

The
Thetean

The
Thetean

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The Thetean is an annual student journal representing the best of historical writing by current and recent students at Brigham Young University. All papers are written, selected, and edited entirely by students. Articles are welcome from students of all majors, provided they are sufficiently historical in focus. Please email submissions as an attached Microsoft Word document to thetean submissions@gmail.com. Manuscripts must be received by mid-January to be included in that year's issue. Further details about each year's submission requirements, desired genres, and deadlines should be clarified by inquiring of the editors at the same address.

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Editor's Preface

WHEN WRITING OF HER FRIENDSHIP WITH HENRY JAMES, Edith Wharton described their relationship as “an atmosphere of the rarest understanding, the richest and most varied mental comradeship.” The friendship began in 1900, when Wharton sent James a brief note congratulating him on a recent publication. They struck up a correspondence, one that lasted nearly fifteen years. Wharton would later reflect on the relationship in her autobiography, calling it “a real marriage of true minds,” built upon a shared love of writing and reading.¹ This relationship is documented in large part because of their vast correspondence, as the two authors shared details of their ideas, writing, and simple day-to-day lives.

I'd always intended to reference plague writings in this preface—perhaps weave in lessons from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, or pay homage to Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* (a personal favorite of mine). But this year's *Thetean* wasn't a lesson in isolation, loneliness, avoidance of responsibility, or any of the other themes that were so pervasive in these works, as well as most of our lives in the last year. The most remarkable part of producing a journal without meeting a single staff member in person was witnessing the power of words to bring people together, regardless of the physical distance that separated them. Like Wharton and James demonstrated with a pen pal friendship that spanned over a decade, great writers will always find each other, great ideas will always be shared, and there will always be a place for them.

The papers in the journal this year reflect that determination to come together. Written, edited, and published from a distance, these papers span an astounding number of subjects. Samuel Johnson looks at how American policy

1. Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glance* (The Curtis Publishing Company, 1934), 169, 173.

impacted imprisoned migrants. Ryan Hollister, Molly Hansen, and Kara Molnar all track changing perceptions of watershed moments or figures, namely the importance of the Wolfenden Report for gay rights, the recent controversy surrounding BYU founder Abraham O. Smoot, and Anastasio Somoza Debayle's fall from grace in the American press. Katharine Davidson Bekker and Travis Meyer tackle Catholic influence, Bekker offering an interpretation of Hans Holbein's famous painting, *The Ambassadors*, as a eucharistic tableau, with Meyer examining the influence of Maya theology on the Morley manuscript. Two papers took on reproductive controversies, with Karen MacKay Moss looking at LDS perceptions of miscarriage in the nineteenth century, and Ruth Hyde Truman revealing the conflicts of southern midwife training in the twentieth century. Alina Vanderwood takes us on a journey through the persistent success of Irving Berlin's music in the jazz era. There is usually one paper every year that deals with a quirky, niche topic, and this year I'm pleased to report that there are two: Caleb Child's paper on BYU's chronic parking problems, and Jack Tingey's history of women's bob hairstyles.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication and effort of many people. Dr. Loose—you have my heartfelt thanks for fielding endless questions with patience and grace. Many professors in the history department were essential as well, with their careful review and thoughtful feedback of the papers now published in this journal. I'm also constantly impressed by the staff editors whom I've only met through a screen, namely Travis, Molly, Sarah, Garrett, Ashley, Abby, Anna, Chandler, Ryan, Lindsay, and especially Hannah, who took on the formatting of the journal: I couldn't have asked for a more competent and reliable group of people. Thank you for being ready for anything.

We hoped that the 50th edition of the *Thetean* would be memorable, but none of us could have anticipated how truly strange and unprecedented the process of putting together this journal would be. For me, this has been an exercise in realizing how messy history really is, as I've lived through a history-making year myself. I have a better appreciation for the work of historians, as I think about what it would be like to recount the details and nuance of the past year in a way that would make it comprehensible for those who will come later. My hope is that those who read this journal will do so with increased empathy and a greater appreciation for the complexity of history.

—Alison Wood
Editor-in-Chief

“Hiding by Showing” Hans Holbein’s *The Ambassadors* as a Eucharistic Tableau

Katharine Davidson Bekker

LITURGICAL CLOTHS AND HANGINGS HAVE BEEN A UBIQUITOUS PART of the Eucharistic experience for Christian churchgoers for much of the Catholic Church’s religious history. While often overshadowed or displaced in religious images by the drapery of individual figures, altar cloths and frontals are occasionally featured, as in the Master of the Aachen Altar’s images of *The Mass of St. Gregory* (figs. 1 and 2). A similar green cloth to those in the *St. Gregory* images is seen in the background of Hans Holbein the Younger’s 1533 portrait of *The Ambassadors* (fig. 3). Though much has been said about many of the visual elements and objects in this painting, the lush emerald brocade curtain behind the scene has received surprisingly little attention in the literature. Curtains such as this one were commonly used as backdrops in Renaissance portraiture by Holbein and others—indeed, Holbein even used a very similar shade of green for the cloth behind his subjects in his 1526 portrait of *Lais of Corinth* (fig. 4) and his 1527 portrait of William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury (fig. 5). However, the curtain in *The Ambassadors* has a larger function than simply that of a backdrop. The philosopher Hagi Kenaan has proposed that the green curtain “suggests the presence of a depth beyond itself” and, in conjunction with the anamorphic skull in the foreground of the

image, makes this painting one that “is regulated by the principle of concealment . . . [and] hides by showing.”¹

Kenaar’s suggestion of simultaneous concealing and revealing in the image, and especially in the curtain, is perhaps most apparent in the way the rich cloth hangs to barely expose the figure of a silver crucifix in the top left corner of the image. The movement of the curtain allows the holy object to be seen while still partially obscuring it and holding it in shadow. This interaction between the sculpted Christ and the curtain invokes the pervasive contemporary mystical theology of veils both revealing and concealing Christ or God the Father via the translucent, diaphanous, flowing nature of the fabric as well as biblical associations with the term. Although backdrop curtains in portraiture usually have no function other than decoration or reference to a domestic space, I suggest that the curtain in *The Ambassadors* has a sacred function similar to that of the mystical veil and liturgical cloth.² Through a discussion of pertinent theological, mystical, and philosophical writings, I will argue in this paper that the interaction between the silver crucifix in the corner of the image and the green brocade backdrop curtain is a reference to the Eucharist and a reenactment of the Crucifixion.

Theology of Veils

The question of the veil being a substance or force that Christ used to reveal himself is one with a considerable biblical and theological background. In Hebrews, Paul makes the reference to Christ as “the great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,” transcending the veil and allowing access to the most holy parts of religion.³ Christ’s interaction with the veil is even more clearly described when, after his death on the cross, “the veil of the temple was rent in twain.”⁴ The theological understanding of Christ tearing the temple veil is that, through the literal breaking of the fleshy veil of his earthly body—of which the temple veil is a type or symbol—Christ removed the barrier between himself and humanity and became their Savior. St. Augustine also uses the symbol of

1. Hagi Kenaar, “The ‘Unusual Character’ of Holbein’s ‘Ambassadors,’” *Artibus et Historiae* 23, no. 46 (2002): 67, 68, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1483697>.

2. Kenaar, “The ‘Unusual Character’ of Holbein’s ‘Ambassadors,’” 66.

3. Hebrews 4:14

4. Mark 15:38

the veil to distinguish between the doctrines in the Old and New Testaments, describing "truth, which veiled in the Old Testament, is revealed in the New."⁵ He continues later in this vein, asking "what does the term old covenant imply but the concealing of the new? And what does the term new covenant imply but the revealing of the old?"⁶ Christ, in this reading, becomes the veil that conceals himself in the Old Testament and, through the process of his death in the New Testament, reveals himself and the truth that St. Augustine speaks of. However, Christ's revelation of himself as truth and savior still involves a cloaking of some kind. On the cross, he is still shrouded in the mortal, finite flesh that conceals his divine aspect; after the Ascension, he is physically, though not spiritually, hidden from his disciples. Even divine revelation, according to St. Augustine, involves a paradox of clarity and partial obscurity: he claims that revelation reveals things "in some sort of veiling sense," as illustrated in the ancient Sybil's prophecy about the coming of Christ wherein "the revelation of the new covenant" would be realized "not in light, but in shadow."⁷ Considering these theological interpretations and implications of the veil, particularly the veil in the context of Christ crucified, the green brocade curtain in *The Ambassadors* is a compelling part of the meaning of this scene. The curtain cuts Christ in two in a visual representation of the tearing of the fleshy veil of his earthly body while simultaneously hiding him from clear view. Thus, this literal veil acts as a physical proxy for the immaterial and spiritual veil that reveals and conceals Christ.

Liturgical Space and the Eucharist

Similarly, the Eucharist is another manifestation of a physical stand-in for Christ. Like the veil itself, the host and wine in the holy sacrament, in both the Catholic and Protestant faiths, take the place of Christ either literally or figuratively—in the Catholic tradition, notably, the accident of the host becomes another feature that both hides Christ's body and renders it accessible. Veils and

5. St. Augustine, *City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.): Book 5, Chapter 18. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1201.htm>.

6. St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book 16, Chapter 12. Here, St. Augustine is discussing the story of Isaac as a type for the Christ's death on the cross.

7. St. Augustine, *City of God*, book 20 Chapter 16; Book 18 Chapter 23.

other coverings feature prominently in the liturgy and symbolism of the Mass: a decorative cloth frontal hangs in front of the holy altar and an altar cloth covers its top. The curtain behind the two ambassadors and the tiered table they lean on is reminiscent of this sacramental setup. Green is the liturgical color used on the altar and the clergy's robes in Ordinary Time—the portions of the year that fall outside of celebratory seasons—and is thus the color most frequently seen in church services. The rich damask emerald of the cloth, then, would very likely have reminded the pious viewer of the altar frontal and its Eucharistic associations. The table itself may be seen as the altar on which the host—the holy body of Christ—would be consecrated and consumed, set off by the green curtain around it.

Several pictorial aspects support this suggestion: the crucifix in the corner, hanging above the table or altar, invokes the traditions of placing an image of Deposition or Entombment above the altar, as in Grünewald's 1516 *Isenheim Altarpiece* (fig. 6), or hanging a Crucifix from the top of the choir screen in the chapel above the altar, as in Giotto's 1295 *Institution of the Crib at Greccio* (fig. 7), to suggest that Christ's body is literally falling or being placed onto the altar below. The table is littered with various secular and scientific objects that could be interpreted as distracting from a Eucharistic image of the scene; however, it is more likely the objects are also speaking to the mystery of the Eucharist. As mentioned, Christ's body and presence are concealed in the accidents of wafer and wine during this sacrament—secular sights concealing divine truths. In a similar way, Holbein is hiding the Eucharist on the altar-table under secular objects, invoking the mystery of Eucharist where the sacred is allowed to manifest only by being hidden under the profane.

The Oriental "turkey rug" laid on the table also reinforces the Eucharist scene. During Holy Week, the altar is decorated with a red or black covering, which two colors are the main components of Holbein's luxurious carpet. Because this painting, it has been suggested, depicts Good Friday of 1533, the colors in the rug correspond to the actual liturgical experience that the two sitters would likely have been party to at some point during that day.⁸ Indeed the design of the rug itself, distinct from its similarities to a Triduum altar covering, has elements that make it a spiritual decoration rather than simply an aesthetic one. John North suggests that the repeated "E"-shaped pattern in the rug represents the Armenian abbreviation for the name of Jesus and, together

8. John North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance*, (New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 338.

with the miniscule Greek crosses that compose the stitching, "denote Christ," even going so far as to propose that "Holbein was placing a crucifixion scene in the very middle of his painting."⁹ More compelling is the idea that Holbein, with this rug and its placement on the table beneath the image of the hanging Christ, was creating a reenactment of the Crucifixion through his references to the sights and liturgy of the Eucharist. The presence of Georges de Selve, bishop of Lavaur, as one of the sitters in the portrait emphasizes this distinction. Christ on the cross is not flanked by the usual forms of Mary and John the Beloved, but rather by a bishop and a layman. Rather than acting as imitators of those holy saints in this image, Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve are contemporary worshippers, imitating in this secular setting the holy exchange of the Eucharist from the bishop to his congregation. The two men, lay and ordained, standing by the table that too is both religious and secular, create a threshold between the sacred and the profane that is mimicked by the cloth behind them.

Another theological comparison of Holbein's curtain is to that which separates the Holy of Holies in the temple. As previously mentioned, biblical language discusses Christ as the high priest, the only earthly individual allowed to step behind the veil and into the most sacred sanctum of the temple.¹⁰ Both the space in front of and behind the veil refer to this holy liturgical space. The intricately patterned floor beneath the feet of the sitters is a modified copy of the marble Cosmati flooring that adorns the sanctuary of Westminster Abbey where Holbein's kingly patron was crowned some twenty years prior.¹¹ The contemporary enactment of priest in the Holy of Holies is, of course, the priest in the sanctuary of the church, consecrating the sacred host and wine, and the replica of a well-known sanctuary floor visually places the two men into that particular section where they would prepare and partake of the Eucharist, respectively. The presence of the Holy of Holies is invoked too by the green curtain that extends down to the decorated floor. In the painted image, the curtain reveals not the shining gold Ark of the Covenant, but rather the silver-gilded body of Christ himself. In this way, the area behind the curtain, which is only

9. North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance*, 204. North discusses the origin of this rug as likely coming from the Armenian Monophysite church, which believed only in the divine (and not human) nature of Christ. The rugs from this group often featured the Greek cross in their design, and "E" can be an abbreviation for the first two letters of Christ's name or mean "Almighty."

10. See Hebrews 4:14, 6:19, and 10:19–21.

11. North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance*, 208.

assumed to be a flat wall because the crucifix requires some surface on which to hang, is a reference to the Holy of Holies itself.¹² Like Augustine's discussion of the truth being veiled in the Old Testament and revealed in the New, this image shows the realization of the ancient Ark in the new manna of Christ's crucified body. Once again, this interpretation strengthens a Eucharistic reading of the painting. Thus, the veil embodies Augustine's paradox of revelation as it both hides the truth of what lies behind it—physically and symbolically—and reveals the ultimate source of truth in the depiction of Christ's sacrifice.

Mystical Interpretation

Paradox is an important aspect of mystical theology contemporary with the production of *The Ambassadors*. This mode of thinking is particularly notable in Martin Luther's "theology of the cross." The theology of the cross dealt chiefly with God's disclosure of himself via Christ's suffering on the cross and the notion that the supplicant—the theologian or meditator—could come to know God through emotional engagement and an examination and denial of their preconceived, human notions of what God is and is not.¹³ Paradoxical imagery not only features heavily in Luther's theology of the cross but is in fact a fundamental feature of his arguments. He encourages the worshipper to examine the unresolvable dialectic of mortal life as they are inescapably *simil iustus et peccator*—"justified and sinner."¹⁴ Luther refers frequently to the posterior de Dei discussed in Exodus 33 as he suggests that God is both

12. Keenan, "The 'Unusual Character' of Holbein's 'Ambassadors,'" 67. Keenan suggests that the crucifix behind the curtain underscores "the possibility of a reality existing behind the curtain." Though he applies this notion differently than I do, the idea of a space behind the curtain is applicable here.

13. Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*, 2nd Edition (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2011) 210–211. This entire chapter of the book explicates Luther's theology of the cross, but the author breaks the theology down into five main tenets in this section. Something to note is the inconsistency in Luther's notion of concealed revelation: he says that God's disclosure is hidden, but also asserts the clarity of scripture, even when God is present in scripture. Luther explains this contradiction away by saying that hiddenness in scripture comes only from a human failure of understanding.

14. Ibid, 210. Mortal life has another unresolvable dialectic of faith and fear or doubting God (*Anfechtung*);

hidden and revealed through revelation, disclosing himself in a way that is "indirect and concealed."¹⁵ The paradoxical combination of disclosure and concealment central to Luther's theology manifests on the cross itself: God reveals himself in the "humility and shame of the cross" but is still simultaneously "veiled and concealed" by human preconceptions about him.¹⁶ Even an empirical witness of Christ on the cross does not reveal him; it takes further thought, pondering, and, as Luther suggests, a challenging of the "natural human judgement about God, revelation, and justification" to come to know the nature of the Father.¹⁷ The silver crucifix and its covering in *The Ambassadors* echoes this idea—the cross is not just the visible object and the curtain is not just a swath of fabric behind the sitters. Rather, the cross is a representation of the already obscured but present God and the curtain is a physical representation of the veiling of revelation by human eyes. Furthermore, considering the Eucharistic interpretation of the cloth and cross together, the scene becomes a sort of frozen theological reenactment of Christ's death. Once again, too, the placement of the sitters is also significant in this interpretation. Luther's theology "begins at the foot of the cross"—it prioritizes, beholds, and is contained within it.¹⁸ Georges de Selves and Jean de Dinteville are pictorially at the foot of the cross, in the ideal place to begin to meditate on Christ in his suffering and enter into an intimate relationship with him. The anamorphic skull, too, speaks to the "foot of the cross" interpretation—like the skull of Adam on Golgotha, the distorted image sits below the silver crucifix, embodying the connection between the Old Testament and the New and turning the scene into a frozen image of recapitulated sacrifice.

While before the advent of Luther's eventual severing from the Catholic church there was little need to distinguish between sectarian beliefs of theologians, clerics, or other religious figures, the religiopolitical period during which *The Ambassadors* was produced introduced a call for such distinctions. However, sectarian differences are less substantial and therefore less pertinent when discussing contemporary mystics and their writings. Because of their

15. Ibid, 204. Referring to Luther's use of Exodus 33:23. McGrath explains that God uses his hand to "prevent the observer from fully seeing what is happening" even as he reveals himself to God; Ibid, 211.

16. Ibid, 211.

17. Ibid, 210.

18. Ibid, 207. McGrath clarifies that Luther's theology "begins at the foot of the cross" rather than beginning elsewhere and finishing or ending up at the cross.

typical circumvention of the mediation of the church, mystics, both Protestant and Catholic, tended to transcend the strict structural and theological differences between sects. In his introduction to a translation of the writings of several German mystics, W. R. Inge writes that “the differences between Catholics and Protestants are hardly felt in the keen air of these high summits”—referring, of course, to transcendent mystical ponderings.¹⁹ Even Luther’s theology of the cross has been described as “characteristic of Late Medieval spirituality,” further blurring the distinctions between Catholic and Protestant mystical theology.^{20, 21} Important to note too is that Holbein’s own religious orientation is unknown—though he worked in the newly Anglican court of King Henry VIII, he also painted for Catholic patrons and is recorded to have favored a more traditional enactment of the Eucharist.²² All this taken together, then, supports a non-denominational mystical reading of this image, especially given that the crucifixion scene, the spiritual crux of this painting, is not a sectarian image.²³

A mystical writing associated with the fourteenth-century German mystic Johannes Tauler (though ultimately attributed to an unknown German author of the same time period) has further implications related to the positioning of the cross in the painting, especially when read alongside Luther’s theology of the cross. In his “Meditations on the Seven Words from the Cross,” the unknown author discusses Christ’s declarations as he hung to be sacrificed, and urges the reader to suffer with Christ on the cross and “consider and ponder with the greatest care the sacred words of Christ.”²⁴ The mystic’s commentary on the first word—Christ’s plea to the Father to forgive his ignorant accusers—includes an exhortation from the author to the onlookers to “weep in the presence of

19. W. R. Inge, *Light, Life and Love: Selections from the German Mystics of the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1935), xlii.

20. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough*, 2nd Edition, 208.

21. Volker Leppin, “Luther: A Mystic,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 56, no. 2 (2017): 142, doi: 10.1111/dial.12315. Leppin mentions here that Luther was particularly influenced by Johannes Tauler.

22. Jennifer Nelson, *Disharmony of the Spheres: the Europe of Holbein’s Ambassadors* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), 118. Holbein said in a letter to his guild that he had not taken the “evangelical eucharist” because he wanted more evidence for that new sacramental practice.

23. North, *The Ambassadors’ Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance*, 311.

24. Inge, *Light, Life and Love: Selections from the German Mystics of the Middle Ages*, 29.

the Lord who made us" and to "behold your Redeemer as He hangs on high; behold and weep."²⁵ This commentary, as a potential predecessor to Luther's theology of the cross, supports the same focus on Christ's suffering on the cross as the impetus of worship and devotion, and the emphasis on Christ's position "on high" is reminiscent of Christ in *The Ambassadors*.²⁶ Thus, the crucifix in the portrait once again declares its primacy as the true focus of the image rather than either of the sitters or their earthly trappings. The wealth and knowledge of the secular objects brings only fleeting contentment or status to the sitters; a knowledge of God the Father attained through a study of his Son persists beyond the life they are currently living. The crucifix in the painting brings to mind Johannes Tauler's appeal to his readers to imagine "how unutterable with be the joy and blessedness, the glory and honour of those who shall see clearly and without the veil the gladsome and beauteous face of God."²⁷ Once again, the curtain becomes the means by which God's presence in the image is revealed and the object that allows both the sitters and the onlookers into the scene to perceive him.

Visual Theology and Optics

The presence of the anamorphic skull in the foreground of *The Ambassadors* makes questions of sight an inherent part of viewing the painting. Both the way that this unusual pictorial feature was created by the artist and the way it is consumed by onlookers relates to the theme of spiritual veiling throughout the image. John North has suggested that Holbein likely drew a perspectively accurate skull onto a pane of glass then traced the refracted shadow of the skull created by placing a bright light source behind the glass at a certain angle.^{28,29}

25. Ibid, 30.

26. Ibid, 30. The 7th word of the cross in particular bears marked similarities to Luther's theology of the cross: both focus on worshipping and communing with Christ in his suffering on the cross. On page 61, the unknown mystic urges the worshipper to notice every part of Christ's physical suffering as he hangs and to suffer and sorrow with him.

27. Inge, *Light, Life and Love: Selections from the German Mystics of the Middle Ages*, 17.

28. North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance*, 184.

29. Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed Our Vision of the Universe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 6–7. This article discusses the spiritual implication of lenses, glass, and mirrors in painting, as with the mirrors that Brunelleschi used to create his perspectival drawings. This

The inclusion of glass to create an image that is not immediately recognizable, though central to the painting, is significant. Like the revelations of God in Luther, the skull is disclosed but still hidden in the painting. Holbein's glass in the creation process, then, is similar to the way the righteous see Christ "through a glass, darkly; then face to face." The curtain and the distortion of the skull, via the glass, both serve as means to obscure and divulge their subjects (Christ and message of *vanitas*, respectively) without making them immediately apparent.

In his religious and philosophical treatise *De Visione Dei* that addresses both divine and earthly sight, Nicholas of Cusa suggests that one can only see God, "the face of the sun," when they are in darkness or "an obscuring mist."³⁰ Indeed, the denser the mist, the closer the incipient viewer comes to seeing the "invisible light" of the divine, and only in that darkness can "the inaccessible light and beauty and splendor of [His] Face . . . be approached unveiledly."³¹ This apophatic approach to seeing Christ is visualized literally in the way Christ hangs in partial shadow on the wall. Like the paradoxical darkness required to perceive the light in Nicholas of Cusa's thinking, Christ's partial concealment makes the small silver crucifix an independently significant aspect of the painting instead of being merely another instrument to speak to the secular and spiritual wealth of the sitters. That is, unconcealed, Christ's image would have been much less significant in the interpretation of the painting: a crucifix hanging on the wall of a Catholic diplomat accompanied by a member of the ordained would have been an entirely expected decoration. However, concealed, the image invokes the many paradoxes of revelation discussed up to this point, and now addresses paradox in sight as well as in theological communion with God.

Luther's theology can be read in tandem with Cusa's: Luther suggests that his theology of the cross offers a means by which its followers can "exist in the dark wasteland of a fallen world, and cope with the deep anxiety of existential and metaphysical uncertainty."³² Christ, though only visible through darkness

Renaissance idea echoes a Medieval understanding of sight, perspective, and light as being religious processes. Thus, the interpretation of Holbein's glass as a theological tool is justified further.

30. Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1988), 690.

31. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei*, 690.

32. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough, 2nd Edition*, 208.

in Cusa's thinking, also acts as the light in darkness in Luther's. The position of the crucifix in *The Ambassadors* implicates this idea: as John North points out in his tome on the iconography, geometry, and historical context of *The Ambassadors*, from a certain viewing point, a line can be drawn from Christ's eyes, through the eye of Jean de Dinteville, and through the astrological globe behind the diplomat's arm.³³ This sight line can be interpreted as yet another reference to Eucharistic engagement in the image via the optical theory of intromission, a more scientific model than Cusa's but one still applied in religious contexts of the time.^{34,35} The theory of intromission, introduced by Euclid and applied later by Roger Bacon and others, suggests that the "species" of an object, some physical or metaphysical essence of its being, extends out from an object and into the eye of the figure observing it, thus allowing them to perceive that object.³⁶ The theory of extramission, wherein the species of the eye extends to the object, was used in the Middle Ages to justify the practice of "ocular communion," where the priest held the Eucharistic host aloft and the worshipper simply gazed at it, thus "eating by sight" by means of their visual rays reaching out and making contact with the holy wafer.³⁷ However, I suggest a sort of reverse ocular communion taking place in *The Ambassadors* with Christ's species entering into the diplomat's eye by, by virtue of intromission, along the aforementioned sight line. Because Dinteville does not meet Christ's eye, a typical extramissive experience of ocular communion is less valid here, but the intromissive reading aligns with previous discussions of Christ revealing himself to the sight of the onlooker, thus providing his body as salvific sacrifice in the form of Crucifixion and Eucharist. Thus, Dinteville still takes some aspect of Christ's being into his body through his eye, once again hearkening to the act of receiving the Eucharist.

33. North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance*, 178.

34. Ibid, 179–181. North suggests a different interpretation and mentions that Dinteville is looking at the viewer rather than at Christ—which is to say, he is looking at something secular and transient rather than at something eternal.

35. Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 141.

36. David Lindberg, *Roger Bacon and the Origins of Perspectiva In the Middle Ages: A Critical Edition and English Translation of Bacon's Perspectiva with Introduction and Notes*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), lxxviii.

37. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in Middle Ages*, 143. The "eating by sight" idea also applied to extra-liturgical showings of the host (such as in a monstrance) and to altarpieces.

The green curtain that hangs behind the sitters in Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* is an important aspect of the painting that has received only minimal attention in the literature to this point. While the image seems to be above all a courtly portrait, the curtain and the way it partially covers and partially reveals the small silver figure of Christ crucified draws attention to this sacred aspect of the painting and imbues it with greater religious meaning. Mystical writings from the contemporary Martin Luther and his predecessors justify a non-sectarian reading of this image and emphasize the theological precedent of paradox present in discussions of veils and in the ways Christ reveals himself to his supplicants. When considered in the contexts of these mystical theologies and pertinent ideas of Late Medieval and Renaissance optics, the organization of the image—the placement of the crucifix and the sitters, the table and its cover, and the anamorphic skull at the base—allows the image to become an interlocutor in the contemporary conversation about the correct enactment and understanding of the Eucharist. Like “the light of truth which is veiled in the Old Testament [and] revealed in the new,” truth in this painting is hidden under the guise of the profane.³⁸ The green curtain, acting as Christ's veil, transforms this image into a Eucharistic tableau, a reenactment of Christ's Crucifixion in the form of contemporary worship and liturgy.

38. St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book 5.



Figures 1 and 2. *Mass of St. Gregory*, Master of the Aachen Altar



Figure 3. *The Ambassadors*, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1533



Figure 4. *Lais of Corinth*, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1526



Figure 5. *Portrait of William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury*, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1527

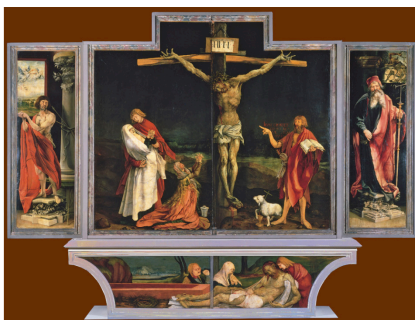


Figure 6. *Isenheim Altarpiece*, Matthias Grünewald, 1516



Figure 7. *Institution of the Crib Greccio*, Giotto di Bondone, 1295

Left in the Dust BYU's Reluctant Response to the Rise of the Automobile

Caleb Child

ALTHOUGH BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND FACULTY have changed throughout the years, one issue has managed to unite all members of the campus community for almost a century: campus parking lots. As a student in 1946 wrote,

It goes without saying that we don't like muddy shoes and don't like bad roads; but what can we do? The natural solution to the problem is to let the school go back to the horse. No parking problem, no roads to worry about. Just put the feed bag on old Dobbin and let him roam till school's out. Then a quick whistle, a leap to the saddle, and the sound of hoofbeats fading away in the evening dusk. Sounds good? No, that's no solution. We gotta keep the auto, find the good roads, and hope by then "parking" isn't much of a problem.¹

While this student's concerns of the "mud lake" parking lot and "tank trap" potholes have since been resolved, the infrastructure associated with automobiles has been constantly problematic for the university.² Although automobiles grew increasingly popular as the 20th century progressed and American culture evolved to reflect the new dependence on the car, Brigham Young University

1. B. K., "Letter to The Editor." *The Y News* 26, no. 16 (1946): 2.

2. *Ibid.*, 2.

resisted the motorized revolution. Despite the growth and expansion of Brigham Young University's campus on Temple Hill at the same time as the rise of the automobile age, the University was left in the dust of the changing perceptions of the value of automobility in American society. The slothful evolution of campus parking lots from the early days of the automobile until the early 1960's illustrates the university's institutional conservatism—the reluctance to adapt to cultural changes—in its perceptions of the motorcar.

Early Automobiles in Utah County and BYU (Before World War II)

The earliest automobiles had little cultural and economic impact on the Beehive State. The first motorcars were invented in the 1880's, yet Utah's first horseless carriage arrived after 1900 when John Devey of Lehi built himself a two-seater motorcar. It functioned like a motorized four-wheeled bicycle, and steering was conducted with a lever directly attached to the front axle. It had a maximum speed of 10 miles per hour, and horses and pedestrians alike could easily pass it on the street. Over the next few years, others built automobiles from scratch and the first manufactured automobiles arrived in Salt Lake City, but they were novelty items that only the rich could afford.³

The early years of automobiles were also marked by rapid growth for Brigham Young University. In 1909, United States President William Howard Taft visited Provo. After arriving by rail, he traveled in an old white-tired automobile—with the gears and braking system on the outside of the car—up Temple Hill, where he inspected the foundations of the construction site of the Maeser Building, the first university structure on what is today's main campus. The official cornerstone ceremony for the Maeser Building occurred just three weeks after Taft's visit.⁴

President Taft's visit demonstrates how, during the early years of the twentieth century, Americans had started their love affair with the automobile. Flink describes how American principles fueled the country's appetite for automobiles

3. Laura L. Timpson, "Our First Automobiles," 1957, MSS 2839, 19th Century Western and Mormon Manuscripts, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

4. Edwin Butterworth Jr., *1000 Views For 100 Years*, (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

during this period. He writes that individualism—defined in terms of privatism, freedom of choice and the opportunity to extend one's control over his physical and social environment—was one of the important American core values that automobility promised to preserve and enhance in a changing urban-industrial society. Mobility was another. The automobile, which tremendously increased the individual's geographic mobility, traditionally closely associated with social mobility in the United States, was certain to be prized by Americans. In our materialistic, migrant society, the motorcar was an ideal status symbol.⁵

As Americans associated automobiles with individualism and mobility, their popularity skyrocketed nationwide, including in Utah, notwithstanding their slow speed and lack of relative mobility compared to horses. Owning a motorcar was a dream shared by many, and cars slowly began to populate Provo's streets. Automobiles became focal points for parades and celebrations; when BYU student and high jumper Alma Richards returned with a gold medal from the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games, he rode in the first car of a long commemorative parade in his honor through Provo's dusty city streets.⁶

Despite the completion of the Maeser building two years after President Taft toured Provo, construction on BYU's "upper campus" proceeded unhurriedly until Franklin S. Harris—whose tenure severely restricted automobiles on campus—became president of the university in 1921. Before construction began on Temple Hill, the university and Brigham Young High School had operated closer to Provo's city center, in what is now known as Academy Square and home to the Provo City Library. Once the institution acquired Temple Hill, ambitious plans were laid to dot the hill with "temples of learning." After the Maeser building was completed in 1911, the next edifice, the Mechanic Arts Building (now the Brimhall Building), wasn't completed until 1918.⁷ During Harris's tenure as president, the Brimhall building was expanded and six major buildings, including the President's residence, were built on the upper campus, doubling the campus floor area.⁸ But despite President Harris's focus on expansion, his plans left little room for automobiles. After some students used the automotive repair classroom motorcars to enjoy an unauthorized excursion

5. James J. Flink, "Three Stages of American Automobile Consciousness," *American Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1972): 451–73, Accessed November 18, 2020, doi:10.2307/2711684, 455.

6. Butterworth, *1000 Views for 100 Years*.

7. Ephraim Hatch, *Brigham Young University: A Pictorial History of Physical Facilities 1875–2005*, Provo, Utah: Physical Facilities Division, Brigham Young University, 2005, 77.

8. *Ibid.*, 83.

to Salt Lake City, President Harris initiated a policy that the university would not own any vehicles. By this time, Henry Ford had long since revolutionized automobile production, and motorcars were now commonplace nationwide. President Harris's ban of university-owned vehicles was the university's first sign of an institutionally conservative resistance to the realities of the Automobile Age. His decision was not overridden until BYU purchased a school bus, a pickup truck, and a tractor in 1934.⁹

Even though the university administration held a conservative approach towards automobiles in the pre-World War II era, students worked to make the school accessible to automobiles. Road and parking lot construction became popular service projects for students. On "Y Day" in 1926, students repaired and improved the only road up Temple Hill to campus by placing gravel on the previously dirt road and building retaining walls to hold back the steep slope of the hill. That road, oiled five years later, is still used today as the pedestrian and bike ramp from the intersection of 200 E and 800 N up to the Joseph Smith Building.¹⁰

By 1942, an intense conflict had erupted on upper campus: the fight over parking. By this time, 150 parking spots dotted the campus, but rarely were more than 50 ever in use. That did not stop students and faculty from improvising problematic parking spots all around campus, particularly in front of the main entrance to the Brimhall Building—an area clearly marked "NO PARKING." The chaotic parking situation forced the university to act, and it began to advise the penalty of letting the air out of one tire for such offenses. This threat efficiently discouraged illegal parking.¹¹

BYU Expansion Era (1940's and 1950's)

After World War II, automobile ownership in Utah and the United States experienced a period of rapid growth. In 1948, the first year that the United States Census Bureau recorded automobile ownership, 54 percent of American families (defined as people related by blood, marriage, or adoption in one household)

9. Ibid, 92–94.

10. Butterworth, *1000 Views for 100 Years*.

11. Hatch, *Brigham Young University*, 95.

owned at least one automobile. By 1950, 59 percent of American families owned at least one car, and by 1960, the number had increased to 77 percent.¹²

This increase in automobile ownership was largely driven by American society's changing perception of the role of streets and transportation. Norton explains how streets had always been viewed as public spaces, like public parks—meant to be shared by foot traffic, horses, and playing children. As automobiles became increasingly popular, both local and federal governments implemented gasoline taxes, where most of the revenue was dedicated to road and highway repair and construction. Under these laws, the perception of roads as public spaces transformed to utilities paid for by their users, the motorists. Meanwhile, pedestrians, bicyclists, horses, and playing children were pushed off the roads as these activities became unsafe and impractical. To continue to access streets and maintain mobility, Americans increasingly needed to own automobiles.¹³ Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System, which started in the 1950's, reaffirmed the use of federal gasoline taxes for transportation infrastructure and further magnified the attractiveness and utility of motorcar ownership.

During this period of increasing popularity and availability of the automobile, Brigham Young University similarly experienced unprecedented growth. The pre-World War II enrollment at the university had peaked in 1939 at 2894 students, but the student population plummeted to only 1155 four years later, due to the international conflict. In 1947, with the return of the soldiers and the post-war G.I. bill, enrollment exploded to 5441 students. That growth would continue for many years. To accommodate this dramatic increase in student population, new construction and temporary buildings were used to increase the floor area of campus buildings by 200 percent from 1945 to 1947. To face the unique challenges of the university's expansion, Leland M. Perry was appointed to be the Superintendent of the Department of Buildings and Grounds. His position made him the head of all maintenance, construction, mail service, material inventory, campus police, parking lots, and many other tasks.¹⁴

The post-war increase of students and the parallel increase in the percentage of members of the campus community owning cars created unprecedented

12. United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC, 1975), part 2, 717.

13. Peter D. Norton, "Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City," *Inside Technology*, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2008).

14. Hatch, *Brigham Young University*, 136–137.

issues and growing pains. The student who satirically argued for the return to the horse held strong opinions about the campus parking problems in 1946:

What to do about the parking lot? Well we might suggest that the area... be made weather-proof, before forcing the students to use it as a parking lot. And, because we need lots of space, it could be marked off to provide a maximum number of parking spaces...for although (the automobile) is driven with pomp and splendor around the campus, you can't just fold it into the vest pocket, and the necessary dimensioned space for parking can be exceedingly difficult to locate. This difficulty can be testified to by the moans and groans heard each day at the local constabulary, where Y students are found all too often digging into the precious sock to pay up the parking tickets. BEWARE! ALL THAT'S EMPTY ISN'T PARKING SPACE!¹⁵

The parking lots were muddy when wet; no parking spots were identified, leading to a misuse of space; parking tickets were common, but nothing was being done by the University to create more parking or make the current space more efficient. The students felt that work and investment in infrastructure would be required to resolve these issues.

