



ALPATA

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Cover: Unknown artists. "The Conquest of Tenochtitlán," from the Conquest of México series, Mexico, second half of seventeenth century. Oil on canvas

ALPATA is named after the Seminole word for alligator.

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Editorial: These are the Lucky Jews

by Adam S. Weiss

“The Jews, where are they? They’re in here somewhere!” The Polish woman behind the counter looks bewildered, as a bearded man, a rabbi, continues, “You know, those little Jews”, marking out an approximation with the thumb and index finger. “I was told I would find them here.” The woman finally understands and hesitantly gestures towards a discreet corner of the shop.

I witnessed this interaction recently, in Krakow’s International Airport; a scene that had it taken place in 1942 might have ended in a hostile confrontation between shopkeeper and customer, but on this day ended in a bizarre discovery. In an unassuming souvenir shop, tucked away amidst rows of snow globes, postcards, and keychains of the Pope, tourists will find a peculiar collection of “Lucky Jew” clay figurines, just several inches in height. At first glance, one can’t help but give a little smirk at this playful tid-bit of Anti-Semitism. The several dozen wide-eyed *Chassidim*, or orthodox Jews, come complete with black hats, full beards, and traditional grown-out sideburns. Below elongated noses, each figurine grasps in one arm, a green money sack, and in another, an authentic one-grosz coin embedded into the grip of the tiny clay hand.

Along with the rabbi who had questioned the cashier on the whereabouts of her Jews, I threw down the last of my *złoty* and pocketed a few of these small figurines, excited that I was able to get my hand on such a revealing oddity before I departed Poland to return home to the U.S. Erica Lehrer, an anthropologist who has studied this

phenomenon, refers to the Lucky Jews as both “Holocaust ghosts” and “Patron saints of Polish Capitalism.” While similar imagery has been found in Polish art for centuries, a new wave of *żyd*-inspired art has swept across Poland in the past 20 years, as Lucky Jew oil paintings have also become staples in Polish homes. After a week touring the mass grave sites and gas chambers of a not-so-distant Polish past, the little Lucky Jew in my pocket seemed an all-too-fitting relic to remember my brief stay in the East.

The figurines represent a so-called Jewish renaissance in Poland, especially in the city of Krakow, whose pre-war Jewish population reached over 50,000. Today, in the historically Jewish quarter of Kazimierz, the Jewish population of about 140 barely rivals the population of Jews on the shelves of the airport’s souvenir shop. Still, the small Jewish community in modern-day Kazimierz is vibrant and growing. Store fronts with Hebrew lettering and kosher restaurants line the streets of the trendy neighborhood. For the first time in my brief stint in Poland, I felt no need for the armed security guard who had been hired to join us on our tour.

An entire tourism industry has evolved around Jewish Krakow, as fleets of golf carts zip through the cobble-stoned Kazimierz streets, offering views of the Jewish quarter, surviving synagogues and ultimately, the factory of Oskar Schindler located just across the Vistula river. The factory and workplace of the former Nazi-capitalist turned righteous-gentile is the most popular spot on the tour. The gift shops fill up with tourists anxious to get their hands on mugs and notebooks featuring pre-war Yiddish art. Although functioning as a museum of wartime Krakow, the industrial building also serves as a monument to the triumphant account of the rescue of 1200 of Krakow’s Jews; a story of the survival of the lucky Jews.

Yet, just several minutes down the road, there stands a lonely landmark that has no gift shops, no golf carts, no flashy tours-- just five melancholy faces carved into a monolithic stone statue staring down upon a large empty field, the former site of the Plaszow concentration camp. This is the monument to Krakow’s unlucky Jews.

These myriad representations of the Jew in Krakow, a symbol of nostalgia and a reminder of what Krakow let happen to its neighbors, are a source of pride and shame. But in the popular imagination, the Jew has reverted to a pre-war state as the devastation of The Holocaust is minimized in favor of a more palatable account of Polish Jewry; one of pre-war conditions and the anti-Semitism that came with it.

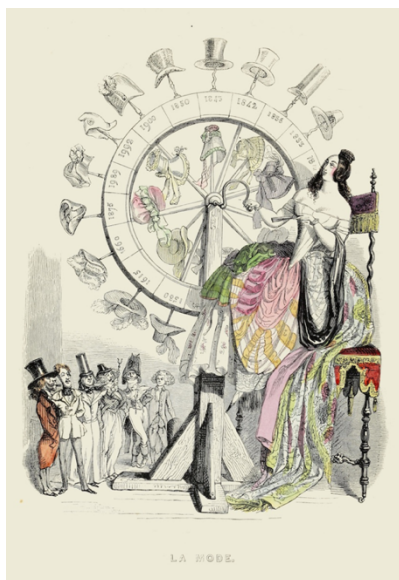
And then there's Auschwitz, just an hour's drive from Kazimierz. Its only concession to the needs of tourists is the pizza restaurant situated across from the infamous railway entry of Auschwitz-Birkenau; the incongruity so striking that I had to ask the rabbi on our tour his interpretation. In typical rabbinic fashion, he answered my question with one of his own: "What are the minimum accommodations that need to be provided for the average person to actually visit a site like this?"

And so I stare into the eyes of the Lucky Jew that sits on my bedroom shelf and wonder, "What is the minimum level of Anti-Semitism needed for Poland to remember its Jews?"

Selected Articles

Dressing the Part: Consumption, Fashion, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century France

Andrea Stein Bolan



Like the complex construction of a designer gown, “fashion” is also a complex construction, made of layers both seen and unseen. In the words of the late French designer Coco Chanel: “Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening.” From street-wear to sleep-wear, the conscious choice of clothing is a physical curation of an idea, a moment, an emotion, and a people. In nineteenth-century France, fashionable clothing and commodities like stylish interior décor became a crucial means of identity formation and communication on both a large scale, such as socioeconomic class, as well as on an individual, interpersonal level. At the forefront of the consumer revolution, women were the primary beneficiaries, victims, and perpetuators; the department store and arcade became palaces of consumption intended to seduce women in control of their husband’s or father’s purse to spend their precious time and money. While one could hardly disassociate entirely from the growing consumer culture, many were well aware of its potential danger and certain moral degradation: such as J.J. Grandville, Gustave Flaubert, and Emile Zola. Grandville’s artistic interpretation of fashion in his lithograph *La Mode* serves as a parallel work of cultural criticism to *Madame Bovary* and *The Ladies’ Paradise*, providing a metaphorical framework and language for interpretation of the texts and thus an understanding of the socio-psychological impact of clothing and consumption on nineteenth-century French society, including gender roles and relations.

Jean-Jacques (J.J.) Grandville was a satirist and an early surrealist who produced colorful, inventive cartoons that demonstrated and criticized the commodification of French culture. One of his most critical and elucidative lithographs, *La Mode*, or “Fashion,” from his 1844 series *Another World*, comically portrays the centrality of fashion and material things in group and individual

identity formation of nineteenth-century Parisians.¹ In *La Mode*, Fashion is a goddess that the Parisians worship and to whom they subject their whims. The scale of Fashion in comparison to her devoted followers is reminiscent of Greek temples and their monumental statues as the gaze between the omnipotent deity and her people represents a power relationship. This awe and loyalty of the French to their Fashion is seen clearly in the character of Emma Bovary and her fervent pursuit of luxury and status.² The choice of a goddess as opposed to a male deity is strategic because it both gives women power as consumers and self-destined vehicles of couture as well as emphasizes women's complex position as both empowered and powerless in the politics of consumption. Fashion is controlling the wheels of "fate," depicted here as men's and women's headwear and the years they are in style, a nod to women's influence in trendsetting yet also a sarcastic reminder that men ultimately remained in financial and political control. The design of her dress is provocative in the cut of the bodice, a nod to the objectification and sexualization of women and the textiles that compose her skirt are plentiful, extravagant, and visually overwhelming, much like the fabric department in Ladies' Paradise.³ The whole scene speaks of excess and sensual, material pleasure. This artistic rendition of French social politics provides a lens from which to view the vivid and biting critiques of the reckless vanity and pervasive nature of fashion and commodification offered by Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* as well as Emile Zola's *The Ladies' Paradise*. Grandville espoused in his art that fashion was the religion of the day. Following this logic, the arcade and department store, like that in *Ladies' Paradise*, were therefore the goddess's houses of worship. Indeed, "these miraculous

¹ J. J. Grandville and Taxile Delord, *Un autre monde; transformations, visions, incarnations ... et autre choses* (Paris, H. Fournier, 1844), http://archive.org/details/unautremondetran00gran_0.

² Gustave Flaubert and Francis Steegmuller, *Madame Bovary* (New York: Random House, 1957).

³ As in the physical store of Zola's novel, as well as the book itself. Émile Zola and Brian Nelson, *The Ladies' Paradise* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

stores spawned impressive edifices whose display and ostentation made them look like cathedrals dedicated to the glory of the age.”⁴ Octave Mouret, the proprietor of Ladies’ Paradise,

[was] building a temple to Woman, making a legion of shop assistants burn incense before her, creating the rites of a new cult; he thought only of her, ceaselessly trying to imagine greater enticements; and, behind her back...he had emptied her purse and wrecked her nerves...⁵

The feigned appearance of female liberation is countered soon after these personal feelings are revealed to the reader, as the women in the room surround him, dote on him, and ritualistically pour him a cup of tea, “heads raised and eyes shining” like sheep to their shepherd. As Phillippe Perrot notes, Mouret’s success ordained him as the high priest of a

new religion that converted a rational browser into an unbridled coquette. Woman came to spend her hours of idleness in his shop, the thrilling, disturbing hours which in the past she had spent in the depths of a chapel.... If he closed the doors, there would have been a rising in the street, a desperate outcry from the devout, whose confessional and altar he would have abolished.⁶

Gustave Flaubert’s *Emma Bovary*, and therefore her real-life French contemporaries, lived and died as governed by Fashion. Scenes of sensual rapture pervade the novels, such as this moment in *Ladies’ Paradise* when the women surrounding Mouret were “leaning forward, as if their whole being was yearning toward their tempter. Their eyes were growing dim, a slight shiver ran over the napes of their necks,” and they were like “kneeling worshippers” to this “despotic king of

⁴ Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie : A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). 60.

⁵ Zola and Nelson, *The Ladies’ Paradise*. 77.

⁶ Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie : A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*. 63.

fashion.”⁷ Goods were “lined up with devotion as if God himself was passing by,” and the droves of women in Mouret’s stores sounded to the ear like “the uproar of a nation bowing down to a golden calf.”⁸

The department store and its space as an exchange of goods and ideas “created the material and psychological conditions for a new kind of consumption by new groups of customers,” then extended its invitation throughout the middle classes, “who could finally acquire the vestimentary signs they had long been legally allowed to wear.”⁹ Lisa Tiersten contributes insight into the role of commercial culture in France during the reordering of class systems in the nineteenth century and reconfiguring of group and individual identity, for in this setting of a growing affluent middle class, “taste became an essential means of asserting individual taste distinction.” As class divisions relaxed and “the consumer market deemed so threatening to the republic’s aesthetic and moral ethos” took center stage in socioeconomic performance, the market, its arcades and modern department stores, “became a primary arena for its expression.”¹⁰ While collective aesthetic caste expression became overshadowed by “individual taste distinction,” the working classes were hardly liberated from their struggles by the consumer revolution. The increasing celebration of costume and its ensuing performance would serve to heighten the tensions between the classes and give rise to the financial and psychological burden of personal debt. In *Madame Bovary*, the theme of fashion as religion and its role in identity formation is exposed through Emma’s want for grandeur and resulting strained personal relationships. Emma’s early dissatisfaction with the rites and words of the convent inform her choice to substitute Christian holy scriptures for a different variety of sacred text: romance novels, fashion magazines, and popular catalogues. Emma Bovary’s attraction and ultimate dedication to

⁷ Zola and Nelson, *The Ladies’ Paradise*. 80-84.

⁸ Zola and Nelson. 430

⁹ Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*. 80.

¹⁰ Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). 90.

these publications from the world outside the convent, the material subverting the spiritual, show the pervasive nature of consumer culture and the seductive promises it held. Emma longs to live in Paris, and her desires are stoked by the trickling down of *bourgeois* couture from those men and women with means to traverse the recently blurred peripheries between socioeconomic classes. Emma's marriage to Charles is rich in tension brought out by material desire and the drive of aesthetic class performance. Before the wedding, she "busied herself with her trousseau," ordering garments from Rouen, and sewing her slips and nightcaps herself, copying fashion drawings from magazines, desiring to emulate the look of luxury of the rich. Their wedding celebrations are described by Flaubert in sumptuous detail, with a focus on the clothes and the awkward formality of the occasion. The guests wore their best clothes, ladies wearing "country-style headdresses and city-style gowns," and "since there weren't enough stable hands to unharness all the carriages, the men rolled up their sleeves and went to it themselves."¹¹ A possible celebration of the working-middle class, and yet the comedy of "freshly shorn" men, who had to "shave in the dark" nods towards the frivolities and questionable importance of putting on airs. Even Charles, in his brief honeymoon euphoria, "couldn't keep from constantly touching her comb, her rings, everything she wore,"¹² engaging in an intercourse with her things rather than Emma herself. Emma Bovary was not only concerned with her own appearance, but with Charles' outward costume as well. She would constantly adjust his outfits, straightening a tie, throwing away a worn pair of gloves, and it "was never, as [Charles] believed, for his sake...but for her own, exasperated vanity."¹³

After attending balls and other spaces of upper class convergence and communication, Emma became enthralled with the commodities and refined manners of Paris, and in Rouen "she saw

¹¹ Flaubert and Steegmuller, *Madame Bovary*. 30.

¹² Flaubert and Steegmuller. 39.

¹³ Flaubert and Steegmuller. 69.

ladies with charms dangling from their watch fobs; she bought some charms” then “took a fancy” to a number of other indulgent and expensive pieces to decorate their meager home. Charles admired these things as well, for they were like “a trickle of golden dust along the petty pathway of his life,” feigning fulfillment and status; the clothes and decorations acted as a mask.¹⁴ These physical conventions represented the “potential of play on equality,” mobility and freedom expressed “under the disguise of manners and in the exaggeration of ideas,” such as in the wearing of fashionable clothing and ownership of stylish interior décor.¹⁵ Emma finds herself caught in the rapture of Fashion, straining to live a devoutly fashionable life but existing just out of range of Her gospel. The Bovary’s finances are typical of a successful working-class family, fair for even lower middle-class means. Charles is a local physician in rural France, and despite the money Emma is gifted or borrows from her extra-marital romantic and financial affairs, their combined income simply cannot feasibly furnish Emma’s dreams of a high fashion, high class lifestyle.

This identity crisis in a changing socio-economic structure was typical of the era. After the publication of *Madame Bovary*, it was well noted and widely studied by French historians of the consumer revolution that Gustave Flaubert strongly identified with the tragic yet approachable character in his creation of Emma Bovary. When he was asked who the Emma of his novel was based on, Flaubert would declare, “*Madame Bovary, c’est moi!*” or “*I am Madame Bovary!*”¹⁶ Perrot surmises that

before the advent of ready-made and of democracy, social roles and status could be read instantly on one’s clothes, which included details that formed part of a code in which every sign was laden with meaning. The end of legal

¹⁴ Flaubert and Steegmuller. 67-68.

¹⁵ Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the “Ancien Régime,”* Past and Present Publications (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). 402.

¹⁶ Francis Steegmuller, *Flaubert & Madame Bovary: A Double Portrait* (London: Constable, 1993). 283.

restrictions and the standardization of manufacturing decisively disrupted the production and interpretation of vestimentary signs.¹⁷

This insatiable lust for commodities and their symbolic stature that she cannot quite reach leads to Emma's moral and financial downfall, resulting in her tragic act of suicide. The harsh series of events in Emma and Charles' less-than-perfect life lends to Flaubert's empathy and disdain for the unfulfilling and potentially deadly cycle of consumer capitalism.

Women, as public consumers, seamstresses, and department store clerks, had the power to influence fashion trends as well as how their money was spent and where they spent it:

Women, whose appearance and clothes henceforth signified their husbands' status, women, who increasingly managed the family budget, women, who were both delegates and managers, became the prime target of the new business practices. For them the department stores multiplied the snares and seductions that both enslaved and exalted them simultaneously.¹⁸

Indeed, this was a new and exciting freedom for women across class lines; yet this freedom, as well as the curated atmosphere of the stores and its *entrée libre*, or “no obligation to buy,” did away with the former moral obligation to buy a vendor's wares and consequentially invited more women to browse and purchase, often impulsively, encouraged by the cheap prices and standardized return policies. For women in particular this “pursuit of chic” in the commercial marketplace “legitimized their presence in the urban public and reconciled the consumer role with domestic responsibilities.”¹⁹ Furthermore, although individual styles would differ among women by personal

¹⁷ Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*. 80.

¹⁸ Perrot. 80.

¹⁹ Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France*. 90.

taste and access to a good tailor, the ready-to-wear phenomenon established a large degree of uniformity and cultural solidarity among middle class women. Mostly simple designs, ready-mades were inexpensive to mass produce for department stores like *Ladies' Paradise*, and therefore widely available and affordable. These simple designs coincided with a cultural break from imperial style dress, aspiring to an age of simplicity in fashion representative of the authentic French people and not the *Ancien Regime* and their aesthetic frivolities.²⁰ The mobility of unchaperoned women in the urban cities, at cafes and arcades, combined with the trend of simplicity and the technology for bulk production led to a revolution in the structure of women's garments. As their physical movement increased, the weight, ornamentation, and layers of fabric in the garments began to decrease.²¹ The "indoor" gowns gave birth to new leisure wear, which served to encourage women to leave their homes for casual outings, bike rides, and of course, shopping sprees.

Clothing is an eternal and symbolic mode of communication. In the words of James Laver, the British author, curator, and dress historian, "Clothes are inevitable. They are nothing less than the furniture of the mind made visible."²² Fashion is a language in and of itself, and an extension of our selves that can speak volumes without uttering a single word. While this did apply to men, it was mostly relevant to women of nineteenth-century France. Four words succinctly capture the mood of nineteenth-century French fashion: costume, custom, dialogue and disguise. The first two terms are played out in *Ladies Paradise* in its lessons on the customs of costumes, or the culture of clothing within spaces that celebrate commodification, like the department store. Dialogue and disguise are explored in *Madame Bovary*, weighing the possibilities and

²⁰ It should be noted, however, that highly ornamented garments were still worn by upper middle-class Frenchwomen, as well as more complicated and elegant dresses for special occasions.

²¹ Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France*. 99.

²² Giorcelli and Rabinowitz, *Fashioning the Nineteenth Century*.

promises dress and décor offered in transcending class boundaries by adorning oneself in attire that represented wealth, status, and refinement. Magazines and catalogues were directed towards women, and department stores and arcades were spaces of luxury and leisure where primarily female socialites, in control of their husband's purse, would go forth and conquer, or at least go forth and buy a new wardrobe for the season. As J.J. Grandville acknowledged in his goddess of Fashion, *La Mode*, the world of couture was one inhabited and ruled, directly and indirectly, by women, but these were also spaces of temptation and danger, as women were targeted and seduced into spending exorbitant amounts of money, sometimes far beyond their means, as Emma Bovary proved to do. The relationships between dress and self, consumer and culture, the seeming victories and false hopes that clothing offered in class mobility, and the role gender plays in this scene of material obsession are worth further study in order to fully comprehend the gender and class relations of what was then a blossoming economic and cultural transformation. These themes have carried over to the twenty-first century, evident in monumental shopping malls and endless advertisements for clothing, makeup, and gadgets. In essence, we are what we wear, and the cultural satires of Grandville, Flaubert, and Zola reveal the timeless and universal significance of dressing the part.

Victorian Women and Their Role in Justifying the Western Presence in Nineteenth-Century China

Courtney Weis



When the West met the East in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century China, female travelers made their way to the country to report a “truthful impression of the country and its people.”¹ Their findings fascinated Western society and they became household names. By using travel logs, books and articles written by these famous Western women and an autobiography of an ordinary Chinese woman, I will argue that Western women created vast differences between themselves and their Oriental counterparts to justify the Western presence in, and therefore the exploitation of, China. By specifically focusing on the typical woman’s sphere, charity and beauty, I will show how Western women in China contributed to the phenomenon of *Orientalism*.

Today, many historians would agree that imperialism requires more than armed struggles and war. The leading scholar of this belief is Edward W. Said. His groundbreaking work, *Orientalism*, critiqued the way the West has seen and recorded the history of the East, both Middle and Far. When the Occidentals arrived in the East, they saw differences between their culture and the Eastern cultures. Instead of focusing on the similarities between what was familiar and what was foreign, Westerners believed the differences to be a marking of inferior Eastern cultures. With this view, Eastern cultures were commodified, simplified, and patronized by the West; they were never truly understood. The biases and stereotypes created by the West for the East laid grounds for imperialism. Because the East was never understood, it was backwards and inhibited the potential of its people, a problem that the West believed imperialism could fix. The supposed backwardness of the Oriental culture secured the right for the Occidental to take over, which usually resulted in economic and political gains for the Occidental countries. This dynamic, Said

¹ Isabella Lucy Bird, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond: An Account of Journeys in China, Chiefly in the Province of Sze Chuan and Among the Man-tze of the Somo Territory* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1899), x.

argues, has tainted Eastern studies since its inception.² Today, historians are aware of *Orientalism* and look for potential biases in primary source material. While some believe that the importance of cultural “otherness” for imperialism may be overstated, it was certainly at play. Western women who visited China, wrote about China and spoke about how China operated under *Orientalism*. Many of these women, whose works will be explored later in this paper, saw the differences between themselves and their Eastern counterparts as a cry for help.

The very presence of Western women in China exemplified the destructive changes China had experienced in the latter part of the nineteenth century. After a long history of isolation, China was unwillingly opening up to foreign trade and influence. Like a game of dominos, one unequal trade agreement led to the next until most of the country was operating under separate “spheres of influences” run by Euromerican powers.³ The most impactful trade was that of opium. Led by the British, opium quickly became commonplace in China. Although the drug was consumed by all Chinese people, men were the biggest users. This negatively impacted the wives of the *coolies* (Chinese peasant workers) whose small salary they depended on to support the family. The sheer number of possible buyers and their weaknesses, as seen through cultural differences, made the Chinese the target market for the drug. Selling opium from India, which was formally under British control at the time, would give the British unprecedented wealth, even if the Chinese government tried to stop the sale.⁴ Through the opium trade and the Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60), the British gained more and more control of the country. *Orientalism* gained a foothold through opium. The drug is

² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

³ Susan Morgan, “The ‘Spheres of Influence’: Framing Late Nineteenth-Century China in Words and Pictures with Isabella Bird,” in *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s*, ed. Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 105-118.

⁴ Edward Fry, “China, England and Opium,” 1876.

addicting and debilitating, and as the Chinese consumption of the drug increased, so did the negative perception of the East, even though the Westerners brought in the drug and encouraged the trade.

The opening of China allowed for both Western men and women to experience the East for themselves. Although women were known to be the more genteel, understanding sex, Victorian women who traveled to the East “adopted the persona of the White Male.”⁵ Both sexes shared the same desire for imperialism and belief in Eastern backwardness. The wildness of an unknown land and their interactions with the indigenous people gave women a chance to be like the great male colonizers of the British empire, but these women were not treated as equals. Victorian gender stereotypes made their way to the East and female travelers focused mainly on domestic issues like hospitals, the Church, and beauty. Victorian women were on a “civilizing mission” and used their morality and purity to help those abroad.⁶

One woman to embark on such a mission to China was Isabella Bird. Her book chronicling her time abroad, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond*, painted China as a beautiful country in need of help. One of her most telling chapters is “Chinese Charities.” Bird found the “non-existence of benevolence in the vast non-Christian empire of China”⁷ to be appalling. She could not find strong charitable instincts in the Chinese people she had encountered. Bird stated that dead Chinese soldiers were stripped of their uniforms on the battlefield and that Chinese generals bought machine guns without a protective part because they had plenty of men to spare.

⁵ Nicholas Clifford, “A Truthful Impression of the Country”: *British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 30.

⁶ Julia Kuehn, “Encounters with Otherness: Female Travelers in China, 1880-1920,” in *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s*, ed. Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 75-90.

⁷ Isabella Lucy Bird, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond: An Account of Journeys in China, Chiefly in the Province of Sze Chuan and Among the Man-tze of the Somo Territory* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1899), 181.

