortunately, Melisende had a strong support base that helped discredit the indecent accusation, and the rumor eventually backfired on Fulk and his supporters. Support came from both the court in Jerusalem and the Church. Evidence for Church support can be found in the form of Patriarch Fulcher, who came to her aid, as well as in William of Tyre's comments on her reign: he had nothing but good things to say about her.¹⁷

Melisende's position stabilized further when Fulk and his supporters eventually implicated themselves in an attempt on the Count of Jaffa's life. Fulk wittingly exonerated himself from direct blame by ordering that the tongue of Hugh's assailant not be cut out, allowing the assailant to admit he had attempted to kill Hugh of Jaffa to win Fulk's favor, but not on direct orders from Fulk. Although Fulk acquitted himself of any involvement in the crime and there was no direct proof he or his supporters had planned it, the blunder allowed for Melisende to come out ahead in public opinion. Fulk's blunder put him on shaky political ground, while strengthening the political, public, and clerical support behind Melisende, allowing her an opening to seize her position as full co-ruler as her father had intended.

The specific wording of William of Tyre's account of the adultery scandal shows that Melisende took up the mantle of true co-ruler and hints at a political coup in which the nobles supporting Melisende also increased their power:

From that day, everyone who brought accusations against the Count so as to enrage the king fell under the displeasure of Queen Melisende and was forced to take diligent measures for his safety... Above all, the queen persecuted Rohard the Elder... in whatever ways she could, for he in particular had led the lord king into hatred [against the Count]. It was not safe for these informers to come before her; in fact, they deemed it prudent to keep away even from public gatherings.¹⁸

¹⁷ William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, 652, 761, 777.

¹⁸ William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, 655-6: "Ab ea die quicumque comitis apud dominum regem fuerant delatores et inceptores odii, domine milissendis regine, quam etiam obiecti criminis quodammodo respere videbatur infamia et dolor inmanissimus expulsi comitis macerabat precordia, indignationem incurrentes exactum pro tutela proprii corporis oportebat habere diligentiam, maxime autem Rohardum seniore, ... qui dominum regem precipue in eam induxerat odiorum materiam, domina regina quibus poterat persequeretur modis. Non erat eis tutum ante eius accedere presentiam, sed et publicorum conventuum se subtrahere cetibus erat consultius."

Melisende's phenomenal display of temper was proof of her skills of intimidation and was a testament to her well-regarded position: men of the court typically did not fear women, yet they feared such a tantrum from Melisende. Even more than a show of anger, the suggestion of a political coup is conveyed in the concluding comment that, "from that day forward, the king became so uxorious that, whereas he had formerly aroused her wrath, he now calmed it, and not even in unimportant cases did he take any measures without her knowledge and assistance."¹⁹ Whereas before Fulk had ruled as sole monarch, without consulting Melisende, he now was so subdued that he took no action in regard to the kingdom's affairs without discussing it with Melisende. She had become a true co-ruler. There are also markers that suggest Melisende became not just co-ruler but the dominant ruler. That Fulk showed fear, and most importantly took the role of calming and soothing his wife, hints at a reversal of roles. His move to calm and sooth Melisende speaks to a position more closely assigned to women, effectively relegating him to second-in-command behind the true ruler—Melisende.

Eleanor's adultery scandal did not have as successful an ending as Melisende's did, most likely due to Eleanor's lack of support from the clergy or the nobles of France and Outremer. The Church had little love for Eleanor at the time of her adultery scandal because Eleanor had failed to do her duty to bear a male heir. Instead, she had insisted upon accompanying Louis VII on the Second Crusade and thus defied the Church mandate that it was to be a male-only endeavor. Consequently, the Church viewed Eleanor's spirited attitude and sexual influence over Louis as unfit behavior not only for a queen but for a woman of God.

The story of Eleanor's supposed shame began when the king and queen's retinue arrived at Antioch. Prince Raymond of Antioch was Queen Eleanor's uncle. He had hoped to secure Louis VII's favor and support in Antioch through gifts and flattery, but Louis VII refused Raymond's propositions of military expeditions for glory and gain because it would have deterred him from his ultimate goal of Jerusalem. Feeling insulted, Raymond took revenge by plotting to "deprive him of his wife" with the implication that he would physically harm the king. While Raymond was depicted as the seducer,

¹⁹ William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, 656: "Rex autem ab ea die ita factus est uxorius, ut eius, quam prius exacerbaverat, mitigaret indignationem, quod nec in causis levibus absque eius conscientia attemptaret aliquatenus procedere."

Eleanor appeared as consenting because she "was a foolish woman."²⁰ William of Tyre calls her "imprudens," implying Eleanor was imprudent. The importance of female prudence is critical to understanding why Melisende's scandal turned out less scandalous than that of Eleanor. Prudence was an important virtue for society and the Church, and if Eleanor was not displaying such prudence it would have met with considerable disapproval. Her attempts to grasp power through what were considered unfeminine means would have niggled her opponents' sensibilities even more and pitted them more deeply against her.

It is possible that French chroniclers and poets writing soon after the Second Crusade took advantage of Eleanor's imprudence to use her as a scapegoat for Louis' failures as a military commander. Chrétien de Troyes, a French poet writing about thirty to sixty years after Eleanor went on crusade, has recently been thought to represent this in his poem *Érec et Énide*.²¹ Louis VII's piety was well known, but the same could not be said of his exploits as a military leader. His inability to hold his soldiers' respect and to inspire them to follow orders was apparent in the disastrous confrontation between the Christian army and the Turks at Attalia during the Second Crusade. The French advanced guard camped in a valley rather than moving forward through a pass as Louis had instructed. For this reason, the army was trapped and unable to maneuver, and nearby Turks took advantage of their difficulties. Louis himself was almost killed, but luckily he escaped alive and the army was able to hold them off the Turks until reinforcements arrived.²²

Desmond Seward in *Eleanor of Aquitaine* rightly scorned other historians for their falsifying of Odo of Deuil's account.²³ In these false versions Louis decided, at the behest of Eleanor, to camp in the Attalia valley instead of moving through it, as Odo states was his intention; Eleanor was the person to blame for the defeat. These recent accounts of Attalia are completely different than the account written by Odo of Deuil, who was a contemporary of the Second Crusade. According to Odo, Geoffrey of Rancon was responsible for the delay that left the French army vulnerable to decimation, not Eleanor.

²⁰ William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, 755: "Una erat de fatuis mulieribus."

²¹ Rachel Walkover, "Reality within the Fantasy: the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes" (University of Florida, undergraduate thesis, 2014).

²² Odo of Deuil, *The Journey of Louis VII to the East*, trans. Virginia Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 144-9.

²³ For discussion of the twentieth-century Western scholars that identify Eleanor as the cause of the Attalia disaster, see Seward, *Eleanor*, 47.

Louis commanded his forces to move forward through the pass, but Geoffrey decided to halt the head of the army and camp in the valley, which became clogged with soldiers.

The very fact that modern historians debate the issue of Eleanor's involvement in the battle near Attalia shows how entrenched were the rumors about Eleanor's influence over Louis and the army. The idea that Eleanor had a hand in the debacle shows how much hostility surrounded her and how it influenced chroniclers later on. Her notoriety as an imprudent woman made it easier for chroniclers to accept the idea that she pushed Louis into making disastrous military decisions; it undoubtedly was better in their minds to blame the queen who would be divorced than the king whom they loved.

Eleanor appeared as a scapegoat in yet another key episode of the Second Crusade. A great council was held in Acre in 1148 to decide how to better expand and glorify the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Damascus was selected as the target of a new crusade. Louis VII participated in both the council and the subsequent siege. William of Tyre described the many great deeds of the crusaders at Damascus, including the Christian forces' success in taking the orchards and the river around the city. The Damascenes, in despair and running out of supplies, bribed men of the Christian army to convince the King of Jerusalem and the other princes, including Louis, to move to the other side of the city. The Christians soon realized that they had been deceived: they had moved away from food, water, and supplies, and were not able to return as their route had been barricaded and fortified against them. The princes and leaders of the Christian force gave up the task quickly and called for retreat. Later, the ordeal was regarded as a shameful failure.²⁴ William of Tyre debated in his *Chronicle* why such treachery happened. A recurrent theme was that Prince Raymond of Antioch used all matter of schemes to make sure the King failed, because he still held a grudge against him for not aiding him in his endeavors at Antioch after he had given Louis numerous gifts.

Eleanor was the perfect justification for Louis' behavior both before and after the siege of Damascus. Regardless of whether Raymond really deceived the crusaders at Damascus, he was right to be angry at Louis' refusal of aid after all the gifts he had given to Louis. The term "gift" had a somewhat different meaning to the one it has today. Gift giving during the medieval period was done in an attempt to gain the upper hand over a person, or to evoke a sizeable return gift that would put the original giver in a more desirable posi-

²⁴ William of Tyre, *Chronicle*, 760-770.

tion.²⁵ In this instance, Raymond wanted in return Louis' army to aid him in extending the lands of Antioch. Louis' refusal to give Raymond a return gift of equal or higher importance was a political blunder that positioned Raymond as the more powerful man. William of Tyre and the Church covered this up nicely by excusing Louis' actions as a desire to fulfill his holy quest for pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Louis was also said to have left because he wanted to escape from the amorous plotting of Eleanor and Raymond while they schemed behind his back. In this way, Eleanor's adultery created a situation where Raymond appeared as a jealous lover and Eleanor a shame to her husband, as well as a facilitator for Raymond's attempts to exploit Louis' power and favor.

Although Melisende of Jerusalem and Eleanor of Aquitaine had resources to spare, they still were expected to play the roles of wife and woman. Each displayed defiance and compliance in her own way. Melisende defied the norm and pushed for power as the preeminent ruler in her marriage with Fulk of Anjou. Her marriage to Fulk was politically tense, but she fulfilled her duty as a woman and provided two male heirs to the throne in quick succession, allowing her to go on her way in attempting to take political control of Jerusalem. Melisende's adherence to certain female norms gained her the favor of the Church and allowed her not only to escape from an adultery scandal with her reputation intact, but also to overturn Fulk's position as the primary ruler of Jerusalem. Eleanor was unable to fulfill her duty of producing a male heir and instead gave Louis daughters, a fact that displeased many. This, along with her open defiance of the Church's mandate against female participation in the Second Crusade, earned Eleanor the Church's disapproval. Eleanor's lack of prudence in regards to female duties and behavior led to a less favorable outcome of her adultery scandal. A clear difference appears between the behavior of Melisende and Eleanor. Melisende proved able to wield political power and also adhere to the majority of female expectations, while Eleanor's power steamrolled over a select few—but crucial—social mandates for noble women, crippling her potential for greater influence. These women both seized political power through different avenues, but Melisende was ultimately more effective since her adherence to certain mandates of femininity lent her the favor and support of the clergy and noblemen of Outremer. This favor let her escape her adultery scandal unscathed, and eventually allowed her to rule Jerusalem autonomously.

²⁵ Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," *Speculum*, 81 (2006): 671-699.

The (Im)permanence of Letters: Representations of Masculinity in Pérez de Oliva's *Dialogue on the Dignity of Man*

Matthew Michel

The Spanish Renaissance saw a renewed interest in the role of man in society as well as in the universe. The predominant medieval attitude, founded principally in biblical texts and the teachings of the Church fathers, held that man as a species was the apex of creation and destined for eternal life. By contrast, in the first half of the sixteenth century a number of humanist scholars adopted a more pessimistic vision, one which emphasized the fragility of human nature and the hopeless struggle against vice, temptation, and death. These competing discourses of dignity (*dignitas*) and misery (*miseria hominis*) are examined at length in the *Dialogue on the Dignity of Man* (1546) by the eminent humanist Fernán Pérez de Oliva.¹ The Cordovan author offers a uniquely Spanish take on the age-old polemic, one which emphasizes human agency and individual autonomy within the context of an increasingly centralized and orthodox society.

Written during or shortly after the author's sojourn to the papal court (ca. 1512-1515), the *Dialogue* shows a strong Erasmian influence in its description of man's virtue and capacity for spiritual growth.² Two intimate friends, Antonio and Aurelio, meet by chance and begin an impromptu discussion of human nature. Following the Ciceronian model, they elect another colleague, Dinarco, as a "judge" to hear their arguments and determine the winner. Despite the lack of an explicit conclusion, through the interlocutors' conversation it is possible to arrive at a new conception of man as an autonomous unit capable of controlling his own destiny. While medieval thought recognized the dignity of man only in relationship to God, the creator and father of all, Renaissance humanism held that man's dignity inherently resides in himself.³ What we are dealing with, then, is an explicit rupture with the traditional model of masculinity and the enunciation of a new humanistic conception of man which anticipates the modern *individual*.

¹ Oliva's *Dialogue* was first published in 1546 by Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, who substantially modified the text by inserting his own continuation to the debate. The latter was removed in the 1586 edition by Ambrosio de Morales, Oliva's own nephew and fellow humanist, who returned to the original Castilian text. Excerpts in this paper are my own translations based on the 2008 Madrid Cátedra edition. Fernán Pérez de Oliva, *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre*, ed. María Luisa Cerrón Puga (Madrid: Cátedra, 1995).

In the Middle Ages the reigning model of the dignity of man harkened back to ancient Rome, where *dignitas* was associated with a political life that contained public and moral components.⁴ Cicero emphasized man's capacity for understanding which manifests as ethical conduct; expanding upon this paradigm, Oliva's text proposes a vision of the ideal man which seems to incline towards self-contemplation. Although Antonio is the ostensible defender of *dignitas*, what he really seeks appears to be withdrawal (*retiro*) from the bitter struggles of the world and refuge within the privileged space of thought and artistic creation.⁵ If we accept this assessment, the image of masculinity represented by Antonio is that of a solitary hermit who takes refuge from the calamities of the world by reading classical and biblical texts. Unlike this rather abstract and contemplative model, the other speaker, Aurelio, finds his discourse on personal experience in order to give a materialist and negative view of man, affirming that man's nature is so corrupt that neither public participation nor withdrawal can save man from himself.⁶ The rest of the dialogue is an attempt to reconcile these opposing discourses, concluding with a tepid verdict in favor of *dignitas*.

The highly tentative structure of the last section of the dialogue suggests that there is much more at play here than a simple reflection on the perfectibility of man. Consolación Baranda stresses the continuities between this dialogue and those of the previous era, noting that a certain degree of pessimism and belief in the misery of man has been present since the Old Testament. The real novelty of Oliva's text is not the content but rather the way in which the speakers explore these timeless questions. Aurelio's discourse is distinct from contemporary works addressing *miseria* not in content but in form. His ideas are presented as the result of individual reflection and direct observation of facts rather than erudite contemplation of authoritative texts.⁷ In other words, Aurelio's insistence on personal experience and observation represents a major step towards the scientific method, founded on investigation and rationalism

² Alternatively, it may have been written after the author's definitive return to Spain in 1525.

³ Mauricio Beuchot, "El fundamento de los derechos humanos en Bartolomé de las Casas," *Areté* 5:1-2 (2013): 8.

⁴ Ascensión Rivas Hernández, "Humanismo cristiano en el diálogo de la 'Dignidad del hombre' de Fernán Pérez de Oliva," *Anuario de estudios filológicos* 34 (2011): 174.

⁵ Hernández, "Humanismo cristiano," 177.

⁶ Hernández, "Humanismo cristiano," 178.

⁷ Consolación Baranda, "Marca de interlocución en el *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre* de Fernán Pérez de Oliva," *Criticón* 81-82 (2001): 283.

instead of passively receiving truth from authority figures, whether they are the clergy or the governing classes.

One might well ask if Oliva's *Dialogue* really discusses masculinity, given that the evidence adduced by Aurelio and Antonio applies to human nature in general rather than to a specific gender or sex. Although *miseria hominis* is, for Aurelio, the irrevocable condition of all living beings, Antonio focuses specifically on man's capacity to achieve salvation, the perfection of the soul, and eternal life. Arturo Andrés Roig observes that the interlocutors only raise questions in respect to men and concludes that women do not figure in the dispute at all.⁸ This assertion is perhaps premature; one might just as easily infer that the absence of explicit references to women means that Oliva did not think of masculinity as a concept exclusively related to one's biological sex. In any case, the salient point is that, according to Antonio's discourse, man is a microcosm or laboratory in which it is possible to resolve the question of human dignity. This attitude anticipates the idea of man as an end in himself, a supposed innovation of modernity that already had its roots in the Renaissance.⁹ Such a discourse involves a complex system of relationships of power and privilege, but they are always masculine relationships: military service, agricultural work, university education, and even the ecclesiastical hierarchy are the "battlefield" in which men demonstrate their virtue and capacity to overcome the physical and moral limitations identified in the *miseria* discourse.¹⁰ Therefore, in humanistic terms, the true champion of the universality of the human condition would be Aurelio because his affirmations are based on the common experience of all human beings. It is perhaps ironic that the defender of the equality of capacities is the interlocutor that denies altogether the dignity of man. In the final analysis, if dignity exists as a virtue that we can possess, it must derive from the respect that we have for ourselves and for each other based on our common humanity. As Roig affirms, we make ourselves dignified or undignified in the construction of ourselves as historical entities.¹¹

⁸ Arturo Andrés Roig, "Las morales de nuestro tiempo y las necesidades a partir de la lección de Pico della Mirándola y Fernán Pérez de Oliva," *Páginas de Filosofía* 4:6 (2011): 14.

⁹ Roig, "Las morales de nuestro tiempo," 15.

¹⁰ Baranda, "Marca de interlocución," 284

¹¹ Roig, "Las morales de nuestro tiempo," 20.

Erasmus and Spanish Humanism

Oliva is known as a luminary of Spanish Renaissance humanism, although scholars cannot always agree on exactly what that term means. The precise definition of humanism that one adopts is of immense importance because it forms the cornerstone of the ideological program of Oliva and his contemporaries.¹² Although there is not unanimous consensus with respect to the term, the definition which best corresponds with the life and work of the Cordovan author is that of María Luisa Cerrón Puga: one who, through the cultivation of letters, publically applies the fruit of his disciplines.¹³ Unlike medieval models which often focused on philosophical abstractions and contemplation, the new civic humanism emphasizes the public and social dimension. For Oliva and his colleagues, the eloquence of the ancient worthies not only serves to enrich the soul of the reader but also functions as a model of government. Instead of isolating oneself in the cloister, earnest men of letters (*letrados*) should place themselves at the service of the widest possible public.¹⁴ Although this understanding of humanism proposes a clear plan of action, certain difficulties persist even with this definition. It is not easy to reduce the contradiction of humanism, the study of letters as a human creation, within the context of Christianity, whose authoritative texts are revealed.¹⁵ Despite this semantic conflict, the preceding definition will best serve the purposes of this paper, given that the debate between reason and revelation constitutes the philosophical axis of the *Dialogue*.

