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The Madison Historical Review is published annually in a print and online version, featuring the work of graduate students in the field of history. Based out of the History Department at James Madison University, the journal presents a unique outlet for master’s students to submit their scholarship. The editorial board is made up of graduate students from James Madison University’s graduate history program who are dedicated to maintaining scholarly integrity and setting a high academic standard. Our mission is to aid in the overall development and refinement of research, analytical, and writing skills.

Over the last few years, the editorial board has taken the initiative to improve the journal and build off of the groundwork laid by our founders. We have added book reviews, historiographies, professional interviews, exhibit reviews, and Digital History Profiles to our published content in an effort to appeal to a broader audience and expand readership. Our vision for the future rests on a commitment to contribute original scholarship to the field of history and benefit the professional development of graduate students at James Madison University and other programs around the world.
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Letter from the Editor

The *Madison Historical Review* is pleased to present our readers with this latest edition of original historical scholarship. We are proud that the *Madison Historical Review* is one of the only scholarly journals run by graduate students with a focus geared toward the publication of master’s level research. The ensuing articles represent a wide variety of graduate student scholarship, from a look into the materiality of Quaker women, advertising in baseball, a labor movement in Youngstown, and an analysis on the tactical failure of policing in Vietnam. Included are two rather timely articles as well: one on the rise of the belief of Anglo-superiority and another looking at an African American musician navigating a white-dominated industry. Our lone book review provides an analysis of a food history concerning a beer manufacturer in San Antonio.

On behalf of the entire editorial board, I would like to congratulate Benjamin Welton, winner of the 2021 James Madison Award for Excellence in Historical Scholarship. His article, “The Anglo-Saxons—Stoddard and Lovercraft: Ideas of Ethnic Superiority and the New England Counter-Revolution,” analyzes the rise of beliefs concerning white superiority in the United States. By focusing on two prominent individuals, H.P. Lovecraft and Lothrop Stoddard, as well as providing a sense of the general evolution of this belief system, Welton compiled a wonderful historical piece that helps to shine light on how such enduring beliefs developed and proliferated in the first
place. Relevant to many problems of today, Welton’s work is an excellent example of graduate student research and writing skills.

I would also like to thank our editorial board; 2020 to 2021 was a very tough year for everyone and this journal would not have been possible without everyone’s assistance. Our board was much smaller as a result of the pandemic, but their work was invaluable and greatly appreciated. Thank you to Jennifer Taylor, Laura Butler, and Richard Thompson. Furthermore, the addition of Giovanni Gibbs as Associate Editor helped immensely to lift some weight off of my shoulders, and I am grateful for her assistance. Additionally, I would like to thank Rebecca Kruse for her technical support and expertise in operating the journal’s Scholarly Commons website, as well as her willingness to devote time to teaching us how to use it ourselves. All of use at the Madison Historical Review are especially indebted to our faculty advisor, Dr. Colleen Moore, for her guidance and support in the publication of this issue.

Support for this publication comes from the James Madison University College of Arts and Letters and The Graduate Program in History at James Madison University. A special thanks to Dr. Robert Aguirre, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, for his continued support for the Madison Historical Review.

Jamie Bone, Executive Editor
Articles

The Anglo-Saxons—Stoddard and Lovecraft: Ideas of Ethnic Superiority and the New England Counter-Revolution
Benjamin Welton
Boston University

2021 Winner of the James Madison Award for Excellence in Historical Scholarship

Howard Philips Lovecraft, the descendant of a long line of Anglo-Saxon New Englanders, published a short story entitled “The Street” in the Wolverine, a publication for amateur journalists, in 1920. Few of Lovecraft’s stories better capture Lovecraft’s Spenglerian cynicism, and yet “The Street” is rarely if ever mentioned or studied by Lovecraft’s fans and experts.¹

“The Street” details the rise and fall of an unnamed street in Boston. “There be those who say that things and places have souls,” the story begins, “and there be those who say they have not.”² The street in question does have a

¹ “Spenglerian” is in reference to the work of German historian Oswald Spengler (1880-1936). Lovecraft was a fan of Spengler’s two-volume work, The Decline of the West (1918-1922), which argues for an organic and cyclical view of civilization. Like Spengler, Lovecraft believed that the twentieth century as an age of decay and decline.
soul and a memory. The first men to set foot upon it wore “conical hats” and “carried muskets or fowling pieces.” These men waved the “Old Flag” of British North America before pulling it down and replacing it with the Stars and Stripes of the American Republic. After the tumult of the Revolution, which began in Boston, the street returned to tranquility. It rested safe in the knowledge that its residents remained the steadfast Anglo-Saxons who had built it in the 17th century.

“The Street” takes a dark turn following the Entente victory in World War I. While the natives of the street raced off to war, the “degenerate subjects” of collapsing empires in Central and Eastern Europe began “flocking with dubious intent” to Boston. These immigrants with “swarthy, sinister faces with furtive eyes and odd features,” established such delinquent hotbeds as Petrovitch’s Bakery, the Rifkin School of Modern Economics, the Circle Social Club, and the Liberty Café. From these dens, the new arrivals sought to bring terrorism to Boston. At the apex of “The Street,” as the foreigners begin their preparations for revolution and the “olive drab” men of the US Army prepare to fight back, the titular street takes its revenge:

It was, indeed, an exceedingly singular happening; though after all a simple one. For without warning, in one of the small hours beyond midnight, all the ravages of the years and the storms and the worms came to a tremendous climax; and after the crash there was nothing left standing in The Street save two ancient chimneys and part of a stout brick wall.

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3 Lovecraft, The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft, 70.
4 Ibid, 72.
5 Ibid, 72-73.
6 Ibid, 74.
“The Street” is nothing less than a revenge story. Boston, for Lovecraft, embodied ancient New England—the land of English families, Anglo-Saxon customs and traditions, and a general conservatism. “The Street” therefore sees Anglo-Saxon New England destroy that which would destroy it, namely mass immigration from Central and Eastern Europe and the concomitant importation of socialist politics.

In a letter to fellow horror fiction writer Frank Belknap Long, Jr. on November 11, 1920, Lovecraft admitted that the Boston Police Strike inspired him to pen “The Street.” Lovecraft wrote, “the magnitude and significance of such an act appalled” him. The only solace he found came from the sight of State Guardsmen walking through Boston as “symbols of the strife that lies ahead in civilisation’s [sic] struggle with the monster of unrest and bolshevism.” Clearly, Lovecraft saw in the Boston Police Strike and subsequent rioting as an attempt to recreate the Bolshevik Revolution in New England. Such opinions placed Lovecraft, a loner and social outsider, well within the majority of Boston’s middle class citizenry.

In his short life (1890-1937), Lovecraft lived as a virtual unknown. His short stories, all of which saw publication in cheap pulp magazines, had plenty of readers, but none of New England’s intellectuals (to say nothing of American intellectuals in general) either read his work or discussed it. Lovecraft had fans for sure, and many of these fans wrote gushing letters to him. Lovecraft in turn responded; Lovecraft was one of the most prolific letter writers of the twentieth century. It is these letters that give us insight into the personal opinions of the writer who is now considered the foremost practitioner of the “weird tale” in American literature.

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7 H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Frank Belknap Long, November 11, 1920.
8 Boston Herald, September 9, 1919, p. 12.
In sum, Lovecraft was an arch-reactionary. He believed in Anglo-Saxon supremacism, stood against the emancipation of slaves, and consistently voiced the opinion that the United States should not have rebelled against Great Britain.9 (Lovecraft’s deep Anglophilia explains his use of British spelling and syntax.) Although a lifelong resident of the Northeast and a strong believer in the traditions of his native New England, Lovecraft supported the Confederacy and hung pictures of Confederate leaders on the walls of his home.10 By his own account, Lovecraft’s love of Britain ran so deep that, in 1898 at the age of eight, he supported the American war against Spain because Spain “had anciently been England’s foe, and whose Armada Drake had destroyed.”11

Writing in February 1923, Lovecraft argued, “democracy…is a false idol—a mere catchword and illusion of inferior classes, visionaries, and dying civilisations [sic].”12 Lovecraft believed that the United States and Great Britain should reunite and erase the “lamentable split in 1775-83.” Furthermore, Lovecraft supported an Anglophone world order to establish a new Roman Empire, which would include the United States rejoining Great Britain and adding the territories gained by the U.S. after the Spanish-American War to the greater British Empire.13 Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, a time when Lovecraft produced the majority of his classic short stories, he lent support to Italian leader Benito

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10 *Ibid*.
Mussolini and his National Fascist Party (PNF).\textsuperscript{14} For him, Mussolini represented a “repudiation of the ‘liberal’ pose and the ‘progress’ illusion” which limited “authoritative social and political control which alone produces things which make life worth living.”\textsuperscript{15} Later Lovecraft gave cautious support to Adolf Hitler, writing that although Hitler promoted “unscientific” and “extremist” views of Nordic supremacy, he supported the notion of keeping “Germany and United States…Nordic in blood and wholly Nordic in institutions.”\textsuperscript{16}

For Lovecraft, politics came second to racial matters. For him, democracy and its entire works (i.e. socialism, bolshevism) had to be opposed because “it would retard the development of a handsome Nordic breed.”\textsuperscript{17} Lovecraft’s Nordicism echoes the work of fellow Anglo-Saxon supremacists Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard. In particular, Lovecraft’s worldview—a worldview that permeates almost all of his fiction—seems taken from three major works of the early twentieth century: Oswald Spengler’s \textit{The Decline of the West} (Der Untergang des Abendlandes, 1918-1922), Grant’s \textit{The Passing of the Great Race} (1916), and Stoddard’s \textit{The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy} (1920). These works enjoyed massive popularity for a time, with Stoddard and Grant’s monographs being both

\textsuperscript{14} Conan the Barbarian creator Robert E. Howard often mocked Lovecraft’s support for Mussolini during Italy’s conquest of Abyssinia between 1935 and 1936. In one letter sent to Lovecraft on February 11, 1936, Howard characterized Mussolini as a “damned rogue” rather than a Caesar. In a letter to Lovecraft on May 13, 1936, Howard, in a roundabout way, compared Lovecraft to Mussolini’s other “rump-kissers” in America.

\textsuperscript{15} H.P. Lovecraft, letter to James F. Morton, February 10, 1923.

\textsuperscript{16} H.P. Lovecraft, letter to J. Vernon Shea, September 25, 1933.

\textsuperscript{17} H.P. Lovecraft, letter to James F. Morton, Jr., February 10, 1923.
published by Charles Scribner’s Sons. Stoddard’s name even appears in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, albeit in a bastardized form. While Lovecraft spent his life in obscurity, the views he amplified did not.

Indeed, Lovecraft and Stoddard deserve the most attention. Both men came from the same New England milieu and had the same Anglo-Saxon blood. Both lived in New England during the “tribal twenties” when Yankee Protestants used federal and state laws to try and limit mass immigration from Catholic Europe, and most important of all, both wrote against what they perceived as the postwar radicalism of the American Northeast following the end of World War I. For this reason, both men deserve a closer look to see how they perceived radicalism and race in the U.S. and New England in particular, and how they spent years writing in favor of a counter-revolution—a counter-revolution against immigration, “bolshevism,” and democracy.

**H.P. Lovecraft: Life and Thought**

Howard Phillips Lovecraft came screaming into the world on August 20, 1890. When writing about his ancestry, Lovecraft got the big picture correct, but often fabricated (or misinterpreted) small details. Lovecraft came from pure English stock. The Lovecraft family had long resided in New England by the time of young Howard’s birth. Lovecraft even mentioned his belief in a 1931 letter to Maurice W. Moe that one of his relations was the

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infamous Mary Dyer, the Quaker evangelist hung by Puritan Boston in 1660.\textsuperscript{21} For him, his own family primarily produced “mediocrity,” and yet Lovecraft had a habit of rhapsodizing about distant familial branches who became planter-gentlemen in Virginia or reverends and ship captains in Rhode Island.\textsuperscript{22}

Thomas, the first Lovecraft to reside in New England, lived a long life from 1745 to 1826. Rather than displaced nobility (which Lovecraft believed and repeated in letters), the Lovecraft clan came to New England and New York in the 18th century as middle-class natives of Devonshire.\textsuperscript{23} The theme of degenerate nobility and familial decline would later become important elements in Lovecraft’s fiction, most notably in stories such as “The Lurking Fear” (1923), “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” (1931), “Arthur Jermyn” (1924), and “The Rats in the Walls” (1924).

Young Howard had even more reason to obsess over physical, mental, and material decline: Winfield Scott Lovecraft, his father, spent the last years of his life in a psychiatric hospital. The state committed the elder Lovecraft to the Butler Hospital on April 25, 1893. Winfield Lovecraft would die there on July 19, 1898. Many have long speculated that Winfield Lovecraft’s descent into madness stemmed from a case of tertiary syphilis.\textsuperscript{24} Sarah Susan Phillips Lovecraft, H.P.’s mother, would ultimately be committed to Butler too before dying in May 1921. For the rest of his life, except for a handful of bleak and awful

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\textsuperscript{21} H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Maurice W. More, April 5, 1931. \\
\textsuperscript{22} H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Maurice W. More, April 5, 1931. \\
\textsuperscript{23} Joshi and Schultz, \textit{An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia}, 153. \\
\textsuperscript{24} W. Scott Poole, \textit{In the Mountains of Madness: The Life and Extraordinary Afterlife of H.P. Lovecraft} (Berkeley: Soft Skull Press, 2016): 44.
\end{flushright}
years living in Brooklyn with his wife Sonia Greene, Lovecraft would live with his aunts Lillian Clark and Annie Gamwell in Providence.

Other family problems exacerbated Lovecraft’s adolescence, such as the death of his beloved grandfather, Whipple Van Buren Phillips. Grandfather Whipple’s death in 1904 plunged the family into poverty, thus forcing Lovecraft to move down the socio-economic ladder. Around this time, Lovecraft began experiencing deep anxiety. The anxiety worsened after Lovecraft enrolled at Hope Street High School. As a student, Lovecraft experienced firsthand what he termed “the offscourings of Judea,” and this created in him a repulsion for all things Jewish. (The biggest irony of Lovecraft’s life would come when he married Greene, a Ukrainian Jew.) Lovecraft failed to graduate, for a mental breakdown and recurring thoughts of suicide kept “Lovey” from attending school. He missed an entire year and never bothered to return.

Lovecraft’s inability to complete high school meant that he could not follow his passion (astronomy) at Brown University. The fact that Lovecraft always lived close to the Brown campus possibly reminded him of his most acute failure on a daily basis.

Lovecraft channeled his depression into amateur journalism. Between 1915 and 1923, Lovecraft wrote, edited, and distributed his own journal entitled The Conservative. No publication provided more insight into Lovecraft’s politics than The Conservative. In 1916, editor Lovecraft published an article by Henry Clapham McGavack called, “The American Proletariat Versus England.” In it, McGavack stumped for the benefits of monarchism over democracy, writing, “It is a

monarchy…which weighs but lightly on the taxpayer.”

Lovecraft echoed these sentiments, often writing in his letters about the superiority of the Plantagenet monarchy in view of modern democracy.

Overall, *The Conservative* made clear Lovecraft’s overriding belief in the superiority of Anglo-Saxon civilization. During much of the journal’s lifespan, World War I raged all across the world. Lovecraft felt compelled to fight on behalf of the Anglo-Saxon world, which he associated with the British Empire. Lovecraft similarly considered himself a loyal subject of the British king, not the American President Woodrow Wilson. Again, as with so much in Lovecraft’s life, the Great War caused great distress. The reclusive militarist attempted to join the Rhode Island National Guard as a member of the Field Artillery after the U.S. declared war in April 1917, then tried to join the regular army. His mother managed to stymie the first attempt even after Lovecraft enlisted as a private in the 9th company of the Rhode Island National Guard, while the Army found the gaunt New Englander only fit for clerical work. Such rejection convinced Lovecraft of his “entire uselessness in the world.”

While Americans saw World War I as a war against German barbarism, Lovecraft “considered the Germans racially identical to the Anglo-Saxons.” Lovecraft also saw Western history as the history of the Nordic race, with each “subdivision” (for example, Anglo-Saxon and

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31 Alex Kurtagic, Foreword, *The Conservative*, 16.
Teutonic) contributing to the unique genius of European civilization.32 As such, Lovecraft, much like Stoddard at the same time, came to see World War I as a pointless exercise in fratricide. Lovecraft’s adherence to the pseudo-science of “Nordicism” came from his readings of Madison Grant. Grant, who lived in New York at the same time as Lovecraft (although in drastically different circumstances), popularized “Nordicism,” which had its origins in the work of French aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau and British political philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain.33

Grant’s 1916 book, The Passing of the Great Race Or, The Racial Basis of European History, put forward the claim that Nordics, or the blue-eyed and fair-haired natives of Northern Europe, created European civilization, even including the Mediterranean empires of Athens and Rome. Grant’s history presented a world of struggle between the Nordic race and all others. For instance, when the Nordics crossed the Rhine around 1000 B.C., Grant said, “they found the Mediterranean race in France everywhere overwhelmed by an Alpine population.”34 (By Alpine, Grant was referring to the sub-category of Caucasians whom nineteenth century writers believed migrated from Central Asia to the Alps and became the early Celtic peoples of Switzerland, Austria, France, and northern

33 Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) was a French nobleman whose wrote An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races in response to the multiple revolutions of 1848. In the essay, de Gobineau asserted that race is the most important factor in world history and insisted that the “Nordic” and “Aryan” race was superior to all others. Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) was a British-born German philosopher whose major book, 1899’s The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century, posits much the same beliefs as de Gobineau’s work although Chamberlain is more overtly anti-Jewish. Both Gobineau and Chamberlain will influence the racial beliefs of the German National Socialists.
Italy.) For Grant and others of his ilk, human races existed in a constant state of battle, with the Nordics winning most of the time because of their innate superiority. Thus, for Grant, the rise and fall of civilizations depended upon the amount of Nordic blood in their populations. Such ideals lasted long after 1916 and even after the Great War. Even Julius Evola, a philosopher of Traditionalism who enjoyed close links with Mussolini and the National Fascist Party, wrote following World War II that Nazi Germany had produced a “vulgarisation [sic] of Nordic traditions.” For Evola, Nordicism equated to Romanism and the Roman Empire, which included the “Teutonic race.” At no point did Evola, himself of Sicilian extraction, question the logic of Nordic supremacy.

Grant applied his Nordicism theory to the history of the United States. “The United States of America,” Grant wrote, “must be regarded racially as a European colony.” Furthermore, Grant wrote against the notion of a multi-ethnic America. Instead, “At the time of the Revolutionary War the settlers in the thirteen Colonies were not only purely Nordic, but also purely Teutonic, a very large majority being Anglo-Saxon.” Both the North and South “were populated…by Englishmen of the purest Nordic type,” according to Grant.

Grant’s scholarship influenced not only Lovecraft’s worldview, but also the worldview of Stoddard. Similarly, it had a real impact on American domestic policy. Grant belonged to a pressure group that pushed for a more

36 Ibid.
37 Grant, The Passing of the Great Race, 74.
38 Ibid, 75.
restrictive American immigration policy.\textsuperscript{39} During World War I, the Immigration Act of 1917 was passed that required immigrants to undergo literacy tests. The federal government introduced an immigrant quota system first in 1921, then, three years later, President Calvin Coolidge signed into law the Immigration Act of 1924, which extended the quotas of 1921 in favor of immigrants from Northern Europe.\textsuperscript{40}

As for Lovecraft, his letters are virtually silent on the matter of U.S. legislation, but it can be stated with near certainty that he supported immigration restrictions. Lovecraft’s letters and fiction are filled with negative portrayals of Southern and Eastern European immigrants, to say nothing of Asian immigrants and African Americans. Lovecraft’s venom proved most powerful during his years living in Brooklyn. In a 1925 letter to his Aunt Lillian, Lovecraft compared riding a subway car from the Bronx back to Brooklyn as being akin to being aboard “one of John Brown’s Providence merchantmen on the middle passage [sic] from the Guinea coast to Antigua or the Barbadoes.”\textsuperscript{41} In another missive, the author categorized New York’s Jews as “either Carthaginians or squat yellow Mongoloids from Central Asia.”\textsuperscript{42} In every way, Lovecraft found New York and the modernism it represented as atavistic and a threat to the New England way of life.\textsuperscript{43}

This formed the root of Lovecraft’s politics—the fear that a separate culture, namely the ethnic stew of high-tech New York, would overrun the Anglo-Saxon splendor

\textsuperscript{39} Jonathan Peter Spiro, \textit{Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant} (Lebanon, NH: University of Vermont Press, 2009): xii.
\textsuperscript{40} Kurtagic, Foreword, \textit{The Conservative}, 17.
\textsuperscript{41} H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Lillian D. Clark, July 6, 1925.
\textsuperscript{42} H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Lillian D. Clark, January 11, 1926.
\textsuperscript{43} In the same January 11, 1926 letter to Aunt Lillian, Lovecraft spoke favorably of Providence’s Portuguese Jewish population that had assimilated to “Aryan” culture.
of New England. For him, artificiality defined New York, with its “purely artificial and affected” values.44 New England, by contrast, formed “the life and growth of the Nordic, Anglo-American stream of civilization [sic].”45 Thus, Lovecraft saw his native soil as the final redoubt in the Northeast of true American culture. Although an atheist who despised religion and favored science, Lovecraft recognized the Protestant quality of America’s founding stock and openly worried about the growth of Roman Catholic political power.46

“The Street” is therefore a neat summation of Lovecraft’s political ideology. Lovecraft identified with the New England of the Colonial period, not the New England of his own epoch. He was indeed a deep reactionary who supported Italian Fascism not because of its modernist totalitarianism or its open celebration of political violence, but rather because Lovecraft saw in it a strike against liberal democracy, staid Victorianism, and the laissez-faire ideal that supported importing millions of foreign workers into the United States between the Civil War and World War I. More than any other figure in American popular culture, Lovecraft represents the New England counter-revolution of the interwar years.

**Lothrop Stoddard—Eternal Yankee**

Like Lovecraft, Lothrop Stoddard’s roots had long been nourished by New England soil. The Stoddard clan came to the New World alongside the Puritans. They established themselves in the Massachusetts Bay Colony around 1630. Born in wealthy Brookline, Massachusetts in

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44 H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Donald Wandrei, February 10, 1927.
46 H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Lillian D. Clark, January 11, 1926.
1883, Lothrop Stoddard came into a world of academics. His father, John Lawson Stoddard, graduated from Williams College and Yale Divinity School before becoming a successful travel writer and lecturer. Like Lovecraft, Stoddard celebrated his English and Yankee heritage.

Young Stoddard would go on to attend Harvard College and study law at Boston University. He ultimately earned his Ph.D. in History at Harvard in 1914. In January 1922, Stoddard became the president of Boston’s Loyal Coalition, an organization that “reflected Yankees’ larger anti-Catholic prejudice.”

The Loyal Coalition, which had ties to the Ku Klux Klan, primarily concerned itself with upholding America’s British heritage. The group’s secretary, the New York-based historian Telfair Milton, summarized the group’s goals by saying, “America must not become a land of many races and languages...but a land of one race—the American race, and of one language—the English language.”

The Boston Yankees of the Loyal Coalition cared the most about growing Irish Catholic power in Boston. If Stoddard shared this concern, he rarely voiced it. Instead, Stoddard’s chief concern lay in what he saw as the revolt of the “colored world” against European civilization.

At the very outset of his academic career, Stoddard saw what he termed the “color problem” as the defining crisis of American and European life. In *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, which stemmed from his Harvard dissertation, Stoddard prefaced his popular work by stating that, “The world-wide struggle between the primary races of mankind—the ‘conflict of color…’—bids fair to be the fundamental problem of the twentieth

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century.” This attitude colors Stoddard’s reading of the Haitian revolt of the early 19th century, which Stoddard characterized as a “race war” and a producer of “social dissolution.”

The “color problem” would remain the key aspect of Stoddard’s work. It serves as the central nexus for Stoddard’s writings on political economy, geopolitics, and nationalism. In his 1922 book *The Revolt Against Civilization*, Stoddard viewed the Bolshevik revolution and threat of Communism’s expansion in Europe as essentially an issue of competing ethnic and racial groups. What Stoddard termed the “ape-man,” or the “Under-man”, is but the offspring of inferior stock. As such, the “Under-man” sees little benefit in civilization (which, in Stoddard’s world, meant any society dominated by white “Nordics”), and the “Under-Man’s intrinsically lighter burdens feel heavier because of his innate incapacity.” Thus, in order to protect American civilization from the “Under-man,” Stoddard argued for a eugenic “perfecting of the race” which would raise the median and install a “neo-aristocracy” of the fittest at the top. As for the “Under-man,” their numbers would thin as “defective genes” would be slowly eliminated.

All of these notions, from the desirability of both “positive” and “negative” eugenics, to the threat of so-called “inferior stocks,” can be found in Stoddard’s most famous work: 1920’s *The Rising Tide of Color*. In this

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50 Ibid, 98.
52 Ibid, 155.
53 Ibid.
volume, Stoddard boiled down the post-World War I malaise of revolutions, labor strikes, and incessant warfare in the European colonies of Asia and Africa to a clash of competing races. *The Rising Tide of Color* took as its guiding mission the awakening of the “Nordic” race, which Stoddard hoped would liberate itself from both altruism and internationalism. Stoddard’s work is intended to be a scholarly call to action. Its popularity certainly highlighted the fact that Stoddard’s views found a receptive audience. Indeed, his 1927 work, *Re-Forging America* (which will be discussed later), reads like a victory lap for a man who feels vindicated.⁵⁴

Stoddard’s work fit into a larger network of New England-based academics who saw eugenics, Nordic supremacy, and Progressivism as part of a thoroughly rational worldview supported by modern science.⁵⁵ The racial theories of *The Rising Tide of Color* must be understood as the logical byproduct of 20th-century Progressivism and its focus on science as the cure-all for socio-political maladies. While Lovecraft and Stoddard shared the same biases and the same Anglophilia, they differed slightly in that Lovecraft championed reactionary politics, whereas Stoddard saw himself as something of a

⁵⁴ Stoddard’s cheery mood likely had much to do with the passing of the Immigration Act in 1924.
⁵⁵ Progressivism, while hard to define, in this context refers to the Progressive movement of the early 20th century. Synonymous with figures like Wisconsin Senator Robert M. La Follette, President Theodore Roosevelt, and public intellectuals like Jane Addams and Herbert Croly of the *New Republic*, Progressivism and the Progressive era was a large movement in support of anti-corruption in government, new and more scientific methods of administration, the creation of antitrust laws to break monopolies, and greater direct democracy across the United States. Also part of the Progressivism was a belief in the superiority of technocrats and the intellectual class. Many Progressives during the early twentieth century supported eugenics on racial grounds by arguing for maintaining the Anglo-Saxon identity of the United States.
Progressive. In the end, both men sought the same outcomes, however.