BYU leadership, conscious of these and other expansion issues, slowly started developing solutions. In 1946, a master plan was conceived for new construction projects with the goal of being able to provide an education for up to 10,000 students at a time. The plan included utilizing both the existing buildings and small, temporary buildings acquired from the military after the war. Notably absent from the 1946 plan were parking lots, a passionate issue for many students that was largely ignored by institutionally conservative campus leadership.¹⁶ However, due to the impracticality of completely omitting parking lots from future planning, the administration commissioned the creation of the Campus Parking Plan, which was developed a year later. The 1947 plan showed lots on the north, west, and south sides of campus. Despite the intention to preserve these areas for parking, within a few years, new construction projects like the McKay Building and the Eyring Science Center would fill in most of the available parking space to the north and west, as the university leadership felt that new buildings would better serve the students than dusty parking lots. However, the lots below the hill on the south side of campus, including the lots

15. K., "Letter to The Editor," 2.

16. Hatch, *Brigham Young University*, 144.

at 800 N and 150 E and at 800 N and 400 E, survived the building boom, and still exist today, much as they were in 1947.¹⁷

As BYU campus expanded, parking remained the last priority for land usage, and the parking lots were exiled to the far northern reaches of campus. In 1953, parking lots were concentrated on the north and northwest portions of campus, but eventually, those areas were quickly filled in with new construction as well.¹⁸ Only three years later, the Existing Campus Plan map shows that the main parking lot had been eliminated from the west side of campus and had continued its exodus northward towards what is now the Talmage Building.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the limited parking near buildings was reserved for faculty and staff members. Further student parking was created on the eastern extreme of campus.²⁰

With a larger student body and a higher proportion of students owning automobiles, the university needed to pay more each year for campus automobile infrastructure. Since it was unfair to have non-automobile owning students pay for parking facilities, parking fees provided needed revenue at the expense of those using the parking lots, echoing the idea Norton explained with gasoline taxes and public roads. In 1953, it was decided to implement a \$10 yearly fee for students wishing to park on campus. The money would be used towards security, maintenance, and improvements to parking structures.²¹ However, the parking fees and parking tickets only raised a combined \$10,000 during the first semester after the imposition of the fees—and \$8,900 was required for a security officer's salary and the bare minimum signs and paint required to operate the lots. The remaining \$1,100 was left to maintenance (including snow removal), an amount that allowed only substandard repairs and no significant improvements.²²

Students were not happy with the continually unsatisfactory parking lot conditions in the 1950's, but the administration and facilities personnel failed to offer permanent solutions. In 1952, Superintendent Perry was asked about

17. Ibid, 147.

18. Ibid, 200.

19. Ibid, 208.

20. Ibid, 218.

21. "University Tuition Up Ten Dollars; Ten Dollar Parking Fee Instituted," *Brigham Young Universe*, May 26, 1953, <https://archive.org/details/brighamyounguniv561asso.1>.

22. Dick Oveson, "Student Parking Charges Barely Defray Traffic Cost, Pres. Edwards Avers," *Brigham Young Universe*, 1954, <https://archive.org/details/brighamyounguniv627asso/mode/2up>.

the university's plan to reduce the daily dust storm caused by students driving and parking in unpaved lots. He responded, "All we can do is hope for a storm."²³ Students were not amused. Storms, in their eyes, were far worse than dust clouds. A group of students in 1953 wrote of their parking troubles during a storm: "Friday, around 2 p.m., when it was raining the hardest, we pulled into the parking lot north of the Science bldg., donned our swim fins and our bathing-suits, and struck out boldly for the side-walk. We had just about given out when one of our more fortunate buddies with an outboard stopped to pick us up." They concluded with the suggestion that BYU use the money from their parking fees to purchase ferry boats.²⁴ As students like these persistently raised awareness about campus parking, the university administration determined to create a coherent plan to address the infrastructural problems created by the school's rapid expansion.

The 1957 Comprehensive Campus Plan and its Aftermath

Campus leadership, which supported further expansion for the university despite the challenges of growth, developed a new Comprehensive Campus Plan, issued in 1957. This was the first plan that stressed the importance of parking in addition to the new buildings and utilities. The Planning Committee's report detailed the current and near future of campus parking. In 1957, there were 5,000 parking spots in the vicinity of the academic portion of campus and 4,733 parking permits granted by the university; 3,359 of those permits were possessed by students and the remaining 1,374 belonged to faculty and staff. To maintain 5,000 parking spots in the short term, future building sites would continue to be used for parking. But in the long term, the committee believed that "it will be necessary to double deck the large student parking area to the east."²⁵ Those spots were to be reserved for faculty, staff, and students living off

23. Rex Smith, "If Ain't Gonna Rain . . . Traffic Dust Storm Causes Silicosis, Evokes Comment", *Brigham Young Universe*, 1952, <https://archive.org/details/brighamyounguniv515asso/page/n11/mode/2up>.

24. Paul J. Christensen et al., "Drowned . . .", *Brigham Young Universe*, 1953, <https://archive.org/details/brighamyounguniv615asso/page/n3/mode/2up>.

25. Ben Lewis et al., "Report of Planning Committee for Brigham Young University Comprehensive Campus Plan," 1957, UA 92 University Archives, L. Tom Perry Special

campus. Students living in the recently completed student housing at Helaman Halls, Heritage Halls, and Wyview would have their own parking lots with a size determined by the number and gender of the students residing there. In a further demonstration of institutional conservatism and resistance to societal changes, the recommendation was to provide parking spots for 60 percent of single men, but only 20 percent of single women. Meanwhile, married student housing would only offer 12 parking spots for every 10 families. To prevent the need for additional parking and allow students to walk to class safely, pedestrian overpasses would be built over the only road dividing student housing from the main body of campus.²⁶

The 1957 plan finally acknowledged the necessity of preparing for the infrastructural needs of the growing, automobile-using campus community, but failed to meet the increasing demand for parking spaces. The committee hesitated to make any permanent solutions, instead promoting temporary parking in future building sites and postponing the authorization of any lasting parking structures. This approach was unsustainable. As more buildings were constructed, more students came to campus and fewer parking spots were available to them—and parking was again pushed further away from the center of campus. Additionally, as more students, faculty, staff, and visitors owned cars every year, the university's parking problems compounded. The biggest increase in automobile ownership that the planning committee failed to foresee was among women, as seen by their plan to only create parking spots for 20% of single young women. With the resurgence of feminist movements and the focus on equality starting in the 1960's, increasing numbers of women owned automobiles, but the university had nowhere to park them.

Despite its shortcomings regarding parking, the 1957 plan did have many merits, and became the basis for all future campus plans. A revised version of the plan's map from a year later shows plans for most of today's campus buildings. The map also shows most of the parking lots concentrated in the north near the Smoot Administration Building and on the east near the Wilkinson Student Center. The biggest deviation from the 1958 plan that eventually occurred was the construction of the Clark Law Building in the middle of the map's largest on-campus parking lot.²⁷

Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 33 and 43.

26. Ibid, 30–32.

27. Hatch, *Brigham Young University*, 263.

When BYU's parking lots became more established after the 1958 plan, they were beautified with trees and shrubs. In addition to being more aesthetically pleasing, these plants helped collect water—assisting in preventing the recreation of the swamp-like conditions students loved to complain about—and significantly reduced the temperature of the lots. The beautification process resolved many of the infrastructural deficiencies of previous parking lots and helped establish these lots as long-term, established features.²⁸

Throughout the next decade, construction projects followed the basic outline of the 1957 plan. By 1968, the peripheral road (known today as Campus Drive), small service roads, and major parking lots were completed in a ribbon cutting ceremony conducted by David O. McKay, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While construction and reconstruction on buildings and facilities remains ongoing, the main layout of Brigham Young University's campus has remained almost identical to the configuration in 1970.²⁹

BYU and the Automobile Age

Brigham Young University's move to and expansion of the campus on Temple Hill and America's love affair with the motorcar occurred on similar timelines. While BYU constantly struggled to catch up with America's evolving attitudes towards automobiles, the institution was not alone in scrambling to adjust to the transportation revolution. A 1968 survey of 47 American universities of varying sizes found that 43 percent of the schools openly admitted to lacking sufficient campus parking space, and 100 percent of academic institutions with over 20,000 students acknowledged that campus and apartment parking shortages led students to park their cars on city streets, leading to congestion off campus.³⁰

BYU and other universities' reaction to increased motorcar usage shows the institutional conservatism and reluctance for cultural change found at many academic institutions. From prohibiting university ownership of motorcars in the 1920's to planning an inadequate number of parking stalls for women in the

28. Will Peterson, "Planning to Park: Meeting the Vehicular Needs of Brigham Young University," Brigham Young University, 2005, 10.

29. Hatch, *Brigham Young University*, 292.

30. Sorensen, Stan E. "University-City Parking Problems- With Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, As A Case Study", Master of Science, Brigham Young University, 1969, 45.

late 1950's, the university resisted the cultural changes that eventually prevailed in American society. Ironically, BYU did not fully accept the automobile as a part of the campus experience until the 1960's, when Flink argues that another major cultural shift in automobile perceptions occurred, with many Americans beginning to view motorcars as social ills instead of liberating machines.³¹ Once BYU's road system and parking infrastructure were permanently established (after years of lagging behind the campus community's need), American culture had already begun to change and reject the idealization of the automobile, moving towards more economical and environmentally-friendly forms of transportation. But by this time, BYU was devoted to automobiles, and, once again, change has been slow.

Despite the university's shortcomings in embracing the societal love for the automobile during its reign as the dominant form of transportation, campus officials, faculty, staff, and students did what they felt was best for the institution—whether that was releasing the air from the tires of illegally parked cars, writing exaggerated news articles, or expanding parking areas to the far reaches of campus. For generations, BYU students have been united by a universal frustration with the parking situation. Due to institutional conservatism and resistance to evolving societal values, Brigham Young University's automotive infrastructure was, like the automobiles in the unpaved, temporary parking lots of the early 1950's, left in the dust.

31. Flink, "Three Stages of American Automobile Consciousness," 452.

Abraham Smoot Complexity in Context

Molly Hansen

I N 2019, A *Salt Lake Tribune* ARTICLE DESCRIBED PIECES OF ABRAHAM O. Smoot's slaveholding past.¹ The article raised controversy over the administration building on BYU campus, which bears Smoot's name. After that *Salt Lake Tribune* article brought Smoot's negative history into a more public eye, outcry from the general public, the BYU community, the Latter-day Saint community, and the Smoot family themselves erupted. Questions like 'Why do we have buildings that honor slaveholders?' and 'Was he even a slaveholder?' and 'Do we unname or rename the Abraham Smoot Building at BYU?' were raised, and are still being asked in public and private arenas.

The origin of this information was not a mystery: published histories as far back as 1976 have brought up fragments of Smoot's relationship with slavery.² Much of the previous scholarship on Smoot is flawed, however, for many reasons, including incomplete research, baseless conclusions stemming from rampant bias, the fact that little to no histories on Smoot acknowledge his slaveholding

1. Peggy Fletcher Stack. "Pioneer benefactor's ties to slavery raise questions for BYU, where a building bears his name," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 9, 2019. <https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2019/08/09/pioneer-benefactors-ties/>.

2. Ronald G. Coleman, "Blacks in Utah History: An Unknown Legacy," in *The Peoples of Utah*, ed. by Helen Z. Papanikolas. Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1976. <https://historytogo.utah.gov/blacks-utah-history/>.

past, and a common disinterest in discussing the shortcomings of historical figures. Because of that, it is imperative that primary sources are also consulted to truly grasp and obtain unadulterated facts on who Smoot was and what his life entailed. This paper aims to correct the exaggerated and downplayed narratives on Smoot through the use of primary sources and reputable secondary sources. Nevertheless, the sources available on Smoot portray him as a multifaceted man with a complicated history and contradictory beliefs. Abraham Smoot was a double-edged sword: both a “builder of the nation” and a slaveowner. Both identities need to be acknowledged in order to understand who Abraham Smoot truly was.³

Who is Abraham Smoot?

In order to understand Abraham Smoot in full, one must understand where he came from. Smoot was born in Owenton, Kentucky, on February 17, 1815, to George Washington Smoot and Nancy Ann Rowlett.⁴ His parents were originally from Virginia, but moved to Kentucky and Tennessee, where Abraham grew up.⁵ His maternal grandmother was a slaveowner, which, in combination with his father’s occupation as a physician, made the Smoot family well off.⁶ Even though nobody in Abraham Smoot’s immediate family participated in slavery themselves, Smoot began benefiting from slave labor at birth.

Abraham Smoot was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on March 22, 1835.⁷ He then served four missions, including one

3. Ida B. Alldredge, “They, the Builders of the Nation,” song, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/text/hymns/they-the-builders-of-the-nation?lang=eng>.

4. “Early Church Information File,” database with images, FamilySearch > Smith, Mary E.-Snider, Maryette > image 4444, A. O. Smoot card.

5. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake: Deseret News, 1941), 485–488.

6. George Freeman, “Rowlett, Nancy Ann, (1787–1871)” in “Nancy Ann Rowlett (1781–1871), Family Tree ID L87J-B3W, “Family Tree,” database with images, FamilySearch (www.familysearch.org).

“Smoot, Abraham O,” *Historical Provo People*, Provo City Library, accessed December 2020, <https://www.provolibrary.com/historical-provo-people-places/55633-smoot-abraham-owen>.

7. “Utah, Salt Lake City, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Missionary Department, Missionary Registers, 1860–1937,” database, *FamilySearch*, entry for Abraham O Smoot.

for Joseph Smith's presidential campaign, before he helped organize the Saints for their trek West.⁸ Beginning in 1847, Smoot began preparing the Saints for their journey to Utah, and ended up being the captain of five pioneer companies.⁹ As part of his duties as a pioneer captain, Smoot often went ahead of the wagon train to gauge the next day's difficulties.¹⁰ All in all, Smoot was responsible for hundreds of Saints arriving safely in Utah.¹¹ After his pioneer service, Smoot served three more missions and held a wide range of Church priesthood offices and callings, including elder, High Priest, bishop of multiple wards, and President of the Stake of Zion.¹² Smoot's allegiances to the Church were also clear through his practice of polygamy: he married a total of six wives, namely: Margaret Thompson McMeans (married 1838; two children),¹³ Sarah Gibbens (1840; no children; divorced Smoot),¹⁴ Almira Emily Hill (1846; four

8. "Abraham Owen Smoot, Sr.," *My Ancestor In Church History*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed 30 November 2020, <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/chd/individual/abraham-owen-smoot-sr-1815?lang=eng>.

9. Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1847–1850* (Salt Lake: Collier's Publishing Company, 1997), 32. Date of this entry was 12 February 1847.

"Abraham Owen Smoot," Pioneer Overland Travel Database, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed 30 November 2020, <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/overlandtravel/pioneers/166>.

10. Oliver Boardman Huntington, "O.B. Huntington's Journal," 19.

11. Loretta D. Nixon and L. Douglas Smoot, *Abraham Owen Smoot: Testament of His Life* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1994).

12. "Abraham Owen Smoot Sr."

"Early Church Information File," database with images, *FamilySearch* > Smith, Mary E.-Snider, Maryette > images 4422–4517, A. O. Smoot cards.

13. Margaret Thomas McMeans (1809–1884), Family Tree ID L8PP-C9G, "Family Tree," database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020).

Missouri, County Marriage, Naturalization, and Court Records, 1800–1991," database, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed November 2020), entry for Abraham O Smoot and Margaret T Atkinson, 12 Nov 1838, Caldwell, Missouri; citing "Marriage, Caldwell, Missouri, United States, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City," FHL microfilm 007425248.

"Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848," database, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed December 2020), Margaret Thomas McMeans in entry for Abraham Owen Smoot; citing Black, Susan Easton, compiler. *Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848*. 50 vols. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1989. Private Donor.

14. Sarah Gibbens (1800–1889), Family Tree ID 2MR5-PNM, "Family Tree," database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020).

children),¹⁵ Diana Tanner Eldredge (1855; thirteen children),¹⁶ Ane Kirstine Mauritzen (1856; seven children),¹⁷ and Hannah Caroline Rogers (1886; no children).¹⁸ In total, Smoot had twenty-six children, eighteen of whom survived childhood.

“Sarah Smoot,” *Pioneer Overland Travel Database*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed December 2020. <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/overlandtravel/pioneers/12993610740740481126>.

“Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848,” database, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed December 2020), Sarah Gibbons in entry for Abraham Owen Smoot.

15. Almira Emily Hill (1815–1882), Family Tree ID KWV3-YNB, “Family Tree,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020).

“Utah Deaths and Burials, 1888–1946,” database, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020), Emily Smoot and A. O. Smoot in entry for Albert Smoot.

“Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848,” database, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed December 2020), Emily Hill Harris in entry for Abraham Owen Smoot.

16. Diana Tanner Eldredge (1837–1914), Family Tree ID L6MH-HW3, “Family Tree,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020).

“Utah, Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah, 1847–1868,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020), Diana Smoot in entry for A O Smoot; citing Frank Eschom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah: Comprising Photographs, Genealogies, Biographies* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Pioneers Books, 1913).

17. Anne Kirstine Mauritzen (1833–1894), Family Tree ID KWJZ-7QH, “Family Tree,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020).

“Utah Death Certificates, 1904–1965,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020), Abram Q. Smoot in entry for Annie Kristina Smoot Taylor; citing Provo, Utah, Utah, United States, certificate 34, series 81448, Utah State Archives Research Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.

18. Hannah Caroline Rogers (1827–1915), Family Tree ID KWJB-DX5, “Family Tree,” database and images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020).

“Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848,” database, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed December 2020), entry for Hannah Caroline Rogers; citing Black, Susan Easton, compiler. *Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848*. 50 vols. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1989. Private Donor.

Historiography

The vast majority of the published works on Smoot completely excludes his involvement in slavery and paints him as downright heroic, similar to the publications about him while he was living.¹⁹ In a biography written about Smoot seven months after his death, Smoot was described as “determined” and his service to Brigham Young Academy (BYA) was the sole topic.²⁰ A 1941 volume wrote the following on Smoot: “[Abraham Smoot was] of heroic mold and mettle [and] sacrificed much for the gospel’s sake.”²¹ Various authors have acknowledged Smoot’s connections to slavery since at least 1965, though their writings hardly scratch the surface of Smoot’s character and involvement.²² In 1965, president of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers and LDS historian Kate B. Carter wrote *The Story of the Negro Pioneer*, which featured Smoot and one of his slaves, Alexander Bankhead.²³ Carter’s piece only passively mentioned Smoot as being the slaveowner rather than expounding on Smoot’s intentions or practice of slavery. Similarly, Ronald G. Coleman’s 1976 “Blacks in Utah History” in *Peoples of Utah* also discussed Alexander and gave no direct commentary on Smoot.²⁴ Paul Reeve briefly recognizes Smoot’s status as a slaveowner in his 2015 book, *Religion of a Different Color*.²⁵ Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringham also mentioned Smoot’s involvement in slavery and Utah politics in their *The Mormon Church and Blacks*.²⁶ Scholar Joanna Brooks wrote about Smoot’s connections to slavery in depth and condemned him for his actions in

19. Susa Young Gates, “President A. O. Smoot,” *Young Women’s Journal* 3, no. 10. <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/11727>.

Ernest L. Wilkinson, Leonard J. Arrington, and Bruce C. Hafen, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, Vol. 1–4 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

20. Joseph E. Taylor, “Life and labors of the late president of the B. Y. A. board, 1895 October 16,” 1895. In “A. O. Smoot papers” at BYU Special Collections. MSS 896, Box 1, Folder 4–5.

21. Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint*, 181.

22. C. Elliott Berlin, “Abraham Owen Smoot: Pioneer Mormon Leader,” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955).

23. Kate B. Carter, *The Story of the Negro Pioneer* (Salt Lake: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1965), 25.

24. Coleman, “Blacks in Utah,” 121–2.

25. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

26. Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringham, *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

a journal article in 2018 and again in her 2020 book *Mormonism and Slavery*.²⁷ However, ever since the *Salt Lake Tribune* pushed the story on Smoot's identity as a slaveowner into the spotlight in 2019, attitudes toward Smoot have drastically shifted. The Smoot Family Association initially disagreed with the assessment that Smoot was ever a slaveowner, and now severely downplay Smoot's racist actions as it tarnishes their view of Smoot.²⁸

Abraham Smoot the Slaveowner

In Utah, most slaveowners insisted they were giving Black people a better life than they would have had otherwise. Slavery in Utah was more paternalistic and less violent than in the American South, where plantation and chattel slavery were more common. Historian Amy Tanner Thiriot described Smoot's involvement in slavery—which surely applies to most other cases of slavery in Utah—as an “indenture-type situation.”²⁹ The practice of slavery was uncommon in Utah, given the blend of so many different cultures and ideals. Many of the pioneers who emigrated to Utah were from countries where slavery was already abolished.³⁰ In February 1852, the Utah legislature passed “An Act in Relation to Service,” which required slaveowners to report their slaves and was meant to promote “gradual emancipation” for slaves that accompanied their masters to Utah.³¹ Brigham Young, who was governor of Utah, promoted varying opinions on slavery dependent on his audience.³²

27. Joanna Brooks, “The Possessive Investment in Rightness: White Supremacy and the Mormon Movement,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 58.

28. Executive Committee of the Abraham Owen Smoot Family Organization, “Abraham Owen Smoot - Slavery,” aosmoot.blogspot.com.

Dr. L. Douglas Smoot, ed., *Abraham Owen Smoot: His Life and Service in Provo* (Lindon: Alexander's Print Advantage, 2015).

29. Personal communication between Amy Tanner Thiriot and the author.

30. The most common country of origin for Mormon migration was England, which abolished slavery in 1833, as did Wales. Sweden and Denmark banned slavery in 1847, when Saints initially left for Utah.

31. Christopher B. Rich Jr., “The True Policy for Utah: Servitude, Slavery, and ‘An Act in Relation to Service,’” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2012): 57.

32. Brigham Young, 4 May 1860: “You know my opinions of slavery—I do not want labor performed by slaves—they would impoverish me.” July 5th, reaffirmed that slavery should be abolished. December 26th, called slavery the ruin of the South. In Young, *Office Journal*, 1858–1863, 81, 112, 184.

Since Smoot was a prominent figure in Utah and the Church, the majority of Smoot's descendants who have written on Smoot heavily emphasize the good he accomplished and omit his slavery entirely from their memoirs.³³ One of the exceptions to this rule is Abraham Owen McKay, a direct descendant of Smoot who supports renaming the Smoot building on BYU campus because of his grandfather's slave-owning past.³⁴ Other scholars, such as Joanna Brooks, have chosen to vilify Smoot completely.³⁵ For example, Brooks writes in her 2020 book *Mormonism and White Supremacy*, "It appears that Smoot and [Zebedee] Coltrin jointly agreed to arrange their recollections to support a position opposing Black ordination."³⁶ The sources Brooks cites to suggest a conspiracy between Smoot and Coltrin are vastly misrepresented: the details within each source are scant and do not explicitly discuss Smoot, let alone reveal conspiracy with Zebedee Coltrin. L. John Nuttall (member of the Council of Fifty, who kept detailed notes on early Church history) attended a meeting between Abraham Smoot, Zebedee Coltrin, Brigham Young, and John Taylor on the subject of the priesthood ban. Nuttall recorded, "Coltrin thought it was not right for [Blacks] to have the Priesthood" based on conversations he had with Joseph Smith.³⁷

Later in the meeting, Smoot stated: "there were Negro's who made Application for Baptism, and the question arose . . . whether Negro's were entitled to hold the Priesthood."³⁸ Smoot further recounts that Joseph Smith emphasized

33. L. Douglas Smoot, *Our Joyful Time on Earth* (Provo: Brigham Young University Print Services, 2013).

Smoot, *Abraham Owen Smoot*.

Loretta D. Nixon and L. Douglas Smoot, *Abraham Owen Smoot: Testament of His Life* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1994).

Anna Smoot Taylor, "Provo City Library Oral History Project : memories of Provo, 1900–1940 : Anna Smoot Taylor" (Provo: Provo City Library, 1988), 14.

34. Abraham Owen McKay, "My ancestor's name should not be on BYU building," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 23, 2020.

35. Joanna Brooks, *Mormonism and White Supremacy: American Religion and The Problem of Racial Innocence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Joanna Brooks, "The Possessive Investment in Rightness: White Supremacy and the Mormon Movement," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 58.

36. Brooks, *Mormonism and White Supremacy*, 2020.

Zebedee Coltrin was an early member of the Church and served as the Church patriarch from

37. Nuttall, "Diary of L. John Nuttall," 290

38. Nuttall, "Diary," 292

“[Blacks] were not entitled to the Priesthood, nor yet to be baptized *without the consent of their Masters* [emphasis added].”³⁹ Smoot clearly states in the meeting that he was able to baptize and confer the priesthood upon Black converts so long as he had permission from their Masters, since slavery was active in the South at the time of his first three Southern States missions.⁴⁰ While it is possible that Brooks is right about a conspiracy, her argument is pure conjecture that she paints as absolute truth. Brooks’ claims were neither supported by primary nor by secondary sources, thus proving her heavy bias against Smoot and revealing her dangerous practice of crafting narratives without foundation.

The following biographies are meant to be transparent and short, yet somewhat comprehensive accounts about Lucy, Alexander, Tom, and Jerry—the enslaved people in Smoot’s possession.

Lucy, also known as Lucinda, was likely the first slave that Smoot obtained. Lucy came from the Lay and Crosby families, who were both Mormon and from Mississippi.⁴¹ In 1842, the Crosby family valued her at \$150.⁴² Unlike some of Smoot’s other slaves, Lucy was specifically purchased by Smoot in 1850 or 1851.⁴³ Margaret Smoot, Abraham Smoot’s first wife, sold Lucy to Thomas Williams on 1 March 1852.⁴⁴ After slavery was abolished in Utah, Lucy likely moved back to the South, though the details are minimal and hard to piece together. The other enslaved people in Smoot’s possession are similarly poorly documented, which is also seen throughout African American genealogy as a whole.

Alexander was born into slavery at the hands of the Bankhead family in Alabama in 1837.⁴⁵ George and John Bankhead brought Alexander to Utah in

39. Ibid.

40. Abraham Smoot served in the Southern States mission from 1835–37, 1841–42, and 1844.

“Abraham Owen Smoot, Sr.,” *My Ancestor*.

41. “Mississippi, Wills and Probate Records, 1780–1982,” Monroe County, estate of John Crosby, probate date 3 January 1842, case 139, *Ancestry*. Pages 38–9 in packet.

42. Ibid.

43. Joanna Brooks, “The Possessive Investment in Rightness: White Supremacy and the Mormon Movement,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 58.

44. “Utah Territory First District Probate Court Records,” database with images, *Utah State Archives*, series 373, reel 5, box 4, folder 26, entry for Margaret Smoot.

45. Carter, Story, 23.

1870 U.S. Census, Utah County, Utah, population schedule, Spanish Fork, page 7, sheet 307, dwelling 52, family 49, Alexander Bankhead; imaged at FamilySearch (www.familysearch.org); citing National Archives microfilm series M593, roll 1612.

September 1848 as part of the Heber C. Kimball pioneer company along with about ten other slaves.⁴⁶ The Bankheads were prominent in Utah society, which means that they likely hired out Alexander. Hiring out is the practice of paying another slaveowner for the work of one of their slaves; essentially “borrowing” a slave from another person. Smoot hired out Alexander sometime after 1850.⁴⁷

Alexander followed Smoot to Provo once Smoot was called to fix the many issues the city was facing.⁴⁸ Alexander ended up moving to Spanish Fork by 1880 with his wife Marinda and stepson William.⁴⁹ According to Smoot, Alexander was “one of the ‘whitest Negroes’ living.”⁵⁰ Smoot described Alexander as such in the wake of the 1897 semicentennial Pioneer Jubilee, and used Alexander’s “whiteness” as the sole reason he was permitted to attend. In the racial climate in Utah in the late 19th century, Black people were considered outcasts and severely limited in their ability to participate in social events. Smoot certainly subscribed to and perpetuated those social norms. In 1899, Alexander gave an interview to Julius Taylor for the *Broad Ax*, a popular Black newspaper. In it, Alexander identified himself as Smoot’s former slave, but gave no further details on how he was treated or how long he was enslaved.⁵¹ There are no other primary sources that indicate that Smoot owned Alexander; regardless, it is noteworthy that Alexander identified himself as Smoot’s former property. Alexander died 10 January 1902 in Spanish Fork.⁵²

Tom, also known as Thomas, was initially owned by the Church family. The Church family owned a small plantation in Tennessee, which is where Tom

46. “George Washington Bankhead,” *Pioneer Overland Travel Database*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed 2 December 2020. <https://history.churchofjesus-christ.org/overlandtravel/pioneers/2696/george-washington-bankhead>.

Coleman, “Blacks in Utah,” 121–2.

47. 1850 U.S. Census, Great Salt Lake County, Utah, population schedule, Great Salt Lake, page 115, Alexander Bankhead; imaged at *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org); citing National Archives series M432, Roll 919.

48. Coleman, “Blacks in Utah,” 121.

49. 1880 U.S. census, Utah County, Utah, population schedule, Spanish Fork, Enumeration District (ED) 83, sheet 188 A, page 79, dwelling 147, family 147, Alex Bankhead; imaged at *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org); citing National Archives series T9, Roll 1338.

50. Carter, Story, 25, citing an 1897 letter between Abraham Smoot and Spencer Clawson.

51. Julius F. Taylor, “Slavery in Utah,” *Broad Ax*, March 25, 1899, 1. <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6b862rb/373405>.

52. Find A Grave (<http://www.findagrave.com>), memorial page 10925832, Alexander Bankhead (1837–1902); citing Spanish Fork City Cemetery, Spanish Fork, Utah County, Utah, United States.

was likely born. Tom was baptized in the Sugar House Ward in Salt Lake in 1854, at which time he was likely still in the possession of the Church family.⁵³ Given the Church family's societal status and the amount of slaves they had, Tom was hired out instead of owned by Smoot.⁵⁴ Tom first appeared in Smoot's household in 1856 in Sugar House, Salt Lake City.⁵⁵ Tom never experienced freedom, as he tragically died April 29, 1862, less than two months before slavery was abolished in Utah.⁵⁶ His death certificate identified him as "Tom, A Negro" and stated that he belonged to Bishop Smoot.⁵⁷

Jerry, also known as Jeremiah, was from the Lewis family. David and Duritha Lewis, Jerry's slaveowners, brought Jerry with them when they traveled from Kentucky to Utah in 1851. After David died, Jerry remained in Duritha's possession and was valued at \$700.⁵⁸ In January 1860, Brigham Young wrote a letter to Duritha Lewis in an attempt to convince her to sell Jerry to "some kind faithful member of the Church" if she were ever to consider selling Jerry at all.⁵⁹ As of June 1860, Jerry was in the household of Abraham Smoot.⁶⁰ Jerry was most likely purchased by Smoot based on the Brigham Young letter, but there is no record of that transaction. Jerry died the following June by way of drowning in Mill Creek.⁶¹ His death records list his name as "Jeremiah Blackman" and his relative as "A. O. Smoot" or "O. A. Smoot," the latter of which

53. "Sugar House Ward Baptisms," entry for Tom, Brother Churches Black-man, Family History Library, microfilm 26792.

54. This hypothesis was posited by Amy Tanner Thiriot in personal communication with the author.

55. "Utah, U.S., Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1850–1890," database, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed December 2020), entry for Thomas Church, 1856. Original image of census from Church History Library in Salt Lake and supplied by Amy Tanner Thiriot.

56. "Utah, Salt Lake County Death Records, 1849–1949," database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020), entry for Tom, A Negro.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Brooks, "Possessive Investment," 58.

59. Brooks, "Possessive Investment," 59. Letter dated 3 January 1860.

60. "1860 Utah Slave Schedule," entry for A. O. Smoot, Family History Library, microfilm 0805314.

61. "Drowned," *Deseret News*, June 19, 1861.

"Utah, Salt Lake County Death Records, 1849–1949," database with images, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed December 2020), entry for Jeremiah Blackman.

has been identified as a clerical error.⁶² “Blackman” was often used as a surname on records to differentiate Black people—especially slaves—from the rest of a population.

As aforementioned, white Utahns believed that slaveowners were creating a better life for the enslaved than they would have as free individuals. This attitude has led groups such as the Smoot Family Administration to interpret Smoot and others “good slaveowners.”⁶³ However, there is no such thing as a “good slaveowner”; any person that owned or hired out slaves was exploitative. Abraham Smoot’s motivations for slavery are unknown, as he did not record why he chose to enslave others. He certainly did not need the slaves for financial gain, as he was one of the more wealthy Saints in Utah.⁶⁴ Smoot may have owned and hired out slaves because he viewed them purely as a “status marker for a man of means,” as slaves were frequently considered so in Kentucky and Tennessee; he may have believed he was giving his slaves a better life than they would have had as freedmen.⁶⁵ Smoot left no record himself that detailed how he treated his slaves either. The *Broad Ax* article that featured Alexander Bankhead and Smoot did not specify how Bankhead was treated during his tenure as Smoot’s slave.⁶⁶ As a result of the lack of information on Smoot’s relationship with his slaves, one can only assume—not definitively prove—that Smoot subscribed to the same paternalistic, less violent philosophy on slavery that was pervasive in Utah.

Abraham Smoot the Public Servant

Abraham Smoot filled his time in Utah with church and civic service. In 1849 and 1850, Smoot was called to be bishop of the Salt Lake City 15th Ward and Big Cottonwood Ward, respectively. In September 1851, Smoot departed on yet another mission, this time in England, and returned home the following

62. “Utah, Salt Lake County Death Records, 1849–1949,” database with images, *Family Search* (www.familysearch.org; accessed December 2020), entry for Jeremiah Blackman.

63. Executive Committee of the Abraham Owen Smoot Family Organization, “Abraham Owen Smoot - Slavery,” aosmoot.blogspot.com.

64. 1860 U.S. Census Agricultural Schedule, Great Salt Lake, Utah, entry for Abm. O. Smoot, page 7–8, line 14.

65. Brooks, “Possessive Investment,” 60.

66. Julius F. Taylor, “Slavery in Utah,” *Broad Ax*, March 25, 1899, 1. <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6b862rb/373405>.

year to lead the Perpetual Emigration Fund. Beginning in 1856, Smoot served as a Justice of the Peace for Utah. Shortly after, Smoot became the mayor of Salt Lake City. As part of his mayoral duties, Smoot frequently spent time with Brigham Young in a political capacity and weighed in on many everyday decisions. Showing Utah visitors around Salt Lake, finding solutions to late cattle drive and thievery issues, figuring out how fences in Salt Lake could be improved, and orchestrating defenses when Utah's sovereignty was threatened were some of his responsibilities as Smoot helped build Salt Lake from the ground up.⁶⁷ Smoot ended his time as mayor of Salt Lake in 1866, but quickly found himself back in the throes of public servitude when he became mayor of Provo in 1868. Despite having strong business ties to Salt Lake, Smoot traveled to Provo at the insistence of Brigham Young, who told Smoot that his choices were between Provo and Hell.⁶⁸ In 1876, Smoot was called as the President of Utah Stake of Zion.⁶⁹ Four years later, Smoot was called to serve in the Southern States mission for the fourth time.⁷⁰ During his time in Provo, Smoot was instrumental in the beginnings and successes of nine businesses, which helped improve Provo's economy and maintain it during an economic recession.⁷¹

Perhaps the most important and impressive thing Smoot did while in Utah was start BYA from the ground up. Smoot became the President of the Board of Trustees in 1875. As part of his efforts, Smoot recruited students to come to BYA and acquired investors. Because Smoot was such a prominent businessman, he was in the unique position to secure close to \$100,000 in loans for the university, which translates to roughly \$2.4 million in 2020.⁷² On 2 March

67. Fred C. Collier, ed., *The Office Journal of President Brigham Young, 1858–1863, Book D* (Hanna: Collier's Publishing Co., 2006), 11, 236, 286, 81, 41, 227.

Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 251–2.

68. Loretta D. Nixon and L. Douglas Smoot, *Abraham Owen Smoot: A Testament of His Life* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1994), 32.

Ernest L. Wilkinson, Leonard J. Arrington, and Bruce C. Hafen, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, Vol. 1 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), page 57.

69. Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint*, 180.

70. "Abraham O. Smoot, Sr."

71. Dr. L. Douglas Smoot, ed., *Abraham Owen Smoot: His Life and Service in Provo* (Lindon: Alexander's Print Advantage, 2015).

72. Joseph E. Taylor, "Life and labors of the late president of the B. Y. A. board, 1895 October 16," 1895. In "A. O. Smoot papers" at BYU Special Collections. MSS 896, Box 1, Folder 4–5.

1884, Smoot determined to donate some of his land for BYA.⁷³ Initially, BYA was a product of an idea from Brigham Young instead of a Church-endowed institution, which meant that the school did not automatically receive funding from the Church. In an effort to keep BYA running, Smoot set out to and succeeded in convincing the Church to donate funds through Presidents John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff. In 1890, Smoot convinced Brigham Young's heirs to sell BYA to the Board of Trustees, though that was not a panacea for the school's financial troubles. Smoot was intimately involved with the aspects of building the school from the ground up and stocking it with supplies needed for a proper and well-rounded education. The supplies Smoot bought for the school were varied, including mandolin strings, dictionary holder and lamp machines, cedar shingles, and spelling workbooks.⁷⁴ Smoot served on the Board of Trustees until his death in 1895. In total, Smoot put in around \$30,000 dollars into the school, worth more than 71,000 in 2020.⁷⁵ Without Smoot's funds and advocacy, there is no chance that BYU would exist.⁷⁶

Conclusions

Abraham Smoot was undoubtedly a complicated man who deserves to be understood in all of his context and complexity. Ernest L. Wilkinson offered the following about Smoot: "A banker, a colonizer, financier, legislator, merchant, delegate to territorial conventions, large scale cattle and sheep man, bishop, stake, and mission president, Smoot was one of the most influential men in the kingdom."⁷⁷ To this should be added: mayor, pioneer, missionary, philanthropist, polygamist, and slaveowner. Seeing Smoot for who he is can be a balancing act: on one hand, Smoot owned or hired and used and exploited slaves. On the other hand, Smoot is in large part why Provo became successful and is responsible for the existence of Brigham Young University.

73. Nuttall, "Diary," 1884 May, page 35.

74. "A. O. Smoot financial papers, 1877–1894" in "A. O. Smoot papers" at BYU Special Collections, MSS 896, Box 2, Folder 1.

75. Taylor, "Life and labors," 1895.

76. Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint*, 178.

77. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Leonard J. Arrington, and Bruce C. Hafen, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, Vol. 1 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), page 57.

While it is simple to break Smoot's spheres of influence into distinct categories, the reality is that Utah society enabled a blend of these roles simultaneously, regardless of how contradictory they were. Smoot did not compartmentalize his various identities; he was a Church leader, slaveowner, politician, benefactor, politician, and so much more all at once. Smoot was a Justice of the Peace at the same time he was acquiring slaves; he was preaching and celebrating the gospel while he was actively spreading racist ideologies.⁷⁸ Smoot clearly held significant prestige and power in his various positions in virtually every endeavor of his adult life. This allowed Smoot to abuse his position in the community and act as a gatekeeper for race: in many instances, Smoot was the determinant of a Black person's involvement in both the Church and Utah society at large.⁷⁹ Brigham Young is another prime example of the same racist and otherwise discriminatory behavior, and enabled Smoot and others to rampantly practice the same hypocrisy.⁸⁰ The privilege that Smoot, Young, and other prominent leaders of the Church exemplified allowed racism and other forms of discrimination to thrive in Utah. Unfortunately, Smoot did not leave a journal wherein he discusses his reasoning on why he chose to own and hire out slaves, and therefore Smoot's actual perspective—an essential piece of the puzzle—is missing. That being said, one can still draw conclusions about what Smoot believed based on the explicit facts that primary sources outline. Regardless of Smoot's motivations, his actions had an overwhelmingly detrimental effect on Black Utahns and Mormons.