The vision of masculinity proposed in the *Dialogue* is essentially a distillation of Erasmus. The Dutch reformer also believed that men were masters of their own future; despite the most humble birth, man can improve himself through diligent study and exercising control over carnal impulses. Although in his essay "De pueris instituendis" Erasmus affirms that the success of these efforts depends to a great extent on receiving proper instruction from an early age, he also recognizes that birth is not exclusively determinative of social ascent: "Well in advance you arrange for your son to become a bishop or abbot, but you fail to give him an upbringing that would enable him to discharge these offices well."¹⁶ This belief in the perfectibility of the self is a central point

¹² Baranda, "Marca de interlocución," 271.

¹³ Fernán Pérez de Oliva, *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre*, ed. María Luisa Cerrón Puga (Madrid: Cátedra, 1995), 15.

¹⁴ Oliva, *Diálogo*, 15-16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," in *The Erasmus Reader*, ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 71.

of dispute in the *Dialogue*, and the resolution in favor of the Erasmian position could explain the text's eventual inclusion on the Spanish Inquisition's *Index of Prohibited Books*.¹⁷

According to Erasmus, the human body is a mere vessel for the true self, the soul, which must be nurtured by classical texts and perfected by the infusion of divine grace. The flesh is simply a tool to achieve these abstract but absolute goals:

"But man certainly is not born, but made man. Primitive man, living a lawless, unschooled, promiscuous life in the woods, was not human, but rather a wild animal. It is reason which defines our humanity... If physical shape constituted man's true nature, then statues would have to be included among the human race."¹⁸

An underdeveloped and uncritical mind makes a man as inhuman as a statue. Of course, Erasmus does not entirely deny the importance of the flesh: "Body and soul are so closely joined together that it is inevitable that one must influence the other, either for better or for worse."¹⁹ What ultimately matters, though, is the soul enriched by wisdom. This idea is encapsulated in an emphatic refrain that resounds throughout the text: "To kill the body is a crime less serious than to kill the spirit."²⁰ The inner life of the spirit is the essential thing, and in order to be truly man it is necessary to master the body and the carnal appetites—an apt motto for the renowned philosopher and pedagogue. In Oliva's text, this tension between body and spirit prompts the initial debate and underlies all subsequent discussions in the *Dialogue*.

First Discourse: Miseria Hominis

Aurelio, the first interlocutor, represents the tradition of *miseria hominis*—the idea that man's position in the world is unbearable and his nature is totally depraved. Before making this grim proclamation, the author attempts to gain the reader's goodwill through a long *captatio* or passage designed to illustrate his rhetorical skill. From the first lines one notes a bellicose tone,

perhaps with a certain irony, such as a reference to duels of honor and the need to hide them:

AURELIO: For once I have seen you defeated in this bout, I will have confidence that no one will be able to defeat me.

ANTONIO: No need for threats when one has arms in hand and an empty field.²¹

The "duel" between these speakers will be accomplished through reason and rhetoric, and Aurelio fires the first volley. Basing his argument on classical models, as well as his own observation, he affirms that letters are superior to arms, but ultimately falls into misanthropic desperation for three reasons. First, he observes that wise men are defenseless against strong men, just as humanity in general lacks adequate defenses against savage beasts. Second, he asserts that all men are at the mercy of sensual temptation and vice, and not even reason is sufficient to help oneself in the eternal war against carnal desires. Finally, he laments the fact that all human beings and even letters themselves will disappear and be erased by time.

Aurelio begins by recognizing the physical weakness of man and his lack of natural defenses against savage beasts: "Only men have no natural defenses against harm: sluggish if he flees and unarmed if he stays."²² The natural world is a continuous struggle for survival, and scrupulous men that dedicate themselves to letters are always the victims of strong men who metaphorically become beasts. This physical conflict between the timid and the fierce is a reflection of the internal conflict that all men experience. Aurelio describes the conflict between reason and natural appetite as a "perpetual war" and believes that man has no option but to surrender before the bombardment of the senses:

Our natural appetites never cease to fight us, though reason often ceases to defend us. At all times sensuality entices us with her vile delights, but reason is not always with us to admonish and defend us from her... Well, when one comes to such a state, what could be more abhorrent than man?²³

¹⁷ Morales' edition appears on the 1632 *Index*, although Cerrón Puga believes this was a censor's error.

¹⁸ Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 72.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 81.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 77.

²¹ Oliva, *Diálogo*, 118.

²² *Ibid*, 126.

²³ *Ibid*, 131.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 131.

This somber interpretation is in marked contrast with Erasmus, who believes that the wickedness of human nature can be curbed through education, and even those who cannot be improved can be controlled through intelligent government.

Another key aspect of Aurelio's criticism is the lack of virtue among the governing class, which again stands in sharp discord with the Erasmian belief in enlightened rule: "Those who govern, see how not even they have time to rest, searching for truth among the disputes of men and their obfuscations, where finding it is a matter of great care and great difficulty."²⁴ According to this view, even the leaders are slaves of their own intellectual disputes and their unceasing desire to accumulate empty honors and wealth. Worse still, society itself depends on the protection of armed men who suffer from the same defects as their leaders: "And if you observe the men of war that guard the republic, you must see them dressed in iron, maintained by robbery, careful to kill and fearful of being killed, walking in the continual changing of fortune's flame, with equal work night and day."²⁵ Aurelio attributes this social deterioration to the absence (or undervaluing) of letters. This attitude appears to derive from Erasmus, who emphatically blames parents for not giving their children proper education: "Parents also cause harm to society when they, in so far at least as it lies within their power, present the community with a citizen who constitutes a real threat."²⁶ The most obvious difference between the two discourses is that Aurelio believes that ignorance and vice are the irremediable destiny of man, while Erasmus believes in the possibility of overcoming them through education.

According to Aurelio, the ultimate refuge of men of letters is in writing, which functions as a defense against impermanence and obscurity. Instead of seeking fame on the battlefield, men of letters traditionally achieve immortality through the texts they compose and leave for posterity. Nonetheless, Aurelio insists that not even this is safe ground for *letrados* because their very letters will be erased by time:

And although they speak the truth, they do not write on the incorruptible sky, nor with immutable letters; rather, they write on paper, with letters that, although they were durable, with the advance of time are finally forgotten. The letters of the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and many others who so flourished, who knows them? Who remembers today the kings and great men that entrusted their fame to letters?²⁷

Despite the eminently negative tone, one sees in this discourse once again the influence of the Erasmian model of masculinity. Indeed, Aurelio's anguish seems to coincide with the description Erasmus offers in his "De pueris instituendis" (1529) of men who try to gain wisdom through practical experience without the essential guide of philosophy: "Think of all the hardships and sufferings that have befallen people who have, indeed, through practical experience, gained some measure of understanding, but only at the cost of great misery in their lives."²⁸ For the Dutchman, as for Oliva, the truly miserable man is he that trusts in his own faculties without consulting the wisdom of the ancients, a possibility that Aurelio does not appear to have considered.

Second Discourse: Dignitas

After listening patiently to his colleague, Antonio methodically responds to each of his arguments, supporting himself principally with scripture and Catholic doctrine. He offers three reasons why men of letters should not despair. First, the strong men that Aurelio so despises actually defend Christian society and create the peaceful conditions which are necessary for men of letters to prosper. Second, the study of letters cultivates virtues in man and enriches him with wisdom, which enables him to resist temptation successfully. Finally, instead of disappearing, letters survive far beyond the death of the writer and are a means of attaining immortality. Letters are, in effect, the foundation of the entire *dignitas* position because through them man can access the accumulated knowledge of the centuries, which helps him to distinguish between virtue and vice. This belief in the perfectibility of the soul through education has a marked Erasmian influence: "The teachings of philosophy are, as it were, the eyes of the soul, casting light on the road ahead, revealing what is the right and what is the wrong path to follow."²⁹ The capacities to reason, evaluate, and choose for oneself are the true dignity of man.

Antonio contradicts the propositions of Aurelio one by one. Although man lacks the natural defenses all other animals possess, he has the intelligence to make arms and tools which surpass the skills of all savage beasts. According to his analysis, man was created in the image of God and his hands are the sign of this divine favor:

²⁵ Ibid, 132-33.

²⁶ Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 75.

²⁷ Oliva, *Diálogo*, 135.

²⁸ Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 77.

²⁹ Ibid.

In man these are very obedient servants to art and reason, [and] they make whatever work one's mind imagines a reality... They tame the brute beasts; they bring hardy bulls to serve man, their necks bent beneath the yoke... These have such might that nothing in the world is powerful enough to defend against them.³⁰

This description introduces a somewhat surprising theme within the Renaissance context: the praise of manual labor. Whereas Italian humanists like Baldassare Castiglione and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola looked at such menial activities with disdain, Oliva seems to have a much more favorable opinion of the agricultural sector, emphasizing the fact that the cities could not feed themselves without the labor of the peasants:

Those who labor in the fields, whom you [i.e., Aurelio] put below the others, are not at all as you indicated. You said that they are slaves to those of us who live in the cities, but to me they seem like nothing less than our own fathers, given that they sustain us; and not just us, but also the beasts that serve us, and the plants that bear fruit for us. A great part of the world has life because of the laborers, and great reward is the fruit of their labors.³¹

From this perspective, one might well ask who has greater importance in the social hierarchy: the humble man who produces food through his own efforts or the idle elite that consumes it in the cities. Regardless, this discourse does not quite become revolutionary because the author never dares to attack the established order directly. In fact, Antonio defends the division of society into distinct spheres as a natural condition which promotes the happiness and wellbeing of all men.

Although he evidently prefers letters, Antonio recognizes the important role that arms have in society as protection against invasion and civil unrest. Any gift, he reminds us, can be used in a perverse or cruel way; the only difference is the intention of the man that takes advantage of it. Once again, Oliva underlines free will as man's defining characteristic, although this capacity for choice can produce positive or negative results according to individual disposition and temperament:

Here are the failings of man; here are the errors, among which I do not count arms like you do, Aurelio, because if there must be bad men then arms are good to defend us from them... Likewise, arms through

bad use become bad, but they are good in themselves to defend against violent beasts and the men that resemble them.³²

Another important element of this discourse is the reduction of arms to a mere tool. Breaking with the medieval tradition that exalted military service as a quasi-divine mission, Antonio places arms on the same level as plows and other labor devices. In true Erasmian fashion, he demystifies the warrior class without altogether denying its validity as a social entity or its importance in the proper functioning of the state.

A second reason humanity should not despair is that the struggle against vice serves to perfect the spirit and soul. This internal struggle brings glory to man in the next life. Antonio compares this process explicitly with the model of the Roman triumph:

How much more, since the ancient Romans used to fight in foreign regions, and endure grievous labors in order to achieve in Rome a day of triumph with earthly pride, should we not fight gladly within ourselves against vice, in order to triumph in heaven with lasting glory?³³

This optimistic evaluation is counterpoint to the misanthropic despair of Aurelio. By stressing a spiritual experience which (in theory) is common to everyone, Antonio raises the possibility that anyone can achieve this type of glory, no matter how humble his origins. The vision of masculine virtue that he presents is far more accessible and even egalitarian than the one constrained by the strict division along class lines that was dominant in the Middle Ages. Birth is no longer the all-determining factor but rather man's free will and capacity to control and direct his own actions.

Although the references to divine recompense are very pronounced, Antonio's discourse does not entirely disregard the importance of earthly fame. Here one perceives another notable contrast with Aurelio, who had despairingly announced, "All will be forgotten, time erases everything."³⁴ According to Antonio, instead of a brief and ephemeral existence, letters grant to man a form of life after death as well as eternal fame. Coinciding with Erasmus, he notes that through letters contemporary readers can access the wisdom of the ancients and the accumulated knowledge of the centuries:

³⁰ Oliva, *Diálogo*, 148-49.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 158-59.

³² *Ibid.*, 154-55.

³³ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

This I consider to be the great miracle of letters, that they give us the ability to talk with those who are not present with us today and to hear now the words our wise ancestors said. Letters maintain our memory, guard the sciences, and, which is most admirable, extend our life over long centuries, for by them we know the past, which is to feel them live again.³⁵

In effect, Antonio offers a double guarantee: man, by cultivating virtues and resisting the temptations of the body, will enjoy divine reward and will also be remembered by future generations for his abilities. In this way man can achieve immortality by his own actions and abilities, a process that bestows dignity on him.

Auctoritas and Ingenuity

Much of the academic debate over the *Dialogue* centers on the lack of an explicit conclusion. According to the Ciceronian model illustrated in *De Oratore*, one would expect Dinarco, as judge of the dispute, to offer a final summary and resolution that would also reveal the opinion of the author. There is no consensus among critics to explain the author's ambivalence about such a heated controversy. Cerrón Puga even suggests that the entire dialogue may have been a pretext for Oliva to show his rhetorical skill and mastery of Castilian grammar.³⁶ This paper suggests that the *Dialogue* is an attempt to reconcile the opposing traditions of *miseria* and *dignitas* rather than to wholly discount either discourse. The text makes it abundantly clear that both interlocutors are in favor of letters in general terms, but they disagree whether *letrados* can succeed in a world dominated (at least in Aurelio's opinion) by brute force and the continual struggle against sin. In this sense, Oliva's text is a microcosm that represents the intellectual ferment and the anxiety of educated men about the future during the imperial era.³⁷

A possible explanation for the lack of a concrete conclusion may be found in the presence or absence of *auctoritas*, the authoritative texts adduced in support of either argument. The question of *auctoritas* and its role in argumentation is the true literary innovation of the *Dialogue*. Instead of invoking divine grace or citing ancient texts, the discussion focuses on the interlocutors' own experience and observation. According to Jacqueline Ferreras, the work's authentic novelty is that the entire conversation arises from the lives of the protagonists and their own uncertainties; these can be momentary and

³⁵ Ibid, 153.

³⁶ Ibid, 15-16.

³⁷ Roig, "Las morales de nuestro tiempo," 14.

externalized, linked with their inner spiritual disquiet, or even reduced to a desire to learn, which corresponds to the author's goal of "scientific vulgarization."³⁸ This phenomenon is seen chiefly in the discourse of Aurelio, whose existential anguish does not seek consolation but merely to describe the hopeless situation of humanity in a hostile universe. However, the individualism and rationalism of Aurelio need not lead to nihilism. On the contrary, his discourse may actually work in favor of a consensus within Christianity, which in fact is what we see in the counter-discourse of Antonio, whose conversational style coincides with the didactic objectives of humanism.³⁹

As already discussed, Antonio continually refers to Catholic doctrine while Aurelio bases his arguments on his own experience and on classical texts by pagan authors. Sixteenth-century readers would not have doubted that the correct position was that which comported with the Church, an attitude which explains the lightly reproachful tone which Antonio adopts when correcting his colleague. As Victoria Pineda observes, the sum of the refutations that Antonio offers, his able manipulation of authorities, and his sententious style form a brilliant defense of the dignity of man; while one may debate the depth of the content, at no point is it possible to deny the excellence of the artifice.⁴⁰ In contrast with this style, Baranda believes that Aurelio directs his words to multiple receptors through the plural second person form (e.g. *mirad*, *veréis*) because he intends to address a universal audience.⁴¹ Despite this assumption, it is doubtful that the public would have docilely accepted such a startling and apparently pagan argument. On the contrary, when confronted with the "unbearable pessimism" of Aurelio, the sixteenth-century reader would incline toward the discourse of Antonio founded in Providence and the promise of resurrection.⁴² If we accept these assessments, it is impossible to speak of a victor and vanquished in this context because the author's purpose is not to resolve the dispute between two imaginary colleagues but instead to illustrate the triumph of divine writ over pagan texts.⁴³

³⁸ Jacqueline Ferreras, "Las marcas discursivas de la conciencia individualista en el diálogo humanístico del siglo XVI," *Criticón* 81-82 (2001): 224-25.

³⁹ Ferreras, "Las marcas," 225.

⁴⁰ Victoria Pineda, "Retórica y dignidad del hombre en Fernán Pérez de Oliva," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 45:1 (1997): 43.

⁴¹ Baranda, "Marca de interlocución," 284.

⁴² Ibid, 292.

⁴³ Cerrón Puga, *Diálogo*, 37.

To a certain point the absence of traditional *auctoritas* in Aurelio's discourse can be understood as a liberating element. Unlike his colleague, Aurelio's argumentation is founded on observable phenomena without the need for intermediaries.⁴⁴ According to this interpretation, Aurelio's materialism is not a defect but rather a precursor to the objectivity of the scientific method which characterizes modernity. At the opposite extreme, Antonio is repeatedly obliged to resort to biblical passages because his corporal senses are insufficient to observe the articles of faith. In Platonic terms, Antonio does not see things, which are mere signs; rather, he sees *inside* things.⁴⁵ But this semiotic and philosophical explanation does not encompass all of Antonio's response. In fact, his strongest argument against Aurelio is based precisely on man's capacity to choose for himself. Unlike plants and brute beasts, man can choose a positive or negative behavior. His capacity to distinguish and choose between good and evil proves that the human condition is not altogether miserable or invariably sinful. Here one can again perceive an echo of Erasmus: "But what is man's real nature? Is it not to live according to reason? This is why he is called a rational being, and this is what sets him apart from the animals. And what is the most harmful influence upon man? Surely it is ignorance."⁴⁶ The most important aspect of Antonio's discourse is that it relies on concrete facts and his own observation, thereby utilizing the same type of reasoning that Aurelio claims is the only admissible criterion for judging the human condition.⁴⁷

We finally arrive at a possible explanation: Aurelio's discourse exists only as a pretext for Antonio's counterpoint. The lack (or insufficiency) of *auctoritas*, the excessively negative tone, and the pessimistic vision of man serve to facilitate their own refutation. According to Hernández, such a device is consistent with the Renaissance ideal of equilibrium: Aurelio's discourse is necessary in order for Antonio to elaborate his position and refute his opponent's.⁴⁸ After all, Dinarco limits himself to praising Aurelio's *ingenio* and *agudeza*—that is, his rhetorical skill. Such a description would not shock the reading public because of the implicit understanding that human reason can

⁴⁴ Baranda, "Marca de interlocución," 287.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 289.