**American Intellectuals and the Growth of Eugenics**

Robert Vitalis, the author of *White World Order, Black Politics*, makes it clear that the conclusions found in *The Rising Tide of Color* remain mainstream. Although the language may have changed, Vitalis sees *The Rising Tide of Color* as not only one of the first examinations of American “soft power,” but also as the precursor to a whole minor industry of “intellectual middlemen” who “shaped the discipline and, not coincidentally, the policies of successive U.S. administrations.”

In Vitalis’ eyes, Stoddard, who wrote his dissertation under the direction of Archibald Cary Coolidge, the founding editor of *Foreign Affairs*, is the little remembered forefather to Joseph Nye, Jr., David Hackett Fischer, and Samuel P. Huntington, the latter of whom, as the author of *The Clash of Civilizations*, Vitalis sees as Stoddard’s equal in terms of “sensationalism.”

Much of this undoubtably comes from the fact that Stoddard represented a generation of Harvard graduates who applied racial science to American foreign policy. As recounted in Matthew Frye Jacobson’s *Whiteness of a Different Color*, the Harvard class of 1889 is often conceived of as the original source of the American eugenics movement. Specifically, graduates of 1889 included “some of the key figures of the Immigration Restriction League—Charles Warren in addition to

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Both Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard would join this cause too.

By the 1910s, Jacobson argues that the men of 1889 “would not only embrace the term ‘eugenics’ and the science it represented—that is, the biological engineering of the body politic—but would couch the entire discussion of the immigration question in a language of ‘desirables’ versus ‘useless’ races…” Stoddard studied under these men and applied their theories to his own work. In this regard, The Rising Tide of Color is a conservative work insofar as it generally agrees with the academic temper (especially at Harvard) of its time.

The theories of Grant and the intellectuals of the New South also informed Stoddard at the time of the composition of The Rising Tide of Color. Grant introduced Stoddard’s book. In it, Grant not only reaffirms Stoddard’s positions, but he also frantically posits that, “The great hope of the future in America lies in the realization of the working class that competition of the Nordic with the alien is fatal, whether the latter be the lowly immigrant from southern or eastern Europe or whether he be the more obviously dangerous Oriental…” A desire for Nordic racial solidarity, as opposed to Marxist class solidarity, animated the work of both Grant and Stoddard. In essence, both men had a sort of scholarly symbiosis, where Stoddard utilized Grant’s racial maps of Europe and Asia, and Grant used Stoddard’s geopolitical warnings during his time as the Secretary of the New York Zoological Society.

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59 Jacobson, 77.
Stoddard echoed Grant’s fear of Noridic decline in *Re-Forging America*. Much like *The Rising Tide of Color*, *Re-Forging America* saw surmounting the “color problem” as being central to a healthy America. Like Grant, Stoddard viewed American history through the prism of race, writing that America, “from the very outset” enjoyed a saturation of “Anglo-Saxon civilization.” Stoddard saw this Nordic strain as being the most important aspect of America’s identity and culture. As such, like the decline of Nordic civilization in Asia and Southern Europe, Stoddard decried the mass exodus of the American Loyalists following the Revolutionary War, for those individuals represented a “superior group” of “prominence and high achievement.” America’s loss of so many courageous men willing “to fight and suffer for an ideal” became Canada’s gain, as the sons of American Loyalists provide “the finest element in the Canadian population.” Lovecraft, the last Loyalist in New England, agreed.

Increasing the number of Nordic Americans provided the driving purpose in both *The Passing of the Great Race* and *Re-Forging America*. Similarly, both texts, although written by lifetime Northerners, display the ideology of what author Natalie J. Ring terms the “New South spokesmen.” Unlike “racial demagogues” or other firebrand and populist proselytizers of racial caricatures like the “lusty Negro buck” or the “knife-wielding Negro,” the intellectuals of the New South used contemporary

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63 *Ibid*.
science and sociology to support their belief “in the inherent inferiority of southern blacks.”\(^{65}\) In writing for mostly Northern publications such as the Boston Independent, New South intellectuals like Wallace Putnam Reed argued that the racial hierarchies of the South could not last forever. Perpetual segregation, which the “racial demagogues” promoted, blinded white men in the South to the desirability of Northern methods of economy, especially industrial capitalism. The South’s problem could only be overcome when “the increasing white population outnumbered blacks by three to one.”\(^{66}\) Once achieved, this whiter South would then develop into a commercial powerhouse.

As can be seen by this brief overview, much of Stoddard’s work simply expanded upon ideas already in wide circulation in the North and, to a lesser extent, the South. The Rising Tide of Color is notable for its sense of urgency, but as a scholarly text, it merely added a specifically American dimension to both Grant’s racial history of the world and Oswald Spengler’s theory of the declining Western (or “Faustian”) world.\(^{67}\) Stoddard, Lovecraft, and Spengler stood united in their pessimism about modernism and liberalism’s ability to weaken Nordic vitality, and therefore wreck precarious civilization.

\(^{65}\) Ring, 26.

\(^{66}\) Ibid.

\(^{67}\) Spengler’s The Decline of the West greatly influenced the Conservative Revolutionary movement in Weimar Germany. Stoddard’s work also found a receptive audience among right-wing intellectuals in Germany, and as such, Stoddard was invited to study Nazi Germany as a reporter. His account, entitled Into the Darkness, provides a mostly positive view on the Nazi eugenics program. Although he agreed in spirit with Berlin’s policy of strict anti-Semitism, Into the Darkness occasionally highlights the fact that Stoddard was uncomfortable with the blunt, populist nature of the Nazi policy towards the Jews.
Beating Back the Tide

World War I propelled Stoddard to write his most famous work. On the first page, Stoddard unequivocally stated that, “Since 1914 the world has been convulsed by the most terrible war in recorded history.” World War I, which Stoddard called “primarily a struggle between the white peoples,” had already bequeathed a poisonous legacy to the white world by 1920. Specifically, despite the severe bloodletting of the trenches, “the war’s results has been a further whittling down of the areas standing outside white condominium.”

Built into this imperialist growth were the seeds of white Europe’s destruction, for, as Stoddard saw it, “the unstable and transitory character of even the most imposing political phenomena” remains often hidden, especially to triumphant victors. In true Spenglerian fashion, Stoddard wrote that the passing “political phenomena” is worldwide white supremacy, which, thanks to European imperialism, collided violently with the more numerous peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

This conflict between “two racially contrasted worlds” of “22,000,000 square miles for the whites and 31,000,000 square miles for the colored races” is imbued with alarmist language and Stoddard’s belief that the decline of European imperial powers would require a white world prepared for not only direct conflict, but the slow war of migration and demographic displacement. To this end, Stoddard’s first rhetorical move was an appeal to history.

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 2.
72 Ibid.
As a trained historian, such an effort should not be surprising. However, for someone writing to a specifically American audience, and as someone who spent the majority of his career focused on the history of America and the Western Hemisphere, Stoddard emphasized the rising tide of color in Asia first. Compared to what he calls the “Yellow Man’s Land” and the “Brown Man’s Land,” the “Red Man’s Land” and the pockets of black numerical dominance in the American South are given the smallest amount of attention. Furthermore, in outlining the threat to “White World Supremacy,” Stoddard conflated history, geography, and biology, thereby coloring his assertions not only with social Darwinism (especially the notion of the “survival of the fittest”), but also with the ancient theory that each race has been bred to adapt to certain climates.\(^{73}\)

In “The Yellow Man’s Land,” the first of the threat zones, Stoddard breezily summarized the Far East as a “group of kindred stocks usually termed Mongolian.”\(^{74}\) This concentrated racial identity, with its core centered in China and Chinese history, provided the bulwark of the Asian threat to white dominance. Namely, besides the nomadic Huns, Mongols, and Tatars, most Asians had had little to no contact with the white world. This isolation (which lasted until the age of European empires) made Asians, in Stoddard’s eyes, less likely or willing to consent to European or American rule in the Pacific. The relatively recent “opening” of the Far East to European and American commerce had, Stoddard writes, been a “forcible dragging of reluctant races into the full stream of world affairs.”\(^{75}\)

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\(^{73}\) It should be noted that Stoddard, like Grant and others, believed that Nordic superiority stems in large part from their biological adaptations to cold and/or temperate climates. Stoddard believed that this adaptation influenced behavioral and cultural patterns (i.e., Nordics are “temperate” and chaste because of their connections to the climate zone of Northern and Northwestern Europe).


\(^{75}\) *Ibid*, 11.
response, “the yellow races, forced into the world-arena, proceeded to adapt themselves to their new political environment and to learn the correct methods of survival under the strenuous conditions which there prevailed.”\textsuperscript{76}

This is not a story of harmonious assimilation. Rather, Stoddard saw this begrudging acceptance of European and American economics and political culture as a deliberate attempt to subvert white authority in Asia. Namely, Stoddard warned his readers that the two great powers of the Far East—Japan and China—would use both their natural adaptations and the technological advancements made by the white world to violently usurp white power not only in colonial Asia, but also in such places as California and Australia.

In the case of Japan, Stoddard highlighted the Russo-Japanese War (a conflict that receives more attention than World War I in \textit{The Rising Tide of Color}) as the clearest indication of Asian attitudes towards whites in Europe and North America. Despite voices of warning against “Japan’s expansionist tendencies,” much of the white world stood aghast when the Japanese completely routed the Tsar’s armies in 1905.\textsuperscript{77} Now, with Pandora’s Box forcibly pried open, Stoddard warned that Japan’s interest in preventing “all further white encroachment in the Far East by the establishment of a Far Eastern Monroe Doctrine based on Japanese predominance” was but a smokescreen for greater Japanese hegemony in the Pacific, including Hawaii, American Samoa, and even America’s West Coast.\textsuperscript{78} In a moment of sharp irony, Stoddard criticized Japanese political leaders and intellectuals for using notions of racial superiority to legitimize their rule in

\textsuperscript{76} Stoddard, \textit{The Rising Tide of Color}, 11.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 12.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 18.
Asia. The Japanese, according to Stoddard, will always seek hegemony in the Far East because their recent exposure to white technocrat culture had made them feel their previous impotency on the world stage all the more painfully.\textsuperscript{79}

Although Stoddard did not recognize it, his view of Japan neatly overlapped with the views of Clarence H. Poe, the North Carolina-born editor of \textit{The Progressive Farmer}. Like Stoddard, Poe, an arch Progressive, located Japan’s previous insignificance on the world stage to its allegiance to agriculture and an “Asian version of preindustrial republicanism.”\textsuperscript{80} “Old Japan,” like the “Old South”, failed because it resisted commercial trade and capitalist enterprise for so long. Although Poe did not share Stoddard’s fear of a rising Japanese behemoth, he nevertheless agreed that Japan’s geopolitical power in the early 20th century only existed because of white imperialism, primarily economic imperialism.

Where Poe and Stoddard deviate is over the issue of capitalism. For Poe, capitalism’s expansion in Asia and in the American South equaled a positive development. For Stoddard, capitalism became just one of the many gifts to Asia that would soon be used as a weapon against the white world. In this instance, the Chinese were characterized as the greatest threat, for “the Chinaman brings with him a working capacity which simply appalls his competitors.”\textsuperscript{81} Because the Chinese “can work under conditions that would kill a man of a less hardy race,” profit-blind businessmen in America proved all too willing to hire Chinese “coolies” as cheap labor.\textsuperscript{82} Stoddard used the same arguments against Chinese immigration as the labor

\textsuperscript{79} Stoddard, \textit{The Rising Tide of Color}, 24.
\textsuperscript{80} Ring, 106.
\textsuperscript{81} Stoddard, \textit{The Rising Tide of Color}, 17.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Ibid}, 17-18.
movement and American socialists.\textsuperscript{83} Barely two
generations before the publication of \textit{The Rising Tide of
Color}, hundreds of white laborers in California had rioted
against foreign workers, especially the Chinese, who they
described as “‘a modification of the negro’.”\textsuperscript{84}

For these workers, the growth of the Chinese
population in California threatened “working-class
entitlement based on race” and “their privileged status as
producers in a producers’ republic.”\textsuperscript{85} Similarly, for
socialists like Jack London, who typically depicted his
working class heroes with terms like “English” “blue-
eyed,” “flaxen haired,” and “Anglo-Saxon,” the “yellow
peril” of Chinese immigration halted unionization efforts
and maintained the low wages preferred by the capitalist
class.\textsuperscript{86} The connections between Stoddard’s right-leaning
eugenics program and racial history and the decidedly non-
Marxian socialism of men like London and science fiction
writer H.G. Wells (a noted supporter of eugenics) did not
seem odd at the time. Rather, these men, along with the
“non-entity” Lovecraft and the popular Grant, formed an
intellectual movement of sorts dedicated to science,
efficiency, production, and the continued strength of
European civilization.

\textit{The Rising Tide of Color} meant to appeal to all
Nordics (and most whites) regardless of class. In writing
about the threat of Asian military and economic power,

\textsuperscript{83} Stoddard abhorred both of these groups. In \textit{The Revolt Against
Civilization}, he spends a great deal of time characterizing labor
unionism and left-wing politics as the expressions of the genetically
violent “Under-man.”

\textsuperscript{84} Jacobson, 54.

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{86} Alexander Saxton, \textit{The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-
Chinese Movement in California} (Berkeley and Los Angeles:
University of California Press, 1995): 281
Stoddard’s book rang the alarm bells, but for the reader who fancied himself a member of the Nordic race, Stoddard’s words also appealed to vanity. This is the potent duality of *The Rising Tide of Color*—it both terrifies and empowers. This duality reached its highest levels of potency when Stoddard discusses the Far East and the rising imperial power of Japan.

In “Brown Man’s Land,” Stoddard directly contrasted North Africa and the Middle East with the Far East. Specifically, unlike Japan, China, and Korea, “the brown world is nearly everywhere exposed to foreign influences and has undergone an infinite series of evolutionary modifications.” However, despite generalizing that “this is no…brown culture,” Stoddard emphatically stated, “there is a fundamental comity between the brown peoples.”

The Islamic religion formed the core of this comity. Although “professed by only one-fifth of the inhabitants” of the “brown world,” Stoddard saw Islam’s “warlike vigor” as one of the key rallying points for anti-white sentiment in the Middle East and North Africa. More importantly, Islam provided the inspiration for “the brown renaissance” for the coming war between Europe and the Islamic world. Islam’s history, much like Grant’s history of the Nordic race, is described as cyclical. At first, Stoddard wrote that Islam’s fury “impressed men’s minds” with conquests stretching from “France to China.” Then, after centuries of bloody proselytization, “Islam seemed plunged in the stupor of senile decay.” The “Golden Age” of the Abbasid Caliphate retreated and “the dry husks of empty

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid, 32-34.
90 Ibid, 34.
91 An interesting note: Lovecraft so admired the culture and literature of the Abbasid epoch that, as a child, he created the penname Abdul Alhazred in order to write poetry. Later, Lovecraft would make Abdul
formalism and soulless ritual” opened up a void in the soul of the religion.\textsuperscript{92} During this lethargy, the great powers of Europe managed to first weaken the Ottoman Empire and its central, Sunni caliphate, then began taking Islamic territory all across Asia and Africa.

In typical Stoddard fashion, he presented this history of European dominance as a false front. Underneath all of this white Christian conquest sits the “Mohammedan Revival.”\textsuperscript{93} This revival began during the 18th century in what would become Saudi Arabia. Its key figure, the puritanical “Abdel Wahab,” created a following, known as the “Wahabees,” whose religious fervor saw the Middle East and North Africa’s “increasing subjugation to the Christian West” as the incentive for a new \textit{jihad}.\textsuperscript{94} Frighteningly for Stoddard’s audience, the then recent conflagration in Europe had not gone unnoticed by the Islamic East. Stoddard quoted the Egyptian scholar Yahya Siddyk, the Western-educated Islamist who lovingly wrote about Europe’s self-induced immolation between 1914 and 1918. With religious reverence, Siddyk saw another world war on the horizon and wrote, “The future is God’s, and nothing is lasting save His Will!”\textsuperscript{95}

Stoddard’s prescience about the growing power of fundamentalist Islam, coupled with his correct view that Japan would eventually try to establish itself as the supreme power of Asia, is one of the reasons why \textit{The Rising Tide of Color} continues to be read and studied, especially by political writers and those interested in

\textsuperscript{92} Stoddard, \textit{The Rising Tide of Color}, 34.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Ibid}, 37.
geopolitics. However, even though much of Stoddard’s views on Islam took inspiration not only from the British Liberal politician and Catholic reactionary Hilaire Belloc, but he also gleaned more than a little bit from the fictional works of men like John Buchan and the very real machinations of the Germans during the war, *The Rising Tide of Color* is frequently seen as the race-crazed ramblings of a degreed conspiracy theorist.\(^{96}\)

Therefore, it is not untrue to say that *The Rising Tide of Color* is the secret book that many modern intellectuals keep hidden in their closets. Because of its obvious racialism, few public figures are likely to state that Stoddard’s work influenced them. Furthermore, although *The Rising Tide of Color* clearly informed Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations* and the political theory of “Culturalism,” its reputation in the academy is, to paraphrase Bret Easton Ellis, less than zero.\(^{97}\)

Be that as it may, in reading and re-reading *The Rising Tide of Color*, it’s clear that Stoddard had a keen

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\(^{96}\) Buchan’s novel *Greenmantle* (1916) is about the British intelligence services trying to stop a German-backed plan to use a religious fanatic to inspire a general Muslim uprising across the world. At the *Halbmondlager* (“Half Moon Camp”) outside of Berlin, Muslim POWs were given religious texts, plenty of study time, good food, and even had the first ever mosque erected on German soil for their exclusive use. The reason for all of this was that Kaiser Wilhelm II, along with the diplomat and “Orientalist” Max von Oppenheim, believed that a propaganda campaign could inspire *jihad* among Britain and France’s Muslim subjects. For more information, see Florence Waters, “Germany’s grand First World War jihad experiment,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 Aug 2014. For his part, Belloc, an Anglo-French Catholic in deeply Protestant England, wrote of “The Great and Enduring Heresy of Mohammed” in his book *The Great Heresies*. Belloc believed that in the 20th century, “Christendom” would have to fight a new war against a resurgent Islam.

\(^{97}\) “Culturalism” is a sociological belief coined by Florian Znaniecki. For Culturalists, culture is the central organizing principle of human societies. Culturalists largely agree with Stoddard, although they place “culture” above race.
sense of history and politics. Stoddard also understood that human beings are rarely rational and can be easily united by base common denominators (religion, race). In this way, Stoddard, as a commentator on the post-colonial world, should be discussed. Although Stoddard, unlike French author Jean Raspail and his 1973 novel *The Camp of the Saints*, did not foresee the political turbulence of mass Muslim migration to Europe or decades of interventionist wars in the Middle East, he did see the dangers of Wahhabism and political Islam before many others.98

Of course, Stoddard’s keen observations are often pulled down by his overarching racialism and attempts to scientifically argue for a renewed racial consciousness among whites in the West. In his later sections, “The Ebbing Tide of White” and “The Deluge On the Dikes,” Stoddard repeatedly hammered home his belief that increased radicalism among non-whites would only be prevented through the abandonment of European empires and the re-forging of Nordic bonds, especially the bonds between the more “vitalist” nations of America, Canada, South Africa, and Australia. If this is not accomplished,

98 In *The Camp of the Saints*, a thoroughly secular and social democratic Europe is inundated with refugees from Calcutta, India. These migrants are depicted as being uninterested in assimilation, while the governments of Europe and North America (barring Switzerland) prove unwilling to send the migrants back. By the novel’s end, the wealthy classes of New York and Paris are forced by the government to marry Indian and Pakistani women and men, while one inebriated Soviet border guard stands in the way of a massive group of Chinese immigrants. In modern Europe, the advanced and secular states of France, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, and others are struggling to assimilate millions of Middle Eastern immigrants, many of whom subscribe to Wahhabism, which is the key ideological foundation of Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other terrorist organizations. For more information, see Yousaf Butt, “How Saudi Wahhabism Is the Fountainhead of Islamist Terrorism,” *The Huffington Post*, January 10, 2015.
Stoddard, in quoting Grant, dourly surmised, “‘the type of native American of colonial descent will become extinct as the Athenian of the age of Pericles and the Vikings of the days of Rollo.’”

For Stoddard, this fear of extinction that underlays much of *The Rising Tide of Color* had a personal resonance. As he wrote, “the evil effects of even white immigration has, in my opinion, been necessary in order to get a proper perspective for viewing the problem of colored immigration.” Furthermore, when Stoddard observed “the damage wrought in America…by the coming of persons who, after all, belong mostly to the branches of the white race and who nearly possess the basic ideals of white civilization,” he fears for the passing of America’s Nordic inheritance (i.e., its English roots and the cultural and political supremacy of English Protestants in American life).

This fear provided the most important context behind *The Rising Tide of Color*. As the son of well-educated New Englanders with deep roots stretching all the way back to the Puritan founding of the town of Hingham, Massachusetts, Stoddard felt that his America had been lost in the late 19th century thanks to the large influx of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Much like Lovecraft, who decried race mixing and the loss of Yankee dominance in 20th-century America, Stoddard thought the only way to save America would be to increase its native stock of English-speaking Protestants from the British Isles.

As such, when he set down to compose *Re-Forging America* in the wake of President Calvin Coolidge (a fellow

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100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
New Englander with blood ties to the Puritan founders of Watertown, Massachusetts) and the 1924 Immigration Act, the almost defeatist mood of The Rising Tide of Color gave way to tempered jubilation. During the 1920s, Stoddard’s combination of social conservatism and Progressive scientism held great power, especially in educated New England. Therefore, Stoddard and Lovecraft remain today as the dual archetype of the New England counter-revolution that began in 1919. Mass immigration to New England’s cities and factory towns, the First World War, the Boston Police Strike, and the revolutionary moment of the summer of 1919, forced both men to articulate a thoroughgoing opposition to liberal modernism. They stood opposed to Wall Street and the ethos of New York City, and they stood for the culture of Anglo-America, which saw its greatest flowering in New England. More than any other writers or thinkers of the interwar years, Stoddard and Lovecraft provided a true alternative to the political horse-trading of the “tribal twenties.” They visualized a Nordic America in a sea of political degeneration. For a time they found their desires satisfied with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. This legislation—the apex of New England’s counter-revolution and a victory for the ideology shared by Stoddard, Lovecraft, and Grant—would last all way until the passage of the Hart-Celler Act of 1965.
“by her needle maintain herself with reputation:” Philadelphia Quaker Women and the Materiality of Piety, 1758-1760
Laura Earls
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After meeting for worship one April morning in 1758, Henry Drinker brought Hannah Callender’s friend Caty some handkerchiefs to hem.\textsuperscript{103} Since none of the three young Quakers were married yet, this requested favor had the potential to create scandal in mid-eighteenth century Philadelphia. Women usually made this type of personal item for their husbands, not necessarily their male friends – perhaps the community would infer that Caty and Henry Drinker were courting too quickly. However, in her diary, Callender believed in her friend’s ability to maintain her virtue while making useful personal belongings for a friend. Callender wrote in her diary that she did not doubt, “but Caty can by her needle maintain herself with reputation.”\textsuperscript{104} Like many other non-Quaker women, Callender and her contemporaries made things for themselves as well as family and friends. However, their actions had distinctly Quaker undertones that related to broader discussions of plainness. Social context set the parameters of pious behavior for these Philadelphia Quakers. The acts of creation and exchange, even in the

\textsuperscript{103} Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom, April 1758, in The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution, ed. Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 98.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.

Callender usually attended meeting on Sundays and Wednesdays, but she also attended on other days of the week. Ibid, 15.
case of just a few hemmed handkerchiefs, represented the materiality of Quaker piety.

Plainness directed many facets of material daily life for Quakers in eighteenth-century England and her colonies. From the garments that they made to the ways that they spoke, Quakers grappled with the outward trappings of piety. Also known as the Society of Friends, Quakers believed that eschewing excessive material possessions would allow individuals to focus on their own relationships with God. Unofficial Quaker guidance enumerated some vague criteria for plain garments around the turn of the eighteenth century, but aside from this, pious members largely decided for themselves what was or was not plain.\textsuperscript{105} Scholars of design history analyze “plainness” as a rhetorical stance through furniture and Quaker clothing but neglect the application of this concept to eighteenth-century Quaker women. Despite the supposed flexibility of this theological concept, plainness underpinned far more of the ways in which these women related to one another and the world around them in socially proscriptive ways.\textsuperscript{106}


Scholars such as Mary Ann Caton focus on nineteenth-century plain clothing and interpret it as a demonstration of piety through the eschewing of excessive material goods, which included elaborate hairstyles, extreme garment silhouettes, and heavily adorned clothing. However, Susan Garfinkel notes that objects like Chippendale furniture fit within the discursive context of Quaker belief systems. For further reading, see \textit{Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption}, ed. Emma Jones Lapsansky and
The aesthetics and behaviors of plainness go beyond peculiar clothing and speech; they offer insight into uniquely gendered, lived, daily experiences for Philadelphia’s late eighteenth-century Quaker women. Historians who edited the diaries of these women focus on the stages of their lives, their thoughts about revolutionary ideas, and their literary networks, rather than the intersections of their religious beliefs and material worlds. Furthermore, some social practices that may not appear Quaker did, in fact, have Quaker undertones. A close study of the diaries and possessions of figures including Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, Grace Peel Dowell Parr, Hannah Callender Sansom, and their contemporaries illuminates how Philadelphia Quaker women interacted with the theology of plainness through the exchange of things. These young, unmarried, wealthy women did not yet have husbands or children of their own to sew for, so they had the time to make objects for their friends and other peers during the few years between the beginning of their diaries and their marriages. Therefore, the years 1758-1760 illustrate each woman’s experience with purchasing, creating, and exchanging objects, yet these years also illuminate the commonalities of their practices of plainness in eighteenth-century Philadelphia.