When she tried to help an ill Chinese man who had served her by placing a wet cloth on his forehead, the Chinese called her a fool. Her conclusion was that the Chinese lacked personal relationships between those who needed help and those who were helping, and to her, that made the Chinese selfish and heartless. A great deal of the “Chinese Charities” chapter describes the large-scale Chinese organizations, both private and state-run, that help the less fortunate. Bird listed the charitable guilds that provide coffins to those who cannot afford one, the free dispensaries that give out medicine, the orphanages for young boys and girls. Although she recognized these institutions, to her and the rest of the West, these institutions could not possibly be as good as theirs because they lack what the West believes is most important in charity: personal connections. She especially did not see much personal charity from Chinese women, which deepened the divide between Bird and Chinese women. Bird’s need to “translate otherness with sameness”⁸ discredits the Chinese charities, and to a larger extent, Chinese culture, which were just as impactful as Western charities, but operated on different grounds. Using personal connections as a catalyst, she created a difference between the West and the East that made the West superior.

Mary Gaunt, another female traveler to China, discussed Chinese charities in her travel log as well. She was “only concerned that the unfortunate should be happy.”⁹ *A Woman in China* is a report of her time in Peking, and like Bird, Gaunt commented on the differences between herself and the Chinese. The chapter began with her description of the filth of the Chinese. So great is this filth that they make themselves go blind, said Gaunt. She spent time [in](#), and took pictures of, the Mission for the Blind in Peking. Here, blind children were brought in from missionaries around China to live and learn Braille. Despite their blindness, Gaunt reported that the children were happy and healthy. Her chief concern was with the girls. Victorian women, fresh from a wave of independence and

⁸ Kuehn, “Encounters with Otherness,” 78.

⁹ Mary Gaunt, *A Woman in China* (London: T Werner Laurie, 1914), 133.

feminism, pitied the Chinese women, for “their lot was hard ... [and] the only chance of happiness a Chinese woman has [was] bearing a son.”¹⁰ After being assured that these girls of the Mission For The Blind could be married, Gaunt expressed her satisfaction with the work of the mission. Like Bird, Gaunt was dissatisfied with Chinese charity in the beginning of her time abroad, but with an increase in missionaries came a charitable climate she found more appealing. It is important to note that her good opinions came with the arrival of more missionaries, i.e. Westerners. But unlike Bird, and like Said, Gaunt acknowledged that there are many ways to care for people, and those ways that are foreign to those “steeped in the sanitary lore of the West”¹¹ are still valid.

Another aspect of the female realm that fascinated the West was foot-binding. Foot-binding is a part of Chinese culture that dates back to the tenth century. Chinese women use wraps to change their anatomy and make their feet tiny. Small feet were a status symbol in China; the smaller the feet, the more refined and elegant the lady.¹² Foot-binding is unique to China, so female travelers in China had never seen such a thing. In her book, Isabella Bird explained the custom as she had come to understand it: Chinese girls begin the process of foot-binding around the age of five, and those who forewent the process would never find marriage prospects.¹³ Although Bird recognized the correlation between feet size and beauty, she did not find foot-binding to be anywhere near beautiful. She commented on the pain the process caused and how difficult life was with bound feet. Her case study on the matter, a young peasant girl from Hsia-shan-po, bound her feet in order to secure a rich husband despite the ruptured tendon the wrapping caused. Like Bird, Mary Gaunt looked at foot binding with horror. It “never failed to strike me, and if the missionaries do but one good work, they do it in

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹² Amanda Foreman, “Why Footbinding Persisted in China for a Millennium,” Smithsonian.com, February 2015.

¹³ Bird, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond*, 240-41.

prevailing on the women to unbind their feet.”¹⁴ In short, Bird and Gaunt were disgusted with the practice. The idea of putting oneself through pain did not seem logical to these Western women.

Comments on foot-binding can be found outside of travel narratives. Magazines frequently wrote on the subject. *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* was read by many Western women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The 1858 issue of the magazine critiqued foot-binding and the role of Chinese women in their societies. Keeping with the female travelers, the authors and readers of *Tait's Magazine* found foot-binding to be disturbing. By discussing the beginnings of the practice as being pre-Christian era, the magazine made foot-binding seem paganistic. The magazine warns Western women that Chinese women are treated “like dogs”¹⁵ and that the crippling of the feet is reflection of the crippled mentality of Chinese women, men, and the state.¹⁶ *Tait's* justifies its conclusions on Chinese women because they “proceed to facts, and from facts draw conclusions.”¹⁷ The low state of the Chinese women was fact in the Western world, whether it be the pain they put themselves through by foot-binding or the lack of personal connections found in their charities. Tightly wrapping body parts in the name of beauty should not have seemed so foreign to Western women, however. The use of corsets had long been a part of Western beauty rituals. Instead of binding feet, Western women would bind their waists to look more attractive. It is interesting that the authors of these travel logs and magazine articles had removed themselves from corsets since the two ordeals are so similar. Keeping with *Orientalism*, Western women used the fact that they liberated themselves from their restrictions to create more differences between the two groups to justify their “assistance” of the poor Chinese women, furthering Western encroachment into China.

Accounts on Chinese women by Chinese women are rare, but *A Daughter of Han* provides a small glimpse into China as told by a

¹⁴ Gaunt, *A Woman in China*, 168-69.

¹⁵ “Woman and Womankind,” *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1858, 22.

¹⁶ “Woman and Womankind,” 22-23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Chinese woman, Lao T'ai-T'ai. Lao was born in P'englai during the late 1860s. She lived most of her life in poverty; her parents were poor and her husband was erratic and did not make a sufficient living for her family. Lao's autobiography focuses on China and Chinese customs, but the presence of the West can be seen throughout the book. Lao was a small child when she saw her first foreigner: a tall man with a dark beard whom she thought to be the devil.¹⁸ Christian missionaries and Western business families were all around Lao. The impact of opium was profound in her life. Her husband had been an opium user from the age of nineteen. Lao was afraid to leave any of her goods unattended for fear of her husband selling them to buy more of the drug. She thought her husband was a good man, but the opium addiction caused her family's starvation.¹⁹ Lao notes that her hometown of P'englai was once a great imperial center and the home of great men, but in the 1860s, the decade of her birth and the height of the opium trade, all the glory had faded and the city was in shambles.

Lao's most profound experience with a Western woman came from her time as a maid for Mrs. Burns. She was happy to work for a foreign family because unlike in a Chinese household, Western maids were allowed to live at home and retain a personal life. The work, however, was more intense in a Western household. According to Lao, Chinese chores were much easier than the Western chores. Relations between Lao and Mrs. Burns reached a fever pitch after two years. Lao did not feel as though she was being compensated enough for her time and did not want to work under Mrs. Burns' Christian guidelines. Unlike Western women, Lao did not feel the need to change Mrs. Burns. Though her Western mistress hoped to make Lao "a very useful woman,"²⁰ Lao simply left Mrs. Burns. There was no need for her to stay and try to help her mistress be more like Eastern women.

¹⁸ Ida Pruitt and Lao T'ai-T'ai Ning, *A Daughter of Han: The Autobiography of a Chinese Working Woman* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2004), 145.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

As a Chinese woman who would one day need a husband, Lao took part in foot-binding. Her parents decided to bind her feet at the age of seven. After a break in binding due to an incident with the “heavenly blossoms” (smallpox), the wrappings remained on Lao’s feet until the age of thirteen when her feet were appropriately tiny.²¹ Like Bird and Gaunt, Lao knew that Chinese beauty standards were “counted more by the size of her feet than by the beauty of her face.”²² Just like her mother, Lao chose to bind her daughter’s feet to increase her marriage prospects. Although her daughter did not want a husband at the time, Lao believed that a woman’s job was to bear children, so she found her daughter a husband, an unreliable man who, like Lao’s husband, could not provide for the family.²³ Lao confirmed that “we women knew nothing but to comb our hair and bind our feet and wait at home for our men.”²⁴ She was used to and accepted foot-binding and the reliance of Chinese women on their husbands; she never acted against the status quo except in dire circumstances.

To feed herself and her children, Lao was forced to beg in the streets of P’englai for a time. Her husband sold everything they had for opium and not for food as Lao had instructed. She began begging at age twenty-two. Chinese women were not supposed to leave the home, so Lao felt great shame as she begged on the streets. Since the rest of the city was experiencing hard times, she went to the Christian missionaries. Despite the anti-foreign sentiments that ran through her town, Lao believed that the Westerners “were people of a kind heart.”²⁵ Lao trekked through the snow to get to the missionaries’ houses where she received food and a coat for her child.²⁶ The charitableness of the Westerners saved Lao’s life.

Isabella Bird felt that the Chinese charities were too

²¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 153-56.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

impersonal and therefore lacking. Bird was upset with the Chinese when they scorned her for taking care of her Chinese servant. There are plenty of instances in *A Daughter of Han* where Lao cared for strangers. For example, in the midst of the lowest point in her life, Lao cared for an old man with cholera. While she used one hand to comfort her starving children, she used her other hand to support the old man. Through Lao, plenty of personal connections in Chinese culture are shown, something Isabella Bird must have missed, or more likely, did not report on to aid the in the creation of differences between the West and East. When Lao had to leave her mother to return to her husband, she would cry, but her mother never did. From this Lao learned “that one’s destiny is one’s destiny. It was so decided for me.”²⁷ Whenever she faced hardships, Lao never complained because she believed that destiny was in control and her life was meant to follow a pre-determined path. Perhaps Western women did not recognize the importance of destiny in China. Female travelers were coming from a world of change; when they did not care for something, they did something about it. Chinese women like Lao did not feel the same. The two versions of what was right provided a chance for Western women to create their superiority and justify their presence in China, for if the Chinese would not change themselves, the Westerners would change them.

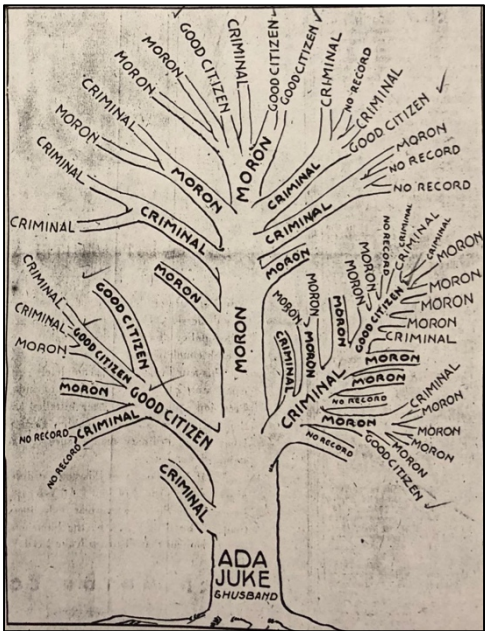
Although *A Daughter of Han* provides a fascinating look into the life of an ordinary Chinese woman, this analysis could use more sources on the Chinese woman’s perspective on Western women. The Chinese equivalents of *A Woman in China* or *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond* are likely non-existent, but it is entirely possible that Chinese women generated differences between themselves and Western women as a sort of protection as China was opened up to foreigners. Unfortunately, the prevalence of Western sources makes this paper too Eurocentric. The sources that were available shows how the creation of key differences and the diffusion of this “truthful impression” by Western women were a microcosm of *Orientalism*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

These differences generated support for assistance of Chinese women by Western women. This assistance allowed the West to further its imperial agenda in the East. This agenda would eventually lead to nationalist and communist movements in the East of which Chinese women would be an integral part.

Uncivil Rights: The Politics of Eugenic Sterilization and Race, North Carolina and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1966

Brenda Louise Withington



Introduction

State-sanctioned compulsory sterilization laws defined negative eugenics practices in the United States during the early twentieth-century. States designed and passed individual laws, looking to other states' laws and precedents for guidance. California, Virginia, and North Carolina respectively, record the highest number of state-sanctioned sterilization operations in the country. Sterilization operations performed across the country declined dramatically after 1945. As the abuses and atrocities of the Holocaust were revealed, most states became leery of the eugenics connection with Nazi Germany. North Carolina, however, expanded its sterilization program post-1945. By comparison, after 1945, only 12 percent of California's total sterilization operations were performed, and in Virginia the number was 40 percent of their total operations. In North Carolina, reported totals reveal 75 percent of the state's compulsory sterilization operations occurred after 1945.¹

Throughout the country, the populations targeted for sterilization began to change after 1945. Prior to 1945 white women of poverty were often characterized as unfit mothers, deemed promiscuous, diagnosed as mental defectives, and segregated into institutions where they were then sterilized. After 1945 eugenics focused on responsible reproduction practices in society. Sterilization victims were targeted from rural communities in the South under the auspices of family planning. Such nonprofit programs as the Population Council, founded in 1953 and funded by both the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, appointed popular eugenicists as

¹ Figures calculated by the author using William P. Richardson and Clarence J. Gamble, "The Sterilization of the Insane and Mentally Deficient in North Carolina," *North Carolina Medical Journal* Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 1947): 19-20; and Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), Appendix C, 294.

administrators and promoted societal health.² They worked hand-in-hand with state health departments initiating demographic studies, focusing on the economic stresses on large families, and promoting the distribution of contraceptives in rural communities. But unique to North Carolina's eugenics program, a growing number of African American women were sterilized after 1945. Statistics show these numbers significantly increased alongside the Civil Rights movement. Only in North Carolina did the number of African Americans sterilized outnumber those of the white race, and it happened during the Civil Rights movement.³ Currently, there is little scholarship specific to the rise in African American sterilization operations in North Carolina during the Civil Rights movement. Evidence uncovered by historian Johanna Schoen, including 8,000 sterilization petitions submitted to the Eugenics Board of North Carolina, led to her study on women's reproductive rights. But even before her book was published in 2005, Schoen shared her findings with Kevin Begos, journalist at the *Winston-Salem Journal*. From their collaboration, in December of 2002, Begos published a week-long series of articles including interviews conducted with living victims of North Carolina's sterilization program.⁴ The story proved groundbreaking and attracted much attention to North Carolina's history of sterilization. Governor Mike Easley issued a public apology and North Carolina became the first State in the U.S. to institute a restitution program for its eugenic sterilization survivors.⁵

Historians have been slow to respond. The next significant study out of North Carolina appeared in 2016. In an article entitled "The Eugenics Movement in North Carolina," law professor, Alfred

² Stefan Kühl, *For the Betterment of the Race: The Rise and Fall of the International Movement for Eugenics and Racial Hygiene* (New York: Palgrave and MacMillan, 2013), 155.

³ Alfred L. Brophy and Elizabeth Troutman, "The Eugenics Movement in North Carolina," *North Carolina Law Review* 94 (2016): 1956.

⁴ Kevin Begos, "Against Their Will," *Winston-Salem Journal* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: December, 2002), Journalnow.com.

⁵ Johanna Schoen, *Choice & Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 243; 19.

L. Brophy, and associate Elizabeth Troutman, follow the development of jurisprudence in North Carolina throughout the eugenics movement. Brophy's carefully compiled tables of data from reports of the Eugenics Board of North Carolina reveal the significant rise in African American sterilization victims coinciding with events of the Civil Rights era.⁶ Brophy urges historians to investigate.

Were African Americans being targeted as victims for sterilization in North Carolina? And if so, by whom? Schoen suggests that the rise in African American sterilization victims developed in connection with rising numbers of African American mothers receiving aid for dependent children. This article explores avenues of investigation specific to the rise in African American sterilization operations from 1954 to 1966. It looks at how North Carolina designed and streamlined the sterilization petition approval process using national models, in order to avoid future legal problems. Following changes as they appear in the biennial reports of the Eugenics Board of North Carolina, this article explores Civil Rights events alongside the state eugenics program's shifting racial demographic. It researches connections to the program with state leaders and health and welfare programs, and proposes that North Carolina's historically progressive anti-poverty programs affected its sterilization outcomes. This includes the pioneering efforts of Governor Terry Sanford and his attempts to win the war on poverty through the founding of the non-profit North Carolina Fund.

Part I: Eugenics as the Science of Race Policy

Eugenics Policy in Practice

Understanding eugenics begins by acknowledging it as a science purposefully designed to create policy. Not all science is determined to affect policy nor is policy always constrained by science. Eugenics developed in the late nineteenth century and

⁶ Brophy and Troutman, 1950-1956.

reached its peak during the 1920s. Sterilization policies in practice reach at least into the 1980s in the United States, and remain residually through jurisprudence.

The father of eugenics, Francis Galton, transformed Darwin's observational language in the *Origin of the Species* (1859), and presented natural selection as an opportunity to actively participate in the reproductive development of mankind. Eugenics strove to combine policy with the science of heredity, to manipulate breeding through selection toward the generational improvement of the human race.⁷ The developing science of heredity aided by related sciences, led to a multitude of eugenic theories. From debates over nature-versus-nurture policymakers of all convictions followed varying equations of eugenics theory.

Race-oriented eugenics, based from Mendelian inheritance laws, sought to scientifically divide humans using genetic racial determination. In essence, it used applied science for the creation of others, defined by race. It was in the "political interest of eugenicists to prevent the genetic deterioration of a supposedly well-defined 'white race.'" It was through the eugenics movement that the policy of science met the politics of race. Race became policy, and "race policy was presented as applied science."⁸ Nazi Germany provides us historically with the most extreme example of eugenics race-hygiene policy in practice.

Eugenics policy aimed at improving society through subjective reproduction control and manipulation, whether through positive eugenics practices or negative, most often resulting in a combination of both. In the United States positive eugenics applied meant the promotion of reproduction in families deemed genetically superior. Socially, this resulted in fitter-family competitions, and legislatively in pre-marital counseling and health evaluation requirements prior to marriage licensing. Negative eugenics policies

⁷ Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Eugenics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4-5.

⁸ Kühl, 6-7.

aimed to prevent births in those deemed genetically inferior. Supporters of eugenics policy used science to prove the heritability of certain undesirable traits. Criminal behavior and mental disease were considered heritable traits among those scientifically categorized, all of which were commonly referred to under the umbrella term, “feeble-mindedness.”

Eugenicists in the United States sought to prove such traits were inherited through a campaign in pedigree studies. Pedigrees were cataloged and stored at the Eugenics Records Office (ERO) in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, founded in 1910 by Charles Benedict Davenport with funding provided by the Carnegie Foundation, John D. Rockefeller, and other philanthropic endowments. Eugenics worked outside of and developed apart from federal oversight. Eugenic scientists, medical doctors, and scholars, supported politically by such figures as President Theodore Roosevelt, coordinated and trained teams of staff field workers to locate degenerate families where evidence could be found to support hereditability theories.⁹

White Women in Poverty

The fear of a defective gene that could be passed down generation after generation through reproduction, possibly going unnoticed while slowly destroying the gene pool, drove eugenicists to actively seek out and identify defective individuals and families that would support heritability theories on social and mental malalignment. Staff field workers, or social workers, were directed from the ERO into poverty-stricken rural areas where they interviewed families in search of defective genealogies.

The first successful hereditability campaign found to support a genetic dispensation to social defect or feeble-mindedness, came through a family named the Jukes. The family study confirmed conclusions on environmental effects leading to poverty and disease.

⁹ Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008) 34; 30-31; 32.

But *The Jukes* (1915) was also a special case study on the heritability of “sexual misbehavior.” Arguably more popular than the Jukes was *The Kallikak Family*. The study, which was repeated in schoolbooks and reprinted in twelve editions, connected the practice of sterilization applied through policy for the prevention of race degeneracy with a convincing generational example of “unclean living and inheritance.”¹⁰ Soon, a model sterilization law drafted through the Eugenics Records Office drew the popular attention of state legislatures resulting in variants of state compulsory sterilization laws across the country.

Although the eugenics movement in the United States grew alongside the Jim Crow era, efforts to manipulate reproduction focused mainly on preserving the purity of the white race. From its focus on poor white women as the major threat to the degeneracy of the white race, America’s historically racist ideology is often dismissed in eugenic studies and analyzed along class lines.¹¹ White lower-class women showing any sign of promiscuity were quickly diagnosed as feeble-minded. The popular reproductive prevention plan began, first by segregating them from society into specially designated institutions, such as North Carolina’s Samarcand, which over time housed countless girls and women from across the country from suspicions of promiscuity. There, they were further evaluated by a host of physicians and subjected to compulsory sterilization. Men were often targeted from inside of prison, but statistics remain true throughout the eugenics movement that white women of poverty were the primary target group for compulsory sterilization.

This is not to suggest that fears of miscegenation and societal race-mixing did not hold strong. Eugenics offered support for racial segregation due to fears of white-race degeneracy. Family pedagogy studies sought out race-mixing in lineages as a sure cause of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6; 37; 40.

¹¹ Bashford, 6-7; 516.

generational defects.¹² Through the decades of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, lawful segregation helped to assuage anxieties about race-mixing; not to mention the added threat of lynching. Miscegenation laws further provided a failsafe from popular fears that “amalgamation” would lead to race “mongrelization.”¹³

Part II: What Makes North Carolina Special

The Bad Things –Done Better

North Carolina is known historically as a pioneer of Southern progressivism, although recently in light of a number of “regressive laws,” it has also come to be known as “The Last Southern State to Do All the Bad Things –and Do Them Even Worse.”¹⁴ Such irony could not ring truer from the evidence provided concerning the State’s eugenic sterilization practices beyond World War II and into the Civil Rights era. Using the national eugenics model, North Carolina worked toward an unprecedented eugenic state-system of independently formed studies, programs, and procedures, designed to circumvent any possible legal failings from the State’s compulsory-sterilization operation practices.

North Carolina’s first sterilization law, enacted in 1919, authorized compulsory operations “for the health and well-being of prison inmates.”¹⁵ Although enacted before the neighboring state of Virginia’s first sterilization law in 1924, the Eugenics Board of North Carolina reports that no operations were performed under the statute.¹⁶ The 1919 sterilization law was repealed when in 1929 the

¹² David J. Smith, *The Eugenic Assault on America: Scenes in Red, White, and Black* (Fairfax, Virginia: George Mason University Press, 1993), 10.

¹³ Blacknall, 6.

¹⁴ Fred Hobson, “North Carolina’s Progressive History and the Neo-Carpetbaggers Putting It in the Rearview” *Indy Week* (Raleigh-Cary-Durham-Chapel Hill, July 13, 2016).

¹⁵ Brophy, 1919.

¹⁶ *Eugenical Sterilization in North Carolina: A Brief Survey of the Growth of Eugenic Sterilization and a Report on the Work of the Eugenics Board of North Carolina through June 30, 1935*, by Eugene Brown, Secretary, Eugenics Board of North Carolina (Raleigh, N.C., 1935), 7; 39.

North Carolina General Assembly enacted its second sterilization law, applicable to any resident, other than inmates, so-deemed “mentally defective or feeble-minded,” and as the “duty of the board of commissioners of any county of North Carolina.”¹⁷ Inmates remained subject to compulsory sterilization, and unique from most other state sterilization laws, North Carolina sterilization law contained “provisions for asexualization, or castration.”¹⁸

Prior to the enactment of North Carolina’s 1929 sterilization law, Virginia’s infamous sterilization case *Buck v. Bell* (1927) led to the Supreme Court’s landmark decision defending state-instituted compulsory sterilization, including Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.’s famous declaration that “three generations of imbeciles are enough.”¹⁹ However, the Supreme Court’s decision in *Buck* did not provide enough support in 1933, when North Carolina’s sterilization law fell prey to the courts in *Brewer v. Valk*. North Carolina’s 1929 sterilization law was struck down for “lack of procedural due process,” specifically provided for in *Buck v. Bell*.²⁰ Stemming from the court’s decision, the Eugenics Board of North Carolina was formed by the General Assembly in 1933, whose duty it was to revise the sterilization law, provide for proper procedure, and review and approve all sterilization petitions.

Unlike in Virginia, where in *Buck v. Bell* the defense focused on alleviating an economic burden for the state (compulsory sterilization as a savings for the state), the Supreme Court of North Carolina in *Brewer* lauded “the benefits of sterilization for the individual... as helping a poor woman stop herself from having more children.”²¹ Since North Carolina’s first sterilization law in 1919, the focus was not on state welfare savings as an economic benefit to the

¹⁷ Act of Feb. 18, 1929, ch. 34, sec.2, 1929 N.C. sess. Laws 28, 28 (1929), quoted in Brophy, 1929.

¹⁸ *Eugenical Sterilization*, 12; *Manual: The Eugenics Board of North Carolina*, Raleigh, N.C., May 1948 (State Library of North Carolina, North Carolina Digital Collections), 18.

¹⁹ Lombardo, ix-x.

²⁰ Brophy, 1920.