⁴⁶ Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 78.

⁴⁷ Baranda, "Marca de interlocución," 290.

⁴⁸ Hernández, "Humanismo cristiano," 187.

never threaten, much less replace, the revelatory texts on which *dignitas* is founded. Aurelio is ultimately no threat because no amount of cleverness or eloquence can equal the truth of revelation.⁴⁹

In the final analysis, the author himself embodies the model of enlightened masculinity which he proposes in the *Dialogue*. Although the conventions of the era obliged him to praise Christian warriors and rulers, it is evident that Oliva valued letters more than arms, and he attempts to demystify the military caste in favor of a more egalitarian vision. In this new model of masculinity, birth does not determine one's worth; rather, the qualities that a man must have are cultivated and developed through a long process of education in which letters take a principal role. One notes again the influence of Erasmus, who affirmed that, "[n]ature is realized only through method, and practice, unless it is guided by the principles of method, is open to numerous errors and pitfalls."⁵⁰ Oliva's discourse of *dignitas* provides just such a guide.

As these pages have attempted to demonstrate, to be a man in Oliva's text means to be diligent in one's obligations, whether on the battlefield, on the farm, in the cloister, or the university. This vision approaches the universal man that, in turn, maintains strong humanistic and Erasmian ties, adapted here for a uniquely Spanish context. As Cerrón Puga affirms, Oliva's real talent is his ability to popularize the moral philosophy and nominalist theology he acquired at the University of Salamanca, particularly the strong emphasis on intellectual independence, and to transmit it to a broad audience of readers.⁵¹ The *Dialogue's* exemplary character is undiminished by the ambiguity with which it presents this discourse. On the contrary, Oliva's text demonstrates that masculinity was not a monolithic construct, but rather a volatile and uncertain category, constantly vigilant against weakness and temptation, that was negotiated according to the physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics of each individual.

⁴⁹ Cerrón Puga, *Diálogo*, 165.

⁵⁰ Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 77.

⁵¹ Cerrón Puga, *Diálogo*, 17-18.

“Unnatural and Retrograde”: Europe’s Progression toward a Commercial Society as De- scribed by Adam Smith

Katelyn Brantley

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, England required Scotland, by authority of the 1707 Treaty of Union, to sacrifice the Scottish political institutions for the hope of economic betterment.¹ The impoverished state, however, continued to experience economic stagnation well into the second half of the century, prompting Scottish political and economic thinkers to center their historical and political writings on the problematic relationship between governmental intervention and economic development.² Andrew Fletcher of Slatoun conducted a remarkably sophisticated debate in his *Two Discourses Concerning the Affairs of Scotland* (1698) on Scotland’s national predicament.³ During the Scottish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, David Hume, in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (1752), also explored the demands of economic development on government institutions.⁴ These political thinkers sought to identify what form of government best suited the needs of a progressive commercial society. At this moment in Scotland’s social and intellectual history, Adam Smith entered the debate when he published the *Wealth of Nations* (1776). Smith viewed modern Europe’s evolution into a commercial

¹ The Treaty of Union in 1707 was an agreement to establish the political union of the kingdoms of England and Scotland to create what is now known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain. See William Ferguson, *Scotland’s Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1977); Michael Fry, *The Union: England, Scotland and the Treaty of 1707* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006); and Allan I. Macinnes, *Union and Empire: The Making of the United Kingdom in 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

² See footnote 11 for more information concerning how Scotland came to experience such poverty.

³ John Robertson, “The Legacy of Adam Smith: Government and Economic Development in *The Wealth of Nations*,” in *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth-Century Political Thought and Practice*, ed. Richard Bellamy (London: Routledge, 1990), 15.

⁴ The seminal works of Andrew Fletcher include *A Discourse of Government Relating to Militias* (1698), which called for Scotland’s royal army to be replaced by local militias and anticipated Adam Ferguson’s praise of martial virtues over a polite, commercial society in *Two Discourses Concerning the Affairs of Scotland* (1698) and in *An Account of a Conversation Concerning a Right Regulation of Governments for the Common Good of Mankind* (1703). David Hume’s major works are *Essays, Moral, Political, Literary* (1742) and the four-part *The History of England* (1754–61). This essay will examine Fletcher’s *Two Discourses*, Hume’s *Essays* and *The History of England*, and Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776).

society as an “unnatural and retrograde” phenomenon, with threads of commerce and liberty interwoven through a series of exceptional circumstances.⁵ This abnormal development led Smith to ask why these changes had emerged so slowly in Europe. He answered with an analysis of the feudal system’s malign and complex influence on the progress of agriculture and the division of labor. These influences contributed to the “retrograde” development of overseas trade before that of industry and agriculture, which thus reversed the “natural” order.⁶ His conception of civic tradition and constitutional principles allowed him to examine Scotland’s economic problems in the context of Europe’s economic history.⁷

To fully appreciate the significance of the *Wealth of Nations*, we must understand the ideological climate in which Smith was writing. His predecessors, such as Andrew Fletcher, wrote in terms of civic tradition. The Scottish political community formed its ideologies out of classical tradition, regarding the institutional, moral, and material conditions of free citizenship. These traditional concepts defined a political community first and foremost by the possession of a regular constitution, under which the institutions of civil government and militia secured the freedom of all citizens to participate in both the political life and defense of the community.⁸ While the institutional framework was central to the identity of traditional political communities in antiquity, it nonetheless depended upon moral and material conditions for its existence and survival. Citizens first had to be capable of moral virtue, a commitment to the public future, before they were free to participate in civil

⁵ Smith wrote in general terms about Europe’s economic history, but he seems to be mainly referring to the countries of Western Europe, such as England, France, Scotland, and so on.

⁶ “Retrograde,” then, described not the slowness of change but rather the reversal of a supposed “natural order” of progression.

⁷ Civic tradition, in this sense, refers to the centuries-old idea that humans are social beings, not isolated individuals, and that society is a collection of individuals seeking the common good. Classical philosophers such as Aristotle, Zeno, and Cicero repeatedly stress the role citizens should play in society and the need of individuals to develop the proper virtues to do so. As we can see, Fletcher, Hume, and Smith continue this tradition in their own writings, arguing that citizens, in turn, ought to be protected by proper government practices. How philosophers defined these practices, however, varied, as we will see in the following pages.

⁸ Consider, for example, the Greek *polis*, in which all citizens felt it both their honor and duty to participate in the security and defense of their city-state, though admittedly citizenship was at that time confined to wealthy, Greek, landowning, male natives of the *polis*. Athenian and Spartan documents discuss this idea in great depth. For primary account, see the *Histories of Herodotus and Thucydides*. For a closer inspection of how this relates to Adam Smith, see Robertson, “Legacy of Adam Smith,” 16.

affairs, and this esteemed attribute depended on material independence or autonomy.⁹ In antiquity, therefore, only a limited number of people could satisfy their own economic needs without making themselves dependent upon others. Conversely, failure to observe these material and moral conditions brought about corruption. Scottish economic and historical writers held that it was precisely this interdependence in a political community of the social, moral, and institutional dimensions of citizenship that made the concepts of the civic tradition so applicable as they sought to relate the demands of material improvement to the continuing institutional requirements of the government.¹⁰

Even with this ancient mindset, it was a peculiarly Scottish development of the civic tradition that adapted its terms to the positive pursuit of wealth. Hitherto, thinkers in the tradition had been hostile to the wealthy, preferring a social regime of Spartan austerity. At best, wealth had been approved as a private pursuit, which citizens should keep strictly separate from their public, political activity. This changed in 1700, however, because escaping from poverty became a national priority, and it was Andrew Fletcher who took the initiative to adapt civic concepts to the pursuit of wealth as a public good. He set forth the pursuit of economic improvement using a classical civic model. As long as a clear differentiation of citizens from the unfree was maintained and the participatory institutions of a national parliament and militia were safeguarded, economic improvement could be seen as consistent with, and indeed the key to, Scotland’s continuing survival as an independent political community.¹¹ David Hume, then, entered the debate by disagreeing with Fletcher’s preservation of the concepts of traditional significance. Hume radically altered those theories by combining the fundamental civic concepts of citizenship and liberty with individualist principles taken from the natural

⁹ Rousseau speaks to the relationship of virtue and wealth but in a highly different manner in *The Social Contract* (1762) and *Discourses on Inequality* (1755).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Andrew Fletcher, *Two Discourses Concerning the Affairs of Scotland* (Edinburgh: [s.n.], 1698), 132-148. This particular section delineates exact distinctions between a servant, one who is “only subject to the laws, and not to the will of his master, who can neither take away his life, mutilate, and torture, or restrain him”, and a slave, who is “absolutely subjected to the will of another man without any remedy: and not one that is only subjected under certain limitations” (132-136). He writes at greater length concerning the interaction with militias, state economy, and constitutions in *Account of a Conversation*, 195-202.

jurisprudential traditions of political thought.¹² He firmly upheld the principles of individual liberty, autonomy, and personal responsibility, which would be characterized later as classical liberalism.¹³

Hume proposed that the individual’s free pursuit of his own interest created wealth. For example, the saddler had an interest in fitting horses with proper riding material and charged a fee for it.¹⁴ At first glance, wealth was not a public good. Hume emphasized that the Scots’ poor economic position was precisely the result of attempts by public officials to appropriate wealth under the guise of public good, which created the economic and governmental problems of which eighteenth-century writers complained.¹⁵ Instead, government in a commercial society should provide the maximum possible security for the individual’s person and property. It must protect the individual from interference or appropriation by government or other entities. Hume’s ideas would alter the concept of citizenship, for the elite would no longer have a monopoly on wealth; rather, an increasing number of people would begin to accumulate wealth and thus achieve the classical standard of autonomy. The universal provision of individual personal liberty would, over time, require a comparably universal extension of the individual’s political liberty.¹⁶

Adam Smith recognized, even more sharply than Hume, the limitations of traditional civic concepts. In formulating the problem of government and economic development, Smith confirmed that the corollary of universal individual

¹² The natural law school of jurisprudential thought, the oldest view of law dating back to ancient Greece, maintains that there are rational objective limits to the power of legislative rules. The foundations of these laws are accessible through human reason, and it is from these laws of nature that man created laws gain their force. See Knud Haakonssen, *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹³ Hume’s notable skepticism, with regard to human knowledge in general and religious knowledge in particular, has often situated him in more radical camps of later thought. While his religious views were far from orthodox, his economic and political views were, on the whole, in line with those of his friend, Adam Smith.

¹⁴ David Hume, “Of Commerce,” in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (1742; London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 255.

¹⁵ Among the several reasons for Scotland’s poor economic state at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the disaster known as the Darien Scheme. The Kingdom of Scotland attempted to become a world-trading nation by establishing a colony on the Isthmus of Panama, backing the project with nearly one-fourth of the national currency. The attempt floundered after a final siege by Spanish forces in 1700, leading to a significant monetary loss for Scotland. The effects of this devastating loss, compounded with a series of bad harvests, left Scotland with little resistance against the Treaty of Union (1707).

¹⁶ John Robertson, “The Legacy of Adam Smith,” 17.

freedom would be the eventual universalizing of citizenship and its liberty. After this assent, however, he departed from the institutional principles of civic tradition in favor of the principles associated with the novel British doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty instituted by the Glorious Revolution of 1688.¹⁷ In the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith offered his unique contribution to economic and historical thought by his treatment of both the governmental and economic problems plaguing Scotland. He integrated the economic and political into one systematic analysis of *political economy*, where both the formulation and resolution to the problem became explicitly one. Like Hume, Smith insisted on the juridical freedom of the individual, but he differed by arguing that the individual’s self-interested pursuit of wealth, the natural desire of “bettering our condition,” is the motor of society’s progress as a whole.¹⁸ The extension of political liberty in a commercial society must be balanced against the need to ensure the individual’s juridical freedom. For Smith, Hume, and other thinkers following the jurisprudential tradition, the cultivation of self-interest depended upon the security of property. Smith identified the government’s necessary duty as the provision of such security through the institutions of justice and defense. Furthermore, he classified security of property as the necessary condition of society’s progress. In the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith conveyed the importance of preventing the improper regulation of economic activity and minimizing the diversion of resources away from productive enterprise; it would also be necessary to ensure that government itself cannot be subverted by the anti-social interest of the capitalist order.¹⁹

While similarities exist between the two theorists, Smith’s constitutional principles were not of the same historical derivation as those of Hume. The latter posited that the classical republican form of government, despite its flaws, had been responsible for the initial development of commerce and

¹⁷ Parliamentary sovereignty was the view, realized in 1688, that the decisions of parliament should supersede the will of the monarch. The “constitutional” part of a “constitutional monarchy” means, in effect, that the rulings of parliament are legal almost automatically and will override decisions of a monarch who wishes to contradict them. For more information on the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the development of a constitutional monarchy, see Vernon Bogdanor, *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁸ For Hume’s full argument, see David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd ed., ed. L.A. Selby-Bigg, revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 280.

¹⁹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 5th edition, 381. Edwin Cannan, ed., 1776 (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1904).

the arts.²⁰ In contrast, Smith denied that the classical model embodied the necessary prerequisites appropriate to a commercial society: judicial, military, and representative institutions. Instead, he suggested it was in the modern world of the previous few centuries that those requisite institutions had first emerged.²¹ Whereas Hume supposed the civilized monarchies of Europe had significantly improved on the republican principles they inherited, Smith considered them to belong to a “gradation of despotism.”²² Their achievement in the spheres of justice and defense was counterbalanced, he believed, by relying on an oppressive and wasteful system of public finance.²³ What cause, then, did Smith believe to be responsible for the rise of a commercial society in Europe if it did not come from “civilized monarchies”?

Borrowing, most likely, from Victor de Riquetti, marquis de Mirabeau’s *Rural Philosophy* (1763), Smith answered this question by pointing to what he considered to be the “natural course” of progression: agriculture, manufacturing, and lastly foreign commerce.²⁴

According to the natural course of things, therefore, the greater part of the capital of every growing society is, first, directed to agriculture, afterwards to manufactures, and last of all to foreign commerce. This order of things is so very natural, that in every society that had any territory, it has, I believe, been in some degree observed. Some of their lands must have been cultivated before any considerable towns could be established and some sort of coarse industry of the manufacturing kind must have been carried on in those towns, before they could well think of employing themselves in foreign commerce.²⁵

People seek material comfort and are naturally sociable; essentially, they have a predisposition to “truck, barter, and exchange.”²⁶ A market then arises and produces a division of labor, specialization, high productivity, accumulation and investment, higher productivity, comfort, and material wealth.

²⁰ David Hume, *The History of England*, ed. William B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1983), 95.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² *Ibid.*, 105.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 380. Riquetti was the father of the better known comte de Mirabeau, leader during the early stages of the French Revolution. For a fuller description of his influence, see John Robertson, “The Legacy of Adam Smith,” 180-192. For Riquetti’s full essay, see Victor de Riquetti, marquis de Mirabeau and François Quesnay, *Philosophie rurale; ou, Économie générale et politique de l’agriculture: reduite à l’ordre immuable des loix physiques & morales, qui assurent la Prospérité des empires* (Amsterdam: Libraires Associés, 1764).

²⁵ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 380.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Driven by human nature, this process of commercialization starts in the countryside with the expansion of productivity in constructing the necessities of life and then expands to the towns. The last stage of commercialization is the “development of long distance international trade” in luxuries.²⁷ The cultivation of land leads to the establishment of towns and then to simple manufacturing, which eventually finds an outlet in foreign trade.²⁸ After proposing what the natural progression should be, Smith realized that modern Europe did not develop in this orderly fashion set forth by Mirabeau.²⁹ Instead, the natural development occurred in reverse as a result of the Germanic invasions of the Roman Empire. Their legacy was that of a few great proprietors engrossing the land and the legal perpetuation of an unnatural state of affairs.

Smith also offered a philosophical foundation for the nature of man, emphasizing the theme of commerce and liberty; the principle of human nature, according to Smith, is man’s unending desire to better his condition, which naturally leads to increasing opulence. This desire to enhance our living “though generally calm and dispassionate, comes with us from the womb, and never leaves us till we go into the grave. In the whole interval which separates those two moments, there is scarce perhaps a single instant in which any man is so perfectly and completely satisfied with his situation as to be without any wish of alteration or improvement of any kind.”³⁰ This, however, is a double-edged sword, for it cannot be separated from another unending principle: man’s desire to dominate others and enforce his own will. The combination of these two principles brought about both the multiplication of riches and the increase and worsening of slavery. The “unnatural and retrograde” progression of Europe took it from an agricultural stage (the Roman Empire) back to a barbaric stage (the consequence of the Germanic invasions). Only after this retrograde progression did a commercial stage (exhibited by the towns) begin, following which agriculture began to improve in the countryside.³¹

After the series of Germanic invasions of the western provinces of Rome’s empire, the land was left in a state of disarray. The “rapine violence” exhibited

²⁷ Ibid., 387.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ I am indebted to John Robertson for a beautiful summary of Mirabeau’s influence on Adam Smith’s writings.

³⁰ Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 353.