Whether through fine art or women’s work in domestic spaces, the beliefs of elite eighteenth-century


108 Callender lent her diary to the Sandwith sisters on June 2, 1760. Klepp and Wulf, 4.
Philadelphia Quaker women were not only spiritual, but material experiences as well. Social engagements, commissioning of portraits, and making useful things for family and friends were acceptable, plain activities because they encompassed women’s exercise of piety through the assessment and creation of things within the context of the Quaker community. Rather than lapses of faith, these practices represented individual interpretations of plainness within rigid social boundaries that were both necessary for and aligned with a faith that did not separate the religious from the secular. During the brief period from 1758 to 1760, these young, elite, unmarried women enacted plainness through the construction of material worlds for both themselves and others in the Philadelphia Quaker community.

Scholarship on the Quakers tends to outline their basic theological concepts, neglecting the study of both gender and materiality. Historian Frederick B. Tolles, a Quaker himself, notes that Friends lived by the basic tenets of equality, simplicity, community, and peace. Underlying all of this was the belief “that God speaks in every human heart.” Tolles argues that early Quakers had no use for fine art, but other scholars take issue with his assertions that eighteenth-century American Quaker artists rejected

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109 According to historian J. William Frost, most of the American Quakers were farmers, as well as artisans and merchants in urban centers (see J. William Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973), 187). Even though these elite women may not be representative of most eighteenth-century American Quakers, this paper analyzes documents written by these women because of the scarcity of material written by Quaker women.

their Quaker backgrounds in order to pursue their art.\textsuperscript{111} He does, however, concede that there were no religious dictates against the work of craftsmen, such as cabinetmakers and silversmiths because their products were useful.\textsuperscript{112} Additionally, Tolles concludes that by the eighteenth century, plainness among elite Philadelphia Quakers was relative. Luxury goods were indicative of their owners’ hard work and God’s favor. The heterogeneous nature of plainness halted after what Tolles refers to as “drastic purging and pruning” occurred at the end of the eighteenth century. Historian Jack Marietta later explicates this withdrawal of Quakers from worldly pursuits.\textsuperscript{113} Overall, both historians neglect the social context of the creation and exchange of goods within eighteenth-century Quaker communities.

Recent scholarship attempts to find manifestations of Quaker beliefs in extant material culture and still struggles to define the characteristics of Quaker design. Building upon Tolles’ foundational history of the Quakers, scholars Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck compiled a series of essays entitled \textit{Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption}. This work focuses on American Quaker material culture in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley from the eighteenth through twentieth centuries and addresses Quaker relationships to modernization.

\textsuperscript{111} Tolles, 79. For arguments against Tolles and references to his work as generative, see Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck, eds., \textit{Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid}, 80.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid}, 87-90.

capitalism, and religion. Emma Jones Lapsansky highlights the tension between outward dress and behavior as either an element of a Quaker’s pious actions or as a substitute for genuine piety. She also states that Quaker beliefs encompass many contradictory values, such as equality and separation, intellectualism and anti-intellectualism, and excellence and humility. Overall, this interdisciplinary group of scholars conclude that there is no specific set of characteristics that define Quaker aesthetics. The ways in which Quakers strived to live pious lives did not manifest itself in the visual components, but rather the context of the artifacts they created.

In her chapter of *Quaker Aesthetics*, historian Susan Garfinkel complicates this apparent dichotomy between Quakers and the world through her argument that members who owned elaborate furniture did not deviate from doctrines because plainness was flexible. Overall, she argues that Quaker beliefs can include material goods that might not strike outsiders as plain. Furthermore, she notes that, “Quaker plainness is more important for what it does than for what it means.” However, she does not state exactly what plainness does, aside from its use as a “rhetorical stance” rather than as an adjective. In her analysis, plainness is relative and should be studied in its proper social contexts. The study of the social and material worlds of Quaker women like Callender and Sandwith can illuminate the ways in which plainness operated as a

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116 Garfinkel in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 52.

117 Ibid, 53.

118 Ibid, 66-69.
rhetorical stance that reinforced the highly contextual boundaries of this tenet.

Garfinkel ties the meaning of plainness to the concept of silence, which Quakers viewed as necessary to access God’s truth. Meetings were usually silent and followed a sequence in which someone recited a prayer then waited for a fellow Friend to be moved by their Inner Light to give a sermon. Anyone could theoretically give a sermon, but ministers and elders with high standing within the meeting usually gave them and decided when worship concluded. In Garfinkel’s analysis, plainness and silence were both a mental state that required little explanation for Friends. Quakers did not explain many of the terms that they used for plainness because, much like God’s truth, the community understood the discursive framework. In contrast to silence, plain speech meant that Friends used words like “thee” and “thou” instead of the formal “you” to refute social hierarchies. In their diaries, Callender and Sandwith referred to months and days of the week in numerical order instead of by their “heathen Roman names”, such as Thursday and June. While plainness was contextual, it also included actions and material productions within proscriptive social boundaries for Quaker women.

In the seventeenth century, Quakers held similar beliefs to Puritans regarding ostentation and material goods. In his explication of the origins of colonial American portraiture, art historian Wayne Craven ties the beginnings of both early America and its portraits to the character and piety of late seventeenth-century Puritan

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119 Garfinkel in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 71-72.
120 Ibid, 66.
121 Ibid, 65-67. For further reading on the extent to which this discursive framework was actually broadly understood, see Jack Marietta’s study of Quaker disciplinary records in The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783.
122 Garfinkel in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 65.
men. Grace Peel’s commissioning of her portrait demonstrated material prosperity that reflected God’s favor and was therefore acceptable. Seventeenth-century Quakers shared many of these beliefs with the Puritans; however, the Puritans defined ostentation in even more vague terms than the Quakers. While Friends may have been slightly more specific, their material culture is not always discernable from its non-Quaker counterparts, especially over the course of the eighteenth century. Overall, provenance and intent marked Quaker plainness from ostentation.

Quaker beliefs revolved around an individual’s relationship to God without mediating factors like clergy or rituals. George Fox founded the Religious Society of Friends in the Truth, or the Quakers, in mid seventeenth-century England. In contrast to some other Protestant denominations, Quakers believed in a loving God and that children were born in innocence that could be maintained throughout their lives through piety. Everyone had access to God through their own Inner or Inward Light, which meant that there were no official hierarchies within meetings. They believed that preaching was not as important as living pious lives without division between the secular and the religious. Additionally, like Catholics and many other Protestants, they strived to be “in the world, not of it,” and one element of this tenet was to refrain from

124 Ibid, 6-10.
126 Scholars seem to use the terms “Inward” and “Inner” interchangeably when referring to a Quaker’s personal experience with God.
conspicuous consumption. The degree to which Quakers were unique among Christian groups is a topic for further debate, but it did not appear to factor into the daily lives of the Quaker women studied here. The Philadelphia Quaker community was a necessary point of reference for piety in the absence of extensive theological texts that discussed plainness explicitly, which meant that meetings and social gatherings were crucial to women’s material worlds and religious experiences.

Elite Philadelphia Quaker women participated in cultural shifts that extended beyond the Society of Friends, but in ways that included the practice of plainness. Hannah Callender and her friend Elizabeth Sandwith, both of whom were contemporaries of Grace Peel, had many social engagements that correlated with the concept of sociability. Sociability, or friendships between men and women that often led to courtship in early America, required broad reading in subjects such as art and politics. Ideally, the conversations facilitated learning and cemented community ties. Historians Susan Klepp and Karin Wulf discuss the importance of social conversations in Callender’s world extensively, but they do not address possible divergences between Quaker social practices and those of other Philadelphians outside of the Society of Friends. While not necessarily Quaker, the parameters of sociability accommodated Quaker theology and interacted with it in unique ways, since speaking was just as important as listening during social visits. Through eloquent conversations in heterosocial settings around the tea table, these women cultivated their inner worlds within the framework of speech and silence.

Hannah Callender’s diary portrays a devout Quaker woman whose worldly proclivities attest to the flexibility of the concept of plainness within the referential framework of

127 Lapsansky in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 5.
128 Klepp and Wulf, 28-29.
social settings. Beginning at the age of twenty-one on the first of the year 1758, Callender intended for her diary to help her manage her time and keep track of her countless social visits.\footnote{Klepp and Wulf, 1.} Prior to starting her diary, Callender studied at Anthony Benezet’s Quaker school with Elizabeth Sandwith. Callender’s father had a subscription to the Library Company of Philadelphia, which facilitated her frequent reading. She enjoyed fine art, landscapes, and architecture, and was skilled at needlework.\footnote{Ibid, 12-13.} Despite her piety, she also struggled with plainness as it related to silence and personal behavior.\footnote{Ibid, 13.} Her upbringing within Philadelphia’s elite circles likely allowed her the time and resources to learn and visit as much as she did.

Speech, the counterpart to silence in Quaker theology, was a common feature of Callender’s many social interactions. Between silent meetings, Callender and her friends exchanged ideas about inward and outward piety for men and women through gossip. During a February 1758 visit with A. James, for example, she noted that, “some men take great liberty in laughing at the Women, however, not being clear of failings themselves, and in a general way, we getting the right side of them; make me think of an old saying ‘let them laugh that Wins.’” Perhaps Callender meant that men were hypocrites, especially since women got what they wanted from men regardless. The following day, she and some female friends denounced large age differences between married couples, especially in the case of two of their peers who announced their intent to marry at meeting.\footnote{Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom, February 1758, in Klepp and Wulf, 48.} While these
conversations do not read as specifically Quaker gossip, they most likely reinforced Quaker social norms. The gender dynamics that Callender described do not seem explicitly Quaker, but her concerns regarding age gaps may relate to the longevity of the marriages of her peers. To Quakers, marriage within meeting was crucial.\textsuperscript{133}

Callender’s disdain for ostentatious behavior is clear throughout her writing. While she visited G. Allison in April 1758, she met “a Coxcomb there, one of the most disagreeable [sic] things in nature. \textit{Monkeys in action, Peroquets in talk / They are crowned with feathers like the cock a too [sic] / And like camelions [sic] daily change there [sic] hue.”\textsuperscript{134} In this instance, a coxcomb, or vain man, is an object of reproach. Monkeys are creatures with similarities to humans who sometimes mime human behaviors, while parrots imitate human speech. Cockatoos wear gaudy feathers, and chameleons change their appearance as they please. This comparison of conceited men to animals relates to the practice of plainness because those who were not plain merely imitated proper behaviors, thereby obscuring their inner vapidity. Plain dress, much like these animal comparisons, could disguise the lack of piety of the Friend who wore it.

Callender’s disapproval of vanity extended to women as well. While visiting her friend Becky in November 1758, she stitched a piece of needlework while Becky read from Samuel Richardson’s non-Quaker 1748 novel \textit{Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady}. Callender concluded from the novel that, “a fallen woman is the more inexcusable as from the cradle the Sex is warned against

\textsuperscript{134} Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom, February 1758, in Klepp and Wulf, 53. Neither Klepp nor Wulf nor I could find this poem anywhere else, so it might be an original composition.
them.” The next day, Callender noted that at meeting, she sat near Patty Loyd and one of Dr. Shippen’s daughters, who were “two celebrated beauties” at the time. She approved of Ms. Shippen’s actions more than she did for Patty, “who has been brought up to think she can have no action or gesture that looks amiss. when on the contrary: I hate the Face however fair, / That carries an affected air, / The lisping tone, the shape constrain’d, / Are fopperies which only tend, / To injure what they strive to mend.” This quote from an Edward Moore poem in Fables for Ladies condemns foppish behavior for women as well as for men. In the context of plainness, silence, and the integral role of personal behavior to these beliefs, Callender used worldly, non-Quaker literary sources to record how her peers did or did not conform to her ideas about proper behavior. To Callender, women who exhibited ostentatious outward appearance and behaviors were much like the Coxcomb – immoral and worthy of reproach. She did, however, note when she thought other women enacted piety correctly.

In September 1758, Hannah Callender recorded the plain outfit and demeanor of her peer Betsey Brook in great detail, highlighting the visual and behavioral components of plainness. Callender did not note what parts of Brook’s outfit were especially plain; rather, the quiet piety of this young woman’s demeanor combined with her practical, unadorned dress left a lasting impression on Callender. At meeting on that September day, Callender and her friend Sally noticed a girl they knew escorting a stranger, later introduced as Betsey Brook, out of the building. They inquired after the girl’s health and a conversation followed.

135 Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom, February 1758, in Klepp and Wulf, 77.
136 Ibid.
Brook was only seventeen, but her physical beauty, manners, and plainness were those of a more mature woman. Callender noted that this visitor from Maryland’s “dress was plain, and something particular from us: yet coud [sic] not be altered in her, without robing [sic] her of a beauty, which seemed intirely [sic] her peculiar, a cambletee riding gound [sic], stomerger (stomacher) [sic] of the same, a white silk lace x and x before it, a peek cornered sinkle hankercheif [sic] tucked in it, a round eared cap, with a little black silk hood, graced as Innocent a face, as I ever see, when a walking she wore a Plat bonnet.”

Callender usually did not describe the clothing of other people in her diary, so her notation of the “cambletee” fabric may have been notable for its plainness.

Callender’s description of Brook’s clothing may indicate what Philadelphia Quakers considered plain textiles. The “cambletee rideing gound” with matching “stomerger” was most likely a gown made entirely of camlet, which was a lightweight plain weave wool fabric with many uses. This textile came in many different patterns and finishes, and early Americans used it for everything from upholstery and furnishing textiles to clothing for men and women. Callender did not write if this fabric had a pattern woven into it, or if Brook wore any ornamentation beyond the white silk on her stomacher. Since the visitor’s appearance left such an impression, we can infer that perhaps there was no noticeable, ostentatious pattern to the camlet. Additionally, Brook probably wore a riding gown because she was visiting from Maryland,

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137 Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom, September 1758, in Klepp and Wulf, 69-70.
138 Christina J. Hodge, Consumerism and the Emergence of the Middle Class in Colonial America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 138.
which implies that plain dress allowed for the pious to wear clothing made for specific situations. Most importantly, Brook’s outfit was plain in the context of her pious demeanor.

In addition to women’s accounts of their social visits, portraiture offers further insight into how women interpreted plainness in their physical appearances and behavior. Grace Peel Dowell Parr’s portrait hangs in the galleries at the Winterthur Museum, where it testifies to the personal interpretation of plainness in the patronage of fine art. According to Peel’s probate inventory, she possessed many luxury goods. By the time she passed away in Lancaster in 1814, she owned a damask tablecloth, several pieces of mahogany furniture, countless household textiles, and a total of four portraits. The portrait of Peel’s first husband, William Dowell, is the only painting listed in the inventory with a named subject. Many of these objects would strike readers as not plain due to their luxury, as in the case of the mahogany and the portraits, or their sheer abundance, as in the case of the textiles. However, upon further investigation, this portrait reveals the individual interpretation inherent to plainness as a rhetorical position.

By the eighteenth century, Quakers began to embrace portraiture as an appropriate material possession to both commission and own. According to art historian Dianne C. Johnson, early Quaker writing indicated disapproval of portraiture as a vain pursuit. However, by the eighteenth century, Quakers began to see portraying themselves as a reflection of their secular and religious prosperity. By the 1750s, around the time that fellow

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Quaker Benjamin West painted Peel’s portrait, Friends began to move away from the plainness of their predecessors in favor of material possessions that correlated with an individual’s interpretation of his or her Inner Light. At a glance, this portrait looks much like others of this time period that were not Quaker; however, Peel and West included distinctly Quaker characteristics in this painting. Grace Peel may have worn a gown without patterned textiles or ornamentation in order to ensure that she would not appear out of fashion in a few years. However, her dress also correlates with the few written Quaker recommendations found in the *Rules of Discipline* regarding plain dress.

At some meetings, Friends contributed thoughts on what behaviors should constitute disciplines of the church, and these thoughts were compiled and published as the *Rules of Discipline*. The behaviors that these publications describe were not mandated for Friends, but they reflect the community input that was crucial to plainness. Despite the faith’s supposedly non-hierarchical structure, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting took its cues from the London Yearly Meeting. London stated in 1691 that Friends should “avoid pride and immodesty in apparel, and all vain and superfluous fashions of the world.” In 1703, they advised, “that all who make profession with us take care to be exemplary in what they wear, and what they use, so as to avoid the vain customs of the world, and all extravagancy in colour and fashion.” The 1711 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Rules of Discipline offered specific advice to avoid “gaudy stomachers” and textiles with floral or striped patterns. In 1719, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting began assembling their annotated rules of discipline into

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141 Johnson in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 145.
143 Caton in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 249.
manuscripts to be sent to smaller quarterly and monthly meetings, where the information was then distributed to Friends.\footnote{An Inventory of Friends Historical Library’s Collection of Quaker Disciplines, 1689-2009,” Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, accessed 6 May 2019, http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/friends/Disciplines.xml.} It is unclear from her sparse archival records if Peel ever saw one of these publications. Regardless, she wears neither of the explicitly mentioned garments, and her gown of high-quality silk is cut in simple lines in a style that changed little over the course of the eighteenth century. Her neckerchief and lack of hair powder further mark her as a young, pious Quaker.\footnote{Caton in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 248.} Although plain dress was not mandated, it still marked especially pious Quakers.

Benjamin West’s early portraits may illuminate how his artistic influences affected his portrayal of Grace Peel. Born in Springfield, Pennsylvania in 1738, West was just beginning his career as a painter and was probably the same age as his subjects when he painted portraits of Grace and her sister Elizabeth Peel in 1757 or 1758.\footnote{Object file for Object ID 2003.63. Winterthur Museum.} He received his early instruction from English emigrant painter William Williams around 1747, and his early influences included the work of well-known colonial artists such as John Wollaston, Robert Feke, and both Gustavus and John Hesselius. The portraits that he painted before leaving the colonies in 1760 to train in Europe were representative of other colonial portraits by artists including and in addition to those listed above.\footnote{“Benjamin West (1738-1820),” Worcester Art Museum, accessed 6 May 2019, https://www.worcesterart.org/collection/Early_American/Artists/west/biography/index.html.} Like his contemporaries, West may
have altered a dress that he painted in another portrait to make it plain for Grace Peel.

Provenance information ties this portrait of another woman in a yellow gown to Benjamin West. Little is known about this portrait, except that it changed hands very few times between its creation and its arrival at the National Gallery of Art. Mary Bethel Boude’s descendant, Elizabeth F.G. Heistand (b. 1872) of Pennsylvania sold the painting in New York in 1947, and Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch purchased it soon after. They owned it for sixteen years before donating it to the National Gallery of Art in 1964, where it remains. Considering its clear path from Pennsylvania to Washington, D.C., it appears likely that West painted this conventional portrait during his early years working in Pennsylvania.

The similarities between West’s portrait of Mary Bethel Boude and his later portrait of Grace Peel Dowell Parr may illuminate how West combined portraiture conventions with plain dress. Both portraits employ conventional poses, serene facial expressions, garment styles, and accessories. Both subjects wear yellow gowns with little ornament and drape billowing fabric at their elbows. However, Boude’s hair curls over her shoulder, unobstructed by a capelet. While both women wear ruffles at their necklines, Boude also wears ornamental ruffles on her sleeves. A small pink bow at the center of Boude’s neckline constitutes the only other ornament on her outfit. The background of Boude’s portrait is an outdoor scene, whereas Peel’s has an unadorned dark background. Peel’s lack of sleeve ruffles, loose hair, and ornamental bows may reveal her interpretation of the Rules of Discipline just as much as it may reveal West’s artistic choices.

West most likely painted portraits of Grace Peel and her sister Elizabeth Peel as a pair, and their simultaneous creation may indicate the coexistence of multiple material interpretations of plainness. According to Winterthur’s object file for Grace Peel’s portrait, West may have painted this pair of portraits before the sisters married their husbands. Elizabeth Peel married Francis Harris in 1758, which correlates with the dates currently assigned to both portraits. Elizabeth’s depiction in her portrait bears similarities to that of her sister with the lack of ornamentation on her silk gown. Gauzy ruffles on her neckline, choker, and cap constitute the only embellishments for her outfit. Unlike her sister, Elizabeth holds a small basket of pink flowers against a vaguely pastoral background. Perhaps, like other women her age who had likenesses painted before marriage, Elizabeth wished to portray her potential fecundity by holding flowers near her abdomen. While Elizabeth and Grace look quite different in their portraits, their garments still correlate with the few specifications listed in the Rules of Discipline, which further indicates the coexistence of different, yet not dissimilar, individual interpretations of plainness in dress and fine art.

London Yearly Meeting lamented the downfall of young Friends who abandoned plainness in their deportment a few years before West painted the Peel sisters’ portraits around 1757, which may indicate part of

the motivation for the commission. In 1743, London warned the faithful about serving as examples of plain dress and speech for younger Quakers. London Yearly Meeting advised, “[I]et not any such as degenerate in these respects excuse their own weakness, under a pretence of the misconduct of some, who have appeared outwardly plain; an objection of very little weight [...] the very reason why deceivers sometimes put on plain apparel, is, because true men have been accustomed to wear it.” They also warned against lapses in plain speech, which was “a practice of very ill example to our observing youth.”  

Quakers who wore plain dress were not automatically pious and speaking like a non-Quaker worsened the hypocrisy that Quaker children, the future of the faith, would see as an example. It is unclear when Grace Peel was born, but considering her marriage in 1762, she was probably in her late teens or early twenties when this portrait was painted. Even though she may not have read the 1743 disciplines, the ideas in this document persisted into the nineteenth century. When she died in 1814, she willed all of her possessions, including her portraits, to seven female family members.  

Perhaps Grace Peel, although an unmarried young woman herself around 1757, sought to memorialize her own youthful piety as an example to the Friends who followed her.  

Philadelphia Quaker women enacted plainness within community ties forged not only through social interactions and literary culture, but in their own work.

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producing material goods for their friends and families. Hannah Callender and her friend Elizabeth Sandwith both made clothing and accessories, such as purses, for family and friends. Neither woman commented on the plainness of the things that they made, nor did they indicate monetary compensation for their work. Both women were young, unmarried, and wealthy during the period from 1758 to 1760, and Callender lived with her parents, indicating that they likely did not need to make their own clothing or sell goods to make ends meet. Additionally, they most likely learned how to sew and embroider from their female relatives and teachers as an essential part of housekeeping and housewifery. Like women of other religious denominations in eighteenth-century America, Quakers expected their wives to perform household duties. Before they married their husbands and had children, Callender and Sandwith both had the time and resources to make things for themselves and others. The repeated exchanges of goods likely strengthened social bonds within the Quaker community because this gifting happened over the course of women’s friendships and when someone experienced a milestone, such as the birth of a baby. The time necessary to create these objects spread out over days,

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154 For discussion of women’s domestic productions for themselves and their peers, as well as recordings of compensation for this work in the eighteenth century, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
156 Unbound typescripts of diaries, 1758-1801 (undated), page 1, boxes 1-2, Coll. 1760, Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker diaries, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
weeks, and years, interwoven with the minutiae of everyday life.

Elizabeth Sandwith, one of the most well-known Quaker women of Revolutionary America, often created things for others during the early years of her diary. She kept track of her “Work done in part of ye Years: 1757, 1758: 1759: 1760,” during which she made several small pieces adorned with “Irish stitch,” a common angular decorative embroidery stitch used on pocketbooks. 157 She wrote down what she made and for whom she made it, such as when she stated that she “Work’d a Irish sti

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ch Pocket Book for Cat’n Morgan” and “A Double Pocket Book, in Irish stitch for Peggy Parr.” 158 Sandwith also made Irish stitch pincushions, garters, needle books, and even a tea kettle holder for people in her community. 159 Because Sandwith did not incorporate this list of her work into her daily diary entries until around the time she borrowed Callender’s diary in 1760, it is difficult to determine the amount of time Sandwith required to make these embroidered objects. 160

Sandwith’s use of Irish stitch indicates her participation in aesthetic trends in decorative arts that both extended beyond the Quaker community and corresponded with the practice of plainness and silence. Today, “Irish stitch” is known as bargello work. Historically, it has also been known as flame stitch, Hungarian point, and Florentine work. This type of decorative needlework developed in Florence during the Renaissance to decorate upholstery fabric. Its main features include vertical stitches

157 Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker diaries, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
158 Peggy Parr may have been a relation of Grace Peel Dowell Parr. 
Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 Klepp and Wulf, 4.
on a canvas that “form regular peaks and valleys.”\textsuperscript{161} This style of embroidery features on early American pocketbooks from New England and the Mid-Atlantic, and it was not necessarily a Quaker stitch.\textsuperscript{162} As with many other everyday objects that Callender and Sandwith wrote about in their diaries, these things were not immediately legible as Quaker. The act of exchanging one of these pocketbooks, which would look like any other pocketbook to colonists outside of the Quaker community, was what made it plain. An object was distinctly Quaker within the context of its creation and exchange.