²¹ *Ibid.*

State. North Carolina sterilization legislation always pointed to the health and benefit of the individual. The revised law in 1933 provided petitions be filed by “duty of the head of an institution or the Superintendent of Public Welfare,” solely based on “his opinion.”²²

The Procedure Machine

Members of the Eugenics Board of North Carolina worked to develop a system of procedures that would both satisfy the courts and streamline the sterilization petition process.²³ The Board consisted of the Commissioner of Public Welfare, the secretary of the State Board of Health, the Attorney General, and the superintendents of the state hospitals in Raleigh and Goldsboro.²⁴

In 1935 a first “how to” manual was issued by the Board.²⁵ The manual began by citing justifications for sterilization through the works of nationally renowned eugenicists and written examples of public support for sterilization. The manual outlined procedural instructions for determining an individual’s need for sterilization, included directions for completing the petition process, and provided the re-printable, necessary forms to ensure sterilization petition approval. In the manual, heritability evidence supplied by *The Jukes* and *The Kallikak Family* studies provided an introduction to North Carolina’s own family study based from these national models. The North Carolina State Board of Public Welfare had conducted a study on a family from Wake County designed along the national models, which remained specific to North Carolina as an educated determination of the need for increased sterilization throughout the state.²⁶

Over time, the Eugenics Board would continue to develop the paperwork processes in an effort to ensure petition approval. In

²² *Eugenical Sterilization*, 15.

²³ Brophy, 1871-1949.

²⁴ *Eugenical Sterilization*, 1; *Biennial Report of The Eugenics Board of North Carolina*, 1954-1966 (State Library of North Carolina, North Carolina Digital Collections).

²⁵ Brophy, 1921.

²⁶ *Eugenical Sterilization*, 5-7; 9-11.

1948, a second administrative manual added instructions for state officials, outlining those authorized to submit sterilization petitions and explaining specific instances where sterilization petitions were likely to be approved. The 1948 manual addressed the specific issue of how to acquire the required consent, necessary forms included, and explanations on the required processes of a patient's right to a hearing. Again, in 1960, another administrative manual provided further guidance on the meaning of consent, including procedural recommendations regarding how to collect any reluctant patient's social history and to seek the support of a family member to accompany the sterilization petition.²⁷

The language provided in the manuals continued to develop over time, focusing on sterilization as beneficial and protective, and on how to relate environmental factors to the "social, emotional, mental and physical development" of the individual concerned.²⁸ Language promoted sterilization as way for "those individuals unable to meet their responsibilities as parents and citizens" who "would otherwise be confined to institutions during the fertile period of life, to live in their homes and return to their family and friends."²⁹ The list of mental conditions subjecting an individual to state-sanctioned sterilization included varying forms of psychosis, epilepsy, and syphilis, although the highest number of operations performed fell into the broad category of feeble-mindedness.³⁰ The sterilization petition also recorded other "defects," such as insanity, alcoholism, suicidal tendency, blindness, deafness, and sexual promiscuity.³¹

Every two years the Eugenics Board of North Carolina compiled statistical data together with a summary of recent biennial developments for the *Biennial Report of The Eugenics Board of North Carolina*. In each report, operation totals are presented in various charts and tables, including those broken down by the number of

²⁷ Brophy, 1923; 1924; 1928.

²⁸ *Manual*, (1960) 30, see also Brophy, 1928.

²⁹ Brophy, 1927.

³⁰ *Eugenical Sterilization*, 19.

³¹ Brophy, 1922-1923.

operations performed from each county, by race, operations reported of the institutionalized, by gender, and a report showing the number of children previously born to patients. Upon completion, the report was submitted with a “Letter of Transmittal” signed by the Chairman of the Board and addressed by name to the governor of North Carolina.³²

Part III: Eugenics Under a New Name

War on Poverty

After World War II, the eugenics movement underwent a promotional reconfiguration in an attempt to disassociate itself from the word *eugenics*. Publicity campaigns altered their language and those diagnosed as feeble-minded were less often segregated from society into institutions. This was true nationally, as well as in North Carolina where, in 1946, the number of institutionalized patients to undergo sterilization operations dropped to under fifty percent. Across the country sterilization practices fell dramatically during and after World War II in reaction to sterilization abuses connected to institutions for the disabled in Germany.³³ Although the number of institutionalized patients who were sterilized in North Carolina began to decline, biennial totals of operations performed on individuals living in counties throughout the state would reach all-time highs beginning with the 1948-50 biennial report.³⁴ North Carolina’s sterilization program expanded after the war alongside the state’s welfare services.³⁵

Population and birth control became the new language used in publicity campaigns by organizations dominated by eugenicists. Eugenicists continued to promote sterilization, adding contraceptive awareness, development, and distribution, and targeting women living in poverty-stricken rural areas of the South. Former eugenicists

³² *Biennial Report*, (1954- 1966).

³³ Schoen, 105.

³⁴ Brophy, 1952.

³⁵ Schoen, 105-6.

now worked alongside demographers, health scientists, and economists to design an initiative supporting convictions that population growth “among the poorest groups in the United States presented a threat to economic development and political stability.”³⁶ A qualitative degeneracy of the race was now calculated as symptomatic of exploding populations in poverty-stricken communities, mostly directed at the rural, and mostly in the South. Reproduction curbing in these areas became imperative by design and by eugenicists, who were among the first to establish birth control clinics.³⁷ The founding of International Planned Parenthood organizations beginning in 1949 were supported and promoted by eugenicists around the world.³⁸

Publications supporting population and birth control expressed a continued concern for the quality of the population, even while acknowledging eugenics after World War II as a “delicate topic.”³⁹ Margaret Sanger, well-known birth control advocate and supporter of eugenic sterilization, turned to discussions of overpopulation as well. In support of birth-control program development, Sanger explained that “our civilization” depends upon ensuring the affordable and effective curbing of reproduction in “poverty stricken slums, jungles, and among the most ignorant people.”⁴⁰ Synonymous with eugenic sterilization programs, birth control and women’s reproductive rights became the post-war eugenicist’s language of choice.

One does not have to look far for connections in North Carolina between eugenic sterilization supporters and population birth control proponents. Ellen Winston, the State Commissioner of Public Welfare from 1944-1963, also served as chairman of the Eugenics Board of North Carolina and was a staunch supporter of sterilization. Under her administration, the state’s sterilization

³⁶ Kühl, 155.

³⁷ Bashford, 99.

³⁸ Kühl, 154.

³⁹ Ibid, 155.

⁴⁰ Margaret Sanger, quoted in Schoen, 208.

program expanded parallel to the “expansion and professionalization of the public welfare system in North Carolina.”⁴¹ Formerly, during the New Deal era, Winston served as social economist for several federal agencies in Washington, D.C., and contributed a number of works to the study of “social welfare, poverty, and population policy.” Philanthropist Dr. Clarence Gamble used his position to promote sterilization, including organized population and birth control in public health clinics across the state.⁴² Compulsory sterilization laws remained in place as health and welfare services became more readily available in counties throughout the state. All the while, instructional manuals were continually updated to expand and streamline the sterilization petition approval process.⁴³ Procedures provided for the state’s security above legitimate consent, as the 1954 biennial report was the last to report on the number of non-consenting patients.⁴⁴

But the state’s progressive aims to expand health and welfare programs during the 1950s and 1960s faced political tensions between tightfisted conservatives and pioneers of progressivism like Governor Terry Sanford. Conservative legislators readily accepted federal funds for business development while staunchly rejecting state public welfare appropriations for the poor. Terry Sanford bypassed conservative lawmakers, securing funds from the Ford and Reynolds Foundations to found a non-profit corporation designed to address the poverty problem directly.⁴⁵ The North Carolina Fund, founded in 1963, supported a program of volunteers as “foot soldiers” who would locate families living in poverty and serve as advocates, connecting them with state health and welfare services. Sanford “sought to awaken the state to the human and social costs of

⁴¹ *Biennial Report*, (1954-1966); Schoen, 105-106.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 105; 33-34.

⁴³ Brophy, 1921-1932.

⁴⁴ *Biennial Report*, (1954-1966); Brophy, 1929; 1952.

⁴⁵ Schoen, 11; Robert R. Korstad and James L. Leloudis, “Citizen Soldiers: The North Carolina Volunteers and the War on Poverty,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* Vol. 62, no. 4 (2000), 177- 197, 178.

poverty and racial inequality,” although he eagerly and willingly surrendered to segregation in exchange for control of economic growth.⁴⁶ During this time, the majority of sterilization petitions received at the Eugenics Board “originated in county departments of public welfare.” In 1964, when the Eugenics Board of North Carolina submitted its biennial report to Governor Terry Sanford, it reflected the highest recorded numbers of African American sterilization operations, ever. The report also included historical data showing that African American sterilization operations had been increasingly outnumbering white sterilization operations for the past six consecutive years.⁴⁷

Race Renaissance

Heading into the Civil Rights era, a split emerged between moderate and racist eugenicists over a reemergence of race-based eugenics research supported by extremists such as American philanthropist Wickliffe Draper.⁴⁸ In 1953, Draper provided funding to support research at the Department of Medical Genetics at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, hoping “to use science as a way to stop the civil-rights movement.”⁴⁹ American eugenicists continued, at the onset of the Civil Rights movement, to provide scientifically determined support to the segregationist theory that “racial mixing with ‘Negros’ ... would lead inevitably to the decline of the ‘white race.’”⁵⁰

Fears of public integration continued to receive support from a number of notable political activists and leaders in North Carolina involved with racist organizations, such as The Pioneer Fund, founded in 1937 by Wickliffe Draper, and whose first president was

⁴⁶ Korstad, 177; 185; 179.

⁴⁷ *Biennial Report* (1964), 9.

⁴⁸ Kühl, 158.

⁴⁹ Kevin Begos, “Benefactor With a Racist Bent,” *Winston-Salem Journal* (December 9, 2002); William H. Tucker, *The Funding of Scientific Racism*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

⁵⁰ Kühl, 157.

the infamous eugenicist Harry S. Laughlin; the organization still exists and is recognized today by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate-group.⁵¹ Population and birth control supporters such as Clarence Gamble, entrenched in North Carolina's public welfare system, continued to argue that "the mass of Negroes, particularly in the South, still breed carelessly and disastrously, with the result that the increase among Negroes, even more than among whites, is from that portion of the population least intelligent and fit, and least able to rear children properly."⁵²

In 1954, the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned "separate but equal," calling for the desegregation of public schools, but provisions for enforcement were omitted. North Carolina's governor at the time, Luther Hodges, advocated private-school funding for white children and supported community decisions to close public schools in an effort to avoid desegregation.⁵³ Following the initial resistance to desegregation, the total number of African Americans sterilized saw a thirteen percent upsurge from the previous report, although the number remained 1.2 percent below the total white population sterilized.⁵⁴

During the gubernatorial administration of Luther Hodges from 1954-1960, biennial reports from the Eugenics Board of North Carolina continued to report unprecedented and rising numbers of African American sterilization operations, particularly notable at the time of the landmark 1955 case *Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company* which outlawed segregation in transit systems.⁵⁵ On June 23, 1957, seven African American activists sat down in an ice cream parlor in Durham, North Carolina. This would begin civil rights efforts aimed at segregated and whites-only businesses and lunch counters across

⁵¹ Alex Amend, "From eugenics to voter ID laws: Thomas Farr's connections to the Pioneer Fund," *Hatewatch*, (Southern Poverty Law Center (December 4, 2017).

⁵² Clarence Gamble, quoted in Schoen, 47-48.

⁵³ Shane Williams, "Luther H. Hodges (1895-1974)," *North Carolina History Project*, John Locke Foundation (Raleigh, N.C., May 7, 2012).

⁵⁴ Brophy, 1956.

⁵⁵ "*Keys V. Carolina Coach Co.*," *World Heritage Encyclopedia* (Project Gutenberg Self-Publishing Press, Article Id: WHEBN001806219).

North Carolina. During the sit-ins movement, African American sterilization victims outnumbered white victims for the first time.⁵⁶

As the civil rights movement continued to gain strength not only in North Carolina but across the country, the percentage of African American sterilization victims in the state continued to rise—beyond the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Even while promoting racial equality as economically beneficial, Governor Terry Sanford, questioned the “incalculable cost... when the children of poverty become the parents of poverty and begin the cycle anew.”⁵⁷ In these poverty-stricken communities across North Carolina, increasing numbers of North Carolina Fund volunteers recorded encountering more difficulty than expected while they were making genuine attempts to confront “the oppressive power of racism” in an effort connect families to state welfare services.⁵⁸

Throughout the eugenics movement, leading intellectuals at North Carolina universities kept close ties with state political figures, actively promoted fears of amalgamation leading to white-race degeneracy, and supported both segregation and state “medical intervention” as a means to protect society.⁵⁹ Agitation brought about by civil rights activism promised to increase public integration, threatening the future purity of the white-race. It was long believed that “intermixture between whites and blacks threatened [to lead to] degeneration,” and was sure to inflict a suicidal disgrace upon any “white man... having fathered a mixed-race child.”⁶⁰ What remains uncertain is how directly related the rising numbers of African-American sterilization victims are to the deep-seated fears of segregationists in North Carolina.

⁵⁶ Brophy, 1956; *Biennial Report* (1954-1966).

⁵⁷ Terry Sanford, *The Case for the New South*, LOOK, Dec. 15, 1964, 78, quoted in Korstad, 180.

⁵⁸ Korstad, 187.

⁵⁹ Gregory P. Downs, “University Men, Social Science, and White Supremacy in North Carolina,” *The Journal of Southern History* (LXXV no. 2; May 2009), 296.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Conclusion

Whether historian Johanna Schoen will be the last researcher to be granted access to North Carolina's "8,000 sterilization petitions received by the Eugenics Board between 1934 and 1966," is yet to be seen.⁶¹ Deserving of investigation is Ellen Winton's connection to the individual petitioning and approval process during her time as both Commissioner of Public Welfare and Chairman of the Eugenics Board, alongside a host of influential state figures in connection with the public welfare system and eugenics organizations. The pioneering efforts of Terry Sanford and the North Carolina Fund toward some semblance of race equality while privately fighting the war on poverty in North Carolina may prove connected to the rise in African American sterilization victims. Individuals from families connected to state social services by volunteers of the North Carolina Fund may have actually fallen victim to the sterilization petition system.

Because of the eugenics connection to white women of poverty, historical narratives have mostly absolved racist-eugenic theory of its direction connection to and promotion of sterilization practices in the United States. The distinctly large number of African American sterilization operations that appear unique to North Carolina begs the larger question: why North Carolina? Only partial works exist specific to the eugenics movement in North Carolina and a more complete history appears necessary. Victims and families seeking restitution through the North Carolina Justice for Sterilization Victims Foundation, established in 2010, have experienced delays by appeals courts, budget cuts, and halts to services from lack of funding. Conservatives have argued that the restitution plan is "unfeasible" and that it "would open the door for other groups" seeking "damages for previous misguided activities by the state."⁶² Although one might question whether some of these

⁶¹ Bashford, 517.

⁶² Greg Hince, "NC Sterilization Victims Denied Compensation: Watauga County Has Dark Past Involving Eugenics Practices," *High Country Press* Boone, N.C. (Thursday, July 5, 2012), HCPress.com.

women chose willingly to undergo sterilization so as to “stop herself from having more children,” we only need to keep in mind that according to Eugenics Board records, the majority of women sterilized were recorded as having one or fewer children at the time of operation.⁶³

⁶³ Quoted in Brophy, 1920; *Biennial Report* (1954-1966), Table 10: “Individuals Having Children Prior to Sterilization.”

Latin American Showcase

Lifeblood: Spanish and Aztec Views of Nature and Sacrifice at Conquest

Anna Kosub



Societies construct their built environments around existing perceptions of the natural world. How they view the landscape and its residents influences where they choose to live, how they choose to sustain themselves, and what they choose to eat. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, conflicting perceptions of nature clashed during the Conquest of Mexico as Conquistadors engaged in a physical, ideological, and biological conquest over native groups.

Both the Spanish and the Aztec constructed their societies based on the needs of their divine and secular authorities. For the Spanish, this meant building their cities in opposition to the natural world over which God gave them dominion. In order to justify the subjugation of the natural world, nature was dehumanized, demonized, and feminized. Spanish theological doctrine also placed the divine on a plane apart from the natural world, while confining the underworld, purgatory, and the realm of the living to earthly parameters.¹ In establishing an ideological association between the earthly and the sinful—and a separation between the earthly and the divine—Spanish religious thought encouraged a perception of nature that advocated the subjugation of the earth by force, particularly through agriculture.

While the Spanish constructed their societies against nature and placed the divine on a plane separate to the natural world, the Aztec built their cities alongside nature and advocated the interconnectedness of their divinities with human bodies and the natural landscape. Aztec cosmology conceived of natural resources as earthly manifestations of the divine, not merely as objects of consumption. Through ritual acts of human, animal, and plant sacrifice, the Aztec established an indelible link between nature, human bodies, and nourishment. According to Aztec ritual thought, these blood offerings nourished the earth and in doing so, nourished the

¹ John Edwards, “Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria, *circa* 1450-1500,” in *Religion and Society in Spain, c. 1492*, ed. John Edwards (Brookfield: Variorum, 1996), 3-5.

gods, thereby maintaining balance in the natural world.²

These differing perceptions of nature shaped how the two cultures responded to each other during the Conquest of Mexico. Spanish Conquistadors Hernan Cortés and Bernal Díaz del Castillo both subscribed to traditional Spanish perspectives of nature as condoned by the Catholic church, but their accounts differ in how they perceived the natural world and its inhabitants. Despite their ideological differences, both men responded similarly in action to the indigenous peoples, ultimately employing destructive agricultural and cultural practices that would permanently alter the Mexican landscape.

This paper will examine Spanish and Aztec perceptions of nature and how they informed each culture's religious and agricultural practices. It will also compare the narratives of the aforementioned Conquistadors, emphasizing how they were each informed by contemporary Spanish thought. Finally, this paper will explore how these conflicting perceptions of nature clashed during the Conquest of Mexico, as Conquistadors engaged in what amounted to a physical, ideological, and biological conquest over the New World and its inhabitants.

Dominating the Land: Spanish Views of Nature through Religion, Agriculture, and Society

Late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Spanish society was shaped by a Crown-endorsed Catholic theological doctrine that enabled the demonization, feminization, and subjugation of nature. Although Catholicism permeated nearly every aspect of Spanish society, the dissemination of theological information was restricted by status. This meant that the poor masses were informed of their religious world in simplified terms, often with more emphasis placed on the supernatural and the sacred than on raw scripture. The popularization of the narrative of Adam and Eve encouraged the

² Philip P. Arnold, *Eating Landscape: Aztec and European Occupation of Tlalocan* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1999), 110-111.

adoption of a dominative view of nature, in which untamed wilderness was made both evil and feminine. When combined with Genesis' ruling that humankind should exercise dominion over the natural world,³ these religious perspectives enabled Spaniards to exercise full control over the natural landscape and its inhabitants, regardless of the impact that those actions had on the surrounding environment and, subsequently, on the Spanish commercial market.

Spanish social hierarchy was dominated first by God, then by His earthly representatives, the monarchy, the clergy and the nobility, and finally, the poor and the slaves. Men were situated above women, fathers above sons, serfs above slaves, and humans above animals and other beasts of burden.⁴ Time was considered relative, with history viewed as a drama that played out under the control of God. Religion gave Spaniards the right to control the land, but it was their perception of divine will that allowed them to displace liability for any unforeseen consequences. In a world where nature dictated the changing of the seasons and the time of day, Spaniards sought to reassert their control over the natural world by taming the landscape.

The Spanish typically preferred a two-field crop rotation system over a three-field crop rotation system, meaning that only one field would be worked at a time, while the other lay fallow. When combined with their preference for a low efficiency scratch plow, as well as their overreliance on a single cereal grain—such as wheat or barley—in the working field, this rotation system often proved detrimental, as it allowed for shortages due to monocrop pathogens.⁵ Despite devastating grain shortages experienced between 1500 and

³ John Edwards, "The Beginnings of a Scientific Theory of Race? Spain, 1450-1600," in *Religion and Society in Spain, c. 1492*, ed. John Edwards (Brookfield: Variorum, 1996), 633.

⁴ John Edwards, "Conversos, Judaism and the Language of Monarchy in Fifteenth-Century Castile," in *Religion and Society in Spain, c. 1492*, ed. John Edwards (Brookfield: Variorum, 1996), 219-220.

⁵ Stephen LeeRoy Cumbaa, *Patterns of Resource Use and Cross-Cultural Dietary Change in the Spanish Colonial Period* (1975), 20.

1506,⁶ the Spanish continued to apply inappropriate agricultural practices. They also heavily favored the production of wool and meat for their export markets. Under protection of the Crown and to meet commercial demands, Spaniards increasingly cleared the land for grazing animals like sheep and cattle, giving pastoralists private rights to lands that were previously held communal.⁷

The Spanish diet reflected their inefficient farming techniques, as well as their overreliance on monocrop and wool production. Their diet consisted largely of grains, olive oil, wine, and some fruits and meats. Meat was limited among the masses, as it could spoil quickly and was often heavily taxed. There was little variation of the diets, except during voyages of discovery, when explorers desired a balanced diet that could be supplemented by marine life and meat stores.⁸

The early sixteenth century was marked by rapid growth into rural sectors. Despite the known aridity of these hinterlands and the fact that many would not sustain mass production of certain crops, Spaniards continued to assert their dominion over nature by attempting to tame the land to grow what they wished. In late fifteenth and early sixteenth century Córdoba, the monarchy and the elite became aware of increasing pressures on land use, yet continued to push their commercial export markets, favoring the wants of the Crown over the needs of their lands. Because of the heavy emphasis on wool production, the Crown often protected the interests of pastoralist associations like the *Mesta* over those of the poor, farming masses. As pastoralists continued to encroach upon communal lands, the amount of arable lands diminished, increasing food insecurity as the Crown continued to pander to pastoralists in regions that faced issues of overpopulation, food shortages, and plague.⁹ The displaced

⁶ John Edwards, "'Development' and 'Underdevelopment' in the Western Mediterranean: The Case of Córdoba and its Region in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," in *Religion and Society in Spain, c. 1492*, ed. John Edwards (Brookfield: Variorum, 1996), 22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁹ John Rigby Hale, *Renaissance Europe: Individual and Society, 1480-1520* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 116.

masses of rural proletariats, peasants, and poor suffered, while the minority of pastoralists flourished under the Crown's indulgence.

Contemporary maps of Spain reaffirmed that Spanish priorities lay in the commercial markets and in the built environment. Cartographers placed more emphasis on differentiating cities from kingdoms and country borders than on clearly defining the characteristic features of the natural world, such as rivers and mountain ranges.¹⁰ This could be interpreted as an attempt to exert control upon the natural environment by choosing to instead highlight the significance of the manmade world.

Feeding the Earth: Aztec Views of Nature through Agriculture and Sacrifice

While the Spanish were driven by a religious doctrine that advocated the domination of the natural world, the Aztec peoples of the Valley of Mexico were driven by a cosmology that placed human beings on a par with the divine and with the natural world. The thirteenth century saw the migration of the Mexica and other ethnic groups into the Valley of Mexico.¹¹ Mesoamerican tradition accredits the creation of the world to the two gods *Quetzalcoatl* and *Tezcatlipoca*, who transformed into serpents and split in two the monstrous goddess *Tlaltecuthli*, from whose halves they formed the nine layers of the earth and the thirteen layers of the heavens.¹² The gods then repaid *Tlaltecuthli* for her suffering by forcing life from her hair, mouths, eyes, and nose. *Tlaltecuthli* apparently only submitted to this after being satiated with human blood. It is this grotesque mother goddess that is illustrated, with “her insatiable maw wide open,” on the “underside of vessels designed to receive the blood and hearts of human victims.” Because she is shown “in the squatting position Mexica women adopted to give

¹⁰ Germanus, “Map: Spain, woodcut.”

¹¹ Michael Ernest Smith, *The Aztecs*. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3-5. Although the term “Aztec” is typically used to refer specifically to the Mexica peoples, it is used here, as in other sources, to refer collectively to the ethnic groups that migrated into the Valley.

¹² Arnold, *Eating Landscape*, 37.

birth,”¹³ *Tlaltecutili* thus associates tasks like childbirth and sex with a bloody hunger, cementing a key Aztec association between eating and the divine.