³¹ An intriguing question is when Smith sees the transition having come to fruition in Europe. However, he did not construct his argument in a strictly chronological manner. Furthermore, it would have been highly difficult to generalize when all of Europe reached this stage.

by the “barbarians” against the ancient inhabitants resulted in the interruption of commerce between the towns and the countryside.³² With towns deserted and the countryside left uncultivated, the degree of opulence achieved under the Roman Empire receded and was replaced by poverty and barbarism. A few great proprietors seized the empty, uncultivated lands, and the remaining population became serfs, the cultivators of the land, or “slaves” to borrow Smith’s nomenclature. Regarding this process, Smith commented that the “original engrossing of uncultivated lands, though great, might have been but a transitory evil. They might soon have been divided again, and broke into small parcels either by succession or by alienation.”³³ However, “the law of primogeniture hindered them from being divided by succession: the introduction of entails prevented their being broke into small parcels by alienation.”³⁴ The practice of primogeniture and entail continued, however, because land was not merely a means of subsistence but also of power and protection. Therefore, to divide the land weakened the landowners’ powers. These landed estates became little monarchies where the landlord was the judge, legislator, commander, and prince. Smith contrasted this with the existing practices of primogeniture in eighteenth-century Europe:

the proprietor of a single acre of land is as perfectly secure of his possession as the proprietor of a hundred thousand. The right of primogeniture, however, still continues to be respected, and as of all institutions it is the fittest to support the pride of family distinctions, it is still likely to endure for many centuries. In every other respect, nothing can be more contrary to the real interest of a numerous family than a right which, in order to enrich one, beggars all the rest of the children.³⁵

The reasons for primogeniture and entail, private protection and power, had disappeared; the laws of the land rather than private military power provided security. Why then did primogeniture still exist?

The medieval proprietors of these lands spent more time defending their own territories from barbaric neighbors than cultivating the land; therefore, they failed to improve and cultivate their estates. According to Smith, the “slaves” or serfs could not be expected to toil or improve the land, since they

³² Ibid., 381.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 391.

worked only for the master’s profit.³⁶ Serfs could acquire “nothing but their daily maintenance.”³⁷ To Smith, a person incapable of acquiring property would have no other interest but to “eat as much and to labor as little as possible.” Only through violence could any work beyond the bare minimum be achieved, thereby establishing a continual resort to violence by the barons and a persistent timidity among their “slaves.” Only the proprietor who cultivated his own lands with free labor would achieve maximum rewards.³⁸ During the writing of the *Wealth of Nations*, this “species of slavery” (serfdom) still existed in Russia, Poland, Hungary, and parts of Germany, while the western and southwestern parts of Europe gradually had abolished it.³⁹ The argument Smith presented concerning the lack of benefit from holding “slaves” posed the question as to why the landlords still adhered to the practice. He proposed his second principle of human nature, the longing of men to dominate and rule over others, as the answer when he stated, “the pride of man makes him love to domineer, and nothing mortifies him so much as to be obliged to condescend to persuade his inferiors.” Wherever the law condoned and nature permitted, man would prefer slaves to freemen.⁴⁰

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the appropriation of lands by the great proprietors eventually led to the erection of castles on various lands and the establishing of towns. Regarding the inhabitants of the towns, Smith wrote, “how servile soever [sic] may have been originally [their] condition, it appears evidently that they arrived at liberty and independency much earlier than the occupiers of land in the country” as a result of their alliance with

³⁶ What Smith refers to here is serfdom, not slavery in the generally accepted sense. Smith demonstrates his liberal mindset and respect for freedom by depicting it as an unjust, and equally unprofitable, system that is worthy of the term “slavery.” See Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, and P. G. Stein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 178-191. For an exquisite examination of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* and *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, see also Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

³⁷ Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 387.

³⁸ Only free labor produces maximum rewards, according to Smith. He thought sharecropping, in which tenant and landlord share the product, was a small improvement, and that it functioned as a traditional arrangement during serfdom’s decline.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 388

⁴⁰ This preference stems from man’s inherent nature, in Smith’s view. However, the powerful were certainly not averse to justifying their actions with religious or social claims.

the Church and the Crown against the lords.”⁴¹ The sovereigns who were most liberal with grants for farming, such as King John of England, were at odds with the barons, the great lords who terrorized the inhabitants of the countryside. The bishops of the royal demesnes recommended two options as the proper means of restraining the violence of the great lords: the erection of a new order of jurisdiction by establishing magistrates or town councils and the formation of a militia under the command of the magistrates. Smith concluded that “order and good government, and along with them the liberty and security of individuals, were, in this manner, established in the cities at a time when the occupiers of land in the country were exposed to every sort of violence,” because those in the countryside, who were not as well protected by the sovereigns, did not possess the privileges available to the townsfolk.⁴² In addition to privileges, those in town had a greater level of protection from the brutish lords and were not subject to the same taxes and levies as the traveling merchants. This protection brought an end to the scene of raging violence and disorder that had developed due to the lack of an ultimate sovereign who could protect the weaker part of his subjects from the lords’ oppression.⁴³

If protection and special privileges were not enough to attract people to the towns, the societal standing of farmers provided another impetus for abandoning the farm for the sake of township. Throughout Europe, farmers were regarded as inferior to the great merchants and master manufacturers; few were likely to leave another profession in order to labor in the countryside. Smith observed that it seldom happened that a “man of considerable esteem and profession would lower himself to an inferior station.”⁴⁴ Additionally, the ancient policy of Europe did not favor the improvement and cultivation of land; rather, it prohibited the exportation of corn and placed restraints upon inland commerce. As a result of privileges and political maneuvers,

⁴¹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 399. This arrangement of the land and its occupants serving the interests of the lords, and ultimately the monarchy, exemplified the vertical social arrangement that hampered the classically liberal conception of freedom espoused by Hume and Smith. They favored a more horizontal social arrangement in which one’s primary connections are to society and its inhabitants.

⁴² Smith, *Wealth of Nation*, 405. For townsmen and farmers, this had profound implications regarding choice of occupation.

⁴³ Duncan Forbes, “Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce, and Liberty,” in *Essays on Adam Smith*, ed. A.S. Skinner and T. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 187.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 397.

“improvement” started in the towns, not, as “natural progression” would dictate, in the countryside. Eventually, this led to the unexpected destruction of baronial power and authority in addition to the emancipation of the rural population.⁴⁵

While militias protected the towns, the countryside still lay exposed to the terror of oppressors. Men, in this defenseless state, would “naturally content themselves with their necessary subsistence,” for the acquisition of greater goods would tempt the injustices of the great lords.⁴⁶ Industry aimed at something more than just the necessities of life was established in cities long before the countryside had the freedom to practice it. The inhabitants of the country who ambitiously sought to accumulate stock took refuge in the cities, as the only sanctuaries that secured the wealth of persons.

The inhabitants of some cities ultimately derived their subsistence and local materials from the countryside, but cities situated near the sea or rivers accessed not only local materials but also supplies from abroad. The sea opened up trade to the remote corners of the world, promoting the exchange of manufactured goods of their own industry.⁴⁷ In this way, a city might grow to great splendor and wealth while poverty still lurked in the countryside. The inhabitants of trading cities and their import services improved on the manufacturing of expensive luxuries for richer countries. A sizable part of the new commerce consisted “in the exchange of their own rude [cultivation], for the manufactured produce of more civilized nations (such as wool of England to be exchanged for the wines of France).”⁴⁸ When the demand for sophisticated items increased, merchants, “in order to save the expense of carriage, naturally endeavored to establish some manufactures of the same kind in their own country. Hence the origin of the first manufactures for distant sale that seem to have been established in the western provinces of Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire.”⁴⁹ This genesis of local manufacturing marked the beginning of hope for those in the countryside.

Smith began his final thoughts on Europe’s “unnatural and retrograde” path to a commercial society by describing how commerce within the towns contributed to the improvement of the countryside.⁵⁰ Due to high demand for the

“rude” produce of the country, the towns provided incentives for the improvement of country farms. The symbiosis of towns and markets that required either crude or manufactured produce from the countryside enhanced the industry and improvement of both. Gone was the “ancient policy of Europe that was, over and above all, unfavorable to the improvement and cultivation of land, whether carried on by the proprietor or by the farmer.”⁵¹ The inhabitants of cities who acquired wealth now frequently bought uncultivated land to cultivate. Consequently, society’s negative view of farmers changed. Being a farmer was no longer a disgrace; rather, merchants now aspired to become “country gentlemen.”⁵² Commerce and manufacturing gradually introduced “order and good government.”⁵³ The formation of “good government” established the liberty and security of individuals in the countryside. Whereas farmers previously lived in fear of subjugation and thievery, while in an almost continual state of war with their neighbors, they now developed commercial ambition and enjoyed stability created by the rule of law. The very old families who possessed a considerable estate and passed it from father to son for many successive generations were rare in commercial regions.⁵⁴ It was commonly practiced in countries with little commerce, like Wales or the highlands of Scotland.

Smith surmised that in most of Europe, urban manufacturers, instead of being the effect, were the cause and occasion of a country’s economic development. The great proprietors sought to gratify the “most childish vanity,” and the merchants acted merely from their own interests. Neither had any knowledge of what their actions would elicit. Development into a commercial society, however, was a slow and uncertain process due to its “abnormal” stages that bypassed Mirabeau’s “natural” sequence. Out of this widespread availability of wealth, Smith foresaw a vision of citizenship and liberty unknown to the antiquated view of Greeks.

As a consequence of Scotland’s economic backwardness during the eighteenth century, Andrew Fletcher initiated the adaptation of civic concepts to the pursuit of wealth as a public good. David Hume contributed to the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 200.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 405.

⁴⁷ While Smith never espoused geographical determinism in the *Wealth of Nations*, he certainly saw the location of cities on rivers and seacoasts as related to their future profits.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 407.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 410.

⁵¹ Ibid., 396.

⁵² Ibid., 411. Images of Jane Austen’s *Emma* come to mind, comparing the roles of Mr. Knightley, Mr. Weston, and Mr. Martin. All engaged in some sort of agricultural endeavor, but Mr. Martin lacked the refinement and class of Mr. Knightley and Mr. Weston.

⁵³ Ibid. Smith saw the increase in country gentleman in his native land as one way of raising the prospects of the nation as a whole.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 421.

discussion by combining the fundamental civic concepts of citizenship and liberty with individualist principles taken from an English jurisprudential tradition. In 1776, Adam Smith entered the discussion through the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*, in which he integrated the economic and political systems into one systemic analysis of *political economy*. In Smith’s view, it was the government’s duty for society’s economic progress to provide security through the institutions of justice and defense. In contrast to Hume, Smith used Scotland and England as case studies to uncover the origins of the rise of Europe’s commercialized society. He concluded that commercial society emerged from an “unnatural and retrograde” progression: from an agricultural society to a “barbarian” culture that was superseded by the rise of commerce in the towns and the consequent increase of agriculture in the countryside. In addition to his contributions to political thought, Smith provided a historical way to think about modernity in terms of the progressive effects of the merchant class upon the rise of capitalism. Rather than merely being an effect, they helped cause further economic development through their efficient enterprises and satisfying of new consumer demand. Throughout the *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith explored how this unusual rise of commercialized society brought forth new visions of citizenship and liberty.

Experimental Ireland: A Colonial Laboratory

Helen Miney

“Once at least in every generation the question, ‘What is to be done with Ireland?’ rises again to perplex the councils and trouble the conscience of the British nation.”¹ In his introduction to *England and Ireland*, a pamphlet published in 1868, English statesman and philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) sardonically echoes the flippant attitude expressed at the time by many of his fellow members of Parliament regarding England’s troubled relationship with Ireland. He elaborates on the history of the “unredressed wrongs” that had existed between England and Ireland for generations and felt it necessary to refute the idea that Irish disaffection with English rule was solely the result of a “special taint or infirmity in the Irish character.”² Although Mill believed that British rule of Ireland would help the Irish to become more civilized, he also observed that the British system of land ownership had “kept the Irish tenants in a perpetual state of inferiority.”³ In Mill’s mind, because the British landlords had failed to improve the condition of their Irish tenants, the British rulers of Ireland had failed in their responsibility to their imperial subjects: “The rule of Ireland now rightfully belongs to those who, by means consistent with justice, will make the cultivators of the soil of Ireland the owners of it; and the English nation has got to decide whether it will be that just ruler or not.”⁴

While Mill sided with the majority in that he did not believe the Irish capable of successful self-governance, his attitudes regarding Irish land ownership were rejected by his peers, who feared losing their stake in the power and profits that had been derived from Irish land. Mill’s reflections on the question of the Irish right to land ownership and self-governance reveal the depth of the English belief in Irish inferiority during the nineteenth century. This attitude can be traced back to the first English colonies in Ireland in the twelfth century, which ushered in a series of territorial disputes and cultural clashes that persist to this very day.⁵ Commenting on these problems, Mill compares Ireland to India, arguing that there were “many points of resemblance between the Irish and the Hindoo [sic] character.”⁶ His attempt to contextualize the Irish experience

¹ John Stuart Mill, *England and Ireland* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵ J.F. Lydon, “The Medieval English Colony, 13th and 14th Centuries,” in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2001), 114.

⁶ Mill, *England and Ireland*, 22.

within the broader scope of the British Empire during the growth of imperial power speaks to the parallels between the British subjugation of Ireland and the development of liberal theory.

Much of the literature that examines Ireland's historical relationship with England and the roots of the conflict between the two countries tends to take the colonial conditions created by the English in Ireland for granted. Ireland is typically characterized as a medieval territorial conquest, a representation which overlooks the broad-scale restructuring of systems of land ownership and the restriction of native rights from the sixteenth century onward. Robert Findlay and Kevin O'Rourke characterize the English conquest of its "Celtic fringe" as a form of "internal colonialism," but differentiate the "slow absorption" of the Scottish and Welsh kingdoms from the "difficult and [bloody] affair" that was the English conquest and colonization of Ireland.⁷ Some revisionist scholars, such as Stephen Howe, author of *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture*, argue that the establishment of the United Kingdom by the Acts of Union of 1800 made Britain and Ireland political and cultural equals.⁸ This would suggest that the Irish were no longer subjugated by the British, and therefore were no longer British colonial subjects. In reality, however, the experimental British colonial ideas and techniques that had been at work in Ireland for centuries continued throughout the nineteenth century, as the British elite attempted to subdue and profit from the impoverished Irish population.

The seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries not only witnessed a growth in British exploration and colonization, but also the birth and development of liberal theory. Colonial expansion went hand in hand with modern political thought, as philosophers like John Locke (1632–1704), Adam Smith (1723–1790), and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) sought to define man's rights and responsibilities in the midst of a rapidly changing British society. Although liberal theory has evolved to form many different branches since its inception, the type of political thought in which these three philosophers were engaged was primarily based on a commitment to individual liberty

and to the promotion of democratic and representative institutions.⁹ Liberal theorists also generally supported an individual's right to property, as well as freedom of expression, which was thought to limit the influence of the state.¹⁰ However, as liberal theory developed, thinkers like Mill also began to advocate for the improvement of the individual through education, or "tutelage."¹¹ Such ideas were incorporated into British patriarchal practices over a span of more than three hundred years as the empire expanded around the world. Although each of these three philosophers wrote at different periods during the growth of the Empire and held different beliefs regarding colonialism (while Locke and Mill both participated in Britain's colonial expansion, Smith remained an adamant critic throughout his lifetime), each of their works reflected the attitudes of the enterprising British men who, over a span of centuries, conquered territories around the globe. British colonial experiments in Ireland were not limited to a particular period, such as the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, for as the empire grew to include new territories and populations, so, too, were British colonial practices forced to adapt.

In *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*, Uday Singh Mehta follows the development of liberal theory and its use as a justification for colonial practices by addressing "the various responses of liberal thinkers when faced with the unfamiliarity to which their association with the British Empire exposed them."¹² Although Ireland is Britain's closest neighbor, it is arguably the first British territorial conquest where the conquerors encountered a significantly unfamiliar, and extremely resistant, culture and society. Additionally, in spite of the fact that he primarily utilizes the British colonization of India to illustrate his argument, by engaging the work of Edmund Burke (1730–1797), Mehta points directly to the connection between the British colonization of Ireland and the development of liberal thought. As Mehta explains, Burke, a relatively conservative British parliamentarian and philosopher, was extremely critical of the British Empire and of British imperial practices in India, Ireland, and America.¹³ Burke condemned the lack of morality shown by employees of the British East India Company in their dealings with the Indian population, as well as their greed

⁷ Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2007), 270.

⁸ Kathleen Costello-Sullivan, review of *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* in *New Hibernia Review* 6.4 (2002): 157–158.

⁹ Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal*

Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

and brutality in their quest to expand the empire.¹⁴ Burke applied the same critique to multiple political events, including the French Revolution.¹⁵ In his later years, Burke turned his attention to the issue of Irish land reform, and he reiterated his concerns with respect to the morality and rationale that guided British imperial rule in Ireland.¹⁶ By examining the progression of Irish history in comparison with the evolution of some of the basic tenets of liberal thought, one can determine how the Irish case contributed to the relationship between liberalism and empire. The comparisons can be drawn as far back as the birth of liberal thought in the seventeenth century, with the works of the Father of Liberalism, John Locke.

“So God and his reason commanded man to subdue the earth, i.e. to improve it for the benefit of life; and in doing that he expended something that was his own, namely his labour.”¹⁷ This phrase constitutes one of the key arguments in John Locke’s discussion of property in his *Second Treatise of Government*. Published in 1689, *Two Treatises of Government* laid the groundwork for liberal theory, and Locke’s theories on property and ownership were, in an age of imperial expansion, used to justify the British conquest of North America.¹⁸ However, the same logic of improvement (understood by Locke as combining one’s labor with the land to promote cultivation, personal wealth, and wellbeing) had been used to justify the English confiscation and redistribution of land in Ireland prior to the publication of Locke’s work. Indeed, historians such as Nicholas Canny and Conn Malachi Hallinan have described the Irish case as a precursor to the English conquest of North America. English settlers perceived traditional Irish subsistence farming unprofitable, and they justified removing native Irish people from their lands in the name of God to “improve” the land. It was in Ireland that the English pioneered what they called the “plantation” system that they would soon extend to the Americas.

¹⁴ Ibid., 159.

¹⁵ Ibid., 159.

¹⁶ Ian Harris, “Edmund Burke,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last modified 14 January 2010, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/burke/>.

¹⁷ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C.B. McPherson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), 13.

¹⁸ Nicholas P. Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30.4 (1973): 590; Conn Malach Hallinan, “The Subjugation and Division of Ireland: Testing Ground for Colonial Policy,” *Crime and Social Justice* 8 (1977): 53-7.