The things that Sandwith made do not stand out for their plainness, but rather for the social context of their creation and the possible pious intention behind them. Returning to Garfinkel’s argument for silence as the most important Quaker expressive behavior and plainness as a “rhetorical stance” rather than an adjective, it follows that plainness could have undergirded Sandwith’s creation of pocketbooks and pincushions.\textsuperscript{163} If Sandwith’s pocketbooks were like other contemporary regional examples, such as figures 4 and 5, then they likely attested to the use of worldly material vocabularies to practice Quaker belief by providing peers with useful belongings. Sandwith embroidered useful things with other stitches, such as queen stitch, which she used to adorn a pincushion for


\textsuperscript{162} Neither the V&A article cited above, nor auction listings for figure 2 nor figure 3 specify that this stitch was specific to Quaker material culture.

\textsuperscript{163} Garfinkel in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 66-69.
herself and pocketbooks for Mary Searle and Peggy Parr. Additionally, she made pincushions, watch strings, and stockings. She seemed to integrate beauty with utility and quality materials, as other Quakers did when they clothed themselves and furnished their homes under the guise of using the best materials, but in a plain manner. By extending her silent production of material goods to her peers, Sandwith practiced plainness as a way of being through production and work.

Hannah Callender did similar work for herself as well as for friends and family, but her diary gives a more detailed overview of the time and labor that went into her production of material goods. At the beginning of her diary, Callender mentions over the course of weeks and months how she worked on her “piece,” which Klepp and Wulf note was an intricate embroidered image of a lion that is not extant. She began working on it in January 1758, and she referred to it only as her “Piece.” On several days, she stated only that she was “at Work at [her] peice [sic].” She mentioned working on it most days until she finally completed her “Lyon Peice [sic]” in the third week of May 1758. Perhaps she derived the image from the Bible, or even English heraldry. Considering her feelings of “filial reverence [sic]” toward England at this point in her life, this steady work may have been a way for her to be an industrious, pious English subject. There is no indication of the size or intricacy of this piece, especially since she did not specify how long she spent working on it on the days that she did other things besides embroidery. Much like the

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164 Unbound typescripts of diaries, 1758-1801 (undated), page 2, boxes 1-2, Coll. 1760, Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker diaries, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
165 Klepp and Wulf, 45.
166 Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom in Klepp and Wulf, 45-46.
167 Klepp and Wulf, 57.
168 Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom, February 1758, in Klepp and Wulf, 48.
other things she sewed over the course of her diary, the creation of the lion piece was interwoven with the events of Callender’s everyday life.

At a glance, Callender wrote about making her own clothing more than Sandwith did; however, she also consistently made things for friends and family. Callender spent a great deal of her time with her friend Caty throughout 1758, and this friendship involved reading, shopping, traveling, going to meeting, and sewing together. In September of that year, she often wrote that she was either “at work helping Caty” or “at work for Caty.” Caty also helped her, such as when they placed Callender’s mother’s black russell quilt in a frame and both worked on it. Together, they were able to finish the quilt in a few weeks.\(^\text{169}\) Shortly after recovering from the measles in March 1759, Callender proceeded to make shirts for Caty. Each of these only took about two days, and she simultaneously worked on shirts and handkerchiefs for her father, as well as shifts for her mother.\(^\text{170}\) Much like Sandwith’s account of what she made for whom, Callender also kept track of what she made for the people within her social and family circles.

In addition to making useful garments for friends and family, Callender also sewed as an act of charity, much like other wealthy colonial women. In April 1759, she stated that she had begun “the first of 2 shirts for Elisa Rue a poor woman.” Later that week, she “finished the 2 Shirts, made a couple of hankercheifs [sic] for a poor woman.”\(^\text{171}\) It is unclear if this poor woman was a Friend, since only her poverty appears in the diary. Perhaps Callender sewed

\(^{169}\) Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom in Klepp and Wulf, 67-68, 73-75.

\(^{170}\) Ibid, 95-99.

\(^{171}\) Ibid, 98-99.
for friends and family as a quiet act of plainness, and she had similar pious motivations when she sewed for charity. She did not mention any affiliation with others who did charity work in her community, which implies that perhaps her Inner Light directed her to care for people she knew as well as those less fortunate through useful material goods. Overall, Callender did not record sewing for charity as much as she did for friends and family, which further confirms the social and familial relationships that circumscribed the ways in which she enacted plainness through her creation of things.

Whether through portraiture, writing, social engagements, or the sewing necessary for housekeeping, eighteenth-century Philadelphia Quaker women lived the tenet of plainness as material experiences. These women saw ostentatious attitude, clothing, and behavior as indicative of a lack of morality, but they saw social engagements, commissioning art, reading, writing, and making clothing and accessories for themselves and others as acceptable Quaker activities. These scenarios were not lapses of faith, but rather a set of behaviors necessary for and aligned with a religion that did not separate secular and religious life. Piety was just as much about one’s outward appearance as it was about proper behavior within circumscribed social contexts.

Grace Peel, Hannah Callender, and Elizabeth Sandwith did not separate the art, literature, and objects of their daily lives into Quaker and non-Quaker categories. Rather, like other Protestants, their worldly pursuits fit within boundaries of acceptable material possessions because of individual interpretations. Sources such as the Rules of Discipline, Peel’s portrait, Callender’s social visits, and both Callender and Sandwith’s production of clothing and accessories reveal the components of plainness as a religious tenet based not only on pious behavior and unadorned appearances, but also the creation and exchange of goods within social circles that reinforced
the aesthetic boundaries of plainness. Many aspects of these examples appear to be worldly on the surface, but they existed and continue to exist in the secular and religious environment of Quaker daily life. For eighteenth-century Philadelphia Quaker women, plainness was a rhetorical stance that depended upon context to give pious meaning to their material worlds.
The Bourgeois Blues: Representations of Race and Authenticity in the songs of Lead Belly
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On January 16, 1925, Texas Governor Pat Neff signed a full pardon for Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter’s life sentence. Ledbetter recalled the day the governor visited Imperial Farm prison at Sugarland to hear the famous inmate songster. “Finally, I started my song,” he stated. “I put Mary in it, Jesus’ mother, you know. I took a verse from the bible, around about the twenty second chapter of Proverbs, around the fourteenth verse: if you forgive a man his trespasses, the heavenly father will also forgive your trespasses. Then I started singing,”

“In nineteen hundred and twenty three,
When the judge taken’ my liberty away from me.
Say my wife come, wringing her hands and crying,
Lord, have mercy on that man of mine.”

This was the first of two pardons Ledbetter received, the first in Texas and the second in Louisiana, presumably rewarding his sublime talent on the twelve-string guitar as time-spent. Ledbetter’s second release came after he was recorded by John Lomax for the Library of Congress in 1934, with a similar song entitled “Governor O. K. Allen.” A few months later, Lead Belly was on a tour of northeastern universities and academic conferences with his manager John Lomax and the sponsorship of the Library of Congress’ Archive of American Folk Song.

Ledbetter achieved remarkable success navigating depression-era society’s economic hardships and Jim Crow segregation. His charisma and musical ability allowed him to escape prison and earn a living as a performer. His guitar playing and lyrical imagery gained him not only freedom but also an identity and a dual-consciousness.

Ledbetter gained his mythic status after receiving two prison releases due to his sublime musical talent. The stories of prison and murder captivated audiences in the north long before Lead Belly played his twelve-string guitar. John Lomax, a folklorist and Lead Belly’s manager, organized a publicity campaign for the musician that “depicted him as a savage, [an] untamed animal and focused endlessly on his convict past.”173 This romanticization of Ledbetter fell in-line with similar racialized perceptions of black southern folk music.

Ledbetter was born around the late 1880s to a sharecropper family in rural Texas. Much of his life was spent working long hours as a field hand or laborer in a strictly segregated world. His music allowed him a modicum of income and a respite from labor, although he would not become financially successful as a musician until after he was released from prison. The representations of Lead Belly during his tour with Lomax cast him either as a farmer or an inmate. Defying these stereotypes, he became a professional musician touring the country with a respected academic. Yet, he was still a black man in a white world. We can gain insight into this duality by exploring Lead Belly’s relationship with the white John Lomax.

Within the literature surrounding Ledbetter’s duality, much of it is based solely on the racial aspects of his time with Lomax. His participation in social activism often goes overlooked. Ledbetter was aware of both his popularity and ability to influence – he capitalized on both. The other side of the Lead Belly/Ledbetter duality casts him in the light of a social activist that captures Robin D. G. Kelley’s definition of a social “movement rooted in a variety of different voices…molded by their race, class, gender, work, community, region, history, upbringing, and collective memory.” Ledbetter’s countercultural blues expressed African American heritage, while voicing critiques of segregation and racial difference. He crossed color lines by using music to become the first black man to play for white affluent audiences like the Modern Language Association and the Utah Humanities Research Foundation, while also having one of the first racially integrated ensembles during his northeastern tour in the mid-1930s. The accumulation of Ledbetter’s influence with the People’s Songs and other leftist organizations in the 1940s and into the folk revivals of the 1950s and 1960s cemented his influence on American society and social protest.

It was the fall of 1946. Huddie Ledbetter arrived to perform at a local university. When a hotel refused to give him a room he found himself lodged in a Japanese-operated place across the tracks on the west side of town. “This proved to be the best possible hotel for our guest,” the director of the Utah Humanities Research Foundation at the University of Utah Hector Lee remembered. Ledbetter quickly made friends with the locals and his cheerfulness carried over to Lee’s first meeting with the famed Lead Belly who was scheduled for a concert series during the following days.

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When Lee walked into the small hotel room he paused, looked Ledbetter over and reflected “he was not as tall as I had expected and his speaking voice was soft – a gentle purring.” The singer introduced himself with a clear pronunciation that Lee had not noticed in his earlier recordings. He wondered, “How could this be the fearless singer of ‘Bourgeoisie Blues’ – the strong worker from the chain gang?” This was not the reflection of a killer Lead Belly’s image rendered.

“Say,” Ledbetter exclaimed when his eyes registered Lee’s son's shy curiosity from across the room, “I’ll dedicate a song for your boy.” The willing performer picked up his 12-string guitar and sang a song that duplicated his evening concert the audience likely never forgot.

His performance for the children later that night was equally memorable. “He sang, and they sang with him,” Lee said. He was a natural storyteller with his guitar as a puppet. “For those who understood and loved his kind of music, the evening was a great success and their appreciation knew no bounds.”

Like Lead Belly, the audience was responsive and congenial, although many left the show without confronting the complex issues a popular black musician represented to the status quo of white America. Ledbetter’s early concerts with Lomax only hinted at the black experience in America. Unlike the audience’s ears, tuned to hear good music, the distinctions between white and black, folk and blues, or racial citizenship never registered over the P.A. speakers. Huddie Ledbetter was Du Bois’ divided man, “One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two

souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”  

This duality becomes transparent by pitting the racially constructed Lead Belly to his double-self, Huddie Ledbetter, juxtaposing this “two-ness” — a primitive, culturally isolated African American or a socially conscious, modern black musician. The dichotomy of Lead Belly/Ledbetter shows he was not just John Lomax’s servile entertainer or a simple folk musician. The merging of the fabricated Lead Belly and the self-aware Huddie Ledbetter elucidates a “better and true self,” Du Bois said.

“In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and sit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.”

The music and performances of Lead Belly showcased his African and American heritage and voiced social and racial protest while attempting to maintain a personal identity, career, and marriage. Ledbetter was a major voice in the civil rights and leftist movements. Amiri Baraka wrote, “what is so apparent in the classic blues is the sense for the first time that the Negro felt he was part of the superstructure.” Lead Belly certainly felt he was part of

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the American superstructure. His talents and social activism allowed him to be both a member of the nascent New Negro campaign and a founder in the Black Arts Movement years before it began, as well as an unsung hero of the long Civil Rights campaign.

Much of the scholarly work regarding Ledbetter concerns itself with the analysis of John and Alan Lomax’s financial exploitation and racial prejudice against Ledbetter. Karl Hagstrom Miller illuminated segregation in America’s early music but does not carry this theme into the realm of class or Ledbetter’s identity. Many analyses rely on the actors surrounding Lead Belly instead of the musician himself. Huddie Ledbetter was not an isolated African vernacular singer, nor was he a voiceless black actor of the depression era. Patrick Mullen states that many scholars created images of blackness and whiteness that revealed a white dominant power structure. Houston Baker Jr. believed black expressive culture came essentially from “the vast fluid body of Black song – spirituals, shouts, jubilees, gospel songs, field cries, blues, and pop songs by Blacks.” All of these perspectives highlight the “difference” between races linking racial oppositions to, “[B]lack to white, African to European, abnormal to normal.” Scholars divide music, culture, or heritage to race; equating Ledbetter to a unitary black voice, one that was dominated by John Lomax’s ideologies. But Ledbetter had another voice, one that was an icon for racial and social unity. His deep grumble was not just an African American moan, but it was an American cry – one that crossed racial

and class divisions. It was in his similarities that brought black and white together – similarities of music culture and human expression. “Black music reveals black thought,” Baraka wrote.¹⁸¹ While this is true, American music also reveals the similarities of white and black thought together. Ledbetter was just one means of this transmission. Lead Belly’s music navigates both black and white thought as a form of cultural revitalization in the black community “which embraced rather than repudiated the organic metaphor of race.”¹⁸² Black and white perceptions of Americans during the depression can “only be examined with simultaneous attention to the ways in which...black American understood race as a concept.”¹⁸³ To find any truth in the duality of Lead Belly’s authenticity one need only to look at what he represented – an alternative story to the narrative of the fabricated African American authenticity propelled by folklorists and the record industry. The discussion must begin with racial difference and social critiques.

One result of analyzing the difference in African American peoples in North America is the romanticization of the division in the form of “blackness.” Toni Morrison said this division between blackness and whiteness enabled Africanism to “become the operative mode of the new cultural hegemony.”¹⁸⁴ While this is true, black music as a mode of communication often used blackness to their advantage or used allegorical or metaphorical representations of African American culture. African American musicians have been stereotyped throughout history, as the working relationship of John Lomax and Huddie Ledbetter shows. One song Lomax often had Lead

¹⁸¹ Baraka and Jones, ix.
¹⁸³ Ibid, 220.
Belly perform was the folk work song “Dis Ole Hammer,” another song that equates African American industriousness with the blue-collar working man. “Dis ole hammer – hunh. Ring like silver – hunh. Shine like gold, baby – hunh. Shine like gold, baby – hunh.” The vocal “hunh” mimicked the swinging of the axe keeping the timing of the railroad gang. This type of analysis was typical in early black music research, “Widely spread and known are the Negro work songs.” While work songs certainly follow the call and response form seen in African tradition, by the 1930s chain gangs in the south were singing work songs written by blacks and whites. Both races met at work, ate together, and sang together. Otto and Burns point out that Jimmy Rodgers “worked as a white water boy for black section gangs on the M&O Railroad, also learning many of his lyrics from black work gangs.” So the cultural transmission worked both ways; Rodger’s sang work songs and Lead Belly yodeled. Many styles of ethnic music flowed through both sections of town. The great bluesmen Charlie Patton performed for Caucasians after a dinner party and then headed to a rural blues juke joint on the edge of town.

Southern whites and blacks are often viewed as culturally dissimilar, which perpetuates a strict black/white dichotomy. This depiction was exacerbated by emphasizing the difference between white and black music rather than the process of creativity. African American musicians were often classified by race, subjecting their music to a label of

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blackness. While Patrick Mullen gives many examples of the primitive image of bluesmen, he also states that this was reciprocally exchanged by black performers manipulating white music producers to gain advantages. Ledbetter often used the racialized image of blackness to delude Lomax. At a hotel in Montgomery, John Lomax recalls Ledbetter asking him for money while he continued to resist. “Boss, I’se nothin’ but a nigger,” Ledbetter said. “There never wus a nigger whut would keep his word – leastwise I never knowed none. I thought you knowed dat. I’se hungry, boss. Ain’t you gwine to give me no money? I’ll never do this way no mo’.” Lead Belly got his money, Lomax finishes. Ledbetter addressed his letters “Dear Boss Man” and signed them “i’m your Servan, Huddie Ledbetter,” throughout the years Ledbetter and Lomax corresponded. He knew early on in his life what particular racial traits to play-up or romanticize for personal gain, both with Lomax and performing on stage. This was already evident in African American performers who donned blackface. Ellis Cashmore believes they “may have been consciously playing the roles whites had created for them; they may also have been manipulating images for expedient purposes.” Ledbetter’s moniker played to the image of a violent, primitive ex-convict who was unnaturally talented on the guitar. There are many myths in the naming of Lead Belly. One suggests he was stabbed

190 Wolfe and Lornell, 123.
while another is attributed to laziness.\textsuperscript{192} Music professor Adam Krims believes that place became the geographic equivalent of identity.\textsuperscript{193} This equates southern musicians to a generalized rural southern farming community or a violent prison complex (as seen with Ledbetter). The photograph of Lead Belly dressed in overalls and a do-rag followed him throughout his career with Lomax. All of these forms were racialized stereotypes of the southern African American. The false heritage of the servile black man enjoying field work is satirized in Lead Belly’s “Pick a Bale of Cotton.”

This double consciousness, in the form of whiteness and blackness, weighed upon Lead Belly as a form of racialized self-identity – “a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world,” according to Du Bois.\textsuperscript{194} People like John Lomax promoted this traditional image of Lead Belly’s identity, but it was undergirded by the social structure around him. The effect of blackness socially inculcated a belief in white social and musical superiority, likewise problems that stemmed from racial discrimination, both in music ownership and social status created a sense of second-class citizenship. Musicians, like Ledbetter, had the opportunity to voice this in song. Blues lyrics contained images of social malaise and critiques on the dichotomy of whiteness and blackness. Lead Belly used the image of disease to represent racial and social oppression. Songs like “Good Morning Blues” illustrate how the disease of racism

\textsuperscript{192}These many references refer to Ledbetter being stabbed in the neck during a prison fight and his ability to lie around as if a weight were on his stomach found in a number of Huddie Ledbetter stories.


\textsuperscript{194} Du Bois, 2.
affected both black and white. It emphasizes morals and sympathy for the audience, while invoking a sense of shame.

“Now this is the blues
There was a white man had the blues
Thought it was nothing to worry about
Now you lay down at night
You roll from one side of the bed to the other all night long
Ya can’t sleep, what’s the matter; the blues gotcha
May have a sister a mother a brother n’ a father around
But you don’t want no talk out of em
What’s the matter; the blues gotcha
When you go in put your feet under the table
And look down at ya plate got everything you wanna eat
But ya shake ya head you get up you say
“Lord I can’t eat I can’t sleep, what’s the matter”
The blues gotcha
Why not talk to ya
Tell what you gotta tell em.
Well good morning blues
Blues how do you do?”

This song questions white insecurities about racial equality and leads to a final confrontation of blackness and whiteness. It can be seen in the African American desire for full citizenship, as Lead Belly’s “Equality for Negros” sings, “Negroes fought in World War One and Two, why can’t we get some equal rights.” Both songs questioned the divisions that were essential to American segregation,

196 Wolfe and Lornell, 245.
tackling the “images of inferiority” that white American emphasized as one of the black race’s deficits. This song dwells on white regret at the treatment of African Americans and implores the listener to ask questions through Lead Belly’s thoughtful lyrics: “blues got ya, why not talk to them.” Ledbetter felt he was on the same social and racial plane as any white citizen and expressed such themes in his music.

John Lomax and the white-dominated music industry presented Lead Belly as a simple fool who was continually taken advantage of, both financially and within the business itself. The few personal statements Ledbetter made throughout his life have limited his voice and led to a one-sided analysis of his career. Despite this, Ledbetter maintained his own voice, capturing himself as a conscious African American musician crossing racial and social boundaries when it was necessary and playing the role of servant when it was not. An example of this awareness can be seen early on in the John Lomax and Ledbetter relationship. While Lomax believed he needed to guide Ledbetter along, Ledbetter often resisted when pushed too far: “I ain’t goin’ to sing no mo’ for you neither lessen I wants to; an’ I ain’t goin’ nowha lessen you bring Marthy along, too.” Ledbetter knew the only thing keeping Lomax and himself together was his music, and his wife was the only person he truly trusted.

Even at Lead Belly’s performances the main attraction was always John Lomax, who interpreted Lead Belly’s identity for the audience. One of the first stops on their tour was in Philadelphia at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association (MLA) in 1934 where Lomax translated Lead Belly’s songs because of his

197 Bay, 77-78.
198 Lomax, Ledbetter, and Lomax, 59.
“dramatic rendition of raw folk songs.”¹⁹⁹ It was the MLA who urged John Lomax, not Huddie Ledbetter, “to set down the story of my experiences.”²⁰⁰ Likewise, John Lomax is often the source of historical analysis. Even the official program for their performance at the Crystal Ballroom at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel excluded Ledbetter’s name and read:

*Negro Folksongs and Ballads, presented by John Lomax and Alan Lomax with the assistance of a Negro minstrel from Louisiana.*

While Ledbetter was treated as a primitive historical artifact, Wolfe and Lornell note this “was the first time that recordings of black vernacular music had been heard at an MLA meeting.”²⁰¹ This bold move legitimized a black voice in the studies of American language and literature. With just his voice and guitar, Lead Belly transcended race and class barriers, becoming a legitimate voice of the racially disenfranchised. At the MLA concert he sang the folk ballad “Frankie and Albert” and the cowboy song “When I Was a Cowboy.” Despite Lomax’s insistence that Lead Belly play only folk songs and change any risqué language, the concert promoted black vernacular music to much of the audience’s enjoyment. “His singing and playing while seated on the top center of the banquet table at the smoker before a staid and dignified professional audience smacked of sensationalism,” Lomax remembered. “Nothing like this had ever before happened. And the delighted listeners filled his hat with silver and with dollars.”²⁰² More significantly though, Ledbetter was the

²⁰¹ Wolfe and Lornell, 130.
²⁰² Lomax, Ledbetter, and Lomax, 45.
first black man to play for the all-white MLA crowd as well as many universities and lecture halls across the northeast during their tour. Some of his concerts were racially integrated, marking another music industry first. This is the duality of Leadbetter that has been largely ignored.

The most studied aspect of early African American music is its heritage to Africa. Much of Lead Belly’s music showcases African musical styles. The structure of Lead Belly’s music had its origins in African polyrhythms. Music critics like Samuel Charters and Amiri Baraka have pointed out these connections in a number of publications and lectures. “Drums! Drums! Drums!” Charter reiterates again and again, “the sound throbbing and pulsing through the steaming night air.”

Similarities to Blues, Ragtime, and Jazz rhythms are the first similarity to African American culture researchers point out. Alan Lomax noted the “complex polyphony of the blacks” throughout his folk collecting trips, equating this to a “primitive” music. Amiri Baraka explains the link of slaves’ call and response singing to early 20th century African American spirituals and seculars:

“Rhythmic syncopation, polyphony, and shifted accents, as well as the altered timbrel qualities and diverse vibrato effects of African music were all used by the Negro to transform most of the ‘white hymns’ into Negro spirituals…The models for the ‘riiffs’ and ‘breaks’ of later jazz music...contained the same ‘rags,’ ‘blues notes’ and ‘stop times.’”

205 Baraka and Jones, 47.
The western pentatonic scale did not fit theoretically into African musical styles. Aberrations of melody and harmonies became known as blue notes. Blue notes were simply songs written with minor notes. The banjo was an African instrument often called the Kora, while the African xylophone could be mimicked on the European piano. While Lead Belly’s music borrowed western musical stylings, other cultural connections link African American musicians to African heritage.

Samuel Charters went as far as to claim modern African American musicians were a re-envisioned African griot. The griot was a West African traveling musician "who served as a community spokesman” and oral historian. Depressed-era black musicians were contemporaries to the griot. Griots brought with them their traditions, beliefs, and myths, as well as their music. It is through the myths and motifs blues musicians sang about that their history now unfolds. As early as colonial times, slaves and freedmen had mastered European instruments but performed in a stylistically unique fashion. What is significant to this analysis is the cultural conveyance of African heritage carried by instruments and words. Because of these cultural connections to Africa, African American musicians like Lead Belly were not only transmitting African heritage but creating their own culture across the Atlantic Ocean. Despite these connections, Baraka explains that African music is not African American music, “even though ragtime, Dixieland, and jazz are all dependent on blues for their existence in any degree of authenticity, the terms themselves relate to a broader reference than

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Lead Belly played music that was not African or American; it was African American. American music is an ever-changing black and white musical tradition. Therefore, when analyzing early black music one must acknowledge the difference of form, but refrain from regionalizing the artist and racializing the music by connecting African culture to a nascent African American culture. This emerging culture created a new style of music by combining European, American, and African forms. While Baraka contends that the blues are a Negro experience, they are also a duality. Blues music was an American experience as much as it was an African American one.

One early similarity between Western music and African American music can be seen in spirituals. The call and response nature of spirituals, along with the harmonies are distinctly African, but the musical content borrowed elements of Western philosophy and religion. Christianity’s influence on African American music has been thoroughly explored. Stories about Moses and the Promised Land held significant importance to their heritage of captivity. Christianity influenced many of Lead Belly’s songs, such as “Amazing Grace” and “Laz’us” seen in John Lomax’s collections. Here, Lomax acknowledges the “difference” by

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209 Ira Berlin states that black music evolved “from shouts and hollers into spirituals, spirituals into gospel, and country blues into rhythm and blues...without presuming these genes had distinctive lineages” but fails to acknowledge any western influence on black music. Ira Berlin. The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations. (Penguin, 2010): 36.
210 Reference Ira Berlin for the parallels of Moses and African Americans as “modern counterparts to the Children of Israel.” Berlin, 128-129.
categorizing the spirituals into separate racial categories, just as the recording industry had done. Taking both songs into consideration, Western religious themes were revamped to fit the slaves’ current bondage. This clearly shows how African forms combined with Western themes to become a distinctly American culture. For example, Lead Belly’s version of “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” includes the verse, “Yuh see dem sisters dress so fine? Well, dey ain’t got Jesus on dey min’. Ef Salvation wuz a thing money could buy, den de rich would live an’ de po’ would die.” In this version Lead Belly exemplifies the divides between rich and poor, black and white, and contrasts this with Christianity. Ledbetter concludes the song absolving these divides, “But Ah’m so glad God fix it so. Dat de rich mus’ die jes’ as well as de po’!” This variation of the adopted black anthem “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” suggests that the elite and the commoners will all be judged together, regardless of class or race. Lead Belly was a product of his antebellum past. He was also a captive of the prison labor system predicated on race rather than the nature or circumstance of the crime. Examples of cunning over strength can be seen in Lead Belly’s folk version of “Ol’ Rattler” where the fleeing prisoner, Riley, outwits the guards and their hounds. “Riley walked the water. Ol’ Rattler couldn’t walk it. Bye, bye, Rattler.” Ledbetter attempted a number of prison breaks. None of them found the success of Ol’ Riley.