This Mesoamerican cosmology dictated how the Aztec constructed their societies and their built environment, as well as how they approached such practices as agriculture and ritual sacrifice. The Valley's natural landscape shaped the Aztec commercial market. If the Aztec recognized that a certain region was not supportive of mass agriculture, they tended to try to fill the gap by specializing in urban artisanal trades like metallurgy and by demanding tribute from militarily dominated adjacent communities.¹⁴ Instead of forcing their will upon the earth, the Aztec molded their own practices accordingly. Although cities like Tenochtitlan represented a heavily built environment, by Aztec standards, the majority of the natural landscape in the countryside and in the Valley were relatively undeveloped. Even in the great urban areas, where there was a clear human influence, the Aztec included heavy nature-based imagery in everything from the construction of their buildings to the outfitting of their weapons. Their temples were built as reflections of the surrounding mountains, pointing toward the cosmos; their weapons they decorated with images of birds, flowers, and trees. Their intricate gardens and their arable lakebed *chinampas* both represented constructions of nature in a controlled environment, but one that allowed citizens to acknowledge nature, even amidst an urban setting.¹⁵

In regions where natural conditions supported farming, the Aztec tended to rely on the production of staple commodities like maize and cassava. Like the Spanish, they emphasized grains, but they also supplemented their diet with insects, algae, fruits, and vegetables. Because of the overexploitation of larger game by pre-Aztec peoples, the forests did not provide the Aztec with an abundance of animal-

¹³ Inga Clendinnen, *Aztecs: An Interpretation*. (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 183.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁵ Hernán Cortés, *Five Letters, 1519-1526*. Translated by John Bayard Morris (New York: Norton, 1960), 85.

based proteins to support their growing populations. Consequently, the Aztec (perhaps unknowingly) turned to their wide pharmacopeia of natural resources to supplement their diets with the protein-dense algae and maize of the Valley.¹⁶

Although the peasant classes of the exterior typically had access to an abundance of natural resources, the agricultural goods that they manufactured ultimately went to the Emperor and his privileged elite, skewing the distribution of wealth and resources. Thus, the minority elite experienced far better food security, as noblemen had access to resources like human sacrifices, while the peasant majority had to resort to eating insects and small game.¹⁷ Though the Aztec often ate fish and smaller game and fowl, their emphasis on plant-based proteins and their reservation of choice meats for the elite meant that the Aztec masses were largely vegetarian, a way of life that further distanced them from their European counterparts. Plants were not just limited to sustenance, however. They were also used extensively for the manufacturing of medical treatments and drugs used in rituals that further emphasized the association between nature and the divine.¹⁸

Aztec cosmology often linked the divine with the mundane and with the natural. The Valley of Mexico personified the living being Tlaloc, the rain god for whose sustenance and continued survival countless beings were sacrificed.¹⁹ For the Aztec, the human body itself held all of the potential of the cosmos. Unlike the Spanish, the Aztec recognized the destruction that accompanied their everyday lives, and so incorporated the destruction of human bodies into their cosmology. This destruction was achieved and celebrated through warfare and through rituals of human sacrifice. Aztec human sacrifices were driven by the underlying belief that the gods demanded blood sacrifices to maintain the balance of the world. Because the gods were associated with the earth, only through providing the earth with sacrifices of

¹⁶ Smith, *The Aztecs*, 10.

¹⁷ Montellano, "Aztec Cannibalism," 614.

¹⁸ Cortés, *Five Letters, 1519-1526*, 87.

¹⁹ Arnold, *Eating Landscape*, 130.

human blood could the Aztec feed and appease their gods. Just as the gods had sacrificed themselves to ensure the creation of the worlds in which the Aztec lived, so too must the Aztec sacrifice themselves to maintain balance.²⁰ Three festival months: *Atl cabnalo*, *Toxcatl*, and *Etzalcualiztli* showcase the role that human sacrifice played in reinforcing Aztec views of nature.

While anthropologist Michael Harner asserted that the prevalence of human sacrifices and cannibalism among the Aztec was a result of protein shortages,²¹ these claims are largely unsubstantiated and are undermined by the high frequency of sacrifices that occurred in times of natural abundance and harvest. Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano instead posits that sacrifices were not meant to feed the people, only the gods, and that the association of sacrifice with harvest was the Aztecs' way of giving thanks to their gods for sustenance.²²

At the end of the rainy season, *Atl cabnalo* ritually bound human activity to destruction and violence. In these rituals, children were sacrificed to *Tlaloc*, the rain god, at one of seven nature sites, each of which represented the mouths of the divine beings who were meant to be nourished and satiated by the blood of the victims. Collectively, the sites incorporated all local ecological systems, including everything from alluvial plains to lake systems and sierras.²³ *Atl cabnalo* thereby indelibly linked human bodies with destruction and with divinity, tying all aspects of the natural landscape into this transformative process.

During the May month of the *Toxcatl* dry season, a human representative, or image, of the penultimate god, *Tezcatlipoca*, was sacrificed as a sort of debt repayment to the gods. *Tezcatlipoca* was the god "whose abode was everywhere—in the land of the dead, on earth, and in heaven."²⁴ To honor this Lord of the Smoking Mirror²⁵ whom

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

²¹ Harner, "Ecological Basis for Aztec Sacrifice," 132.

²² Montellano, "Aztec Cannibalism," 614.

²³ Arnold, *Eating Landscape*, 131-136.

²⁴ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah, 1950), 2.

²⁵ Clendinnen, *Aztecs: An Interpretation*, 299.

the Spanish demonized,²⁶ an unblemished and physically attractive warrior was chosen from among a cache of captive, non-Aztec prisoners of war. This man was thus changed into a *teotl ixiptla*, a perfect image of *Tezcatlipoca*. He was then given a full year to live in total luxury while receiving training in the arts and social etiquette. He was briefly given four wives for him to use at will, and at the end of his year of luxury, was sacrificed atop the city of Chalco's ceremonial temple. His heart and head were removed, his body was brought down the steps and away from the celestial beings, and his skull placed atop the *tzompantli*, the skull rack. Although decidedly gruesome, this ritual emphasized the living, perishable image of deities, while reaffirming an association between a human body and the divine.²⁷

The start of the corn growing season was marked by *Etzalcualiztli*, when four maize representatives were sacrificed to the *tlaloque*. In accordance with Montellano's theories about giving thanks through sacrifice, the victims' hearts were offered to the rain gods in recognition of the waters that fed the very *chinampas* where their maize was newly growing. In this ritual, the Aztec not only rewarded the gods for past harvests, but also pressed upon them for future good will.²⁸ In further recognition of nature's role in connecting human bodies to the divine, the Aztec relaxed the maize crop once every eight years, to both honor its sacrifices and prevent it from being over exhausted.²⁹

In the majority of human sacrificial rituals, the victims were marginal members of society. They were mostly non-Aztecs who were captured in battle—either by the Aztec or their allies—for the express purpose of human sacrifice. The Aztec were wholly cognizant of the foreigner status of their victims and often exploited this ignorance of Aztec cities to keep the victims docile during rituals. To further ensure the passivity of victims, the Aztec used mind-altering hallucinogens to render the individuals submissive to sacrifice. The physical acts of

²⁶ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History*, 38.

²⁷ David Carrasco, *Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes* (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1999), 34, 44.

²⁸ Arnold, *Eating Landscape*, 161.

²⁹ Clendinnen, *Aztecs: An Interpretation*, 53.

sacrifice were public and acted as much as a religious ceremony as a means of ensuring cooperation from tributary populations.³⁰ By violently showcasing Aztec dominance and the consequences of dissent, these rituals acted as a form of social control. They were structured to directly target those “rulers of other and lesser cities” who “were routinely present.”³¹ These rituals not only discouraged resistance, but also amounted to a substituted warfare that began with the actual battles during which the victims were captured and ended with their sacrificial deaths.

Even though blood sacrifices were typically reserved for humans, that is not to say that other resources could not and would not be used to manifest the divine. Vegetable and animal forms were often associated with human bodies and could be used to craft divine idols to further the connection between human bodies, the landscape, and the divine.³² Indigenous maps of the time period reflected this connection between the mundane and the divine. These maps were populated by native peoples, plants, and animals, and often detailed how viewers could communicate with their divine ancestors.³³ Despite a shared Mesoamerican background, there were neighboring ethnic groups who objected to Aztec religious and sacrificial practices. The Spanish Conquistadors later exploited this undercurrent of discontent to conquer Mesoamerica.³⁴

A Cultural Conquest: Hernan Cortés and Bernal Díaz del Castillo in Mexico

Like many of his fellow soldiers and countrymen, Conquistador Hernan Cortés was a practicing Catholic who subscribed to the belief in his own superiority over women, nature, and non-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

³¹ Clendinnen, *Aztecs: An Interpretation*, 92.

³² *Ibid.*, 252.

³³ Guillelmoprieto, “A Lost World,” 63.

³⁴ Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain*. Translated by John M. Cohen. (London: Penguin, 1963), 151, 159-160.

Spanish peoples. In his *Five Letters, 1519-1526*, Cortés writes to the Queen Mother and to Emperor Charles V to detail the cultural and economic state of their New World holdings.³⁵ According to his letters, Cortés believes that “God is more powerful than nature”³⁶ and is pleased with the monarchy’s New World campaigns.³⁷ For Cortés, the New World landscape exists solely for Spanish consumption. Even when acknowledging the apparent worth of precious goods like feathers and turquoise, which are so novel and strange “as to be almost without price,”³⁸ Cortés succumbs to an underling desire to assign commercial value to the natural world and its resources. Rather than recognizing their inherent worth, Cortés seeks a profit, first and foremost, as is apparent in his quest for gold.³⁹ With Cortés, if it is not a familiar land full of an abundance of resources, then it is described as dangerous and alien, as a threat to his campaign and to his mission, until it can be tamed.⁴⁰ Thus, the physical landscape and its indigenous inhabitants all comprised a vista ripe for harvest and commodification.

In Mexico, Cortés uses religion, or the natives’ alleged lack of religion, to justify his treatment of them and their lands and resources. When former allies attack Cortés’s campaign as it is proceeding into the Mexican interior, Cortés rallies his troops by appealing to their desire to “reclaim” lands that were “lost” to them. He further elaborates that these lands belong to the Spanish not only by royal decree, but also by right of faith because it is their duty to “spread the faith against a barbarous people.”⁴¹ In accordance with his faith, Cortés critiques the natives for their use of handmade idols constructed from nature, since nature-based relics are unclean.⁴² He responds to these false idols by eradicating them.

While the Catholic Cortés merely disliked false idols, he

³⁵ Cortés, *Five Letters, 1519-1526*, 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁷ Cortés, *Five Letters, 1519-1526*, 61.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 91.

immediately and actively sought to neutralize human sacrificial rituals. When Cortés encounters temples dark with the blood of past sacrifices, he sets about “cleansing”⁴³ them and replacing them with the appropriate Catholic idols. Because he appears to view the native peoples as a mere extension of the natural landscape, his destruction of their idols represents a symbolical conquering of the natural world. This symbolic conquest is apparent in Cortés’s efforts to familiarize, and thus demystify, an otherwise alien land and its people. Although Cortés occasionally defers to indigenous laws⁴⁴ and claims that Aztec metallurgy is so great that “there is no goldsmith or silversmith in the world that could better them,”⁴⁵ he does so while claiming that these are anomalies for a “barbarous nation shut off from the knowledge of the true God or communication with enlightened nations.”⁴⁶ He also likens indigenous peoples to the Moors, solidifying an image of them as inferior, sacrilegious, and undeserving of their lands.⁴⁷ In comparing Mexico’s alien environment to the familiar environment of Spain, Cortés not only critiques the areas where Mexico falls short of Spain, but also demystifies an unknown and thus untamed landscape.

Despite his criticisms of the natives, Cortés is more than eager to exploit their “savagery”—their brutality, their ethnic rivalries, and their military tactics—when employing neighboring tribes as his allies against the Aztec of Tenochtitlan.⁴⁸ He plays upon existing cultural rivalries and undercurrents of discontent with Moctezuma, drawing his allies from tributary nations who chafe against owing allegiance to an Emperor whom they believe exercises too much power over too great an empire.⁴⁹ Cortés repeatedly relies on these allies for military aid and for intelligence. When he narrowly avoids a surprise attack by enemy peoples, it is only on account of a tip from a native girl from a

⁴³ Cortés, *Five Letters, 1519-1526*, 90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22, 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 129, 244.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

neighboring tribe.⁵⁰ When preparing to lay siege to Tenochtitlan, Cortés employs the aid of “more than eight thousand natives from the provinces of Aculuacan and Tezcucó” to construct a canal that he hopes will lead to a Spanish victory.⁵¹

Regardless of his reliance on their aid, Cortés continues to emasculate indigenous peoples throughout his narrative. When his relationships with his native allies sour, Cortés is quick to use their so-called savagery to dehumanize and demonize them. He appears to kill the natives indiscriminately, often at the expense of women and children.⁵² Even though he recognizes the spread of diseases like smallpox, Cortés seems either unaware or unconcerned with his role in that biological conquest.⁵³ Although he occasionally admires the skills of natives at war, in the same breath he infantilizes their actions, patronizingly referring to the “fury and recklessness” with which they fight and lose.⁵⁴ He repeatedly draws attention to their backward nature, nakedness, and lack of civilization in order to justify his campaign and God’s supposed support of it. In emphasizing the superiority of the Spanish over all others and in refusing to assign agency, Cortés effectively emasculates the peoples of Mexico.⁵⁵ In writing to the Spanish monarchy, Cortés furthers this emasculation by presenting, for Spanish consumption, an image of natives as infantilized colonial subjects. While Cortés dehumanizes Mexico’s indigenous peoples as mere figments of a savage and untamed wilderness, one of his campaign followers presents a different view of the New World and its people.

In his 1576 account *The Conquest of New Spain*, Conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo writes of his firsthand experiences working with Cortés on campaigns to secure Mexico for the monarchy.⁵⁶ Del

⁵⁰ Cortés, *Five Letters, 1519-1526*, 56-57.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 126-136.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

⁵⁶ Castillo, *Conquest of New Spain*, 14.

Castillo's narrative provides considerably more insight into the indigenous perspective than that of Cortés, even though that insight is skewed by del Castillo's clear religious bias against Aztec rituals. Unlike Cortés, del Castillo does not limit his praise to indigenous allies, but also extends that praise toward enemy tribes, particularly the ones who fight bravely against the Spanish.⁵⁷ In admiring some opposing factions, del Castillo counters traditional Spanish thought by advancing an image of indigenous males that is multidimensional.

Del Castillo also clearly diverges from Cortés in his active attempts to differentiate between indigenous groups. He reveals a personal grasp of indigenous New World languages like Jamaican and Totonac.⁵⁸ Del Castillo also gives considerable credit to the female Nahua interpreter and former-Aztec-princess-turned-slave, La Malinche, who aided the Spanish campaign.⁵⁹ Del Castillo's attempts to separate indigenous ethnic groups suggest that he views natives differently than Cortés does. Although the natives in both works are recognized as a means to an end, in del Castillo's narrative, some have their own worth and are subject to the Spanish gaze, rather than to Spanish consumption.

Del Castillo's narrative is marked by lengthy descriptions of the landscape and of the native flora and fauna of the Valley of Mexico. These descriptions allow nature to play a pivotal role in Conquest, especially as del Castillo depicts the fall of cities and the destruction of their unique splendor. Del Castillo's exclamation at the loss of Iztapalapa's beauty suggests that he finds worth in the land itself, worth that is perhaps beyond consumption. Late in life, del Castillo is able to look back upon the Conquest and, although he does not assign blame to himself, he considers the impact that the Conquest had on the brilliance of cities like Iztapalapa and Tenochtitlan.⁶⁰ Del Castillo also

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 291, 299.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 28, 98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁶⁰ Castillo, *Conquest of New Spain*, 214-215.

diverges from Cortés in how he seeks to familiarize himself and his audience with the natives of the New World. Whereas Cortés attempted to control the new landscape and its people by comparing them to a civilized Spain, del Castillo familiarizes the people of Mexico by comparing them to other New World indigenous populations.⁶¹

However, the progressiveness of del Castillo's outlook is somewhat tempered by the reality that, like Cortés, del Castillo subscribes to the traditional Catholic belief that nature and natives are to be dominated, even if he recognizes their inherent worth.⁶² Like Cortés, del Castillo recognizes and takes advantage of differences in Spanish and Aztec cosmology, playing into the indigenous belief that the gods had brought Cortés to Mexico in order to advance his campaign into the interior.⁶³ Both Conquistadors also found motivation in a religious desire to convert the faithless natives and to acquire gold and profits in the New World.

Furthermore, even though del Castillo at times recognizes the military prowess of native warriors, he falls into a more traditional mindset when considering native women. For del Castillo, although warring men might be admired for their strategic skills, native women were akin only to the spoils of war. They were likened to material products of the landscape, meant, just as the land was, for Spanish consumption. Even La Malinche, who del Castillo sets apart for her superb intellect, was said to have a courage that could not be considered feminine.⁶⁴ Here, del Castillo not only undermines indigenous female agency, but also encourages a two-dimensional view of native women.

Although del Castillo exclaims at the fall of cities like Iztapalapa, he makes no criticisms about the subsequent sacking of Tlatelolco⁶⁵ or his fellows' efforts to unearth Tenochtitlan's foundations to reframe them according to Catholic

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 203.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 159-160.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁶⁵ Castillo, *Conquest of New Spain*, 406.

standards. He instead remarks upon the precious stones found during the excavation, reaffirming traditional Spanish interests in nature for profit and consumption.⁶⁶ While commenting on the ingenuity of the lake city of Tenochtitlan and its fortifications, del Castillo simultaneously laments that this ingenuity means that the Spanish will be unable to employ their usual burning tactics because the houses will be unlikely to stay alight and the fire will be unlikely to spread.⁶⁷ Often, his underhanded criticism of Aztec culture and his willful acceptance of what the Spanish plan to do to the natives undermine his admiration of them.

Cortés's and del Castillo's views of nature informed how they perceived the Aztecs, but these views also informed their specific actions during Conquest. Both Conquistadors employed tactics of burning and otherwise decimating whole indigenous villages, particularly those of their enemies, but often those of their neighbors.⁶⁸ Their religious beliefs encouraged a view of the natives as inferior, which justified any atrocities committed by the Spanish as acts of God. Without threat of blame for their actions, the Conquistadors were able to act against the Aztec with impunity. Accordingly, they burned their villages, murdered their residents and lamented any who escaped, and destroyed any and all remnants of native cosmology.⁶⁹ Where they encountered existing religious icons, they burnt divine idols, cleansed temples, and undermined the very foundations of the city, so that they could reconstruct Tenochtitlan and its religious centers in the image of their Catholic Spanish society.⁷⁰ Even though individuals like del Castillo may have appreciated the aesthetics of indigenous cities, they still acted upon an underlying belief that forcing a more civilized Spanish aesthetic upon the cities would improve them. The Conquistadors cemented this cultural conquest by forcing the natives to submit not only to Catholicism, but also to the Spanish monarchy

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 289-291, 375.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 238-239, 291.

⁷⁰ Castillo, *Conquest of New Spain*, 238-239.

and to Spanish culture.⁷¹

A Biological Conquest: Ecological Implications of Spanish Occupation

Following the physical and cultural conquest of the Aztec, the Spanish conducted a biological conquest of the Valley of Mexico. This conquest was defined by the desire to dominate the natural world according to what the Spanish wanted, not what was best for the environment. Unlike some flawed Mesoamerican practices, such as the pre-Aztec overhunting of the Valley of Mexico, the biological conquest conducted by the Spanish did not just augment existing environmental issues; it introduced entirely new ones to a climate already physically damaged by warfare, starvation, and strife.⁷² The Valley of Mexico—previously home to a variety of game, fowl, vegetation, and microclimates—was exposed to invasive and non-native species that would permanently alter the natural landscape. Just as the Spanish encouraged agricultural practices that were ill-suited to their own arid climates, they also promoted inappropriate practices throughout their New World settlements. These practices were dictated by Spanish religious demands, such as a need for fish at Lent. When native food sources were depleted, it meant that natives were restricted to food sources that were not only Spanish in origin, but also determined according to a religion that they did not subscribe to.⁷³ In the Caribbean and in Florida, the Spanish attempted to import non-native animals and plants, but while the animals like pigs and sheep flourished and ran feral, the plants fared poorly and so the flora remained largely native.⁷⁴

Undeterred by these Caribbean failures, the Spanish attempted similar introductions in the Valley of Mexico, and this time, the varying

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁷² Elinor G. K. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 165.

⁷³ Cumbaa, *Patterns of Resource Use*, 73.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

climates and soil compositions encouraged a positive reception of many Old-World flora. Wheat, figs, roses, and walnuts did exceptionally well in the Valley and so emboldened the Spanish to continue their biological conquest.⁷⁵ As in the Old World and in the Caribbean, the Spanish also emphasized grazing animals like sheep and cattle. Pigs were among the first animals to show promise in the New World.⁷⁶

While the Spanish introduced their own animals to the New World, they also introduced new agricultural policies to support those animals. With the introduction of grazing animals came an increased emphasis on clearing land for pastures, so that the animals could be fed and could supply Spain's global market. In the Valley of Mexico, this emphasis on pasturelands required a subsequent reduction in forest lands. As deforestation increased, the wild game lost key sources of nourishment, and so their weight decreased, along with their reproduction rates. This reduction in reproduction rates equated to a decrease in natural resources and animal products for both native and Spanish use.⁷⁷ The new Spanish animals and agricultural practices both contributed to broader issues of soil erosion, deforestation, and a diminishing supply of running and waste-free waters.⁷⁸ Thus, in their zeal for creating a New Spain, the Spanish permanently altered their landscape, as well as their commercial markets.

The introductions of new plants and animals decimated not only the landscape, but also the people. Diseases like smallpox had arrived with the Conquistadors and already wrought havoc, but when Conquistadors forced displaced natives to work in close quarters and in gang units, they exacerbated the issue.⁷⁹ Even when the Spanish themselves were inconvenienced by their introduction of non-native species—as when pig-related crop destruction prompted a rise in indigenous complaints—they still made no moves to address the issues

⁷⁵ Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*, 47.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷⁸ Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*, 28-30.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

or control any problem species. To the Spanish, the needs of their commercial market far outweighed the concerns of their newly acquired native subjects.⁸⁰

For the Spanish, victory in Conquest included their rights to water and land, rights that were to be acquired either through force or through generations of law.⁸¹ Although natives still retained land rights during the first generation of Conquest, this changed as the Spanish restructured land boundaries according to their own interests.⁸² The shifting of land ownership prompted a change not just in indigenous community structure, but also in how they used the land. Nahua land grant petitioners increasingly requested rights to mining, deforestation, and horse breeding, in order to meet Spanish market demands, regardless of the fact that such land use rights did not really exist prior to the Spanish Conquest.⁸³ Pastoralists in the Central Highlands, for instance, used the lands for their grazing herds, despite indigenous objections.⁸⁴ The favoritism of pastoralists meant that Spanish authorities used their land and water “rights” to regulate access to pastures, just as the elite did back in the Old World.⁸⁵ In imposing Spanish norms on a people previously without grazing animals or laws for grass possession, the Spanish exploited the Aztecs’ lack of understanding about the Spanish concept of nature ownership. Due to their unfamiliarity with the Spanish system, native plaintiffs were poorly equipped to respond to disputes with pastoralists and were typically unable to use or understand the Spanish legal system to achieve any real relief.

While the Spanish and the Aztec both erected their societies according to religious demands, the differences in their respective religions ultimately informed similar differences in how they perceived the natural world and its inhabitants. For the Spanish, adherence to

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 49-51.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁸² McDonough, “Indigenous Rememberings,” 70.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁸⁴ Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*, 120.

⁸⁵ Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*, 116.

Catholic doctrine perpetuated a belief in the superiority of humankind over nature and over the feminine. This dominating view of nature encouraged the men who conquered Mexico to do so with impudence, believing they were justified in their superiority over the native beasts of this alien landscape. Conversely, Aztec cosmology encouraged a symbiotic relationship between human bodies, nature, and the divine. When these two cultures met at Conquest and the Aztec finally succumbed to the Spanish, what followed was a biological and ecological conquest driven by a Spanish view of nature as something to be consumed and possessed, rather than sustained. The ramifications of this ecological conquest are still being studied today.

"I Invented the World in Which You Are Now Standing": Chicana Literary Reimaginings of the Malinche Figure

Indica Mattson



"Malinalli was this, reflection of a reflection."