The most famous Irish plantation was the Ulster Plantation in northern Ireland, which consisted of land seized by the Crown from several exiled Irish earls in 1607. The land was then redistributed to the Protestant aristocracy, much in the same way that lands in North America were awarded to English aristocrats.¹⁹ The native Gaelic people who resisted the English invaders were either murdered or driven from northern to western Ireland, where they were forced to eke out an existence on land not suitable for agricultural development. Much of the arable land in northern Ireland was converted to pasture for livestock such as cows and sheep, which would then be sold in English markets.²⁰ However, some English lords, such as Walter, Earl of Essex, wished to retain on the land those Irish perceived as docile, stating that “the more Irishe [sic] the more profitable so as the Englishe [sic] be hable [sic] to master them.”²¹ The English would then be able to instruct the Irish in the proper methods of agricultural cultivation. Using the same logic that Locke would describe almost one hundred years later, the labor of the Irish who cultivated the land served as an extension of the English lord’s labor. By mixing his labor with the land, the lord became rightfully entitled to it as his property, not just in the eyes of the Crown, but in the eyes of God. This attitude of divine entitlement would prove significant in later debates in the nineteenth century regarding Irish land ownership.

In addition to the large tracts of land awarded to English lords as royal land grants in the sixteenth century, small groups of Protestant settlers were also granted lots of 1,000 to 2,000 acres for cultivation, under the Stuart monarchy in the early seventeenth century.²² These groups were strategically “planted” on confiscated lands in the north of Ireland in order to break up, and ultimately replace, Irish Catholic communities with English and Scottish Protestant ones.²³ In the minds of the English, if they could not force the Irish to convert, then they would have to be replaced with more deserving Protestants. The Crown utilized such strategies to both weaken the Irish, forcing them to rely on their British rulers for protection and imported goods,

¹⁹ Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ireland in 250 Episodes* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009), 165.

²⁰ Ibid., 168.

²¹ Nicholas P. Canny, “English Colonization,” 590.

²² Aidan Clarke, “The Colonisation of Ulster and the Rebellion of 1641—60,” in *The Course of Irish History*, 153.

²³ Ibid., 153.

as well as to ensure that the Irish could not compete with Britain in trade.²⁴ For example, by 1699 the British Parliament had essentially eliminated the ability of the Irish to export manufactured woolen goods, thereby increasing the British share of the market.²⁵ Although negative stereotypes of the Irish served to justify British exploitation in the pursuit of power and profit, it was also thought that, by subjugating the native Irish, the British influence would elevate them from their original and culturally inferior state of nature.²⁶

Lord Deputy Mountjoy once characterized a Gaelic chieftain of Ulster as “proud, valiant, miserable, tyrannous, unmeasurably covetous, without any knowledge of God, or almost any civility.”²⁷ Nicholas Canny argues that while this perception of the native Irish was common among the English in the seventeenth century, the portrayal of the Irish as barbarians was originally propagated by the English conquerors throughout the sixteenth century as a justification for the subjugation of the native Irish population.²⁸ Howard M. Jones notes that the experiences of these sixteenth-century colonists in Ireland contributed to the development of “promotional literature.”²⁹ Promotional pamphlets simultaneously encouraged English lords to obtain land in Ireland and cautioned the reader to prepare himself for the shock of encountering, and possibly defending himself against, the bestial Irish. Similar propaganda was used to encourage the English to explore and settle the New World, as well as to characterize the Native Americans who originally inhabited the North American lands as savages.³⁰ The English, who considered themselves culturally superior to the Irish, argued that only through forceful subjection to the civilizing influence of the English lords

²⁴ Maureen Wall, “The Age of the Penal Laws 1691–1778,” in *The Course of Irish History*, 176.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

²⁶ John Locke describes what he means by “state of nature” in his *Second Treatise of Government* (8): “to understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in...” Locke then provides multiple conditions of the state of nature, but he generally argues that man naturally exists in a state of liberty and equality governed by reason.

²⁷ Canny, “English Colonization,” 585.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 585.

²⁹ Howard Mumford Jones, “Origins of the Colonial Idea in England,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 85.5 (1942): 451.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 453.

could the Irish be transported “from their delight of licentious barbarism unto the love of goodness and civility.”³¹ The English cultural influence would improve the naturally barbaric Irish culture, thereby elevating the Irish people to a more civilized state.

In addition to violent measures, the English attempted to Anglicize the Irish through legislation that prevented Irish Catholics from participating in government, civil service, education, and commerce. Early versions of these laws were established in the fourteenth century, namely the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1367, which allowed Irishmen to obtain the same rights and liberties as Englishmen under English law if they agreed to renounce their Irish culture and submit to English cultural and religious values.³² J. C. D. Clark observes that similar laws were enacted in Wales and Scotland, where they appeared to be significantly more successful in converting the inhabitants of England’s Celtic fringe. Clark argues that despite differences in political assimilation and cultural history, the increasing Anglicization of Wales’ and Scotland’s elites “amounted almost to cultural capitulation” in both kingdoms, thereby making it easier to subdue the native Welsh and Scottish populations.³³ Ireland’s elite, represented mainly by Gaelic chieftains, did not submit so easily to English cultural coercion, and as a result they were either executed or exiled while their lands and subjects were conquered. The laws were later revised to reflect the English belief that the Irish naturally lacked the civility to participate in governmental or commercial ventures, and that they therefore had to be excluded from such occupations until such time as the English elite agreed that they had reached an acceptable level of cultural development.³⁴ Locke’s theories bolstered pre-existing assumptions of English cultural dominance and provided the basis for the development of the liberal theories of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, which were further utilized to justify English colonial practices in Ireland and throughout the British Empire.

First published in 1776, Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* addressed the reality of an evolving political and economic landscape during the eighteenth century. In Book III, Chapter IV, “How the Commerce of the Towns Contributed to the Improvement of

³¹ Canny, “English Colonization,” 592.

³² Hallinan, “Subjugation,” 54.

³³ J. C. D. Clark, “English History’s Forgotten Context: Scotland, Ireland, Wales,” *The Historical Journal* 32.1 (1989): 213.

³⁴ Canny, “English Colonization,” 592.

the Country,” Smith highlights the importance of the rising merchant class in England’s development as a political and economic power. He argues that merchants from England’s towns contributed to the improvement of the country by purchasing land from the aristocracy and utilizing it for “profitable projects.”³⁵ The rise of the merchant class thereby contributed to the abolition of feudal structures, as those living on the land were able to become small proprietors by developing the land for their own profit, instead of remaining trapped in a system that offered them no incentive for improvement.³⁶ In Ireland, however, the structure of land distribution in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries remained analogous to the feudal system; Catholic peasants rented small parcels of land at high rates from a Protestant lord.³⁷ By the advent of the Great Famine in 1845, the population in Ireland had soared to over 8 million people, and more than two-thirds of the populace relied mainly on subsistence agriculture (i.e., potato farming) for survival.³⁸

Although there was an intense ideological debate in the British Parliament on the government’s role in providing relief to Irish peasants during the famine, most English lords saw the catastrophic event as an opportunity to implement land reforms based on Adam Smith’s capitalist theories.³⁹ By evicting tenants or allowing them to die, English lords were able to consolidate and reorganize their landholdings to engage in large-scale agricultural production. English landholders usually exported grains, such as barley, wheat, and rye, as well as products derived from livestock, namely sheep and cattle, such as meat, milk, and butter.⁴⁰ Additionally, the English hoped to reconstruct Irish society by instructing the remaining Irish peasantry in improving the land through more modern methods of cultivation and rejecting the potato, which was seen as “the root of all Irish evil,” and investing their labor instead in cultivating a more civilized, (i.e. profitable) food source, like

³⁵ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2000): 439.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 446.

³⁷ Wall, “Penal Laws,” 178.

³⁸ E. R. R. Green, “The Great Famine 1845–1850,” in *The Course of Irish History*, 220.

³⁹ Peter Gray, “Ideology and the Famine,” in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Mercier Press 1995), 88.

⁴⁰ E. Margaret Crawford, “Food and Famine,” in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Mercier Press 1995), 62.

⁴¹ Kevin Whelan, “Pre- and Post-Famine Landscape Change,” in *The Course of Irish History*, 28.

grain.⁴¹ The English generally maintained that potato farming encouraged laziness and waste, and that their methods of agricultural cultivation were necessary for the improvement of Irish land.⁴²

Colonists made a similar argument for the enclosure and cultivation of North American lands. Settlers like Francis Higginson observed that “the Indians are not able to make use of the one fourth part of the Land, neither have they any settled places, as Townes [sic] to dwell in, nor any ground as they challenge for their owne [sic] possession, but change their habitation from place to place,” and believed that this was due to a natural tendency towards laziness.⁴³ Because the Native Americans did not use their labor to improve the land, they had no right to claim it, which allowed the English colonists to claim vast territories as a result of the labor they would expend to enclose and cultivate the land. Applied to a different context, Smith’s observations regarding the “rapid advances of our North American colonies” could be used to justify imperialist actions in the Irish case, as English landowners supported “the natural course of things” by investing in agricultural development in Ireland.⁴⁴ Smith’s discussion of the value of individual labor elaborates on Locke’s theories regarding labor, improvement, and property, and it contributed to new ideas concerning social and political responsibility in England and Ireland in the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century saw the rapid development of radical new theories and worldviews, many of which originated in England and were exported throughout the British Empire. The Industrial Revolution created a new need for unskilled labor, causing the British government to view its colonial subjects as fuel for “the biological machines of industrial capitalism,” rather than as an endless supply of agricultural labor.⁴⁵ Industrial production and the birth of the factory system in England led to the development of concepts like Adam Smith’s division of labor. Each individual’s contribution to society was measured in the amount of labor he or she produced. Meanwhile, the English perception of the Irish had not improved, but had instead evolved to the

⁴² Canny, “English Colonization,” 590.

⁴³ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 55.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 448.

⁴⁵ David Nally, “‘That Coming Storm’: The Irish Poor Law, Colonial Biopolitics, and the Great Famine,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98.3 (2008): 717.

extent that “Irish poverty was indelibly tied to moral corruption, economic underdevelopment, and agrarian agitation.”⁴⁶

As a result of these economic and intellectual shifts, Ireland became a laboratory for social experimentation; the British government began to develop “biopolitical” strategies to manage its colonial populations by focusing on controlling the individual.⁴⁷ David Nally specifically points to the systems of social development established within workhouses in Ireland by the Irish Poor Laws of 1838 and 1852, which “aimed toward the better ‘ordering and directing’ of Irish social life,” as the most salient example of these new forms of colonial social control.⁴⁸ Although the goal of the Irish Poor Laws was to completely reshape the individual, it is important to note that the Poor Laws implemented a new system of classification aimed at individuals within the Irish peasantry based on a measurement of each individual’s capacity for labor.

Every aspect of the workhouse was linked to labor as a form of discipline. Men and women were segregated, and a microcosmic version of Adam Smith’s division of labor was established. Men broke stones, milled corn, picked oakum, laid pipes, and dug ditches; women sewed, knit, carded, cleaned, mended clothes, and cared for the sick.⁴⁹ During the famine years, from approximately 1845 to 1850,⁵⁰ access to food became dependent on one’s ability to perform manual labor, either in a workhouse or as a part of a public works scheme, as Irish peasants were paid meager wages to toil for the benefit of the British capitalist society.⁵¹

The Irish case was in turn related to the broader context of British imperialism and the application of liberal theory. As Peter Gray has noted, late nineteenth-century India paralleled its Irish counterpart.⁵² In the 1870s, India experienced food shortages and a population crisis like that of Irish famine

⁴⁶ Ibid., 720.

⁴⁷ Nally (717) summarizes the concept of biopolitics, originally developed by Michel Foucault, as “the state-led management of life, death, and biological being—a form of politics that places human life at the very center of its calculations.” In the broadest sense, biopolitics is defined as state-controlled population management.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 725.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 727.

⁵⁰ “The Irish Potato Famine,” University of Houston, last modified 3 April 2014, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/irish_potato_famine.cfm.

⁵¹ Nally, “‘That Coming Storm,’” 729.

⁵² Peter Gray, “Famine and Land in Ireland and India, 1845–1880: James Caird and the Political Economy of Hunger,” *The Historical Journal* 49.1 (2006): 210.

in the 1840s. To combat this crisis, the British government instituted public works projects, such as the building of railways and canals, which linked the labor of impoverished Indians with access to food and menial wages.⁵³ Additionally, representatives of the British government in India recommended “extensive agricultural development” and the creation of a “‘plantation’ of British capitalist agriculturists” in order to civilize the Indians, as well as to increase British landlords’ exports and profits.⁵⁴ Gray not only discusses the historically similar characteristics of the Irish and Indian cases, but also points out the frequent comparisons made by contemporary British observers with regard to the colonies’ inhabitants’ cultural “backwardness.”⁵⁵ In addition to the spread of biopolitical techniques of social control within Britain’s colonies during the nineteenth century, ideas concerning varying states of natural civility and barbarism similar to those that had previously been expressed during the English conquest of Ireland were crystallized in liberal theory through the works of British philosopher and politician John Stuart Mill. As in the cases of John Locke and Adam Smith, despite his belief in the protection of the sovereignty of the individual, Mill’s ideas were used to justify further violent colonial subjugation, particularly in India.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Mill followed in the liberal tradition of Locke and Smith by publishing *On Liberty* in 1859 and *Considerations on Representative Government* in 1861. In these two works, Mill discusses the principle of utilitarianism, which he defines as “actions [being] right in proportion as they tend to promote...the greatest amount of happiness altogether,” arguing that such a doctrine must govern society if the liberty of the individual is to be advanced.⁵⁶ Much of Mill’s discourse echoes the language of his liberal predecessors, as he uses the concept of improvement to make his case for the rationality of the individual and for his ability to self-govern. Additionally, Mill expands upon Locke’s original discussion of the state of nature by constructing a hierarchy of civilizations and placing limitations on the autonomy of individuals in societies that have not yet reached his industrialized and racialized standard of civilization: “Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against

⁵³ Ibid., 211.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 194.

⁵⁶ John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism,” in *Fraser’s Magazine* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1879), 9, 13.

their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as its nonage. . . . Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.”⁵⁷ Although Mill does not explicitly describe what constitutes a “backward state of society,” throughout the course of his writings, it is evident that he regards English society as the pinnacle of civilization, with the implication that all other societies (including Ireland) must gradually evolve to become like England.

In the world of John Stuart Mill and his father, James Mill, liberal theorists agreed that, although all men might emerge from a universal state of nature, they were no longer equals. John Locke originally stated in his *Second Treatise of Government* that all men naturally existed in “a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.”⁵⁸ By the nineteenth century, British liberal thinkers like the Mills were faced with such unfamiliar social and cultural conditions in British colonies like India that it became necessary for them to explain how the British could coexist in an equal state of nature with their colonial subjects and, at the same time, dominate them.

British liberal theorists generally held that different societies existed at different stages of development, with England at the pinnacle. At the opposite end of the spectrum, John Stuart Mill proposed that there also existed “those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as its nonage,”⁵⁹ which required the intervention of more advanced societies “to carry such a people the most rapidly through the next necessary step in social progress.”⁶⁰ Mill termed this interventionist form of government “the government of leading-strings,” which was “only admissible as a means of gradually training the people to walk alone.”⁶¹ On a continuum of culture and development, Mill claimed that all societies, or communities, were compelled to strive

⁵⁷ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd., 1901), 6.

⁵⁸ John Locke, *Second Treatise*, 8.

⁵⁹ Mill, *On Liberty*, 7.

⁶⁰ John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, (Rockville: Serenity Publishers, 2008), 50.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

for a greater degree of civilization, and that the best form of government would be the one that encouraged the conditions necessary for progress. As Uday Singh Mehta explains in his analysis of political exclusion in nineteenth-century India, “the facts of political exclusion—of colonial peoples, of slaves, of women, and of those without sufficient property to exercise either suffrage or real political power—over the past three and a half centuries must be allowed to embarrass the universalistic claims of liberalism.”⁶² It is important to note, however, that, even at the pinnacle of civilization in Mill’s England, suffrage was contingent upon having a propertied stake in society, meaning that most men were politically excluded until the passing of the Third Reform Act, enacted in 1884.⁶³

By the turn of the twentieth century, the British colonial experiments in Ireland had created a monster that imperialists could no longer control. In 1914, Ireland erupted in violent clashes between Catholic nationalists, who sought independent land ownership and political autonomy for Ireland, and unionists, the Protestant minority which continued to benefit from discriminatory British policies, and therefore supported British rule. The conflict culminated in the events surrounding the Easter Rising in 1916.⁶⁴ Members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a nationalist group founded in 1858 by a group of Irish revolutionaries,⁶⁵ attacked and occupied several British strongholds, such as Dublin City Hall, and declared Irish independence from Britain.⁶⁶ The rebellion lasted less than a week, from April 24th to 29th, and after enduring days of heavy shelling and hundreds of civilian casualties, the rebel leaders surrendered unconditionally to the British army.⁶⁷ The British government took full advantage of the opportunity to assert its martial dominance over its imperial subjects by conducting widespread arrests of suspected rebels, condemning ninety men to death for their involvement in the

⁶² Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, 76.

⁶³ “Third Reform Act 1884,” [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/one-man-one-vote/), accessed 23 May 2014, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/one-man-one-vote/>.

⁶⁴ Donal McCartney, “From Parnell to Pearse 1891-1921,” in *The Course of Irish History*, 254–56.

⁶⁵ T. W. Moody, “Fenianism, Home Rule and the Land War 1850-91,” in *The Course of Irish History*, 230.

⁶⁶ Donal McCartney, “Parnell to Pearse,” 256.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

insurrection. Ultimately the British Army executed fifteen of the rebellion's leaders, including Pádraig Pearse, who became a martyr to the Irish cause.⁶⁸

This incident demonstrates that while classical liberal theorists like Locke, Smith, and Mill advocated freedom of the individual, their work also reflects the ideological framework within which ambitious politicians and colonists defined power relationships between themselves and “inferior” foreign populations. In the twentieth century, however, when Britain's territorial conquests reached their maximum extent, it became increasingly difficult to maintain its imperial control. Britain's involvement in World War II proved costly, as the sheer amount of economic resources and manpower invested in winning the war severely weakened the empire's foundation and upset the balance of power.⁶⁹ By the time of its entrance into the European Economic Community in 1973, the majority of Britain's colonial holdings had gained independence, and Britain's increased focus on European relations seemed to signal the end of the imperial era.⁷⁰ However, some scholars argue that the British transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1997 marked the empire's official end.⁷¹ In any case, despite the fact that the British Empire no longer exists as an official political power, there remain fourteen British overseas territories⁷² and fifty-three members of the British Commonwealth worldwide.⁷³ The British imperial legacy lives on in all of its former colonies, whether culturally, politically, or economically. Ireland, however, will always hold a unique place in the history of the British Empire, as the island neighbors' tumultuous relationship continues to affect both British and Irish citizens.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 256.