Finally, the story of the devil and the crossroads repeated throughout blues lore is another adaptation of black and white culture. The elements originate from an African American mix of the Christian devil and the

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212 Lomax, American Ballads, 610.
213 Lomax, Ledbetter, and Lomax, 108.
African crossroads’ god Esu. The trickster Esu was the guardian of the crossroads - the symbolic juncture that represents choice. Henry Louis Gates described Esu as individual and loyal:

The guardian of the crossroads, master of style and stylus, the phallic god of generation and fecundity, master of that elusive, mystical barrier that separates the divine world from the profane. Frequently characterized as an inveterate copulator possessed by his enormous penis, linguistically Esu is the ultimate copula, connecting truth with understand, the sacred with the profane.

In African-American society the trickster "provides an outlet for the expression of socially unacceptable themes” such as segregation in both American society and the professional music business. But the cultural similarities do not end there. Segregation’s attempt to separate white and black was largely a failure in the music world, as James Otto and Augustus Burns argue “despite segregation, white and blacks met at work...heard each other’s lyrics, vocal styles, and tunes.”

The colorblind nature of music allowed for the assimilation, reconfiguration and authentication of African and European music and the culture resulting in nascent American music. The contact between Africans and Europeans in America resulted in a

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214 There are various names for the trickster Esu throughout Africa and the Americas. The name Legba can be found in Benin, Exu in Brazil, Echu-Elegua in Cuba and Papa Legba in Haiti.
217 Otto and Burns, 410.
new musical creation seen in Lead Belly’s eclectic music catalog. It also created a social dialogue in the midst of racial segregation.

It is these connections between Africa and America that resulted in an American heritage that was both black, white, and otherwise. The meeting of African and American heritages voiced the question of African American identity and citizenship, as well as social divides between the rich and poor during the interwar period. This question could not be more forcefully expressed than Lead Belly’s most politically charged song, “Bourgeois Blues” recorded in 1937 and performed during his MLA tour.

Lord, its a bourgeois town
It's a bourgeois town
I got the bourgeois blues
Gonna spread the news all around
Home of the brave, land of the free
I don't wanna be mistreated by no bourgeoisie
Lord, in a bourgeois town
Uhm, the bourgeois town
I got the bourgeois blues
Gonna spread the news all around
Well, me and my wife we were standing upstairs
We heard the white man say "I don't want no niggers up there"
Lord, in a bourgeois town
Uhm, bourgeois town
I got the bourgeois blues
Gonna spread the news all around
Well, them white folks in Washington they know how
To call a colored man a nigger just to see him bow
Lord, it's a bourgeois town
Uhm, the bourgeois town
I got the bourgeois blues
Gonna spread the news all around
I tell all the colored folks to listen to me
Don't try to find you no home in Washington, DC
`Cause it's a bourgeois town
Uhm, the bourgeois town
I got the bourgeois blues
Gonna spread the news all around.218

Here, Ledbetter equates class and race together, as he did in many of his songs to suggest that black citizenship and equality should exist for African Americans as well. As he does with “Equality for Negros,” Ledbetter asks his audience to “spread the news” of racial and class divides to the masses. Author Richard Wright interviewed Ledbetter a few months later where he expressed respect for the song “Bourgeois Blues.” Wright wrote in the Daily Worker in 1937, that Lead Belly was “a people’s artist,” in which the “entire folk culture of the American Negro has found its embodiment.”219 Wright and even John Lomax’s son Alan encouraged this song to be showcased because it was reality.

Not all of Lead Belly’s lyrics were so transparent. The role of language and performance reflected a subculture of social protest. The folk songs Lead Belly sang live identified him as a spokesperson. The music, lyrics and performances of Lead Belly were often critiquing society or signifiers of the African American culture of protest. Lawson writes that blues musicians were seen as a facsimile of the interwar counterculture who expressed

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219 Wolfe and Lornell, 200.
experience through vocal signifiers.°°° A song like "Bourgeois Blues" was a subversion of social norms. A musician’s ability to “communicate publicly through veiled and coded language” was perhaps their most unique advantage.°°°° Performers like Lead Belly entered the public forum when they entered the recording industry culture. This allowed for a public voice that was normally limited through various Jim Crow laws. Lead Belly’s music allowed for personal and cultural expression without openly antagonizing the norm. Sociologist Jason Toynbee stated, “Quite simply, music needs to be understood as an ensemble of coded voices.”°°°° Not only can the words and music be a social dialogue, but they allow for the transcendence of the norm. In this way, Ledbetter’s singing becomes a dialogue with its audience, reflecting a black collective identity that challenged the American racial dichotomy. West African musical tradition relies on the social experience; everyone is a participant. Both Lead Belly’s folk songs and blues tunes consider the “we” as an integral part of the music.°°°°°°°

The artist’s performance is the vehicle that communicates a consciousness to the community. Backstage at the University of Utah’s concert series Hector Lee saw Lead Belly’s performance and thought, “Even his songs of bitterness like ‘The Gallis Pole,’ and others that are the ultimate in disillusionment, were for Lead Belly songs of fighting strength, of glory, of triumph, with him as the champion.”°°°°°°°° Lee continued, “He seemed proud that he

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°°°° Lawson, 2.


°°°°°° Wilson, 16.

°°°°°° Lee, 138.
had the means at his command of expressing the sadness of his people.”\textsuperscript{225} The forceful and passionate delivery of Lead Belly’s final verse elicited a response of remorse and determination that even the white audience understood as the hanged man swung from the gallows’ pole. Despite bribes of money and work, the hangman’s friends and family could still not save him. “Brother, I brought you some silver, I brought a little gold, I brought a little of everything, to keep you from the gallows’ pole. Hangman, hangman, upon your face a smile, pray tell me that I’m free to ride, swinging from the gallows’ pole.”\textsuperscript{226}

While being a musician allowed for interaction with vast groups of people, it also allowed the performer to release their own fears, joys, desires, and social critiques. When Ledbetter saw the Manhattan skyline after thousands of miles performing through the southern states he proclaimed, “New Yawk! Capital of all de states in de world! Run under a mile of water to git in it! Subways up in de air, on de ground and under de ground through a solid rock! It scares me! Fifth Avenoo! New Yawk! New Yawk!” The Song “New York, New York” rarefies the Lead Belly duality.\textsuperscript{227} John Lomax attributed the song’s primitive vernacular to Lead Belly’s primitiveness. He saw Ledbetter’s trip to New York City as a testament to the childlike recklessness of the African American. Upon arrival, Ledbetter had to stay in Harlem as no other part of town would lodge him. There he walked from music club to music club, free to roam and mingle with people and alcohol. The Harlem morning found him hung over, but he had found the city of the black renaissance that he told his fellow southerners about through song. “If I ever go down

\textsuperscript{225} Lee, 138.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{227} Lomax, Ledbetter, and Lomax, 47.
to Georgia I’, gonna walk and talk and tell everybody about the city of New York. New York City! Woo! Ain’t that a city.” Lead Belly’s song then encourages the black southerners to settle in the African American renaissance borough of Harlem. “Train’s a runnin’ in the ground and it won’t keep still, when I catch me a train to ride to Sugar Hill.”

In this song, there is an obvious infatuation with New York City that Lead Belly shares with his fellow southerners. But there are other subtleties that the lyrics convey. Harlem represents southern manumission. The chugging of Lead Belly’s guitar suggests riding the rail, while his vocal “Wooo” represents the train’s whistle. The connections to the Manhattan subway line that runs from central station to Harlem is as accessible to travelers as the southern trains that will carry the black southerners north. Lead Belly makes another social statement when he refers to “catching a train ride to Sugar Hill.” The northern district of Harlem’s Hamilton Heights was named Sugar Hill, which by the 1920s and 30s came to represent the upward mobility of African Americans. “New York, New York” showcases an exciting modern black city, but really represents the long train ride from share-cropper shacks in the Mississippi Delta to the upscale row houses of Sugar Hill neighborhood.

Lead Belly’s music also allowed for a communal call and response. In “Alabama Bound” Lead Belly invokes his African heritage with his call of “I’m Alabama bound,” the chorus repeats “I’m Alabama bound.” This response represents the multitude of black southerners singing along with Lead Belly, all of which are afraid to enter the state of Alabama. But it also held meaningful content in the context

228 Lomax, Ledbetter, and Lomax, 47.
229 Langston Hughes wrote about Harlem and Sugar Hill in 1944 for The New Republic (March 27, 1944), “There are big apartment houses up on the hill, Sugar Hill...nice high-rent houses with elevators and doormen, where Canada Lee lives, and W. C. Handy.”
of the Jim Crow south. “I’m Alabama bound if the train doesn't stop and turn around. Oh, don’t you leave me here.” Alabama was notorious for its slavery-like prison system that Ledbetter must have feared even while spending time in Parchman Farm. As a slave, convict, or black man, Alabama was the antithesis of the New York City that Lead Belly sings about. This version of the late 19th century folk song based in early American call and response connects folk with modernity, a leader with community, and performer to audience. Like “New York, New York” and “Alabama Bound,” “Scottsboro Boys” is a call to vacate the south and escape to the north. “Go to Alabama and ya better watch out. The landlord’ll get ya, gonna jump and shout.” Again Ledbetter equates Harlem to freedom and black culture, “I’m Gonna tell all the colored people. livin’ in Harlem swing. Don’t ya ever go to Alabama.” Finally, the hit song “Midnight Special” was about a Texas train that left Houston for the West Coast, passing by Sugarland Penitentiary, a jail where Ledbetter could formerly see the train’s lights cast across his cell. Like the north, the west held the allure of freedom and safety.

Hector Lee described Lead Belly during the Salt Lake City performances: “He asked the audience to join

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231 See Mary Ellen Curtin "Black Prisoners and Their World." Alabama 1900 (1865): 156-58, for an in-depth analysis of the convict-lease system the folk song “Alabama Bound” references. Curtin states “freedom left black Alabamians vulnerable to new forms of legal repression...like white control and forced prison labor.” Ledbetter understood this system well and often sang prison folk songs.
232 The Scottsboro Case can be examined here: Carter, Dan T. Scottsboro: A tragedy of the American South. (LSU Press, 2007).
him in song. He called them in. He waved them in.”\textsuperscript{233} The performances of Lead Belly elucidated a response. Lead Belly was a performer who knew how to draw his audience into the show, encouraging them to take a walk in his shoes. Songs like “Scottsboro Boys” merged personal fears with other black concerns. During the modern blues period of the 1930s, Lawson states, “‘me’ – centered musical form increasingly reflected the collective identity ‘we.’”\textsuperscript{234} The polyphonic nature of African rhythm translated into the lyrics creating a community dialogue.\textsuperscript{235} Grace Elizabeth Hale wrote, “Segregation’s performances erased African American identity” and it was blues music that “announced the possibility of an individual black identity.”\textsuperscript{236} Self-expression in the form of first-person affirms an identity authentic to each individual that we can see in “I’m Alabama bound.” The act of community comes in the chorus “I’m Alabama bound.” The same can be seen in the chorus of “New York, New York.” Toynbee believes “social authorship also implies a social semiotics in that creation is a matter of selecting from a pool of coded voices that are shared within a given musical community.”\textsuperscript{237} The sharing of music in the form of the folk or blues songs created an evolving heritage that ensures Lead Belly’s version would not be the last or only voice. This means that the folk songs Lead Belly sang became an outlet for

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\textsuperscript{233} Lee, 137.
\textsuperscript{234} Lawson, 198.
\textsuperscript{236} Hale, Grace Elizabeth. "Hear me talking to you: The blues and the romance of rebellion." Beyond blackface: African Americans and the creation of American popular culture 1930 (1890): 253. Hale also states, “the blues stylized presentation of individualism almost always occurs through the use of first person,” 246.
\textsuperscript{237} Toynbee, 169.
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continuing communal response. Many of Lead Belly’s songs reflected social critiques such as in “Bourgeoisie Blues,” “New York, New York,” and “Scottsboro Boys.”

Alternative forms of communication are often more effective than mere speech. Historians Shane and Graham White wrote that “over more than two centuries, ordinary black men and women developed a style that did indeed affirm their lives.” White and White argue that the way in which African American wore their clothes, styled their hair, and danced were cultural imperatives that linked them together. While White and White give the illustration that jazz musicians lifestyles were “highly visible and influential,” they do not explain how the audience was affected through the music and lyrics. It was the songs Lead Belly sang, as well as his dress, that expressed his consciousness to listeners. Ledbetter was an immaculate dresser who believed dress was a sign of success. African American style or music was communicable to races other than their own despite White and White’s claims of the differences in their language, style, and manners. The black and white demand for race records show that white listeners sought African American music. While segregation attempted to keep the races apart, socially and culturally, it was music that brought blacks and whites together. The difference explains the uniqueness of the two races, but the similarities between black and white bridge them together as Ledbetter’s early tours with Lomax achieved. Ledbetter crossed race lines by singing a selection of politically conscious songs to white audiences

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240 Refer to Kenney’s *Recorded Music in American Life*, Chapter Six.
at the MLA performance, along with forty two shows at black and white universities (featuring black and white performers) across the United States from 1934 to his death in 1949. A 1947 performance at New York University used a concert flyer with the message, “An alert and open mind,” as the only admission requirement.\textsuperscript{241} It was perhaps these concerts with working-class songs like “Joe Hill” that caught the attention of leftist groups. With lyrics like “what they could not kill, went on to organize” captured in \textit{Work Songs of the U.S.A. Sung by Lead Belly}, the song was endorsed by Pete Seeger and People’s Songs, a leftist, grassroots organization that equated the black struggle with working-class struggles.

In the early 1940s, Lead Belly’s folk music became part of the American Popular Front in the form of People’s Songs, a group founded by Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger.\textsuperscript{242} According to the \textit{People’s Songs Bulletin}, their mission was to “create, promote, and distribute songs of labor and the American people” regardless of race or political affiliation.\textsuperscript{243} Lead Belly’s folk songs like “John Henry” expressed a wider lens of reality. Songs about powerful workers fighting against the machine, as in “John Henry,” linked the working class together regardless of race. “John Henry, gonna bring me a steam drill round, gonna take dat steam drill out on de job, gonna whop dat steel on down.”\textsuperscript{244}

John Henry was a hard-working man, appearing as a white man or a black man in various folk songs, fighting for every last dime to feed his family and keep a shirt on his back like many of the people Lead Belly sang for in rural juke joints and folk hootenannies. The John Henry Lead Belly sang for at elite universities with Lomax across the Northeast showcased a down-trodden, but industrious commoner fighting their modern machines. Lastly, the vernacular Lead Belly uses for the Captain and the worker are the same suggesting there is little difference between master and man. Charles Nanry wrote, “American music often bridged the cultural gap between the races.”

Many in People Song’s hoped music like Lead Belly’s would bridge the gap between performer and the audience, as well as bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Lead Belly’s music allowed for the transmission of culture through performance. “Musical experience…belongs not just to musical work, composer or accredited ‘expert,’” Ruth Finnegan said, “but also to the variegated practitioners and audiences.”

Lead Belly’s MLA concert with John Lomax in 1934 provides an example of the audiences’ reaction to this type of cultural transfusion. The Modern Language Association was the nation’s largest organization of literary scholars. Here, for the first time at an MLA meeting, black vernacular music was heard, to an audible success, or as Wolfe and Lornell called it, “an immediate sensation.” MLA organizer Thomas Scudder III said, “it occurs to me that if you’re

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negro, with his folk songs…will have furnished for them a treat of uncontaminated ‘original’ music which should live in their memories.”

While the “hot music” of the blues was being marketed to the working-class and white women, Lead Belly’s tunes were reaching out to the academic upper-class, legitimizing him not only as a popular musician but as a transmitter of cultural identity linking the white working-class with the African American working man as seen in the lyrics of “John Henry.” The extent at which musical participation confronted the division between white and black and rich and poor can be seen with the juxtaposition of blackness and whiteness in Lead Belly’s career.

Much of the literature concerning Ledbetter suggests he was superficially political; a New York journalist wrote all of the leftist People’s Songs artists were “politically conscious…with the exception of Leadbelly.” Ledbetter’s association with People’s Songs shows this was not the case. During Ledbetter’s time with social activists like Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie, he did not display his political colors, despite songs like “Bourgeois Blues.” “I think he was just glad to fit in with people who enjoyed his music,” Ledbetter’s friend Richard Nickson said. But it seems naive to suggest that Ledbetter himself was apolitical. Ledbetter sang “We Shall Be Free” with Guthrie on the Down Home Radio Show for WKNY in 1940, a song which encouraged racial equality and workers’ rights. While Ledbetter may not have openly voiced his politics because of the racial divides in

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247 Wolfe and Lornell, 130; 135.
248 See Wolfe and Lornell’s, 209-210. See also: Miller, Karl Hagstrom. Segregating sound. (Duke University Press, 2010).
the 1930s, the songs that Lead Belly often performed were politically conscious, resulting in a critique of American issues like segregation and disenfranchisement. It was a form of Lawson’s “blues counterculture…that were necessarily accepting of prevailing Jim Crow social norms while at the same time hoping to evade or subvert them.”

Ledbetter went as far as to criticize social norms as an early civil rights activist. In the end, it did not matter whether he was political or not, “all us niggers is communists,” Ledbetter joked at a party. Ledbetter was singing about society in a country where his voice was not supposed to count for anything. Simply performing politically conscious songs like “Bourgeois Blues" publicly invited communal participation and in this way forever associated Lead Belly with political and social reform. Social participation, in this case in song, broke the barrier between audience and performer.

Many of Lead Belly’s songs were, in fact, political according to John Greenway’s definition of protest songs. “These are the struggle songs of the people…they are songs of unity.” Greenway goes on to state protest music is “class conscious…for economic protest is often synonymous with social protest.” The union folk song about Joe Hill Lead Belly sang for People’s Songs spoke to the common working man. “Says Joe, what they can never kill, went on to organize (chorus). From San Diego up to Maine, in every mine and mill, where working men defend their rights, its where you’ll find Joe Hill. It’s where you’ll find Joe Hill

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251 Lawson, 17.
252 Ibid.
Many of Lead Belly’s songs fit the criteria as seen in the group lyrics, “went on to organize and working men defend their rights.” Other applicable tenets associated with protest music are also seen, namely racial equality and full citizenship.

Lead Belly sang about other principles associated with protest music, like racial equality and African American citizenship. Houston Baker Jr. uses DuBois’s metaphors of veils and masks to represent racial segregation that “keeps Afro-Americans always behind a color line…prey to divided aims, dire economic circumstances, haphazard educational opportunities, and frustrated intellectual ambitions.” Lead Belly presents these disadvantages to blacks and whites, seen in the song “Joe Hill” or the lyrics of “Jim Crow Blues,” “These old Jim Crowisms, dead bad luck for me an’ you.” He merges racial barriers with social barriers, in effect articulating both the social ills of the common man and societies’ prejudice to African Americans. In this sense, he united the New Negro movement with that of the Common Man and connected social equality with racial equality.

Alain Locke described the New Negro as “self-respecting, self-dependent and demanding full citizenship.” Ledbetter can be seen as a modern New Negro who represented modernity despite being entrenched in various Jim Crow restrictions. He used DuBois’s “veils” of the New Negro and Populist propaganda to cross the Mason-Dixon Line shown in James Lawson’s statement: “Having no vote, black southerners expressed their political

254 Refer to the many versions of the song “Joe Hill” at Song of America https://songofamerica.net/song/joe-hill/ and “Article Songs of Unionization” through the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197381/.
255 Baker Jr, 57.
256 Wolfe and Lornell, 244.
identity in the forms of personal behavior and culture.”

Music was another form of African American political expression. In the song “Equality for Negroes,” Lead Belly associated racial equality with religious morals and patriotic sacrifice. Lead Belly asks, “if the Negroes were good enough to fight, why can’t we get some equal rights”. “Equality for Negroes” reaches out to Jews and Christians, as well as fellow African Americans with the words, “why don’t you folks realize, love thy neighbor.” Just as Lead Belly demanded to be heard by John Lomax, he also demanded that a national black voice be heard as well.

“Now listen up, Negroes fought in World War One and Two. The blues is like now, the blues at hand, fighting for a United Nations.” Ledbetter speaks to the loyalty and courage African Americans displayed in previous wars and asks, “If the Negroes were good enough to fight, why can’t we get some equal rights, for God made us all, and in Him we trust.” Again, Ledbetter affirms his social criticism with religion and the indiscriminate nature of death. “One thing, folks, you all should realize, six foot of dirt makes us all one size, for God made us all, and in Him we trust.” Finally he laments past and present injustices, “All and all, it’s a rotten shame, like they’re wanting to bring back slavery again.”

Lead Belly’s “Equality for Negroes” and a song about Jackie Robinson, absent from commercial records and Lomax’s songbooks, were intended for mostly white audiences. Wolfe and Lornell said he recorded the song only for Mary Barnicle and Tillman Cadle after hearing the

258 Lawson, 198.
259 Ledbetter and Lomax had many contract and relationship disputes. The first time Ledbetter sued Lomax was over the issue of post-dated checks, he received most of the money due to him. Wolfe and Lornell, Chapter 19.
260 Wolfe and Lornell, 244.
1948 Democratic convention broadcast nominating South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond for president. Songs like these showcased Lead Belly’s knack for speaking across race and class divides. It was the alternating masks that made him hard to read. Wolfe and Lornell suggest many African Americans referred to Lead Belly as an Uncle Tom because of his servile background with John Lomax. Ledbetter was well aware of such rumors, “These are good songs, they are my songs,” he responded, “don’t tell me I’m an Uncle Tom.” But the utilization of his dual-consciousness allowed Ledbetter to navigate the surging tide of Jim Crow. W. Fitzhugh Brundage said black musicians shaped public identity and their status as citizens. Ledbetter utilized music to express his part the civil rights struggle as a self-respecting African American musician demanding full citizenship. Music can heighten an understanding of the musician, in this Ledbetter transmitted an image of a modern black man concerned with social and civil rights of the common man and the so-called “New Negro.”

The musical career of Lead Belly presents an early representation of a populist, leftist, artistic voice for African American citizenship, equality, and national identity. While the issue of citizenship affected African Americans, the blues and folk music culture of the 1930s and 40s exposes a variety of marginalized people’s social struggles. The music of Lead Belly was a call for both social and racial equality. Since musical performances and politics often take place in social settings, music became an

261 During the 1948 democratic convention many southern conservatives, angered over Harry Truman’s stand on civil rights formed the Dixiecrat Party. “None of this sat well with civil rights advocates and Huddie reflected this in his song”. Wolfe and Lornell, 244.

262 Wolfe and Lornell, 246.

outlet of cultural transformation. It was social movements, like the Popular Front’s use of folk music, that questioned politics and promoted civic solidarity and commitment, which in turn “helped build bridges between class and status groups, between blacks and white supporters, and between rural and urban and/or northern and southern blacks.” Lead Belly did this by breaking through the concept of whiteness and blackness. Lead Belly’s lyrics gave agency to African American calls for citizenship. The combination of politics, music and social movements’ united race and class as black music came to represent mainstream American popular music for all races and classes. When Ledbetter freed himself from the lopsided relationship with John Lomax, he joined the folk community in New York City. In the late 1930s, Ledbetter sued Lomax for copyright and royalty infringement, effectively severing their troubled partnership. After Ledbetter’s death, Moe Asch, founder of Folkways Records, forever immortalized Lead Belly’s protest songs in Leadbelly’s Last Sessions. A three double-album release featuring him at his most influential peak, 1947 to 1949, the collection put Folkways Records on the map for folk music, and eventually made bands like the Weavers popular through Lead Belly covers. Through his relationships with Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and Folkways Records, Lead Belly’s music spread across race and class. Ledbetter, like many African American musicians, found his voice in music. Ledbetter’s lyrics questioned racial difference while promoting African American heritage and activism. The popularity of protest songs like “Bourgeois Blues” granted him access to the growing circle of folksingers in

264 Mullen, 98.
Greenwich Village and the white working class. By the time the Weavers began singing Lead Belly’s “Goodnight Irene” in 1949 Lead Belly’s music could be heard all over Europe, Canada, the Caribbean and beyond.
A Distinction Without A Difference: Vietnam, Sir Robert Thompson, and the Policing Failures of Vietnam
Mark J. Rothermel
University of North Carolina-Wilmington

In November 1968, Captain Bill Haneke was an army infantry officer assigned as an advisor to the Regional Forces/Police Forces, or “Ruff Puffs” as the American Army nicknamed them in the Bin Thuan Province. He and twelve other advisors supervised several hundred Ruff Puffs whose mission was to provide protection for the South Vietnamese rural villages. The Americans had no idea that this undisciplined and poorly trained organization was once part of a disciplined French colonial police organization. The same type of organization had successfully kept French colonial possessions peaceful for many decades. Haneke was not a policeman nor did the United States have a colonial or constabulary-type police force. Instead of constabulary policing, Haneke taught infantry tactics he learned from Ranger school, including “field cooking” a chicken.266 The camp was continually under observation from the Viet Cong, including one night in September where several Ruff Puff platoons defected to the enemy. In November, as the Americans attempted to set up defensive perimeters around their compound, Captain Haneke was in the process of moving a fifty-five gallon drum of aviation fuel with a phosphorus grenade the Americans had set up when a Viet Cong sniper detonated

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the drum and sent Haneke flying eighty feet across the field into a barbed wire fence smashing his jaw and cutting his carotid artery.\textsuperscript{267}

Captain Haneke miraculously survived the explosion despite losing an eye, half his leg, a foot, and having his skull crushed.\textsuperscript{268} While medical evacuation during the American Vietnam conflict was incredibly effective, much of the war’s execution was not. Why was Haneke, an Army officer, serving as an advisor to a regional police force? Instead of policing and intelligence gathering in the rural areas like a constabulary police force, Haneke and his team were teaching them infantry and survival tactics. While Captain Haneke’s Vietnam service was over, the American war continued for another seven years. Unfortunately, with the decades of neglect and mismanagement of South Vietnamese policing during the Vietnam war, many of these experiences were too common.