Regardless of the way that Smoot treated Lucy, Alexander, Tom, and Jerry, his actions were unconscionable and indefensible. At the same time, Smoot's actions in regards to BYA, the Church, and Utah are overwhelmingly positive and far-reaching. It is impossible and unreasonable to say that the good Smoot did outweighs the bad, and vice versa. In order for BYU to heal from the hurt that Smoot has caused, we must acknowledge and condemn his actions as a slaveowner while concurrently respecting all that he did to found, finance, and form the academy-turned-university. It is high time for BYU to address the intensely problematic aspects of Abraham Smoot's legacy.

78. Carter, *Story*, 25, citing an 1897 letter between Abraham Smoot and Spencer Clawson.

79. Such was the case for Alexander Bankhead, as previously discussed in this piece.

Carter, *Story*, 25, citing an 1897 letter between Abraham Smoot and Spencer Clawson.

80. Brigham Young, though expressing his desire to make Utah a free state in 1859 by iterating "Slavery here would prove useless and unprofitable . . . a curse to the masters," chose to hire out slaves himself and oversaw slave transactions in Utah.

Brooks, "Possessive Investment," 59. Letter dated 3 January 1860.

Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 5.

The Wolfenden Report

The Key to the English Gay Rights Movement

Ryan Hollister

THE HISTORY OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN GREAT BRITAIN IS LONG AND complicated, extending all the way back to the Roman conquest. Romans had a tradition of homosexuality,¹ but when Rome fell, churches became the authority on homosexuality, leading to numerous movements to fight against it. King Henry the 8th of England outlawed buggery, a term for anal intercourse, in 1533,² and there are suspicions that King James had homosexual relationships,³ but the scope of English history cannot be fully summarized in a paper of this length. Instead, this paper will focus on the British decriminalization of homosexual practices in the 1950s and 1960s. Specifically, this paper will address the establishment of the Committee of Homosexual Offences and Prostitution and the impact the Wolfenden Report had on English culture and politics that would lead to the decriminalization of private homosexual acts

1. Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 33.

2. "Buggery: Meaning of Buggery by Lexico," Lexico Dictionaries | English (Lexico Dictionaries), accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/buggery>

Thomas Berthelet, "Anno XXV. Henrici VIII. Actis Made in the Session of This Present Parliament, Holden Uppon Prorogation at Westmynster, the XV. Daye of Januarie, Etc. B.L." (London, n.d.).

3. Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon, *Who's Who in Gay and Lesbian History* (London, England: Routledge, 2002), 226–227.

in the Homosexual Offences Act of 1967. The Wolfenden Report was a key moment in the international gay rights movement that would lead to a change of opinion worldwide about the “issue” of homosexuality.

The Wolfenden report would become influential in English LGBTQ+ history, and therefore world LGBTQ+ history. LGBTQ+ rights are still a political issue around the world nearly 60 years later. The Wolfenden committee was formed to increase the consequences for the crimes of homosexuality and prostitution. Instead, the report that the committee formulated started the gay rights movement in England. To understand the gay rights movement and the arguments that exist on both sides, it is important to go back to the committee that changed everything, perhaps unknowingly, in room 101 of the Home Office building in London.

Several pieces of historical literature have gone over the formation, members, and results of the Committee of Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, one of these being an autobiography of Lord Wolfenden which is extensively referenced in this paper. Brian Lewis wrote very detailed coverage of the committee in *Wolfenden's Witnesses: Homosexuality in Postwar Britain*. However, both of these histories of the Wolfenden Report are incomplete. Lord Wolfenden's autobiography was published in 1976, leaving it completely unaware of the same-sex partnerships and marriages which would be introduced in the 90s and early 21st century as a legacy of the report. Brian Lewis is more aware of the significance of the Wolfenden Report as an aspect of the gay rights movement in the UK, but is more focused on the legal, rather than social, impact that the report would lead to. Both fail to recognize the importance of the Wolfenden Report on changing public opinion internationally.

The United Kingdom is one of the largest empires to ever rule the world, so the laws, culture, and social movements of this behemoth had influence on the rest of the world. However, the extensive British empire was in decline after World War II. The conservative government that came into power in 1951, led by the famous Winston Churchill, was determined to maintain global influence. Churchill had led the English to victory against Nazi Germany, but was cautious with this domestic issue. As the government struggled for its foothold in global politics, there was unrest at home. In the United Kingdom, there was an increased interest in the issue of homosexuality and prostitution: two sexual “sins” that seemed to be plaguing the streets.

Churchill wanted to keep these deplorable crimes under wraps, but this became more difficult as newspapers started reporting high-profile homosexual trials, including the news of famous mathematician Alan Turing's suicide in

1954. Turing had been influential during WWII but was charged with indecency when police discovered he was in a homosexual relationship while Turing was reporting a robbery. Turing entered into a plea deal in which he was chemically castrated, put on probation, and released from government duty in 1952.⁴ Another spark in the flames of the public eye was the trials of Lord Edward Montagu, Michael Pitt-Rivers, and Peter Wildeblood.⁵ These three, along with two servicemen, had been caught in a plot to have sex and were charged with homosexual indecency after the two servicemen testified against them for immunity. The homosexual problem was becoming an issue that the government needed to address because the public was becoming more aware of it.

The Committee of Homosexual Offences and Prostitution

In order to understand the origins and influence of the Wolfenden Report, it is important to understand the basic English government structure. English governments are established when there is a majority of representatives in parliament from a political party. These governments are led by Prime Ministers who lead parliament, as well as government organizations through a cabinet. One of these cabinet positions is Secretary of the Home who is in charge of law and order. The Secretary of Home is also often seen as a stepping stone to the Prime Minister seat which can create conflict between the Secretary of the Home and the acting Prime Minister. This is true in the case of Secretary of the Home David Maxwell Fyfe and Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Churchill's government needed to decide how to handle the issue of homosexuality that was filling more and more of the newspapers every day. Churchill was in favor of gagging the press to put the issue down,⁶ as he had done during wartime. This would keep the issue out of parliament as the government focused on international issues. Fyfe argued that the issue needed to be handled more directly with a Royal Commission into homosexuality and prostitution.⁷ The government decided that a Royal Commission would only inflame the issue in

4. Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: the Enigma* (London: Vintage Books, 2014).

5. Peter Wildeblood, *Against the Law* (London: Phoenix, 2000)

6. Patrick Higgins, *Heterosexual Dictatorship: Male Homosexuality in Postwar Britain* (London: Fourth estate, 1996), 6.

7. Lewis, *Wolfenden's Witnesses*, 6.

the public eye. Fyfe was allowed to establish a committee under the Office of Home, giving the government stricter control over the investigation while also providing the research necessary for changing the laws to establish steeper punishments, thus curbing the plagues of prostitution and homosexuality.

Soon after, Reading University vice-chancellor, Lord John Wolfenden, received a message from the Office of the Home. Wolfenden recorded in his own memoir, "I have been asked a good many times why this particular lot fell on me. I have replied, with perfect truthfulness, that I don't know, adding, with equal truthfulness, that it cannot have been because I was an expert in either of these two subjects."⁸ Even with little expertise, Wolfenden accepted the offer to be chairman of the committee that Fyfe sought to create. Wolfenden had been knighted for his contributions to art and sciences while headmaster of several schools and his Vice-chancellorship.

On August 24, 1954, Wolfenden established a team of the team of 15 members known as The Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution which, "provided us with a conveniently brief and uninformative acronym: references to CHOP could bring no blush to any secretarial clerk."⁹ The committee was made up of a diverse group selected by Wolfenden and Fyfe in the Home Secretary's office. "There were representatives of the established churches of England and Scotland, there were three lawyers, three doctors, two Members of Parliament (one Labour, one Conservative), a peer, three academics and one Roman Catholic layman. There were three women, four Scots and a Welshman, providing a proper representation of sexual and national 'minorities'."¹⁰ This would create plausible deniability of bias for Wolfenden's committee. Lord Wolfenden was bent on performing his duty correctly. Jeremy, Wolfenden's son, had come out as gay just two months prior to Wolfenden's appointment. Their relationship during this period is summed up well in a letter between Lord Wolfenden and his son which said, "I have only two requests to make to you at the moment. (1) That we stay out of each other's way for the time being; (2) That you wear rather less make-up."¹¹

Wolfenden called on a favor from his years in the education world to decide whether the committee should consider morals overlapping with law. The result,

8. John Wolfenden, *Turning Points: The Memoirs of Lord Wolfenden* (London: Bodley Head, 1976), 132.

9. Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 134.

10. Higgins, *Heterosexual Dictatorship*, 9.

11. Sebastian Faulks, *The Fatal Englishman: Three Short Lives* (London: Hutchinson, 1996).

in Wolfenden's own words: "It was quite an entertaining moment for the utter layman when I found the Lord Chief Justice of England sitting on the other side of the table, with me in charge and him in the witness-box."¹² Wolfenden does not confide in his memoir what the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Goddard, answered regarding whether morals and law should overlap, but the committee came to its conclusion that in this case morals do not always constitute law.

In room 101 of the Home Office, the committee met 62 times with 32 of these meetings being devoted to the oral examination of witnesses.¹³ The witnesses called included those that were charged with "homosexual offenses," police officers who were arresting LGBTQ+ individuals, and medical professionals. The people arrested probably included people who would identify as transgender, gay, or bisexual in modern terms, but a lot of those terms were not in use, and the police didn't really care what people identified as. Women were far less likely to be arrested for homosexuality. The findings of the committee would promote the gay rights movement in England and the world made up of once British colonies, for decades.

Wolfenden's Report

Wolfenden and his companions outlined how the committee came to their conclusion. The committee met in private throughout the research and in penning their conclusion, one of the benefits of being under the Office of Home instead of a Royal Commission. "We were aware of the general kind of criticism directed against the present laws, and we realized that any proposals for changing or retaining any of them would raise issues on which opinion was liable to be swayed or unbalanced or sensational use of what might transpire at our meetings."¹⁴

Wolfenden's committee was dealing with laws that were consolidated in the Sexual Offenses Act of 1956. There is also a differentiation between English and Scottish Law that the report explains, along with how the amendments of the law in both of these systems would look. Under English common and civil law, precedent, legislation, and arguments were used to make legal decisions.

12. Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 136.

13. John Wolfenden, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (London: H.M.S.O., 1957), 19.

14. Wolfenden, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, 19.

Scottish law, often labeled Roman Law, included different levels of courts as well as a process that the report fits their recommendation into. Wolfenden explains in his memoir, “The Home Office and the Scottish Office provided us with the necessary factual information about their respective laws and procedures: exposition, assessment, and possible recommendations were clearly the responsibility of the Committee.”¹⁵ The Committee made recommendations that would influence both law systems in a similar way despite the different legal structures.

The report makes a differentiation between social opinion, the fields of psychology and theology, and the recommendations of the report. This followed the line from the preface of the report from Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, “‘Certainly some things are sins,’ said he, ‘which need not be considered crimes.’”¹⁶ The report then outlines the three instances of homosexual offences: child abuse, public indecency, and private sex between consenting adults. The report explains that adult men having sexual relationships with minors was inappropriate and should remain criminalized.¹⁷ Public indecency was also seen as harmful to social order. The third category, private sex between consenting adults, was seen as separate from the previous two.

The inquiry declared, “We accordingly recommend that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offense.”¹⁸ This then would be explained further by the report. The Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution debated between three possible ages of homosexual consent: 16 (the age of heterosexual consent), 21 (the age after mandatory military service), and 31 (which the committee felt would “protect” the young). The final age that would be recommended as age of consent for gay sex was 21.

15. Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 136.

16. Wolfenden, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, Preface.

17. Wolfenden, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, 42.

18. *Ibid.*, 48.

Report Reception

In early September 1957, the results of the committee were published.¹⁹ The recommendation finally received the media attention that had once been intentionally avoided. “It entirely filled the front pages of Wednesday’s evening papers, with VICE in inch-high capitals as the main headline. And Thursday’s dailies, in their different styles, gave it more column-inches than any of us had dreamt of.”²⁰ Wolfenden’s committee had opened, rather than closed, a door to discussion on the subject of homosexuality, and the responses varied from support to disdain. “The report generated a major debate on male homosexuality in British society during the late 1950s and 1960s, the first time that this issue had ever been the subject of prolonged public discussion in British history.”²¹

Home Secretary Maxwell Fyfe had, by then, moved on from his position and would never gain the seat of Prime Minister. In fact, the majority of the proceedings would be under Secretary of the Home Gwilym George who also left. The new Secretary R.A. Butler would say regarding the report, “They are in advance of public opinion.”²² This was meant to be negative as something without support. However, this response would accurately describe the results of the report.

On the side of condemnation, “The Report was held up to scorn as ‘the Pansies’ Charter’.”²³ The issue was seen as a moral issue. The same Secretary of Home to call the report ahead of its time, R.A. Butler, would also say, “There are, unfortunately, people today to whom criminal law and moral law are coterminous in the sense that they have no other point of reference. They consequently consider that if conduct is not prohibited by criminal law, there is no reason why they should not indulge in it.”²⁴ According to this argument, if the government did not punish bad behavior, then they would be encouraging it. One member of parliament, William Shepherd, went so far as to say, “homosexuals were ‘revolting creatures of odious femininity who want to flaunt

19. Wolfenden, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*. The actual date varies among accounts, but it consistently the first week of September in all accounts.

20. Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 140.

21. *Ibid.*, 2.

22. Eustace Chesser, *Live and Let Live: the Moral of the Wolfenden Report* (London: My Fair Books, 1962), 19.

23. Chesser, *Live and Let Live*, 14.

24. Higgins, *Heterosexual Dictatorship*, 128.

themselves before the public and who are nauseating members of society.”²⁵ For this side of the argument, it did not matter what evidence was presented because the morally objectifiable homosexual behavior did not fit into the life of the English people.

Although the opposition was strong, there was support for the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report. From the position of support, “Neither facts nor arguments will have much effect upon those who are actuated by blind, unreasoning prejudice.”²⁶ In fact, some of the greatest supporters for the recommendations made in the Wolfenden report were those of the churches. “Both the Church of England Moral Welfare Council and the Roman Catholic Advisory Committee appointed by the late Cardinal Griffin agreed that ‘it is not the business of the State to intervene in the purely private sphere, but to act solely as the defender of the common good’.”²⁷ There was support for the Wolfenden report recommendations from the very authority from which the unsupportive were referencing for moral distaste.

The government took the recommendation from the committee regarding prostitution over a year later. This was done in the embodiment of the Street Offences Act of 1959.²⁸ Parliament did not debate the committee’s recommendations on homosexuality until 1960.²⁹ When the discussion of the homosexual offences recommendations did arise, it became a hotly debated issue. This back and forth between the supporters and disapprovers of the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report left the issue in limbo for almost another decade. As for the Committee of Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, its purpose had been fulfilled, and the members continued on in their separate lives and returned to their previous professions.

The report has become known as the Wolfenden Report. John Wolfenden explains this in his memoir. He received copies of the report after it was published in the United States: “When they arrived I found that the title was not HMSO’s formal ‘Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution’ but ‘The Wolfenden Report’.”³⁰ He goes on to explain that even

25. Higgins, *Heterosexual Dictatorship*, 128.

26. Chesser, *Live and Let Live*, 9.

27. *Ibid.*, 14.

28. Higgins, *Heterosexual Dictatorship*, 123.

29. *Ibid.*, 127.

30. Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 140.

though the report was published with his name, he never received a penny because it was published through Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Homosexual Law Reform Society

Over the decade between the publishing of the report and the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, there were a few attempts to make the recommendations law. "Other debates followed, at lengthening intervals but with decreasing majorities against changing the law."³¹ So it appeared that there was an acceptance of the committee's recommendation on prostitution, and the recommendations for homosexuality would fade into oblivion. However, there was another development from the Wolfenden Report.

The Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) was formed as those that supported the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report in regard to updating the laws of homosexuality, came together. The organization was formally created on May 12, 1958.³² Originally, this group was composed of politicians, but soon businessmen and others who supported the recommendations for changes in the law would join. The majority of the leaders of this organization were straight, and they feared having a homosexual leader who could be prosecuted by the very laws HLRS was fighting against.³³ The purpose of the HLRS was to change the law, but it soon gained a reputation of reeducating the public on the issues of sexuality.

By 1964, the HLRS was an operating organization that was strategizing across party lines to create a coalition in support of the Wolfenden Report. The society had drafted bills that would legalize private consensual homosexual acts between men over 21 since its formation in 1958, but it lacked the political, and often financial, weight to influence immediate change. Along the process to establish the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report, many began to seek further changes to the law regarding homosexuality.³⁴

31. Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 144.

32. Antony Grey, *Quest for Justice: towards Homosexual Emancipation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011) 27.

33. Antony Grey, *Quest for Justice*, 29.

34. Patrick Higgins, author of *Heterosexual Dictatorship*, argues the HLRS was more of a hinderance to the passing of gay right laws as well as the reason that homosexual groups and

The Sexual Offences Act of 1967

The Wolfenden Report's recommendations for homosexual offences were first debated in Parliament in 1960. During this debate, the championing argument was, "Society would be destroyed, its heterosexual foundations undermined, if Wolfenden's recommendations became law."³⁵ Another failed attempt would happen in 1962.³⁶ The prospects were not looking good for the passing of any of the recommendations regarding homosexual law reforms.

This all changed in 1965. Arthur Gore, Earl of Arran, took up the cause of the Wolfenden Report. Lord Arran brought up the bill, prepared in advance by HLRS, to debate in the House of Lords where the bill was very successful. The bill was not so well received in the House of Commons like previous attempts. It took several attempts for the House of Commons, but the Earl refused to give up. The Earl of Arran had an older brother who was disavowed by his parents for his soldier lover, which was the reason that Lord Arran fought so hard to pass the bill.³⁷ Although in action Arran was a warrior for gay rights, in his words he was not. After victory in parliament he said, "Homosexuals must continue to remember that while there may be nothing bad in being homosexual, there is certainly nothing good... no amount of legislation will prevent homosexuals from being the subject of dislike and derision, or at best of pity."³⁸ The biases that were held were being put aside to change the law, but the moral implications, whether queerness was right or wrong, was a separate issue.

The battle continued between those that supported the bill and those who did not. Amendments, challenges, and votes slowly pushed the bill through parliament. On July 27, 1967, the bill became law with royal assent, meaning it was signed into law.³⁹ Although it took a decade, the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report had finally been enacted by the government of England. Wolfenden's response to whether he was disappointed by this long period before the report became law, answered, "I think honestly, that I was not . . . the sapient Permanent Secretary at the Home Office said to me, when he had

societies were basically nonexistent in the UK while they exploded in numbers in the United States during this same time period.

35. Antony Grey, *Quest for Justice*, 29.

36. Higgins, *Heterosexual Dictatorship*, 132.

37. Ibid., 132.

38. Ibid., 142.

39. Antony Grey, *Quest for Justice*, 126.

read the draft of our report, ‘Don’t expect legislation quickly. In a thing like this, where deep emotions are likely to be aroused, I would guess fourteen years as the average time-lag between the recommendations and legislation.’”⁴⁰ The break between reporting and seeing change was expected by Wolfenden when he submitted the report.

The change in the law is linked directly with the publication of the Wolfenden Report. “The legacy of the Wolfenden Report as embodied in the 1967 Sexual Offences Act was a carefully demarcated private space in which the poor homosexual, who couldn’t help himself, could behave deplorably with another consenting adult male, without the fear of a policeman feeling his collar.”⁴¹ This change in law eventually led to further changes in laws of the United Kingdom that culminated in gay marriage legalization in 2013.

Conclusion

It is important to realize that while the impact of the Wolfenden Report is great, the findings are outdated and carry prejudices that would not and should not be held up as presently accurate. The recommendations that resulted from the Committee of Homosexual Offences and Prostitution were seen as revolutionary for the time that they were published. The results of the Wolfenden Report would have a long-lasting effect on the LGBTQ+ laws of Britain. Thankfully, The Committee of Homosexual Offences did their duty to the best of their ability. Eustace Chesser, one voice that spoke out after the report was published, said, “They faced the risk of unpopularity and misunderstanding unflinchingly.”⁴² Unpopularity and misunderstanding faced the committee no matter their recommendations. The committee inspired positive change, which was evident in the formation of the Homosexual Law Reform Society.

On July 17, 2013, Queen Elizabeth II of England gave royal assent to the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill, legalizing gay marriage in England.⁴³ On March 14, 2014, the queen gave royal assent to legislation in Scotland that did

40. Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 144.

41. Lewis, *Wolfenden’s Witnesses*, 264.

42. Chesser, *Live and Let Live*, 114.

43. “Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013,” Legislation.gov.uk (Queen’s Printer of Acts of Parliament), accessed March 10, 2020, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/30/part/1/enacted>

the same. in response to the legalization, Prime Minister David Cameron said, "I don't support gay marriage despite being a conservative. I support gay marriage because I'm a conservative."⁴⁴ These words are the result of a conservative interest in homosexuality in the United Kingdom since the Wolfenden Report.

The story of the Wolfenden Report continues past the passing of the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Law, and all the laws in between. "The figure of the straight-mimicking, respectable homosexual, given powerful form by the Wolfenden Report, has had a continuous presence in gay rights discourse throughout all the campaigns for recognition and inclusion, culminating in marriage in 2013 under a Conservative-led government."⁴⁵ However, the gay rights movement has not been fully realized yet. The fight for gay rights continues around the world. Homosexuality is still criminalized in many countries to this day. The punishments that one might face for being gay range from prison time to the death penalty. In these places, the influence of the Wolfenden Report has not yet reached. There is continued discrimination around the world in places that gay marriage is legalized. One example of this is the United States, which legalized gay marriage in 2015 but still does not have legislation to protect rights based on sexual orientation in most states. The Wolfenden report was printed widespread in the United States, greatly impacting social opinion on homosexuality. Conversion therapy, a practice that has long been disavowed by therapists, is still legal in a majority of these states and is still being practiced on minors who identify as anything other than straight. However, more and more are coming to the same conclusion that the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution came to.

It is important to understand LGBTQ+ history in order to understand the social, cultural, and legal structures that continue to debate the rights that should be given to the queer community. The Wolfenden Report changed how homosexuality was treated by the law in Britain over half a century ago. However, there is still much to do in changing legal codes around the world. Arguments against LGBTQ+ rights are not new and are largely uninformed with modern psychology and biology. The debate rages on whether queer rights are human rights. The Wolfenden Report dealt with this debate and came to a conclusion that allies to the gay rights movement come to. Sex between consenting adults is their business. The revolution for LGBTQ+ equality continues on.

44. Brian Lewis, *Wolfenden's Witnesses: Homosexuality in Postwar Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 265.

45. Lewis, *Wolfenden's Witnesses*, 265.

“Yearning to Breath Free” American Policy’s Impact on the Experience of Imprisoned Migrants, 1980–1989

Samuel Johnson

// SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS, TEMPEST-TOST [SIC] TO ME,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”
—Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus”¹

“Nobody wants these people.”
—White House Chief of Staff James Baker, 1981²

The evidence against the Immigration and Naturalization Service was clear. “The agent grabbed me by the arm and twisted it behind my back. He threw me against the van and held me by the arms while a second agent took out his revolver and struck me very hard in the face, twice. I began to bleed profusely from the nose and mouth,” recalled plaintiff Crosby Orantes Hernandez. “He

1. Emma Lazarus, *Emma Lazarus: Selected Poems and Other Writings*, ed. Gregory Eiselein, (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2002), 29.

2. Here, President Ronald Reagan’s Chief of Staff was referring specifically to Cuban refugees detained in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. See footnote 26 for more information. Kristina Shull, “‘Nobody Wants These People’: Reagan’s Immigration Crisis and the Containment of Foreign Bodies,” in *Body/Nation: The Global Realms of U.S. Body Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Emily S. Rosenberg and Shanon Fitzpatrick (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) 19

told me that I would be placed in a cell with men, leaving me with the impression that I would be sexually molested,” testified fellow plaintiff Dora Elia Estrada. Jose Sanchez Flores also added his own personal experience: “We are not given any clothing while in the camp, and we are subject to being punished without a prior hearing for little or no reason. . . . I was never given a hearing regarding whether I should be punished so severely for such minor acts.”³ The United States of America’s Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had no defense against accounts of violence such as these that the INS had perpetrated on Central American refugees.⁴ In the 1982 case *Orantes-Hernandez v. Smith*, cited above, a United States district court ruled that the INS had systematically violated the rights of detained Salvadoran refugees. Among other things, the court found evidence that the INS showed “little or no regard for the procedural or substantive rights of aliens under United States immigration law” and that detainees in immigrant prisons had been lied to regarding the process to obtain political asylum, denied access to legal representation and information, and punished excessively through solitary confinement and physical violence.⁵ The resulting injunction imposed several stipulations on the INS, requiring that federal immigration detention centers “shall not employ threats, misrepresentation, subterfuge or other forms of coercion, . . . inform the class member of the existence of his or her right to apply for political asylum, . . . not advise, encourage, or persuade the class member to change his or her decision [to seek asylum],” or deny legal representation to Salvadoran refugees and prisoners.⁶

Despite the *Orantes-Hernandez* injunction, stories of abuse by the INS in migrant detention centers throughout the 1980s are widespread. Salvadoran detainees recall stories of being told that they had to “choose one of the four” rights granted to them by the *Orantes-Hernandez* injunction after being detained. Others recalled false deportation trials held by guards, and unexplained midnight family separations. Physical abuse by detention center staff in

3. *Orantes-Hernandez v. Smith*, 541 F. Supp. 351, 354 (C.D. Cal. 1982).

4. Notably, California District Court Judge recorded in his conclusion that “defendants have [the evidence presented] left largely uncontested.” The INS’s defense hinged on “urging the Court to step carefully because of the sensitivity of many of these issues,” as the federal government could not disprove the numerous plaintiffs’ testimonies. *Orantes-Hernandez v. Smith*, 541 F. Supp. 351, 354 (C.D. Cal. 1982).

5. *Orantes-Hernandez v. Smith*, 541 F. Supp. 351, 354 (C.D. Cal. 1982).

6. *Orantes-Hernandez v. Gonzales*, No. 82-v-01107 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 26, 2007).

both INS and privately-owned prisons was rampant.⁷ The image of “huddled masses” of Central American refugees, imprisoned and abused by the country in which they had hoped to find a haven, stands in stark contrast to the American self-perception as a nation that welcomes immigrants and is emblematic of the issues in the United States’ immigrant prisons in the 1980s. The belief that America is a nation of immigrants is a central facet of the “American Dream,” and many residents of the United States proudly share stories of ancestors that arrived in America in poverty and worked their ways to prosperity. The ideal is even enshrined in the poem engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty, “The New Colossus”, which welcomes all those “yearning to breath [sic] free,” but the United States government’s treatment of immigrants has often strayed from this ideal. The mistreatment of immigrants detained by the United States is not a new phenomenon. The Immigration and Naturalization Service spent much of the twentieth century pursuing policies like the blatantly-xenophobic “Operation Wetback,” which, in 1954, resulted in a massive military-style campaign that swept the Southwest with raids on farms and workplaces. Rather than hold the migrants they captured, however, the INS preferred swift deportation although, in some cases, they allowed arrested “wetbacks” to remain in the country as laborers with the Bracero Program.⁸ The penultimate decade of the twentieth century is distinct not for an increase in the quantity of detained undocumented aliens and refugees (particularly those displaced by conflict in Central America and the Caribbean), but rather due to an increase in those being held in the dismal prison conditions described by the Orantes-Hernandez plaintiffs for more time than ever before.⁹ In many ways, historical evidence points towards the decade as a pivotal point in this massive explosion in the rate of mass incarceration of migrants, as “between 1975 and 1985, detention funds

7. Kahn, *Other People's Blood: U.S. Immigration Prisons in the Reagan Decade*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 120.

8. Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines - The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 202.

9. Many non-citizens benefitted from immigration legislation passed in the 1980s. The Refugee Act of 1980 created a general policy governing the admission of refugees, and the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) IRCA provided amnesty to for long-term resident undocumented immigrants that eventually allowed more than 2 million people to obtain citizenship. Brad Plumer, “Congress Tried to Fix Immigration back in 1986. Why Did It Fail?” in *Washington Post* (Washington, DC) Jan 30, 2013.

jumped from \$2,451,113 to \$36,474,375” and the INS contracted with over a thousand detention facilities in forty-six different states in 1986 alone.¹⁰

The historiographical record on the creation of immigrant prisons in the nineteen eighties is expansive. Works by authors of many disciplines, such as Bill Ong Hing’s *American Presidents, Deportations, and Human Rights Violations: From Carter to Trump*, and Patricia Macias-Rojas’s *From Deportation to Prison: The Politics of Immigration Enforcement in Post-Civil Rights America*, do an admirable job of explaining the political milieu and international situation that gave rise to the immigration prisons that have dotted the United States since the eighties.¹¹ Other texts, like journalist Robert S. Kahn’s *Other People’s Blood: U.S. Immigration Prisons in the Reagan Decade* and lawyer Cesar Cuauhtémoc Garcia Hernandez’s memoir *Migrating to Prison: America’s Obsession with Locking Up Immigrants*, have compiled first-person accounts from the inside of these prisons in the decade.¹² Still, there is space in the historiography for a work that blends these two types of sources. Too often in works relating to this

10. Patricia Macias-Rojas, *Deportation to Prison: The Politics of Immigration Enforcement in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 56.

11. Bill Ong Hing’s *American Presidents, Deportations, and Human Rights Violations: From Carter to Trump* serves as a president-by-president breakdown of immigrant policy shifts, and Patricia Macias-Rojas’s *From Deportation to Prison: The Politics of Immigration Enforcement in Post-Civil Rights America* gives insight into the evolution of immigration enforcement that led to the mass incarceration carried out from the 1980s to present day. In addition to these sources, *Governing Immigration through Crime*, a compilation of essays and analyses by different authors that highlight how border police and the prison system came together to “control the presence of a group deemed undesirable” and fold the punishment of criminals and the punishment of illegal immigrants together, provides a myriad of well-researched viewpoints about policy. Bill Ong Hing, *American Presidents, Deportations, and Human Rights Violations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Patricia Macias-Rojas, *Deportation to Prison: The Politics of Immigration Enforcement in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 2016). Julie A. Dowding and Jonathan Xavier Inda, ed., *Governing Immigration through Crime: A Reader*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

12. *Other People’s Blood: U.S. Immigration Prisons in the Reagan Decade* is an invaluable account, recorded by journalist Rober Kahn, of the lived experience of migrant detainees, and is replete with interviews, personal anecdotes, and other personal testimonials of the conditions in which undocumented and displaced peoples were held. Cesar Cuauhtémoc Garcia Hernandez’s memoir, *Migrating to Prison* provides a unique viewpoint, as the author blends his legal expertise with experiences from his childhood in Texas, surrounded by people that had spent time in detention. Robert S. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood: U.S. Immigration Prisons in the Reagan Decade*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996). Cesar Cuauhtémoc Garcia

topic, the focus is solely on policy and politics, while in other sources, primary accounts lack context. This text will examine each major shift in immigration policy in the 1980s, from the Refugee Act of 1980 to the adoption of private prisons to 1986's Immigration Reform and Control Act, and connect those policy shifts directly to the experiences of immigrants who were incarcerated due to those laws.

A pair of themes are evident throughout this document: first, it illustrates how a wave of Central American refugees in the nineteen-eighties spurred a surge of xenophobia and policies that increased the rate of imprisonment of immigrants in the United States. Secondly, it gives a voice to the migrants who were incarcerated and impacted by these harsh procedures. This analysis creates direct connections between a government whose officials saw immigrants as “a danger to society” and the negative experiences of migrants that suffered due to those views.¹³ Each major policy shift in the 1980s, including the 1980 Refugee Act, the contracting of private prisons in 1984, and the 1986 Immigration and Refugee Control Act, led to a large numerical increase in the quantity of immigrants imprisoned in the United States. These last two policies combined to drastically increase the size of the immigrant prison system during Reagan's “war on crime.” Moreover, this paper argues that these policy shifts caused thousands of immigrants to lose rights and protections in immigrant prisons and experience systematic abuse on a scale unprecedented in American history.

The Refugee Act and the “Marielitos”

The year 1980 was a momentous time in the history of American immigration, in particular due to the creation of a national strategy to deal with refugees. Senator Edward Kennedy, who introduced the Refugee Act of 1980, described the intended purpose of the reform in six basic objectives: define the term “refugee,” raise the annual limitation on regular refugee admissions, provide emergency procedures for refugee crises, eliminate “parole authority,” establish “an explicit asylum provision,” and create the Offices of the United States Coordinator for

Hernandez, *Migrating to Prison: America's Obsession with Locking Up Immigrants*, (New York; The New Press, 2019).

13. Shull, “Nobody Wants These People,” 6.

Refugee Affairs and the Office of Refugee Resettlement.”¹⁴ However, the newly-signed bill had barely had time for the ink of its signatures to dry when it was put to the test: a massive influx of Cuban refugees began to arrive in boats on the shores of Florida just a few weeks after the bill took effect in April of that year in an event known as the Mariel Boatlift.

Unfortunately, a precedent for using executive action to overrule these laws was set in the 1980s as a response to a refugee crisis of unprecedented scale on the United States’s Caribbean coast. In 1980, after a sharp economic downturn and significant unrest, Cuban dictator Fidel Castro allowed tens of thousands of Cubans to leave the country. Launching from Cuba’s Mariel Harbor, these “Marielitos,” many of which had been released from Cuban prisons, fled to the United States on any boat available to them. Initially, the Carter administration responded by putting the emergency provisions contained in Section 207(b) of the new Refugee Act into effect, but the Mariel Cuban wave showed no sign of stopping, and fear of the refugees, many of whom were reported to have criminal records, was widespread among the American populace. President Carter’s own mother remarked that “I’ll tell you the truth, I hope they don’t come to [her hometown of] Plains.”¹⁵ Faced with over one hundred thousand refugees arriving on Florida’s shores, Carter abandoned the procedures established in the Act and went for a short term solution, “parole authority,” which delayed the

14. Edward M. Kennedy, “Refugee Act of 1980,” *The International Migration Review* 58, vol. 15 no. 1/2 (1981), 141; To grant parole, in immigration terms, is to “temporarily allow certain noncitizens to physically enter the United States if they are applying for admission but are either inadmissible or do not have a legal basis for being admitted to the United States.” This typically requires “urgent humanitarian or significant public benefit reasons for a person to be in the United States and that person merits a favorable exercise of discretion,” Refugees that enter through parole are not “provided an immigration status nor are they formally “admitted” into the United States for purposes of immigration law.” This patchwork system, unlike refugee admittance, does not place entrants on a path towards citizenship or legal residence. “The Use of Parole under Immigration Law.” American Immigration Council, February 6, 2018. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/use-parole-under-immigration-law>.

15. Section 207 (b) stipulates that, “if the President determines, after appropriate consultation, that (1) an unforeseen emergency refugee situation exists, (2) the admission of certain refugees in response to the emergency refugee situation is justified by grave humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest,” he or she may use the provisions of the Refugee Act to expand the number of persons permitted to enter the United States with refugee status. S.643, 96th Congress. Refugee Act of 1980 (1980); United Press International, “Don’t Want Cubans Here: Carter’s Mom,” *Montreal Gazette*, September 25, 1980.

resolution of the status of tens of thousands of Cuban refugees. In immigration, parole status allows aliens to reside in the country, but they are considered neither immigrants on the path to citizenship nor refugees applying for asylum. By removing these persons from the refugee system established by the Refugee Act, the executive office placed the burden of processing the massive influx of migrants on local governments and law enforcement where the Cuban migrants landed; had they been granted refugee status, their situation would have been more well-defined and fewer would have been detained indefinitely.¹⁶ Carter was lambasted for the decision at the time, with one headline reading “Carter Helps Refugee Law Flunk First Test,” and a major flaw in the United States’ way of dealing with immigrants was exposed: executive order had overridden congressional law to pursue alternative measures that were ultimately harmful to both the detained refugees and the state that housed them.¹⁷

The parolee status granted to them put the “Marielitos” in a precarious situation in American immigrant prisons: “The U.S Attorney General can revoke parole for a misdemeanor or for no reason at all, and a parolee who has lived legally in the United States for years can be imprisoned even if he or she is found innocent,” noted reporter Robert S. Kahn, “He or she can be held indefinitely without being given a hearing because he or she has been excluded from the United States.”¹⁸ This undefined status did nothing to benefit the detained Cubans, who were dispersed to detention centers in several states; additionally, the negative media coverage of the “Marielitos” coupled with racial tensions between white Americans and the more racially diverse Cuban population to

16. Cesar Odio, assistant city manager of the City of Miami at time of Mariel Boatlift, recalled the massive undertaking required of his city during the influx of refugees: “The city of Miami coordinated the effort to put the refugees at the Orange Bowl. And the reason why the Orange Bowl was that we had room for 70,000 people for football games. We had concession stands to feed 70,000 people. So that was and we had the bathroom facilities for 70,000 people. So we had all been bused to the Orange Bowl, where we would process them, and then they would be turned over to the federal government for relocation or reunification with their families. And that’s what happened.” Cesar Odio, interview by Maydel Santana Bravo, *Talk of The Nation: Marielitos’ Stories, 30 Years after the Boatlift*, National Public Radio, July 20th, 2010.