⁶⁹ John Darwin, “Britain, the Commonwealth and the End of Empire,” *BBC*, last modified 3 March 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/endofempire_overview_01.shtml.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Queen and Overseas Territories,” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*. Accessed 23 May 2014, <http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchAndCommonwealth/Queen%20and%20overseas%20territories/Queen%20and%20overseas%20territories.aspx>.

⁷³ “Commonwealth Members,” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*. Accessed 23 May 2014, <http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchAndCommonwealth/Commonwealthmembers/MembersoftheCommonwealth.aspx>.

Black Socrates: Hubert Harrison and the Problem of Religion *Toni-Lee Maitland*

The neglect of Hubert Harrison's work and possible influence in the years following his death in 1927 is rather perplexing. Referred to by his peers as the “Black Socrates” and by scholar Jeffrey B. Perry as the “Father of Black Radicalism,” Hubert Harrison was and is “one of America's greatest minds.”¹ His class and race consciousness ideology was of seminal influence in constructing the foundation of the black radicalism movement during the Harlem Renaissance. Harrison influenced major black leaders like Marcus Garvey—who rallied under the cause of radical black nationalism—and A. Philip Randolph—who preferred to improve the condition of blacks through revolutionary socialism—who were two vehemently opposed figures during the 1920s.²

Harrison was arguably the first to merge these two divergent ideologies in order to explain the subordinate position of blacks in America. He put equal focus on class and race in the “Negro problem” rather than elevating one over the other as the black radicalists did with race and the black socialists did with class. According to one of his contemporaries, Harlem activist Hodge Kirnon, Harrison was “the first Negro whose radicalism was comprehensive enough to include radicalism politics, theological criticism, sociology and education in a thorough-going and scientific manner.”³ He was an advocate for the masses of black Americans and understood their plight as a person who had a working-class background.

Born on 27 April 1883 to an unmarried, working-class mother on the tiny island of St. Croix in the West Indies, Harrison's early years consisted of financial struggle combined with intellectual pursuits. After he left for Harlem, New York, in 1900 following his mother's death, Harrison eventually became one of the leaders of the black radicalism movement that emerged in response to the severe racial oppression experienced by black Americans in the United States.

While Hubert Harrison was in the United States during the early 1900s, he experienced the Nadir, or lowpoint in American race relations, when

¹ Jeffrey B. Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 1.

² Winston James, “Dimensions and Main Currents of Caribbean Radicalism in America: Hubert Harrison, the ABB, and the UNIA,” in *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Verso Press, 1998), 126.

³ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 2.

racially-driven acts of violence reached a peak.⁴ By 1911, Hubert Harrison became active in the Socialist Party, influenced by the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Although Harrison's writings state that he did not specifically recall the exact date he adopted socialism into his worldview, in that ideology he found what he presumed to be a better explanation for the "Negro Problem," which he believed was a "problem of social adjustment" originating from slavery rather than biology.⁵ He was hired by the Socialist Party—with a democratic-socialist focus—in 1911 in New York and created the Colored Socialism Club at a time when black membership in the Socialist Party was low and black leadership non-existent. By the early twentieth-century, blacks were strongly tied to Republicanism and conservatism following the Civil War. Harrison thought the ten million Negroes of America were "more essentially proletarian than any other American group" since their African ancestors were exploited without "any choice in the matter."⁶ He believed the purpose of socialism was to "put an end to the exploitation of one group by another, whether that group be social, economic or racial."⁷

Hubert Harrison blamed capitalism, imperialism, and white supremacy for the persecution and condition of blacks in America. Since whites were in power, they imposed their culture, customs, and laws on a powerless group as tools to dominate and control them. Religion, particularly Protestant Christianity, was one of these tools of which Harrison was especially critical

⁴ Leslie M. Alexander, and Walter C. Rucker, eds., *Encyclopedia of African American History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 654-655. The years following Reconstruction, from 1877 to 1918, have been called the Nadir, because they were characterized by a systematic disfranchisement of blacks recently freed from slavery. Many Southern whites, who lost the Civil War, as well as their slaves and property as a result, engaged in acts of violence against blacks. This period sparked a movement for blacks to begin the fight for their civil rights. These years also saw the European powers scramble for control of Africa in order to have cheap access to raw materials. Africans and their land were exploited and violated. They formed resistance movements to combat imperialist forces and their capitalist ideology.

⁵ Hubert Harrison, "The Negro and Socialism: I—The Negro Problem Stated," *New York Call*, 28 November 1911, in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, ed. Jeffrey B. Perry (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 53.

⁶ Harrison, "Socialism and the Negro," *International Socialist Review* 13 July 1912, in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 72.

⁷ Harrison stated that unless Socialism "remove[d] ignorance at the same time," it would not "at once remove race prejudice" upon initial implementation. He did, however, hold onto the belief that it could lessen the injustices experienced by people of color and "lighten the black man's burden." Harrison, "The Duty of the Socialist Party," *New York Call*, 13 December 1911, in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 59.

about its effect on the black community.⁸ As a religion that had been historically used by whites to "civilize" their African captives, Harrison thought Christianity was a convenient way for whites to promote servility and a slave mentality among blacks.⁹

Harrison's view of religion is worth exploring, because he provided an alternative to the predominantly Christian worldview present in twentieth-century America, which mostly favored the white supremacist government. He also gave a voice to those blacks who, in a deeply religious and conservative community, preferred freethought to prayer but had few with whom they could share this unpopular perspective. From his personal religious experiences to his subsequent denouncement of religion and religious practice among black people, this paper will explore the progression of Hubert Harrison's views on religion, and the factors that contributed to the undeserved neglect of his contributions to black radicalism.

Early Experiences with Religion

Hubert Harrison's experience with religion began in childhood. He was baptised in St. John's Episcopal Church in Christiansted a few months after his birth and raised in the Protestant Episcopal faith. He is reported to have attended an Anglican school in his childhood and to have been a bright student and an eager learner.¹⁰ Harrison was admitted to Holy Communion at St. John's Church in March 1896. After being granted access to the church library by befriending a priest who worked there, Harrison used the library to quench his persistent thirst for knowledge.¹¹

Jeffrey B. Perry, Harrison's biographer, notes the irony in the way Harrison fed his intellect. Although Hubert Harrison eventually came to reject the Christian religion's teachings of subservience and docility in the latter years

⁸ Hubert Harrison favored Catholicism over Protestantism because he admired the "beauty and solemnity of its ritual...the dignity, antiquity and power of the vulnerable institution itself." According to Harrison, Protestantism "tries to hide from itself that the fundamental basis of theism is an assumption and constructs an elaborate chain of religious syllogisms to aid it." The preservation of Latin by the Catholic Church also meant to him that educational pursuits were valued a degree more than in Protestantism, giving it some utilitarian purpose outside of a dogmatic, unfounded belief. Harrison, "Letter To Miss Frances Reynolds Keyser," 20 May 1908, in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 39.

⁹ Hubert Harrison, *The Negro and the Nation* (New York: Cosmo-Advocate Publishing Company, 1917), 44.

¹⁰ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹² *Ibid.*

of his youth, the church and other religiously affiliated educational institutions were the places where he acquired most of his knowledge.¹² Harrison was sincere in his beliefs during this period. Some evidence of his devotion to Christianity during his teenage years can be found in a poem he wrote at the age of fifteen, when his mother passed away. In the poem, he tellingly states that, “God shall wipe each teardimmed eye...when we shall meet him in the sky on the Resurrection Day.”¹³ It is clear that the general beliefs he had in the Christian faith were quite strong, but as Harrison learned more about the history of his faith and his people, he began to question the nature and problem of these beliefs.

Hubert Harrison renounced the Christian religion around the age of eighteen, in 1901.¹⁴ At that point, he had been living in New York with his sister for a year and was struggling financially while he worked as an elevator operator and attended night school to earn his high school diploma. Unfortunately, due to constant financial struggle, he could not afford to continue on to college despite his academic success.¹⁵ Nevertheless, he read incessantly and was greatly influenced by Thomas Paine’s famous work the *Age of Reason*, which inspired Harrison to critically evaluate the tenets of Christianity. He found Paine’s *reductio ad absurdum* (reduction to absurdity) arguments to be “irresistible” and irrefutable.¹⁶ Harrison recounted this experience in a letter to activist and educator Frances Reynolds Keyser, where he expressed the emotional pain it caused him when he gave up the religion that had given him such comfort in his youth:

...seven years ago I divorced myself from orthodox and institutional Christianity. The complete severance was not affected at once. In the course of my reading I came across [Thomas] Paine’s *Age of Reason*... Paine, the least learned of 18th century deistic written presented certain

¹³ Ibid, 47.

¹⁴ Ibid, 60.

¹⁵ Harrison garnered public attention after his graduation from night school in New York, when an article titled “Speaker’s Medal to Negro Student: The Board of Education Finds a Genius in a West Indian Pupil” was published on 1 April 1903 in *New York World*. He was quoted as being “exceptionally thorough” in Latin, English Literature, and ancient history. He was the only student in his class that “passed perfect at a 100 percent” on a particularly “rigid” final exam. His teacher, Professor Carr, stated that Harrison was, “the most remarkable Negro I had ever met.” See Winston James, “Dimensions and Main Currents of Caribbean Radicalism in America: Hubert Harrison, the ABB, and the UNIA,” in *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Verso Press, 1998), 123-124.

¹⁶ Ibid.

rationalistic results which bore their own proof of their face... Conviction quick as a flash did its dynamite work...I suffered. Oh, how my poor wounded soul cried out in agony! I saw the whole fabric of thought and feeling crumbling at its very foundations, and in those first fearful weeks...I could not console myself...I began with feverish anxiety to pick from the ruins those pieces that would serve from the building of another fabric...when my Bible went my God went also...It was what I came to. But...Time, the great healer, closed the wound and I began to live—internally.¹⁷

He declared himself to be an agnostic, “not a dogmatic disbeliever...I would say that I am (in my mental attitude) such an Agnostic as [Thomas] Huxley was and my principles are the same.”¹⁸

After reflecting on his feelings about and understanding of life, Harrison declared God to be “unknown and unknowable.”¹⁹ Throughout this period of his life Hubert Harrison felt isolated, suffered from depression, and became preoccupied with human purpose and suicide.²⁰ However, this inner struggle did not stifle Harrison; he actively promoted and articulated his developing worldview through the written word. Hubert Harrison had a series of letters to the editor published in the *New York Times* from 1903 through 1910 which demonstrated clear development of his “race and class consciousness, socialist, and free-thought beliefs.”²¹

Religion as a Hindrance to Blacks and its Place during the Harlem Renaissance

In Harrison’s view, the propagation of white supremacy was reinforced by the Christian religion. He believed that religious devotion had close ties to imperialism and was used as a “civilizing mission” to colonize people of color, particularly Africans during slavery.²² What was arguably more provocative

¹⁷ Harrison, “Letter To Miss Frances Reynolds Keyser,” 20 May 1908, in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 36.

¹⁸ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 61. Thomas Huxley was an English biologist who advocated for and supported Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. He also coined the term ‘agnostic’ to describe a belief where he declared supernatural forces as “unknowable” and unfounded. In a letter to Charles Kingsley in 1860 he wrote: “I neither deny nor affirm the immortality of man. I see no reason for believing in it; but, on the other hand, I have no means of disproving it.” As quoted in Leonard Huxley, *Thomas Huxley: A Character Sketch* (London: Watts & Company, 1920), 41.

¹⁹ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 62.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 63.

²² Adrian Gaskins, “Let U. S. Prey: Mark Twain and Hubert Harrison on Religion and Empire,” *Journal Of Transnational American Studies* 1:1 (2009): 59.

about his argument was that religiosity in the black community was actually a hindrance to its progress. In his essay “On a Certain Conservatism in Negroes,” published in 1917 in *New York*,²³ Harrison critiques the black American community for its dedication to the Christian religion. “Yet it should seem that Negroes... would be found in the Freethought fold, since they have suffered more than any other class of Americans from... Christianity.”²⁴

Harrison went on to argue that Christianity perpetuated race prejudice in America and cultivated a slave mentality because of Biblical passages and Christian teachings:

“Cursed be Canaan,” “Servants obey your masters” and similar texts were the best that the slaveholders’ Bible could give of consolation to the brothers in black... The present condition of the Negroes of America is a touching bit of testimony to the truth of this assertion. Here in America the spirit of the Negro has been transformed by three centuries of subjection, physical, and mental, so that they even glorified the fact of subjection and subservience.”²⁵

Furthermore, he cited E. B. Putnam-Weale’s book *The Conflict of Color* to support his argument against the “white Christians” that “preach the brotherhood of man, but want ‘niggers’ to sit in the rear pews... and generally ‘keep in their place.’”²⁶ In an even more provocative manner, Harrison stated that if he was “shown a population that is deeply religious,” he would “show you a servile population, content with whips and chains.”²⁷ Through his observations of the plight of the black community in America, Harrison was assured that blacks were still enslaved by embracing the ethics of Christianity. He cited Friedrich Nietzsche when he called them slave ethics because Nietzsche also believed that Christianity emphasized values that would pacify and weaken the cognitive abilities of people.

Hubert Harrison expressed polarizing views about Christianity during the early twentieth century. Several other black intellectuals in America held similar views about Christianity during the Harlem Renaissance movement in

New York from the 1920s until the mid-1930s. Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and W.E.B. DuBois, among others, were all critical of Christianity, much like Hubert Harrison. However, Harrison took this critique a step further in the way he explained that Christianity, white supremacy, and capitalism intersected and worked together to systematically oppress blacks in America. He also differed from W.E.B. DuBois—who was arguably the most prominent figure during the Harlem Renaissance—because instead of focusing on the “talented-tenth” of elite black people to carry the race, he wanted knowledge to be given “to the common people.”²⁸ This was particularly radical at the time because proper education was seen as a right allowed to “white people only”²⁹ and blacks were meant to spend their life as workers with no chance to advance beyond that if they wanted to.

Harrison was quite critical of W.E.B. DuBois and other members of the black American elite, like Booker T. Washington, who largely ignored the needs of the black working class and depended “upon the ignorance of the masses” to maintain prominence and leadership.³⁰ He and Washington had a contentious history during the 1920s. Harrison criticized Washington’s philosophy of industrial education for blacks to prove themselves as acceptable, yet non-threatening citizens to appease the white supporters of his “Tuskegee Machine.” To Harrison, Washington’s approach to black advancement in American society was “one of submission and acquiescence in political servitude.”³¹ In opposition to Washington, he did not view the Christian religion as a favorable part of black culture, did not show allegiance to the Republican Party, favored radical action through protest and fighting for the rights underrepresented communities deserve, and also believed that black leadership “should be chosen by, and responsible to, black people.”³²

The Harlem Renaissance was a movement that set out to improve opportunities for blacks to achieve more through education so they could develop a better sense of self and subsequently change white society’s perception of them. Furthermore, its intentions were to explore the various expressions of black culture by harkening back to the black diaspora’s African origins and examine the contemporary state of the black community and its culture.

²³ Hubert Harrison first published this article in the *Truth Seeker* on 12 September 1914. It was originally titled “The Negro a Conservative: Christianity Still Enslaves the Minds of Those Whose Bodies It Has Long Held Bound.” He re-printed the essay in his publication *The Negro and the Nation* in 1917 along with other essays that concerned the “New Negro” Movement and analyzed the situation of contemporary blacks. Jeffrey B. Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 42.

²⁴ Harrison, *The Negro*, 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁸ Harrison, “Education and the Race,” *When Africa Awakes*, 126-128, in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, ed. Perry, 123.

²⁹ James, “Dimensions and Main Currents,” 128.

³⁰ See Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³² *Ibid.*

These were all ideas present in the writings of Hubert Harrison before the Harlem Renaissance gained momentum throughout the 1920s. In response to Harrison's death in 1927, Kirnon again acknowledged Harrison's contribution to the black radicalism movement in Harlem. In reference to Hubert Harrison's paper *The Voice*³³ he stated that it was:

...the first organ to express the new spirit of the Negro. It is to Mr. Harrison that the credit must go for being the first militant apostle of the New Negro. He assisted in molding and directing this new spirit and its accompanying ideals into their most effective channels.³⁴

Harrison already encouraged the black community to think critically, enthusiastically and relentlessly educate themselves, obtain racial pride by exploring black America's African roots, and not look to the white community for assistance and assurance. In fact, when Harrison established the Liberty League³⁵ in 1917, one of the many actions against the racist practices of American society they wanted to take, the black nationalist organization fought to enact anti-lynching legislation and called for blacks to arm themselves in self-defense against any lynching.³⁶

This promotion of self-reliance within the black community encouraged black Americans from various class backgrounds to explore and engage in open discourse on various topics, particularly religion. However, the Harlem Renaissance was not a completely irreligious movement. Author Jon Michael Spencer argues against viewpoints like that of Harry V. Richardson that the

³³ *The Voice* was founded by Harrison in 1917 and was the first newspaper of the "New Negro" movement. The radical newspaper "called for a 'race first' approach, full equality, federal anti-lynching legislation (which the NAACP did not support at the time), enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, labor organizing, support of socialist and anti-imperialist causes, and armed self-defense in the face of racist attacks." See "Introduction" in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 5.

³⁴ James, "Dimensions and Main Currents," 126.

³⁵ *Ibid.* The Liberty League, founded by Harrison, was the first known black nationalist organization of its time. Harrison explained that the Liberty League was a necessity, due to "the need for a more radical policy" than that found in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "He felt that the NAACP limited itself to paper protests, was dominated by white people's conceptions of how African Americans should act." With this belief, the Liberty League operated without the help or financial support of whites. It did not simply focus on the "talented tenth" but black Americans from all class and educational backgrounds. "Its program emphasized internationalism, political independence, and class and race consciousness."