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The history of the American experience in Vietnam has chronicled many experiences like Haneke’s. With scores of young patriotic men injured or killed for few results, writers began to launch stinging critiques against Vietnam before the war had even ended. Just after Haneke’s horrific wounds, David Halberstam wrote \textit{The Best and the Brightest}, a stinging rebuke of the Vietnam war policies and strategy of President Lyndon Baines Johnson and his administration. Halberstam blames the disastrous war on LBJ’s micromanagement, Secretary of State Robert McNamara’s absurd metrics of “casualty


count,” and Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MAC-V) Commanding General William Westmoreland’s inappropriate deployment of forces. Halberstam and his fellow “Orthodox” historians contend the Americans effort to defeat the North Vietnamese Communist Forces was inevitably doomed.269

While other Orthodox historians of the war identified compelling and strong warfighters, there was no change to their argument of the impossibility of American success. Neil Sheehan’s A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam tells the story of enigmatic heroes like John Paul Vann, and his successful fighting in Vietnam. Sheehan, like Halberstam, had been a Saigon reporter in the early 60s, and saw years of disastrous American defeat. Despite heroic Americans like Vann, poor American leadership and corrupt South Vietnamese governance ensured American involvement sealed America’s fate. 270

Later historians began to differentiate the successful warfighting of President Richard Nixon’s administration from the Johnson failures. With new MAC-V commander, General Creighton Abrams, the American fight became more coordinated, and as a result accomplished many of its objectives. Lewis Sorley highlights Abrams’s successes in his 1999 A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America’s Last Years in Vietnam. Sorley’s


Other Orthodox histories include:


work falls squarely into a new group of Vietnam historians. Sorley and other “Revisionists” argue that if the Americans had conducted the war better like Abrams and his team did, then Vietnam could have been a winnable war.  

Another conflict that has been compared to Vietnam is the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), in which the British defeated a Communist insurgent population in the colony. Military historians have asked for many years why the collapsing British Empire could successfully defeat a Communist insurgency in the jungles of Southeast Asia, but the much larger American army could not. As the 21st century War on Terror continued, a new focus on counterinsurgency warfare began which caused scholars to analyze past conflicts like Vietnam and compare them to Malaya.

In this scholarship, a forgotten British officer has come to the forefront. Sir Robert Thompson (1917-1992) was a Royal Air Force officer in World War II, and also served as a senior Colonial officer in the Malayan Emergency. Thompson was credited with executing the successful British counterinsurgency strategy that defeated Chin Peng’s Communist Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA). Because of his success defeating Communists in Malaya, the British government sent Thompson to Vietnam in 1961 as part of the British Advisory Mission (BRIAM) to assist the Americans and

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**Other Revisionist histories include:**


South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. Thompson was sent to advise his government’s counterinsurgency fight against the Communist forces that had already infiltrated South Vietnam as the insurgent Viet Cong. Thompson advised the South Vietnamese government until the November 1963 coup that killed Diem.  

Afterwards, Thompson wrote several books on his experience, most notably the trilogy on his doctrine for defeating Communist insurgencies. In *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, Thompson gives his explanation for the British and Malayan people’s success in defeating Chin Peng’s communists, and his assessment of the early American advisory experience he observed.  

Thompson’s follow up book, *No Exit from Vietnam* gives his insights into what he considers American missteps in Vietnam, and offers his specific suggestions as to how to defeat the North Vietnamese insurgency.  

His third book, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy 1945-1969* takes a global look at all the battles against Communist insurgents, and potential future stratagems to defeat global Communism in the Cold War.  

*No Exit from Vietnam* piqued the interest of President Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger. They invited Thompson to Washington DC to discuss the book, and then invited him to travel to Vietnam to give Nixon and the team his assessment of the current strategy and how to improve it.


The scholarship around Thompson tends to identify how well the United States fared using Thompson’s warfighting and political strategies. For instance, George M. Brooke III’s two-volume doctoral dissertation, “A Matter of Will: Sir Robert Thompson, Malaya, and the Failure of American Strategy in Vietnam,” examines the South Vietnamese and American’s poor execution of Thompson’s hamlet relocation strategy (which Thompson considered a key success in Malaya) and America lacking the Thompsonian “will” to continue the fight.276

What the scholarship on Thompson continually misses, however, is what Thompson himself considered the key to defeating the insurgency. In *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, Thompson identifies the Malay colonial police as the key to defeating the Communists. The police far outnumbered the British and Malay army forces. Even at the height of the Emergency, the British only had twenty thousand soldiers fighting in Malaya. The vast majority of the patrolling and warfighting was conducted by the police.277

This type of police is quite different than an American concept, however. In empires like the British or French, the “police” had a constabulary paramilitary role. A constabulary police force’s mission was to protect the local population and stop unrest or possibly insurrection. As colonial powers were outnumbered compared to a local population, the constabulary was comprised mostly of native constables with some colonial leadership. A constabulary unit would gather intelligence from the local population and would conduct patrols and even get into firefights. The most important weapon the constabulary had, however, was its power to arrest. Acting on

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intelligence, a constabulary could conduct a raid, arrest insurrectionist supporters, and separate them from further influence on a village. These ideas and techniques are not civilian policing nor are they infantry tactics. This paramilitary style organization is unique to imperial policing.\textsuperscript{278}

The continuing question for Vietnam historians is why were the Americans ultimately unsuccessful in defeating the North Vietnamese Communist insurgency? While the Orthodox, Revisionist, and Thompsonians have their theories, they fail to understand that the failure was not because of military strategies, but instead the American lack of understanding of what a constabulary police force was. Even though Vietnam was a former French colony, the drastic upheaval from World War II, and a rushed transition to independence from France destroyed the years of colonial policing knowledge. Afterwards, the ignorance of constabulary policing from the United States exacerbated the problems with Vietnam policing and misguided training. Finally, a critical misunderstanding between the Americans and Thompson himself made the Vietnam police force useless for its critical mission which ultimately doomed the American and South Vietnamese mission.

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On the morning of the 9\textsuperscript{th} of March 1945, the Vichy French Colonial forces, which prior to this moment had a relatively peaceful World War II experience, awakened to a nightmare. After France surrendered to Germany in 1940, the new Vichy government still administered its colonies. French Indochina, which the French controlled for almost a

\textsuperscript{278} Thompson, \textit{Defeating Communist Insurgency}, 19, 85.
century, continued as it had prior to the war with one exception. Its new “ally,” the Empire of Japan, was able to garrison its forces there and use its ports. All of this changed as Germany went into full retreat in Europe. Japan, in an effort to keep the offensive against the allies, executed “Operation Bright Moon.” They immediately surrounded and captured all French administrators and military to take full control of Indochina. Fifteen-thousand French and Indochinese soldiers and Gendarmerie (France’s colonial police force) were captured. The Japanese tortured and beheaded almost a third of its prisoners. Without weapons or reinforcements from France, those who escaped had to traverse hundreds of miles of jungle and mountains to reach China. As French diplomat Jean Sainteny lamented years later in retrospect, “[The coup] wrecked a colonial enterprise that had been in existence for 80 years.”

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**French Indochina**

Prior to South Vietnam’s formation, the French gained control of Indochina in a series of battles that by 1893 gave them Annam, Tonkin, Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Laos. During this time France administrated these independent protectorates through local kings or emperors. After the March 1945 coup, however, the Japanese created the “independent” Empire of Vietnam (Annam, Tonkin, Cochinchina), Kingdom of Kampuchea (Cambodia), and the Kingdom of Luang Phrabang (Laos).

With the coup, the Japanese destroyed all of the French colonial infrastructure, most notably the Gendarmerie. These forces, commanded by the French, but

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mostly comprising local populations, provided protection for the local population through policing. Most importantly, as Sir Robert Thompson stressed, it acted as the first line of defense against native population insurrections. With these vital groups gone, Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) and his Viet Minh independence movement took advantage of their previous American support from the Office of Strategic Services and the weak emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai, to declare independence. With the Japanese defeat and retreat from Indochina, however, France was determined to reclaim its colony.

France did not return to their colony status quo antebellum, however. All of the administrative state and police forces had been murdered or forced to flee. Their defeat at the hands of the Japanese also created a perception of French weakness amongst the populace. As French academic, Paul Mus, who escaped from Hanoi at the launch of the coup remarked, “French Colonialism had been blown out of history.” No longer were the French seen as invincible. As the French attempted to put Bao Dai in charge of Vietnam again, Ho and the Viet Minh expanded their insurrection movement. The hastily rebuilt French colonial administration could not prevent Ho’s movement from growing in popularity amongst the population. With the Haiphong incident, war began between Ho’s forces and the French and South Vietnamese forces.

As the French searched for a way to preserve their influence in Indochina, they quickly worked to gain favor with the loyal Vietnamese forces as well as mollify the Americans (who were financially supporting the French war effort) and their anti-colonial sentiment. France signed

281 Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 85.
282 Chandler, 26.
the Elysée Accords in 1949 with South Vietnam. This agreement gave increased autonomy to the Vietnamese for self-rule. While this limited autonomy was unpopular with the Vietnamese, the one overlooked but critical issue was that the former colonial police forces were disbanded and replaced by a South Vietnamese controlled Civil Guard.\(^\text{284}\)

The difference between British and French actions in 1949 could not have been more disparate. In Malaya, Sir Robert Thompson and the British forces were investing training and energy in the Malayan colonial police preparing it to suppress the growing Communist threat. Meanwhile, in Indochina, the French completely dismantled its *Gendarmerie*. Perhaps from the weakened administrative state from the coup, France ignored its previous success in suppressing insurrections in its other colonies like Algeria. Regardless of the reason, the result was catastrophic. Vietnam being forced to police itself ultimately impaired its ability to govern. After a few years, it became clear South Vietnam needed a functioning police force, and it certainly seemed logical for the country that was funding the war to provide this training. In 1955, the U.S. Vietnam policing experience began.

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U.S. Army Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams, the commander of Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam (MAAG-V) was apoplectic. “Whoever sold Diem this idea is nuts!” he wrote to a colleague.\(^\text{285}\) President Ngo Dinh Diem, South Vietnam’s President wanted the new Civil Guard to be comprised not only of 55,000 troops, but also tanks and helicopters for “subduing riots” or to


\(^\text{285}\) Letter, Williams to Lansdale, 1 Mar 1958; Memo of Conversations, Williams, Barrows, President Diem, 3 Dec 1957, Williams Papers. Cited in Spector.
“disperse a mob.” When a Vietnamese general was tasked with drawing up the plan for this newly reorganized Civil Guard, he simply copied U.S. Army task organizations he found. This plan of Diem’s was completely different from the one State Department Vietnam mission leader Leland Barrows and his team had devised a few years earlier. General Williams and the rest of the MAAG group assumed Diem was attempting to create his own private army.

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The U.S. Policing Effort

After the Elysée accords, the vestiges of the French colonial forces continued in little more than name. There were 54,000 men in the Civil Guard, which was the paramilitary colonial style police force, 7000 in the municipal police, and 3500 in what was called the “Vietnam Bureau of Investigation.” No one had any idea how many Gendarmerie there actually were or if they were part of the Civil Guard numbers. There was also a “Self Defense Corps” originally designed as a reserve police force that had 50,000 members. What these units had in numbers, they completely lacked in training and equipment. Most of the Self Defense Corps was without weapons, and what weapons they had were antiquated French rifles with little ammunition.

While the lack of equipment was troubling, the incoherence of the organization was the most problematic.

286 Memo of Conversations, President Diem, Ambassador Durbrow, Barrows, Gen Williams, Chan, 5 Mar 1958, Williams Papers. Cited in Spector.
287 Spector, 324-325.
288 Ibid, 320.
A seasoned officer with colonial experience, like Sir Robert Thompson, probably would have recognized the vestiges of an old colonial police force. At this time, unfortunately, Thompson was fighting Chin Peng and the Malay Communists. One negative of the American anticolonial ethos was that this constabulary-type structure made little sense to Americans. In 1955, after the French had signed the Geneva Accords and left Indochina, Lieutenant General Williams and his MAAGV team focused their advisory and financial support away from the French and directly towards the newly independent Republic of Vietnam’s (South Vietnam) government and military affairs. Williams’s priority was preparing the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) for what many feared was the impending attack across the 17th parallel by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). As the Korean War ended only three years earlier, the Americans were convinced that with the establishment of the divided Vietnams, any Communist attack would be a conventional attack south. With Williams and Diem focused on building up the conventional ARVN forces (building up to seven divisions), there was a debate regarding the police. With Williams focused on building up the Army, the police building was left to the State Department’s Leland Barrows and his Mission to Vietnam.

Leland Burrows was a career government official who had previously served the Truman administration. From 1949-1958, he led the U.S. Mission to Vietnam. The Mission’s role was to advise and build the infrastructure of Diem’s new independent government. When it came to the police force, there was some debate as to who would rebuild the current forces. Barrows and the

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289 Spector, 19.
291 Ibid.
American team insisted that the police forces needed to be organized under the Ministry of the Interior, not the Ministry of Defense. Most likely, American distaste for colonial rule and the current intense Gendarmerie fighting in French Algeria led the Americans to insist on a more civilian focused form of policing. In 1955, Barrows sent a police advisory group to South Vietnam from Michigan State University.

The Michigan State team established a national police training academy and basic structure to the new Civil Guard. From 1949 to 1958, Barrows led the U.S. Mission to Vietnam. Instead of Thompsonian paramilitary tactics and intelligence gathering like the kind deployed by the Malayan Colonial Police, the Civil Guard was trained to operate like “The Pennsylvania State Police.” Williams was skeptical of Barrows’s strategy and described them as, “Police types who do not see the big picture.” Diem was also critical of the new Civil Guard organization. Being a civilian style police force was the last thing a volatile new country like South Vietnam needed. He vehemently stated to the Americans that Vietnam was “not Michigan.”

If Diem or Williams had somehow wrestled police control from Barrows, there is little evidence that the Vietnamese police would have been dramatically transformed into a Thompsonian-style constabulary police force. While Diem and General Williams saw the natural complement of the Civil Guard to the Defense Ministry, they did not envision a true paramilitary force. Williams simply saw armed forces as military units. Barrows’s

292 Spector, 322.
293 Ibid, 321.
294 Memo of Conversations, Williams with Diem, 3 Dec 1957, Williams Papers.
295 Spector, 322.
Michigan team envisioned an American police force. Neither could comprehend the organization as a constabulary force. They simply did not understand the principles of constabulary fighting that Sir Robert Thompson stressed.

There is some revisionist discussion that U.S. Air Force Colonel Edward Lansdale advocated for a “counterinsurgency force” to defeat an insurrection in the South.296 Lansdale, who had worked in Vietnam as a French advisor and CIA operative, had made many claims criticizing the French bombings as well as the overall MAAG strategies. His charges are not consistent with the facts, however. Lansdale claimed that counterinsurgency was not known during this time (ignoring Thompson and the Malayan Emergency). Thompson made no mention of Lansdale’s work in Vietnam, nor are there any documents suggesting there was an alternate plan to the Michigan State team that was considered. As later historic scholarship determined, the Michigan State team was also comprised of CIA personnel. The lack of coordination of policing strategies with Lansdale seems unlikely.297

As the insurgency inside South Vietnam intensified, American and South Vietnamese policy makers realized that an impending North Vietnamese assault across the 17th parallel was not likely. The Viet Cong Communist insurgency was the largest threat to the South Vietnamese government. After the Geneva Accords in 1954, most Catholics and other non-Communist supporters of Diem moved into South Vietnam. Ho’s Viet Minh supporters in the South, however, did not move North. The southern Communists formed the Viet Cong forces to conduct guerilla operations. With this new threat, Americans

repurposed the Civil Guard. The Barrows initiative of civilian policing was abandoned. This adjustment, however, proved just as ineffective.

To create a force to defeat the Viet Cong, the Civil Guard and the Civil Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) were combined into a large force in 1959. Diem’s desire for a private army might have been unrealistic, but it was not without merit. During this Civil Guard transition, Diem was overthrown in 1963 and killed. After the coup, the new Civil Guard was turned into the Regional Forces. The ineffective and ill-equipped Self Defense Guard became the Popular Forces. These two groups were combined into one chain of command for the RFPF. Nicknamed “Ruff Puffs” by the Americans, their mission was to fight the Viet Cong in rural areas.

With the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, the American effort in Vietnam escalated. MAAG became MAC-V, and its new commander General William Westmoreland led the effort in the fight against the North Vietnamese. Americans began to deploy the Ruff Puffs in insurgent campaigns against the Viet Cong. After the failed Barrows civilian plan, and having total ignorance of colonial police tactics, the Americans used the Ruff Puffs like any other infantry unit. Instead of constabulary experts like Thompson, Captain Haneke and other Infantry officers were assigned to train them. These units conducted infantry patrols and learned infantry tactics from the American advisors. With no experience in constabulary-type work, the Americans trained the Ruff Puffs in what they knew: infantry tactics. While the Ruff Puffs were still separate from the ARVN organization, the manner by which they differed in mission from the ARVN or the U.S. Army was a distinction without a difference.
Besides the Americans’ inability to train paramilitary forces, there was another systemic issue with the Ruff Puffs. Because of Diem and General Williams’s priority to defend South Vietnam from a Korean war-style attack across the DMZ, all of South Vietnam’s best men joined the army.\textsuperscript{298} The civilian ministries and police forces received the second-tier men, and units could not avoid Communist infiltration. After years of disappointing results and an inability to pacify the South’s rural areas, the Ruff Puffs were combined into the ARVN organization in 1970.\textsuperscript{299}

Whether creating a Michigan police force, or a group of mediocre infantrymen, there was little chance of success for creating a true Thompsonian counterinsurgency force. Both the MAAG-V and State Department Mission had no comprehension of what the French colonial forces provided as the system had been dismantled years before. Diem’s ideas of a more militaristic guard, ideas probably poorly translated from Thompson, were met with suspicion and lack of understanding. The binary decisions of civilian or military for the police forces provided no flexibility, which was essential in disrupting the counterinsurgency. The American anticolonial tradition and lack of constabulary forces simply did not allow the Americans a chance at success.

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Sir Robert Thompson had been advising and observing American actions in Vietnam for several years. Thompson was fascinated by American strategies in South Vietnam and how they did not result in success. As he stressed the

\textsuperscript{298} Thompson, No Exit from Vietnam, 111.
need for intelligence, one general remarked to him, “Let’s go out and kill some Viet Cong, and then we can worry about intelligence!” The Americans were not afraid to try new things and spend money. Expenditures in Vietnam were over ten times what the British spent in Malaya. Yet the results were not leading to success. This reality finally led to Sir Robert Thompson’s infamous charge: “The trouble with you Americans is that whenever you double the effort you somehow manage to square the error.”

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Sir Robert Thompson

Sir Robert Thompson began his career in the Royal Air Force at Cambridge and was commissioned as a Reserve officer in 1936. As he studied and prepared for the impending war with Germany, he chose a career in the Colonial Service which required an extra year of schooling at Oxford. The Colonial Service assigned young Robert Thompson to the British colony of Malaya. He was then sent to Macao, a Portuguese colony, to learn Cantonese. As the British began fighting Germany in 1940, Thompson and other Colonial Service students were to continue their Chinese studies in Hong Kong. As Japanese bombers began attacking Hong Kong on December 8th, Pearl Harbor was attacked simultaneously on the other side of the dateline. The British war now had a second front in the Pacific. With some beginning Cantonese proficiency, and travel passes signed by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, Thompson and other cadets were forced to evade and fight their way into mainland China. After connecting with

300 Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 85.
301 Thompson, No Exit from Vietnam, 89.
302 Thompson, Make for the Hills, 1-2.
Chinese guerrilla and former Hong Kong police forces, Thompson was able to join the Chindit operations as a Royal Air Force officer serving under legendary British officer Orde Wingate. Thompson participated in Burma’s irregular operations and was an instrumental part of the Chindit team that helped disrupt Japanese operations in Burma.  

After World War II, Thompson resumed his Colonial Services career in Malaya. During the war, the Japanese occupied Malaya. The Chinese Malayans, along with some British fighters, spent the war fighting the Japanese in the jungles. The Chinese formed the Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) to defeat the Japanese, and after the war, the British reestablished their colonial rule over Malaya. Despite the disarming and disbanding of the MPAJA, many Chinese Malayans, inspired by Mao Zedong’s Communist movement were motivated to rebel against British rule. The MPAJA’s wartime leader, Chin Peng, took control of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and began violent attacks against Malays and British residents. In 1948, after the murders of several rubber plantation European managers, the British Malay government declared a State of Emergency, and the 12-year conflict known as The Malayan Emergency officially began.  

The MCP successfully attacked key British targets, and even assassinated the Malayan High Commissioner Henry Gurney. Ultimately, the British were able to defeat the insurgency through the leadership of General Sir Gerald Templer. Thompson, who had worked implementing the counterinsurgency strategy, cataloged all of the successful key metrics the British achieved. By 1960, the MCP had

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303 Thompson, Make for the Hills, 19-41.
surrendered, and the Malayan Emergency was an impressive victory in counterinsurgency for Great Britain.\textsuperscript{305}

Thompson detailed the important factors that led to the success of the British counterinsurgency, many of which were surprising to conventional military strategists. For instance, he argued that the guerilla fighters were not the important factor to defeat in a counterinsurgency. Instead, determining and interrupting the underground networks of the population was paramount.\textsuperscript{306} To achieve this goal, Thompson stressed gaining proper intelligence. He also determined that the key fighters in Malaya were the police force, not the military. When the Malay police would patrol an area and gather intelligence on potential MCP insurgents, the police could then arrest those individuals. While removing an insurgent from battle was effective, the more important achievement, Thompson argued, was keeping the local population safe from violence. With a minimal British troop deployment, they were able to determine when they wanted to engage the MCP and did not aimlessly meander through the jungle searching for the enemy. With their proper intelligence and patrols gathered from the Malay police, British patrols pushed the MCP away from the rural population eliminating opportunities for Communists to gain rural control.\textsuperscript{307}

Another important strategy Thompson noted, was the concentration of friendly forces. Rural villages away from police support were targets for the MCP. Thompson and the British created a strategy of moving entire villages into more protected areas. While this tactic seemed

\textsuperscript{305} Thompson, “Emergency in Malaya,” 83.
\textsuperscript{306} Thompson \textit{Defeating Communist Insurgency}, 30.
\textsuperscript{307} \textit{Ibid.} 16.
extreme, most villages were only moved around three miles from their previous location, and the new areas were concentrated together for better police protection. An additional strategy that Thompson considered important, was the targeting of key insurgent infrastructure by ambushing supply routes. For Thompson, preventing insurgent resupply missions was more important than winning any insurgent battle.

Arguably the most important point in counterinsurgency, Thompson stressed, was patience. The insurgents had to understand that the government forces were not going to leave quickly. In Malaya, Thompson noted that the British resolve brought Chin Peng to the negotiating table with the government. When Chin Peng realized the British, and after 1958, the independent Malay government, were not going to stop their counterinsurgency campaign, the Emergency ended with the MCP’s defeat. Because of Thompson’s success in Malaya, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan sent Thompson and the BRIAM team to South Vietnam as an advisor to President Diem and the Americans. Thompson’s counsel should have been a perfect complement to the fiercely anti-Communist Diem and the well-funded and equipped U.S. military.

When Thompson began to advise the South Vietnamese government, he attempted to implement the hamlet resettlement plan for Diem’s government. Despite his advice, it was a disaster. Rather than concentrating villages and only slightly moving them, the Diem government moved hamlets far away from their previous locations and also spread them too far from each other. By ignoring the key parts of the Thompson strategy

308 Thompson Defeating Communist Insurgency, 121-123.
309 Ibid, 32.
310 Ibid, 16.
311 Thompson, Make for the Hills, 81.
312 Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 130-132.
(concentrating friendly hamlets, and keeping villages near their original location), the South Vietnamese made the villagers less safe and impossible to patrol. Another unique issue to Vietnam compared to Malaya was Vietnam’s lack of political stability. Despite the American financial and political support, Diem’s regime grew less effective and ultimately was overthrown in 1963. The Americans took over responsibility of the Vietnam war in 1964, and the BRIAM team returned to England.  

With the Americans in command of the war effort, Thompson’s concern about “squaring the error” became reality. Hamlet resettlements were even more haphazard and spread out when done by the US Marines. Instead of having a light footprint of foreign troops like the British in Malaya, Americans deployed over 200,000 Americans to fight the Vietnamese communists. Having no constabulary intelligence gathering like Thompson had stressed, the Americans instead implemented a “search and destroy” strategy which simply allowed the NVA to choose where and when to fight. By 1968, the Americans were in an endless war of attrition on the ground supported in the air by a largely ineffective bombing campaign.

After General Creighton Abrams became commander of MAC-V in June 1968, the American strategy changed dramatically. As new ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker noted that instead of discussing the “political war” or “air war,” there became “one war.” The Barrows/Stewart fights from the 1950s were over. The larger “search and destroy” missions were replaced with an emphasis on holding territory.