-Laura Esquivel, Malinche

In the 1980s, protestors in Mexico City's district of Coyoacán demanded the removal of a fountain depicting Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, indigenous interpreter La Malinche, and their son Martín, Mexico's first *mestizo*.¹ These nationalists were motivated by a hatred for La Malinche's alleged betrayal and *malinchismo*, a preference for foreigners over Mexican culture. In the centuries after the conquest, the Mexican cultural imagination has defined Malinche—also known as Malinalli, Malintzin, and Doña Marina—as Mexico's traitorous Eve, conflating her with figures of female monstrosity like La Llorona and La Chingada. Malinche's own voice remains absent from these narratives of conquest, yet Chicana authors and theorists like Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sabina Berman, and Laura Esquivel are reconceptualizing the Malinche figure and gendering the archive by creating new literary narratives in place of absent historical accounts. Through a response to the binary characterizations of La Malinche cemented by mid-twentieth century Mexican nationalist thinkers, contemporary *mestiza* feminists are illustrating their own intersectional hybridity and search for place in defiance of patriarchal histories.

Formulating La Malinche: Paz, Fuentes, and Mexican Nationalism

Prominent post-revolutionary authors like Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes, figures which Chicana feminists would later controvert, evoked the Malinche figure in an attempt to dissect Mexico's cultural origins and national identity, subsequently shifting

¹ Ann McBride-Limaye, "Metamorphoses of La Malinche and Mexican Cultural Identity," *Comparative Civilizations Review* 19, no. 19 (Fall 1988), 22.

the blame of the Mexican conquest away from white male conquerors and onto female indigenous bodies. In his essay "The Sons of La Malinche," Paz posits that La Malinche is the historical and mythological embodiment of La Chingada, "the mother forcibly opened, violated, or deceived."² According to Sandra Cypess, Paz "writes as a Mexican male whose concept of woman has been formed by the polarities of the Virgen and the Malinche figure."³ As the "Mexican Eve,"⁴ Paz constructs La Malinche as the counterpart to the Virgen de Guadalupe, yet both are defined by their passivity:

Guadalupe is pure receptivity, and the benefits she bestows are of the same order: she consoles, quiets, dries tears, calms passions. The *Chingada* is even more passive. Her passivity is abject: she does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood and dust.⁵

By defining La Malinche through her contradictions and antitheses, Paz illustrates a figure who lacks identity; La Chingada "is nothingness."⁶ She is the opposite of Guadalupe, the gentle mother, and is the victim of the patriarchal *gran chingón*, the *macho* Cortés figure. Yet Malinche is also antagonist to Cuauhtémoc, the final Aztec emperor, assassinated by Cortés but not sexually violated by him. According to Paz, this allows Cuauhtémoc to retain his honor as a "closed" figure; unlike Malinche, Cuauhtémoc isn't characterized by receptivity or passivity.⁷ Depicted by Paz as a traitor open to foreign conquest, Malinche is the origin of *malinchistas*, "those who want Mexico to open itself to the outside world: the true sons of La Malinche, who is the *Chingada* in person."⁸

Musings on La Chingada contemporaneous to Paz can be

² Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 79.

³ Sandra Messinger Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 97.

⁴ Paz, 87.

⁵ Paz, 85.

⁶ Paz, 86.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

found in Carlos Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. Here, the titular Cruz reminisces about the violated mother while on his deathbed. So engrained is this Malinche image in Cruz's mind that it violently comes to him even in his final thoughts:

She [La Chingada] stands up for us, she deals the cards, she runs the risk, she conceals our reticence, our double dealing, she reveals our struggles and our courage, she gets us drunk, shouts, succumbs, lives in every bed, presides over the rites of friendship, hatred, and power. You and I, members of this secret society...Abandon her on the road, murder her with weapons that aren't her own. Let's kill her: let's kill that word that separates us, petrifies us, rots us with its double venom of idol and cross. Let her not be either our answer or our fatality.⁹

La Chingada is framed as both mother and whore, the compatriot and inheritance of all Mexican men as well as an entity which they desire to destroy. Yet, to destroy Malinche would be "a denial of the reality of the past and the origin of the Mexican nation,"¹⁰ as Paz has stated that the repudiation of the violated mother would be synonymous with the forsaking of one's Mexican identity and the choice to live "in isolation and solitude."¹¹ This excerpt from Fuentes frames La Chingada as the feminine weakness inherent in Mexican men. As mother, she exerts an emasculating influence, revealing her sons' secret desires and hatred. La Chingada also fits the mold of the corrupting whore; she gets men "drunk" and is blamed for clouding their judgement, yet, present in "every bed," remains their only comfort. Fuentes characterizes the relationship between La Chingada, the embodiment of the "feminine condition,"¹² and Mexican men as incestuous. With the death of La Chingada, the rape and feminization

⁹ Carlos Fuentes, *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), 136-138.

¹⁰ Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 97.

¹¹ Paz, 87.

¹² Paz, 85.

of the Spanish conquest dies with her, and Cruz calls for her murder on his deathbed because she is a locus of blame in the Mexican cultural imagination. Fuentes frames La Chingada's destruction as necessary for the success of the Revolution and modernity.

At the end of the novel, it is revealed that Cruz is the product of the rape of an indigenous peasant woman by a white landowner. Thus, Artemio Cruz becomes a national metaphor; his life, which spans the period from the Porfiriato until the 1960s, acts an analogy for the struggles of Mexican modernity and the nation's post-revolutionary fate. By referencing Cortés' rape of La Malinche via Cruz's own conception, Fuentes places Cruz in communication with the first *mestizo* son of Mexico, cementing him as a true *hijo de la Chingada*. Like the *chingón* illustrated in "The Sons of La Malinche," Cruz perpetuates the very violence from which he originates. While fighting as a Maderista in the Mexican Revolution, Cruz sexually assaults a woman named Regina after the seizure of a town; like Paz's passive *Chingada*, Fuentes depicts Regina as enthusiastically receptive to her violation. After a brief love affair with Cruz, Regina's ultimate fate is to be raped and murdered at the hands of *federales*, illustrating the role and destiny of the *Chingada* in the mid-20th century Mexican cultural imagination.

In order to understand depictions of La Malinche during the time in which Paz and Fuentes were active, it is necessary to examine the murals of José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera, artworks which Paz references in "The Sons of La Malinche". Painted in the National Preparatory School in Mexico City in 1926,¹³ Orozco's *Cortés and Malinche* depicts these two figures with their hands clasped in union. They sit naked, a "dead, emaciated body...lying face down at their feet."¹⁴ Cortés' ropy arm reaches across Malinche's body as though in an attempt to stay the movement of her left hand. His broad leg, outstretched, is locked into a territorial, dominating pose

¹³ Cypess, *La Malinche*, 92. Analisa Taylor, *Indigeneity in the Mexican Cultural Imagination* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 98.

¹⁴ Taylor, 97.

over the withered, anonymous corpse below. Here, Malinche seems to be defined by her passivity in comparison to the active, assertive Cortés. With downcast eyes, Malinche is folded inwards towards herself; she exudes the shame and reluctance of a *Venus pudica*. These three figures—the *gran macho*, *Chingada*, and the dead indigenous man at their feet—form the racialized and sexualized triangulation of conquest. The power of Cortés is tied to his whiteness and his sexual dominance; his tools—his nationality, his sexual violence, and his possession of a phallus—form the basis for his colonial success and authority. Malinche, cowed, is the symbol of “openness” on a sexual and racial level, a result of her status as both a violated woman and a member of a conquered indigenous people. The slain indigenous warrior at the feet of the seated couple supplements this racial messaging; although not the victim of explicit sexual violence, the corpse has still been penetrated by the sword of the white *macho*. In a state-sponsored effort to artistically condense national narratives, Orozco’s mural depicts the origins of Mexico as a result of Spanish sexual and racial dominance.

Rivera’s portrayal of Malinche in his murals in the Palacio Nacional, painted from 1929 to 1951, displays his interests in indigenous subjects stemming from the “social revolutionary passion and nationalist fervor that flourished in the postrevolutionary period.”¹⁵ Here, Malinche is portrayed in the center of a chaotic market scene. Her skin is noticeably lighter than that of her fellow Aztecs, which, in addition to her white dress and background of bright calla lilies, ensures that she is the scene’s focus. In a coquettish pose, Malinche’s exposes her bare leg to her audience; the curve of her raised skirt suggests her “openness” as described by Paz. Her face is turned away from the viewer, yet her expression and cocked eyebrow conveys a certain confidence. Although portrayed as more active than Orozco’s passive Malinche, Rivera’s mural still depicts Malinche as exotic and sexually available for the enjoyment of a presumed male viewer. Perhaps more significantly, Rivera’s

¹⁵ Cypess, *La Malinche*, 92.

interpretation of Malinche places her in opposition to her own people. Not only does Malinche seem unaffected by the scene of chaos and violence around her, but Rivera also whitens her drastically, perhaps suggesting that Malinche is somehow more "European" than other Aztecs and, thusly, complicit in the Spanish conquest.

Yet this artistic period wasn't comprised solely of nationalistic, state-funded murals by male artists. In many ways, the works of Frida Kahlo act as a genesis for later *mestiza* reimaginings of La Malinche. By borrowing visual depictions of the "feminine condition"¹⁶ by prominent Mexican male artists, Kahlo connected herself to the figure of La Chingada in order to explore the contradictions of the Mexican *mestiza* identity. Kahlo's 1932 painting *Henry Ford Hospital* is a self-portrait of sorts painted after her miscarriage. The artist portrays herself naked in a stained, bloody hospital bed. Kahlo's bed, which seems to float in an industrial, dream-like plane, acts as a tether for various surreal objects—including a snail, a crushed flower, and a male fetus—which are tied to the metal bedframe by red, vein-like strings. The setting of Kahlo's self-portrait within a nightmarish American landscape can be compared to the violation of La Malinche by a foreign power, and Kahlo's visceral depiction of her own broken body is reminiscent of Octavio Paz's characterization of La Chingada as a pile of viscera. Kahlo paints her stomach as swollen yet empty, representing a maternity more similar to the violation of La Malinche or the grief and monstrosity of La Llorona, two emblems of corrupted motherhood to be later combined by Octavio Paz.¹⁷ Kahlo's focus on her own disability in her art contributes to this parallel between the suffering of Malinche/Llorona; according to Janice Helland, the effects of the polio Kahlo had as a child as well as a traumatic bus crash she was injured in as a young woman ensured that "pain

¹⁶ Paz, 85.

¹⁷ Paz, 75: "The *Chingada* is one of the Mexican representations of Maternity, like *La Llorona* or the 'long-suffering Mexican mother' we celebrate on the tenth of May."

became an integral part of Kahlo's life."¹⁸

A later 1939 work, Kahlo's *The Two Fridas* is a double self-portrait. The two depictions of the artist sit opposite each other in a pose paralleling Orozco's *Cortés and Malinche*. Like Orozco's couple, the two Fridas have their hands clasped together in union, yet they lack Malinche's passivity and gaze sternly out at their viewer. On the left, Kahlo wears a white dress, stuffy and prim in a high-necked, lacy collar. Conversely, the Kahlo on the right wears an indigenous-inspired garment. These two selves represent the duality of Kahlo's identity as the daughter of a German father and an indigenous mother, yet Kahlo doesn't seem to align herself with one over the other; the two portraits share a heart that has been sliced down the middle, and the two are bound together with arteries which double as creeping vines. Not only is this violent alliance between Kahlo's two identities reminiscent of the duality of La Malinche, but this simultaneous union and opposition between two selves, modern and indigenous, also represents the contradictions of Mexican identity as a whole. Absent from Kahlo's image is the triangulation seen in Orozco's work; Kahlo asserts that her identity is a union between two conflicting selves but doesn't depict the product of this joining in *The Two Fridas*. The fruit of this union, however, is an identity explored by contemporary Chicana feminists working with the figure of La Malinche.

Reimagining La Malinche on the Borderlands

Kahlo's depiction of a combined self-identity in *The Two Fridas* confronts the same themes addressed by Gloria Anzaldúa's discussion of a new mestiza consciousness in her 1987 work *Borderlands*. Anzaldúa's essays highlight "the psychological... sexual... and spiritual borderlands"¹⁹ created where people of different cultures, races, and/or ethnicities are forced to merge. Unlike

¹⁸ Janice Helland, "Aztec Imagery in Frida Kahlo's Paintings: Indigeneity and Political Commitment," *Woman's Art Journal* 11, no. 2 (1990): 8.

¹⁹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 19.

Octavio Paz's construction of a Mexican (male) identity which desires to repudiate the sins of the white father and the violation of the indigenous mother, Anzaldúa illustrates the *mestiza* identity as an inability to disavow any one culture, as one must "continually walk out of one culture and into another...at the same time."²⁰ In defining a *mestiza* future, Anzaldúa mirrors Paz's approach to the *mestizo* origin story by identifying the different mothers of Mexico:

All three are mediators: *Guadalupe*, the virgin mother who has not abandoned us, *la Chingada* (*Malinche*), the raped mother whom we have abandoned, and *la Llorona*, the mother who seeks her lost children and is a combination of the other two.²¹

Anzaldúa characterizes Malinche not as a mother who has abandoned her children, yet as a figure who has been raped by the conqueror and forsaken by her own people. Anzaldúa's work is imbued with a sympathy for the violated mother which the masculinist Paz lacks. Her obvious refusal to let the *gran macho* dominate the historical narrative seems to be a critique of Paz's approach—the very title of his essay, "The Sons of La Malinche," denies *mestizas* legitimacy as the children of Mexico, instead compacting their identities into passive, semi-mythological maternal figures. Anzaldúa's response to these mid-20th century searches for *mestizo* identity is to place her identity as a lesbian Chicana feminist at the forefront of her works. In her essay "Towards a New Consciousness," Anzaldúa declares, "As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover."²² She places herself—and other *mestizas*—in a cultural borderland, a third space characterized by Anzaldúa as inherently female, where multiple identities converge and must be navigated. The Malinche figure seems to lie beneath the surface of Anzaldúa's description of how

²⁰ Anzaldúa, 99.

²¹ Anzaldúa, 52.

²² Anzaldúa, 102.

Chicana women must "juggle cultures."²³ Malinche, a woman acting as a pivotal bridge between two empires, is comprised of contradictions like Anzaldúa's *mestiza*. Aware of these binary gendered oppositions in the Chicano cultural consciousness, Anzaldúa's call for an inner revolution begins with a single step: *mestizas* must "unlearn the *puta/virgin* dichotomy and...see *Coatloapeuh-Coatlicue* in the Mother."²⁴ Anzaldúa calls for the rejection of the oppositional relationships of the *tres madres* by imbuing the image of the Mother with the complexities and agency found in Mesoamerican mother goddesses. However, Anzaldúa queers these maternal images by framing them in relationship to her own lesbian identity, demonstrating that a new *mestiza* consciousness can derive power and inspiration from these maternal figures, but that heteronormative, conventional motherhood is not necessary for the realization of a Mexican female identity.

Like Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, the poetry of Chicana scholar Alicia Gaspar de Alba often focuses on the *tres madres* in an attempt to define a *mestiza* identity and rebuke patriarchal narratives. In "Malinchista, A Myth Revisited," Gaspar de Alba conflates La Malinche with La Llorona in her description of a vengeful mother:

"The woman shrieking along the littered bank of the Rio Grande is not sorry. She is looking for revenge. Centuries she has been blamed for the murder of her child, the loss of her people, as if Tenochtitlan would not have fallen without her sin. History does not sing of the conquistador who prayed to a white god as he pulled two ripe hearts out of the land."²⁵

Like Anzaldúa, Gaspar de Alba locates Malinche/Llorona on the borderlands—specifically, the border between Texas and Mexico. Her position as the Mexican Eve is reaffirmed through Gaspar de Alba's mention of Malinche's "sin". Now exiled from Tenochtitlan as

²³ Anzaldúa, 101.

²⁴ Anzaldúa, 106.

²⁵ Rolando Romero and Amanda Nolacea Harris, *Feminism, Nation and Myth: La Malinche* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2005), 5.

a metaphorical Eden, she seems cursed to her vengeful roaming, perhaps more Lilith than Eve. Gaspar de Alba's verse criticizes the patriarchal way in which historical and mythological narratives are constructed. After all, "history does not sing of the conquistador" as a vengeful, weeping spirit; Malinche, turned grotesque and monstrous by folklore and the cultural imagination, seems to shoulder the blame for her own violation. Gaspar de Alba frames the border as a site which is "political, sexual..., neo-geographical and poetic," a place where historical and cultural grievances can be found as well as voiced and potentially healed.²⁶

Gaspar de Alba's poem "Kyrie Eleison for La Llorona" also deals with a Malinche/Llorona figure in a desolate, industrial borderland. Gaspar de Alba characterizes La Llorona as the "patron saint of bus stops and turnstiles" as well as a "Virgin of the deported" and "mother of the dispossessed."²⁷ Here, the *tres madres* are merged to create an image of a mother for the uprooted in a border society. With the line "You've traded your midnight cry for the graveyard / shift and a paycheck at the maquila," Gaspar de Alba places Llorona/Malinche in a *maquiladora*, a "gritty (and often lethal)" factory on the border in which Chicana/os' lives and heritage has become "muted, mechanical, poisoned, [and] degraded."²⁸ Gaspar de Alba characterizes Llorona's "midnight cry" as something which fades as the lives of her *mestiza/o* children are becoming increasingly bleak, industrialized, and corrupted by U.S.-style capitalism. Gaspar de Alba draws a connection between exploitation by foreign-owned companies on the border and estrangement from one's origins, meaning the cries of Llorona. Ironically, this suggests that *malinchismo* and Malinche are somehow diametrically opposed. Through the modern, industrialized borderland settings of her poetry, Gaspar de

²⁶ Suzanne Chávez-Silverman, "Gendered Bodies and Borders in Contemporary Chican@ Performance and Literature." In *Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture and Chicana/o Sexualities*, edited by Alicia Gaspar de Alba, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 225.

²⁷ Chávez-Silverman, 223.

²⁸ Chávez-Silverman, 224-5.

Alba has reworked La Llorona and La Malinche into a new mother who cares for the desperate and the abandoned, a goddess figure of the border embodied by a rose blooming in a car tire.²⁹

Berman and Esquivel: Reconquistas of La Malinche

While Anzaldúa and Gaspar de Alba were influenced by racially conscious feminist activism as a response to the failings of the Chicano civil rights movement, Sabina Berman and Laura Esquivel take a more "post-feminist" approach to revisions of the Malinche myth. Berman's 1985 play *Aguila o Sol* ("Heads or Tails") is set during the conquest of the Aztecs and employs humor and parody in order to critique patriarchal histories and knowledge institutions. *Aguila o Sol* dramatizes the Spanish arrival in Mexico and the murder of Moctezuma, yet differs from official histories by characterizing the conquest's male players—both Spanish and Aztec—as bumbling incompetents. Considering that Spanish missionaries often used theatre to communicate religious and cultural ideology to conquered peoples,³⁰ Berman's decision to use theatre to convey a woman's view of the conquest is political in itself. In Berman's parodic work, "nothing is sacred."³¹ Berman takes aim at Cortés, conquistadors, and priests in the same breath as Moctezuma and Aztec soldiers. Cortés himself never has a coherent line of dialogue, and instead speaks a garbled version of *castellano* flavored with bits of vocabulary from other languages and time periods, representing the wide reach of the Spanish Empire as well as the many imperial powers which have attempted to exercise control over Mexico during the nation's history.³²

Cortés' first line of dialogue, the first "Spanish" spoken in the

²⁹ Anzaldúa, 112-3: "Here every Mexican grows flowers. If they don't have a piece of dirt, they use car tires, jars, cans, shoe boxes. Roses are the Mexican's favorite flower. I think, how symbolic—thorns and all."

³⁰ Sandra Messinger Cypess, "From Colonial Constructs to Feminist Figures: Re/visions by Mexican Women Dramatists," *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 4 (1989): 494.

³¹ Cypess, "From Colonial Constructs," 499.

³² Cypess, *La Malinche*, 134.

New World, is interpreted by Berman as: "Cat for a hare, you dirty black traffickers? Me pee in pants? Maybe give out licorice ice."³³ A figure imbued with patriarchal and colonial importance instead immediately becomes a strange object of ridicule to the audience; the Aztec characters of the play, however, speak Spanish fluently, enabling Berman's audience to identify more closely with them. Because Cortés is unable to be understood, the character of Malinche acts as translator between Cortés and Moctezuma and for Berman's Spanish-speaking audience. Additionally, her character is depicted not in the style of Orozco's passive Malinche or Paz's violated heap of flesh, but is instead instilled with humanity, agency, and humor. Her patient translations of Cortés' babblings act a parodic, tongue-in-cheek examination of "the real problems of communication brought by the encounter of two different civilizations,"³⁴ as evidenced in this first exchange between Cortés and Moctezuma, who believes the conquistador is the god Quetzalcoatl:

Moctezuma: Come and rest; take possession of your royal estate: give repose to your body. Please enter your home, our dear Lords!

Cortés: Soothing, writhing snakes, flying feathered friends.

Malinche: He says, "Have confidence, Lord Moctezuma. Fear nothing."³⁵

In this scene, both Cortés and Moctezuma are shown to be inept at communicating with or understanding one another. While Cortés speaks foolishly, Moctezuma is unable to comprehend the true meaning of his words, and instead has to rely upon Malinche's translation, which often is clearly not what Cortés intended:

Cortés: A little poker? I pass. Me bluff? See, five aces, I mean four: check my sleeves.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Cypess, *La Malinche*, 135.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Malinche: He says, "Now that he is in your home, you both may speak freely. Have faith."³⁶

Malinche is not portrayed as a violated woman or a traitor, as she seems to be the only character who understands all elements of the situation and "can function in the two worlds—that of the Indians and that of the Spaniards."³⁷ Instead, Moctezuma's error—misreading omens and believing that Cortés is Quetzalcoatl—is shown by Berman to be the true betrayal of the Aztecs. By illustrating how Moctezuma and Cortés are equally unfit to rule, Berman suggests that patriarchal codes and systems of control can and should be subverted. However, although Berman's play takes aim at patriarchal structures, Berman's revision of events reasserts the white supremacist view that indigenous rulers were inherently weak and unable to resist Spanish conquest. By focusing on Moctezuma's belief that Cortés is the god Quetzalcoatl, Berman reinforces the racist narrative that the Aztec defeat was the result of their primitive and childlike nature. According to Cypess, the intent of Berman's "return to the past" and revision of Malinche is to lend modern Mexicans "the clarity and strength needed to demystify the myths that have locked in stone any real change for Mexican society."³⁸ Although Berman's intent was to critique patriarchal systems of knowledge and conquest, the messaging in *Aguila o Sol* presents racist ideology as yet another barrier to Mexican societal change.

In her 2006 novel *Malinche*, Mexican author Laura Esquivel takes a conciliatory approach similar to Berman's *Aguila o Sol*. Esquivel lends Malinche the humanity and agency which has been stripped away from her in the centuries since the Spanish conquest. By formulating her novel like an Aztec codex, Esquivel explores an alternative history in which Malinalli authors the official account of the destruction of Tenochtitlan and the birth of the first *mestizo*. Esquivel explains that those who wrote codices in Mexica society

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Cypess, "From Colonial Constructs," 503.

³⁸ Cypess, *La Malinche*, 136.

were highly respected and allotted special privileges;³⁹ as summarized by a lesson conveyed by Malinalli's grandmother— "Without images, there is no memory"⁴⁰—Esquivel's integration of the codex into the narrative of *Malinche* further lends Malinalli historical authority while posthumously gifting her with the agency to tell her own story. Further, Malinalli's authorship of her own codex is also depicted as a coping mechanism for memories of her enslavement by Aztecs:

It hurt to remember that they offered much more for quetzal feathers than they did for her. That part of her past bothered her so much that she decided to erase it in a single stroke. She made up her mind to paint inside her head a new codex, in which she would be the buyer and not an object for sale.⁴¹

As the author of a work of historical, fictional revision, Esquivel portrays herself as the author of a previously-unwritten codex, yet Esquivel also frames Malinche's thoughts and actions during the events of the Spanish conquest as a historical codex. Malinche's revision of her own painful past parallels Esquivel's revisionist approach to historical narratives in order to craft a woman's account of the Spanish conquest.

Esquivel portrays the mother of *mestizas* as intelligent and resourceful, yet also highlights her limitations as a woman in the time and place in which she lived. Conquered first by the Aztecs and then by the Spanish, Malinalli is a slave and seen as an "instrument of conquest"⁴² by male-dominated institutions. Yet although Cortés views Malinalli as a pawn in his quest for power, Esquivel makes Cortés' complete reliance on her linguistic skills clear. Malinalli's thoughts on her role as translator even upend predominant gendered notions of the Spanish conquest:

The mouth, as feminine principle, as empty space, as cavity,

³⁹ Laura Esquivel, *Malinche*, (New York, Washington Square Press, 2007), xi.

⁴⁰ Esquivel, 31.

⁴¹ Esquivel, 126.