17. Kennedy, “Refugee Act of 1980,” 141.

18. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 139.

create a situation in which migrants with no legal rights were held by guards that saw them as violent criminal “others.”¹⁹

The following quote may grant some perspective into the welcome that these migrants received at one detention center in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas: “The first 128 Cubans arrived by plane on the night of May 9, and they were greeted by a man dressed in the white hood and robes of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klansman, ‘Mac’ McCarty, ran out towards the runway and screamed a warning to officials not to let them in.”²⁰ One Cuban detainee named Herman, who is Black, stated after being beaten and kicked by INS guards while handcuffed on a prison bathroom floor that “It’s bad. It’s bad. After three months I was brought back here. I never had a hearing, neither before nor after this. I don’t know why I was sent to Wharton [prison], or why I was sent back.”²¹ Herman’s experience may have been a result of an overtaxed system dealing with thousands of “parolees” with a hazily-defined immigration status; hearings were in short supply. One Marielito parolee, Maximo, had never been accused of a crime in the United States or Cuba, and was arrested while legally crossing into Mexico for a routine dental appointment, something he had done before without incident. “As I understand it,” he noted, “in this country, almost all the people have the right to a bond: drug smugglers, robbers, everyone. Then why not me? Because I’m Cuban? Because I went to the dentist?”²²

The immigration detention issues caused by the Mariel Boatlift continued to hound American leadership throughout the 1980s. President Ronald Reagan, who was elected just a few days after Carter arranged with Cuba to stop sending

19. About forty percent of the Cuban participants in the Mariel Boatlift were of African or Mulatto (mixed race) descent. Gastón A. Fernández, “Race, Gender, and Class in the Persistence of the Mariel Stigma Twenty Years after the Exodus from Cuba,” *International Migration Review* 41, no. 3 (2007), 602; Though approximately twenty percent of the Cubans that arrived as part of the Mariel Boatlift had been incarcerated prior to leaving Cuba, and Fidel Castro made an effort to depict them as escoria (scum) and criminales (criminals), less than one percent were found to have committed crimes considered to be “violent”; most had been imprisoned for petty theft or for actions that would not be considered criminal in the United States such as homosexuality or anti-Communist rhetoric. Alexander Maxwell Stephens, *“I Hope They Don’t Come to Plains”: Race and the Detention of Mariel Cubans, 1980–1981*, (Athens, GA; University of Georgia, 2016) 22–30.

20. It is worth noting that the Klansman, McCarty, was granted entry by military staff at Fort Chaffee due to his status as a Marine veteran, and that he could enter the airfield in Klan regalia. Stephens, *“I Hope They Don’t Come to Plains,”* 27.

21. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 141.

22. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 12.

“undesirables” to Florida, wrote that his “1st problem is what to do with 1000’s of Cubans—criminals & the insane that Castro loaded on refugee boats & sent here.”²³ Reagan’s personal reflection on the issue indicates that his views of the Marielitos had been impacted by the claims of Fidel Castro and some American media, and that he considered them to be dangers to America at large.²⁴ The political and popular impact of the Mariel boatlift would go on to shape immigration policy and the treatment of immigrants detained by the United States throughout the administration of President Reagan. Media reports about the criminality of the Cuban Marielitos and other refugees that followed them spurred harsh anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the United States and within the administration’s leadership.²⁵ At the same time, Carter had shown in his reaction to the Mariel Boatlift that executive action could be used to go over the head of Congress and its Refugee Act, which, in the case of the Cubanos exiled to Florida, resulted in the indefinite detention of thousands of migrants with functionally no rights. Both factors created a situation in which immigrants detained by the American government would go on to have fewer rights and protections, face harsher and at times more violent treatment by detention staff, and find themselves increasingly detained, punished, or released at the whim of the Executive Branch.

Privatization

When President Ronald Reagan began his tenure as the President of the United States, the tide of public opinion had shifted against immigrants, and Reagan’s policies followed the trend. *U. S. News & World Report* warned the country of

23. Shull, “Nobody Wants These People,” 17.

24. One INS officer claimed that, “85 percent of the refugees are convicts, robbers, murderers, homosexuals, and prostitutes.” Though this figure was incorrect, statements like this one were widespread in the media at the time. Stephens, *I Hope They Don’t Come to Plains*, 27.

25. Reagan, Vice President George H. W. Bush, Chief of Staff James Baker, among others, all considered the removal of Cuban “undesirables” a key political issue, and were in favor of continued use of “parole authority” to prevent them from receiving hearings. Arkansas Governor Frank White wrote the administration, noting that the detainees held at Fort Chafee, Arkansas “have become more important as political symbols than as individuals . . . I don’t need to tell you how important it is to the Republican Party and to my own political future that these people be moved.” Shull, “Nobody Wants These People,” 18.

“Castro’s ‘Crime Bomb’ Inside U.S.,”²⁶ Representative Lamar Smith claimed that “Jamaicans, mostly illegal aliens, have developed a massive criminal organization that imports and distributes narcotics,” and the threat of Latin Americans fleeing the violent instability in El Salvador, Colombia, and neighboring Latin American countries dominated media depiction of immigration issues.²⁷ Reagan’s initial stance was more welcoming, and he noted in the summer of 1981 that “our nation is a nation of immigrants. More than any other country, our strength comes from our own immigrant heritage and our capacity to welcome those from other lands.”²⁸ However, the rates of undocumented entry into the United States continued to rise in the early years of Reagan’s first term, surpassing an estimated three hundred thousand entries annually by 1983. The number of refugees from the Caribbean and Central America arriving each year far surpassed the quota of fifty thousand persons allotted by the Refugee Act, and Attorney General William French Smith called an expansion in America’s immigration prisons to “meet a possible immigration emergency.”²⁹ By 1981, the INS, in response to this wave, had adopted a policy of detaining all deportable migrants, including asylum applicants.³⁰ As the end of his first term approached in 1984, Reagan’s stance began to lose its idealism as he announced that “the simple truth is that we’ve lost control of our own borders, and no nation can do that and survive.”³¹ The experiences of the Salvadoran nationals that took place in *Orantes-Hernandez v. Smith*, described previously in this text,

26. Interestingly, the popular 1980s blockbuster film *Scarface* may have played a large role in public perception of the Marielitos. The film opens with a text stating that Castro used the Mariel Boatlift to send “the dregs of his jails” to America and follows a (fictional) murderous Cuban drug lord said to have been part of the Boatlift. Garcia Hernandez, *Migrating to Prison*, 61.

27. Garcia Hernandez, *Migrating to Prison*, 61.

28. Ronald Reagan, “Statement on United States Immigration and Refugee Policy,” Reagan Library Archives, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Archives, July 30, 1981, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/statement-united-states-immigration-and-refugee-policy#:~:text=Our%20nation%20is%20a%20nation,welcome%20those%20from%20other%20lands.&text=We%20shall%20continue%20America's%20tradition,welcomes%20peoples%20from%20other%20countries>.

29. Shull, “Nobody Wants These People,” 19; Jeffrey S. Passel, *Estimating the Number of Undocumented Aliens*, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1986), 33.

30. Macias-Rojas, *Deportation to Prison*, 55.

31. Josiah McC. Heyman, “Constructing a Virtual Wall: Race and Citizenship in U.S.-Mexico Border Policing” in *Governing Immigration through Crime: A Reader*, ed. Julie A. Dowling and Jonathan Xavier Inda, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 118.

give an idea of the major issues occurring in overcrowded INS facilities during this period. Fortunately for Reagan and the INS, and unfortunately for thousands of foreign nationals held by the immigration prison system, 1984 also saw the beginning of a new enterprise that would drastically alter the shape of the American immigration detention: private prisons.

The 1980s was a boom for prisons in America as a whole, as Ronald Reagan's "War on Crime," spearheaded by his 1984 Comprehensive Crime Control Act, created a massive need for increased capacity in American prisons; it made pretrial detention required for more offenders, implemented mandatory minimum sentence lengths, and included expanded forfeiture laws that incentivized increased arrests on the state and federal level.³² Prior to this, the INS had largely contracted with state and federal prisons and local jails, but when faced with an already-overcrowded immigration prison system taxed by the recent influx of Haitian, Cuban, Salvadoran, Honduran, Guatemalan, and Nicaraguan refugees and a constant stream of Mexican entrants, the federal organization turned to a new prison provider: the security industry.³³ Private prisons, which have become an integral part of the modern American justice system, are private facilities, owned and staffed by a corporate owner, which typically charge the government a daily fee for each inmate placed there by the contracted government agency. These company-run facilities are responsible for the detention and security of their inmates, and often look for opportunities to cut costs or benefit from inmate labor in order to turn a profit. The trend of pushing immigrants to private facilities as government-run prisons ran out of space would continue for the rest of the decade and will be explained further in the ensuing section. The Corrections Corporation of America, the "world's first private prison company," opened its first corporately owned private facility in 1984: a shoddily and quickly revamped old building used to hold immigration detainees near the Texas border. It would construct sixty-six more immigrant detention facilities before the end of the decade.³⁴ During the last half of the 1980s, the INS would begin to contract with security industry corporations like the CCA and the GEO Group to run hundreds of federal immigration

32. Macias-Rojas, *Deportation to Prison*, 55.

33. Macias-Rojas, *Deportation to Prison*, 58.

34. Alexis Takoushian, "The Role of Immigration in the Rise of U.S. Private Prisons," *Panoramas*. Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, January 11, 2019. <https://www.panoramas.pitt.edu/news-and-politics/role-immigration-rise-us-private-prisons>.

detention centers throughout the United States.³⁵ The issues of imprisoning individuals with complicated legal and citizenship statuses in prisons centered on cutting corners to increase profit margins quickly became evident.

In March 1985, on a nondescript desert plain outside the city limits of Laredo, Texas, the Corrections Corporation of America opened a first of its kind INS-contracted prison; Laredo was the first U.S. immigration prison built specifically to hold children. It was run for profit, charging the INS by the day for each detainee held within its walls.³⁶ One teenage Guatemalan held there, Ramon, recalled his violent interrogation: “[the guard], dressed in green, then placed a knife upon my right cheek, and grabbed my face with his other hand . . . he asked me “And wouldn’t you like me to make you a scar right now?”³⁷ By all accounts, training and restraint were severely lacking in early private immigration prison staff, even compared to the oft-maligned INS. Immigrant advocate Robert S. Kahn’s description of the Laredo facility speaks for itself in this regard:

The INS/CCA immigration prison in Laredo violated prison standards for detention of juveniles and violated state and federal laws, INS regulations, U.S. district court and Supreme Court Orders, and immigration case law—all as a matter of policy.³⁸ Children were . . . denied access to education, denied access to sunlight, put into solitary confinement without a hearing, . . . repeatedly strip-searched for seeking legal counsel, denied the right to post bond, sexually threatened and pressured by an adult guard, and given ‘trials’ in their cells by prison guards who impersonated immigration judges. . . .³⁹

The experiences of the children held at Laredo were the norm rather than the exception in the hundreds of for-profit immigration prisons built in the 1980s. In the 1984 class action lawsuit *Flores v. Meese*, the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law gathered account after account from detained

35. Macias-Rojas, *Deportation to Prison*, 60.

36. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 117.

37. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 122.

38. Subsequent cases building on the original Orantes-Hernandez injunction found systematic issues in the capacitation of INS and private staff at detention facilities, noting that, “INS processing agents and detention officers are not adequately trained to respect the rights of class members. There is no comprehensive nationwide post-academy training to implement the preliminary injunction.” *Orantes-Hernandez v. Meese*, 685 F. Supp. 1488, 1511–13 (C.D. Cal. 1988).

39. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 118.

minors that had been denied visitation, denied bail, held in crowded cells with unrelated adult prisoners, and forced to submit to invasive strip searches in privately-run holding in Laredo, Pasadena, and San Ysidro. Perhaps the most concerning claim recorded in the lawsuit is that the INS had “initiated a policy to indefinitely jail juveniles” in secret, without informing the young inmates or the public.⁴⁰

Historian Kristina Schull highlights one important transition that took place during the Reagan Administration as a result of this shift in the quantity and administration of immigrant prisons: “the refugee ‘resettlement camp’ had now become inseparable from the ‘detention center’ for the ‘illegal alien.’”⁴¹ The distinction between displaced persons applying for entry on the grounds of a “well-founded fear” of persecution in their home countries and economic migrants detained without a visa was blurred as both groups came to be held in the same facilities by under-trained private prison officials. To the administrators of these corporately held detention centers, “aliens” were “aliens.” Nevertheless, for reasons that will be explored in the following section, private immigration prisons became the federal norm, providing an “economic boom” for corporations like the CCA and opening room in federal and state-run prisons for Reagan’s other war.⁴²

The War on . . .

On its surface, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the only major immigration legislation enacted during Reagan’s eight years as president, appears to have been a largely beneficial change for the millions of undocumented immigrants residing in the United States at the time. Upon signing the Act, President Reagan noted his pride in the coalition that put the IRCA together and stated that “future generations of Americans will be thankful for our efforts to humanely regain control of our borders and thereby preserve the value of one of the most sacred possessions of our people: American citizenship.”⁴³ He was, in part, correct: in passing the bill, Congress provided a path to legal residency

40. *Flores v. Meese*, No. 85–4544 (C.D. Cal. 1985).

41. Shull, “Nobody Wants These People,” 21.

42. Garcia Hernandez, *Migrating to Prison*, 125.

43. Ronald Reagan, “Statement on Signing the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986,” Reagan Library Archives, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

for undocumented long-term residents that had entered the country prior to 1982, a decision that would eventually help over two million foreign nationals gain citizenship in the United States.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the effects of the IRCA would combine with that of another Reagan-era policy to create an explosion in the number of detained migrants that has continued for decades.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act's massive offer of amnesty certainly bettered the lives of millions of future Americans, but it did not come without a compromise. In order to appease both parties in Congress, that offer of amnesty was coupled with a "promise that a new program of employer sanctions would destroy the incentive for further mass immigration" and continued increases to the funding of immigration enforcement agencies, particularly the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which administered immigration prisons at the time.⁴⁵ The Immigration and Control Act increased appropriations for the INS and Executive Office of Immigration Review, "obligates increased funding . . . for the border patrol," and, pointedly, "expresses the sense of the Congress that the immigration laws of the United States should be vigorously enforced."⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the Immigration Reform and Control Act and its tantalizing promise of amnesty had the opposite effect of its intended impact on illegal immigration: employer sanctions, intended to fine those that hired undocumented workers to reduce the number of jobs available to those that entered the country clandestinely, went largely unenforced, and "the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the country soared, from an estimated 5 million in 1986 to 11.1 million" as of 2013.⁴⁷ "Humanely regaining control" of the hundreds of thousands of immigrants and asylum applicants entering the United States would prove to be a taxing task for the now-fully-funded INS.

Just as Reagan and Congress pushed for stronger immigration control, their War on Drugs continued, and the interplay between the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act and the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act had a significant effect on the situations in which the immigrants detained by the INS found

and Archives, November 6, 1986, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/statement-signing-immigration-reform-and-control-act-1986>

44. "The law awarded green cards to about 2.7 million immigrants, all told—including about 1 million farm workers. It was the largest legalization program in U.S. history." Plumer, "Congress Tried to Fix Immigration Back in 1986. Why Did It Fail?"

45. Jack Miles, "A Bold Proposal on Immigration." *Atlantic Monthly* vol. 273, no. 6 (June 1994): 32–43.

46. S.1200, 99th Congress. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (1986).

47. Plumer, "Congress Tried to Fix Immigration Back in 1986. Why Did It Fail?"

themselves detained; more specifically, a massive wave of drug-related incarcerations shunted immigrant and refugees from federally-administered facilities to the increasingly large private prison industry.⁴⁸ One of the stipulations put into effect as part of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act was the mandatory detention of all non-citizens who had committed an aggravated felony or drug-related offense, marking the beginning of an era of mandatory immigration detention that coincided with the mandatory prison sentences of the War on Drugs.⁴⁹ Fear of immigrants with connections to drugs and crime at this time remained high, and Reagan himself made his own views on Central American refugees, many of which were forced out of their homes by his actions, very clear, warning Americans (and the INS) that Soviet-allied Nicaraguans were “just two days’ driving away from the border town of Harlingen, Texas.”⁵⁰ In order to carry out the policies imposed by this policy shift, the 1988 Alien Criminal Apprehension and Border Patrol Criminal Apprehension Program were created to augment the INS’s ability to detain more migrants and Congress increased funding to locate private incarceration facilities “that could be made available to the Bureau of Prisons for use in incarcerating aliens.”⁵¹

48. The scale of the increase in prisoners created by Reagan’s policies is difficult to fully communicate. The Bureau of Justice Statistics notes that, by 1989, the final year of Ronald Reagan’s presidency, “the number of prisoners in these facilities increased by more than 82,000 in 1989, the largest increase in the 65-year history of the [Bureau of Justice Statistics] statistical series. The increase equals a demand for 1,600 new prison beds per week nationwide.” Lawrence A. Greenfield, “Prisoners In 1989,” Bureau of Justice Statistics (Office of Justice Programs, May 1990), <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail>.

49. H.R.5484, 99th Congress. Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (1988).

50. A sense of fear regarding Latin American immigrants is evident in publications of the time. A 1985 article published in U.S. News & World Report claims that “now sounds the march of new conquistadors in the American Southwest... By might of numbers and strength of culture, Hispanics are changing the politics, economy and language in the U.S. states that border Mexico. Their movement is, despite its quiet and largely peaceful nature, both an invasion and a revolt.” Josiah McC. Heyman, “Constructing a Virtual Wall: Race and Citizenship in U.S.-Mexico Border Policing” in *Governing Immigration through Crime: A Reader*, ed. Julie A. Dowling and Jonathan Xavier Inda, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 118. Two days after Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act, news of the Iran-Contra deal broke, revealing to the United States that much of the violent instability in Central America had been secretly perpetrated by American-financed military equipment and weapons. Reagan’s own decisions had helped create the wave of Central American refugees that troubled his administration. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 118. Garcia Hernandez, *Migrating to Prison*, 63.

51. Macias-Rojas, *Deportation to Prison*, 60.

Refugee crises in Central America pushed INS facilities to their limit. The Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and other Central Americans fleeing in the thousands from civil unrest and war in their home countries in the latter part of the nineteen eighties saw the United States as a “beacon of safety.”⁵² As they made the grueling trek north, towards stability, they were unaware of the legislative shift that had created a larger Immigration and Naturalization Service police force, now equipped with increased funding and access to hundreds of private prison facilities. By 1989, spurred by the stipulations of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, the arrest rate for Central American migrants had increased by 72 percent.⁵³ The experiences of the migrants detained at this time are shockingly like those described by the plaintiffs of *Orantes-Hernandez*, seven years previously. One unnamed asylum applicant was told that “political asylum ‘wasn’t given’ in the United States, and that if she did not sin for voluntary departure she was going to be in detention for a long time in a jail where there were ‘only men.’”⁵⁴ Carlos Sanchez, a medical student from Nicaragua that was detained as he sought asylum with his wife and children, stated that “Many suffer from diarrhea, hunger, bronchitis. . . . The sanitary conditions are nonexistent. With no medical attention, the children suffer hunger. . . . There is shit everywhere, and there are children everywhere.”⁵⁵ Another woman was grabbed by a detention agent by the hand and “physically forced to make an X as her signature on form I-274 [requesting ‘voluntary repatriation’].”⁵⁶ At the end of the 1980s, the issues noted in the original injunction noted at the beginning of this text, issued to protect the rights of detainees, continued, but on a much larger scale: the United States had gone from detaining fewer than three thousand immigrants at a time to imprisoning well over seven thousand per day, and the average length of detention leapt from just a few days to approximately one month.⁵⁷ The War on Drugs had become a War on Migrants that filled abusive, privately-run detention centers all along America’s southern border.

52. Garcia Hernandez, *Migrating to Prison*, 125

53. In McAllen, Texas alone, the number of undocumented migrants from Central American countries arrested rose from 1,776 in 1988 to 3,287 the following year. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 215.

54. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 220.

55. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 193–194.

56. Kahn, *Other People’s Blood*, 220.

57. Emily Kassie, “How the US Built the World’s Largest Immigrant Detention System,” *Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, September 24, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/24/detained-us-largest-immigrant-detention-trump>.

Conclusion

The 1980s mark a departure from immigrant-detention trends earlier in the century and a shift towards mass detention that has endured for decades. At the midpoint of the twentieth century, the United States of America was moving away from the mass detention of immigrants; the 1958 Supreme Court case *Leng May Ma v. Barber*, confirmed the sentiment that “needless confinement” was not necessary through use of parole programs, and the court found that “physical detention of aliens is now the exception, not the rule.” The United States Supreme Court argued that immigrant detention does not and cannot “reflect the humane qualities of an enlightened civilization.”⁵⁸ Nevertheless, over half of a century later, the United States is detaining more immigrants and refugees than ever before, and the policy changes enacted in the 1980s are responsible for ensuring that said “exception” has become the rule. This text has laid out sources and evidence in order to illustrate three central shifts in American immigration detainment that occurred in the 1980s. First, it claims that fear of a wave of Central American and particularly Cuban migrants created fear both in and out of the government that led to a push for more immigration prisons. Secondly, it argues that increased reliance on the emergent private prison industry created more difficult situations for immigrant inmates that granted them fewer rights and protections. Thirdly, it posits that the War on Drugs and its mandatory minimum sentences were imposed on migrants as well as the American population at large, exacerbating the previously noted pair of issues. These shifts, brought about by Reagan-era policies, show that a desire for control of the border and the waging of the “war on crime” were pursued in favor of ensuring humane treatment and due process.

The toll that Reagan-era immigrant detention policies took on the wellness of the detainees that experienced them is difficult to gauge, but personal accounts describe worsening conditions that put their health and mental well-being of detainees. The detained juvenile plaintiffs of *Flores v. Meese*, who were denied medical treatment, due process, and perhaps most troublingly, “subject to strip or body cavity searches after visiting with their attorneys,” represent but a small sample of the many migrants that experienced institutional abuse in

58. Ana Raquel Minian and Allyson Hobbs, “Perspective: A Firsthand Look at the Horrors of Immigration Detention,” *Washington Post* (WP Company, April 1, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/06/25/a-firsthand-look-at-the-horrors-of-immigration-detention/>.

rapidly growing detention centers.⁵⁹ From the paroled Marielitos to the Orantes-Hernandez plaintiffs to Carlos Sanchez and his family, the stories are the same: American detention policies implemented in the nineteen eighties made custody more difficult, more overcrowded, and more harmful to foreign bodies. The first-hand experiences of immigrants that spent time in the United States' detention centers show that human rights and dignity were disregarded as a matter of Reagan-implemented policy; sadly, these mistreatments have continued ever since, and the toll continues to rise.

These major shifts in the way that the United States treated its foreign prisoners are of the utmost significance because these same issues have continued for decades, plaguing American immigrants in detention now just as they did at their onset in the 1980s. Law professor Juliet P. Stumpf notes the major shift in the circumstances of imprisoned immigrants at the end of the penultimate decade of the twentieth century as well: "Detention of aliens with criminal backgrounds was less common [prior to the late 1980s] than now, and relief from detention more readily available based on a range of circumstantial considerations," she wrote in 2006. "Criminal sanctions for purely immigration-related violations," Stumpf wrote, "were far more limited in comparison to the present day."⁶⁰ Indeed, the consequences of those three specific shifts mentioned previously can be easily observed in the experiences of immigrants imprisoned in the United States, on a much larger scale. Just as in 1980, fears of dangerous immigrants continue to push presidents to ignore established norms as they increase federal immigration detention; now, instead of Carter failing to address the refugee status of the Marielitos, it is Trump pushing against limits on the length of detention for migrant families.⁶¹ The American government continues to contract the Corrections Corporation of America (now called CoreCivic), the GEO Group, and other private prisons, which continue to commit a disproportionately high number of human rights abuses while being paid to operate over

59. *Flores v. Meese*, No. 85-4544 (C.D. Cal. 1985).

60. Juliet P. Stumpf, "The Crimmigration Crisis: Immigrants, Crime, and Sovereign Power" in *Governing Immigration through Crime: A Reader*, ed. Julie A. Dowling and Jonathan Xavier Inda, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 61.

61. Muzaffar Chishti and Sarah Pierce, "Trump Administration's New Indefinite Family Detention Policy: Deterrence Not Guaranteed," Migration Information Source (Migration Policy Institute, September 28, 2020), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trump-administration-new-indefinite-family-detention-policy>.

sixty percent of the United States' immigrant detention centers.⁶² Immigration and Customs Enforcement, known as ICE, the successor to the INS, continues to detain migrants at a growing rate, surpassing fifty thousand at a time as of 2018, and “use torture to make Africans sign [their] own deportation orders.”⁶³ The issues of the Reagan decade have become fundamental parts of the immigration prison in this country for over three decades. The American immigrant detention center was forever altered by the policies that it adapted in the 1980s, and as a result, millions of asylum-seekers, immigrants, and “huddled masses yearning to breath free” have experienced abuse and a loss of human rights in American prisons.

62. Livia Luan, “Profiting from Enforcement: The Role of Private Prisons in U.S. Immigration Detention,” Migration Information Source (Migration Policy Institute, September 28, 2020), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/profitting-enforcement-role-private-prisons-us-immigration-detention>.

63. Emily Kassie, “How the US Built the World’s Largest Immigrant Detention System,” *Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, September 24, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/24/detained-us-largest-immigrant-detention-trump>; Julian Borger, “US Ice Officers ‘Used Torture to Make Africans Sign Own Deportation Orders’,” *Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, October 22, 2020), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/oct/22/us-ice-officers-allegedly-used-torture-to-make-africans-sign-own-deportation-orders?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other.

Maya-Catholic Theologian

The Influence of Maya Theology on Catholic Doctrine in the Morley Manuscript

Travis Meyer

IN 1576, AT THE HEIGHT OF CATHOLIC EVANGELIZATION IN THE Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, an unnamed Catholic preacher met regularly with a congregation of indigenous Maya to teach them the doctrine of Christianity. He taught them about the biblical creation, as well as the nature of God and the devil, all from his own original doctrinal instructional manual. This preacher was also a Maya himself. Between the years 1500 and 1800, only about 1,100 European-descended Catholic friars ministered to the tens of millions of Maya in Mesoamerica.¹ Because there were so many natives and so few friars, they could not regularly visit, bless, or instruct every community they had jurisdiction over. Instead, friars would often train Maya converts to carry out some of the lesser duties of religious officials, including the doctrinal instruction of other Maya. This ensured that each Maya Christian community received the ecclesiastical attention it needed.

Though Spanish authorities allowed these Maya authorities, known as *maestros*, to teach their communities Christian doctrine, they prohibited them from creating any of their own sermons. The unnamed *maestro* mentioned at the beginning of this article chose to break that rule. He composed what is

1. John D. Early, *The Maya and Catholicism: An Encounter of Worldviews* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 134.

known today as the Morley Manuscript, named after the archaeologist Sylvanus Morley, who discovered the document and donated it to the Museum of New Mexico. The sermons within the manuscript cover a variety of topics, including, but not limited to, the creation of the world, the fall of Adam and Eve, questions and answers regarding the nature of God, and Christian fables.

Despite being based on a collection of Christian sermons, the doctrine taught within the Morley Manuscript's pages is unorthodox when compared to the Bible and other sanctioned religious teachings of the day. Native Maya religion was an inclusive religion; the Maya frequently adopted the religious beliefs and practices of the other cultures they came into contact with, such as the Nahuas of central Mexico or the Mixtecs of present-day Oaxaca. Though it was heretical in Catholic culture, the combination of Christ, saints, and other Christian concepts with traditional Maya theology would have been conventional in Maya religion.

The Morley Manuscript is evidence of the Maya willingness to combine Christianity with ancient Mesoamerican religion and “Mayanize” Christian teachings. The manuscript has remained fairly unstudied, with the most significant treatments being done by Gretchen Whalen (2003) and Mark Z. Christensen (2013), who have studied the Maya influence on this Christian text. This study adds to their analyses by specifically examining the topics of the natures of God, the devil, and the creation of the world as they are set forth in the Morley Manuscript in order to prove that the Maya understanding of Catholicism in the Early Modern Period was a syncretic blend of Christian and Maya theological beliefs.

The Identity of God

Despite the many differences between Maya and Christian doctrine, their worship of deity is similar—they both eat their gods. Many Christians participate in some form of communion, or a ritual centered around the reenactment of the Last Supper, a biblical event during which “Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.”² In the case of the Catholic Church, these words are interpreted literally, and

2. Matthew 26:26.

when this event is reenacted in communion, the bread which the participants eat physically transforms into the body of Christ upon consumption.

In a similar vein, a key aspect of proper worship for a Maya was to engage in what historian John Early calls “the covenant of reciprocity.”³ Maya gods, unlike the Christian God, are viewed as fallible and subject to death, and in order to continue living forever, they engage in a reciprocal and co-dependent relationship with mankind. One such god who relies on the help of human beings is the principal Maya creator deity, the Maize God. Traditional Maya theology holds that at the creation of humanity, man’s flesh was created by the Maize God out of maize, the very same material from which his own body is made. Therefore, in the covenant of reciprocity, humans are expected to plant and grow maize in order to perpetually rebirth the Maize God during each agricultural season while the Maize God sustains the life of the human farmer by allowing them to harvest and eat his flesh in the form of the newly grown maize.⁴

The similarity between eating the flesh of the Maize God and eating Christ’s flesh at communion did not go unnoticed by the Maya. Many of them, including the author of the Morley Manuscript, combined the two ideas into one and began to associate the Maize God with Christ, as evidenced by the author’s word choice when describing communion. The Manuscript contains a discourse on the Lord’s Prayer, which contains the phrase, “*Dza ca samal kin [U]aah toon*,” translated by Gretchen Whalen as “Give our daily bread to us.”⁵ While Whalen likely chose those particular words for her translation because they fall in line with the terminology of the Lord’s prayer as recited in English, the word *Uaah* could equally be translated as “tortilla” instead of “bread.” The standard form in which maize is consumed is as a tortilla.

In order to survive from day to day, a Christian supplicates their creator for daily bread, just as a Maya requires his daily tortilla to fulfill their covenant of reciprocity. This idea of conflation is strengthened by another passage in the Morley Manuscript which clarifies that the bread asked for in the Lord’s Prayer is not just any bread, but “is the bread of the most holy sacrament, that which

3. Early, *The Maya and Catholicism*, 69.

4. Michael D. Coe and Stephen Houston, *The Maya*, 9th ed. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 71.

5. Gretchen Whalen, “An Annotated Translation of a Colonial Yucatec Manuscript: On Religious and Cosmological Topics by a Native Author” (Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., 2003) <http://www.famsi.org/reports/01017/01017Whalen01.pdf> (accessed Dec 8, 2020), 187.

is of God. It is this by which our souls are really fed and become fat, when you receive and you revere it.”⁶ It is then the sacramental bread, the bread that is key to spiritual survival that is the true “daily bread,” and during communion, the sacramental bread is transformed into the body of Jesus Christ, the creator of mankind. Therefore, it is no surprise that the communion bread receives such special attention in the manuscript, as the reciprocal covenant of the Maize God and Christ’s covenant of communion are so similar, both being covenants necessary for spiritual or physical survival.

The conflation of Jesus with the Maize God is not the only instance in which the identities of Christian and Maya deities are combined. Another instance appears when the author of the manuscript chooses to use religious terminology with pre-Columbian connotations. For example, though the author usually uses the word *Dios* (the Spanish word for God) to refer to the Christian God,⁷ there are instances of the author using the word *ku* (a Yucatec Mayan word for deity) instead,⁸ the word they use to refer to indigenous deities in general.⁹ This created an issue for the Catholic friars when it came to attempts to persuade the Maya that there was only one god, the Christian *Dios*. By using the traditional term *ku* for deity and using the Spanish word *Dios* to refer to the god that Christians worship, the author gives his Maya parishioners the impression that there continues to be more than one god (*ku*), but that the Catholic god’s name is *Dios*. By doing so, the author of the manuscript emphasizes the worship of the Christian God, but does not deny the existence of other, pre-Columbian deities.

The Devil and His Demons

This muddying of the identity of divine beings is not just limited to God. Both Spanish and Maya Catholics attempted to teach the nature of demonic beings by associating them with indigenous deities. For example, when discoursing on false wisdom and the origin of pride, the author writes, “So where would it come from, their evil wisdom that came forth here, when it came here on this earth, that the arrogant ones learned here, in your opinion? From no other

6. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 226–227.

7. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 113.

8. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 283.

9. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 115.

than Hun Ahau, who is the leader of the devils; Lucifer is his name.”¹⁰ Hun Ahau was a pre-Columbian deity associated with the underworld as well as with Venus, the morning star.¹¹ The equation of Hun Ahau with Lucifer in the Maya text is most likely due to Lucifer’s association with the morning star, as well as Catholic friars’ tendency to associate all pre-Columbian deities with the devil and his minions. For instance, Franciscan friar Diego de Landa claimed to have learned from some Maya that they believed in a hell filled with demons and torture of all kinds, and that “there was in this place a devil, the prince of all the devils, whom all obeyed, and they call him in their language Hunhau.”¹² While Landa’s claim that this was a pre-Columbian belief is likely false (many friars felt inclined to interpret any native religious ideas they encountered as an apostate form of Christianity), the fact that both he and the author of the Morley Manuscript identified Hun Ahau as the devil cannot be a coincidence, and probably reflected a teaching that was common at least throughout Yucatan, if not the whole Maya world.

While the widespread labeling of a native God as the devil may seem like a victory for the Catholics, it may have also had unintended consequences that promulgated the observance of pre-Columbian religion in conjunction with Christianity. Despite the efforts of Catholic authorities, many Maya continued to believe in the existence of their native gods long after the Spanish began evangelization.¹³ Therefore while the friars may have intended for the Maya to recognize the being who went by Hun Ahau as the devil in disguise, statements such as those in the Morley Manuscript can be seen as validating his existence. While the image of Hun Ahau presented in the manuscript does paint him in a negative light, it does not deny his existence. What may have been seen as devil worship for the friars may have only been the continuation of pre-Columbian religious practices for the Maya.

A similar fusion of diabolic Christian thought and Maya spiritualism reveals itself in the similarities drawn between demons and shamanic transformation into animals. To examine the roots of this fusion, we once again return to native

10. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 82.

11. Susan Milbrath, *Star Gods of the Maya: Astronomy in Art, Folklore, and Calendars* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 159–160.

12. Diego de Landa, *Relación de las cosas de Yucatan*, trans. Alfred M. Tozzer (Cambridge: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1941), 132.

13. Nancy M. Farriss, *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 313.

terminology used by Catholic friars to explain Christian concepts. According to ethnohistorian Louise Burkhart, in order to teach the Nahuas of central Mexico about demons lesser than the devil, Franciscan friars needed to use a word that “would indicate non-divine status, malicious character, and dangerous power.”¹⁴ The word they settled on was *tlacatecolotl*, which referred to a type of evil shaman who could transform into animals when he entered a trance. “The *tlacatecolotl* was associated with the night, the underworld, sorcery, ghostly apparitions, human afflictions, even horns,” yet was not a god.¹⁵ Therefore, this seemed to be the perfect indigenous term to use to refer to a demon. And though *tlacatecolotl* was specifically a term among the Nahuas, the Maya also had shamans who possessed similar powers.¹⁶

The association of demons with beings that can transform into animals can be found in a section of the Morley Manuscript that treats several *ejemplos*, or stories, intended to both entertain and teach doctrine. In one of these *ejemplos*, a dying warrior asks his comrade to sell his horses after he dies in order to pay off personal debts, so that he may be speeded through purgatory. This story is not original to the Morley Manuscript, but comes from a book of medieval Christian tales written by one Clemente Sánchez de Vercial. Interestingly, however, Sanchez’s version of the story and that of the *maestro* differ slightly. In both stories, the comrade fails to sell the horses, but in Sanchez’s version, the comrade is punished by being torn apart by demons,¹⁷ whereas in the Morley Manuscript, “really quickly (the comrade) died while being ripped apart by jaguars and wild beasts.”¹⁸ Having changed the killers of the comrade from demons to animals may be attributed to the author’s understanding of the nature of a demon, especially when that animal is a jaguar, one of the most common animals that a Maya shaman could supposedly turn into. Though Catholic friars may have intended to only use an indigenous word to represent a Christian idea, the understanding of what that word meant to a native likely did not change simply because the friars began to use it in a different way.

14. Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahuatl-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 40.

15. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, 41.

16. Eva Jane Neumann Fridman and Mariko Namba Walter, *Shamanism: An Encyclopedia of World Beliefs, Practices, and Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 1:433.

17. Clemente Sánchez de Vercial, *The Book of Tales* by A. B. C. trans. John E. Keller, L. Clark Keating, and Eric M. Furr (New York: Lang, 1992), 200.

18. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 267.

The Creation

The Morley Manuscript includes a telling of the Genesis account of the creation of the world and spends a considerable amount of time recounting the creation of the first man, Adam. However, the version of the story that the author of the manuscript recounts deviates from the biblical account in such a way that suggests that the author was influenced by one of the most widely-known Maya creation myths for which records still exist: the *Popol Vuh*. One such deviation in the manuscript emphasizes how multiple beings counseled together to make man in the image of God, reading, “Then when They stood in the middle of Earthly Paradise, the blessed three persons, the most holy trinity, while They speak among themselves, God the father, God the son, God the holy spirit. They say, ‘Let us create and let us make man in Our image, in Our likeness . . .’”¹⁹ Though the Genesis account does use plural pronouns in two cases during this same story (“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”), there is no mention of a group of deities speaking among themselves and deliberating the creation of man.²⁰ The Morley Manuscript account is much more similar to the *Popol Vuh* account in this regard, given that in the *Popol Vuh*, a variety of deities with names such as Sovereign, Quetzal Serpent, He Who Has Begotten Sons, and She Who Has Borne Children, counsel together before making anything, whether it be the mountains, animals, or humans.²¹

It is when the first man is formed, however, that the parallels become so obvious that the native influence on the Morley Manuscript telling of Genesis cannot be ignored. In the *Popol Vuh*, the gods make various attempts to create mankind exactly how they would like it. One of the earlier attempts is a humanoid figure made out of mud that lacks the ability to speak properly.²² Likewise, in the Morley Manuscript, Adam is created from “damascene” earth and initially lacks the abilities to speak, hear, and see.²³ When Adam is fully formed, however, the manuscript states that “his mouth became open; then

19. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 152.

20. Genesis 1:26

21. Allen J. Christenson, *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya: The Great Classic of Central American Spirituality, Translated from the Original Maya Text* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 70.

22. Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 78.

23. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 153.

he began to speak, while he gives thanks to God his creator, while he raises his sight on high, while sees [*sic*] the heavens, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars.”²⁴ Here, in just a few lines, the manuscript mirrors several aspects of the creation of man in the *Popol Vuh*, including man’s ability to speak being a key to successful creation,²⁵ the thanks that both Adam and the first men in the *Popol Vuh* give to their creators,²⁶ and man’s ability to see the other wondrous creations of the universe.²⁷

Prior to the creation of man, the Morley Manuscript offers a description of the paradisiacal Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve dwelt. Here, the manuscript deviates severely from what is described in the Genesis account, and by so doing again reflects its Maya authorship and in what way it was intended for a Maya audience. The most obvious Maya influence in the manuscript’s version of the garden is the presence of the *yax cheel cab*, the first tree of the world. Perhaps no symbol of creation and the newness of life is as common in the Maya world as the world tree, as it is the source from which life proceeds forth. This tree is common throughout all Mesoamerican religion and is depicted in countless stelae, paintings, and ceramics throughout the entire Maya world.²⁸ Though the biblical account of the Garden of Eden does mention the presence of a tree of life and a tree of knowledge,²⁹ terminology used in the Morley Manuscript coincides perfectly with that of pre-Columbian Maya writings that treat the matter of the first world tree.