³⁶ Ravi Malhotra, "The Legal Politics of Hubert H. Harrison: Excavating a Lost Legacy," *Columbia Journal of Race and Law* 1, no. 3 (2012), 391.

New Negroes³⁷ of the Harlem Renaissance were all "atheists devoid of spiritual interests."³⁸ He maintains that there was actually a growth and institutionalization of the black church during this period.³⁹ The Harlem Renaissance was not based on any one religion, but Christianity was still at the forefront of acceptable religious expression within the black community.

Hubert Harrison's denunciation of religion did not spark an organized movement among blacks to reject God, but it may have had the opposite effect. The church flourished as a social and cultural hub in the black community, so much so that some black non-believers like W.E.B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson spoke at black church gatherings.⁴⁰ One contemporary scholar even makes the bold claim that several of the black intellectuals who declared themselves non-believers were not really so, because of their tendency to explore spiritual and religious themes in their work, sometimes favorably, without explicitly rejecting Christian beliefs.⁴¹

Several churches were also being established in Harlem, New York, most noticeably the Abyssinian Baptist, St. Philips Protestant Episcopal, and St. James Presbyterian churches, which were led by "educated and progressive pastors."⁴² Traditional, familiar, and well-established, Christianity garnered much support with its message of forgiveness and easily persuaded church members to contribute funds to its support. Despite its frequent association with conservatism and Republicanism in post-Civil War America, Christianity was able to radicalize itself in the context of race during the Harlem Renaissance. The church also gave an alternative to the majority of blacks who considered atheism or agnosticism too radical and frightening. Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey, a devotee of Harrison, offered this alternative of black nationalism and Christian principles; Garvey's appearance in the Harlem black radicalism scene eventually contributed to the eclipsing of Hubert Harrison's popularity at the beginning of the 1920s.⁴³ This was interesting, since much of Garvey's success—particularly with

³⁷ Alain Le Roy Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 3-16. The term "New Negro" was popularized by Alain LeRoy Locke as the title of a literary anthology which featured poetry and other written work of black Americans. The term was also used during the Harlem Renaissance in the early twentieth century to refer to a new type of Black person who actively resisted dehumanizing stereotypes and the oppressive Jim Crow laws.

³⁸ Jon Michael Spencer, "The Black Church and the Harlem Renaissance," *African American Review*, 30:3 (1996): 454.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 453.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 455-456.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 456-457.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 458.

⁴³ James, "Dimensions and Main Currents," 129.

his newspaper *Negro World*, which Harrison edited—was, according to Harrison, based on his ideological work.⁴⁴

The Historical Neglect of Hubert Harrison

Hubert Harrison had several contemporary admirers—both black and white—who saw him as an intellectual giant and were eager to learn from him. However, many factors contributed to Hubert Harrison's decrease in popularity and eventual neglect in history. Hubert Harrison lived a short life but was not martyred like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, nor were his writings and speeches widely disseminated.⁴⁵ He was an uncompromising intellectual who did not “suffer fools gladly” and had no allegiance to a particular movement or group.⁴⁶ Harrison expressed his opinions without intention to harm anyone yet without concern that they would offend anyone either. His popularity among the masses was understandably temporary because of his black radical, socialist, and irreligious ideology that called for no interference from white-dominated groups, but was not supportive of blacks leaving America to return to Africa, as Garvey advocated.⁴⁷

However, the critiques of his fellow radicals hardly redeemed him. Claude McKay, another fellow West Indian, cited Hubert Harrison's “abnormal sexualism” as the reason for his failed undertakings.⁴⁸ His actions did not physically prevent him from accomplishing any goals, but knowledge of his extramarital affairs caused many of his admirers to dissociate themselves from him. They soon fell under Marcus Garvey's spell and shifted allegiance to his brand of black radicalism.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ In a 24 May 1920 diary entry where Harrison gives a poignant critique on the true character and abilities of Garvey, he wrote: “When we had organized the Liberty League Garvey used to attend our meetings; at the same time he began to organize the...Jamaica Improvement Association” and then later became “the UNIA and ACL [United Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League]. Everything that I did he copied...Knowing that the work which had failed had laid the foundation for his success, I refrained from burdening his movement with my presence.” Harrison was particularly referring to Garvey's adoption of “race first” notion that was a key component of Harrison's ideology after he saw that the Socialist Party ignored the needs of black members in order to maintain white supremacy. See *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 189-190.

⁴⁵ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 13.

⁴⁶ James, “Dimensions and Main Currents,” 129.

⁴⁷ Hubert Harrison believed that the race problem was a social phenomenon that was created by people and therefore could be terminated by people, if the right measures were taken. Furthermore, since blacks had been in America for generations and were in fact American, “they were here to stay and make the best of it. His problem is an American problem and he will settle it here in America upon American lines.” From “The Negro-American Speaks,” *The Boston Chronicle*, 29 March 1924. See *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 200.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

According to A. Philip Randolph, Hubert Harrison was “far more advanced than we were...he was older, and he had a very fine mind...but he was poor.”⁵⁰ Throughout his life, Harrison struggled financially and held several jobs to support himself, but never completely lifted himself out of poverty. He was known to mishandle money and often left debts unpaid.⁵¹ Without financial capital and influence, Harrison was limited in how far he could carry his message and movement. Being poor and a black immigrant from a small Caribbean island also contributed to the lack of effort to preserve his name and legacy. Both were marginalized groups that were often overlooked in American history.⁵²

Harrison opposed capitalism, white supremacy, and the Christian church, institutions that dominated American society and, in his view, kept blacks reliant on traditions that typically favored whites and served whites' interests.⁵³ His association with socialism and agnosticism were among the most polarizing of his affiliations. Harrison believed that capitalism could not fully benefit or advance the black population in America and did not waver in his acceptance of Marxist principles.⁵⁴ He was a member of the Socialist Party in New York for several years, but left the party in favor of a “race first” stance because the party was plagued with racial discrimination by whites who failed to acknowledge the plight of black workers.⁵⁵ American society was fearful of socialism and the possibility that it would subvert the capitalist principles that the government espoused. In the case of black Americans, Harrison believed that they were “ignorant of what Socialism means,” disinclined to examine it, and “suspicious of...everything that comes from white people.”⁵⁶ Other black activists like Cyril Briggs, Claudia Jones, and even A. Philip Randolph did not get as much recognition as they might have in the black radicalism and civil rights movements because of their socialist views. Not just the American government, but American society more generally tended to denounce any

⁴⁹ The greater popularity of Marcus Garvey had much to do with his use of Christianity—which many blacks could more easily relate to at the time—acceptance of capitalism, organizational ability, access to financial resources through members' donations to his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and his captivating and passionate oratory that all could understand. See James, “Dimensions and Main Currents,” 129.

⁵⁰ See James, “Dimensions and Main Currents,” 130.

⁵¹ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 56.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ James, “Dimensions and Main Currents,” 126.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

⁵⁶ Harrison, *The Negro*, 24.

semblance of socialist ideology, especially the deemphasizing of religion usually promoted by Marxist and socialist ideologies.

Harrison openly “refuse[d] to put faith in that which does not rest on sufficient evidence.”⁵⁷ He openly promoted human responsibility, science, and rationality above the “virtues of subservience and content” offered by Christianity.⁵⁸ Blacks felt strong ties to the Christian religion because of its use as a tool of rebellion and the way it created solidarity during slavery and aided in the success of abolition. However, Harrison still maintained that Christianity was not initially for the freedom of blacks from slavery and that slave masters used it to justify and perpetuate the institution:

When the fight for abolition of slavery was on, the Christian church, not content with quoting scripture, gagged the mouths of such of their adherents as dared to protest against the accursed thing, penalized their open advocacy of abolition, and opposed all the men like [William Lloyd] Garrison, [Elijah Parish] Lovejoy, [Wendell] Phillips and John Brown, who fought on behalf of the Negro slave.⁵⁹

To Harrison, Christianity and the Bible “constituted the divine sanction of this peculiar institution,” and yet more than ever before in his time, the church “exert[ed] a more powerful influence than anything else in the sphere of ideas.”⁶⁰ Harrison was not only critical of the connection he saw between religion and slavery. He also thought “the Bible and the Testament are impositions and forgeries” and that religion was mainly a ploy to “terrify... mankind, and monopolize power and profit.”⁶¹ Harrison was perhaps one of the earliest black figures in American history to denounce religion so openly and audaciously.

Legacy and Conclusion

Hubert Harrison’s contributions to the Harlem Radicalism movement suffered much neglect in the years following his death in 1927 due to his radical and controversial associations with socialist and anti-religious ideology. However, in recent years, interest in his life and legacy has surged following the publication of Winston James’s book, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*—which features Harrison in one of the chapters—and the donation

of his papers to Columbia University in 2008.⁶² Soon after, Jeffrey B. Perry published a biography of Harrison, which gave further publicity to this once enigmatic historical figure.

The accessibility of Hubert Harrison’s criticism of religion in his essays, articles, critiques, and journal entries sparked great interest in his purported agnosticism. Harrison noted what he considered the excessive religious devotion of blacks in the 1920s, yet blacks remain the most religious racial group in America today. About 86% of black Americans identified with some branch of Christianity in 2008.⁶³ Conversely, there has been a trend in recent years for many Americans to move toward non-belief as more extensive education encourages people to come to their own conclusions on the subject. In the black American community, the shift may not be as drastic as in other communities, but the non-believer classification has attracted a greater number of black Americans than ever before. Between 1990 and 2008, the proportion of black Americans that do not affiliate with any religion nearly doubled from 6% to 11%.⁶⁴

Many present-day black humanists like Jamila Bey and Mark D. Hatcher cite Hubert Harrison as an inspiration for their cause and as an example of the fact that being religious is not a requirement for being black.⁶⁵ With the advent of social media and the quick access to information through the internet, numerous support groups, forums, and organizations provide refuge to many black non-believers. One of these organizations, known as the African Americans for Humanism, includes a section on its website devoted to historical black humanists, where Hubert Harrison is prominently featured among several other black non-believers. Black Americans who are faced with the question of religion in their lives are able to discover and identify with Hubert Harrison’s intellectual pursuits and struggles in a world where they are able to achieve more than at any other time in American history.

⁵⁷ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 62.

⁵⁸ Harrison, *The Negro*, 42.

⁵⁹ Harrison, “The Negro a Conservative: Christianity Still Enslaves the Minds of Those Whose Bodies It Has Long Held Bound,” *Truth Seeker* 41, 12 September 1914. See *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 42.

⁶⁰ Harrison, *The Negro*, 43-44.

⁶¹ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 60.

⁶² In 2008, Columbia University, with the help of Hubert Harrison’s family and his biographer Jeffrey B. Perry, made his papers from 1893 to 1927 available at the university’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library in New York City.

⁶³ Barry A. Kosmin and Ariel Keysar, “American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008): Summary Report March 2009” (Hartford: Trinity College, 2009), 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Jamila Bey and Mark D. Hatcher are both members of African Americans for Humanism, which is a program that was started by the Council for Secular Humanism at the Center for Inquiry-Transnational in Amherst, New York. It was founded in 1989 by Norm R. Allen, Jr.

Hubert Harrison was a “brilliant writer, orator, educator, critic, and political activist” whose life and legacy deserve more attention than they have received to date.⁶⁶ In 1920s America, it was more difficult for black people to be exceptional and advance their education if they did not have money or a certain skin color. Hubert Harrison was able to achieve a level of greatness in spite of this, and his achievements challenged the notions of black inferiority and white supremacy prevalent in American society at the time, as evidenced by the Nadir period and the rise and influence of the Ku Klux Klan during the early twentieth century. He could not afford college, yet he had a wealth of knowledge in numerous subjects including history, languages, and philosophy. He produced many intellectual publications, most notably his articles in Garvey’s newspaper, *Negro World*, his “Black Man’s Burden” response to Rudyard Kipling’s poem, and his essay compilation titled, *The Negro and the Nation*. Harrison provided the essential ideology for Harlem Radicalism, where he combined labor and class struggle with race and nationalism, ideologies that were not seen as mutually reinforcing at the beginning of the twentieth century. With a biography of him now in print and his papers publicly available, others can identify with his struggles and aspirations, and perhaps revive his legacy.

Hubert Harrison was definitely way ahead of his time.⁶⁷ His particular brand of black radical socialism and agnosticism contributed to the neglect that his writings received during the early twentieth century, as his ideas were not widely embraced by the masses then. His views on religion were controversial, but genuine and logically argued. Today, quite a few black Americans do not find refuge in the black church and want an alternative. They identify with his arguments about the link between slavery and religion and how religion may hinder the advancement of black Americans. He has become a symbol of diversity of thought in the black community, and his writings and various interests shattered white American society’s view that blacks are a monolithic group. As more black individuals identify with non-belief in America, the growing interest in Hubert Harrison and his life will only strengthen.

⁶⁶ Perry, *Hubert Harrison*, 1.

⁶⁷ James, “Dimensions and Main Currents,” 130.

Book Reviews

Wendy Lower. *Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2013.

Reviewed by Craig Sorvillo

Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields by historian Wendy Lower presents a new historical account of the role German women played in the Nazi machinery of destruction. Lower is among the first to place German women across the war-torn Eastern front and demonstrates that these women were integral to the Holocaust’s execution. Lower also reveals how these women often acted on their own accord as well as with German men. Lower illustrates a higher level of agency by these women, which has been previously left out of Holocaust historiography.

Lower examines the role of German women in the Holocaust using the method of collective biography. She carefully selects German women from a variety of backgrounds and professions, including female nurses, teachers, secretaries, and wives, to demonstrate that female participation in the Holocaust was widespread. Lower is addressing a blind spot in the historiography by focusing on “ordinary” German women, since much of the historical work on female perpetrators focuses exclusively on female concentration camp guards. Lower is responding to a longstanding historiographical debate concerning the nature of perpetrator motivations. Christopher Browning has emphasized military structures and the psychological desire to stand with fellow comrades as the primary motivation for many Holocaust perpetrators. In contrast, Lower points to both racism and careerism as the primary motivating factors.

Her subjects include women from diverse backgrounds and different regions of Germany, who all share one important commonality; they all belong to the same generational cohort, seventeen to thirty years old. As a cohort, these women all came of age during the rise and fall of Hitler. According to Lower, this fact impacted every aspect of their lives and often radicalized these women. As evidence of radicalization, Lower focuses her attention on personal correspondence and diaries throughout her book to demonstrate the level of radicalization these women underwent.

There is no single explanation for why these women participated in the Holocaust. Each woman presented in Lower's book has her own specific set of circumstances that explains why. Despite this, Lower argues that "Women in the eastern territories witnessed and committed atrocities in a more open system, and as part of what they saw as a professional opportunity and a liberating experience" (9). Lower bases this hypothesis on the repressive nature of Nazi society, where women were encouraged to remain obedient wives and producers of children. According to Lower, the Eastern Front afforded these ambitious women with a number of opportunities that did not exist in Germany.

The purpose of Lower's book is to trace the careers of these various German women throughout the war and its aftermath. She demonstrates how they chose their professions and how they performed their duties. She also explains how these women justified their actions during and after the war. One example includes the German nurse Pauline Kneissler, who was stationed at the infamous Grafeneck Castle where she participated in the Nazi euthanasia program. Kneissler was one of the most notorious murderers of the mentally and physically handicapped, and she participated in these programs with no remorse. She even justified her actions, believing they were acts of mercy.

Like Kneissler, many of the German women in Lower's study justified their actions to Allied authorities, or simply denied them completely. It is here that Lower also addresses a distortion in the historical record. After the war, German women were held up as the best hope for Germany's salvation, and they were often thought to be free of Nazi taint. They were often referred to as "rubble women" because these women were restoring and rebuilding Germany. Lower shows us that this characterization is largely untrue. She demonstrates that German women radically and broadly supported Nazi ideology and even participated in the Holocaust.

This book is exceptional in many regards. Lower's prose is tremendously readable and free of jargon, and her argument is well-articulated. Also, Lower goes a long way to address a subject that has been drastically understudied, despite the extent of the field of Holocaust studies. I would highly recommend this book for undergraduates, professional historians, and the general public equally.

Colleen Doody. *Detroit's Cold War: The Origins of Postwar Conservatism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013.

Reviewed by Michael Edward Brandon

The dominant vantage point of postwar historiography has been the collapse of the New Deal coalition around issues of urban crisis, white flight, and southern civil rights. It is a narrative guided by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and American Communist Party (CPUSA). Though there is excellent scholarship written from the perspective of liberal-left activists and organizers, Colleen Doody insists that historians must move toward a deeper understanding of the disparate, but unifying forces of postwar conservatism. In *Detroit's Cold War*, Doody argues that the roots of modern conservatism are found in grassroots anticommunism and the fevered anxieties of the Second Red Scare. Doody's work, similar to important predecessors such as Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors* (2002) and Donald Critchlow's *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Anticommunism* (2005), demonstrates that local anticommunist ideology was the glue binding an inchoate set of liberal critiques into a conservative ideology. Anticommunism, primarily composed of anti-statism, religious traditionalism, and libertarian economic philosophy, birthed a distinguishable conservative movement by the late 1950s, propagated by William F. Buckley and Senator Barry Goldwater.

Detroit's Cold War is an effective case study that responds to important historiographic questions about the postwar era in a crucial geographic locale at a definitive point in American history. Franklin Roosevelt's "Arsenal of Democracy" was dominated by the automobile industry. It not only produced leading corporations, such as General Motors and Ford, but also housed some of the nation's most militant unions, especially the CIO-affiliated United Auto Workers (UAW). Detroit also developed into a central hub for black migrants in search of defense jobs opened up by the wartime Fair Employment Practices Commission. By the late 1940s, the Motor City boasted the nation's leading industrial union, largest NAACP branch, and third biggest Communist Party. However, as Doody notes, Detroit's vibrant New Deal-Popular Front politics crumbled in the face of unprecedented prosperity, a Republican resurgence, and an intense anti-union campaign. This was best characterized by automation, plant relocation, corporate public relations, congressional lobbying, and campaign contributions (47).