⁴² Esquivel, 154.

was the best place for words to be engendered. And the tongue, as masculine principle, sharp, pointed, phallic, was the one to introduce the created word, that universe of information, into other minds in order to be fertilized.⁴³

It follows that Malinalli's role as *la lengua* to Cortés gifts her an active, masculine role as the arbiter of information and fertilizer of minds in the Aztec-Spanish encounter. This power dynamic completely revises Paz's characterization of the *chingón/chingada* relationship as well as Orozco's artistic rendition of a passive Malinche protected by a patriarchal Cortés. Malinalli, through her knowledge of speech, is imbued with phallic power, whereas Cortés is rendered passive, dependent, and "open" to her translation as a result.

Nevertheless, Esquivel does not excise the figure of La Chingada from her narrative completely. There are many moments in which Cortés attempts to dominate Malinalli, whether by physical, sexual, or verbal force. For instance, after the Spaniards have entered Tenochtitlan, Malinalli is raped by Cortés, who is described as having "ripped her apart,"⁴⁴ evoking the verb *chingar* which Paz discussed in "The Sons of La Malinche". However, unlike Paz's examination of La Chingada, Esquivel then focuses on Malinalli's self-reflexivity, stating: "She knew she did not deserve to be treated thus. Never before had she felt so humiliated."⁴⁵ Esquivel's focus on Malinalli's trauma poses a question which had previously gone unasked—how did it *feel* to be Malinche? In *Malinche*, Esquivel constructs a complex and subjective woman from the ashes of La Chingada.

In their examinations of Malinche, post-revolutionary Mexican writers and nationalists treated women as an enigma and Mexico as a country without a national identity. In "The Sons of La Malinche," Octavio Paz, on the topic of Woman, asks: "What does she think? Or does she think? Does she truly have feelings? Is she the

⁴³ Esquivel, 65-66.

⁴⁴ Esquivel, 123.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

same as we are?"⁴⁶ It is these male-centric narratives of harmful binaries which have established *mestizos* as bastard offspring and *mestizas* as violated, treacherous mother figures. Contemporary Chicana authors, in an effort to reclaim their own identities and create a new *mestiza* future, have had to redefine La Malinche in order to reimagine a positive origin story, both for the Mexican cultural imagination and their identities as women between cultures. In the same way which Chicano men have reclaimed *machismo*, these female writers have adopted *malinchismo* as a way to navigate and define their own hybridity.

⁴⁶ Paz, 66.

Race and Gender Politics in the Panama Canal Zone

Megan Watkins



The longstanding slogan of the Panama Canal, “The Land Divided, The World United”, evokes an image of conquest over nature through a spirit of heroism and of brotherhood. At the time of its construction, the canal became a new symbol of American technological and economic might. The sheer task of engineering its construction, the management of a multi-national labor force, and the eradication of deadly yellow fever secured its place among modern marvels. U.S. bureaucrats and French engineer Philippe-Jean Bunau-Varilla ushered forward the 1903 Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty which solidified Panama’s separation from Columbia, thus promising hope for a sovereign, democratic republic in the Americas and with it the expansion of global commerce and greater influence of the United States in Latin America. The treaty granted the U.S. control over the construction of the canal and over the five miles extending from either side of the canal, bisecting the newly formed Panama along its narrow waist.

The construction and subsequent protection of this valuable asset thus provided inroads for the United States to establish a hegemonic, paternalistic presence in Latin America. This foray into American-style imperialism required intensively strict control to maintain order and project an ideal image constructed by U.S. officials. Colonel George Washington Goethels and Dr. William Gorgas largely guided the early management efforts of the canal. Their joint tradition of rigid organization, control, and sanitation characterized policies and culture of the Canal Zone for decades. The governance of gender roles and the deployment of white masculinity lay at the heart of U.S. policy in Panama and justified its political, economic, and militaristic control. This study explores U.S. imperialism in Panama dictated at a national level and reinforced among local institutions and agents including U.S. military and civilian personnel, West Indian laborers, and Panamanians in the borderland.

Among the early challenges of constructing the Canal, the

eradication of yellow fever required immediate attention. The lethal disease wiped out throngs of laborers in earlier construction efforts and framed Panama, and the wider tropics as dangerous and foreboding. Panama figured prominently in U.S. notions of male conquest over a forbidding tropical adversary. U.S. Army physician William Gorgas introduced mosquito control early in the construction period, effectively making the tropics safe for white people. Overseeing sanitation of the Zone and “drawing from positivist and eugenic ideas of the time, William Gorgas portrayed the entire course of human history in relationship to climate and disease.”¹ The U.S. military authorities and governing Isthmian Canal Commission sought to manufacture the zone defined by its order, efficiency, and cleanliness. In addition to the narrow Zone, the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty made the U.S. responsible for sanitation in the Republic border towns of Colón and Panama City, including the regulation of brothels. Ideas of controlling mosquito-borne diseases such as yellow fever and malaria extended into the policies to control sexually transmitted disease. For U.S. officials, “controlling sexual transmitted disease became especially important in Panama where the U.S. empire and the ‘white race’ at large faced the debilitating effects of tropical degeneration not only due to the climate but also through interracial sex.”² Prostitution and vice became a fundamental piece of the relationship between the Zone and the Republic.

The scandal surrounding the French importation of Martinique women for the purpose of sex work during the French period of construction cast a shadow on the governance of the Isthmian Canal Commission (ICC) and the U.S. This threatened the ideal image sought by U.S. officials, thus “avoiding scandal became an unwritten rule for the ICC, especially with the attention of the world’s press focused on the canal.”³ Under the administration of

¹ Jeffrey W. Parker, “Sexual Angst of Empire: Race, Manliness, and Prostitution on the Panama Canal, 1914-1921.” ILASSA conference paper, February 2008, 4.

² *Ibid.*, 3

³ Olive Senior, *Dying to better themselves : West Indians and the building of the Panama Canal* (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2014), 251.

Theodore Roosevelt, the U.S. Senate investigated over one hundred and fifty West Indian women in the Zone, receiving affidavits detailing their employment activities, their marital status, and their moral behaviors.⁴ The U.S. military blamed Afro-Caribbean women in Panama for infecting soldiers who would then contaminate white women and render American servicemen incapable of fighting. In a letter to Panamanian President Belisario Porras, U.S. physician Arthur McCormack “charged that the British West Indian women acted as ‘parasites on the body politic...busily engaged in destroying and degrading the young manhood of your Republic and civilian population of the Canal Zone.’ ”⁵ Within the Zone, nearly all vice activities remained non-existent, or at least very well-hidden. The sterile nature of the Zone pushed vice into Republic cities establishing Panama as a sexual frontier, outside of the tight control of the Zone government and moral watch of other Zonians and military commanding officers.

A long-held belief of American GIs in Panama was that “anything local in a skirt was a whore.”⁶ Both Canal Zone and Panamanian officials considered a regulated sex industry as an important component to maintaining servicemen morale and to limiting the spread of sexually transmitted disease. Hundreds of soldiers, sailors, and marines poured into border cities while on furlough creating what Panamanians treated as foreign invasions. In a 1945 report, the U.S. military established that its men spent \$6,010,000 on prostitution and vice in Panama that year.⁷ The prosecution of illegal sex industry activities (as opposed to government-regulated and taxed prostitution) signaled a significant discrepancy between the female sex worker and the white male client. Only the prostitute would receive sentencing of incarceration or fine; rarely did the “john” receive any official punishment. During the

⁴ *Ibid.*, 252

⁵ Parker, “Sexual Angst of Empire,” 6.

⁶ Michael E. Donoghue, *Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone* (Durham: Duke University Press. 2014), 140.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

Third-Locks project, the sex industry grew exponentially with women pouring in from interior cities, other Latin countries, and the West Indies to participate in the booming border economy. During and after World War II, the U.S. military maintained a list of establishments and entire towns off-limits to servicemen due to their active brothel sites.

In an effort to limit GI participation in the local sex industry, the U.S. military employed a two-pronged prostitution strategy. First, they made efforts to deport women, specifically Afro-Caribbean immigrants, suspected of prostitution. This strategy did not produce the desired results, in part due to the transient nature of the migrant sex worker who often chose to travel throughout Central America or return home. Additionally, the deportation plan remained largely unsupported by the Panamanian government who saw West Indian prostitutes as a “convenient sexual buffer between U.S. soldiers and ‘decent Panamanian women.’”⁸ The second piece of the military strategy involved an educational campaign on the perils of red-light districts in Panamanian border cities. The campaign promoted notions of masculine sexuality and patriotic service as a deterrent to vice activities. As early as World War I, the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) campaign utilized “pamphlets, posters, motion pictures, and guest speakers [all of which] warned of the dangers of prostitution while appealing to a sense of family values and a patriotic manliness.”⁹

The centrality of North American mothers, wives, and daughters to these campaign images evoked sentiments of shame and honor, making the servicemen duty-bound to protect their virtue and health. Gender-laden materials reinforced the Victorian views of feminine respectability and their vulnerability to shame while promoting U.S. masculinity. Additionally, the CTCA campaign framed Latin and West Indian prostitutes in military terms as an

⁸ Jeffrey W. Parker, “Sex at a Crossroads: The Gender Politics of Racial Uplift and Afro-Caribbean Activism in Panama, 1918–32,” *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*. Vol. 4, No. 2. (Fall 2016): 196-221.

⁹ Parker, “Sexual Angst of Empire,” 8.

“enemy” which threatened U.S. security. The American Social Hygiene Association published *Keeping Fit to Fight* which the War Department distributed to U.S. servicemen as a handbook on venereal disease. The handbook also portrayed images of masculine athletes and suggested that before big fights, boxers avoid sex. The logic followed in the handbook that soldiers would become manlier if they avoid loose women because “the testicles produce a substance, when it is absorbed back into the blood, gives the body grit and manly vigor.”¹⁰

The response by Panamanian officials and society highlights the influence of gender perceptions on U.S. and Panamanian relations. While the U.S. military positioned white, North American women as the potential victims of Panamanian prostitutes, Panamanians sought to reframe this narrative. Panamanian Secretary of Treasury, Santiago de la Guardia delivered a 1919 speech intending to unite Panamanian laborers against the U.S. personnel in the Zone who he blamed for coming “into our territory in search of *bad women* to satisfy their sexual desires which they cannot do in the Canal Zone.”¹¹ His emphasis on the Republic’s control of the Panamanian sex industry highlights the nationalistic sentiments felt by Panamanians against other Latin and West Indian sex workers active in the border cities of Colón and Panama City. These sentiments connect notions of Latin masculinity and U.S. imperialism in that the American exploitation of Panamanian women violate the colonized man’s honor. In the borderland of the Canal Zone, the U.S. effectively inserted control through gender by infringing on the masculinity of Panamanian men.

Canal personnel, known as Zonians, habitually asserted their own masculinity while feminizing and infantilizing all others in the Zone. Zonians often referred to Panamanians as the “little guys” and white men of all ages referred to black men of all ages as “boy.” The border became a physical space for U.S. hegemonic masculinity to

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

apply sexual identities and norms to non-U.S. actors. U.S. personnel perpetuated the Zone's racial and social boundaries as "Canal Zone Police and MPs [Military Police] frequently arrested sexual 'transgressors' along the enclave's borders and categorized, classified, and ascribed behavior and identities to them that were often untrue, mistaken, or self-serving for the US border-control mission...thus Panamanian lovers became prostitutes; effeminate Columbian males, homosexuals, and Panamanian Carnival revelers, cross-dressers."¹² As the imperial power in the Zone, the U.S. determined the categories of morality and immorality and the sanitary and the unclean. thereby asserting their superiority.

The culture of exotic vice and the gendered perceptions of Isthmian sex workers became so engrained in U.S. mentality that reflections of these attitudes infiltrate into popular culture. Within Isthmian Canal Commission clubhouses and theaters, women "joined men in performing "coon songs" in the popular black-face minstrel shows of the day, replicating U.S. vaudevillian entertainment with all its racial prejudices."¹³ Similarly, American-born nightclub entertainer, Jade Rhodora performed as a sexualized half-women and half-ape, juxtaposing the white woman's vulnerability to the eroticism of the tropics. The World War II period witnessed a spike in popular culture references to the sexual dangers of the tropics. Several major motion picture productions, including *Panama Lady* (1939), *Panama Hattie* (1942), and *Panama Sal* (1957) expressed a common theme of a vulnerable white North American woman pulled from her respectable state and into the underbelly of the Panamanian red-light districts. In each of these cases, the hero of the film, generally a U.S. serviceman, rescues these "fallen angels and returns her to bourgeois respectability in the States."¹⁴ In addition to film and theater, erotized

¹² Donoghue, *Borderland on the Isthmus*, 137.

¹³ Paul W. Morgan Jr., "The Role of North American Women in U.S. Cultural Chauvinism in the Panama Canal Zone, 1904-1945," PhD dissertation (Florida State University, Tallahassee, 2000), 59.

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00013679/00001/5j>

¹⁴ Donoghue, *Borderland on the Isthmus*, 143.

postcards of exotic women contributed to the sexual conquest of Panama. Cynthia Enloe posits that these postcards captured “the imperial concepts of masculine adventure and the ‘exotic’ that were crucial to French [or in this case, U.S.] colonial domination.”¹⁵ These cases highlight the nature of cultural imperialism imparted on Panama by the U.S. and the governance of gender roles in the borderland.

Homosexuality in the Canal Zone presented a particularly challenging problem for U.S. officials. The Zone represented a showcase of U.S. authority; therefore, *sissified* or *unmanly* behaviors by U.S. troops in Panama undermined that image. Similarly, lesbian women disrupted the image of women as models of American virtue. Arrests involving military personnel generally occurred on base in the bachelor barracks. Commanding officers condemned these acts as “degenerate, unnatural, and most telling, *unsoldierly* behavior.”¹⁶ Though reports of homosexual acts between North American and Panamanian men do not show in the record often, advertisements of male *artistas* at Panamanian brothels suggest that these encounters occurred more than the record shows. Rape of a U.S. soldier by Panamanian male particularly troubled the U.S. military because “the idea that Panamanian men possessed the capacity to overpower and force themselves on U.S. soldiers apparently challenged their hegemonic masculinity as guardians of the borderland.”¹⁷ Zone military personnel charged with degenerate behavior generally faced immediate removal from their post within the enclave and returned stateside.

Race and nationalism deeply impacted the perceptions and reactions on both sides of the border. In response to the gendered landscape crafted by U.S. officials and civilians that positioned Panama as degenerate and immoral, the Panamanian government prompted a morality crusade. Particularly, this crackdown of vice in

¹⁵ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), 91.

¹⁶ Donoghue, *Borderland on the Isthmus*, 158.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

the border cities of the Republic spiked post-World War II as revulsion of wartime excesses- run- high. The Panamanian police routinely arrested “unlicensed and underage prostitutes, transvestites, streetwalkers, drug peddlers, and pornographers – all competitors to the government-sanctioned vice industries.”¹⁸ The influences of American chauvinism and racial stereotyping are pronounced especially within the sex industry. For example, Isthmian prostitutes habitually declined service to black American GIs under threat of rejection or decrease in price among their white and mestizo clientele. These sex workers adopted this practice from the U.S.-held myth of the oversexualized black male who, by his large size would diminish a woman’s ability to please her non-black patrons.

The case of Chilean *artista* Roxanna Hermosillo highlights not only the danger of adopting such practices, but also the manipulation of sex workers as symbols of national purity or immorality. The Isthmian prostitute Hermosillo was murdered by a black GI following multiple refusals, even after she submitted to his demands for service. Despite her Chilean nationality, Hermosillo embodied a national heroine for Panamanians. Churches held mass for her following her death and temporarily revered her as the “virgin-whore of Panama sacrificed on the altar of U.S. imperialism.”¹⁹ Hermosillo’s death at the hand of a black American soldier promoted a nationalist sentiment that Panamanians constructed of the *demon-gringo* with the U.S. soldier playing the “principal villain, the despoiler of Panamanian virtue.”²⁰ While prostitution and vice significantly shaped the borderland landscape, not all relationships in the Canal Zone suggested such an incredible imbalance of control over sexuality and gender roles.

Romantic relationships between U.S.- and non-U.S.-actors contributed to the power dynamics in the Canal Zone through the interactions of those immediately involved and the responses on

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 150-1.

either side of the border. Within the Zone, a relatively egalitarian environment existed between white North American personnel and their families. Civilian Zonian families highly discouraged relationships between their daughters and the lower-class enlisted men. This apparent disfavor likely prompted the enlisted servicemen to date and marry Panamanian women at a much higher rate than military officers or other Zonians. USO and NCO sponsored dances drew young Panamanian women into the enclave each weekend in the hopes of finding a boyfriend or husband among the enlisted GIs. These so-called “Gate Girls” generally came from lower- and middle-class Panamanian families and through their relationships with American servicemen, they undermined Panama’s racial and social hierarchy.

As late as the 1990s, marriages between U.S. servicemen and Panamanian women occurred at a rate of fifty per month.²¹ U.S. servicemen in the Zone and those who returned stateside with a Panamanian bride faced racial and social scrutiny from all sides. These “allegedly morally and racially ‘inferior’ Latinas became bona fide U.S. citizens”²² upending the national and racial hierarchy of the Zone. Within these mixed-race marriages, abuse ran rampant with frequent arrests reported of servicemen accused of violence against their Panamanian wives and children along with their multi-national maids, seamstresses, and cooks. Donoghue suggests that “the sense of racial, national, and gendered superiority that many U.S. military men felt towards Panamanians probably contributed to these behaviors.”²³ Abandonment of the Panamanian family by servicemen occurred commonly with often little to no recourse for the wife to receive financial support from a husband who may be deployed anywhere around the world. Children of these relationships experienced challenges of acceptance from both their Panamanian and American side. Zonians considered children of miscegenation as

²¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

²² *Ibid.*, 151-2.

²³ *Ibid.*, 153.

destined to a life of depravity, and these potential “mongrel” offspring symbolized the unnerving prospects of racial mixing in the tropics.²⁴ This attitude towards mixed relationships highlights how the U.S. dictated the social mores of the Zone.

Within Panama, mixed families tended to stay outside of the enclave or in particular neighborhoods within the Zone. These neighborhoods, such as Curundu, received pejorative names from other Zonians such as Squaw Hill, Skunk Hill, and Jungle Glen. Former Zonian Herbert Knapp recalls other Zonians saying “Oh, Curundu...where you can’t tell the wives from the maids.”²⁵ Among Zonians and other colonial powers, “sexual liaisons between colonial men and local women were usually winked at; affairs between colonial women and local men were deemed threats to imperial order.”²⁶ Second- and third-generation Zonian families who chose to live in the Republic inadvertently expanded the reach of U.S. influence in the region through the process of transculturation, as colonists and “natives” became more alike, however with greater authority given to the dominant power.

Equally, if not more important to the construction and maintenance of American masculinity in the Canal Zone, was the reliance on North American women to these efforts. If the American family played a central role in the American embrace of Cold War domesticity, the white American mother played a governing figure. Early in the construction period, young bachelor men comprised the vast majority of the workforce, however early social engineers saw the need for a softening effect on the Zone to build morale and to keep these young laborers away from the Isthmian prostitutes. To them, American civilization in the Canal Zone would be built in the home. The presence of American women and families in the zone contributed to the myth of American exceptionalism, which U.S. officials saw as a distinguishing factor from European-style

²⁴ Donoghue, *Borderland on the Isthmus*, 14.

²⁵ Herbert & Mary Knapp, *Red, White, and Blue Paradise: The American Canal Zone in Panama* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1984), 126.

²⁶ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, 99

imperialism; but it would show no less sinister in its drive to dominate the colonized. The ICC generally excluded Panamanian laborers from Canal work as they could pay West Indian laborers less and to avoid more complex gradations of race prevalent among Panamanians which disrupted the clear black-white lines established by Canal Zone authorities.

While control of social hierarchy between the white, West Indian, and Panamanian worlds generally focused on the work environment, the U.S. wives and matriarchs negotiated this in the more personal domestic sphere; “by recreating the private, domestic realm of the home in the towns of the zone, [thus] American women became central to the U.S. construction project.”²⁷ U.S. women viewed themselves as cultural missionaries who brokered civilization for the West Indians and Panamanians who depended on U.S. beneficence to progress. Such assumptions “were considered arrogant by those Panamanians who saw the ‘spirit of civilization’ and progress of the United States turned into ‘taunts, humiliations, derogatory and ridiculous epithets’ from those who value their superiority of material strength.”²⁸ Travel writing penned by the white wives of U.S. laborers who joined their husbands on the canal offer insight into the day-to-day interactions between white Americans and others in the Zone.

One such wife, Elizabeth Parker, records in *Panama Canal Bride* a conversation between her husband, Charlie, and one of his Indian day-laborers, Panga Singh. Singh states that “Mr. Parker is my God. He takes care of me...Boss, will you take care of my money, please? I’m afraid to leave it in my room. My countrymen steal.”²⁹ These recollections showcase the tendency of American wives to present their husbands as saviors of racially inferior Canal workers. Victorian dress and behavior helped curate the Zone’s image

²⁷ Julie Green, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 226.

²⁸ Morgan Jr., “The Role of North American Women,” 147-8.

²⁹ Elizabeth Kittredge Parker, *Panama Canal Bride: A Story of Construction Days* (New York: Exposition Press, 1955), 25-6.

according to ideals of feminine respectability as ladylike behavior was a mainstay of imperialist civilization. Like sanitation and Christianity, this version of feminine respectability was meant to convince both the colonizing and the colonized that foreign conquest was right and necessary.”³⁰

An interesting counter to this argument suggests that Panamanians, who like many other Latin Americans of the period, valued whiteness as a measure of superiority and “found an ally in North American women.”³¹ Morgan points to advertisements in the *Star and Herald* that “portrayed their subjects as Anglo-Saxon women in Victorian attire.” One reporter observed that Panamanian women were wearing a lot of powder on their faces, with the general rule that the darker the complexion, the more powder should be applied.”³²

In *Maid in Panama*, a 1938 collection of short stories, Sue Core presents these points of cultural interaction and persuasion through a series of anecdotes. While at times Cole seems to call out the strange nature of the relationship between a white mother and West Indian domestic servant, she presents a distinct image of American superiority that argues the uplifting benefits West Indian women experience through their association with U.S. matrons. Despite the numerous ethnicities represented in *Maid in Panama*, all non-U.S. characters illustrated in the book are shown in black-face, nodding to the racial lines drawn in the Canal Zone by white U.S. actors despite the reality of an extremely diverse work force. This highlights the sentiment held by U.S. canal workers that reduced all others simply to a global-native which to subjugate. This is particularly evident in the discriminatory gold and silver rolls that initially divided laborers along racial lines, but later evolved to distinguish U.S.- and non-U.S.-citizens to include Italian, French, and Greek laborers.

Feminist writer and professor, Dr. Cynthia Enloe, notes that

³⁰ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, 99-100.

³¹ Morgan Jr., “The Role of North American Women,” 77.

³² *Ibid.*

by working as “cooks and nannies for the wives of those foreign men...in simply trying to earn an income, they may have unintentionally bolstered white women’s sense of moral superiority by accepting their religious and social instruction.”³³ In addition to the daily interactions between U.S. and non-U.S. women in the Zone, women helped craft the American identity in the enclave through their purchasing behavior. For the most part, North American women remained in the enclave, rarely venturing out into the Republic to visit markets. As such, the mass importation of American goods significantly added to the feel of American presence on the Canal. The use of local products, Donoghue suggests, “may have connoted a lack of patriotism, a rejection of Zonian identity and pride.”³⁴ Within the Zone, American blue-collar families achieved a lifestyle in line with upper- and middle-class white families stateside. With the overall affordability of living in the Zone and the availability of cheap domestic workers, these white wives could enjoy their liberation from the domestic sphere.

Women in the Zone accepted their role and its centrality to maintaining the image of American civilization. Through Zone sponsored activities, many Canal Zone girls challenged these ideals by participating in masculine activities such as hiking, shooting, and riding, becoming a “cultural archetype of the borderland, along with the traditional cotillion coming out princess and society grand-dame.”³⁵ Further, the labor shortages caused by World War II granted many Zonian women access to jobs previously held by men, and a number of these professional women continued in the workforce following the end of the war. Older Zone matrons resented these working women who threatened the family by subverting lady-like behavior. Among the few avenues North American women could pursue socially in the Zone, clubs became a sphere of governance and a place to reaffirm white U.S. superiority.

³³ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, 91-2.