In addition to the tree, there are two other symbols in the garden that carry a connotation of authority and divinity that a Maya would be sure to recognize. Adjacent to the tree gushes forth “the water of a spring, really sweet” and “at its source is the chair, the seat, on which sits the ruler, under the feet of Jesus Christ.”³⁰ Water, especially water that came from under the ground, such as a spring or *cenote* (a large, natural pit filled with groundwater) was considered among the Maya to be divine in origin,³¹ and was often used in religious rituals

24. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 154.

25. Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 79.

26. Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 199.

27. Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 197.

28. Allen J. Christenson, *The Burden of the Ancients: Maya Ceremonies of World Renewal from the Pre-Columbian Period to the Present* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 41.

29. Genesis 2:9.

30. Whalen, “An Annotated Translation,” 150.

31. Early, *The Maya and Catholicism*, 64.

as a portal to the world in which the gods lived.³² Further, chairs and sitting positions were associated with rulership in cultures throughout all of Mesoamerica.³³ Consequently, the non-biblical image of Christ sitting upon a throne at the head of a spring in the Garden of Eden invokes an image to a Maya audience of rulership and a divine presence. The creation of man and the Garden of Eden, therefore, are adapted in the Morley Manuscript to mirror motifs of Maya creation theology that would result in greater understanding on the part of the Maya audience.

Conclusion

It is evident from the numerous examples presented here that it was no difficult task for a Maya in charge of teaching Christian doctrine to conflate it with pre-Columbian traditions. The use and equation of pre-Columbian figures with Christian characters, such as the Maize God with Jesus Christ, Hun Ahau with Lucifer, and a *tlacatecolotl* for a demon clearly indicate this trend. Moreover, native motifs including the world tree, groundwater, and seats of authority combined with direct parallels to indigenous traditions for the creation of the world would have allowed the author of this manuscript to frame the Judeo-Christian creation in such a way that a Maya *maestro's* audience of Maya parishioners would have understood.

The alterations made by the author of this manuscript contributed to a religious syncretism that was developing not only in Maya regions, but all throughout North and South America as Europeans attempted to replace the religious systems of populations that vastly outnumbered them. As to why the document contains instances of conflation of Maya and Catholic doctrine, it is difficult to say. One possible explanation is that it is a sign of active rebellion against the Catholic system through an attempt to retain their indigenous religion. This theory would be supported by the mere existence of this manuscript, as native-authored sermons were prohibited. Another possible explanation is that the Maya simply did not understand the Catholic doctrine well enough to maintain

32. Mark Christensen, *Nahua and Maya Catholicisms: Texts and Religion in Colonial Central Mexico and Yucatan* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013), 206.

33. Christensen, *Nahua and Maya Catholicisms*, 207.

orthodoxy. This would be likely due to language barriers between them and the Spanish as well as lack of consistent contact with friars.³⁴

No matter the reason, though, by introducing native theology into Christian doctrine, the *maestros* would undoubtedly have given divine authority to the Catholic teachings that they so actively taught to their native parishioners. The fact that a Maya willingly broke the law in order to compose a Christian text reveals that to a major degree, Maya religious leaders accepted Christianity, albeit on their own terms and through a filter of pre-Hispanic culture. Also, seeing as the author of the Morley Manuscript was the regular ecclesiastical figure in his town, this document also reveals that Mayanized Christianity was typical of native colonial societies, and that the face of the Catholic Church for most indigenous Americans was an indigenous face. In the end, Catholic-Maya syncretism was principally perpetuated by *maestros*, and as the colonial period in Latin America came and went, the choice of how Catholicism developed laid in the hands of those native to the land.

34. Early, *The Maya and Catholicism*, 177.

From President to Dictator

Anastasio Somoza Debayle's Fall from Grace in the American Press

Kara Molnar

WHEN NEWS OF ANASTASIO SOMOZA DEBAYLE'S ASSASSINATION in Paraguay reached Nicaragua, the reigning Sandinista government announced over radio that its citizens should "celebrate with joy the execution of Anastasio Somoza."¹ Nicaraguans obeyed this command in force, dancing in the streets, filling downtown bars, and setting off fireworks late into the night.² While U.S.-based journalists did not face this turn of events with such glee, they eagerly provided their own renditions of what precisely had transpired the morning of September 17, 1980, as well as the legacy Somoza would leave behind. Condemnations of the former Nicaraguan ruler as a "dictator" were universal: the *New York Times* even declared that "there was little admirable and nothing lovable about Anastasio Somoza, the failed caudillo of Nicaragua."³ Many correspondents elected not to mention his deep, long-lasting relationship with the United States, glossing over the support he had

1. "Somoza Dies in a Hail of Bullets," *Boston Globe* (1960–1989), Sep 18, 1980. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/1008205514?accountid=4488>.

2. Ibid.

3. "The Bazooka's Other Victim," *New York Times* (1923–Current File), Sep 19, 1980. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/121146354?accountid=4488>.

received from the American government. A mere decade earlier, the reverse had been true: Somoza was held up as a United States ally in its all-encompassing fight against communism, his human rights record overlooked.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) ousted Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the last dictator from the 43 year U.S.-backed Somoza dynasty to hold power, in July 1979. Throughout most of his rule, Somoza Debayle had enjoyed close relationships with American politicians, and the U.S. had installed his father in 1936.⁴ He had run Nicaragua's army for years under the presidency of his brother before he gained the title of president himself in 1967.⁵ Somoza received his education at West Point and commanded Nicaragua's National Guard at the time of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and he allowed the United States military to train on and launch the 1961 attack from Nicaraguan soil.⁶ Nonetheless, despite his pro-American policy, Somoza was brutal to his own people; Amnesty International condemned him for his anti-insurgent repression, which included both the torturing and murdering of political prisoners.⁷ Conditions worsened after Managua's devastating earthquake in 1972, which killed ten thousand and left over three hundred thousand residents of the Nicaraguan capital homeless. During Jimmy Carter's presidency, political events in Nicaragua escalated, culminating in the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, the editor of the opposition newspaper *La Prensa*, in January 1978.⁸ As a wellspring of anger over the event bubbled into wide scale revolt, U.S. policy makers found themselves in an increasingly difficult position as they sought to balance anticommunist and prodemocratic policies in Latin America.

Throughout this period, the American press also had to decide how to grapple with the Somoza government and its tendency toward brutal suppression within its own borders, contrasted with its staunch support of U.S. anti-communist interests toward Cuba. These events took place at a high point in U.S. investigative journalism, riding the wave begun by the *Washington Post's*

4. Frank J. Coppa, "Encyclopedia of Modern Dictators: from Napoleon to the Present," in *Encyclopedia of Modern Dictators: from Napoleon to the Present* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2006), 283–286.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. William Michael Schmidli, "'The Most Sophisticated Intervention We Have Seen': The Carter Administration and the Nicaraguan Crisis, 1978–1979," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no. 1 (2012): pp. 66–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2012.651962>, 67.

8. Ibid, 68.

unveiling of the Watergate Scandal in 1972.⁹ Watergate resulted in a growing amenability to doubt the judgment and the authority of the president, which paved the way for further disagreement with official U.S. policy within daily news publications. This was compounded by the fallout from the Vietnam War, the only facet of foreign policy more divisive than relations with Nicaragua in this period.¹⁰ The disastrous results of U.S. efforts in Vietnam allowed for more criticism of the U.S. government and the interests of “big business” in dealings around the globe.¹¹ As a result of these trends, American journalists found themselves able to step away from their dependence on U.S. policies, politicians, and documents in formulating their reports for the public. “Between 1949 and 1970, [historian] Leon Sigal found that over half of the sources for political reporting resulted from routinized contact with Washington officials,” but this reliance declined over the subsequent decades, meaning that Nicaragua was the first major foreign policy matter in which external perspectives could and did reign supreme.¹²

Most analyses concerning U.S. foreign policy in Nicaragua and their press coverage concern the Reagan administration and the Iran-Contra Affair, which took place several years after Somoza’s death but was precipitated by the revolution that overthrew him. An examination of the press coverage leading up to the Sandinista Revolution and of the United States’ dwindling support for President Somoza provides a unique opportunity to examine one of the defining events in foreign affairs of the 1970s; furthermore, it rests between two of the greatest scandals in twentieth-century presidential history and paved the way toward the eventual creation and uncovering of the Iran-Contra Affair. This scandal revealed that the Reagan administration had funneled funds from illegal weapons sales in Iran to the *contras*, an insurgency that rose up against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, fearing a Communist takeover of the Central American isthmus; support for the *contras* had been prohibited by the Boland Amendment of 1984.¹³ As Martha Cottam states, “oddly, current interest in

9. Jon Marshall, Bob Woodward, and Carl Bernstein, *Watergate's Legacy and the Press: the Investigative Impulse* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

10. Robert S. Leiken, *Why Nicaragua Vanished: a Story of Reporters and Revolutionaries* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 12.

11. *Ibid.*, 10.

12. *Ibid.*, 8.

13. Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: a World History* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2017), 533.

that relationship [between the United States and Nicaragua] has not resulted in many in-depth analyses of the Carter administration's actions despite every indication that they are far more interesting and puzzling than those of the Reagan administration."¹⁴ Indeed, most established histories of U.S. relations with Nicaragua blow over the seventies entirely, so they can focus on the Reagan administration's single-minded hawkishness after the Sandinista Revolution (such as Peter Smith's *Talons of the Eagle*).

A similar gap exists in the record of journalistic history; while Watergate, Vietnam, and the Contra Affair have been analyzed ad nauseam, and their impact on the American press and public has been stated and restated in works such as Jon Marshall's *Watergate's Legacy and the Press*, little historical research has been dedicated to how the press saw one of the most contentious aspects of Carter's foreign policy, nor how that foreign policy related to the press's own perceptions of a Latin American despot. Older works, like Joshua Muravchik's *News Coverage of the Sandinista Revolution* and Max Holland's "Nicaragua: A Despot Falls, the Press Stumbles," published in 1988 and 1979 respectively, both offer critical analyses of how journalists reported on events in Nicaragua, but they examine these issues with contemporary eyes and a clear political slant, not with a historical perspective. Furthermore, their investigations focus on the Sandinista Revolution itself, without digging into how relations or perspectives had reached such a crisis point. Robert S. Leiken's *Why Nicaragua Vanished* comes closest to the goal of this paper, but his study focuses on events leading to the 1990 election in Nicaragua, and he asserts that the turning point in American press coverage took place later than the evidence examined in this piece will demonstrate.¹⁵ Not only that, all of this previous research is centered on how the press viewed the Sandinistas, rather than the other key players in the conflict.

This paper will begin to fill in this historical gap by analyzing the evolution of how the American press addressed President Somoza, his rule, and key political events in Nicaragua from 1961 to 1980. The work of journalists who reported on Nicaragua over these two decades reflected a growing discomfort with U.S. policy in Latin America and its emphasis on anticommunism, as illustrated by the evolution of their descriptions of Anastasio Somoza from the Bay of Pigs

14. Martha L. Cottam, "The Carter Administration's Policy toward Nicaragua: Images, Goals, and Tactics," *Political Science Quarterly* 107, no. 1 (1992): 123–146, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2152137>, 123.

15. Leiken, *Why Nicaragua Vanished*, 107.

invasion in 1961 until his assassination in 1980. By examining these articles, it becomes clear that the turning point in his rule was the earthquake of 1972 that devastated Managua, although the political tides completed their turn against him after the assassination of Chamorro in 1978. Such a change in periodization implies that humanitarian concerns contributed more to press coverage of Nicaragua than geopolitical ones.

Before this transition, Somoza enjoyed widespread popularity among U.S. officials, and he willingly agreed to assist American troops in the Bay of Pigs Invasion. Because America's cooperation with Somoza and Nicaragua's National Guard was classified, no news coverage of his involvement with the offensive exists. However, documents from the CIA highlight the closeness of the U.S.'s relations with Nicaragua at this time—top operatives seriously considered having the invasive forces train on Nicaraguan soil rather than in Guatemala, and with a payoff of ten million dollars to President Luis Somoza, Anastasio Somoza's older brother, the military operation set up its strike base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.¹⁶ Furthermore, news articles from this time do illustrate a cordial relationship with the Somoza Dynasty, despite no direct reports on their assistance in Cuba.

In an October 1961 article in the *Chicago Tribune*, Paul Kennedy discussed the threats of communist terrorism to the stability of Luis Somoza's Nicaragua after an interview with the Somoza brothers. The most extensive description offered of Anastasio Somoza took place when Kennedy offered the leader's full title, "Gen. Anastasio Somoza Debayle, chief of the Nicaraguan armed forces."¹⁷ He never questioned Somoza's charges that "Fidel Castro is organizing and financing the projected invasion [of Nicaragua]," nor that "there are signs that our borders will be troubled by violent forces."¹⁸ Furthermore, when Somoza mentioned the upcoming election, in order to dismiss the idea that the terrorism could come from the internal opposition party, Kennedy did not comment on the freedom or fairness of these elections, except by saying that the Nicaraguan Conservatives were "trying to upset the election set for 1963."¹⁹ Throughout this article, Kennedy never actively endorsed Somoza's claims, but

16. Jack Pfeiffer, Vol. 1 *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation* §.f.1 (1979).

17. Paul Kennedy, "Warn Reds Peril Nicaragua: Leaders Cite Recent Wave of Terrorism," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923–1963), Oct 11, 1961. 1, <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/183057885?accountid=4488>.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

he also did not refute them or offer counterpoints. Given the nature of the Somoza family's power in Nicaragua, this decision signals a level of acceptance of their activities and perspective and is indicative of the general relationship between Nicaragua and the United States at this time.

Of course, this *Tribune* article did not monopolize reporting on Nicaragua at this time. In March 1961, William E. Giles wrote a report that delved deeper into the nature of Somoza rule and the family's relationship with their own country, as well as the United States. Giles acknowledged that "martial law, with the exception of 1958, has been in effect here since 1956" and quoted a Nicaraguan lawyer who said that "the Somozas use the army as a weapon to stay in power . . . so there is no question that Somoza is a U.S.-supported dictator."²⁰ However, despite these mentions of dictatorship, most of the writing worked against this claim, and all the language used to describe the Somoza brothers was positive, or at worst, neutral: Luis Somoza was "amiable . . . an astute agriculturist and shrewd businessman."²¹ Giles also referred to his "personable charm," and at the closing of the article, described the president as "likable Luis."²² Similar to the previously mentioned article, Anastasio was only referred to as "West Point-trained General Anastasio ('Tachito') Somoza Debayle, director of the Guardia Nacional."²³ Giles' report gives a more complete image of Nicaraguan governance than Kennedy, but his reluctance to directly address the Somoza family's dictatorial tendencies illustrates the overall positive feelings between the United States and these Nicaraguan rulers.

More of the press's attention turned to Anastasio Somoza specifically after his election to the Nicaraguan Presidency in 1967. In his coverage of the election for the *New York Times*, Henry Giniger wrote two articles about the proceedings. Giniger clearly endeavored to obey the standards of the 1949 Fairness Doctrine, which "required a 'balanced point of view', which implies reference to at least two different opinions on a subject."²⁴ However, despite his efforts to include the perspectives of both Somoza and opposition candidate Dr. Agüero, Giniger

20. William E. Giles, "A Dictator and a Dilemma: Nicaragua's Somoza is U.S. Friend Disliked at Home," *Wall Street Journal* (1923 - Current File), Mar 08, 1961. 16, <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/132726203?accountid=4488>.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Muhlmann Géraldine and Jean Birrell, *A Political History of Journalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), 12.

continued to portray Somoza in a positive light, describing “the President-elect, a 42-year-old West Point graduate who has two sons in American prep schools” as “smiling and self-assured.”²⁵ Including these positive descriptions and Somoza’s connections to the United States indicated an overall favorable attitude toward the ruler. Even his acknowledgment of the family’s dictatorial history was caged in the statement that this characterization was “the main charge of the opposing forces.”²⁶

The strongest condemnation of Somoza’s legal machine that appeared in these articles was that “the voting . . . appeared to be quiet throughout the country, but there were numerous complaints of irregularities by opposition forces . . . some of the complaints were justified.”²⁷ Giniger then juxtaposed this statement with a report that “only two weeks ago, [Dr. Agüero] tried to enlist the national guard in what he later acknowledged was to be a coup,” which a reader would likely presume to be a greater affront to democracy than possible election interference.²⁸ Giniger referenced this attempted junta in the other article as well, closing out with the assertion that “the national guard . . . remained loyal to the Government and to General Somoza, who commanded it until recently.”²⁹ The continued use of positive language to refer to Somoza and the couched disapproval of the dynasty’s governmental practices provide a stark contrast to the eventual excoriation that the same newspaper would offer to the late Somoza.

Internal opposition to Somoza continued throughout his first term, but the American press continued to favor him over these forces. In 1970, Francis Kent of the *Los Angeles Times* detailed the economic and political challenges facing Nicaragua’s president. He wrote that “Somoza counts almost 30 extremist assaults on the Nicaraguan government since Fidel Castro fought his way to power in Cuba 11 years ago . . . Castro has sought to export his Communist

25. Henry Giniger, “Somoza is Victor; Calls for Unity: But Rival in Nicaraguan Election Rejects Bid,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Feb 07, 1967. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/117608775?accountid=4488>.

26. Ibid.

27. Henry Giniger, “Somoza Ahead in Nicaragua Voting: Somoza Takes Substantial Lead in Nicaragua Vote for President,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Feb 06, 1967. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/118152370?accountid=4488>.

28. Ibid.

29. Giniger, “Somoza is Victor.”

revolution.”³⁰ This statement framed Somoza’s Nicaragua as an anticommunist stronghold, implying that his government itself was the bulwark against the ideology, an obviously positive characterization to the American public during the Cold War.

Kent called Chamorro, the editor of leading opposition newspaper *La Prensa*, the “legal opposition,” contrasting him with the northern guerrilla forces. However, he presented the animosity between Chamorro and Somoza as a “feud [that] dates back to when both were schoolboys,” asserting that Chamorro’s articles accused Somoza “of personal as well as political shortcomings.”³¹ Portraying Chamorro’s opposition to the Somoza regime as a personal feud weakened the weight of the opposition’s claims as depicted in the article, even making them seem unfair to Somoza. The greater detail afforded to Somoza’s side of the arguments furthered this effect. Kent did acknowledge that “Chamorro spent a brief period in jail as an insurrectionist,” but placed this in a context in which such treatment of the political opposition seemed justifiable, describing “fighting in the streets” and saying that “Agüero Rocha and Chamorro strapped on pistols,” a signal of violent intent against the ruling party.³² Kent only described Somoza as a dictator in saying that “Somoza can—and does—point to *La Prensa* as evidence of freedom of the press in what some insist is an undisguised dictatorship,” relativizing this assertion and contrasting it with a demonstrable exercise of civil liberty.³³

Although journalism during Managua’s catastrophic 1972 earthquake did not focus on Somoza, its characterizations of him demonstrated a marked contrast to its predecessors. In separate articles, the *New York Times*, the *Atlanta Constitution*, the *Austin Statesman*, and the *Boston Globe* all referred to General Somoza as a “military strongman.”³⁴ Other news sources depicted him as “the

30. Francis B. Kent, “Somoza’s Land: ‘Company Store’ with Problems: Nicaragua’s President Frustrated by Economy and Guerrillas’ Upsurge,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923–1995), Jan 26, 1970. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/156336383?accountid=4488>.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. United Press International, “Thousands Dead as Quakes Strike Nicaraguan City: Capital Battered Fires Follow Temblors in Managua—U.S. is Sending Aid Thousands Killed as Earthquake Smashes Nicaragua’s Capital,” *New York Times* (1923–Current File), Dec 24, 1972. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/119498465?accountid=4488>; “Managua Ordered Evacuated as Rescuers Search Rubble,” *The*

still-powerful former president,” “the ruler,” and the “de facto leader of the country,” clarifying that “he retains effective control as commander of the national guard.”³⁵ As previously shown, any prior comments regarding the legitimacy of his power were stated as opposition opinions. However, after the Managua earthquake, these ideas moved beyond their prior controversial state, beyond the point where the Fairness Doctrine took effect, into cold, hard fact.

After the earthquake, journalists began to question some of Somoza’s policy decisions as well. Numerous correspondents reported that “the ruling three-man junta and the chief of the armed forces declared martial law to prevent looting.”³⁶ The *Atlanta Constitution* specified what this meant, stating that “the National Guard warned that persons who tried looting would become targets.”³⁷ Only one article provided Somoza’s justification for this decision, and another one actively called it into question, saying that this “declaration of martial law seems somewhat drastic.”³⁸ Previous news articles did not engage in such speculation or doubt of the ruler’s decisions, indicating a fundamental shift in the U.S. press’s portrayal of Anastasio Somoza had begun.

A full condemnation of the Nicaraguan ruler still remained on the horizon, however. In the *Chicago Tribune*, Frank Blatchford included U.S. Ambassador Turner B. Shelton’s praises for how Somoza handled the crisis: “The amount of help that has flown into the country from around the world is unbelievable . . . General Somoza is doing a fantastic job and we are just helping him.”³⁹

Atlanta Constitution (1946–1984), Dec 25, 1972. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/1616511214?accountid=4488>; “Nixon Offers Aid to Nicaraguans,” *The Austin Statesman* (1921–1973), Dec 25, 1972. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/1521782704?accountid=4488>; United Press International, “‘A City that was, but is no More’: Quake-Stricken Managua Ordered Evacuated,” *Boston Globe* (1960–1989), Dec 25, 1972. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/503623411?accountid=4488>.

35. “Hundreds Perish as Quake Levels Nicaraguan City,” *The Sun* (1837–1994), Dec 24, 1972. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/541429173?accountid=4488>; “Nixon Offers Aid to Nicaraguans”; Marlise Simons, “Quake Survivors Evacuated: A City Dies—Managua in Rubble,” *Boston Globe* (1960–1989), Dec 26, 1972. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/503624191?accountid=4488>; United Press International, “‘A City that was, but is no More.’”

36. “Managua Ordered Evacuated.”

37. Ibid.

38. Simons, “Quake Survivors Evacuated.”

39. Frank Blatchford, “Rush Aid to Quake Victims: Managua Begins Clearing Rubble and Burying Dead,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963–1996), Dec 26, 1972. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/>

The writers of the *Boston Globe* also noted that “Somoza’s private residence . . . was converted into a relief coordination center, and its spacious grounds were turned over to medical teams.”⁴⁰ The reports from these journalists reveal that while Somoza’s transition from “president” to “dictator” in the press’s eyes had begun, it still was not absolute.

Allegations of Somoza’s corruption in the aftermath of the disaster helped tarnish his image in the United States. In February 1974, a little over a year into the rebuilding efforts, the *New York Times* reported on the state of these endeavors in the runup to the 1974 election. However, its tone had changed, acknowledging the Somoza family’s prior 38 years of rule and that “there is no doubt here that [General Somoza] will win” the upcoming election.⁴¹ The article also asserted that he “already holds real power in Nicaragua” and that “the Somozas are also the richest family in Nicaragua.”⁴² While such statements appear relatively neutral at first glance, the sinister edge of Somoza’s rule becomes clearer as the article continues, and these admissions of Somoza’s status within the country went beyond those of prior press coverage. However, this piece did not stop there: it recorded allegations of Somoza’s unlawful behavior and even stated, in reference to reconstruction of the capital after the earthquake, that “there have been charges of corruption and complaints against sharp increases in the price of cement—an industry largely owned by the Somoza family.”⁴³ Furthermore, this article used evidence published by *La Prensa* to augment its allegations of Somoza’s corruption, legitimizing the opposition newspaper in the eyes of the American public, and therefore Chamorro’s assertions about Somoza’s character.

The *Washington Post*’s Jack Anderson released an even more scathing report of Somoza’s financial dealings the following year, declaring Somoza “the world’s greediest ruler.”⁴⁴ He then detailed Somoza’s extortionary practices, including

login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/170322141?accountid=4488.

40. “A City that was, but is no More.”

41. “Somoza Widening His Control but Foes Vow no Letup: Reconstruction at Issue,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Feb 17, 1974. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/historical-newspapers/somoza-widening-his-control-foes-vow-no-letup/docview/120088934/se-2?accountid=4488>.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Jack Anderson, “The World’s Greediest Ruler,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (1946–1984), Aug 19, 1975. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/historical-newspapers/worlds-greediest-ruler/docview/1617584313/se-2?accountid=4488>.

reselling Nicaraguan blood for over 300% of the value given to blood donors, owning “half the private property in this little nation,” and “making the cement that is used to pave the streets of Managua.”⁴⁵ While there is not a direct, written connection between these allegations and the earthquake that devastated the Nicaraguan capital, such an accusation shows a sudden departure from the reporting of Somoza’s dealings before the earthquake. Furthermore, the specific comments on his ownership of cement plants gain significance in the context of this natural disaster. Compared with Kent’s 1970 explanation of Somoza’s economic role in Nicaragua, wherein he stated that “President Somoza is painfully aware of his problems. He moves restlessly about the country discussing them with his people,” the assessment that “the dictator rakes off a profit from the food [Nicaraguans] eat, the clothes they wear, the houses they live in, the banks they borrow from” could not demonstrate a sharper contrast, even though only five years separate these words.⁴⁶

Although the reevaluation of Somoza and his role in Nicaraguan politics began with Managua’s 1972 earthquake, the assassination of Pedro Chamorro in January 1978 completed this process, confirming Somoza’s new title of “dictator” for Nicaragua’s American audience. Additionally, the murder of *La Prensa*’s editor is widely acknowledged as the catalyst for the Sandinista Revolution. Even though Somoza repeatedly and vehemently denied any involvement in Chamorro’s death, it set off a chain reaction of anger at the oppressive, wealthy regime ruling over a restricted, impoverished citizenry. Thirty thousand people took to the streets to protest, strikes closed between fifty and eighty percent of businesses nationwide, and the opposition drew up formulae to depose Somoza and reform the government.⁴⁷ The Carter administration also placed sanctions on Somoza’s government due to human rights abuses, especially concerning insurrectionists and political opposition.⁴⁸ Suddenly, American newspapers sympathized with the opposition and Somoza had been reincarnated as a dictator.

The day after Chamorro was killed, multiple American newspapers reported on the event. The *New York Times* was the only major paper to refrain from calling President Somoza a dictator in their main article, and they still published a letter calling for “the dynastic dictatorship of the Somoza family . . . to prove its

45. Ibid.

46. Kent, “Somoza’s Land: ‘Company Store.’”; Anderson, “The World’s Greediest Ruler.”

47. Schmidli, “The Most Sophisticated Intervention,” 68.

48. Cottam, Martha L. “The Carter Administration’s Policy,” 128.

asserted devotion to the protection of human rights and elementary liberties.”⁴⁹ It also expressed doubt that the National Guard would pursue the case with the rigor necessary, given that the army was “long hostile to the murdered editor.”⁵⁰ Other papers praised Chamorro as a “crusading newspaper editor” and a “prize-winning editor,” while simultaneously denouncing the “dictatorship of Gen. Anastasio Somoza.”⁵¹

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the “editor and publisher of the opposition *La Prensa* newspaper and an implacable foe of the late dictator Anastasio Somoza [García] and his son who succeeded him, was shot to death Tuesday in a daylight ambush in downtown Managua.”⁵² It continued by listing his accolades as a journalist and activist, including receiving the Maria Moors Cabot award for “journalistic leadership of those forces opposed to tyranny in Nicaragua,” and getting arrested for organizing a boycott of the 1972 election.⁵³ This acknowledgment of Chamorro’s efforts for freedom in Nicaragua signified a shift in the American media’s support from Somoza to the Chamorro-led opposition. Beyond the characterization of the Somozas as “dictators,” the *Los Angeles Times* directed a specific accusation at Somoza through Chamorro, writing that “after the devastating 1972 Managua earthquake, he denounced the younger Somoza for mishandling foreign relief.”⁵⁴

Chamorro’s claims about Somoza’s profits from the earthquake proved correct; shortly after the catastrophic natural disaster, Somoza “appointed himself president of an emergency committee with absolute powers and assumed

49. “An Editor Silenced,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Jan 11, 1978. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/123851883?accountid=4488>.

50. Ibid.

51. “Nicaraguan Dissident is Gunned Down,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996), Jan 11, 1978. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/169677444?accountid=4488>; “Prize-Winning Editor is Shot Dead in Nicaragua; He Opposed Somoza: Editor was Honored in U.S. was Exiled to Mexico,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Jan 11, 1978. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/123851641?accountid=4488>; “Somoza Foe Slain in Nicaragua,” *The Sun* (1837-1994), Jan 11, 1978. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/542144598?accountid=4488>.

52. Times Wire Services, “Editor Opposed to Somoza Slain on Nicaragua Street,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995), Jan 11, 1978. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/158483943?accountid=4488>.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

control of financial and material aid pouring in from abroad to help in the crisis.”⁵⁵ In addition to the funds he embezzled from the aid money sent to Nicaragua, Somoza amassed “windfall profits from the reconstruction of Managua,” by building up companies associated with banking and construction in the aftermath of the disaster.⁵⁶ These monies contributed significantly to his estimated 900-million-dollar fortune by the time he fled Managua in July 1979.⁵⁷ When news of these financial dealings spread, this corruption became a rallying cry against Somoza and maintained this role for the duration of the Sandinista Revolution. The press incorporated this outrage into their reports on Nicaragua’s former dictator, marking another reason why the earthquake was the tipping point in their portrayal of Somoza.

These turns of events left the Carter administration in a difficult situation regarding its policy in Nicaragua. The United States had to decide whether to side with Somoza, a longtime U.S. ally with an undeniably flawed human rights record, or the rising Sandinistas, a Marxist insurgency group with ties to Cuba. A more moderate opposition coalition briefly formed during the tumult of 1978 and 1979, but it struggled to stay unified and Somoza effectively shut it down by continuously questioning the constitutionality of its plebiscite proposals.⁵⁸ By the spring of 1979, it became clear that Nicaragua would be faced with a choice between a continuation of Somoza’s regime or that of the Sandinistas, and in July, Somoza resigned from his position and retreated to the United States, answering that question and the U.S.’s urges for him to leave office.⁵⁹ However, shortly thereafter, U.S. policymakers swung their foreign policy back toward traditional Cold War methods, trying desperately to prevent full Sandinista control of Nicaragua.⁶⁰

55. Alan Riding, “Somoza, Long a U.S. Ally, was Bitter Over ‘Betrayal’: Buys Land in Paraguay Brother Assumes Presidency Guerrilla Front is Formed Succumbs to U.S. Pressure,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Sep 18, 1980. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/121170235?accountid=4488>.

56. Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 173.

57. Wayne King, “The Wealth of Anastasio Somoza: His Holdings Include Ships and an Airline Somoza,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Jul 22, 1979. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/120790501?accountid=4488>.

58. Schmidli, “The Most Sophisticated Intervention,” 80.

59. Ibid.

60. Cottam, “The Carter Administration’s Policy,” 142.

Nonetheless, the press had already decided against Somoza, and their allegiance did not shift back, even in the face of a Sandinista-dominated junta. During the Sandinista Revolution, the press provided brutal detail of Somoza's corruption, discussing its mechanisms on multiple fronts, and they blamed him for his own impending downfall: "many of Gen. Somoza's problems are traceable to . . . 'corruption on a grand scale' in every facet of business."⁶¹ This same *Wall Street Journal* article included Somoza's profession of legitimacy in the context of the opposition's refutation of it, stating that "the country's capitalist leaders rejected Gen. Somoza's claim that he is the country's only bulwark against communism; they charged instead that he was the main cause of Nicaragua's instability."⁶² In other words, the press was continuing to utilize the strategy they had developed at the beginning of Somoza's reign, namely, caging a comment counter to their perspective in language that minimized the importance of that point of view. However, instead of underrating the opposition's perspective on his character, this time, journalists dismissed Somoza's own defense. The characterization of the opposition as "a national mutiny in which almost every sector of the country . . . is united against a dynastic dictatorship" compounded this effect, emphasizing how completely Somoza had lost his legitimacy, according to the press.⁶³ This depiction of Nicaragua's exiled dictator did not change, even after he fled to the United States at the closing of the revolution.

Soon after Somoza arrived in the U.S., he moved to Paraguay by way of the Bahamas, fearful of extradition to Nicaragua for trial. Paraguay's rightwing dictator offered him asylum, and he maintained a constant network of bodyguards at his home in Asunción.⁶⁴ However, he was assassinated less than a year later, in September 1980. American newspapers did not sympathize with the late dictator for his fate, although they provided varying levels of detail regarding the path his life took and his relationship with the United States. Alan Riding wrote

61. John Huey, "Dictator's Decline: As Nicaragua Turmoil Intensifies, Support of Somoza Evaporates National Guard Now Fights Guerrillas in More Cities, Precluding Peaceful Shift," *Wall Street Journal* (1923–Current File), Sep 12, 1978. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/historical-newspapers/dictators-decline/docview/134220237/se-2?accountid=4488>.

62. Ibid.

63. Alan Riding, "National Mutiny in Nicaragua: Nicaragua." *New York Times* (1923–Current File), Jul 30, 1978. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/historical-newspapers/national-mutiny-nicaragua/docview/123618390/se-2?accountid=4488>.

64. Riding, "Somoza, Long a U.S. Ally."

for the *New York Times* that Somoza “was a longtime ally of the United States who spoke English as fluently as Spanish.”⁶⁵ He also included that Somoza “blamed the Carter administration for his downfall,” but later concluded that Somoza caused his own undoing: “Through his authoritarianism and corruption, he gradually destroyed the political coalition that had enabled his father and brother to remain in power without serious challenge.”⁶⁶

The *Christian Science Monitor*’s James Nelson Goodsell proclaimed that Somoza “failed to recognize the escalating signs that his days as dictator of Nicaragua were nearing an end.”⁶⁷ He also highlighted both the reining Sandinista government’s joy at the reports of Somoza’s death and their insistence that they were not responsible without any counterargument, demonstrating how the press gave the new government a similar level of confidence to what had been granted to the Somoza regime in the sixties. Nelson Goodsell went on to describe facets of Somoza’s personal and political life but without the *New York Times*’ focus on his relationship with the United States, observing that “when he came to power . . . Anastasio strengthened the hand of government in ways that made his father’s era look like a kindergarten exercise. National Guard brutality became notorious. Opponents were jailed and tortured.”⁶⁸ He also declared that “his personal life [was] a series of women and excess.”⁶⁹ Such vilification signaled a complete break from his positive portrayal in the sixties and the cementation of his legacy as a failed dictator in the eyes of the American press and therefore in the eyes of most Americans as well.

Given the excessive focus of historians on the Reagan administration’s interactions with Nicaragua at the expense of an analysis of events during the Nixon and Carter administrations, it is often assumed that U.S. perceptions of Nicaragua during this critical period changed entirely based on geopolitical concerns. According to this narrative, as Somoza’s control slipped, the human rights violations escalated, and the Sandinista takeover became inevitable, the United States recognized the necessity of Somoza’s removal. At the same time,

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. James Nelson Goodsell, “The Somoza Legacy: He Failed the People He Professed to Love,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (1908–Current File), Sep 19, 1980. <http://erl.lib.byu.edu/login/?url=https://www-proquest-com.erl.lib.byu.edu/docview/512170056?accountid=4488>.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

and perhaps more importantly, denouement with the Soviet Union diminished the threat the Sandinistas posed to America's liberal worldview.

While geopolitics and the Cold War undoubtedly played a role in U.S. perceptions in Nicaragua, this analysis reveals that it was a humanitarian crisis, not geopolitical concerns, that ultimately changed the tides for the press's portrayal of Anastasio Somoza; human rights and human tragedy were central to its coverage of Nicaragua. Before the 1972 Managua earthquake, the Fairness Doctrine obliged reporters to offer justifications for the Somoza government's policy positions, and the conflict with Cuba provided additional impetus to support these in writing. However, the devastation of the Managua earthquake both provided an opportunity for journalists to critically examine conditions as they really were in Nicaragua, rather than simply parroting what Somoza claimed was happening; and for Somoza to show his true colors, to profit from calamity while leaving his citizens in dire conditions. Humanitarian crises sometimes precipitate larger changes in press coverage, and therefore in popular opinion, than corresponding geopolitical concerns, contrary to the instinct of many politicians. Somoza's downfall in the American press demonstrates that "by unspoken understanding, there are not two sides to human tragedies."⁷⁰

70. Muhlmann, *A Political History of Journalism*, 13.

Losing “the Jewels in Her Crown” Latter-day Saint Women and Pregnancy Loss in the Nineteenth Century

Karen MacKay Moss

IN HER JOURNAL ENTRY FOR THE MORNING OF MAY 27, 1849, ZINA D.H. Young recounted her morning’s work in assisting Margaret Alley, a fellow wife of Brigham Young, during a sickness which had begun over a week earlier after Margaret had “over done” herself.¹ Young wrote that while she stayed home from church meetings that day, Margaret “was relieved of a two month sickness—perfect form occasioned by a hurt.”² Margaret Alley had experienced a miscarriage. Taking to her journal again that evening, Young stated that her day had been quite busy, full of “little events” including Margaret’s “misfortune,” a hen hatching, and a cat birthing two kittens who she hoped would “prosper as the mice are very troublesome.” Besides including the miscarriage in a list of other “little events” and calling it a “misfortune,” Young does not dwell on or portray much emotion about Alley’s loss. Indeed, she dedicated more space in the journal to the fresh kittens.³ In contrast, a month later Young spent two paragraphs describing the death of a friend’s three-day-old infant,

1. Zina D.H. Young, *A Weary Traveler: The 1848–50 Diary of Zina D.H. Young*, ed. by Marilyn Higbee (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1992), 32.

2. Young, *A Weary Traveler*, 33.

3. Young, *A Weary Traveler*, 33.

mourning the loss and expressing her sadness at seeing the “early nipped rose” laid to rest.⁴

Margaret Alley’s pregnancy loss was hardly a unique experience in nineteenth century America and such losses remain common experiences for women today. Even with modern medical interventions, experts place the likelihood of miscarriage as high as fifteen to thirty percent of all pregnancies, with most losses, as in Margaret Alley’s case, likely to occur within the first twelve weeks.⁵ Although pregnancy loss has been common throughout history, and a topic taken up by a number of historians, Latter-day Saint women’s experiences losing pregnancies, especially in the nineteenth century, has been neglected. Latter-day Saints were certainly familiar with pregnancy—the Utah census of 1870 tallied more babies per capita than in anywhere else in the world.⁶ Family was central to Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century. Historian M. Guy Bishop describes the family during this time as “the seedbed of Zion—the nucleus of a righteous kingdom of God... faithful parents were duty-bound to raise up a worthy progeny.”⁷ Teachings that described children as: “the jewels in a mother’s crown” placed cultural responsibility on women to produce as many children as possible.⁸ But not all “jewels” made it out of their mother’s wombs. How did Latter-day Saint women reconcile their pregnancy losses with the belief that their God wanted and expected them to produce his spirit children? Although evidence for the presence of pregnancy loss is scattered throughout the diaries of Latter-day Saint midwives, church leaders offered no sermons on the topic and their commentary on related issues left no clear answers for these would-be-mothers that might guide them through the process of understanding pregnancy loss. Because of the absence of direct references to pregnancy loss in publicly available historical records or Church teachings, Latter-day Saint women’s experiences with and understanding of pregnancy loss appears to have been a private experience wherein they created their own coping mechanisms for their losses.