Anticommunism was a hodgepodge of foreign and domestic fears, but

Doody shrewdly identifies free-market orthodoxy and anti-statism as common themes in Detroit (2). These loose ideological precepts formed powerful links among white liberal critics in a city gripped by residential segregation, mass black migration, and racial warfare over a thoroughly inadequate supply of postwar housing. Grassroots organizations led by homeowners, white-collar workers in the auto and real estate industry, Catholic housewives, and small-time entrepreneurs were among conservatism's early champions in Detroit. Moreover, Doody details anticommunism's role in driving the Motor City's battle between capital and labor, during a period when auto-industry titans contained Walter Reuther's UAW with long-term contracts amidst automation, plant relocation, and foreign competition. *Detroit's Cold War* efficiently chronicles how the city's emergent conservative coalition not only drove the UAW and local NAACP branch into détente with Cold War orthodoxy, but also elected Republican city officials. It furthermore produced leading members of the National Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers, interest groups vital in the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act.

Detroit's Cold War's biggest weakness is that Doody is traversing well-trodden historiographic terrain. She recounts a familiar tale, already explored in Thomas Sugrue's path-breaking monograph, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (1996). Sugrue not only examines the implications of "growth capitalism" and "urban renewal" for metropolitan policy-making, but also details how anti-communism fractured Detroit's liberal consensus, culminating in white flight to conservatism, Republicanism, and suburbia. Doody buttresses Sugrue's suggestion that anticommunism united a diverse group of liberal critics, transcending class boundaries and economic motives. In Motown, white homeowners, real estate dealers, and bankers built an incipient political movement in opposition to liberal governance, progressive socioeconomic preoccupations (i.e., civil rights, public housing, collective bargaining), federal power, and the expansion of the welfare state. In sum, Doody provides a case study that mirrors Sugrue's earlier, definitive work on the Motor City.

Detroit's Cold War is a solid supplement to an emerging historiographic consensus which places anticommunism at the genesis of modern conservatism, from Dixie, across the Sunbelt, and all the way to the West Coast, forming what are now known as the "Red States." In this regard, Doody's work may raise more questions than it answers. For example, many readers will wonder how southern libertarianism, "states' rights," and massive resistance influenced or interacted with Detroit's variant of postwar conservatism. However, such questions are beyond Doody's geographic parameters and outside

of her specified goals. *Detroit's Cold War* does not produce a revolutionary thesis. However, it is certainly an effective complement to studies of modern conservatism and grassroots politics, crucial fields of analysis at a time of economic crisis, political insurgencies, and twenty-first-century "culture wars."

Jonathan Ray. *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of the Sephardic Jewry*. New York: NYU Press, 2013.

Reviewed by Brian Hamm

Stretching from Curaçao to Ceylon, the global diaspora of Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula had a significant influence on European economics, politics, and philosophy throughout the early modern period. Despite a series of important recent books on this diaspora, the mechanisms of its formation and early development are still understudied. In *After Expulsion*, Jonathan Ray contributes greatly to our knowledge of this early stage in the history of the Sephardic Diaspora by emphasizing the sixteenth century as the crucial period when a uniquely Sephardic society and a broad Sephardic cultural consciousness started to come into being. Rejecting any explanation based on pre-existing "natural solidarity inherited from the Middle Ages," Ray argues that it was instead out of the crucible of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean that this new society and consciousness were constructed (31).

This central thesis is developed in three parts. First, in chapters 2 and 3, Ray emphasizes that the Jewish exiles from the Iberian Peninsula found themselves in a Mediterranean world marked by perpetual volatility, chaos, and conflict. The Spanish Expulsion itself certainly contributed no small part to this regional turmoil at the end of the fifteenth century. On this point, Ray rightly reads the Expulsion not as a single moment of devastation, but rather as a serpentine and disorganized process of dislocation. Regardless of their eventual Mediterranean destination—North Africa, Italy, or the Ottoman Empire—the exiles were continually faced with potentially violent non-Jewish neighbors, as well as shrewdly calculating political leaders. All of these circumstances required a great deal of pragmatism on the part of the Iberian refugees throughout the Mediterranean, and, as it had often been in medieval Spain, many Jews found significant opportunities in frontier zones, where their diplomatic, economic, and linguistic skills were of great value.

Second, in this "age of nearly perpetual migration and resettlement," the

Jewish exiles had to negotiate the challenges of political, social, and religious organization in the building of new local communities (62). In chapters 4-6, Ray explores each of these dimensions in turn. Highlighted here are political challenges, especially tax collection; rivalries between various social and commercial networks; and substantial divergences between popular and rabbinic conceptions of appropriate religious devotion and belief. Perhaps surprisingly, given the level of tumult and conflict discussed in the preceding chapters, Ray argues that the most entrenched difficulties in Jewish community-building were actually internal obstacles, rather than external ones (76). Intra-communal rivalries and factionalism proved perennial, complicating religious and political leaders' attempts to implement their visions of what the Jewish communities should be.

Lastly, Ray connects these broader trends to the rise of a distinctly "Sephardic" cultural consciousness. In his final chapter, Ray specifically credits three separate sixteenth-century phenomena for the rise of this new self-fashioning: first, the severe dislocation that resulted from the Expulsion and the continued migration thereafter; second, the often ambivalent relations with native Mediterranean Jewries, which minimized any local variations or dissimilarities from medieval Iberia; and third, a series of Jewish chroniclers who crafted a certain image of Sephardic society in the aftermath of 1492 (135-36).

At 162 pages (excluding notes and bibliography), *After Expulsion* is certainly not meant to be a fully comprehensive study of the early Sephardic Diaspora. Although Ray persuasively demonstrates his principal thesis concerning the construction of Sephardic society during the sixteenth century, the brevity of the book unfortunately leaves certain secondary claims in need of further elaboration. For example, Ray posits a rather sharp "division between the learned and the masses" regarding religious belief and practice (114). While there certainly were innumerable instances of popular practice falling short of rabbinic ideals, Ray seems to accept rather unquestioningly the fundamental binary of his rabbinic sources—viz., a "learned" elite and the "masses." One wonders whether a more extended discussion (and range of sources) would reveal not only a great amount of diversity on each side, but also significant commonalities as well. These dimensions are never really explored in Ray's chapter on religious practice, and it remains unclear exactly how absolute a divide actually existed between elite and popular religious devotion. These dimensions of Sephardic life will be for future scholars to investigate, and in pursuing these questions, along with many others, it is certain that *After Expulsion* will prove to be a valuable contribution in thinking more deeply about the development

of the Sephardic Diaspora, as well as the broader social and economic patterns of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean.

Adam Rome. *The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-In Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2013.

Reviewed by Matt Simmons

Adam Rome's *The Genius of Earth Day* examines a seminal moment in the modern Environmental Movement: the first Earth Day on 22 April 1970. Contrary to historians' portrayal of Earth Day 1970 as merely symbolic, Rome argues it was an "unprecedented" and "transformative" event which combined a political and educational experience that resulted in the creation of the "first green generation" and the construction of a lasting eco-infrastructure (x-xi). According to Rome, the effects of that first Earth Day have been multiple and long-lasting. He claims that, as a direct result of Earth Day, colleges created environmental studies programs, communities built ecology centers, activists organized state environmental lobbies, and newspapers incorporated environmental news within their headlines. Rome asserts that this all occurred because, in the wake of Earth Day 1970, "thousands of organizers and participants decided to devote their lives to the environmental cause" (x). For a book about a single day, *The Genius of Earth Day* has a wide scope—Rome begins in the 1950s with the origins of Earth Day and ends with a comparison between the first Earth Day in 1970 and the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day in 1990. The majority of the book centers on the months and weeks leading up to and including the first Earth Day and its immediate aftermath. Rome organizes the book thematically instead of chronologically. In order, the chapters discuss Earth Day's origins, the event's organizers, annual celebrations—including speakers—and the creation of an eco-infrastructure. In an epilogue Rome illuminates the impact of Earth Day through biographies of individuals who became lifelong environmental advocates after 1970.

Rome drew on a number of primary sources. Principal among these are oral interviews with over 120 of the first Earth Day participants. Archival material came from the Gaylord Nelson Papers at the Wisconsin Historical Society, the private collection of Steve Cotton, and the Douglas D. Crary and David Chudwin Papers at the University of Michigan. Rome utilized contem-

porary environmental nonfiction such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* to contextualize the state of environmental affairs in the United States prior to Earth Day. He also consulted more than thirty-three metropolitan newspapers including *The Michigan Daily* and the *Ann Arbor News* to understand the scope and impact of Earth Day and how the media portrayed it.

Despite its exhaustive research and well-reasoned argument, Rome's book falls short in a couple of crucial ways. Rather than a narrative of how these events jump-started the modern environmental movement and created the "first green generation," the book often devolves into a Who's Who of those involved in Earth Day. A related weakness of the book is its focus on the "important" people in leadership positions in the Earth Day organization. This book presents a top-down, "great man" history of the events, focusing almost exclusively on the middle- and upper-class activists who made Earth Day possible. Certainly their stories need to be told, but what about those on the margins of society who were most affected by environmental degradation at this time—people who could not afford to purchase clean water or leave the most polluted urban neighborhoods? A minority perspective is sorely missing.

Nevertheless, this book succeeds in a number of ways. Rome does a superb job of contextualizing the time period in which this first Earth Day took place with his discussion of the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War protest movement. Additionally, Rome's journalistic background comes through clearly in his easily accessible prose, which is apropos since this is a book with the general educated public as its target audience. Furthermore, despite Rome's at times problematic execution, his central thesis rings true: Earth Day did much to catalyze the modern environmental movement and inspire a generation of activists. Consequently this book fills an important gap in the historical record and is a useful read for any student of the environmental movement, professional or amateur.

Ari Z. Bryen. *Violence in Roman Egypt: A Study in Legal Interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Reviewed by Danielle Reid

How did citizens interact with the Roman legal system? What did they hope to accomplish? How did they present themselves and their grievances? *Violence in Roman Egypt* utilizes the wealth of papyrus petitions from Roman Egypt to explore how individual villagers constructed themselves vis-à-vis

other villagers and authority figures both local and imperial. Not only does Ari Z. Bryen highlight the personal nature of the narratives located within petitions, he also examines them in relation to current social theory, particularly theories of violence and imperialism. Additionally, Bryen's methods are clear enough to be accessible to the non-specialist without sacrificing any of the complexity of Egypt's position in the Roman imperial system.

Chapter 1 lays out the methodological pattern that is repeated throughout the work. After describing and translating a petition, Bryen considers what sort of questions a scholar might bring to such a text. By framing his work in this way, he draws attention to the methods of historical investigation and the theories that underpin them. However, the primary sources are made visible throughout the chapter. In-depth analysis of specific petitions demonstrates that this book is about individual people. Each analysis is situated at the point in the text where it is most relevant to Bryen's deeper theoretical arguments. When he discusses the construction of the self and styles of complaint, we meet Ptolemaios, who drafted numerous petitions against his neighbors. In later chapters we meet Ision who resisted the collection of a debt and was beaten "for no good reason" and Gena, a local official, whose unsuccessful attempt to compel others of his village to accept public office demonstrates the unofficial use of violence by officials (75). Through these cases, Bryen discusses "violence" in a broad sense, as a label for actions with which one disagrees.

Interwoven with these examples is an extensive and complicated historiography. Bryen walks his readers through the difference between the way violence is discussed in modern society—colloquially, legally, and academically—and the way it was discussed in Roman Egypt. He highlights the vocabulary of violence and its relevant legal categories. Besides the upfront analysis of major thinkers like Max Weber and Michel Foucault, a comparative method lies in the background of his work. His notes contain investigations of modern violence which frame theoretical discussions and arrange them into something to which readers can relate. For example, at the beginning of Chapter 4 "Narrating Injury," Bryen opens with a description of an ancient Egyptian fist fight and a comparison with bare-knuckle boxing.

The final chapter ties all these strands together. Bryen implements the theory and method discussed in previous chapters in his analysis of two document sets. The documents concern disputes between family members and property rights. They include not only a single petition concerning a single incident, but enough documentary evidence to highlight the way individuals deployed strategies of legal dispute and identity construction to reformulate

village relationships. Furthermore, Bryen reveals the purpose and interpretation of violence in these reformulations. In this final chapter, he provides a vivid account of life in Egyptian villages under Roman rule and relates that account to major debates in late antique studies through analysis.

At only 208 pages of argumentation, this enlightening book is also concise. The remaining 155 pages comprise an extensive bibliography, a thorough index, insightful notes, and two appendices. Appendix A explains for the non-specialist how a papyrus text is edited and how an official edition is produced—an important methodological clarification for new readers of Egyptian documents. Appendix B provides the author's own translations of all the papyrus documents discussed in the work. Furthermore, between Appendix B and the notes, the section entitled "Papyri in Checklist Order" may be the single most useful part of this book's apparatus criticus. It allows the reader to quickly determine whether a particular papyrus was used in the work, with cross-references to its translation in Appendix B. In addition, whenever Bryen discusses any section of a document longer than a few words, he cites his own English translation along with the original Greek. By using this understudied body of evidence in a new way, Bryen challenges the field of late antique studies and provides an excellent introduction to life in Egypt under Roman rule. This book is worthwhile for specialists and non-specialists alike.

Jessica M. Lepler. *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis*.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Reviewed by Brenden Kennedy

On 3 May 1837, international financier and leading New Orleans cotton merchant Theodore Nicolet committed suicide with a pistol. Jessica M. Lepler opens and closes *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis* with Nicolet's unfortunate death to highlight how Americans, fretting over individual financial insolvency, panicked in a variety of ways during 1837. Some fled to the Republic of Texas; others sought high-interest, short-term loans to pay off creditors; still more requested leniency from creditors, or begged bankers for financial advice; or they sued business associates to collect debts. Lepler's book abounds with individual episodes of panic, what she calls "the many panics in 1837." She breaks with historians and economists who construct the Panic of 1837 as a singular and national event. These scholars reached their conclusions by telling "stories

of a panic-less Panic of 1837" (3). Reinserting panicky individuals into the historical narrative, Lepler finds that "historians had gotten the chronology wrong" (2). Most scholars date the Panic of 1837 from approximately May 10. According to these narratives, Nicolet had the indecency to take his life seven days before the Panic started. This prompted Lepler to ask, "Why would the panicked merchant kill himself before the crisis began?" (2).

To answer this question the author explores the 1830s financial milieu of America and Britain, focusing mainly on New York, New Orleans, and London. More specifically, the book covers extensively the period between March and May 1837. Building on recent histories of American capitalism, Lepler highlights the mutual dependence between southern slavery and Anglo-American financial systems. British credit fueled slavery's expansion into the Old Southwest, and slavery gave British financiers a profitable investment opportunity. Bills of exchange, paper promises to pay in specie at a future date, funded the entire system. For the system to function, each person accepting the bill as payment had to have confidence in the bill's value. Lepler notes that "a single failed bill could not destroy the transatlantic financial system, but many unfulfilled promises could" (30).

The directors of the Bank of England (BOE) lost confidence in Americans' ability to repay British loans during late 1836. Intense partisan debate over the nature of America's banking system left BOE directors wary of American financial stability. As a result, the BOE limited credit to American borrowers, leading to what Lepler calls "The Pressure of 1836." England's centralized financial system, headed by the BOE, allowed such a policy. Americans desperate for credit did not immediately panic, nor, once panic set in, did they panic at the same time. News and rumors of an impending credit crunch spread unevenly across time and space; Lepler thus argues for the "power of communication as a causative force in economic history" (95). Only after several months of handwringing and frantic letter-writing did Americans realize their debts would be unpayable without more British credit. Beginning in March 1837, therefore, Americans began to panic.

Establishing a new timeline for the many panics in 1837 did not solve another, more pressing dilemma: Lepler asks, "Why did historians get the chronology wrong?" (3). She posits the many panics in 1837 fundamentally changed how Americans understood economic failure. After outlining how sermons, novels, instructional guides for women, and political economy textbooks preached individual responsibility as determinative of economic success or failure, Lepler asserts the harrowing months of March, April, and May

1837 forced Americans to calm “their troubled minds by blaming the crisis on systems larger than any individual” (3). This seismic shift transformed a jumbled mess of individual responses to panic into a “portrait of panic” that “was singular” and national in scope (183). In other words, as panicked Americans struggled to comprehend their own experiences with financial insolvency they searched for a culprit other than themselves. They found that “the two-party system of mass politics offered an easy answer to questions of economic causation” (124). Whigs blamed Democrats, Democrats blamed Whigs, and the only point of agreement was that politics caused panic. Lepler astutely outlines how historians and economists subsequently wrote panicked individuals out of the narrative by taking Americans at their word that politics caused panic.

Lepler has delivered an excellent addition to the growing literature on nineteenth-century Anglo-American financial history. Her work should serve to open questions about other nineteenth-century panics. How, for example, did Americans panic during the 1819-1822 recession? Did they blame themselves or larger forces?

Notes on Contributors

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Daniel Conigliaro graduated *summa cum laude* with his B.A. in History and Classical Studies from the University of Florida in 2014. He was a University Scholar for the 2013-14 year and wrote a senior thesis on sermons and preaching in late fourth-century northern Italy. He is currently in the process of completing a combined degree and will stay at UF to receive his M.A. in History.

Daniel Fernández-Guevara is a Ph.D. student in Latin American History at the University of Florida, where he specializes in migration and early twentieth-century Cuba. He was a recipient of the McKnight Fellowship and assisted in curating an exhibit titled *Revolucionarias: Women and the Formation of the Cuban Nation* for the George A. Smathers Library at the University of Florida in Spring 2014.

Brian Hamm is a Ph.D. candidate in Latin American History at the University of Florida. He received his B.A. in History from Pepperdine University in 2010 and his M.A. from the University of Florida in 2012. His dissertation examines the connections, interactions, and conflicts between Portuguese *conversos*, local society, and the Inquisition in colonial Cartagena de Indias.

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Submission Guidelines

Become a published author in *Alpata*, the award-winning, student-run journal of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society's Gamma Eta chapter at the University of Florida. All University of Florida students are invited to submit. All historical papers will be considered.

Submission Length

Undergraduate Papers 2,500—4,000 words

Graduate Papers 5,000 words, minimum

Book Reviews 500—750 words

All submissions must follow the Chicago Manual of Style humanities documentation system. Submit electronically to ufalpata@gmail.com or send three hard copies, each with a cover page containing your contact information, to:

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