³⁴ Donoghue, *Borderland on the Isthmus*, 68.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

George Goethels, engineer and administrator of the Canal, established the Bureau of Clubs and Playgrounds with an early request for \$52,000 to build a club house. His response to the Congress Appropriations Committee was that “We need a good club house because we should give them some amusement and keep them out of Panama.”³⁶ Clubs in the Zone helped to inculcate U.S. values in Zone communities, an important objective as the concern of U.S. citizens “going native” remained on the minds of Zone administrators; so much so that they sent Zonians home every two years for vacation. Patriotic organizations like the YMCA, the Masons, the American Legion, and the VFW “boasted charters that limited membership to white U.S. males [which] further defined U.S. identity as white, masculine, and heroic.”³⁷ These clubs often held “Panamanian Nights” in the Zone to dress and dance like Panamanians. Donoghue argues that events such as these festivals and dances, in which the colonial authority comesling with Natives, are indicative of common imperial behavior in which “Zonians exhibited their superiority as anthropological observers and mimickers”³⁸ and have the privilege to do so. Even after a Zonian left the canal, they likely joined the Panama Canal Society of Florida – an association formed “to preserve American ideals and Canal Zone friendships.”³⁹

The façade of the civilizing benefits of U.S. presence in Panama is especially transparent in the Zonian relationship with the Native Kuna Indians of Panama. North Americans viewed the Kuna as “unspoiled, natural creatures, in contrast to the ‘corrupted’ mixed-race Panamanians.”⁴⁰ The Kuna, facing scrutiny by Latin Panamanians for holding the nation back from achieving modernity, saw in the U.S. a protector from the Panamanian nationalism and expansion into their territory. The Kuna remained the only ethnic

³⁶ Knapp & Knapp, *Red, White, and Blue Paradise*, 142.

³⁷ Donoghue, *Borderland on the Isthmus*, 65.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁹ Knapp & Knapp, *Red, White, and Blue Paradise*, 123.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

group in Panama to vote against the 1977 Carter-Torrijos treaty granting the canal back to the Republic of Panama.

Caught between U.S. imperialism and Panamanian nationalistic xenophobia, West Indian men and women faced some of the most severe behavior by both sides. From the early days of construction, the U.S. and ICC sought to keep racial lines clear in the Zone. While experiencing a severe housing shortage in the first two decades of U.S. construction, cohabitation without marriage was forbidden. Marriage did not occur commonly among West Indians in Panama due to cost and cultural norms. By making cohabitation illegal, the ICC achieved two objectives: to keep prime housing away from West Indian workers, which helped Americanize the Zone, and to combat the perceived loose morals of West Indian workers. In 1908 alone, there were one hundred and thirty-one arrests⁴¹ on the charge of lewd and lascivious behavior related to cohabitation among West Indians.

Beginning in the second decade of US construction, West Indian men joined Pan-African organizations such as Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) which "engaged in the cultural politics of racial uplift."⁴² These activists argued that Afro-Caribbean prostitutes hindered racial advancement but were put in the position of relying on sex work due to unfair wages for black laborers, perceiving the silver and gold wage system as emasculating to workingmen. As a counter to U.S. imperialist masculinity, Garveyite men articulated a "patriarchal vision of racial advancement" and embraced a new "spirit of manliness" [the New Negro] by adapting Victorian gender conventions of manhood.⁴³ In response to Afro-Caribbean men blaming them for holding back racial progress and U.S. efforts to deport them from the Zone, Afro-Caribbean women "actively engaged in gendered politics as they took to the streets, union halls, courtrooms, and newspapers to demand

⁴¹ Senior, *Dying to better themselves*, 249.

⁴² Parker, "Sex at a Crossroads," 196-221.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

new moral standards from men.”⁴⁴ Conflicts of race and gender in the Zone seep into national and organizational policy and in personal interactions among local individuals.

The U.S. recognized late in its governance of the Zone that friendlier relationships with the Panamanian government and populace would serve all. In 1962, General Theodore Bogart proposed a solution: Operation Friendship. This effort sought to mend the growing rift between Panama and the U.S. with a focus on learning from one another. Less than a year later, expanding nationalistic sentiments came to a head in the 1964 Flag Riots which saw Panamanian youth challenge U.S. control in the very heart of Canal life at Balboa High School. Along with Flag Riots, numerous other protests signaled a weakening of the United States’ hegemonic grip on the Republic of Panama and eventually led to the negotiation of the 1977 Carter-Torrijos Treaty.

For almost an entire century, the United States maintained complete control over the Canal Zone through carefully manufactured policies and a culture of superiority. Without the individual efforts of local actors to support the idea of white, American, masculine control, the façade of an exemplary American colony would have likely crumbled. The Canal Zone represents a unique example of American imperialism in Latin America, which turned virtually every venue of daily life into an opportunity for U.S. actors to perpetuate racial and social boundaries while effectively silencing the voices of Panamanians, West Indians, and the multitudes of others who contributed to the monumental human experience of the Panama Canal.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Conveniently Undisclosed: An Oral History on the Life of Angel Lara

Amanda Bello



Chapter 1: Early Life

“I’m deaf in one ear and half-deaf in another,” my grandfather said. “So, sit close and speak up, or else I won’t be able to hear you.” My grandfather—Angel Lara—insisted on doing the entire interview in English. But for some reason, he heard everything more clearly when I asked in Spanish. “Where do I begin?” he asked. I told him to start wherever he’d like, curious to see where he thought his story began. He decided to start from the very beginning—Cuba in 1939. He was born in Mariano that year, just south of Havana City, to family of eight brothers and sisters. He remembers moving around a bit in his youth—but he didn’t say why he left, where he went, or with whom he traveled. I expected to hear a bit about his childhood—his siblings and his schooling—but he summarized his entire childhood in one sentence. “I went to school until sixth grade and then I stopped. I never went to school anymore,” he told me. When I asked him why, he implied—and then outright stated—that it was his choice. He wanted to work. “I did a little bit of everything,” he said. I asked him to explain and he responded, “You know—everything.” He worked in a market for a year or so, before leaving to work in a *carnicería*—a butcher shop.

When he turned eighteen, he could start working “officially.” And for him, that meant working in a carpentry shop with his brother-in-law—who was the boss, but not the owner, of the small business. He started working in the carpentry shop at the end of 1957, and he continued working there until 1959.

Chapter 2: 1959

In 1959, when my grandfather was twenty years old, they closed the carpentry shop. “After Castro came, they just closed it,” he told me. I responded and asked, “They?” “Yeah,” he replied, “they closed my shop.”

Three months after the shop closed, someone knocked on his

door. It was an old friend—a coworker from the carpentry shop—coming to tell him that he could return to work. My grandfather was happy that the shop had re-opened, and he was excited to go back to work. He told his old co-worker that he'd return the next day, and that he'd bring his brother-in-law, too. But at that point his coworker interrupted, informing my grandfather that his brother-in-law could not return. The carpentry shop was under new management, so they only needed a few workers to return. My grandfather told him to go to hell—his words, not mine. He refused to go back if his brother-in-law couldn't come, too. His mother was confused and apparently questioned his decision not to return. They needed the money. But my grandfather told her that he refused to work at a place where his family was no longer welcome. "So, what did you do then?" I asked. "I started working with my brother-in-law, doing carpentry everywhere. We got tools. We got everything, and we went many places."

I wanted to ask why they hadn't started this business earlier, and I wondered what he did in the three months before his coworker came by. But I chose not to interrupt. He spoke for a few minutes about his carpentry shop—devoting more time to telling me about his business than he did summarizing his entire childhood. If someone needed a new cabinet or a door, he assured me, they would call him directly. He smiled, remembering his time working with his brother-in-law—still proud of the decision he made not to return to the old carpentry shop, where his brother-in-law wasn't welcome.

In 1959—the year of the Cuban Revolution—my grandmother was fifteen years old. I asked her what he remembered about that year; she shrugged. My grandmother said that things started to change gradually in 1959, but that she didn't feel the full weight of the revolutionary change until 1961, when her Catholic school closed. Her father was an engineer, and many of his coworkers left Cuba in 1959 and 1960, she told me. "That's when you all should have left, too," my grandfather interrupted. My grandmother said it was no one's fault that they didn't leave, even

though her dad still blames her mom to this day. “The truth is my dad didn’t really trust the people who said they could take him to Puerto Rico. That’s the truth,” she told me.

She remembered that random house searches started that year. My grandfather asked her if anyone in her house was conspiring against the government. My grandmother shook her head no. “They didn’t just search *our* house,” she responded, “They searched *everyone’s*. Looking for what? I don’t know.” She also remembered that just a few days after the revolution, those who had once proudly supported Batista were chanting “Fidel! Fidel!” in the streets. “Those are people who don’t stand for anything,” she told me.

She hesitated to say too much about this year at first, but she did admit that her father helped hide a few students from the University of Havana in the basement of a church. They were Batista supporters, she told me, who left Cuba shortly after the revolution. “My father probably saved their lives,” she said, “And luckily nobody found out. The government would have killed my father, I think.”

Her front-door neighbors were Batista supporters. And she remembers that after the revolution, they lit a fire and started to burn anything that could potentially incriminate them. They burned hundreds of photographs and documents, before leaving the country soon afterwards.

A member of Batista’s police force lived in her neighborhood, too. “Before the revolution, he intimidated us all. He would announce when he was going to sleep, so that everyone would turn off their radios and send their children inside.” But after the revolution, those same neighbors would help hide him and eventually helped him escape to the United States. “Batista just left him there. Batista really screwed a lot of people, that man. It was a surprise when he left, to all of us, even his own people,” my grandmother said.

My grandfather responded to this story and expressed that it was right for her neighborhood to help the Batista police officer escape. He and my grandmother talked for a few minutes about how

not everyone who worked for the government—Batista's or Castro's—was necessarily evil. "Castro was a motherfucker," my grandfather said. "And most of the people that worked for him were too. Some were assassins, murderers. But not all of them," he said. My grandmother nodded and agreed.

"Fidel Castro was supposed to be the savior of Cuba," my grandfather said, "And look what happened. The whole country drowned." My grandmother responded and said that he helped some people; my grandfather ignored her comments. "The rich people helped him, and then the first thing he did was take away all their business in Cuba, and he took over the American business on the island" he said sharply.

My grandfather described the political turbulence and violence on the island fiercely. Raul Castro, Fidel Castro's brother, killed many people in the early years of the revolution, my grandfather said. He remembers witnessing shootings in the streets, and hearing about hundreds more. He claims that people complained about this to Fidel Castro—apparently the public shootings were a bad look for the government. "So, Raul just start hanging people instead," my grandfather responded. "That was his solution. It was cleaner" My grandmother responded and said many of these people were likely killed because they were counterrevolutionaries. My grandfather stood up at this point and screamed, "But there was no proof! No trial, Maria. Nothing!"

My grandparents said that things changed gradually from 1959 until 1961. My grandmother said three things really changed for her: school, food, and medicine. Her Catholic school closed in the early 1960s because the priests and nuns fled the country. They wanted her to come, too apparently; she never mentioned why she decided to say. "And in 1961, you could no longer buy what you wanted to buy. You had to buy what the government wanted you to buy," she said. The government determined how much food a family needed to survive for a month—based on the number of family members living in the home—and would distribute food accordingly.

My grandparents both agreed that their rice and pasta often ran out in a few days.

My grandfather said he was paid in Cuban currency, but that he was required to pay for his food with American dollars. This made no sense to him—he didn’t understand why he was being paid with useless currency. “They’re motherfuckers is what they are,” he scoffed. They both remembered that going to the doctor’s office was a complete gamble. “Sometimes they would have supplies and sometimes they wouldn’t,” my grandmother recalled.

My two grandparents argued for a bit on how things ended up this way. My grandmother insisted that in the end, it was all Batista’s fault. She believes his decisions welcomed the revolution, and she repeated that he abandoned his own country. “Everything has a consequence,” she said, “and things don’t just happen for no reason.” My grandfather shied away from any argument that shifted the blame away from Fidel Castro himself. “Castro came to fix the world, to be some sort of savior,” my grandfather fumed. “And he left the world worse than it was before, a million times worse.” My grandmother couldn’t disagree. She nodded and said, “Well everyone knows that.”

Chapter 3: Isla de Pinos

In 1961, a few of my grandfather’s friends—and his brother—were sent to prison. Word of their arrest had not yet traveled, and so my grandfather decided to help spread the news. “I wanted to tell people that some of our friends were already in prison,” he told me. He did not tell me why he felt inclined to spread this news himself, or who exactly he told.

One afternoon, he drove to his friend’s house to deliver the news of the arrests. But when he stepped inside the house, he was greeted—not by his friend—but by uniformed police officers. “They caught us,” he told me. The police officers questioned him—asking him why he was there and where he had been. “I don’t know,” he told them. He repeated this several times. “I don’t know. I don’t

know. I don't know." The police officers told him that his brother had been charged with conspiracy against the government. He told them that he was unaware of his brother's plans, and they told him that it was his responsibility to be aware. "But anyways, they kept me in prison for three years," he said. The first time we spoke, this was all he told me about, his time in prison—nothing more, nothing less.

When we spoke another time, I asked him about his time in prison. And I learned about the trial that determined his sentence. He did not describe his trial the first—or even the second time—we spoke about his prison sentence.

The trial took place in Pinar del Río—a city about 100 miles away from his home in Havana. No one from his family came—they weren't allowed to come, he told me. Eleven people were on trial with him. He had a lawyer but said that lawyer was no good. "The lawyer was appointed to me by the government, and I couldn't get anyone else to defend me. How are you going to win a case against the government if you're lawyer is from that same government?" he argued. Some of the defendants were eventually charged with conspiracy against the government and were sentenced to death by firing squad. He mumbled the names of a few—Cueto, Manuel, and two others. He told me he was charged with conspiracy as well, but said the government had no proof—he repeated this many times. This is why he wasn't condemned to death. "They got no proof, but they said they were sure," he told me. "How can you say that you know if you have no proof?" he asked, obviously not needing an answer.

He wasn't too emotional, flustered, or nervous when telling me the story of his trial—at least not as far as I could tell. He was calm, as though he was recalling the story of what happened to somebody else—somebody that he used to know. But I can't claim to know why he spoke so casually of this time, though I'll always wonder.

During the three months that followed the trial, he stayed at a local jail in Pinar del Río, until he was transferred out. He served the

rest of sentence at Presedio Modelo—a prison located on Isla de Pinos, an island off the coast of Cuba. This was the same prison that Fidel Castro was sentenced to years prior, in 1953. A lot of the other inmates were political prisoners, like my grandfather. There were about 1,400 prisoners there when he arrived. He lived on the fifth floor of the circular prison, and a few Americans lived on his same floor. He remembers the names of two—Peter Laughton and Alfred Jixon. They lived in cell 42, and he lived in cell 43.

One night during his stay, at around eleven, an American man asked him why the food hadn't been served yet. My grandfather, who didn't speak English, asked him to repeat himself several times, but ultimately could not understand what he was being asked. Peter witnessed their conversation and translated for my grandfather. "I was so ashamed," my grandfather told me. "The very next day, I wrote to my mom and asked her to please send me books to help me learn English." He asked Alfred to help him a little bit each day. "I don't remember how I asked him, or how he understood what I was asking. But he did, and I learned."

Chapter 4: Mariel Boatlift

My grandfather's prison sentence ended in 1964, and he got married the following year to my grandmother, Maria Lara. But he didn't tell me about his marriage the first time we spoke. In fact, he didn't tell me about anything that happened between 1964 and 1980, even though several of his family members left for the United States during this time—including his mother and some of his brothers. He also had four children during this period, but he did not mention their births or childhood in the initial telling of his story.

When my grandmother joined our conversation, though, she filled in some of the missing details. "We met in 1964 and got married in 1965," she told me. "That was fast, right?" she laughed. And I laughed too. A lot of people told me not to even look at him, my grandmother told me. "But, I looked anyways," my grandmother laughed. Said my grandfather was a womanizer, and my grandfather

nodded laughing. “That’s what your youth is for, am I wrong?” he responded.

After telling me of his release from prison in 1964, he immediately jumped to the story of his decision to leave Cuba in 1980. Had I not asked for specific dates, I would have thought that he was released from prison one afternoon and left the island the next.

In April of 1980, my grandfather heard that former prisoners would be allowed to leave Cuba for the United States. He heard this news from his nephews—Chuchi and Juan Carlos—but tells the story as though he was personally informed by Fidel Castro. “Castro said ‘if you want to leave, go,’” he told me. He didn’t speak of his decision to leave in detail. He did not tell me whether he thought about it, or if he weighed the advantages and disadvantages of leaving his home country. And I didn’t dare ask why the decision seemed so obvious to him; as a Cuban woman myself, I felt like I should just know.

He remembers going to an immigration office to fill out paperwork in May of 1980. At the office, they told him that the government would provide a large ship for the journey and that this boat would carry one hundred ex-prisoners and their families to the United States. He said that some people who left before him—people who could not afford to pay the government—had to pay with their labor. He remembered that some of his friends were sent to work in fields—cutting sugar cane—because they expressed a desire to leave the island.

The next day at 2 o’clock in the morning, police officers showed up to his home and placed a sheet on his door. “At that time,” he said, “if you wanted to leave Cuba, you had to give the government everything you had. Your house. Your car. Your everything.” The sheet on the door, I think, was meant to represent this reality—that the home no longer belonged to a private citizen, but to the government. It also likely served as a symbol—to neighbors and anyone who passed by—that the people inside were

leaving country. But he didn't explain to me what the sheet meant, and I don't think it mattered much to him.

That same morning, my grandfather's brother drove him, his wife, and his four children to another office—the Cuban Government Security Office, he remembers. They were eventually transported to a port—Mariel—where many boats from the United States were docked. The boat my grandfather and his family were assigned held, as promised, one hundred ex-prisoners and their families. My grandfather does know who the boat belonged to, who drove the ship, or why they decided to transport one-hundred ex-prisoners to Miami. But he does remember the name of the ship—the “Lady Mary.” Seated on top of the boat, my grandfather told me, were about ten individuals who were mentally ill. “They didn't know where they were going. They had no family in Cuba and no family in the United States. They were the undesirables,” he said. My grandmother called them “*los locos*”—the crazies. But she made sure to assure me that they weren't a bother to anyone. And my grandfather agreed.

I asked my grandmother what she remembered about the boat-trip to Key West. “For the love of God,” she replied. “How about almost drowning?” she giggled. She said the trip on the boat lasted about 18 hours, and she remembers that almost everyone was with their family, with the exception of a few old people. “Everyone was vomiting,” she said. “And we didn't have any of our stuff—just the clothes we were wearing.”

My grandma believes that all the vomiting caused the sharks to lurk near their boat. I couldn't believe that she saw sharks by the ship, but she assured me. My grandfather chimed in and said, “It was a big boat though. Nothing was going to happen to us.” My grandmother shrugged and agreed. I like to imagine he reassured her of their safety in that same way thirty-eight years ago.

Chapter 5: Miami

When my grandfather initially spoke of his arrival in the

United States, he did not mention anything about his immediate experience. I learned, later on, that he and his family first arrived in Key West, where they were initially processed. My grandfather's mother—Digna Lara—picked him up with his family, and together they drove to the Orange Bowl. They remained there, in a processing camp, for about three days. At the Orange Bowl, everyone was told to change their clothes. My grandparents and their children had to remove the clothes they were wearing and put on the used clothing provided to them. "I don't know why they made us do this," my grandmother said. "Maybe they thought we had diseases, I don't know." My grandfather interrupted her, "No, no they didn't. Our clothes were dirty from travelling. They wanted us to be clean."

My grandfather skipped these details altogether when first telling the story. The first time we spoke of his arrival in the United States, he jumped straight to his first job in Miami. He worked at a carpentry shop, of course.

My grandfather found his first job through his brother—who had left Cuba a few years earlier. His brother introduced him to the owner of the carpentry shop, and the owner told my grandfather that he could start work the very next day. "I told him to please give me three or four days, though, so I could get my driver's license. That way when I start working, I wouldn't have to take off any days of work to get my license," my grandfather told me.

I asked him where he first lived upon arrival. "A trailer," he said laughing. He lived with his family in that trailer for about three months, until he was able to rent an apartment. One day, after working for a few weeks, he remembers that his sister stopped by his house. She told him that she was on her way to get food stamps, and she asked if he'd like to join. "I don't need anything from the government," he said loudly. "I was already working. Why would I depend on the government to feed my family?" He smirked and said, "A lot of those people still use food stamps now. Not me though." My grandma nodded and agreed.

He purchased his first car a few weeks after he arrived in

Miami, he told me smiling. His neighbor—who he described in surprisingly vivid detail—had purchased a used car that year. He bought a wrecked car for three-hundred dollars, purchased some car parts at a local junkyard, and picked up some paint. “Between Maria and me, we completely fixed the car,” he said proudly. His face lit up when he described his first car—more so than it did when he talked about his last day of prison or his arrival in Miami.

My grandmother—who was formerly a teacher in Cuba—found work in the kitchen of Shenandoah Elementary School, where she made food, served students meals, and sometimes worked at the register. She remained working there until her retirement in 2013. “In Cuba, she worked in three different schools—one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the night,” my grandpa boasted. My grandmother laughed and nodded. “And on Saturdays,” she added, “I taught the teachers how to teach math.” She laughed and said, “Yeah, look at all that I used to do there.” I didn’t laugh—it hurt. And I wondered if underneath the laughter she hurt, too.

She told me that she was treated like a delinquent when she arrived. “But we weren’t delinquents,” she exclaimed. “And a lot of other people who came weren’t delinquents, either. Your grandfather was a political prisoner, not just any kind of prisoner. But everyone got treated the same,” she told me. “It’s the same story you hear now about any immigrant.” She talked for a few minutes about the reputation of the *Marielitos*—the nickname given to the Cubans who came during the 1980 Mariel Boatlift.

Cubans were the worst of all, she said. Cuban exiles from years prior watched her closely and made her life miserable at work. My mom, who was thirteen when they first arrived, tried to learn English as quickly as possible. And her sister, my aunt, refused to tell anyone that she was a Marielito. To this day, their husbands don’t even know that they arrived during the Mariel Boatlift. And I didn’t know until this interview. My mother claims she didn’t hide it from anyone; she says she left it conveniently undisclosed. “It was like a stigma,” my grandmother said. “When people knew you were a

Marielito, it was like they placed a mark on you that everyone could see, and no one could remove. You could hide it, yeah, but you couldn't remove it."

My grandmother remembers crying at work one day. She missed home. She missed her mother. She missed belonging—or at least being welcomed. A custodian approached her that day, already knowing why she was in tears. He told her, "This has to end now. No more tears." My grandmother told him that she couldn't stop. She expected to find a home within the already-established exile community in Miami, but instead she found women at work who consistently reminder her that they were the "real Cubans," who left in 1960 by choice, not by expulsion. "The next time they tell you they left in the 1960s," the custodian told my grandmother, "ask them if they're the prostitutes Castro sent over in the 60s." My grandmother says she laughed, never imaging that she'd actually say that to one of the teachers. But she ended up taking his advice later that week. And with a smirk on her face, she reminded a teacher—who was boasting about having left Cuba in the 60s—that many prostitutes were expelled from Cuba during that time. "I wasn't a prostitute!" the teacher scoffed back. "And I'm not a delinquent," my grandmother responded.

My grandfather interrupted and said that he never experienced any form of discrimination. My grandmother rolled her eyes and listed the many people who disagreed with him. "Let me explain," my grandfather said. "When I arrived in Key West, I had to speak with the CIA and the FBI." My grandfather was apparently offered a translator, but he refused to rely on one. "I said no thank you," he told us, "I can do it by myself." This attitude, my grandfather argues, is why he earned the respect of everyone he met after leaving the island. "I did things for myself, by myself," he boasted.

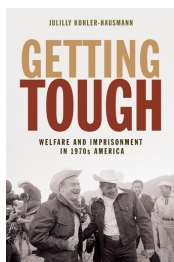
My grandfather claims that he brought this attitude with him to the workplace. He wasn't afraid to speak up; in fact, it seems as though he felt that he needed to, in order to earn the respect of his

coworkers and peers. “I didn’t care if someone had been working there for four, five years,” he told me, “If they were doing something wrong, I told them.” He found pride in his work—in his ability to contribute. “What took them one hour took me five minutes,” my grandfather scoffed. My grandfather recited five or six success stories from his job—stories about working faster than his counterparts, stories about being personally requested for jobs, and stories about standing up to coworkers who disagreed with him.