4. Young, *A Weary Traveler*, 37.

5. Shannon Withycombe, *Lost: Miscarriage in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 12.

6. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 366.

7. M. Guy Bishop, “Preparing to “Take the Kingdom”: Childrearing Directives in Early Mormonism,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 7, no. 3 (1987): 283.

8. Claire Noall, *Guardians of the Hearth: Utah’s Pioneer Midwives and Women Doctors* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1974), 11.

The Latter-day Saints' silence surrounding pregnancy loss appears to correspond with traditional social taboos surrounding miscarriage in the United States.⁹ This social taboo prevented the topic of miscarriage from appearing in scholarship even until the late twentieth century. Scholarship on infertility and successful pregnancy became rich with research, but historians neglected the experiences of women who lost their pregnancies.¹⁰ Only recently, historians such as Shannon Withycombe have begun to fill this gap, exploring different circumstances and reactions surrounding the history of miscarriages. Withycombe's *Lost: Miscarriage in Nineteenth-Century America* is the first monograph to explore miscarriages, and explores the primary source accounts from American women who experienced pregnancy loss to detail the complicated emotions surrounding miscarriage and pregnancy loss. She notes that while the "current literature on the medicalization of reproduction is rich," greater attention to the topic of pregnancy loss can provide a more accurate picture of both the medicalization of the female body as well as women's personal feelings toward pregnancy in childbirth.¹¹ Withycombe's research opened up the field of the history of miscarriage for more historians' research, showing that there is not a catch-all response to miscarriage during the nineteenth century.¹² This raises questions about how other groups of women may have reacted to pregnancy loss.

9. Historian Felicity Jensz suggests that medical advancements such as ultrasounds and three-dimensional imaging led the western world to have a "fetus-central culture," and claims this culture creates additional discomfort in society after the loss of a pregnancy. Jensz attributes this as one possible reason for the taboo around discussing miscarriages and stillbirths. For further explanation see: Felicity Jensz, "Miscarriage and Coping in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Private Notes from Distant Places," *Gender & History* 32, no. 2 (July 2020): 270.

10. Historians first focused on the medical field's gradually increased understanding of pregnancy and fertility, but it wasn't until the 1990s that scholars began analyzing the social perceptions and culture surrounding women's infertility. Two works that pioneered this research of studying infertility are Elaine Tyler May's *Barren in the Promised Land: Childless Americans and the Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995) and Susan E. Klepp's *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

11. Withycombe, *Lost*, 5.

12. Another miscarriage historian is Felicity Jensz, whose recently published article "Miscarriage and Coping in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Private Notes from Distant Places," *Gender & History* 32, no. 2 (July 2020) <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12478> explores the diaries of two Moravian missionaries who experienced miscarriages to show how women's faith helped heal the emotional trauma of pregnancy loss, although women often still lacked context to process the event.

Nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women in Utah have been studied by many historians, but no research has been done on miscarriages or stillbirths.¹³ While scholars occasionally make passing reference to miscarriage in their work, the experience is glossed over without serious attention to the pregnancy loss or to the feelings of the women and families who experienced them.¹⁴ Indeed, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, for instance, mentions Zina D. H. Young's account of Margaret Alley's miscarriage, yet only briefly frames it as an example of how Young enjoyed nursing others.¹⁵ Ulrich writes about the miscarriage similarly to how Young wrote of the event in her diary back in 1849: more attention is given to the surroundings and the nurse's life rather than the woman who endured the miscarriage and the meaning of the loss itself.¹⁶ The only historian to study Latter-day Saint miscarriages has been Sherrie L.M. Gavin, who utilized oral histories in the Claremont Oral History Collection from the mid-twentieth century to understand infertility and pregnancy loss in the context of women's faith. In the absence of specific doctrines that might guide women's understanding of their loss within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Gavin shows how twentieth-century Latter-day Saint women have created their own personal belief systems regarding their miscarriages.¹⁷

13. One especially significant recent work is Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* which intimately details the daily experiences and choices of Latter-day Saint women during the nineteenth century, particularly regarding plural marriages. Rebekah Ryan Clark and Kate Holbrook's article, "A Wider Sphere of Action: Women's Agency in 1870s Utah," in *Women and Mormonism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Matthew Bowman and Kate Holbrook (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2016), 168–179 also explores Latter-day Saint women's autonomy during this era.

14. Ulrich, *House Full of Women*, 275.

15. Ulrich, *House Full of Women*, 223.

16. Nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint nursing and midwifery have been given much attention by scholarship. In her 1973 book, *Guardians of the Hearth: Utah's Pioneer Midwives and Women Doctors*, Claire Noall reports that by the late nineteenth century there was a higher percentage of midwives per capita than anywhere else in the United States. (Claire Noall, *Guardians of the Hearth: Utah's Pioneer Midwives and Women Doctors* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1974) More recently, Honey M. Newton has also explored how the calls by Brigham Young and other church leaders for women to be trained in both midwifery and the medical field hastened the creation of Deseret Hospital in 1882. (Honey M. Newton, *Zion's Hope: Pioneer Midwives & Women Doctors of Utah* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2013)

17. Sherrie L.M. Gavin, "Fertility," in *Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection*, ed. Claudia L. Bushman and Caroline Cline (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2003), 36.

Building on this scholarship, this paper draws on the experiences of Latter-day Saint women to uncover the ways that they understood pregnancy loss in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Although questions about emotions and internal struggles may remain illusive, exploring various historical accounts of both miscarriages and stillbirths in Latter-day Saint history can provide insight into the ways women of the past understood and coped with their losses.¹⁸ Drawing on diaries, letters, and other sources, this paper explores the ways that Latter-day Saint women who experienced stillbirths and miscarriages in the nineteenth century reacted to and interpreted their pregnancy losses.¹⁹ Their understanding of contemporary medical science, Latter-day Saint theology, and personal life circumstances shaped their experiences and help us appreciate the physical, emotional, intellectual, and religious lives of early LDS women.

Speculative Doctrine

One reason families were so crucial to Latter-day Saints was because the religion's founder, Joseph Smith, had taught them that after living on earth, families would be able to live together throughout eternity after death as long as they had remained faithful in mortality.²⁰ Having a person's spirit experience life in a physical body was critical to this ability though, and raised the stakes for how Latter-day Saint mothers may have thought about miscarriage and stillbirths. Church leaders made conflicting statements about whether unborn children even had a spirit, or if the time spent during gestation counted as their chance to experience mortality. As early apostle and later president of the

18. Although the viability of a fetus at the time of the pregnancy loss separates stillbirths and miscarriages, both medically qualify as forms of pregnancy loss. This was true even in the nineteenth century: For further research on nineteenth-century pregnancy terminology, see Withycombe's *Lost*, 66.

19. One surviving diary is from midwife Patty Bartlett Sessions. Session's diary contains descriptions of almost all the births and women she attended between 1846 and 1888, including the ones which resulted in a miscarriage or stillbirth. This diary names sixteen women who experienced a form of pregnancy loss. For an in-depth view into Latter-day Saint midwifery and birthing complications, see: Patty Bartlett Sessions, *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*. Ed. by Donna Toland Smart. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997).

20. Gavin, "Fertility," 40.

Church, Joseph Fielding Smith wrote in the early twentieth century, “there is no information given by revelation in regard to the status of stillborn children” and their place in heaven. Despite his acknowledgement that there has not been specific revelation about this topic, he shared his personal opinion that “these little ones will receive a resurrection and then belong to us.”²¹ Smith’s answer mirrored perhaps thousands of women’s hopes who might have found comfort in his words after losing their pregnancies. Framed more as a hope that God would see the innocence of stillborn children, it was a hope that likely resonated with grieving women. This hope is evidenced in the coping mechanisms women had to create for themselves in order to make sense of their loss, using the fragments of doctrine or opinions from church leaders that most aligned with what their hope was for their lost child. Hope guided Latter-day Saint women’s faith in their search for meaning after pregnancy loss through their unique reactions.

Historian Gavin notes that part of the lack of scholarly attention to pregnancy loss in Latter-day Saint history is because there has never been any official doctrine in the Latter-day Saint theology about the status of a lost fetus.²² Historian Amanda Hendrix-Komoto argues that while the Church’s official stance against abortion points toward a belief in life beginning at conception, there have not been clear statements about when or if an embryo has a soul or spirit.²³ Nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint leaders debated about whether unborn children had souls before they were born. Brigham Young argued that “when the mother feels life come to her infant it is the spirit entering the body,” and therefore fetuses did not have souls prior to that “quickening” stage.²⁴ Young’s analysis focused on the quickening stage as the primary time when spirits entered the fetus in the context of theology, but his timetable was also

21. Val D. Greenwood, “Can we put the names of our miscarried or stillborn children on our family group records? Will these children belong to us in the hereafter?,” *Ensign*, September 1987, accessed September 19, 2020, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1987/09/i-have-a-question/can-we-put-the-names-of-our-miscarried-or-stillborn-children-on-our-family-group-records?lang=eng>

22. Gavin, “Fertility,” 35.

23. Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, “The Other Crime: Abortion and Contraception in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Utah,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 53, no. 1 (2020): 39, accessed September 17, 2020, https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue5103_3.pdf

24. Hendrix-Komoto, “The Other Crime,” 39.

based on some scientific teachings of the time period.²⁵ Although given around the same time in the 1870s, Bishop Jesse Little’s interview with a news reporter about abortion contradicted Young’s statement. When asked about the morality of abortion, Little called it “murder, no matter at what stage of prenatal life it may be committed.” Little’s condemnation of abortion “no matter” the stage of fetal development insinuated that life and soul began at the earliest point of pregnancy.²⁶ This teaching contradicts Brigham Young’s statement, and would mean that even a miscarriage occurring a few days after conception would result in the loss of a spiritual child. Other church leaders went even further than Young, insisting that they felt the “living soul does not exist until three essential elements—the body, the spirit, and the breath of life—are all present.”²⁷ With top leaders offering different theories on when spirit joined with fetus, Latter-day Saint women lacked clear understandings about the theology behind their pregnancy losses. The gaps of missing doctrine left space for nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women to create their own religious ideologies using personal revelation to help them cope with their miscarriages and stillbirths.²⁸

Influence of Faith in Medical Perspectives

Often Latter-day Saint physicians’ teachings coincided with popular medical beliefs of doctors throughout the country. Throughout the nineteenth century, American doctors claimed to know the causes of pregnancy loss and how to prevent it. For example, Frederick Hollack’s *The Matron’s Manual of Midwifery*, published in 1849, taught that “miscarriage is caused by a too eager gratification

25. Russell Stevenson, “Souls in Waiting: The Embryo and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” Mormon History Guy: Mormon History for the Masses Blog, 2013. Accessed December 9, 2020, <https://mormonhistoryguy.com/2013/07/07/souls-in-waiting-the-embryo-and-abortion-in-nineteenth-century-mormonism/?fbclid=IwAR1RkFkjuiOWGQPVRXTwPGn6aMVSeojbNLVuNuvOIC-wiAtsxTkTVI3HRJY>

26. Stevenson, “Souls in Waiting.”

27. Greenwood, “Can we put the names...”

28. Historian Neylan McBaine argues that the encouragement of personal revelation within Latter-day Saint doctrine specifically provides women within the religion to have more autonomy over their choices and beliefs. See Neylan McBaine, “Filling the Page: Women’s Choices in the Context of Gospel Boundaries,” in *Women and Mormonism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Matthew Bowman and Kate Holbrook (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2016), 289.

in [sexual] desires,” and counseled for women to avoid sexual intercourse if possible during pregnancy.²⁹ Another doctor, Pye Henry Chavasse, insisted that a pregnant woman ought to have a separate bed from her husband while pregnant to avoid temptation, and if possible, recommended that the “best plan” was for her to “leave her husband for several months.”³⁰ This understanding of the need for sexual prudence during pregnancy was not lost on Latter-day Saints, as the teaching of sexual continence was taught by midwives and church leaders alike. Latter-day Saint physicians taught that to prevent pregnancy loss, couples must avoid sexual activity during pregnancy for fear of “the injuries inflicted upon the child [and] the mother, too.”³¹ However, unlike their secular counterparts, Latter-day Saints approached the issue with theology in mind. While addressing Saints in Springville, Utah, the apostle Orson Hyde likened sexual intercourse to gardening by stating, “You wouldn’t plant even a squash seed in the *Fall*.”³² To the early Saints, the main goal behind sexual intercourse increased the number of God’s children on the earth, therefore it did not serve a purpose during pregnancy. The religious beliefs about chastity combined with the medical teachings that sexual intimacy would actively harm the pregnancy, helped to make this one of the most commonly proposed solutions for avoiding pregnancy loss during this time period..

According to historian Withycombe, nineteenth-century American doctors’ warnings about the causes of miscarriages followed a pattern of avoiding “excess.” This included avoiding an excess of “diet,” “exercise,” and “violent emotions.”³³ Latter-day Saint midwives like Sister Oliver Andersen and Else K. Christensen followed these same patterns of avoiding excess in their teachings. Andersen taught women to only consume bland foods “prepared not with a great amount of grease, salt, pepper, mustard, [or] vinegar” while pregnant to promote healthy growth. Furthermore, she taught that pregnant women ought only to sleep in “a light, well ventilated room” because of her belief that darkness and poor ventilation would result in a “cross and fretful baby.”³⁴ Whether based

29. Withycombe, *Lost*, 78.

30. Withycombe, *Lost*, 79.

31. Hannah Sorensen, *Notes Written for the Benefit of Members of the Woman’s Hygienic Physiological Reform Classes*, (Provo: Dispatch Print, 1892), 11.

32. Ulrich, *House Full of Women*, 269.

33. Withycombe, *Lost*, 75.

34. Hannah Sorensen, *Closing Exercises of the Woman’s Hygiene-Physiological Reform Class held in Springville: term commencing May 25, ending September 8, 1891. Motto: “Woman, know thyself”* (Springville: Dispatch Steam Printing, 1891), 12.

more on science or folklore, these preventative measures instructed women on "practical" ways to prevent miscarriage or stillbirth.

The homespun advice of Latter-day Saint midwives and views from church leadership on pregnancy supported each other, as shown through Brigham Young's personal beliefs around medicine: Young instructed that to prevent sickness, one must "live by faith" rather than "surgeon's medicine."³⁵ Claire Noall suggests that Latter-day Saint midwives utilized traditional herbal remedies combined with the faith healing promoted by Young to prevent pregnancy loss.³⁶ As an example of this, on April 7, 1848, celebrated midwife Patty Sessions reported visiting a pregnant Sister Love who had taken ill and was "like to miscarry." Sessions, known for her gift of speaking in tongues while giving blessings, possibly administered to Love both with standard herbal treatments as well as through prayer and faith. However Sessions treated Love, within five days Sessions wrote that "she is beter [*sic*]."³⁷ The reflective words of midwife Christensen conveyed Latter-day Saint midwives' beliefs best: "Often a few herbs administered with faith brought about wonderful results."³⁸ In practice, this combination built Latter-day Saints' trust in midwives' abilities to prevent pregnancy loss throughout nineteenth-century Utah.

Latter-day Saint Dr. Hannah Sorensen felt strongly about instructing Utah women about their own health and hygiene in the latter half of the nineteenth century, specifically relating to pregnancy and childbirth. In 1862 Sorensen graduated from the Royal Hospital of Denmark. By the time Sorensen was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1883, she had been practicing obstetrics for the Danish government for twenty-two years. Sorensen faced opposition after her baptism, both from the Danish government and her husband, causing her to lose her job, home, marriage, and four of her ten children through custody battles. Sorensen emigrated to Utah in 1883 where,

35. Robert S. McPherson and Mary Lou Mueller, "Divine Duty: Hannah Sorensen and Midwifery in Southeastern Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4, 1997. Accessed December 9, 2020. Brigham Young also prescribed "such herbs and mild food as are at your disposal" for aiding illness. Here again midwives serve as an example of Latter-day Saint healing practices, as herbs were the medicine of choice for midwives. Midwife Else K. Christensen of Mayfield, Utah often "gathered and made concoctions from smartweed, wormwood, horehound, yarrow, and other herbs which grew wild in the valley."

36. Noall, *Guardians of the Hearth*, 13.

37. Patty Bartlett Sessions, *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*. Ed. by Donna Toland Smart. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 11.

38. Keeler, *Some Christensens Who Came From Thy*, 279.

with church leadership's approval, she established a traveling medical seminar for Latter-day Saint women.³⁹ Before publishing her own book, *What Women Should Know* in 1896, Sorensen's messages were taught during the Latter-day Saints' semi-annual General Conference proceedings as part of the women's meeting.⁴⁰ At the close of one of her meetings, a local bishop remarked to the attendees that her "mission was in greatness somewhat comparable to that of the Prophet Joseph Smith."⁴¹

Sorensen's classes went over basic female anatomy and remedies to common ailments, with a heavy emphasis on obstetrics and pregnancy. Like other Latter-day Saint midwives, Sorensen informed women on what they should and should not do while pregnant, as well as the medical causes of miscarriages. In *What Women Should Know*, for example, Sorensen explained that anything that caused "uterine contraction" would lead to miscarriages. Events such as "blows, falls, violent exertion, or emotional violence as excessive joy, fear, grief, anxiety, anger," or medicines were often the cause.⁴² To avoid miscarriages, Sorensen taught that women "should refrain from everything that brings on uterine contractions," including breastfeeding and excessive movement. These efforts were to help "the uterus to retain its contents in peaceful repose."⁴³ Sorensen also taught that, in the case of a threatened miscarriage, a woman must "rest in the recumbent posture" with "perfect quietness of mind as well as body," avoiding "all stimulants." Stimulants included excessive warmth in clothing, room temperature, food, and drinks.⁴⁴ However, if a miscarriage had already begun and the hemorrhaging did not stop, Sorensen taught that "you have no hope of stopping it," and prescribed the use of a cotton tampon soaked in "a solution of weak carbohic water" be inserted into the vagina to quicken the process as safely as possible.⁴⁵ Sorensen's obstetrical teachings helped to inform Latter-day Saint women across Utah about their bodies and health, and helped to grow

39. McPherson and Mary Lou Mueller, "Divine Duty."

40. "Hannah Sorensen Letter to the First Presidency," October 8, 1896, found in "First Presidency (Wilford Woodruff) General Correspondence, 1887–1898." Church History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City, UT.

41. Hannah Sorensen, *Closing Exercises of the Woman's Hygiene-Physiological Reform Class*, 16.

42. Hannah Sorensen, *What Women Should Know* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Company, 1896), 78.

43. Hannah Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 79.

44. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 79.

45. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 80.

the midwife profession throughout rural areas. Whether or not women fully adhered to her teachings on pregnancy and pregnancy loss, her popularity and presence in Utah society during the time suggests that her ideas informed the public understanding and interpretation of pregnancy loss.

In her teachings on the physical body and pregnancy loss, Sorensen also commented on possible religious causes for miscarriage. During a class taught in Provo, Sorensen explained miscarriages as an event orchestrated by the devil, because "nowhere is that enemy so much on the alert as with the pregnant woman. And why should that be a wonder? Is there any place where more harm can be done? Is that not the proper period to lay the foundation for ruining purposes of mankind?"⁴⁶ Sorensen's teachings that the devil influenced pregnancy loss through tempting women adapts earlier religious beliefs about woman's susceptibility to Satan. Especially notable among colonial Puritans, this belief was based on the weakness of women's bodies compared to men. Traditional Christian perceptions of women as the morally fragile sex taught that the devil was far more likely to tempt women than men because of their weak moral defenses.⁴⁷ Although Latter-day Saint teachings about women were generally more positive, like other Christian religious traditions, former sexual biases occasionally found themselves in Latter-day Saint culture. Hannah Sorensen's explicit linking of pregnancy loss to the devil's influence on pregnant women mirrors the long-established Christian belief about women's frailty. Her suggestion that pregnant women could be especially susceptible to the devil's enticements, since her body was even more weakened from the strain of gestation, reflected that although Hannah Sorensen ultimately empowered women about their bodies and health with her teachings, some of her beliefs did not trust women to make the right decisions.

If women's weakened state in pregnancy made them more open to Satan's influence, Sorensen gave women ultimate responsibility for their pregnancy loss. According to Sorensen, pregnancy loss was "a natural result of action" from women choosing to follow fashions and worldly practices rather than God's, which would bring "death instead of life and development" to the fetus. Although admitting that miscarriage might be accidental, she claimed that was the case "in a very small minority" of situations. For Sorensen, "thousands upon thousands" of miscarriages occurred directly "as a result of gratification

46. Sorensen, *Notes Written for the Benefit of Members*, 42.

47. Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 108.

of passions, habits, appetites [sic], and fashions” in women which caused the loss, “even in women who did not wish” it.⁴⁸ Sorensen raised anxiety surrounding pregnancy loss. Because her detailed descriptions of the “habits” which caused pregnancy loss are less over-gratifications so much as routines of daily life, women experiencing pregnancy loss may have felt difficulty interpreting whether or not their situation was part of the “small minority” who did not need to blame themselves for the loss.

Sorensen further isolated the blame of pregnancy loss onto the mothers-to-be by using theology surrounding God’s infallible and omniscient nature. After expounding how perfectly God created women’s bodies for the miracle of reproduction, Sorensen bemoans that pregnancy loss only occurs when women do not preserve their bodies in the “natural condition.”⁴⁹ To Latter-day Saints, God could not do anything imperfectly—imperfection was a result of human actions. Under this logic, Sorensen preached the idea that the imperfect event of a miscarriage reflected the woman’s failure to “comply with the laws of her Maker.”⁵⁰ The placement of blame on the women who experienced pregnancy loss corresponds with the developing understanding of the true womanhood period in Latter-day Saint history. True womanhood reflects the expectation for Latter-day Saint women to be perfect creatures of demure domesticity, becoming a gleaming beacon of faith and motherhood. Failing to complete a successful pregnancy because of disobedience to God’s commandments could be a sign of weakness and embarrassment to both the affected woman as well as her priesthood-holding husband.⁵¹ This new culture may explain why there are less references to pregnancy loss, particularly miscarriages, in the late nineteenth century. Hannah Sorensen taught this idea, reminding her students that a responsible woman “if threatened or being subject to [miscarriage] would conceal it” as an indication of “true modesty” and “true purity.”⁵² To avoid being seen as an unfaithful Saint, women were instructed to hide their losses.

48. Sorensen, *Notes Written for the Benefit of Members*, 41.

49. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 74.

50. Sorensen, *Notes Written for the Benefit of Members*, 45.

51. Gavin, “Fertility,” 40.

52. Sorensen, *Notes Written for the Benefit of Members*, 41.

Women’s Reactions to Stillbirth

A successful birth for Latter-day Saints was filled with joy, but alternately, Dr. Ellis Reynolds Shipp’s writings after losing her infant shortly after her birth shows the overwhelming depths of grief at the loss of a child: “What pen can portray or what heart can indite the feelings of my heart! Four days ago my little Anna, my darling babe, closed her eyes in death’s long sleep . . . Never for a moment did I think she would be taken away till I saw death upon her.”⁵³ After a long pregnancy, mothers-to-be expected their months of carrying their child to be rewarded with being able to hold their healthy child in their arms, but despite best efforts, sometimes the tragedy of a loss completed their pregnancy. Unable to spend any time with their living infant, the women who experienced stillbirths grappled with confusion over why their God would allow something like this to occur. The coping mechanisms displayed through their firsthand accounts showcase the resiliency of Latter-day Saint women during the nineteenth century.

Lucinda Haws Holdaway experienced the stillbirth of her second child amidst temporal difficulties in 1850. Holdaway and her husband settled in a new area of the Salt Lake Valley earlier in 1850, but experienced economic difficulties in establishing their home. According to Holdaway, their small mud home had “no floor, no roof, and no door.”⁵⁴ The home provided no shelter from the elements besides a wagon cover tarp which did not cover the whole roof. Holdaway explained the circumstances of her labor: “There had been rain for three days—and in the midst of this, on Nov. 4, 1850, my second baby was born.” Holdaway remembered that “everything in the house was wet through, and streams of water poured through the wagon cover onto [her] bed” during the birth. In these drowning conditions, Holdaway recalled that her baby never breathed, and she “came nearly dying also.”⁵⁵ Her account of this stillbirth gives bleak descriptive details about the environment in which her baby was entering the world. Holdaway’s account of her loss indicates that she felt the perilous weather and living conditions were highly responsible for the stillbirth but does

53. Ellis R. Shipp, *The Early Autobiography and Diary of Dr. Ellis R. Shipp*. Ed. by Ellis Shipp Musser. (Salt Lake City: 1961), 103.

54. “Biographical Sketch of Lucinda Haws Holdaway written by granddaughter Etna H. Foulger at Provo, Utah 1907.” Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University. Hereafter cited as “Holdaway Biography.”

55. Holdaway Biography.

not blame herself or God. Holdaway's explanation of the dangerous environment parallels Sorensen's teachings about the need for mildness and calm during pregnancy—Sorensen cited overexcitement as a cause of pregnancy loss.⁵⁶

Helen Mar Kimball Whitney also found herself searching for answers about a stillbirth while deeply mourning her loss. The year 1846 was difficult for Latter-day Saints who had left Nauvoo to escape persecution, and many, including a pregnant Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, found themselves living in the waystation of Winter Quarters, Nebraska awaiting better weather to travel. Whitney's husband, Horace K. Whitney, left on a scouting expedition with Brigham Young in late April of 1847, leaving his pregnant wife behind. On the morning of May 6, 1847, midwife Patty Sessions was summoned to assist in Helen Mar Kimball Whitney's delivery of her child, a stillborn daughter.⁵⁷ In his first letter back to his wife in June, Horace K. Whitney showed his excitement about the birth of their first child, referencing that he hoped her "tryel [sic] is over" and that their baby had been born. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney responded with grief.⁵⁸ In her response to her husband, still on the trail, Whitney relayed her emotional pain at the loss as being "harder to bear than all my bodyley [sic] suffering . . . for I had doted much on [the unborn child]'s society in your absence [sic]."⁵⁹ This line suggests that Whitney had developed a relationship with her unborn child prior to the miscarriage, and that her bond with the child she carried offered a sense of companionship in her lonesome weeks without her husband. The stillborn was to be Whitney's first child, so perhaps this line is also representative of the excitement she had had for this birth over the previous long months of pregnancy. The feelings of excitement would have compounded her grief and emotional toil after losing the child so close to the final due date. The example of Whitney's "doting" shows that Latter-day Saint women sometimes created connections with their unborn children, which possibly caused more grief at the loss of the connection after a pregnancy loss.

However, her writings about the sisterhood and community of the other women in Winter Quarters show how Latter-day Saint women served each other during trying times. For example, she discussed receiving a blessing from Eliza Snow to comfort her in her affliction which "rejoiced [her] heart" with

56. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 79.

57. Sessions, *Mormon Midwife*, 81.

58. Whitney letter to husband, 1847.

59. Whitney letter to husband, 1847.

its promised blessings.⁶⁰ ⁶¹ This practice of women blessing other women was especially practiced before giving birth to strengthen and protect the mother-to-be during the nineteenth century, and remained a common practice up until the 1920s.⁶² The example of women blessing Whitney after her stillbirth is representative of this practice and meaning, as they likely blessed with comfort and healing. Historians Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright contest that the "ritual exercise" of washing and anointings "at times of critical life events such as miscarriages, births, and illness bound women together and further intensified the kinship bonds" forged between Latter-day Saint women.⁶³ This balm of empathetic sisterhood after losing a pregnancy is an example of how Latter-day Saint women were able to cope with their losses through their joint faith.

Another example of Whitney's use of her faith to process her grief was her writings about her belief in the afterlife. Whitney wrote her husband about her longing for heaven, "when we shall receive our little infant back to our arms, when sorrow and affliction shall be done away, for that blessing is surely ours, it has been promised by your father, and many others, & it causes my heart to rejoice."⁶⁴ Whitney clung to what she had been taught: that she could be with her family eternally in the afterlife. Although there was a lack of specific doctrine relating to stillbirths, she received personal revelation that she would be able to see her daughter again in the eternities.⁶⁵

Whitney not only planned on seeing her child again in heaven, but also imagined that she would be an "infant" at that time too, suggesting that she planned on raising her daughter from infancy in the afterlife. According to historian Sherrie Gavin, the belief of raising lost children in heaven is based

60. Whitney letter to Husband, 1847.

61. Although in modern Latter-day Saint culture only men may hold the priesthood and the authority to offer blessings, the Latter-day Saint women of the nineteenth century often gave healing blessings. This practice was often referred to as the "laying on of hands" and was common after the Latter-day Saints settled in Nauvoo, where Joseph Smith affirmed the practice. There it became more common because of the anointing of women who had gone through the temple, deeming them ordained with the necessary power. For more information see: Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 10.

62. Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 72.

63. Stapley and Wright, "Female Ritual Healing," 10.

64. Whitney letter.

65. Greenwood.

on scripture found in the Doctrine of Covenants which says that “all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven.” However, this revelation was given in relation to a young child’s death, not in the context of prenatal death.⁶⁶ Whitney’s writings show that some Latter-day Saint women felt their pregnancy losses deeply, but also how they used doctrine to cope with their grief and “fill their page.” Blessings, scriptures, and theologizing new interpretations of doctrine aided Whitney’s mourning process and understanding after her stillbirth.

Women’s Reactions to Miscarriage

During the nineteenth century, medical professionals referred to miscarriages as abortions. Although modern understandings of the term abortion limits itself to the use of purposeful loss of a fetus, the nineteenth-century verbiage for this was differentiated as “willful abortions” or “infanticide.”⁶⁷ Miscarriages were considered in the nineteenth century to be any birth of a fetus before it was viable. According to Utah doctors’ writings in the 1890s, a nonviable pregnancy meant less than seven months after conception.⁶⁸ Because miscarriages could occur very early on in pregnancy, sometimes a pregnancy loss was difficult to differentiate from a heavy menstruation cycle, especially since, without access to pregnancy tests of the future, it was sometimes difficult to determine whether one was pregnant until the fetus began to “quicken,” around the end of the first trimester.⁶⁹ In her book on historical miscarriages, Withycombe relates that nineteenth-century physicians relied on the quickening to know if a woman was pregnant, or if her pregnancy symptoms were representative of a different issue that was simply replicating the event, such as stomach pains or menstruation.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, women who recorded their miscarriages often did not note how far along they were in their pregnancy, which would have offered more insight into the different reactions to miscarriages. For example, early Latter-day Saint leaders such as Brigham Young believed that if a miscarriage occurred within the first trimester, then the fetus was never alive, nor did it have a soul, and

66. Gavin, “Fertility,” 38.

67. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 82.

68. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 78.

69. Hendrix-Komoto, “The Other Crime,” 39.

70. Withycombe, *Lost*, 46.

could just be considered a relapsed menstruation.⁷¹ Others, like Dr. Hannah Sorensen, believed that life began at conception, therefore a miscarriage "should be looked upon as one of the heaviest trials of [a mother's] life."⁷²

Unlike stillbirth, in many instances, women did not record much emotion about their miscarriages, but instead mentioned their losses almost in passing. In December 1835, Caroline Barnes Crosby and her husband travelled from Massachusetts towards Kirtland, Ohio. Near the end of their journey, Crosby stayed with her brother's family in Ripley, Ohio while her husband went ahead to inspect Kirtland on his own. During this stay, Crosby writes that she "had a sick turn [after she] had been there a few days, which terminated in a miscarriage."⁷³ Crosby does not note how far along this pregnancy had been nor what may have triggered the event. Instead of going into details, Crosby writes immediately that she "soon recovered, however, and enjoyed a very good visit" with her family and friends. After her husband returned ten days later, she wrote vividly about her husband's report of Kirtland and the Prophet Joseph Smith, detailing her excitement to leave at once.⁷⁴ Crosby does not spare any details of her husband's report in her journal, yet only gives her miscarriage one sentence. It's possible that she simply did not want to relive the possible trauma of the experience by writing about her emotions. It is also possible, however, that she is an example of her times—early child death and sickness prevailed during the early nineteenth century, so events like this were not quite as unexpected and possibly not as shocking for the mothers-to-be. Crosby's journal only addresses her pregnancy loss with one sentence, meaning it is possible that her emotions surrounding the miscarriage might have been less involved. However, this might have simply indicated that Crosby held her emotions surrounding this event to be even more private than a journal entry.

In the early twentieth century, Mary May Clove documented similar emotions towards her miscarriage. Clove lived on the frontier in Glendale, Utah with her husband and three young daughters.⁷⁵ When describing her summer

71. Hendrix-Komoto, "The Other Crime," 40.

72. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 80.

73. Edward Lyman, Susan Ward Payne, and S. George Ellsworth, ed. *No Place to Call Home: The 1807–1857 Life Writings of Caroline Barnes Crosby, Chronicler of Outlying Mormon Communities* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005) 39.

74. Lyman, Payne, and Ellsworth, *No Place to Call Home*, 39.

75. "Mary May Clove Little's Diary," Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, 57. Hereafter cited as "Little Papers."

of 1915, Clove remarks that she “lost a false conception” during that summer.⁷⁶ Her specific description of her loss as a “false conception” rather than a miscarriage suggests that she had a medical understanding of types of miscarriages. According to Hannah Sorensen’s 1896 book, *What Women Should Know*, “false conceptions” occurred when the fetus “died soon after conception” but still continued its “natural tendency for growth and develop[s] into [an] organized substance, which in the course of time is expelled from the uterus through the same forces as an ordinary delivery.”⁷⁷ Despite Sorensen’s definition, the validity of false conceptions caused controversy amidst doctors as early as 1807, when Dr. Thomas Denman argued that the expelled tissue of “false conceptions” were actually almost always early products of a “true conception.”⁷⁸ Clove’s identification of her miscarriage as a false conception indicates that she interpreted false conceptions in the same vein as Sorensen’s teachings, and that she believed her fetus had stopped growing very early in the pregnancy and never lived.

Sorensen’s book did, however, caution women against defining miscarriages as “false conceptions” because she “noticed that people call an expelled ovum (when expelled at an early date) a false conception when really it was a true conception.”⁷⁹ Perhaps Clove used this medical term to lessen the grief and build understanding, even if she did not truly know if it truly was a false conception. This medical understanding may have provided a way for Clove to think about her miscarriage logically rather than emotionally, possibly making it easier to accept and move forward from. After Clove mentioned her “false conception,” she quickly moved on to details about other events happening on the farm without further elaborating on her loss.⁸⁰ She may have also had other pressing concerns on her property which might have superseded this miscarriage in her mind. Of course, she might have been attempting to distract herself with work to help herself move forward from the event. Whatever the reasons behind her post-miscarriage activities, her lack of writing about the event suggests that she was not deeply affected by this miscarriage.

Despite the accounts we have of women demonstrating conflicted emotions towards their miscarriages, this was not always the case. While Clove and Crosby’s experience suggest detachment, other accounts from Latter-day

76. Little papers, 58.

77. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 86.

78. Withycombe, *Lost*, 61.

79. Sorensen, *What Women Should Know*, 86.

80. Little papers, 58.

Saint women express the deeper feelings which could accompany pregnancy loss, including miscarriages, and some of the religious coping comforts they turned to in their grief. Mary May Clove experienced at least one other miscarriage, which she recorded in her journal. This one happened in 1922, when she was thirty-six years old. This particular year was an especially tough one for Clove, as her oldest daughter, Fern, died of appendicitis in May at the age of twelve.⁸¹ The loss of her eldest child might have rested heavily on her mind as she experienced a miscarriage in late autumn. Unlike her first miscarriage, which Clove readily identified as a false conception, suggesting it occurred early in her pregnancy, the miscarriage she suffered in 1922 occurred almost halfway into her pregnancy. In addition, the loss of her eldest child, the difference in the length of pregnancy, and development of the fetus prior to her miscarriage may have contributed to deeper feelings surrounding the loss of this child. Clove knew that she had been pregnant for four months. She had likely been making plans for her future child's arrival and may have believed she was safe from a miscarriage since her first miscarriage had occurred earlier. Also, because the miscarriage took place later in her pregnancy, it would have been a much more difficult experience physically. Indeed, Clove recorded in her diary that after this miscarriage, she was laid up in bed for "three months . . . and was very weak all winter."⁸² The three month recovery period she describes shows something of the long-term effects miscarriage could have on women. With such a long convalescence, Clove had much time to dwell on her feelings after this loss, during which she was likely experiencing emotional pain as well.

The extended recovery period Clove experienced after her 1922 miscarriage represents the physical danger women who experienced pregnancy loss faced. Charles D. Meigs, the most well-known nineteenth-century obstetrics doctor, taught that "long years of broken health and . . . weakness which is never fully recovered" often followed a woman's miscarriage.⁸³ For example, after Emma Ajax's miscarriage in 1862, a doctor diagnosed her with *prolapsus uteri*.⁸⁴ This uncomfortable condition occurs due to the "weakening of pelvic muscles and supportive tissue" following labor or pregnancy, causing the uterus to slip down

81. Little papers, 59.

82. Little Papers, 60.

83. Withycombe, *Lost*, 67.

84. "Ajax, William, 1832–1899," Overland Trails Biographies, Transcontinental Migration Archive. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University. 12. Hereafter cited as "William Ajax."

into or protrude from the vagina.⁸⁵ Over the following months, William Ajax wrote about his wife's prolonged recovery in his journal, including the cost of the medicinal herbal lotions she was prescribed to strengthen her muscles and the methods of application.⁸⁶ The Ajax family was able to have healthy children born a few years later, but other women's physical consequences proved more fatal. In 1880, forty-two-year-old Lois Barnes Pratt endured a miscarriage. Hemorrhaging during the miscarriage caused Pratt to have fainting spells in the years following her loss. While cooking over the fireplace five years later, Pratt experienced one of these fainting spells and landed in the flames. Her sustained burns led to her death just a few hours later.⁸⁷ These examples demonstrate the danger and physical toll pregnancy loss could potentially place on nineteenth-century women who experienced pregnancy loss.