313 Thompson Make for the Hills, 149.
314 Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 138.
315 Thompson, No Exit from Vietnam, 88.
316 Ibid, 145.
Thompson, noting the changes from England, wrote his book *No Exit from Vietnam* celebrating the new Abrams strategy. This book attracted the attention of the new Nixon administration National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. Kissinger, impressed with Thompson’s success in Malaya defeating Communists, invited him to Washington to discuss the U.S. strategy. After the meeting, Thompson was invited to further meetings regarding Vietnam withdrawals. He was also invited to tour Vietnam and give his assessment on the ground.

Sir Robert Thompson assembled a team of advisors and travelled to Vietnam in February and March of 1971 to give his assessment of the American war effort. It is noteworthy that Thompson on his trip to Vietnam did not bring other British soldiers. Instead, he brought his colleagues from Malaya who administered the winning police force work. Sir Richard Catling, W. L. R. Carbonell, J. H. Hindmarsh, and D. S. Palmer were all experts and leaders in British Colonial policing who were part of the Malayan police force during the Emergency. After the trip, Thompson and his team produced a detailed report on what would be needed for the South Vietnamese to be successful in Vietnam. His focus was on reforming the National Police.

In Thompson’s March 1971 *Report on the National Police Republic of Vietnam*, Thompson evaluated the state of the National Police and offered 157 specific suggestions for reforms. What Thompson and his team most identified was the National Police’s intelligence gathering failure. In Malaya, Thompson noted the police were the main intelligence gatherers. It was imperative that the police could identify insurgent supporters, arrest, and remove

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them from the population. Thompson proposed a regional police control reorganization to ensure they patrolled the rural areas properly to keep insurgents away from the hamlets. Interestingly, in the National Police history, Thompson ignored all of the Michigan State work, and only briefly discussed the original French organization. He gave specific instructions for how the Police should assist the Armed Forces and gather “intelligence related to subversion and terrorism.”

For as much of an expert as Thompson was in counterinsurgency, it is noteworthy that he did not relate how much the former French Indochina colonial police force had strayed from its original mission. He only briefly mentioned the “administrative and training problems” that the force faced. Perhaps it was an effort not to upset the Americans as he was only an invited guest. He worked hard to ingratiate himself to Abrams by dining and creating a personal relationship with him before offering his criticism, so he may have seen no need to discuss in detail the previous American folly.

The report was analyzed by the Americans. A month later (April 1971), Ellsworth Bunker and the State Department team provided a detailed response to Thompson’s report. Bunker’s memo evaluated the report based on several priorities of timing and feasibility:

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321 Ibid, 15.
322 Ibid, 5.
323 Thompson, Make for the Hills. 158-159.
A: Is and should be implemented
B: Is and should be implemented in part
C: Should be implemented
D: Should be implemented, but infeasible
E: Should not be implemented

As well as four different categories for timing of implementation: 1) Currently, 2) Short Term (Within one year), 3) Mid Term (Over one year), and 4) Indeterminant.\textsuperscript{325} Items 15-36 of Thompson’s suggestions, which related directly to the police strategic recommendation for patrolling and intelligence gathering for the war effort, were grouped together, and rated with a very optimistic “B” and “Short Term.” The comments, however, suggested a less optimistic tone:

“These organizational concepts reflect British Colonial influences. They do not adequately consider the background of Vietnamese concepts, the residue of French Colonial influence, and approximately 15 years of U.S. influence on police matters.”\textsuperscript{326}

In a few sentences of bureaucratic jargon, the American Vietnam War was perfectly encapsulated. An assembly line of errors had been created: First, the French abandoned Vietnam and left behind a dysfunctional colonial police force, then the Americans attempted to create something unnecessary and not adaptable to the country, followed by an advisor missing the fundamental problems. Thompson repeatedly touted the Malayan police as the key to defeating the MCP, yet years later he never

\textsuperscript{325} Report on the National Police Republic of Vietnam, 2.
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid, 3.
mentioned the American and South Vietnamese failure in the police development.\textsuperscript{327}

Both the Orthodox and Revisionist schools have filled volumes in libraries criticizing American mistakes in Vietnam. Whether on policy or strategic level, finding errors in judgement or execution has never been difficult. Sorley and the Revisionist school have emphasized the successes of the American war in Vietnam after 1968 and suggested that if the Abrams strategy had been pursued more consistently, they could have prevailed in the conflict. Attempting to understand which ignored plan or strategy might have produced better results, or which advisor or strategy should not have been ignored is a perpetual challenge. For every Sir Robert Thompson, who advised two governments and had successfully executed a counterinsurgency strategy, there are others like Colonel Edward Lansdale who claim they were the \textit{vox clematis} despite having limited experience in counterinsurgency warfare. For any losing effort, there is no shortage of people who retrospectively had the solution.

Sir Robert Thompson is different, however. He had successfully defeated a Communist insurgency. He had tangible plans and results that winning governments could follow to defeat an enemy. His scholarship on counterinsurgency and five principles for success against an insurgency are still studied today.\textsuperscript{328} British military historian Alexander Alderson recently evaluated the British strategies in Iraq using Thompsonian doctrine to measure

\textsuperscript{328} Thompson, \textit{Defeating Communist Insurgency}, 50-62.
efficacy.\textsuperscript{329} Other Vietnam scholarship measures the efficacy of hamlet resettlement or political will. There is no question that the Thompsonian school will continue to flourish. Thompson was prolific in writing doctrine, was willing to share his ideas, and had no specific axes to grind. As a foreign advisor and not a member of the South Vietnamese or U.S. governments, his voice remains one of the most objective regarding evaluation of the Vietnam war effort.

Clearly, Thompson is not without fault regarding Vietnam strategy, however. His assessment of the contemporary state of the police force did not directly address the use of the police as infantry units which he specifically criticized in \textit{Defeating Communist Insurgency}.\textsuperscript{330} Thompson brought an entire team of colonial police experts to South Vietnam to evaluate the National Police, yet he chose not to address the American dismantling of a constabulary model directly. After attempting to create an American-style police force, the Regional Forces had been trained and converted into infantry units. Americans simply saw the forces as a binary: a unit is either a military force or a civilian police force. Even the leader of the Territorial Forces General in Vietnam, General Ngo Quang Truong, considered the force he commanded a military force. In his 1981 after action report, he discussed military battles, and his report rarely mentioned any sort of policing. It reflected the total conversion from the Barrows or the previous \textit{gendarmerie} model into an infantry unit.\textsuperscript{331}

Increased scholarship today notes the constabulary skills deficit in modern American peacekeeping. National


\textsuperscript{330} Thompson, \textit{Defeating Communist Insurgency}, 103-110.

security expert, Robert Perito discusses in *Where is the Lone Ranger When We Need Him? America's Search for a Postconflict Stability Force* America’s need to create a Thompsonian-type constabulary force to ensure a previously hostile foreign country can be pacified after the fight. Thompson’s work will continue to be the framework for governments and historians to determine the correct way to implement future peacekeeping strategies.

Hopefully, this paper will create further scholarship regarding the breakdown of proper policing in Vietnam. Thompsonian scholarship continues to be an important area of focus on the Vietnam war, and in evaluating past and future counterinsurgency warfare. His principles establish an effective benchmark for evaluating this type of warfare. It is important, however, to not create a hagiographic portrayal of Thompson as regards his Vietnam advisory work. The failure to establish a proper constabulary police force was from a confluence of abandonment by the French, American misapplication of home-style policing, and the South Vietnamese being at the mercy of ineffective instruction. Thompson deserves criticism as well for not turning the focus of the counterinsurgency on proper deployment of the Vietnamese police. The casualties of these policing mistakes were monumental and tragic. Captain Haneke and many other misdirected soldiers were irrevocably hurt by this catastrophic strategic failure.

Sir Robert Thompson addresses in his books that policing was the British key to success in the Malayan Emergency. If Thompson’s doctrine is the fundamental teachings for counterinsurgency warfare, as most scholars who have studied him argue, then the focus for Vietnam

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Thompsonian historians should be on the policing failures in the Vietnam war, and why Thompson himself seemed to ignore his own advice. Rather than using Thompson as merely a framework for counterinsurgency evaluation, military scholars should determine why the man who developed the doctrine of counterinsurgency decided to dismiss the central tenets in the years that followed. Constabulary policing in counterinsurgency is clearly not just infantry patrolling or peacekeeping. Until scholars address the differences, future Vietnam scholarship may offer new theories on America’s failure, but these theories will continue to have distinctions without differences.
Little Steel’s Labor War in Youngstown

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Labor and management are important cogs in the American capitalist machine. One cannot exist without the other. However, good relations between labor and management can be tenuous. When the desires of labor and management are out of balance, the relationship can deteriorate, sometimes resulting in violence. Such was the case at the steel mills of the Republic Steel Corporation in and around Youngstown, Ohio in 1937. Republic Steel was not in the top tier of steel producers in 1937. Larger companies, like United States Steel Corporation or Bethlehem Steel operated more facilities and turned larger profits than Republic Steel. Trying to keep pace with its competitors, in the early months of 1937, Republic rejected advances by labor organizers to unionize its employees. Believing unionization would have an adverse effect on its profit margin, the Youngstown mainstay’s steadfast determination to remain union-less added pressure to an increasingly tense situation. Labor unrest was growing throughout the U.S. and Republic Steel experienced strikes in other cities where they also operated. On the evening of June 19, 1937, during a union demonstration at one of Republic’s mills, violence struck Youngstown, Ohio. Republic employees clashed with local police, sheriff’s deputies, and company security causing two deaths and scores of injuries. Republic’s northeastern Ohio facilities were not the only locations of confrontation between labor and management, but the confrontation there, which left two people dead, illuminates the dangers of neglecting
harmony between labor, management, and the local community.

Since the financial success of both Republic’s labor and management depended on a collegial relationship, the devolving and embittered situation in which those involved were willing to take each other’s lives was extraordinary. People with, at best, a tangential interest in the outcome, like law enforcement, felt empowered to use deadly force against fellow citizens engaged in a financial dispute. Republic’s leadership was not concerned with the welfare of its employees, who were beaten and shot. Rather, they were indifferent so long as a docile workforce could be maintained. Attitudes about community, economics, patriotism, and stewardship held by Republic’s leader Tom M. Girdler hold the key to understanding the outbreak of violence in Youngstown, Ohio during the sweltering summer months of 1937.

Tom Girdler led the Republic Steel Corporation as either its president or board chairman from 1929–1956. He was a mechanical engineer by education, but his real talent was management. His upbringing, training, and experience evolved into a philosophy called Girdlerism—a version of paternalism that rewarded loyalty and rugged individualism and abhorred communism and unions. Under Girdler’s leadership, Republic Steel resisted unionization far longer than competitors in the steel industry.

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334 Two of the nation’s largest steel companies, United States Steel and Bethlehem Steel agreed to terms with union negotiators on May 2, 1937 and March 28, 1941, respectively. Republic Steel held out until August 11, 1942 when director of industrial relations, J.A.Voss, signed a contract with the Congress of Industrial Organizations. For more information, see: Tom M. Girdler, Boot Straps, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943), 374; Bethlehem Area Public Library, n.d. “1941 Bethlehem Steel Strike,” Bethlehem Area Public Library, https://www.bapl.org/local-history/local-history-
Republic Steel was a so-called “Little Steel” company—a moniker given to secondary companies that did not command the same market share as firms like the United States Steel Corporation or Bethlehem Steel. In the years preceding 1937, labor groups at firms of various sizes began to organize as company-sanctioned unions. Steel companies allowed their employees to organize if they did so as a company union. Company unions, outlawed today, were groups of workers that met under the supervision of their employers. Under this arrangement, workers were not actually free to voice disagreement with the company nor were they protected by a binding contract. These ‘unions’ allowed employees to feel like their concerns were being addressed while simultaneously allowing companies to exert influence and retain control over their workforce. In 1937, this balance shifted. A new, more aggressive organization, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) began to organize workers. The CIO organized outside the workplace and its membership was open to anyone who wanted to join. Steel companies hated this new model of unionization.

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because it removed power from management and transferred it to labor. However, the writing was on the wall and in early 1937 the United States Steel Corporation acquiesced and struck an agreement with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), a CIO entity. SWOC bargained for U.S. Steel’s employees and won the contract without a strike.\textsuperscript{338} U.S. Steel’s history involved clashes with labor before 1937 and its leadership calculated that negotiation with labor was preferable to more bloodshed. This new arrangement was problematic for companies like Republic. It created a situation that emboldened the CIO as it began to wield power. Republic, and other companies, resisted the formation of non-company unions and this resistance led to violence.

**Labor Relations and Government Regulation, 1890–1937**

To understand violence across the Republic Steel Corporation in 1937 it is necessary to examine U.S. labor-management relations in the preceding decades. During the late 1800s some American workers began to agitate for better pay and working conditions. Improvement for workers, however, came at a cost to employers. This expense threatened profitability and workforce control. As employees escalated demands, management turned to private security firms to quell the boldness of labor. The most famous private security organization was the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. The Pinkertons, and other groups like them, were accountable only to their customers and operated as de facto police forces. They were free to use coercion and violence to protect management’s property and business interests. Workplace

\textsuperscript{338} Blackford, *A Portrait Cast in Steel*, 125.
laws were nearly non-existent before 1900 and companies took full advantage of notional regulation.\textsuperscript{339}

A confrontation that exemplified companies’ bravado at the time occurred at Andrew Carnegie’s steel mill in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Labor, represented by the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, disagreed with management over wages and control. Negotiation ensued, and an impasse was reached. During this impasse management took a more aggressive stance than usual. Instead of allowing work to continue, the workforce was locked out and operations ceased. With this tactic, management showed labor that it would suffer without their benevolence. Henry Clay Frick, Carnegie’s business partner and supervisor of Homestead, planned to bring in non-union workers to restart operations. But the workforce did something unexpected; it seized the mill by force of arms. Frick responded by calling in the Pinkertons. The next day, July 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1892, the Pinkertons fought with Homestead workers and townsfolk. The ensuing fight, in which one side used a cannon, left 10 people dead: three workers and seven Pinkertons. Six days later, the Pennsylvania state militia was summoned to restore order. For all the trouble, little changed. The confrontation resolved none of the underlying issues and tensions remained high until November when the union relented, and some workers were allowed to return. Still other laborers were blacklisted. Carnegie won—operations resumed, and the workforce learned their place.\textsuperscript{340}


After the Homestead Strike, prevailing trends in American business continued to favor capitalists over the working class. The San Francisco streetcar strike of 1907 serves as yet another example, pitting United Railways against employees represented by the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electrical Railway Employees of America, also known as the Carmen’s Union. The union decided to strike when Patrick Calhoun, United Railways’ president, rejected a request to raise workers’ daily wage to $3.00. Calhoun’s lawyer, James A. Farley, owned a detective agency and was a professional strike buster. Farley contracted 400 ruffians to travel from New York to San Francisco to work the jobs that strikers left. These hired hands stayed in one of the railcar storage barns, and the union knew they were there. After waiting a day, Calhoun ordered Farley’s men to operate six cars in defiance of the union’s strike. Like the strikers before them, they wore United Railways uniforms. Unlike the strikers, Farley’s men worked armed with revolvers. Once the cars left the barn, the strikers threw rocks and bricks at the vehicles and the strikebreakers responded by firing on them. Men remaining in the barn also opened fire on the strikers. This event left 25 people mortally or seriously wounded. 341

In both of these important antecedents, corporate leadership hired outside workers to intimidate workers with the intent of breaking strikes. The message was clear—the powerful capitalists running these companies would not tolerate having the terms of their livelihoods dictated to them. It was in management’s long-term economic interest to refuse union demands. Had they not done so, they would have willingly increased the legitimacy and bargaining power of unions, threatening the order and discipline needed to maximize profits. Furthermore, the Homestead Strike involved governmental authorities in the form of the

341 Smith, 40, 50–52.
state militia arriving on scene. The militia were nominally neutral, but their presence further intimidated the striking steel workers, thus benefiting Carnegie’s position. Government intervention in San Francisco, however, benefited the strikers. Local police were displeased that outside, private muscle came to their city agitating violence. The police warned the newcomers that, “if any strikebreakers start shooting from the cars, they will be shot in return by the police.”\textsuperscript{342} Mismanagement from a lack of direction produced decidedly different outcomes as governmental leaders at each scene acted without guidance telling them which side to support. State, and for that matter national, legislatures failed to provide regulatory and legal guidance to enforcement agencies in handling violent or potentially violent labor disputes.

The early 1900s showed that the relationship between labor and management was devolving to an untenable situation. Carnegie’s use of the Pinkertons and United Railways’ unleashing of Farley and his men were catalysts for change. Laws that governed labor/management relations and addressed wages and working conditions were enacted because of incidents like Homestead and San Francisco.

In 1935, labor scored a legislative victory with the passage of the National Labor Relations Act, more commonly referred to as the Wagner Act for its namesake—New York Senator Robert R. Wagner. The Wagner Act guaranteed the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively, prohibited interference by management, and established an independent board to

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\textsuperscript{342} Smith, 52.
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administer the law. The Wagner Act was a departure from previous judicial interpretations of the Sherman Act of 1890 which sought to ensure fair competition among businesses. The Sherman Act required prohibition of “…combinations or conspiracies in restraint of interstate or foreign commerce and provided for criminal prosecution, injunctions, and suits for triple damages for violations.” Congress designed the Sherman Act to protect the American economy from monopolies by ensuring that one company or trust could not become too powerful. Corporations adapted by using the Sherman Act against labor unions. They argued that because labor unions could affect the flow of interstate commerce and its rates, they conspired against organic fundamental operations and were therefore in violation of the law. The Supreme Court upheld this interpretation in Loewe v. Lawlor, also referred to at the Danbury Hatters’ case. It appeared that workers’ rights were subservient to corporate profitability, at least in the eyes of Congress and the federal judiciary. These Sherman Act machinations occurred during the first decade of the twentieth century. Labor unions and progressive allies struggled for the following two decades to score a major victory in their fight for rights until the passage of the Wagner Act.

The Wagner Act was a sufficiently written law that defined conditions precisely intended “to diminish the causes of labor disputes burdening or obstructing interstate and foreign commerce, to create a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), and for other purposes.” This stipulation

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344 Millis and Brown, 9.

345 Ibid, 8–9; O. L. Clark, Application of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to Unions since the Apex Case, 2 Sw L.J. 94 (1948) https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol2/iss1/6.

seemingly prioritized free-flowing commerce as the law’s priority. However, the remainder of the law enumerated rights and protections for labor that represented reconciliation for decades of abuse suffered by American workers at the hands of the United States’ industrial management hegemony. Despite good intentions, the Wagner Act was only partially effective at protecting workforces from unfair labor practices. Because of cultural norms, workers feared retribution by management. Local, state, and federal authorities remained impotent in their responses to labor/management disagreements even after the Wagner Act’s passage. The Wagner Act was under-enforced, and management continued to wield unchecked power. Meaningful change did not occur until more blood was shed, particularly during the Republic Steel confrontation in Youngstown.

The Wagner Act specified that, “Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing…”\textsuperscript{347} This was the most important text within the legislation as it established legal protection for laborers. Prior to the Wagner Act, employees were merely a commodity, but with its passage, their wishes had to be considered. In addition to recognizing labor as more than a tool of management, the act also prohibited practices such as interference in union activities, hiring discrimination based upon union affiliation, and retribution by management.

Management viewed the new protections granted to labor as unwelcome intrusions by the government into private enterprise. After passing through Congress with almost no opposition, President Franklin D. Roosevelt

\textsuperscript{347} National Labor Relations Act, U.S. Code 29 (1935), §§ 151–169.
signed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) into law on July 5th, 1935. Some saw this legislation as anti-American and patriarchal, resulting in immediate legal challenges from private business. The new law established workers’ rights and prohibitions of certain management practices, and also established a National Labor Relations Board to act as an enforcement body ensuring that violators were sanctioned. However, before the board was organized the American Liberty League—a conservative advocacy group whose members opposed New Deal reforms generally, and the Wagner Act specifically—questioned the Wagner Act’s constitutionality in a scathing report that suggested the new law placed excessive restriction on individual rights. The Wagner Act was under attack and its survival depended on the opinion of the Supreme Court.

On April 12th, 1937, the Supreme Court held that the Wagner Act was constitutional and provided “adequate opportunity to secure judicial protection against arbitrary action.” With the Supreme Court’s endorsement, labor began to influence American industry. Management did not stand idly by, though, and allow their control to be usurped. A response to widespread patterns of managerial behavior that oppressed and dehumanized labor, the Wagner Act provided the legislation required to stop the brazenness with which employers treated their workers. Homestead, San Francisco, and the struggle to pass the Wagner Act served as prelude to violence in Youngstown in 1937.

**Girdlerism**

To understand violence throughout the Republic Steel Corporation in 1937, it is imperative to understand

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348 Millis and Brown, 28.; The vote tally for the National Labor Relations Act was 132-45 in the House of Representatives. It passed the Senate without a record vote.

349 Ibid, 36.

350 Ibid, 40.
Tom Girdler’s background. In many ways, Girdler was the embodiment of that which business and capital tried to protect. He believed in strength, patriotism, and independence. He also eschewed the union ethos which valued workers as vital and hard-to-replace partners in industry’s success. Tom Girdler opposed the leadership of the CIO literally and figuratively. Literally, in that he ordered his employees to resist the formation of a union and figuratively in that he personified the practices that SWOC and the CIO tried to defeat.

Girdler gave his autobiography an ironic title: *Boot Straps*. To pull oneself up by their bootstraps implies that their road to success was within reach but required self-motivation. In Girdler’s case, this could not have been further from the truth. Two circumstances, his financial well-being while attending college and his ascendency to leadership of his father’s business, illustrate that Girdler’s rise to industrial rule was assured. Girdler thus represented the classic hypocritical industrialist who assumed hard work was enough without realizing his own privilege.

Tom Girdler attended Lehigh University, benefitting from the finances of his paternal aunt, Jenny. Aunt Jenny believed education to be important and promised to help Girdler attend college. His matriculation began in 1897, studying mechanical engineering. Beginning that year, Aunt Jenny saw to Girdler’s monthly expenses. By the end of the first year, they agreed upon a $50.00 monthly allowance. Girdler thrived at Lehigh. He sang in a church choir, belonged to a fraternity and forged strong friendships. One friend, Cy Roper, provided Girdler an opportunity to work in England after graduation in 1901. He worked for Roper in England for about a year, became
homesick, and returned to the U.S. by March of 1902.\textsuperscript{351} Because of his time at Lehigh and his family’s benevolence, Girdler achieved academically and expanded his mind through travel. His family, via Aunt Jenny’s stipend, provided him with the security that ensured an undemanding path from adolescence to adulthood. Later in life, during his time as chairman of the Republic Steel Corporation, his employees fought for this same security and Tom Girdler stood in their way.

During the summers of his college years, Girdler worked in the family business. His father owned a cement plant that did well, but production could be better. One summer, Girdler’s father fell ill and needed to step back from running the factory. The business’s treasurer, Thomas Cooper, concocted a scenario in which Girdler would take over the business. Girdler’s father was dubious. The elder Girdler did not feel anyone beside him could run the factory. Alas, needing a rest, he relented, and Tom Girdler entered the world of management. Girdler described his father as enslaved to duty. Tom wasn’t interested in running a cement business, but he revered his father and his way of life. Thus, duty compelled him to manage the cement plant until his father could return. Girdler worked relentlessly. During that summer, the cement plant broke production records. While other men ate lunch, he worked. When other men went home for the night, he worked.\textsuperscript{352} Girdler’s drive may have been due to his work ethic or it may have been due to his idolization of his father. Either way, he saw himself as driven and other men as lazy. This attitude of self-righteousness dominated Girdler’s interactions with labor for his entire career.

Girdler’s stance toward labor hardened when attitude turned to action. Before running Republic Steel,

\textsuperscript{352} Ibid, 73–79.
Girdler spent time at various levels of management in other companies. One of these firms was the Oliver Iron & Steel Company. Early in his career, Girdler was a foreman for Oliver. One day, one of his subordinates finished his work and tried to leave a few minutes early, which was in violation of company policy. Workers were expected to start another task if it could be completed within a few minutes after quitting time. Many workers were unhappy with this rule and one man challenged it by leaving early. Girdler ordered the man back to his post and when he did not go Girdler punched the man and a fight ensued. Girdler beat the man unconscious. After the incident, Girdler’s boss was only concerned with who won the fight and fired the worker. Girdler had only graduated college a year earlier and was now a foreman, the lowest management position in a steel mill. He knew that the worker’s actions were an affront to his authority. This knowledge combined with his inexperience resulted in a quicker escalation than necessary. Girdler surmised that his place in the labor/management ecosystem would be secure if he protected the interests of capital. The man’s dismissal along with Girdler’s continued ascension proved he was right. This lesson, combined with his belief that labor was inherently lazy, guided Girdler’s business decisions and evolved into a management philosophy called Girdlerism. Intense control of labor through policies and

353 Girdler, 96–97.
354 The origins of the term “Girdlerism” are unclear but it appeared in newspapers as early as 1938. Historians of the 1930s steel industry have also included their work. For more information, see Gordon Mackay, “Is Zat So!,” Courier-Post, August 23, 1938, 9, https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/480359653/; Ahmed White, The Last Great Strike: Little Steel, the CIO, and the Struggle for Labor Rights in New Deal America (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 63.
practices that define the role of the worker as inferior characterized Girdlerism. If labor did not try to re-define itself outside the bounds of this definition, there was peace. When labor upset the status quo, Girdlerism required management to preserve its paternal role.