He worked in that carpentry shop for about ten years, he recalls. He left to work at Bertram Yachts—a company that built performance and sportfishing boats. When my grandmother heard us talking about his previous jobs, she stepped out of her room and brought a small notebook. She had the names and addresses of all his previous places of employment written down inside the book. The two flipped through the book together—there were 7 or so jobs listed. My grandma also had a list of their previous homes, written neatly besides the corresponding dates.

My grandfather stood up and walked towards the fridge. “I’m going to make coffee,” he told me. I told him that I’d happily take a Cuban coffee. “Really?” he asked. “Okay. But I’m drinking American coffee instead.”

Graduate Student Book Reviews



Julilly Kohler-Hausmann

Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017

Reviewed by Kaitlyn Muchnok

With the exception of Elizabeth Hinton's *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, historians have not sufficiently acknowledged connections between the rise of mass incarceration and welfare policy in late twentieth-century America. Julilly Kohler-Hausmann's *Getting Tough*, however, helps fill this void by exploring the similar ways policymakers approached issues of crime and poverty throughout the 1970s. Focusing on four case studies throughout three states, Kohler-Hausmann examines how public officials in New York, California, and Illinois transformed their states' welfare and penal systems through a series of "get tough" measures. She argues that as policymakers proposed increasingly more punitive solutions to urban crime and drug addiction, they also created much stricter requirements for welfare recipients, which primarily affected impoverished racial minorities in rapidly decaying urban areas. To accomplish this, state leaders engaged in a public discourse that portrayed drug sellers, addicts, and the poor as inherently flawed and outside the bounds of full American citizenship.

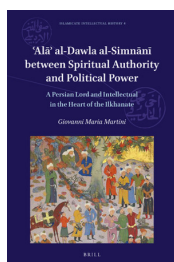
Getting Tough is divided into three thematic parts that focus on state-level responses to drug addiction, expanding welfare rolls, and urban crime respectively. In the first section, Kohler-Hausmann

discusses New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller's replacement of the state's failing rehabilitation programs with draconian, mandatory prison sentences for individuals facing drug-related convictions. The book's second part concentrates on both California and Illinois's campaigns to end supposedly rampant welfare fraud and scale back public assistance programs. Spear-headed by then-Governor Ronald Reagan, California's welfare reforms became a model for states across the nation as they "constricted eligibility standards, heightened bureaucratic scrutiny, instituted work requirements, and enlisted the penal system to handle fraud and child-support collections." (122) In the last section, Kohler-Haussman examines California's replacement of the indeterminate criminal sentence with lengthy prison terms that limited convicts' civil rights and officially transformed the function of incarceration into punishment, rather than rehabilitation. This transferred the power to set criminal sentences from the judicial branch to the legislative branch and further politicized the state's penal system.

Kohler-Hassman examines public speeches, newspaper reports, and correspondence between Americans and elected officials. She demonstrates how politicians employed racist stereotypes, describing poor single black mothers as "welfare queens" and urban drug pushers as dangerous young black men. Condemning the failure of the "liberal" policies of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty and Great Society programs, politicians in the 1970s approached welfare and criminal justice policies "with a contractual understanding of citizenship where the state was empowered to degrade the rights and benefits of people deemed unwilling or incapable of performing their civic obligations." (7) The "getting tough" approach portrayed drug users, the poor, and individuals convicted of crimes as burdens on society and socially distinct from employed, tax-paying Americans. Lawmakers and their constituents justified the loss of convicts' voting privileges and welfare recipients's privacy rights as an appropriate consequence for people who broke the law or could not independently support themselves. According to

Kohler-Haussman, then, state leaders transformed crime and poverty into either an individualized or cultural problem, which allowed for the further marginalization and stigmatization of poor people of color.

Collectively, Kohler-Haussman highlights how state-level “get tough” policies extended beyond criminal justice administration and helped shape national politics. While she acknowledges that New York, California, and Illinois are not representative of the entire nation’s management of crime and welfare, she also underscores the various ways such state-level approaches influenced other states as well as the federal-level presidential policies of the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. Most importantly, Kohler-Haussman’s inclusion of correspondence from a variety of individuals, including letters from prison inmates to suburban housewives alike, demonstrates the heightened concern Americans had for crime and welfare policy throughout the 1970s. Perhaps the only significant issue is the book’s organization, which separates drug, welfare, and criminal policy into three distinct sections. This tends to isolate the three topics from one another, which detracts from Kohler-Haussman’s central thesis that they were consistently interrelated. Nonetheless, *Getting Tough* is an important work that encourages historians to explore mass incarceration, not as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as part of a broader transformation in American society.



Giovanni Maria Martini

‘Alā’ al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power: A Persian Lord and Intellectual in the Heart of the Ilkhanate

Leiden: Brill, 2017.

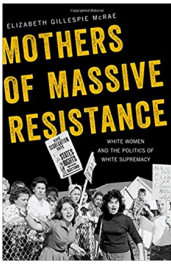
Reviewed by Ethan Williamson

Martini uses this work to expand the relatively meagre scholarship on ‘Alā’ al-Dawla al-Simnānī, one of the most prominent and influential Sufi intellectuals of medieval Iran. Simnānī (1261–1366) lived during the entirety of the Ilkhanate, the Mongol polity in Persia and the Near East. The tension, at least initially, of a majority Muslim population being ruled by a dynasty of foreign non-Muslims produced one of the most complex and controversial periods of Islamic history. Martini believes Simnānī’s life and works provide an indispensable look into the Ilkhanid world. Apart from Jamal Elias’s 1995 monograph on Simnānī’s, most other scholars have either overlooked the mystic or have addressed him in light of other topics. Nothing has been written since. Martini writes in dialogue with Elias and the other historians, correcting and expanding on their writings with recent research.

Despite the title, this book is chiefly about two of Simnānī’s theological treatises—the *al-Wārid al-šārid al-ṭārid šubhat al-mārid* (The Inspiration Refuting the Rebel’s Sophistry) and the *Zayn al-mu’taqad li-ẓayn al-mu’taqid* (The Beauty of the doctrine of the Adornment of the Believer)—not about the dynamics of spiritual authority and political power. Martini’s first chapter discusses Simnānī’s biography and

places him within the contexts of Sufism and Mongol Iran. He unveils the compelling narrative of Simnānī's journey from loyal retainer to the Khan to a combative and critical mystic. Martini then provides an in-depth comparison of the two principal texts with analysis of the philology, structure, style, and language of each. The *al-Wārid* is an Arabic refutation of Avicenna and the philosophical approach to knowledge. It also touches on other subjects such as the relationship of the soul to the body. Simnānī argued that people should not rely on reason alone because all knowledge is mediated to the intellect by something beyond the intellect, whether by experimentation (*tagriba*) or divine inspiration (*ilham*). Martini demonstrates that the *Zayn*, supposedly the Persian translation of the *al-Wārid*, is actually a very different document in content, style, and audience. He illustrates how Simnānī artfully used Arabic and Persian to convey different concepts to readers at home and abroad. The rest of the text contains a critical edition of each source, as well as an English translation of the *al-Wārid*.

Through a skillful use of linguistics and thorough research, Martini provides a fascinating volume that illuminates elements of the life and work of a poorly understood Sufi scholar under Mongol rule. It will undoubtedly become a valuable resource to specialists in Islamic and Middle Eastern history. Scholars of Medieval Europe may be interested to compare the tensions between scholasticism and mysticism in Islam with those in Christianity. The solid organization and rigorous scholarship of this book make up for writing that is unnecessarily dense. Hopefully Martini's informative contribution will spark further studies into Simnānī's works and their intellectual and spiritual legacy in Sufi Islam.



Elizabeth Gillespie McRae

Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Hartmann

Long after the legal structures of Jim Crow segregation were dismantled, de facto racial segregation and white supremacist rhetoric still plague American society. Historians have identified the existence of a “long segregationist movement” that arose to oppose the “long civil rights movement” well before massive resistance and that continued long after the end of Jim Crow. In *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*, Elizabeth Gillespie McRae illuminates the early development of white supremacist rhetoric and the adaptation of that rhetoric to the national conservative movement. *Mothers of Massive Resistance* contributes to the historiography of civil rights and the conservative movements by studying the grassroots organizing of southern segregationist women against perceived threats to the white supremacist social order.

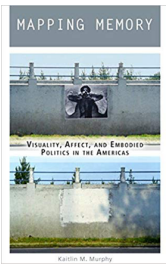
McRae argues that “White women were the mass in massive resistance” (4). Massive resistance is usually studied from the top down, privileging the roles of male elites, but McRae believes that women bore the responsibility for white supremacy's daily existence. She constructs her narrative around the lives of four politically active

women from Mississippi, South Carolina, and North Carolina: newspaper columnist Nell Battle Lewis, Black Belt activist Florence Sillers Ogden, conservative crusader Mary Dawson Cain, and "first Republican southern belle" Cornelia Dabney Tucker (6). These female segregationists worked in the areas of social welfare, education, politics, and culture to maintain white supremacy. McRae seeks to integrate segregationist women into prior work on grassroots conservative women outside the segregated South to show how segregationist thought influenced national conservatism.

The first half of the book examines the role of white women in constructing white supremacy in the interwar period. Social workers cataloged racial identities according to Virginia's new Racial Identity Act to eliminate the threat "passing" presented to white purity. Women like Mildred Lewis Rutherford used battles over school curriculum and textbooks to advance a white supremacist vision of history. Women weighed in on partisan politics and introduced a moral defense of white motherhood that would later inform the New Right. In this period, even liberal social reformers like Nell Battle Lewis reinforced white supremacy through cultural representations that placed white above black. The second half of the book chronicles how white women integrated their defense of segregation into the national conservative backlash against international communism and domestic liberalism. After Democratic party leaders embraced civil rights during and after World War II, segregationist women launched a campaign to rescue the party by challenging racially moderate politicians. They rhetorically linked civil rights with communism and forged ties to conservative anti-communists through schemes like the Bricker Amendment. Segregationist women advanced a maternalist vision that portrayed federal school desegregation actions as an intrusion into their families. After the defeat of massive resistance, they found new homes in the "color-blind" rhetoric of the New Right while preserving the ideal of white womanhood.

Like many histories that try to draw clear connections over long periods of time or across multiple geographies, McRae must

simplify and smooth over differences to establish her long national segregationist paradigm. As a result, the book's argument is uneven. She is more successful in arguing that southern segregationist women were part of the national conservative movement than she is in establishing that national conservatives were segregationists. In the concluding chapter on national opposition to racial busing, she makes a logical leap by contending that opposition to busing for any reason amounted to support for segregation and white supremacy. De facto segregation may not have been as natural or defensible as busing opponents claimed but simplifying their grievances to racism alone distorts our understanding rather than clarifying it. The book is also marred by frequent typographical errors that distract the reader. Despite these criticisms, McRae makes a valuable contribution by illuminating the work of white women to support and defend white supremacy in the South.



Kaitlyn M. Murphy

Mapping Memory: Visuality, Affect, and Embodied Politics in the Americas

New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

Reviewed by Lisa Krause

Throughout the twentieth century, violent dictatorships and the succeeding violation of human rights transformed the Latin American political landscape. Recently, scholars have become increasingly interested in how and through what means citizens remember times of state-sponsored terror. In *Mapping Memory: Visuality, Affect, and Embodied Politics in the Americas*, Kaitlin M. Murphy examines examples of civil society approaches bearing testimony to state repression, violence, and societal suffering. The works selected range from film and photography to memorial sites and smartphone applications.

Murphy's analysis demonstrates the commemorative character of visual art represented in material objects and spaces. She formulates the concept of memory mapping to represent the complexity of memory, arguing that the pieces connect the present and the past to a specific locality. The aesthetics of visual art link the past to the present, both in form of knowledge and memory. Often, this occurs to challenge widely accepted, or official, memory narratives that do not represent complete memories. The reconstruction of the violent past

maps the multifaceted memories into the visual and affective. In this sense, the visual works reflect “spaces where audiences visually and affectively come into contact with memory” (2018: 10). Memory expressed in various artistic forms, then, has a dual function as both a memory keeper and a manifestation. The case studies Murphy integrates show that the legacies and historical memories of the violent past are still present and controversial in their respective societies. Visual art, in other words, attempts to spark an emotional response among the audience to raise awareness and visibility.

Murphy integrates five case studies, which review one or more visual art works. Murphy introduces the relevance of her work with the photography series *Esclarecimiento* [Clarification] by Guatemalan photographer Daniel Hernández-Salazar. The series addresses the persistent weight of the genocide during the Guatemalan Civil War (1960 – 1996), which targeted primarily rural Mayans. Despite the grave human rights abuses that occurred here, there is no official commemoration of the lives lost and the crimes committed over the course of the conflict. Hernández-Salazar attempts to recall the past through his images using exhumed victims’ bones. One of his best-known photos is that of an angel of mestizo origin (of European and indigenous ancestry), whose wings are the shoulder blades of an unidentified civil war victim.

In the first chapter, Murphy examines the 2011 documentary *The Tiniest Place* by Salvadoran filmmaker Tatiana Huezo. The film takes the audience to the small village of Cinquera in El Salvador that, far from public attention, becomes a memory site illustrating the difficult task of reckoning the past with daily life post-conflict. Like other memory sites or maps, the film unites place and people with memory of past events.

The second chapter explores two Patricio Guzmán-directed documentaries about Chile. The 1997 film *Chile, Obstinate Memory* shows Guzmán, an exiled Chilean of the Pinochet regime (1973 – 1990), returning to the country and screening his renowned 1970s documentary *Battle of Chile* to a group of young people unfamiliar

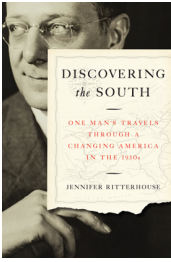
with the history of the coup. The other movie, *Nostalgia for the Light*, released in 2010, addresses the lasting imprint of the dictatorship on Chilean society's ongoing memory struggles.

In the third chapter, Murphy examines memory struggles in Argentina through different mediums. In the first section, for example, Murphy assesses the visual performance *Tucumán Kills Me, Action #2* by Julio Pantoja, about the human rights abuses of the last Argentine military dictatorship (1976 – 1983) and the trials against perpetrators in Tucumán province, presenting images and information about victims. Similar to Hernández-Salazar, Pantoja also employs pictures from exhumations. The chapter continues with the memorial site ESMA and nearby Memory Park, both commemorating the victims of state terror.

In the last chapter, Murphy turns to the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. She focuses on the film, *Who is Dayani Cristal?*, described as a real-life drama that traces the migrant route from Central America through the desert to cross the border into the U.S. She further briefly presents the Border Memorial: Frontera de los Muerto and the Transborder Immigrant Tool. The first is an application for smart devices that individuals at the border, yet no migrants, can use to locate positions where dead migrants have been found. The latter is also a phone application that points migrants to water supplies via GPS while supporting them with poetry. Interestingly, the art project faced allegations of political activism.

Notwithstanding Murphy's thoughtful balance of acclaimed and less well-known visual art works throughout the Americas, her fascinating examination makes no reference to two crucial studies on memory in Chile and the dangerous migrant trail in the U.S.-Mexican borderland. Readers familiar with the memory struggles about Pinochet's dictatorship will notice the absence of Steve Stern's trilogy *The Memory Box of Chile*. In the monographs published between 2004 and 2010, Stern challenges the simplistic notion that oblivion about the human rights violations of the regime has overtaken Chilean society. Yet Murphy limits her examination to this view. Further, her

analysis of *Who is Dayani Cristal?* lacks an in-text engagement with the work of Jason de León, despite a bibliographic reference. A direct quotation in the last chapter would have pointed out that the striking parallels between the fictional account and the findings of de León's work are more than coincidence, but common occurrence in the borderlands.



Jennifer Ritterhouse

Discovering the South: One Man's Travels Through a Changing America in the 1930s

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

Reviewed by David Meltsner

Raleigh newspaper editor Jonathan Daniels toured the South in May and June 1937 seeking to alter romanticized perceptions of the region and characterizations of Dixie as backwards. Daniels wrote about his journey in *A Southerner Discovers the South*, a popular and critically-acclaimed book. Building on the scholarship of Glenda Gilmore, Jason Morgan Ward, and Jacquelin Dowd Hall, historian Jennifer Ritterhouse, in her new book, analyzes Daniels's musings to advance several important arguments about the New Deal era.

In 1937, two competing impulses—a long civil rights movement (LCRM) and a long segregationist movement (LSM)—struggled over African American citizenship rights. The LCRM, according to Ritterhouse, began “haltingly” because of effective reactionary opposition and the apathy of white liberals, like Daniels (11). The newspaperman’s trip, however, facilitated his transformation as a liberal and reflected a larger political movement in the South. Daniels’s and others—SCHW president Frank Porter Graham, civil rights activist Virginia Durr, and CIO organizer Lucy Randolph Mason—who encountered an “emerging black-left-labor-New Deal coalition,” Ritterhouse argues, facilitated an immense shift in racial

sensibilities (271).

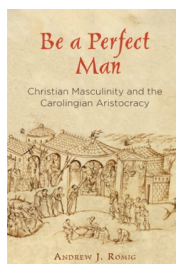
Ritterhouse references Daniels's unpublished daily journal entries, which reveal the editor's thoughts as he crisscrossed a region undergoing economic and political change. After a biographical chapter about Daniels and his prominent family, *Discovering the South* proceeds chronologically, with each succeeding chapter covering a stop on his southern trip. In early May, for instance, Daniels visited the Tennessee Valley Authority and spoke with Commissioner David Lilenthal. The young New Dealer advocated for regional planning but accepted racial discrimination. Daniels next spent time in Scottsboro, Alabama, where the Communist Party's defense of the Scottsboro Boys put civil rights on the national agenda. These early stops reflected both the racial ambivalence of New Dealers like Lilenthal and Daniels and the racial violence that characterized the LSM—two factors that stalled the LCRM.¹

Ritterhouse later examines the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) in northeast Arkansas, which coincides with Daniels's stop in Memphis. On one hand, STFU interracial activism succeeded by prompting President Roosevelt to establish the Resettlement Administration, an agency tasked with providing federal funds to resettle destitute agricultural workers. On the other hand, the alliance of black and white farmworkers sparked intense planter violence indicative of the LSM. The same tensions between LCRM and LSM forces appeared as Daniels visited Birmingham, the Tuskegee Institute, Atlanta, and the Mississippi Delta. Ritterhouse concludes that Daniels's journey compelled him to realize that white prejudice and hostility—not supposed African American deficiencies—forestalled meaningful social and political change.

Discovering the South succeeds in capturing the emerging scholarly consensus over the LCRM and LSM. It also manages to

¹ Even after observing racial injustice in Alabama and reading about the Duck Hill, Mississippi, lynchings in April 1937, Daniels opposed federal anti-lynching legislation.

highlight the processes through which white southern liberals finally embraced elements of the civil rights agenda. Ritterhouse's chronological analysis of Daniels's journey and frequent integration and condensation of LSM and LCRM historiography makes the book remarkably accessible. While knowledge of New Deal is helpful, it is not required to read this engaging and impressive monograph that should be required reading for scholars of Southern history.



Andrew J. Romig

Be a Perfect Man: Christian Masculinity and the Carolingian Aristocracy

The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Reviewed by Robert E. Lierse

Master of sword and horse, skilled in the art of war, champion of the hunt, commander of a prominent household and a virile producer of heirs; these are the traits that historians have traditionally defined as markers of “manliness” for Carolingian aristocracy. So, as Tina Turner once said, what’s love got to do with it? Well, according to Andrew J. Romig, everything. In his work, *Be a Perfect Man*, Romig challenges the notion that masculinity was defined by physical prowess or martial ability and instead asserts that love represented the very core of Carolingian masculine ideals. Carolingian masculine values, he claims, were built “upon a profound cultural valuation of love, emotional sensitivity, and care for others,” and ultimately defined by the concept of *caritas*: “a complete and all-inclusive love, flowing from the whole heart, mind, and soul.”¹

The first part of Romig’s monograph lays the foundation for

¹ Andrew J. Romig, *Be a Perfect Man: Christian Masculinity and the Carolingian Aristocracy*, 1st edition, *The Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 2-3.

his argument by discussing the Judeo-Christian and pagan roots of *caritas* and traces how the concept evolved in the works of early medieval Christian scholars from late antiquity to the eighth century. Romig then goes on to discuss developments in the ninth-century and argues that the Carolingian aristocracy adopted ideals of Christian masculinity to strengthen their power and ally themselves with ecclesiastical authorities. Because of this, Romig asserts that Christian male asceticism became an inextricable part of Carolingian gender discourse, ultimately resulting in gender ideology constructs focused not only on the differences between male and female, but also the divide between secularity and non-secularity. Within this framework, *caritas* codified appropriate masculine behavior and defined power hierarchies that allowed for non-ascetic men to lay claim to divine authority.

The second part of Romig's work is focused on demonstrating how Carolingian writers used the concept of masculine *caritas* to frame their own arguments. To do so, Romig analyzes several patristic texts written for non-royal laypersons that detail how to lead a pious life. The author believes that these works, known as "lay mirrors," are too often dismissed by historians as "simple collections of wisdom or manuals of banal advice" and approaches them from a literary standpoint.² In doing so, Romig demonstrates how individual authors utilized a culturally recognizable language grounded in masculine *caritas* to advance their own agendas. This, Romig proclaims, demonstrates the prevalence of masculine *caritas* as a universal concept within Carolingian culture and society. More poignantly though, it also demonstrates how individuals adapted, modified, and worked within the confines of cultural ideologies to meet their own needs.

Though written in uncomplicated prose, this work may be confusing for historians not familiar with the nuances of literary analysis as the author occasionally drifts away from the theme of masculinity and instead focuses on philosophical rumination. Despite this, *Be a Perfect Man* is an undoubtedly trailblazing contribution to an

² Ibid., 158.

area of research that is severely limited and Romig is quite successful in presenting a groundbreaking way of understanding masculinity in the Carolingian world.

Notes on Contributors

Adam Weiss is a senior majoring in History. His academic interests include the Holocaust and modern Jewish history and has received his Certificate in Holocaust Studies from UF's Center for Jewish Studies. After graduation, he plans to eventually pursue a career in law.

Alexandria Sellers is a senior double majoring in History and English literature. Her current interests include women's history, Victorian British literature, and the French and Korean languages. After graduation she plans on pursuing a career in publishing at a children's literature imprint.

Andrea Stein-Bolan is a senior and University Scholar majoring in History and minoring in Anthropology and Women's and Gender Studies. Her research interests include women's history and intersectionality of gender and religion, and she is completing her Honors Thesis on the "Conversas" and "Crypto-Jewish" Women of 16th c. Spain under the guidance of Dr. Nina Caputo. Andrea will be traveling to Israel to pursue Talmudic studies, then returning to complete future degrees and research in Jewish History and Women's Studies.

Courtney Weis is a junior majoring in History while minoring in Dance and Teaching English as a Second Language. Her current interests include Atlantic history and the Spanish colonial period. After graduating from UF, she plans on teaching English in Spain before beginning graduate school.

Brenda Withington is a graduating senior History major and Philosophy minor. She is a History Honors student, a McNair scholar, and a student assistant at the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program. Her research focuses on intersections of political and social history in the American South. In the fall, she plans to continue into a History PhD program.

Indica Mattson is a junior double majoring in History and English with a minor in Art History. Her research interests include representations of race in visual media, histories of gender and sexuality, and Latin American studies. After graduation, Indica intends to pursue a Master's program in Library Sciences.

Anna Kosub is an honors senior who is double majoring in History and Criminology and minoring in Sustainability Studies. Her academic interests include North American environmental history, indigenous history, and environmental law and policy. After graduation, she plans to travel and work to save up for law school in British Columbia, where she intends to practice Environmental and Indigenous Law.

Megan Watkins is a senior history major with major coursework in Russian language studies. Her research interests include modern United States foreign policy and gender and sexuality in Latin America. She plans to attend law school following graduation with a focus on immigration.

Amanda Bello majored in English and History and graduated in December 2018, with honors. Her current research interests include the intersection between the law, federal law enforcement, and intelligence. She is planning on attending law school and pursuing a career in legal academia.

Submission Guidelines

Become a published author in *Alpata*, the award-winning, student-run journal of Phi Alpha Theta, History Honors Society's Gamma Eta chapter at the University of Florida. All University of Florida students are invited to submit. Papers must follow the Chicago Manual of Style's documentation. *To ensure anonymity in the selection process, do not* include your name or contact information anywhere within your submission, other than on the contact page.

Recommended Submission Length

Undergraduate Papers:	2,500 — 4,000 words
Graduate Papers:	5,000 — 10,000 words
Book Reviews:	500 — 750 words

Papers may be submitted electronically to:
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or in hard copy to:

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