Like Helen Mar Kimball Whitney's reaction to her 1846 stillbirth, Clove recognized that her recovery was aided by the help of local women. A "Sister Cox called in and helped" Clove during her months of recovery, and a "Mary Ellen Smith came every morning" to help Clove get back on her feet. Finally, Clove wrote her appreciation for her Aunt Julia, who was with her while she miscarried her baby.⁸⁸ These notes about the help she received from the community of women around her shows the connection that Latter-day Saint women placed on community. In addition to this example of aid from women Clove notably recalls that the "Elders administered to me before I lost."⁸⁹ Clove's request for a blessing is also similar to Whitney's experience of women providing a blessing to her after her own loss. However, Clove's description of the blessers being "elders" is perhaps an example of the phasing out of women offering blessings within the Church in the 1920s. While the blessing is not recorded, it is likely that it offered her some measure of peace and comfort as she endured the sadness and physical toll of her pregnancy loss over the following months.

85. "Uterine Prolapse," Mayo Clinic (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, September 19, 2020), <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/uterine-prolapse/symptoms-causes/syc-20353458>.

86. William Ajax, 26.

87. "The John Hunt Book," Manuscript Collections, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

88. Little Papers, 60.

89. Little Papers, 60.

Conclusion

The experiences of Latter-day Saint women who experienced pregnancy loss during the nineteenth century shows that while specifics of women's pregnancy losses differed among accounts, some similar themes in coping mechanisms emerge. For example, both Mary Clove Little and Helen Mar Kimball Whitney relied on the special community of female support within their communities. The sympathies and assistance women offered to the mothers who experienced losses suggests that Latter-day Saint women understood and felt empathetic feelings toward miscarriages and stillbirths. Furthermore, none of the women's first-hand accounts studied expressed any sort of lingering guilt or shame about their losses. Some women expressed grief while others appeared to hide their emotions, but none expressed the shame or feelings of responsibility that Hannah Sorensen had taught women to feel concerning their pregnancy losses. Instead, women reverted to their faith in God and his plan for their lives. They used their personal agency to build their own understanding of loss through their use of revelation to interpret meaning from their experiences.

Like their nineteenth-century sisters in the gospel, many Latter-day Saint women today experience pregnancy loss without having clear-cut doctrine to guide them through the experience. Historian Sherrie Gavin's research with the Claremont Oral History Collection, which showcases modern Latter-day Saint women who experienced miscarriages and stillbirths between the 1950s and the 1980s, shows that their reactions are like their nineteenth and early twentieth-century counterparts. Sounding very much like Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, one woman named Jean recalled her 1970s miscarriages with sadness, but expressed her sincere belief that she "knew that one day [she] would have an opportunity to raise" the miscarried fetuses.⁹⁰ Connie, who in the 1950s experienced a miscarriage after three months, recalled her emotional recovery from her miscarriage as being totally isolated from her faith, and instead, focused instead on the medical aspects of the miscarriage. Her experience shows similarities to Mary May Clove's first miscarriage experience, as Clove justified her miscarriage in the terms of it being a "false conception."⁹¹ Through learning about different ideas regarding loss, other women who experience pregnancy loss may more easily find ideas or mindsets that will be able to help themselves cope.

90. Gavin, "Fertility," 38.

91. Gavin, "Fertility," 37.

Showing how women of the past reacted and understood their pregnancy loss creates solidarity and connection to the women who experience it today; the same bits of doctrines and access to revelation which guided the nineteenth-century women are available to modern Latter-day Saint women. There has not been any new revelation or counsel given over the past century. Continued discussion will help to promote more resources to be available for women experiencing this in modern time. As Kint suggests, discussions on uncomfortable topics have the potential to “remove [the] social boundaries that prohibit communication,” which in turn can benefit the society.⁹²

92. Esther Lea Kint, “Women’s Experiences of Pregnancy Loss: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.” Unpublished PhD thesis, (Edith Cowan University: 2015) Accessed September 26, 2020, 6. <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1723/>

“Moloch of the Present Mode”

Women’s Short Hairstyles in Nineteenth-Century American Society

Jack Tingey

AN ARTICLE FROM THE *Indianapolis Journal* IN 1883 REPORTED ON the phenomenon of women cutting their hair short in the name of fashion, describing the process of a woman cutting off her long hair as akin to sacrificing virtue to the “Moloch of the present mode.”¹ Today, short hairstyles are more commonly associated with the bob of the Roaring Twenties, an era historians and popular culture recognize as one of excess, social change, and new innovations. But short hair on women was by no means new in the 1920s. The bob was not the first short hairstyle in the United States but was the latest in a long line of fashionable short hairstyles dating to the mid-nineteenth century. A variety of circumstances contributed to the rise in popularity of short hairstyles after the Civil War, and contemporary accounts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries detailed many instances of women’s² short hair, aided by advances in communication and mass consumption, indicating that short hair on women was not only known but common. This trend had various

1. “A New Fashion in Hair-Dressing,” *The Indianapolis Journal*, October 6, 1883.

2. Note: This paper focuses solely on white American communities in the timeframe. Evidence in Black communities comes later in the early twentieth century, and among other ethnic communities, short hair was influenced by specific cultural traditions not in the scope of this paper. This is not to say that there is no evidence in any other community besides white Americans, but instead this paper will only focus on mainstream white American culture.

impacts on society and set the precedents for the coming boom of short hair in the 1920s and the continued popularity of short hair into the twentieth century.

The historiography on the topic of short hairstyles in the nineteenth century remains sparse. Sources on the period indicate the growth of mass media and communication through the newspaper and telegraph industry, as in Smethers' "Pounding Brass for the Associated Press," which emphasizes the power of printed publications in shaping American culture.³ Regarding hair and fashion, there is little mention of short hair on women during the nineteenth century⁴ or during the women's suffrage movement. Mention of short hairstyles is noticeably absent in American and British works on the late nineteenth century,⁵ and a recent work on the social history of hair said nothing of short hair until the early twentieth century.⁶ Some sources even classify the trend of short hair, exemplified by the bob, as primarily an early-twentieth-century phenomenon with no clear precedents.⁷ Newspapers from the early twentieth century only vaguely remember short hairstyles before the bob,⁸ indicating that it was largely forgotten in the collective memory. This is likely due to an oversight in the narrative, rather than misrepresentation. The social history of hair is an admittedly niche field and thus would be ill fitting in a greater narrative of nineteenth-century America. Sources do emphasize that media played a significant role in the social development of urban and rural American environments in the late nineteenth century,⁹ and it is well within the realm of possibility to consider the role of mass media in spreading the idea of short hair as a fashion throughout the country.

3. J. Steven Smethers, "Pounding Brass for the Associated Press: Delivering News by Telegraph in a Pre-Teletype Era," *American Journalism* 19, no. 2 (2002): 13–30.

4. Lucy Johnston, Helen Persson, and Marion Kite, *Nineteenth-century Fashion in Detail* (London: V&A Publications, 2005).

5. Laura L. Behling, "Unsilently Evidence: "Female Inversion" and the U.S. Woman Suffrage Movement," in *100 Years of Women's Suffrage: A University of Illinois Press Anthology*, ed. Dawn Durante (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 91–120.

6. Rose Weitz, *Rapunzel's Daughters: What Women's Hair Tells Us about Women's Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

7. Donald Pizer, "Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy and 1920s Flapper Culture," *Studies in American Naturalism* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 123–32.

8. *The Atlanta Constitution*, "Even Grandma Was Bobbed." January 11, 1925.

9. Victor Rosewater, *History of Cooperative News Gathering in the United States* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930).

Short Hair Fashion and Media in the Nineteenth Century

Early accounts of short hair in the United States can be traced to the 1850s¹⁰ and even earlier, due to records in the media. Newspapers before the Civil War¹¹ indicated that it was fashionable for young women to wear their hair short,¹² but they did not describe the exact nature of the style. Short hair for women would have been anything from shoulder length to cropped close to the head, as anything longer than this would likely have been noted as “long” hair with special notice of its length.¹³ After the Civil War, many small local newspapers purchased stories from larger eastern papers like the *New York Evening Post* and the *Evening Star* out of Washington, DC, often through the Associated Press or the United Press. Fashion columns in newspapers bore the latest styles from New York and London, informing ladies in all regions of the United States of the latest fashions. An 1884 article from the *Indianapolis Journal* reported on the fashion trends of the time, stating, “The fashion of cropping the hair is fast gaining favor in both Europe and America, and it is quite wonderful to discover how many ladies are willing to sacrifice their wealth of shining tresses to a passing fancy.”¹⁴ The article dismissed this “new” fashion while admitting that the hairstyle was widely popular and that hairdressers were more than willing to indulge their clients. Additionally, newspapers reported several different specific styles of short hair. A popular style in 1881 involved short hair curled around the face and a long braid tied close to the head, false or otherwise.¹⁵ The European fashion, as reported in local newspapers,¹⁶ entailed the hair being cut short all around the head, curled in tight spirals.¹⁷ One newspaper reported that the young ladies of a Texas town wore their hair shorn to the scalp, even shorter

10. “Why My Uncle Was A Bachelor,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, May 24, 1855.

11. “An Abominable Fashion,” *Western Reserve Chronicle*, October 27, 1858.

12. “Short Hair-New Fashion,” *St. Charles City Intelligencer*, January 27, 1859.

13. Felicity J. Warnes, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Fashion* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, 2016), 45.

14. *The Indianapolis Journal*. “Fashion of Short Hair.” April 5, 1884.

15. “Fashion Notes,” *Gloucester Democrat*, July 7, 1881.

16. It is interesting to note that most local newspapers would purchase the rights to stories published in larger eastern newspapers like the *New York Evening Post* or *Washington Herald*, so reports of fashion trends often came days or weeks after the initial reporting.

17. “Fashion Notes,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 20, 1882.

than most short styles of the time.¹⁸ Disdain in the media for short hairstyles was not widely held either; an 1883 article from the *New York Evening Post* spoke favorably of the European fashion and reported that many women of all ages wore short hair. The article used a sarcastic phrase, “Moloch of the present mode,” to ridicule the dramatic critiques of the hairstyles.¹⁹ The article utilized the phrase sarcastically to emphasize the notion held by some that young ladies were sacrificing their long hair on the altar of fashion without a care for its sacred value.²⁰ Another article predicted that short hair would remain fashionable for the foreseeable future.²¹ By the 1880s, short hairstyles for women, imported by newspapers from Europe, were well established in the United States.

Stories in the media about women selling their hair, both real and fictitious, were also commonly published during this period. An Ohio newspaper in 1867 featured a short story of a young woman who sold her braid of long hair for meal and board.²² A memorable story from Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1876 told of two young ladies visiting Philadelphia who lost their return train tickets and had no money. To raise the necessary funds, the two girls cheerfully visited an obliging barber and sold their back hair (the large part of hair that hung down their backs) for \$3.75 each, which was enough to return home.²³ The story was recounted with a casual tone, as if this was not an uncommon event. A woman selling her hair was traditionally depicted as an act of desperation, for a woman’s hair was considered her crowning glory and integral to her beauty. Although the term “crowning glory” originated from the Bible,²⁴ it was normally used ironically or as a poetic device. The novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott depicted one of the March sisters, Jo, selling her long hair for money for her family. One of her sisters exclaimed in distress, “Your one beauty!”²⁵ The tragedy of a girl selling her hair, however, seemed to have been related to the initial unwillingness to part with her hair, as many other girls did so willingly. Writers likely described women cutting their hair short because they observed haircutting to be occurring around them, though the reactions of these writers were

18. “Girls of Onoko, TX,” *The Evening Star*, May 22, 1880.

19. “A New Fashion in Hair-Dressing,” October 6, 1883.

20. The term *Moloch*, also known as *Molech*, refers to a Canaanite heathen god from the Old Testament, to whom apostate Israelites sacrificed children.

21. “Women’s Globe,” *Wheeling Register*, September 19, 1884.

22. “The Female Secretary,” May 1, 1867.

23. “Two Belles Shorn,” *The Yorkville Enquirer*, November 9, 1876.

24. 1 Cor. 11:15

25. Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (New York: Penguin, 2019), 168.

mixed. To some, women cutting their hair was a great tragedy at the loss of such beautiful hair, while to others, the reaction could be described as mild fascination and interest. Indeed, in one 1883 story about a young woman who cut off her own braid and framed a school janitor to gain public notoriety, her actions were described with casual indifference.²⁶ The reactions of writers to women cutting their hair depended largely on the individual, rather than specific societal standards regarding proper hair length. For women in the late nineteenth century, it was common enough to cut one's hair under different circumstances and was thus not a taboo or social crime. Through analyzing stories of hair cutting and accounts of fashion in the media, it is clear that short hair for women was not unusual and was perhaps even common for the time.

Societal Influence and Impact of Short Hairstyles

The trend of short hair was both influenced by society and had larger effects on society. Women in the late nineteenth century benefited from the inspiration of celebrities who wore their hair short, particularly Miss Rose Cleveland, the sister and first lady of President Grover Cleveland. During her brother's first year in office in 1885, Miss Cleveland wore her hair short and curled ". . . on the grounds of comfort, convenience, and health."²⁷ Although newspapers featured few photographs of the first lady's hairstyle, the popularity of the European-style short curls increased dramatically. One newspaper in 1885 described the style as spreading across the nation with "alarming rapidity."²⁸ Illustrations depicted the short hairstyles with bangs, which was popular with longer and shorter hair.²⁹ According to one article, most short hairstyles had some form of bangs, usually curled with a hot iron,³⁰ while women who retained their long locks often banged their front hair anyway.³¹ Rose Cleveland was certainly a celebrity, and as the one-time first lady she influenced many women across the United States to cut their hair short, as she had.

26. "The Rape of the Lock Story," *The Evening Star*, December 4, 1883.

27. "Parting With Their Hair," *Savannah Morning News*, August 25, 1885.

28. "Local Department," *The Democrat*, November 12, 1885.

29. "The Fashions," *The Ottawa Free Trader*, May 30, 1885.

30. "Record-Union Melange," *Daily Record-Union*, September 29, 1885.

31. "A Peep Into The Mysteries Of Hair-Dressing Establishments," *Salt Lake Evening Democrat*, July 1, 1885.

Changing societal norms also had an influence on hair trends in the late nineteenth century. Aside from young ladies eager to follow a new fashion craze, short hair appealed to practical women who did not want the hassle of dressing long hair. An article from 1890 advised prospective brides to cut their hair short after their weddings and to wear wigs or switches for special occasions, associating short hair with “cool, clean, level-headed women who wouldn’t be bothered with the so-called [crowning] glory.”³² Many sources traditionally associated short hair with female suffragettes, but an article from 1886 stated, “It is no longer the badge, as it always was at the Capital, of woman suffragists and the virago. . . . The line is drawn nowhere; poor and rich, pious and worldly, fast and staid share the fashion.”³³ The article attributed much of the popularity of the style to its ease of maintenance and lack of fuss over hairpins and clips. Short hair appealed to the working woman who had little time to dress her hair or had dangerous work. Nurses in one New York hospital in 1887 cut their hair short for practical and sanitary reasons, much to the disapproval of the hospital matron, who reluctantly allowed them to remain employed.³⁴ Steel magnate and robber baron Andrew Carnegie, among other employers, advised an assembly of female students in 1906, saying that short hair attracted fewer germs and thus was far more hygienic and practical than long hair.³⁵ Women of all ages, backgrounds, and classes adopted short hairstyles, often for considerations of practicality. The “new woman” in the years before universal suffrage would have found more opportunities for employment in the growing American economy, so shorter hairstyles appealed to the need for sanitary and simple grooming.³⁶ However, the growing demand for female workers did not create the popularity of short hair; rather, many female workers adopted short hair because it was already popular and held added benefits of simplicity and practicality.

The impacts of short hair extended even into the economy as well. While American women cut their hair short, the human hair trade expanded in the late nineteenth century and continued to grow after the Civil War. It was estimated

32. “Advice to a Spring Bride,” *The World*, February 4, 1890.

33. “The Short Hair Craze,” *Western Sentinel*, February 18, 1886.

34. “The New Rule: A Hospital Comedy,” *The Press*, August 27, 1887.

35. “Germs Lurk In Girl’s Long Hair,” *Devils Lake Free Press*, January 26, 1906.

36. Maurine Beasley, “After Suffrage: An Uncharted Path,” in *Front Pages, Front Lines: Media and the Fight for Women’s Suffrage*, ed. Linda Steiner, Carolyn Kitch, and Brooke Kroeger (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 193–209.

that by 1889, over one million pounds of human hair was harvested,³⁷ bought, and sold across the “civilized world.”³⁸ Another article estimated the amount to be closer to twelve million pounds in every nation.³⁹ Advertisements for switches and other hair pieces targeted middle class women who could purchase a braid of human hair for around three dollars, depending on the quality of the hair, for use in elaborate hairstyles.⁴⁰ The best quality of human hair could have been found in the lucrative and elusive “convent hair,” collected from convents in North America. Certain convents held customs of shearing novices’ long, treasured locks after taking vows, which would be collected in bundles and put into storage. Nuns would then sell the hair at wholesale price to pay for the costs of running the convent; the hair had a reputation for substantial length (due to the shortness of the nuns’ haircuts) and excellent quality.⁴¹ This quality attributed a price several times higher than standard hair, so much that some American sellers, to increase upper class patronage, put out signs that read, “Strictly convent hair if desired.”⁴² The same article pointed out that ladies with either long or short hair could use convent hair to add length and bulk to hairstyles. Advertisements for false hair could be found in newspapers and magazines alongside reports on the current fashions of short hair. The trade of false hair thrived in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in combination with the popularity of short hair.

The Longevity of Short Hair into the Twentieth Century

The craze for short hair continued through the 1890s and into the twentieth century. Some tried to claim that short hair was out for good, as in 1885,⁴³ and again in 1886.⁴⁴ While most women across the United States maintained

37. Hair from India, China, and elsewhere in Asia was considered unclean due to racial concerns, but also due to rumors of Chinese hair being taken from gutters, corpses, or animals.

38. “Human Hair,” *Evening Star*, September 21, 1889.

39. “A Harvest of Human Hair,” *The Nebraska Advertiser*, September 24, 1897.

40. “Grey Hair A Specialty,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, February 5, 1888.

41. “Convent Hair,” *Mt. Sterling Advocate*, November 10, 1891.

42. “Convent Hair For Women,” *Newark Evening Star*, December 15, 1909.

43. “The Lady Ramble,” *The Globe Supplement*, October 4, 1885.

44. “Our Brevity Basket,” *The Times and Democrat*, July 22, 1886.

their long tresses, short hairstyles remained fashionable into the new century. Articles from 1891,⁴⁵ 1895,⁴⁶ and 1897⁴⁷ declared that short hair remained in style for women. An article from 1900, and another from 1901,⁴⁸ addressed the fashionable methods of dressing short hair, indicating its presence in the fashion scene.⁴⁹ The styles themselves varied, but the term “shingled” was used to describe short hair at the nape of the neck and the back of the scalp.⁵⁰ The term “bob,” normally associated with the 1920s, was referenced as early in 1910.⁵¹ Although instances of short hair diminished somewhat before World War I, short hairstyles continued to become popular into the 1920s with the advent of the Roaring Twenties and the trend of the bob.⁵² However, as indicated by contemporary accounts, there was a clear precedent for short hairstyles for women during the nineteenth century as a precursor to the more famous bob haircut.

Interestingly, most contemporary accounts of the bob in the 1920s failed to connect the style with previous fashions in short hair. One account from 1914 commented on the popular fashion of wearing short hair, referred to as the “Russian style.”⁵³ Short hair, now referred to as the bob, was associated with the dancer Irene Castle, who adopted the style in 1913. A later interview of Castle revealed that she was influenced to bob her hair after having short hair as a child in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁴ In the years after the conclusion of World War I, newspapers began reporting a surge in the popularity of short hair, specifically the bob; one 1909 article was titled, “Have You Bobbed Your Hair Yet?” accompanied by an illustration of a woman cutting her own hair with a large pair of shears.⁵⁵ By the beginning of 1920, short hair was widely popular, appearing in news stories, opinion pieces, and advice columns.⁵⁶ This trend continued to become a symbol of the era, associated with the image of the “new

45. “Bushels of Human Hair,” *The Bee*, Washington, DC. 1891.

46. “The Same Women After All,” *Waterbury Evening Democrat*, August 23, 1895.

47. “Woman’s World,” *The Morning News*, March 14, 1897.

48. “Main Article,” *The Times*, Washington, April 21, 1901.

49. “The Edicts of Fashion,” *The Fulton County News*, May 3, 1900.

50. “Girl Hobo Puts Hair in Pocket,” *Los Angeles Herald*, October 18, 1906.

51. “Ideas For One In Mourning,” *The Sunday Star*, September 25, 1910.

52. Sara Ross, “‘Good Little Bad Girls’: Controversy and the Flapper Comedienne,”

Film History 13, no. 4 (2001): 409–23.

53. “Dressing Children’s Hair An Art,” *The Washington Herald*, July 30, 1914.

54. *The Ladies’ Home Journal*. “I Bobbed My Hair And Then—” October, 1921.

55. “Have You Bobbed Your Hair Yet?” *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, April 27, 1919.

56. *Evening Public Ledger*. “Please Tell Me What To Do.” Philadelphia, PA. January 1, 1920.

woman” who evolved into the “flapper,” a bobbed, cigarette-smoking libertine synonymous with both short hair and the 1920s.⁵⁷ But without the previous precedents of short hair dating back to the nineteenth century, it is unlikely the bob would have been as widely accepted in the 1920s.

Conclusion

In contrast to previous historiography, the bob of the 1920s did not begin the trend of short hair but was rather a continuation of the existing popular hairstyles from the nineteenth century. The reason for the popularity of the style in the 19th century was effective consumption of mass media through the spread of newspapers in every region of the United States, especially newspapers reporting trends from fashionable cities, which led more women to adopt short hair for themselves. The specific styles of short hair varied widely, and many styles included the addition of false hair. Additionally, the trend of short hair had influences from popular culture, and changing societal standards led many newly-working women to adopt short hairstyles for the sake of practicality. By the late nineteenth century, short hair was widely popular as a fashionable style, which shows that common perceptions of modern short hair originating in the 1920s is false.

57. Maria Montserrat Feu López, “The U.S. Hispanic Flapper: *Pelonas* and *Flapperismo* in U.S. Spanish-Language Newspapers, 1920–1929,” *Studies in American Humor* 1, no. 2 (2015): 192–217.

Birthing Contention

Conflict Between Black and White Health Officials in Southern Midwife Training in the Mid-Twentieth Century

Ruth Hyde Truman

“YOU CAN GO RIGHT NOW AND START TALKIN TO SOMEBODY ABOUT my age and lil older and quite a bit older. They’ll say, ‘I was delivered by a granny midwife.’ A black woman, a granny midwife.”¹ These words, spoken by Onnie Lee Logan in her book, *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife’s Story*, illustrate the important role that black women played in childbirth in the South in the mid-twentieth century. In the South, hospitals were located far from rural communities, and women were much more likely to give birth in their own homes and enlist the aid of a black midwife than to travel several miles to give birth in a hospital. Midwives were crucial in the child-birthing process, assisting women in the delivery of their children, and advising them of the best care practices afterwards.

Black women were intimately involved in both the development and the distribution of medical care, specifically regarding women’s reproductive health, in their communities. Interest in black women’s contributions to medical care has increased in recent years, and with much of the recently published scholarship, it is possible to trace the changing roles and experiences of black women through various periods. Through American history, black women’s bodies were often viewed as commodities to be exploited or controlled, yet black women

1. Onnie Lee Logan, *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife Story* (Untreed reads, 2013).

also played an active role in the research about female physiology. In *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*, Dierdre Cooper Owens explores the development of what is today known as gynecology and its beginnings in Mount Meigs, Alabama, where Doctor James Marion Sims ran a hospital dedicated to learning new ways to surgically treat his patients. It was because of the hospital's location on a slave farm that he was able to work—the availability of black female bodies on which to experiment was crucial to his research. Cooper Owens explores the experiences of three enslaved women, Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy, to show that because of their enslavement, the women on whom he operated were not treated like patients, allowed to rest and recuperate after surgery. Instead they were expected to work, doing the range of tasks normally expected of enslaved people in the American South. These women also performed highly skilled labor as surgical assistants, learning and pioneering this new medical field alongside Sims, challenging initial assumptions that enslaved women were passive victims unable to influence their surroundings. Cooper Owens also suggests that after Sims had left the farm and the hospital behind, these women may have gone on to act as midwives for others in their community, further cementing the important role they played in the reproductive health of women.²

In addition to black women's contributions to the development of reproductive care, scholars have explored how the role of black women in women's health has changed as gynecology continued to develop. Gertrude Jacinta Fraser's *African American Midwifery in the South: Dialogues of Birth, Race, and Memory* focuses on African American midwives' recruitment and training, as well as their relationship with public health officials in the twentieth century. She shows that over the course of the twentieth century, white public health officials became more involved with women's reproductive health by creating clinics and other training programs to help midwives deliver babies in a safer and cleaner way.³ Eventually, midwives became an integral part of the public health system in the South, which consequently increased interaction between midwives and public health officials. Both Yulonda Eadie Sano's "Protect the Mother and the Baby: Mississippi Lay Midwives and Public Health" and Alicia D. Bonaparte's "Physicians' Discourse for Establishing Authoritative

2. Dierdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017).

3. Gertrude Jacinta Fraser, *African American Midwifery in the South: Dialogues of Birth, Race, and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Knowledge in Birthing Work and Reducing the Presence of the Granny Midwife” explore this interaction between professionals and midwives, showing that as early as the 1920s, white doctors and physicians began earnest efforts to regulate granny midwives. Sano’s and Bonaparte’s works suggest that high mortality rates of black mothers and babies prompted various state boards of health to become involved in the healthcare of poor women in rural areas. These states soon passed laws requiring practicing midwives to acquire licenses before assisting in a delivery, thus ensuring they would receive proper training at one of the educational clinics offered. Both scholars argue that while professionals’ efforts to regulate midwives were meant to reduce the mortality rate of women and infants, they also sought to gain more control over the midwives themselves. White doctors often blamed midwives for causing the high rates of infant and mother mortality (as opposed to poverty or lack of resources in a community), and the controlling policies were a means to gradually eliminate the midwives’ ability to practice.⁴

While the existing scholarship on black midwives has explored the connection between black women and public health care, most scholars have focused on midwives’ interactions with white professionals without exploring the perspective of black professionals, leaving unanswered questions about the topic. Were black public health workers involved in the training of midwives? What was the dynamic between white and black health care workers in their efforts to help the rural black communities of the South? Did attitudes toward black midwives differ between white and black healthcare workers? Analysis of primary sources reveals that white doctors, nurses, and public health officials criticized midwives’ bodies, minds, and character to uphold the racialized social and professional hierarchies, while black doctors, nurses, and volunteers pushed back against the white narrative and sought to legitimize black midwives’ work to uplift their community and advocate for black liberation.

As interest in training or regulating midwives increased in the early twentieth century, both white and black public health officials produced articles and studies about the black midwife that appeared in various scientific and medical

4. Yulonda Eadie Sano, “Protect the Mother and the Baby: Mississippi Lay Midwives and Public Health,” *Agricultural History* 93, no. 3 (2019): 393–413; Alicia D. Bonaparte, “Physicians’ Discourse for Establishing Authoritative Knowledge in Birthing Work and Reducing the Presence of the Granny Midwife,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 28, no. 2 (June 2015): 166–196.

journals.⁵ Some of these articles written by white doctors, nurses, or researchers were meant to convince other public health officials that black midwives posed a danger to Southern maternal health. Others were meant to persuade white doctors of the importance of training programs to better supervise the black midwives. Black professionals who interacted with midwives, both in the midwife training process and while working in the community, published articles and instructional manuals targeted toward rural areas to improve health in the black community. While both white and black professionals wrote about black midwives and the care the midwives provided, their rhetoric concerning the women involved was distinct. White officials' descriptions of the midwives used words that suggested black women occupied a status physically, intellectually, and morally inferior to any white professional. These descriptions were highly influenced by racial beliefs and the established social hierarchy of the time. The white officials' belief in the racial inferiority of the black women worked to delegitimize the midwives' work, perpetuated racist narratives, and eventually led to the midwife's elimination. Black professionals also analyzed midwives and responded to many of the claims made by white professionals, but instead characterized midwives as responsible and intelligent assistants to women in delivery, even with the midwives' occasional need for additional medical training. The difference between the white and black professionals' views on midwives offers insight into the way that each group sought to use public health to influence the black community.

"The Midwife Problem": The White Professional Perspective

White professionals viewed and defined childbirth as a highly medicalized event. Three mid-twentieth century scholars—Beatrice Mongeau, Harvey L. Smith, and Ann C. Maney—published an article in 1961 about the role of black midwives in the South. "The 'Granny' Midwife: Changing Roles and Functions of Folk Practitioner" asserted that childbirth should be classified as an institution of "enduring, complex, integrated pattern of behavior by which social control is exerted and through which basic desires or needs can be met."⁶ This example

5. Sano, "Protect the Mother and Baby," 394; Bonaparte, "Physician's Discourse," 166.

6. Beatrice Mongeau, Harvey L. Smith and Anne C. Maney, "The 'Granny' Midwife; Changing Roles and Functions of a Folk Practitioner," *American Journal of Sociology* 66,

of the professionalization of childbirth suggested that certain societal expectations about childbirth should be met by everyone involved—doctor, nurse, new mother, and baby. In the eyes of these professionals, childbirth was meant to maintain the existing social hierarchies and power structure. Midwives were instrumental in assisting women in childbirth inside the home, yet this was in contrast with the professional atmosphere the white officials described. While these officials did not condemn midwifery in all forms, the belief that childbirth was meant to follow a certain pattern allowed them and other professionals to further argue that midwives should be supervised by those who properly understood childbirth's function—in other words, the white professional.

White medical scholars increasingly attempted to convince their colleagues of what they claimed was the cause of problems in maternal health care in the South. Their arguments and scrutiny often centered on the midwives' physical bodies and minds. James H. Ferguson's article "Mississippi Midwives" explored what Ferguson called the "midwife problem" by first describing the midwives themselves. He claimed that the African American midwives were "often physically and mentally unfit to perform this function" of midwifery.⁷ He focused on the midwife's body, indicating that she might be too old or weak to properly assist in a labor, or that she might even be a carrier for infectious diseases. He discussed her mental function, indicating that she did not understand the complexities of the child birthing process.

Mongeau and her colleagues also analyzed the midwives' bodies and physical appearance. They sometimes referred to the black women as an "indigenous type."⁸ In the context of the article this term did not indicate Native American descent, but rather it designated the midwives as members of a local group, different from the white professionals who had come to the area to improve it. Using this term, Mongeau and her colleagues labeled the midwives as physically different than the white doctors and professionals participating in childbirth because of their place of origin. This example may be indicative of a wider trend of white professionals maintaining a degree of separation between themselves and the black community. Mongeau and her colleagues also discussed the midwives in terms of their age, asserting that most of the midwives were elderly or approaching an advanced age, which would affect their ability to practice.

no. 5 (March 1961): 498.

7. James H. Ferguson, "Mississippi Midwives," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1950): 85.

8. Mongeau et al. "The Granny Midwife," 499.

Because age was stressed as a deciding factor regarding a person's ability to practice midwifery, and because midwives were associated with old age, doubt was cast on all midwives' ability to practice regardless of age.

Narratives about black bodies were frequently used to justify systemic racism. Sociologists in the late nineteenth century attributed higher death rates among the black community to an "inferior constitution" or racial "degeneration" of the black body.⁹ These descriptions of black bodies allowed white society to justify prevalent social inequalities. In other words, white experts claimed that black people were to blame for their own problems because their bodies were inferior. Throughout American history, racist stereotypes have especially portrayed black women as weak or at fault for many of the social problems in black communities. Black mothers endured stereotypes portraying them as physically incompetent and culturally unable to care for their children.¹⁰ White medical professionals used the same kinds of arguments and stereotypes to discredit black midwives, regularly focusing on black women's bodies to delegitimize the midwives and their professional capabilities. As Mongeau and her colleagues described the midwives in a way that portrayed them differently than white professionals, they were contributing to the existing hierarchy that placed whites above blacks. By viewing members of another group as distinct or separate, it was easier to impose a hierarchy giving one group power over another. Similarly, Ferguson's focus on the midwife's body and mind suggested that her shortcomings were an inherent, unchanging part of her and did not exist merely due to lack of proper training. The midwife's defects were something that could not be improved upon, and her faults may have even required that she be carefully supervised or controlled.

Just as white professionals scrutinized midwives' physical abilities, they consistently downplayed the black women's intelligence. Articles that analyzed white doctors' training of midwives described the midwives as educable and eager to learn, yet white professionals also questioned how much the midwife understood about the scientific side of childbirth.¹¹ Mongeau and her colleagues asserted that the midwife

9. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 40.

10. Lakisha Simmons, "Black Love: Relationships of Love and Care between Black Women after the Civil War" (Lecture, Brigham Young University Global Women's Studies Colloquium, Provo Utah, November 6, 2020).

11. Ferguson, "Mississippi Midwives," 86.

did not adopt the doctor's techniques because they were rational, nor did she abandon her own because they were irrational. She simply substituted his kind of magic for her own or practiced them both side by side. When the magic did not work, it wasn't the magic that was at fault; it was the Lord's will.¹²

White professionals' descriptions of the midwives implied that they did not understand science in the way that the white community did; instead they held that the midwife relied on superstition. Rather than use words like "medical technique," they described the midwife as adopting a kind of magic which undermined her ability to truly understand what she was being taught.

In "Mississippi Midwives," Ferguson also said of the midwife that "her relationship with organized medicine consisted usually of nothing more than a half-awareness of the activities existing between her and the local physician."¹³ His portrayal of midwives suggested that these women were incompetent and their practices were perhaps at times more harmful than helpful. Ferguson's descriptions cast doubt on the midwife's understanding of her own practice, her ability to successfully coordinate with doctors, and her potential to provide the best care for patients. These types of comments were used to justify the involvement of white professionals in the health of black mothers as well as the white professionals' control over black midwives.

As white professionals used racial narratives to discredit black midwives' intelligence, less experienced doctors and nurses learned to expect less of midwives. Doctors participating in midwife training courses were advised that midwives would need someone to interpret the activities for them.¹⁴ White professionals were taught to have low esteem for the midwives and to expect them to have subpar intelligence and understanding of the medical world. This expectation led professionals to believe that midwives would seek approval and conform to expectations even if they did not understand the approved medical practices.¹⁵ These statements indicated a belief that the midwife was incapable of intellectually understanding the activities in which she was participating. The

12. Mongeau et. al, "The Granny Midwife," 503.

13. Ferguson, "Mississippi Midwives," 85.

14. Marian F. Cadwallader, "Midwife Training in Georgia: Needs and Problems," *Bulletin of the American College of Nurse-Midwifery* 2, no. 2 (1957): 22.

15. Mongeau et al, "The Granny Midwife," 504.

white professionals did not expect her to comprehend complex concepts behind the techniques she was learning.

Ferguson mentioned that a midwife's "personal character" should also be scrutinized before deciding if she should be allowed to practice.¹⁶ This suggests a belief that white doctors should not entrust many responsibilities, especially the responsibility to care for a mother and baby, to some of these women before they proved their morality and integrity. As white politicians, statisticians, and everyday citizens at the time constructed racial narratives that connected blackness with immorality and crime, white professionals perceived black midwives as inherently immoral.¹⁷

As a result of the perceived intellectual and moral inferiority of black midwives, white professionals believed that the white doctor must have ultimate authority over the black midwife. After a midwife had passed the prerequisite moral and intellectual scrutiny and finished her training she still "looked directly to the physician for her sanction to practice: he stood almost, but not quite on par with the Lord as her authority figure."¹⁸ After a midwife had learned and internalized the proper medical techniques and procedures, the white doctor retained his position above her. This authority over midwives was justified not by medical training but by race. Regardless of the midwives' level of skill, white doctors' godlike authority helped to justify the established social order and maintain that the midwives were (or should be) submissive and accepting of that authority. If midwives had accepted the white doctors as second only to God, the organization of the health administration would be further justified.

The way that white professionals characterized the midwives offers insight into the professionals' beliefs about how the public health administration and society should exist. Their belief about the black midwives' role fell in line with the racist view of what a black person's role in a white society should be. Consequently, each of the criticisms levied by white professionals about the midwives' bodies, minds, or character worked to preserve and reinforce the social and professional hierarchies of the time. These hierarchies were grounded in white supremacy and placed white skin above black. These officials were unable to consider black midwives outside of the racial stereotypes, and they offered the midwives only a limited role in obstetrical care. The white officials' focus on

16. Ferguson, "Mississippi Midwives," 87.

17. Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness*, 42.

18. Mongeau et. al, "The Granny Midwife," 502.

the inadequacies of the midwives also pulled attention away from the actual healthcare needs of the patients.

Kind-Hearted and Conscientious Midwives: The Black Professional's Perspective

While white medical professionals produced articles about the state of the healthcare industry, a growing number of black people sought to become involved in the health of their community. These black individuals, who consisted of doctors, nurses, or volunteers who had received training in public health, had different ideas about the midwife's role in public health than the white professionals. Several publications produced by black professionals analyzed similar circumstances to the white professionals, yet drew vastly different conclusions about the midwives. Publications produced by the black public health community show a conscious effort to push back against racial narratives that disadvantage black citizens, and a desire to improve the social standing of black people in the United States, especially in relation to health care. The way that black professionals talked about the midwives' bodies, minds, and character reveals significant differences between the white and black professionals' beliefs.

One of the biggest differences between the white and black professionals was their descriptions of the midwives' bodies. While white professionals described black bodies as inherently weak and inferior, their black counterparts rarely mentioned the midwives' physical appearance or bodies at all. Black professionals did not consider the black body a detriment to a midwife's abilities and only sometimes mentioned body in conjunction with a career in healthcare. A pamphlet for the National Negro Health Week discussed what qualifications a woman should possess before she started serving in the community: "She should have, in addition to an adequate professional training, a healthy body and human interest in her work."¹⁹ The pamphlet mentions the qualifications about the body only briefly and in addition to other qualities such as "tact, insight, a feeling heart, a quick mental grasp of persons and situations, dignity, persuasiveness—these things came by grace of nature."²⁰ Physical health, kindness, compassion, and understanding were important in order for black women

19. "The Public Health Nurse," National Negro Health Week, 12.

20. "The Public Health Nurse," 12.

to be successful in healthcare. By suggesting that these qualities should be part of a woman's nature if she were involved in healthcare, black officials implied that the desired qualities may be present within anyone and were not restricted by race. The qualifications to become involved in healthcare were attainable by white and black women equally and independent of the color of their skin.

Another article, published in the public health periodical *National Negro Health News*, only considered black midwives' physical bodies in relation to their age, stating that "in due course the aged and unfit were eliminated and friendly assistance and training were given to a dozen licensed midwives who remained active."²¹ This suggests that black professionals acknowledged the existence of physical limitations in some older midwives but did not over-emphasize the elderly midwives' conditions. Black midwives did not all share the same physical limitations, and those midwives no longer fit to serve their patients were part of a small group that gradually stopped practicing.

While black professionals believed that age was a category that should restrict some midwives from practicing, race was not. Advanced age would eventually apply to all people involved in healthcare, whereas race was constructed as a category to exclude a certain group of people. In order to justify the hierarchy of power between black and white people certain racial theories claimed that black people could not progress as white people could, but instead portrayed them as perpetual children. Black intellectuals such as W. E. B. DuBois and other social activists recognized and tried to shift judgments about black people away from race toward what they saw as other natural qualities, age being one.²² Similarly, black medical professionals referred to midwives not by their race, but by their qualification. As these professionals identified advanced age as the factor that disqualified midwives, they indicated that racial narratives about the midwives did not apply.

Black healthcare professionals also consistently spoke about the midwives' intelligence differently than their white counterparts. An article in the *National Negro Health News* acknowledged the need for midwife training by comparing midwives to doctors: "there are some midwives, just as there are some doctors,

21. Elizabeth R. Ferguson, "Nurse-Midwives Serve a Rural County," *National Negro Health News* 11, no. 2.

22. Rebecca de Schweinitz, *If We Could Change the World* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, 2009), 10.

still in need of education.”²³ By evaluating their situation equally, black professionals put doctors and midwives into the same category, acknowledging that there was need for improvement from both groups in some cases. This comparison removed the issue of race and implied that any problems with black maternal healthcare were not due to the midwives’ own intellectual failures, but to ignorance that could be overcome by more training.

Often when black professionals in the *National Negro Health News* wrote about the midwives’ training clinics, they spoke positively about the midwives’ intelligence and capacity. One article stated that through the clinics, doctors and nurses were able to successfully teach the midwife as she participated in the clinic activities.²⁴ These black professionals believed that the midwives were able to learn and appropriately use the information presented to them, making the midwives “capable of giving adequate care in any home.”²⁵ This belief is in direct contrast to the white professionals’ belief that the midwives were incapable of learning.

Black professionals also wrote about the midwives’ thoughts and reactions to the training they received. One article stated that the midwives “were easily brought to appreciate the value of the pre-natal examination of their patients,” suggesting that midwives were not simply following directions given by others who were smarter and more capable than themselves, but learning the principles behind the instructions they were given.²⁶ Despite white professionals’ claims to the contrary, black professionals believed in and defended the black midwives’ ability to appreciate why something was valuable for their patients, and then use it in their practice.

While white professionals asserted that the midwives’ character would inhibit their ability to properly care for their patients, black professionals spoke positively about the midwives’ reliability. The *National Negro Health News* stated that after receiving their training, midwives “developed a sense of renewed responsibility for the welfare of the mothers and babies under their care.”²⁷ This indicated that as the midwives felt responsibility to their patients,

23. “Underregistration: A Negro Health Problem,” *National Negro Health News* 16, no. 1, 11.

24. “Nelson County, Va., Maternal and Child Health Clinic,” *National Negro Health News* 17, no. 3, 13.

25. “Nelson County, Va., Maternal and Child Health Clinic,” 13.

26. Ferguson, “Nurse-Midwives Serve a Rural County,” 11.

27. Ferguson, “Nurse-Midwives Serve a Rural County,” 11.

they were more likely to follow the training they were given and ensure that the mothers and babies were safe and well cared for. Midwives could be depended on to help ensure the health of the community.

Black professionals additionally attributed women's health improvement to the midwives' training.²⁸ As professionals gave credit to midwives for improvement in the community, they showed trust in the midwives that validated their right to practice and benefit the community. Black professionals also used previous successes to justify the midwives' continued involvement in healthcare.²⁹ Because the midwives had previously helped to improve public health, their added training and education would continue to solve problems and improve circumstances. While white professionals often insinuated that black midwives were inherently immoral or untrustworthy and therefore unfit to practice, black professionals instead sought to show the way that midwives would fulfill their responsibilities. Because the midwives cared about their patients' wellbeing, they recognized their own responsibility in providing adequate care.

As black professionals pushed back against negative portrayals of midwives perpetuated by white doctors and public health officials, they asserted their own ideas about important qualities for midwives to possess. Even while recognizing the shortcomings of untrained midwives, Elizabeth R. Ferguson described midwives as "kind-hearted and conscientious" women who "did the best for their patients," despite their ignorance of certain procedures.³⁰ Midwives were eager to help their community and did good for their patients despite having limited resources. While the midwives' intelligence and training were crucial to the health of the mother and the community, Ferguson's description of kindness and compassion suggests a belief that black midwives were further qualified to serve their community because of their personal characteristics. Proper medical techniques and procedures were important in improving health, but compassion, kindness, and a sense of community ensured that everyone would receive the best medical treatment possible.

While white professionals saw the midwives' adoption of improved medical practices as evidence that the midwife was eager to follow the white doctors' authority—like a child in need of guidance from a parent—black professionals saw the midwives' desire to adopt healthier practices as evidence that the black

28. "Underregistration: A Negro Health Problem," *National Negro Health News* 16, no. 1, 11.

29. "Underregistration: A Negro Health Problem," 11.

30. Ferguson, "Nurse-Midwives Serve a Rural County," 11.

community also wanted to be healthier. Black professionals consistently focused on creating a healthy community and the benefits that a healthy community would receive. Individual health and welfare were important on a personal level, but black professionals argued that a healthy community was equally important. One article in the *National Negro Health News* stated that “if the Negro is to survive, if he is to progress and develop and assume an enduring and respected place in community life, he cannot afford to overlook this basic health and family welfare measure.”³¹ This statement connected healthy communities to upward social mobility, suggesting that for the black community to receive the full benefits of American society, improving black health was paramount:

The survival and progress of the race depends not on how many babies are born, but on how many live to become strong, healthy, useful adults. It depends on the number of well-trained, clear thinking leaders it can develop, not the masses of cheap, unlettered labor to be exploited and cast aside ‘because there are plenty more where they came from.’³²

Black professionals connected good health to the success and progression of their race. They believed that healthy people were less easily “exploited and cast aside” and therefore much more likely to be respected. Promoting the black community’s overall health was their pathway to black liberation and racial equality. White racial theorists used statistics of poor health in black communities as proof that black people were “degenerate” and inferior in order to uphold white supremacy.³³ Black professionals intended to produce a healthier population to directly counteract this logic and prove that the black race is capable and worthy of being treated with dignity and respect.

Involvement with racial justice groups such as the NAACP aided black professionals with their goals for public health. Modjeska Simkins, an African American activist, helped develop many clinics alongside white professionals within their organizations to improve health in black communities. Simkins connected black health and social representation when she complained about the structure of the clinic program’s advisory boards, expressing that there was a great threat to black health, yet there were no black officials on the advisory

31. “Summary Report of the Women’s Health Conference,” *National Negro Health News* 16, no. 3, 9.

32. “Summary Report of the Women’s Health Conference,” 9.

33. Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness*, 40.

boards to weigh in on the matter.³⁴ Just as white officials claimed and exerted authority over black midwives, the distribution of power in leadership positions similarly placed whites above blacks, allowing white professionals to make decisions for a community that they had little to no part of. Simkins' desire for black officials to be involved in prominent positions to make decisions for their community further confirmed the black community's belief that health and social justice are connected.

The push for racial liberation and autonomy for black doctors and midwives often created conflict between black and white professionals. Simkins' white supervisor told her to cut ties with the NAACP when Simkins began working alongside white colleagues. Simkins responded that she would "rather all negroes die and go to hell" due to their health problems "than go through some of the things they're suffering right now, and that the NAACP is trying to stop them."³⁵ While improving the health of the black community was important to Simkins and other professionals like her, this quote suggests that health without racial justice was not enough. Black communities were suffering from racism perpetuated against them as much as they were suffering from poor health, which was used as justification for racism and an excuse for the white professionals' paternalism against black midwives. The interdependence between racism and poor health likely contributed to black professionals' belief that the health of black communities should be connected to racial liberation. Eventually Simkins was forced to leave her position with the health organization, further illustrating the conflict between white and black health professionals over public health and racial liberation.

34. Oral History Interview with Modjeska Simkins, July 28th, 1976. Interview G-0056-2. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program.

It's also interesting to note that many of the black professionals themselves, including Simkins, were birthed with the help of black midwives. These professionals had a unique understanding of the need for midwives in the black community, and the midwives' impact on the community that white professionals could never appreciate.

35. Simkins, interview.

Catching Babies: The Midwives' Experience Under the Black and White Professionals' Influence

The conflict between black and white public health officials was more than just a disagreement over the best way to train midwives and improve the health of black mothers. White and black officials had different ideas about what the training would mean for the communities that midwives served. As black and white professionals wrote about midwives and worked to influence training clinics, the midwives and communities were affected. New protocols, such as state board regulation making it harder to receive or renew midwifery licenses or the increased use of insurance—which did not cover home births—affected midwives and their ability to practice.³⁶ Professionals wrote about the midwives from a sometimes one-sided analysis that they tried to portray as reality, but the actual experiences of the midwives and community were nuanced. As the two professional groups sought to shape the future of midwifery and obstetrical care, midwives absorbed aspects of each group's teachings.

Onnie Lee Logan, a black midwife, recognized the influence of the white professionals' training clinics on her practice. She enrolled in a midwifery course and received a license to practice in under a year. Logan acknowledged that white professionals had important medical knowledge that she and the other midwives needed to learn to help their patients. She also expressed gratitude for the white doctors that encouraged her to become a midwife and helped her find a clinic for her training. Of the things that she learned, Logan said, "listenin' at the classes I would say helped a lot. It grew within my mind what to expect or what to think about . . . I would say the classes taught me how to make the pads. The classes taught me beginning a scrubbing up my hands. The classes taught me how to put the silver nitrate in the babies' eyes."³⁷ Logan's thoughts about her experiences learning from white doctors suggest that midwives recognized certain positive aspects of the white professionals' involvement in the black communities. Because of the practices that midwives learned in the training courses, they were better equipped to help the mothers and babies in their care. As more midwives learned techniques to help deliver healthy babies with healthy mothers, they appreciated the impact of white doctors.

36. Sano, "Protect the Mother and Baby," 404.

37. Logan, *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story*, vocation.

Even as Logan appreciated her medical training, she did not accept or appreciate every aspect of the white professionals' involvement. White professionals portrayed themselves as the ultimate authority over the midwives and their involvement in obstetrical care. Logan, however, knew that her knowledge and experience grew independent of the board of health. The first baby that Logan delivered was born breach, or buttocks first, something that Logan had not been trained to handle. She sent for the doctor, but before he arrived, Logan was able to deliver the baby safely. On another home visit, Logan and another midwife helped to deliver a set of twins, one of which was born without a heartbeat. Logan took the baby in her hands and massaged his chest and back. She breathed into his mouth several times over the course of about thirty minutes until his heart began to beat and he began to breath on his own. Logan emphasized that nobody had taught her how to resuscitate a baby using mouth-to-mouth, but that she had produced that technique "out of [her] own mind." As she focused on her development in her profession and the things that she learned Logan said, "I say God give it to me. The Bo'd a Health didn't give it to me. Readin' books didn't give it to me. I progressed that outa my own mind."³⁸ Logan used her increase of knowledge as evidence of an authority higher than the board of health or other white professionals. By asserting that God had called her to be a midwife and increased her knowledge, Logan legitimized the midwives' ability to practice. This legitimacy was about more than the approval of white doctors or other professionals. It was about the black midwives' ability to help the women and children in their community.

Logan consistently pushed back against racial narratives that white professionals perpetuated, especially regarding the midwives' understanding of medical techniques before proper training. "Those old midwives in those days . . . were doin' the very best they could and doin' a job well done as far as their knowledge would lead 'em. . . . Those old negroes in those days needed training."³⁹ Logan specifically rejected the idea that older black women caused poor medical care because of a lack of intelligence. Even though some older midwives did not have proper training they worked to help deliver healthy babies as best they knew how. Logan even blamed the white professionals themselves for this health disparity by saying that "the negroes at that time didn't mean to be like that. That's all they knew. . . . You should blame the white folks for not teaching the po' ole black person. I think the white person in those days shoulda took mo'

38. Logan, *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story*, Vocation.

39. Logan, *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story*, Tradition.

interest in the negroes since he hadn't had any schoolin.'" While white doctors perpetuated racial narratives and blamed black midwives for the community's poor health, Logan and the rest of the midwives knew that the real cause for the health disparities was only due to the midwives' lack of training and the real blame should lie with those who refused to teach them.

Conclusion

Midwives were an important part of the birthing process, both to ensure that the babies entered the world in the safest way and that the mother was cared for as she experienced childbirth. Midwife training programs greatly influenced midwives by providing them with additional medical knowledge, which in turn affected the medical care in black communities in the Rural South during the mid-twentieth century. While white professionals sought to control the midwives to maintain the existing social hierarchies, black publications like the *National Negro Health News* and professionals such as Modjeska Simkins sought to build a healthier community on their path to racial liberation. Meanwhile, midwives themselves entered homes and improved the quality of obstetrical care for women and families.

The legacy of midwives such as Onnie Lee Logan continues to this day as community members remember the care they received from midwives and refer to midwives with profound love and gratitude. Logan's community has even honored her years of service as a midwife with "Onnie Lee Logan Day," a holiday in honor of the woman who "devoted her life to helping others."⁴⁰ Eloise Greenfield, a renowned author, tenderly explained in her book that midwives "caught the babies, and guided them into the world, with gentle, loving hands."⁴¹ Despite the competing narratives surrounding both white and black roles in healthcare, black midwives increased the quality of care that women and babies received by properly applying their training to each woman they assisted.

40. Deborah Shelton Pinkney, "Onnie's Children; Mobile County's Last Lay Midwife, Onnie Lee Logan, delivered babies and goodwill," *American Medical News* April 20, 1990.

41. Eloise Greenfield, *The Women Who Caught the Babies*, (Carrboro, NC: Alazar Press, 2019), 7.

The Persistence of “a Simple Melody” Acceptance of Irving Berlin’s Music in the 1920’s

Alina Vanderwood

“NOBODY APPRECIATES MORE THAN I DO HOW BAD SOME OF MY LYRICS are in the matter of technical details,” said the 32-year-old composer Irving Berlin in 1920 during an interview with *American Magazine*. “Some of the biggest hits I’ve written were songs I was so ashamed of that I pleaded with the heads of music houses not to publish them.”¹ Yet in all of its imperfection, his music became so popular and influential that American composer Jerome Kern famously wrote, “Irving Berlin has no place in American music. He *is* American music.”² Just nine years prior to this 1920 interview, Berlin wrote “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” his first worldwide hit that launched him toward fame. Ten years before that, at age 13, he left home to relieve his family of some of their financial burden³ and began living independently in a lodging house in the Lower East Side of New York, working daily to sell newspapers and

1. Frank Ward O’Mally, “Irving Berlin Gives Nine Rules for Writing Popular Songs,” in *The Irving Berlin Reader*, ed. Benjamin Sears (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173–181.

2. “Letter from Jerome Kern to Alexander Woollcott, from The Story of Irving Berlin,” in *The Irving Berlin Reader*, ed. Benjamin Sears (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81–83.

3. Laurence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990), 14.

sing on street corners for anyone who passed by. Years later he became the first and only composer to build a theater for his own shows because they were so widely accepted as some of the greatest musical productions in America.⁴ The story of Irving Berlin's success portrays how he overcame tremendous social and economic obstacles, but beyond that, examining the acceptance of his music amid one of the most complex and defining eras of American pop culture reveals the public's desire to hear new music that encapsulated simple, everyday life.

The Jazz Age Begins

The 1920s are often referred to as the "Roaring 20s" and the "Jazz Age." The economy flourished, commerce increased among the public, and speakeasies and dance clubs were increasingly populated with youth who embraced the exciting new trends of music and dance. Historians have long regarded the creation of jazz music to be a hallmark of early twentieth century America and discussed that an ethnically diverse population was necessary to stimulate the birth of such a new and original genre. Scott DeVaux writes that up until the mid-nineteenth century, popular music in America was strictly modeled after European opera, classical music, and dance, referred to as "art music."⁵ This model included very strict rules of how music must sound. As jazz developed in the streets and pubs of New Orleans with syncopated rhythms and innovative sounds, the traditional "rules" of music were broken in a way that made music more exciting to Americans because it was finally their own. This simultaneously caused both enthusiasm and concern in the music world. Carol Oja explains, "Any gangplank interview with European luminaries visiting the United States during the 1920s . . . revealed, sometimes painfully, that American jazz, not concert music, was what interested them."⁶ Despite the obligation that sophisticated visitors felt to remain loyal to concert music, jazz was an undeniably fascinating art form that excited the public. Modernists such as George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, and Paul Whiteman sought to fuse jazz and concert music to make respectable

4. Benjamin Sears, ed., "Biographical Highlights," in *The Irving Berlin Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 205.

5. Scott DeVaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (1991): 525–60. doi:10.2307/3041812.

6. Carol J. Oja, "Gershwin and American Modernists of the 1920s," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 646–68.

American music separate from that of Europe, or to bring worldwide attention to the “modern American orchestra,” as Whiteman put it.⁷ As this generation of composers arose in the 1920s, they felt a distinction from their American predecessors in the industry because of the lessened degree to which they accepted musical authority from abroad. From the words of Copland, they “felt a sense of ‘exhilaration’ at being ‘on our own.’”⁸ Similarly, Gershwin described himself as “a man without traditions,”⁹ someone who felt comfortable pushing the boundaries of traditional music. This desire to create a new culture within American music became evident in the works of composers in the 1920s who sought to free themselves from the constraints of European traditional music.

With the traditional definition of concert music in flux, Irving Berlin paved the way for American popular music—writing some of the most influential American songs of 20th century. Berlin’s unique biography has been recounted by historians to show his unlikely yet profound impact on American culture with a career that lasted for the entire first half of the century. Historians have also defined his music as a reflection of events throughout his life, such as the death of his spouse, the birth of his daughter, and his experience being enlisted in the army.¹⁰ In contrast, this paper will focus on bridging the biographical context of Berlin’s life with the public’s acceptance of his music, as compared to the work of contemporary concert composers. This analysis will provide insight on the general public’s desire to consume music with simple composition and relatable subject matter during a pivotal time in the history of American music, the Jazz Age. By examining both the differing approaches of jazz composers and the critics’ views of them, I will frame Berlin as an anomaly among musicians, one who achieved a level of accessibility to the public that was possible because of his lack of education and unorthodox writing methods. His success at home and abroad, despite the criticisms that he and other American jazz composers faced in the 1920s, portrays the transformative development of American popular music as familiarity began taking precedent over sophistication in order to appeal to a mainstream audience instead of only the educated demographic.

7. Oja, “Gershwin and American Modernists,” 649.

8. Oja, “Gershwin and American Modernists,” 650.

9. Oja, “Gershwin and American Modernists,” 649.

10. Sears, “Biographical Highlights,” 204–207.

Experimenting with Jazz

The American popular music industry was largely fueled by a stretch of publishing offices on West 28th Street in New York City, where anyone was welcome to pitch a new song. In 1909, Monroe Rosenfeld, a songwriter and journalist, wrote an article that compared the street, with music from pianists and singers heard from every window, to a busy kitchen with clattering pots and pans. He called it Tin Pan Alley, and the name stuck throughout the early twentieth century.¹¹ The musicians found in Tin Pan Alley, as well as the composers of upscale concert music, were generally Jewish immigrants. In fact, Copland, Gershwin, and Berlin all came from families of Jewish immigrants, but each had a unique path to their prestigious musical reputations, which influenced their individual careers.

During the 1920s, composers tried different approaches for incorporating jazz into American music so that they could reach their contemporary audience in a new way. As biographer Walter Rimler described, Gershwin understood that “every great European capital boasted as proof of its culture a glittering and opulent opera house,” however, “opera was not an American form, and Gershwin very much wanted to be an American composer.”¹² Aaron Copland shared a similar goal to fuse jazz and classical music in order to create a name for *American* opera, instead of imitating European opera. Both Copland and Gershwin primarily composed symphonic arrangements, meaning they wrote long movements, similar to the structure of classical music to be performed by a full orchestra in a concert hall.

Paul Whiteman advocated for moving jazz into the concert halls and he led his orchestra in performing more complex concert pieces with subtle elements of swing and syncopation, just as Gershwin and Copland sought to do. In doing so, he hoped to appeal to the largest range of audience members, and to change the negative light in which the “high-brows” viewed jazz. He organized a concert in 1924 called “An Experiment in Modern Music,” which was attended by a large audience primarily made up of contributors to and admirers of traditional music. The concert included some older American pieces such as “Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1” and “To a Wild Rose,” nothing very “experimental” until George Gershwin sat at the piano and performed his

11. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 42–43.

12. Walter Rimler, *George Gershwin: An Intimate Portrait* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 3.

“Rhapsody in Blue” with the orchestra. The famous 17-note clarinet scoop at the beginning caught the audience by surprise and after 20 minutes of a powerfully orchestrated swing melody with clever interludes of jazzy piano solos, they wildly applauded.¹³ Somehow every change of tempo, every interruption by a lone trumpet, and every run on the piano worked together to build a cohesive narrative that captured the sentiment of twentieth century New York greater than any mere imitation of classical music could. This performance expanded traditionalists’ views as to what concert music could achieve by incorporating elements of jazz.

Meanwhile, Irving Berlin’s music gripped the nation in an equally impactful but opposite way. Though they both came from the poverty-stricken Lower East Side of New York, Gershwin and Berlin experienced very different paths to the music industry. When he was 10 years old, Gershwin’s parents were shocked at his interest in music and his ability to play the piano, so they hired teachers for him until he dropped out of school for a well-paying job with a music publisher at age 15. On the other hand, Berlin was the youngest of six kids, and he left home as a result of the financial difficulties the family faced after his father passed away. He picked up jobs as a singing waiter, earning pennies every hour, until he eventually made a name for himself with his first big hit, “Alexander’s Ragtime Band.”¹⁴ While Gershwin always had the clear goal of working his way up from Tin Pan Alley and Broadway to American opera,¹⁵ Berlin remained in the realm of popular music, as he discovered a unique ability to write novel and sentimental lyrics that continued to be hits with the public. Berlin’s work portrayed a very different approach to jazz, embracing new forms of humor and sentiment by making pieces that the uneducated audiences could relate to. One audience member, obviously a big fan of jazz, described a show in the Grand Opera written by Berlin that incorporated jazz parodies of classical opera. After the well-known opera characters appeared on stage, they began to belt out the refrain, “Yes, We Have No Bananas.” Absolutely thrilled by the humorous and inventive juxtaposition, the spectator wrote, “One does not have to understand music to appreciate this gem of satire. While many of the audiences may not know the various operas from which the hits are taken . . . the

13. Rimler, *George Gershwin: An Intimate Portrait*, 4–6.

14. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 3–5.

15. Rimler, *George Gershwin: An Intimate Portrait*, 2–3.

infectious laughter is there and the appreciation of the brains which conceived the burlesque.”¹⁶

A Threat to “Good” Music

While the general public was enjoying the innovative new entertainment brought by jazz or marveling at the complexity that jazz added to concert music, others were desperately trying to reverse the effects of the wild cultural trends. “Is There an Antidote for Jazz?” reads the title of a discussion in a 1928 publication of the *Journal of Education*. The article includes a wide variety of responses to the cultural craze, written by various educators across the US. Two of the educators gave an emphatic “yes, there has to be!”, one gave a strong “no, and there shouldn’t be!” and the last one gave a middle-of-the-road answer.¹⁷ The first response from Margaret Lowry of Kansas City, Missouri, reads, “The answer to this question seems almost as obvious as the answer to the question, is there an antidote for darkness? We banish darkness simply by letting in the light, and we do not feel it necessary to examine the character and quality of the darkness and discuss its possible effect. Then why spend valuable time bemoaning the ill effects of jazz that might be used to demonstrate the benefits of good music?” She goes on to explain that to save children from relying on jazz to gain enthusiasm for music, educators need to expose them to “good music” to show them the better way. Stating that the purpose of teachers “is not to wage war against jazz but to give students so much experience in good music that they can develop a proper viewpoint and balanced judgment for themselves.” Thus, students were to discover that “Wagner or Tchaikovsky could write ‘meaner’ chords than Gershwin and that Beethoven and Schumann knew more rhythmic tricks than Irving Berlin.”¹⁸ The comparison of classical composers to contemporary twentieth century artists is obviously meant to show that Berlin and Gershwin should pale into insignificance when compared to the greatest composers of all time. However, the fact that she mentioned only Berlin and Gershwin by name tells us just how popular these men were, that they could be named as the two

16. S. I. deKrafft, “‘Yes, We Have No Bananas’ in Grand Opera Setting,” in *The Irving Berlin Reader*, ed. Benjamin Sears, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 75.

17. “Is There an Antidote for Jazz? (Discussion Continued from October 22),” *The Journal of Education* 108, no. 16 (1928), 403–406.

18. “Is There an Antidote for Jazz?,” 403.

great culprits in guiding children toward the distasteful jazz craze. Critics did not shy away from speaking out against new music as the growing enthusiasm for popular jazz seemed to be tainting the integrity of music as an art form.

A criticizing article in the *Musical Times* in 1926 quoted the music critic Ernest Newman declaring, “Your typical jazz composer or jazz enthusiast is merely a musical illiterate who is absurdly pleased with the little things because he does not know how little they are.” In comparing good music to literature, he denounced the act of making “Shakespeare acceptable to the masses by re-writing him in the language of the New York East-sider. ‘To be or not to be, that is the question,’ let us say, becoming ‘Yer for it or yer ain’t—j’get me, kid?’”¹⁹

Along with annoyance at jazz composers’ lack of reverence toward classical music, traditionalists thought that popular music was juvenile because of its simplicity. In 1926, Hans Schneider from *Musical Quarterly* put it this way:

Whenever the primitive ear is approached by too complex or unusual harmonies, it will regard them as “queer” or “wrong,” because the ear cannot assimilate them quickly, and cannot vibrate in sympathy with them. This is an experience that every music teacher has daily with children, when they meet specially dissonant chords in their music.

Therefore, folk-music, hymns and popular music, constructed according to this simple acoustic scheme of the ear—swinging pendulum-like between tonic and dominant—are enjoyed mostly by primitive listeners. Such music appeals to their natural qualifications. They put no particular strain upon the ear . . .²⁰

According to Schneider’s description, folk-music, hymns, and popular music could all be classified as simple because they were written to agree with and appeal to everyone, not just musicians. The untrained or “primitive” ear preferred popular songs which lasted only a few minutes and contained easily understood lyrics instead of long movements that focused on dissonance and complex harmonies. Berlin’s own lyrics perhaps best sum up this common desire for a natural, appealing tune:

19. “Occasional Notes,” *The Musical Times* 67, no. 1004 (1926): 904–06.

20. Hans Schneider, ““The Enjoyment of Music.”” *The Musical Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1921): 221218–25.

Won't you play a simple melody

Like my mother sang to me?

One with good old-fashioned harmony

Play a simple melody²¹

An Unlikely Musical Genius

In a music world that consistently criticized musicians both directly and indirectly for being “musical illiterates,” Berlin’s music achieved immense success even though he was arguably the least educated of twentieth-century musicians. Many who witnessed Berlin’s writing methods were perplexed at his apparent weaknesses in technical music knowledge. He only knew how to play in the key of F#—which consists of only black keys—and he relied on a lever that he could pull to change the musical key of the song without ever having to play on the white keys.²² He never wrote his own musical notation but instead had secretaries that would transcribe his melodies. Because of this, when 23-year-old Berlin wrote “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” which sold more copies worldwide than any other song of the time, rumors spread that a “ghostwriter” or a “little colored boy” wrote his songs for him. Berlin spoke out against any such accusations²³ and the rumors faded as he continued to prove his musical genius with original and consistent crowd-pleasing ballads.

Still, it is amazing how widely accepted Irving Berlin’s songs were from the 1910s to 1950s, especially considering his lack of musical knowledge in comparison to other musicians of the day. A young pianist and songwriter named Will Irwin worked as a transcriber for George Gershwin until he received the opportunity to help Berlin out with his music. Irwin was so used to Gershwin’s ease, cleanliness, and skill on the keyboard that he was shocked by Berlin’s stumbling around and plunking on the keys. “The sounds that came of that piano were

21. Irving Berlin, “Play A Simple Melody,” in *Berlin’s Best for Guitar*, arranged by Leon Block (New York: Irving Berlin Music Corporation, 1964), 10–11.

22. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 314.

23. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 68–69.

those of a piano tuner,” said Irwin, “I’d never heard anything like this.” Irwin asked Berlin to sing for him instead. Irwin explained that he felt “that [Berlin], perhaps unknowingly, had perfect pitch,” so from there they decided that Berlin would sing the melody for Irwin. He added that Berlin “was always rhythmically right on the button as to what he wanted, whether it was a dotted quarter note or not a dotted quarter note. So we got along fine from then on.”²⁴

If not for his musical abilities, then how was Berlin able to maintain such consistency in his song writing? More than just consistency, how could he continually write songs that outshined those of highly educated musicians? Returning to his 1920 interview with *American Magazine*, Irving Berlin broke down his own personal rules for writing popular music and prefaced them by explaining, “A song writer may break the rules of grammar, of versification, even of common sense and reason and still turn out a song hit of the popular variety. He *cannot* ignore the rules of popular song construction and get away with his song . . . the rules must be followed in a general way or the song will certainly—not probably, but certainly—be a failure.”²⁵ Evidently, Berlin learned on the streets something about people and what they like to hear that couldn’t be learned quite the same way in formal music lessons or college courses even if his methods were considered incorrect from a technical viewpoint. He went on to share the rules that he created and lived by to meet the needs of the common person when writing a song:

First—The melody must musically be within the range of the *average voice* of the average public singer . . .

Second—The title, which must be simple and easily remembered, must be *planted* effectively in the song . . .

Third—A popular song should be *sexless*, that is, the ideas and the wording must be of a kind that can be logically voiced by either a male or a female singer . . .

Fourth—The song should contain *heart interest*, even if it is a comic song . . .

24. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 314–15.

25. O’Mally, “Nine Rules,” 175.

Fifth—The song must be *original* in idea, words, and music. Success is not achieved . . . by trying to imitate the general idea of the great song hit of the moment.

Sixth—Your lyric must have to do with ideas, emotions, or objects known to everyone. Stick to nature . . .

Seventh—The lyric must be *euphonious*, written in easily singable words and phrases in which there are many open vowels.

Eighth—Your song must be perfectly *simple*. Simplicity is achieved only after much hard work, but you must attain it.

Ninth—The song writer must look upon his work as a business, that is, to make a success of it he must work and *work*, and then WORK.²⁶

Berlin continued to explain that when “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” became so popular, he was more “flabbergasted” than anybody else. He repeatedly asked himself why it was such a hit. He’d written a lot of songs and wanted to find out what made this one different so that he could continue making songs that appealed to the public in the same way.²⁷ He attributed the success mostly to the melody and lyrics, but over time he was able to come up with this recipe for his music and he stuck with it. One of Berlin’s biggest hits from the 1920s was “Blue Skies,” and when observing the elements of the song, it’s evident that his rules were kept in mind while writing it. The lyrics read:

I was blue just as blue as I could be,

Ev’ry day was a cloudy day for me,

Then good luck came a-knocking at my door,

Skies were gray but they’re not gray anymore.

(chorus)

26. O’Mally, “Nine Rules,” 175–176.

27. O’Mally, “Nine Rules,” 179.

Blue skies smiling at me
Nothing but blue skies do I see,
Bluebirds singing a song
Nothing but bluebirds all day long,
Never saw the sun shining so bright,
Never saw things going so right
Noticing the days hurrying by,
When you're in love my! how they fly,
Blue days all of them gone
Nothing but blue skies from now on
I should care if the wind blows east or west,
I should fret if the worst looks like the best,
I should mind if they say it can't be true
I should smile that's exactly what I do,
(Chorus)²⁸

Sure enough, the song checks all of Berlin's boxes for success. The title remains a focal point of the song as it's noticeably planted throughout. The lyrics allow it to be sung from either the male or female perspective. The song exhibits an original idea and melody. It also references universally recognizable elements in

28. Jeffrey Magee, "Irving Berlin's 'Blue Skies': Ethnic Affiliations and Musical Transformations," *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2000): 542–544.

nature to portray emotion. All the words included can be easily pronounced or sung. Upon listening to the song, it carries a unique tune that matches the lyrics with its brightness, however the reasonable range allows it to be sung by the average person. While keeping the melody easy to follow, the tune still shows a degree of technical genius: using major chords when the word “blue” refers to joy and switching to a minor chord when “blue” refers to sadness.²⁹ Thus, Berlin proved that success in the music industry could be found outside the realm of traditional, strict music theory by following rules that were more contingent upon the common person’s ability to relate to and enjoy the song.

Though he was always aware of his imperfections in grammar and in musical technique, Berlin recognized that the way his music reached people emotionally surpassed its errors. When asked how a formal education would have affected his career, he responded that it would “Ruin it! I don’t mean for one second that a lyric to be popular, must be, or even necessarily profits by being, wrong from the high-brow viewpoint,” he said. “But I do know that the price we pay for experience and technique is self-consciousness.”³⁰ His songs exhibited the hopes, sorrows, humor, and joys of everyday life and that concept could have been constrained by the “self-consciousness” of trying to write music in an educated manner. Berlin’s emotional value came from an honest vulnerability that couldn’t be created by technical perfection. Acknowledging the emotional effectiveness, Berlin asserted, “I know now that if I attempted to-day to ‘improve’ some of my old song hits by substituting correct rhyme and rhythm for the glaring technical errors in those earlier efforts, I’d kill the songs.”³¹

Unmistakable Popularity

However controversial the conversation surrounding jazz or Berlin’s musical credibility, his music could be found virtually everywhere in the US and western Europe in the 1920s. A 1926 publication of *The Musical Times* notes, “Well, who are the musical [immortals], according to the [Encyclopedia Britannica]? Irving Berlin, as composer of “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” and other American songs, finds a place in the encyclopedic sun, with titles of his compositions and dates of their production. Sir Henry Wood and Sir Landon Ronald, however, are left

29. Magee, “Irving Berlin’s ‘Blue Skies,’” 545.

30. O’Mally, “Nine Rules,” 180.

31. O’Mally, “Nine Rules,” 181.

in the cold, though we should have thought that to an English editor . . . they would have seemed at least as important (and even as well-known) as Mr. Berlin.”³² Both Wood and Ronald were English conductors that apparently seemed to be, at least temporarily if not permanently, outshined by the genius of the simple American songwriter that couldn’t fully read or write music.³³ Of course, there were times where Berlin felt like a failure, when songs that contained his deepest emotions were harshly rejected by producers³⁴ and films released with an anti-climactic debut,³⁵ but to the shock of his critics, fame was almost automatic for him in many instances. Reviewing the composition of his successful songs and how readily they were accepted adds further evidence to the claim that Irving Berlin’s music reflected the people’s preference for songs with accessible themes, language, and melodies.

One example of the public’s reaction to his modest songwriting began on December 27, 1926, when Berlin received a request from his friend Belle Baker who was scheduled to open in *Betsy* the next day, a show written by the up-and-coming composers Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. She was worried that it lacked a “Belle Baker song” and feared the performance would be a flop. Working through the night to finish a half-written song that he already had in a suitcase,³⁶ Berlin ended up with the song “Blue Skies,” and Baker was thrilled by it. *Betsy* wasn’t received with much enthusiasm until Baker sang “Blue Skies” in closing and the audience went wild. She sang 23 encores until she forgot the lyrics and Berlin, seated in the front row, stood up and started singing it.³⁷ Berlin’s “Blue Skies” became a standard in the American songbook, and was so popular that Al Jolson sang it the following year in *The Jazz Singer*, the first full motion picture with sound.³⁸ This success with “Blue Skies” allowed Berlin to stay current amid the emerging musical film industry in the 1920s; many producers sought opportunities to create musical films featuring Berlin’s songs.

32. “Occasional Notes.” *The Musical Times* 67, no. 1005 (1926): 1007–014.

33. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 27.

34. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 228.

35. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 291–293.

36. Mary Ellin Barrett, *Irving Berlin: A Daughter’s Memoir*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 54–55.

37. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 276–277.

38. Sears, “Biographical Highlights,” 205.

“The Melody Lingers On”

As America recovered from World War I and the Spanish flu pandemic, the improved economic, political, and social climate led to a distinct consumer culture and increased focus on entertainment. While concert music was catered toward a smaller demographic of educated listeners, popular music had a much broader audience. The general public's enthusiastic acceptance of Berlin's music reflects this desire to feel like they were a part of the greater American cultural identity; large numbers of people flocked toward the theaters and dance halls that showcased jazz's new, upbeat, and accessible form of entertainment. Jazz composers such as Copland, Gershwin, and Whiteman each played an essential role in further developing the American music identity by taking steps to separate from formal European music. Berlin was unique in his determination to create relatable popular tunes, written for anyone who was willing to listen.

The “high-brow” community consistently built barriers between music and the common person, but Berlin made music accessible to everyone by using relatable themes. Despite much debate, the efforts of composers during the 1920s established jazz as the principal representation of American culture, which continued to grow in popularity and adapt in style. However, this decade only contains a fraction of Berlin's career. With a career that lasted from the 1910s to the 1960s and resulted in the publication of 1,500 songs,³⁹ his most enduring popular hits such as “White Christmas,” “Happy Holiday,” and “God Bless America” came in the decades following the 1920s. There is much to be discussed about how these songs, and popular music in general, boosted nationalism and unified the public during the Great Depression and World War II.

While Berlin's credibility as a legitimate composer became more of a mainstream belief, other issues such as religion and race continued to complicate the music scene. Because jazz initially rose to popularity as a product of African American culture, it's hard to talk about the music scene in the 1920s without discussing its connection with race relations in America. In the 1920s, Berlin's music was famously sung by some of the most well-known African American singers such as Ethel Waters, Ella Fitzgerald, and Louis Armstrong. Many musicians celebrated the union of geniuses from all ethnic backgrounds to create an original American art form, yet African Americans endured immense persecution despite their integral contributions to American pop culture. There is much

39. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, 40.

more to investigate about how Berlin's music, along with that of other Jewish American composers, was received by minority groups in the US and also to what extent their careers advanced or halted the influence of African American jazz musicians. Such studies contribute valuable insight to the dynamic picture of America's social and cultural atmosphere.

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