Violence that occurred at the Youngstown mill was the result of Girdler’s unrelenting desire to maintain control. When labor tried to organize, Republic only allowed company unions. When labor persisted via SWOC, Republic locked them out and slowed or stopped production at its facilities. When labor called a strike, Republic responded violently, and people were injured or killed. Republic Steel, under the leadership of Tom Girdler did not discriminate when it chose whom to apply the principles of Girdlerism. Workers, women, and non-employees were all targets on the night of June 19th, 1937. Some believe that Girdlerism was a conscious set of policy decisions, but it was not. Instead, Girdlerism was subconscious—a consequence of Girdler’s values and beliefs that beset a company climate in his image. The managers of Republic Steel shared a belief system rooted in vehement control of labor to maintain a status-quo. Girdler attempted to justify his philosophy by shrouding it in notions of paternalism, patriotism, and capitalism.

While working for Jones and Loughlin, another steel company, in 1914, Girdler managed a steel mill: the Aliquippa Works at Woodlawn, Pennsylvania. There, he rose to the rank of Assistant General Superintendent—the highest position at Woodlawn. Later that same year, he became head of Jones and Laughlin’s company town that became Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. With Girdler as its leader, Aliquippa became “…a benevolent dictatorship.” He oversaw the town’s private police force and installed Harry

Mauk, a former Pennsylvania state trooper, to lead it. Girdler believed that his workers needed a paternalistic figure to guide them. Aliquippa, a town with all its homes owned by Jones and Loughlin and schools run likewise, afforded Girdler the opportunity to be that father-figure and control most areas of workers’ lives.357

Patriotism was another value that informed Girdler’s leadership. Girdler described the United States’ advantage in World War II as follows, “all the superb mechanisms which will enable them to conquer the enemies of the United States are the products of this country’s great industrial corporations and could only have been created in such a short time by such organizations.”358 The American ideal and the determination of the United States’ armed services took a backseat to industrialism for Girdler. He felt a responsibility to provide military means to defeat evil in the world. He also saw organized labor as a threat to success in this endeavor. At the time, men with communist leanings or were outright communists led the CIO.359 Girdler equated the idea of workers’ rights to communist sympathies. His version of patriotism would not allow communists to defile his vision of the American way. Thus, his rigid reaction to strikers in Youngstown was consistent with his belief system. Boot Straps was published in 1944, before both the end of the war and the onset of the Cold War. Accordingly, those events only reinforced his beliefs about communists, labor, and business. Further, as one of the U.S.’s most prominent captains of industry, Girdler was a chief architect of the

357 Girdler, 73–79.
358 Ibid, 2.
nation’s attitude regarding communists, labor, and business.

Girdlerism’s roots are embedded in capitalist principles which prioritize profit above the well-being of workers. One of the main criticisms of capitalism is that it places excess wealth in the hands of too few people. One must be willfully self-deceptive to engineer this lack of balance into a business. Girdlerism was a tool used by those who controlled wealth to maintain a lack of balance and its inventor, Tom M. Girdler exercised it in its most perfect form.

Youngstown, Niles, and Warren: Republic Steel’s Ohio Battlefields in 1937

Violence erupted in Youngstown, Ohio on the evening of June 19th, 1937 when striking union members and agents for Republic Steel fought near Republic’s facilities. This encounter was brutal and deadly; two people died, and scores were badly injured. Several conditions explain why events that day became bloody. First, leadership of Republic Steel was determined not to bend to the will of the CIO, acting through its steel industry organizing arm, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. Second, SWOC, was determined to organize workers of Republic Steel using new powers granted to it by the Wagner Act. Third, local authorities were an invested third party because events took place in their city, not only on the grounds of Republic Steel. Finally, the attitudes of those involved were rooted in their self-images as Americans. Each believed their role legitimate and essential to the functioning of the United States—all also believed their opponents were wrong, misguided, or evil.

The CIO’s strike against Republic Steel began on May 26th, 1937.\textsuperscript{360} Earlier that year, the organization sent a

\textsuperscript{360} White, 125.
letter of demands that included a $5.00 daily minimum wage, paid vacations, a 40-hour work week, overtime pay, health and safety standards, and a grievances settlement process.\textsuperscript{361} Tom Girdler was dumbstruck by the fact that his workers wanted improvements in any of these areas but particularly in safety. “Just ordinary carelessness, such as management has engineered out of the industry, can cause horrible accidents.” Girdler also suggested that although management had virtually eliminated accidents, there were “planned mishaps” concocted to coerce CIO membership.\textsuperscript{362} There was, however, enough employee unrest to enable SWOC’s organizing efforts to take hold, but Girdler refused to acknowledge their concerns. He refused the demands of the CIO letter and did so because he believed there was a faction of workers loyal to him. A large majority of Republic’s employees joined the CIO, but some did not. Girdler clung to the idea that these few were virtuous while those who joined the CIO were dishonorable. While pseudo-negotiations ensued, the group of men that Girdler preferred met with another of the company’s leaders, Charles White. Girdler claimed that, at that meeting, they stated to White, “If Girdler signs an agreement with the C.I.O., we strike!”\textsuperscript{363} This was music to Girdler’s ears. In his mind, it gave him a moral justification to reject SWOC’s demands.

Girdler knew a strike was inevitable, so he prepared. He anticipated violence and prior to the beginning of the strike, Girdler ordered that each Republic Steel plant be supplied with tear gas. This move showed his hand. Girdler meant to break the strikers’ will and was prepared to use force. He wrote that he instructed his staff

\textsuperscript{361} White, 119.
\textsuperscript{362} Girdler, 280.
\textsuperscript{363} \textit{Ibid}, 228.
to avoid violence but reminded them of their obligation to protect Republic’s property and defend workers who remained inside the facilities during a strike. Surely, he knew that if his men used tear gas, then local authorities would arrive and intervene on behalf of the city’s private enterprise. In Youngstown, Niles, and Warren this was exactly what happened.

Prior to the strike, SWOC distributed handbills as workers left the plants. These papers served as recruitment tools for SWOC. Newly recruited members then held organizing meetings in homes, churches, and bars. Leaders were elected, and pickets were organized. SWOC needed to operate in accordance with the Wagner Act. So, in the months leading up to the strike, Lee Pressman, SWOC’s lead legal counsel instructed membership to record all violations of their rights.

Once the strike was on, the union’s tactics became a bit more questionable. SWOC and its members felt they were engaged in an ideological and material war with Republic Steel. To that end, they used whatever tactics necessary to advance their cause. According to Tom Girdler, the union needed to keep men who wanted to work out of the plants. To accomplish this, Girdler wrote of the strikers, “This was done by pickets carrying clubs, guns, razors, and other weapons. Very few of these pickets were Republic employees.” Whether Girdler’s claims are accurate or not is difficult to confirm but the National Labor Relations Board found that the union barred entry of non-union workers into the plants. For the strike to work,

364 Girdler, 238.
365 “In the Matter of Republic Steel Corporation and Steel Workers Organizing Committee” National Labor Relations Board, 1938, 322.
366 White, 110.
367 Ibid, 91.
368 Girdler, 229.
369 “In the Matter of Republic Steel Corporation and Steel Workers Organizing Committee”, 251.
SWOC needed Republic to feel economic pain. Their method was to deny plants supplies and cease production. It started to work.

As the strike began in Warren, men left at the end of their shifts intending to begin picketing while also trying to recruit others to their cause. Standing between them and potential recruits, however, were the plant superintendent and a couple hundred “loyal” workers and bosses armed with sledgehammers, pikes and other weapons. The superintendent shouted to them, “Come on you sons-of-bitches, we are waiting for you.” Another group trying to leave the Warren facility also met resistance and were told, “You have to stay here to protect your jobs… If you go home you won’t have any more jobs in this department.”

Republic Steel was clearly willing to resort to intimidation and violence to maintain the status quo, but the CIO and its members were likewise prepared to stand their ground.

On Saturday May 30th, 1937, SWOC leadership in Ohio met with representatives for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Steel mills connect to railroad lines that deliver steel making materials and distribute the finished product. Republic wanted to use their lines to deliver food and other supplies to workers who remained inside defying SWOC’s wishes. SWOC appealed to their fraternal brothers in the Engineers union to convince them not to make deliveries. Their efforts were somewhat successful. In describing an exchange with the railroads, Girdler wrote of the engineers’ commitments, “…we’ll haul coal, iron ore, or finished steel as usual. But we won’t haul munitions.” Those ‘munitions’ included food and

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370 “In the Matter of Republic Steel Corporation and Steel Workers Organizing Committee”, 356.
clothing.\textsuperscript{372} The union needed the engineers’ help because they could not hope to stop a locomotive physically. Mail trucks, on the other hand, could not get through the human picket lines around Ohio’s Republic facilities. Republic authorities attempted to mail food into the plants from Cleveland, but the union suspected the tactic and stopped deliveries.\textsuperscript{373} With the situation becoming desperate, Republic devised an ingenious solution to defeat the SWOC siege.

Tom Girdler was an engineer by training, and he attacked the siege problem like one. Girdler examined Republic’s resources, assessed tactical success probabilities, determined material cost and the cost to Republic’s reputation, and decided on a course of action. The Niles plant was in dire straits. Girdler’s leadership team considered driving food near the plant, but they abandoned that idea because strikers controlled all roads around the facility. They considered using trains and mail, but those methods had already been thwarted. Another thought was to use a tank to deliver food, which Republic had because they were contracted to provide armor and needed to test steel on a working model. This was also rejected because the Republic men decided it would lead to bloodshed. Finally, they decided to try aerial resupply.\textsuperscript{374}

Several Republic employees who owned airplanes as well as private contractors were mobilized to drop food into the plants. The Niles plant was the site of the first attempt. It was off target and the strikers ended up with supplies intended for workers in the plant. Subsequent drops were successful, and the workers got food and domestic supplies. Within a few days, workers inside the Niles plant were able to fashion a makeshift runway that Republic used to fly men and supplies in and out. The

\textsuperscript{372} Girdler, 283.
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid, 331–332.
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid, 299–305.
union also used planes to perform reconnaissance. The CIO needed to know what work was ongoing and they used planes to circle the plants and collect information.\textsuperscript{375} The airplane strategy worked but it was not a long-term solution. Steel making supplies could not get into the plants and product could not get out. With both sides dug-in, something had to give.

The strike languished for several more weeks into the beginning of June 1937. Meanwhile, Republic tried to gather support from law enforcement in cities where work had stopped. On June 15th, Girdler distributed a statement to employees that, in part, read, “Employees kept from their jobs by mobs of armed pickets many of whom have never worked for Republic and citizens outraged by this defiance of law and decency by the C.I.O. are joining together to insist that law enforcement agencies compel the union to cease unlawful picketing.”\textsuperscript{376} While Girdler’s statement reassured uninvolved employees, it also called for them to pressure local authorities. Girdler tried to start a grassroots campaign to benefit one of America’s most prosperous companies. He wanted those on the sidelines to agitate for local police and sheriff’s departments to enter the fray. When fighting erupted in Youngstown the police and sheriff’s deputies that were involved protected Republic’s interests—not the workers.

There were only a few points of entry at Republic’s Youngstown mill. This made it easy for strikers to control the flow of people in and out of the mill. One of these points was “Stop 5.” On the evening of Saturday, June 19th, 1937—three weeks into the strike—gunfire erupted, and John Bogovich and James Eperjesi were killed outside

\textsuperscript{375} Girdler, 299–305; White, 125.
\textsuperscript{376} “In the Matter of Republic Steel Corporation and Steel Workers Organizing Committee”, 255.
the Republic plant in Youngstown. Accounts of the fight report that at least 26 people were wounded, however the actual number may have been upwards of 60. Dozens more suffered the effects of tear gas. The community was changed by this incident and divisions between labor and management deepened. Both factions and bystanders saw parts of their city damaged by disagreements between labor and management. The costs of these confrontations were materially high but the cost in human life and peace of mind were even higher. The lives of those involved and their loved ones changed forever.

Accounts of the events vary, and the genesis of fighting is unclear. One account, purportedly from an eyewitness, suggested that Youngstown police provoked the incident. The eyewitness described a scene in which women picketers arranged themselves for a photograph. One had a camera and while others sat on folding chairs, a Youngstown police officer snatched the camera from the would-be photographer’s hands. Upon seeing this, the photographer’s husband, who was nearby, tried to wrestle the camera away from the police officer. Things escalated quickly; the police lost control of themselves and the situation. In contrast to others, this account stated that the police opened fire with bullets as well as tear gas. This account blamed the beginning of the battle on the police and described them as a group of people itching for confrontation. The account was sympathetic to SWOC and saw its tactics as just. Others saw the beginning of the encounter at Stop 5 differently.

Footnotes:

378 White, 157-159; Girdler, 354.
Newspaper reports of the event varied. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* was the largest daily publisher in the immediate vicinity of Youngstown. Its reporting on the opening salvos of the battle indicated that the women failed to follow police instruction to move further from Republic property. The *Plain Dealer* also identified them as the CIO Women’s League. Because of their refusal to leave, the police used three shells of tear gas. The crowd then dispersed, reorganized and marched on police. The *Plain Dealer* implied the melee began because the Women’s League failed to comply. The language used in the *Plain Dealer* article portrayed the strikers as wild and uncontrollable. It mentioned no gunfire on the part of the police and was specific about the number of tear gas shells fired. The tone of the article painted authorities as ‘good-guys’ and the union as ‘bad-guys’. Likewise, when the *Chicago Daily Tribune* summed up the evening’s events seven days later its reporting cast the strikers in an unfavorable light. The *Tribune* called the strikers “a wild throng of enraged pickets.” The article did not indicate strikers’ motivations, but it did, tellingly, call the CIO an “all-powerful labor dictatorship.” This language reinforced communist accusations leveled at the CIO. Rather than reporting on the Youngstown strike, the *Tribune* used their platform to advocate for Republic Steel, authority, and the economic status-quo.

The chairman of Republic Steel was the most extreme in blaming the CIO and SWOC for the violence. In his autobiography, *Boot Straps*, Tom Girdler recounted the events that started the strike. “As for the women, they were anything but peaceful. They were, in fact, the same

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380 “Fight Rages at Republic Mill Gates,” *Plain Dealer*.
truculent, foul-mouthed type that Communist strategists have used repeatedly to provoke a riot brawl with policemen. And this riot was provoked. It had been planned.” Girdler, although not present for the encounter, described it in exhaustive detail. He claimed that the women would not follow police instruction, spat at them, and even cursed them—sometimes in a foreign language. He also emphasized that the women sat on folding chairs and boxes, which supposedly incited the police. In addition to besmirching the character of the women, Girdler’s account suggested that union agents waited just beyond the vicinity of the female picketers so they could pounce if there was trouble with the police. Girdler described the Stop 5 incident as a coordinated tactical ploy designed by SWOC, the CIO, and communists. In his mind, they used underhanded tricks such as gender baiting and provocation to pull the police into a confrontation they hoped to avoid. A successful strike threatened to undermine Girdler’s managerial ability and the union was beginning to outflank him. Production slowed and local support, which he needed to pressure workers into returning, was neutral. A union instigated confrontation only benefited public opinion of Girdler and Republic Steel.

Donald Sofchalk presented another depiction of the Stop 5 incident in his 1961 dissertation examining the Little Steel Strike. Sofchalk began his discussion of the Stop 5 incident by giving a detailed description of the terrain involved. He also described Stop 5 as a bottleneck or choke point into and out of the mill. Either side of the road at Stop 5 was bounded by a river or a railroad embankment. This created an area controllable by anyone on the embankment’s high ground—a veritable killing field. To enter the facility, a person or vehicle had to go through an underpass in the embankment. According to Sofchalk, members of the Women’s League organized themselves on

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382 Girdler, 342.
the sidewalks and the driveway near the underpass. One issue with the protests on June 19th was that the women sat in chairs and were not walking. This amounted to provocation in the eyes of the police. An officer informed the women they were obstructing traffic, the picket line must be moving, and they could not sit. He gave them five minutes to correct themselves and when they did not, he discharged two or three tear gas grenades near the picketing. After this, confusion reigned, and a full-blown riot began.\footnote{Sofchalk’s dissertation offered the most sober assessment of the Youngstown riot. The events that ignited violence that evening remain in dispute but what followed later that night is certain—the lives of two people ended on June 19th, 1937.}

John Bogovich and James Eperjesi were shot to death during the June 19th riot. The two victims that eventful night, Bogovich and Eperjesi, were steelworkers, European immigrants, and strikers. They worked together at Youngstown Sheet and Tube—another steel company involved in the Little Steel strike.\footnote{White, 158.} The fact that they were not Republic Steel employees but were present at the incident is evidence that SWOC’s organization and fraternal ties among workers were assets to the union’s cause in Youngstown. Both Republic Steel and local law enforcement opposed that cause. It is undetermined which side fired the shots that killed Bogovich and Eperjesi. Like the Stop 5 events that led to riot, competing versions of the truth obscured the identities of Bogovich’s and Eperjesi’s killers.

After the initial events at Stop 5, all sides agreed that things escalated quickly but that is the limit to their
agreement. Eyewitness testimony that appears favorable to the union claims that machine gun fire erupted from the “overhead cranes in the old tube mill.”\textsuperscript{385} This version leaves no doubt that someone inside the mill fired on the crowd. Girdler’s version contradicts this claim. He wrote, “I am satisfied that no shots were fired by any of the more than 800 men in our plant. They were mad that night. They wanted to go out and go after the rioters. But all such talk was discouraged and kept under control.”\textsuperscript{386} Not only did Girdler justify the behavior of his company by absolving it of any wrongdoing, he did so in a way that made him appear to be in total control. When he said that he was “satisfied,” Girdler’s words indicated that he was the ultimate authority that arbitrated right and wrong at Republic Steel. Furthermore, Girdler’s words betrayed his attitude toward his employees. He portrayed them as people of lesser emotional control who needed to be restrained. If this is what he thought of employees loyal to Republic during the strike, he must have believed worse about the strikers.

John Bogovich was not initially involved with the strike on June 19\textsuperscript{th}. After hearing about what was unfolding at the mill, Bogovich, like many other union members, rushed to the scene. It is undetermined who fired the bullet that killed Bogovich, but the anti-union forces seemed to be using tactical methods. According to an interview of striker Fred A. Fortunado, shooters inside the Republic mill opened fire when flares were sent into the air. The flares illuminated the scene and allowed gunmen to fire more accurately.\textsuperscript{387} It was during one of these illuminated moments that Bogovich was shot. Whether the fatal shot came from the police, a Republic agent, or a union

\textsuperscript{385} Republic Steel Company Stop 5 Riot Eyewitness Narrative, Carl “Jerry” Beck Papers.
\textsuperscript{386} Girdler, 354.
\textsuperscript{387} Fred A. Fortunado, interviewed by Philip Bracy, Youngstown State University: Oral History Program, January 6, 1983.
member, Bogovich was shot from distance. In contrast, a point-blank shotgun blast killed James Eperjesi. Like Bogovich, Eperjesi’s killer is unknown. Physical evidence suggests that the fatal shot came from the direction of the plant or the railroad embankment. Anti-union forces occupied both locations. One witness claimed that sheriff’s deputies shot Eperjesi from the back of a nearby truck and that he was killed while he ran for cover.  

Most accounts of the deaths of John Bogovich and James Eperjesi ran counter to Girdler’s claim that his men fired no shots. His abdication of any Republic responsibility was an exercise intended to salvage both the reputations of himself and his company. The union, on the other hand, tried to use the deaths as a source of inspiration. At Bogovich’s funeral, a SWOC organizer named John Stephens said, “Tom Girdler and Frank Purnell are responsible for the death of this man, but his life has not been taken in vain. The cornerstone of the union has been cemented in his death.”  

The deaths of Bogovich and Eperjesi on July 19th did little to change the attitudes of SWOC, the CIO, and Republic Steel toward one other. It took another four years and a War Labor Board order until Republic Steel finally signed an agreement with the CIO.

Conclusion

Two federal bodies, the National Labor Relations Board and the Supreme Court of the United States both released decisions that condemned the labor practices of

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390 Girdler, 374.
Republic Steel during the 1930’s. First, in 1937, the Supreme Court found the Wagner Act to be constitutional. The CIO and SWOC based most of their organizing strategy on the rights afforded to them by the Wagner Act. This decision granted legitimacy to labor unions across the country and served as a threat to companies like Republic Steel. Then, in 1939 the NLRB found that Republic Steel operated in a manner that violated the Wagner Act by using intimidation tactics and dismissing employees who tried to organize. Under the power granted to it by the NLRA, the National Labor Relations Board ordered Republic Steel to compensate employees whom they harmed financially or physically during the Little Steel strike. The NLRB also reaffirmed the freedom to unionize without molestation and required that workers fired for union affiliation be re-hired. Furthermore, Republic Steel had to report to the NLRB the steps it took to implement their orders. Against the backdrop of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, federal entities began to make policy and decisions that took power from corporations and placed some in the hands of the working class. Labor organizations took full advantage of the changing climate. Some corporations resisted the winds of change. Where resistance was strong, labor and management clashed, and sometimes violence ensued. Republic Steel, led by one of the most ardent opponents of labor rights, Tom Girdler, resorted to violent means when no other option seemed plausible.

Police justification for lethal violence is tenuous at best, judging from available evidence. Accounts vary as to the levels of danger law enforcement officers were in. Judging the behavior of the female strikers and their motivations is also difficult because of the difference in

391 White, 3.
392 “In the Matter of Republic Steel Corporation and Steel Workers Organizing Committee”, 400–404.
descriptions of that fateful evening. Nevertheless, for laborers nationwide, a new era was emerging that promised greater bottom-up influence in decision making to bring better conditions, higher pay, and shorter hours. For management, however, this upcoming labor-centric period foretold an end to outright dominance over workers’ rights and lives. When management’s fears of the future clashed with labor’s hope, confrontation was inevitable. The degree to which that confrontation escalated was dependent upon the commitment that both sides gave to their ideals. In Youngstown, on June 19th, 1937 those commitments ran deep.

Historians have written very little about the conflict at Republic Steel’s Youngstown operations, yet this event nevertheless remains an important episode within the broad arc of worker struggles in America. Republic Steel, albeit less productive than “Big Steel” firms like U.S. Steel and Bethlehem, was nonetheless an important component of the latent American industrial power that played such a critical role in the country’s ascendency to world economic leadership. The strike, and subsequent status quo ante bellum at the plant, likewise presaged an era of continued antagonism between labor and capital that continues to this day. Regardless, the Republic workers’ strike and the violent aftermath in Youngstown, Ohio demonstrated an important juncture in the long history of capitalist exploitation of workers in the United States.
By 1919, Babe Ruth, pitching and batting for the Boston Red Sox, had put the Dead-Ball Era in the grave with his amazing feats of power at the plate. The Great Bambino single-handedly pulled baseball out of the nineteenth century, and with his bat and glove revitalized the sport that had wallowed through the dominance of spitballers and groundouts. At least, this is what baseball’s mythology tells us. Unsurprisingly, this popular mythology minimizes the importance of baseball’s darkest hour, the Black Sox Scandal, in which members of the Chicago White Sox conspired with gamblers to throw that year’s World Series. In fact, the game in 1919 was not being remade by the Great Bambino, but rather was in turmoil as the public turned against a game now suspected of being rigged. These two narratives are almost irreconcilable. It is difficult to see how 1919 could both be a year of triumph and of darkness for the sport. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how baseball could have so quickly rebounded from an event that so undermined the public’s trust in one of America’s most popular institutions. In exploring this topic, I argue that baseball’s recovery and resurgence is tied to the rise of advertising as a culture industry in the United States. Drawing on James Cook’s formulation, I will show that baseball took advantage of this rise of advertising as a culture industry to prop up its greatest star, Babe Ruth, and move past the Black Sox Scandal. In considering advertisements and newspaper articles from 1919 to 1927, I will show that consumers of the sport came to have what Cook describes as a “split consciousness” in which they were aware of the Black Sox’s crimes through the older
medium of newspaper but allowed themselves to be influenced through baseball’s advertising to accept the role of Babe Ruth as a savior of the game.

**1919 in Boston: The Dead-Ball Era and Babe Ruth**

Baseball, in some form, has existed since the middle of the nineteenth century. Early baseball history is full of amateur teams, barnstormers, failed professional leagues, and the establishment of formal rules of play and the two Major Leagues: the National League and the American League. By 1903, these leagues were sending their champions to compete against one another in the World Series, which quickly became immensely popular. Despite the sport’s growing popularity, the game itself was lost. The rules of the period discouraged offensive play, and batting statistics were the lowest ever seen in the sport’s history. Of the sixteen worst offensive seasons in baseball history when measured by runs scored per game, all but three took place between 1904 and 1919.\(^{393}\) Put simply, the game on the field was not exciting. Batters could hit, as evidenced by average batting averages in the period, but not for power, as evidenced by extremely low slugging percentages.\(^{394}\) Without power strokes by real sluggers, runs were less likely to cross the plate, and pitchers’ earned run averages were among the lowest ever seen. Even Ty Cobb, the sport’s greatest talent in the period and the 1911 Most Valuable Player, hit no more than nine home runs in a season until 1921, with those nine coming in his 1909

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\(^{394}\) *Ibid.*
The ball was “dead.” It would not leave the park, and offensive numbers suffered as a result. Though wallowing in sub-par offensive numbers, the sport did have stars beyond Cobb. The Dead-Ball Era also saw the rise of George Herman Ruth, Jr., better known as the Babe. Having made his debut in 1914 with the Boston Red Sox, Babe Ruth made a name for himself as an excellent pitcher who could also hit when necessary. His career earned run average was 2.28, an excellent mark. While pitching, he won the World Series three times with the Red Sox, capturing the title in 1915, 1916, and 1918. However, driven by a desire for more playing time, the Babe switched to playing outfield, allowing him to go to the plate every day. His offensive numbers soared. His 1919 season was one of the finest on record at the time. He got on base in almost half of his plate appearances. His slugging percentage was .657. He was worth 9.1 wins above replacement. Most importantly, he hit twenty-nine home runs, a new record. In one season, Ruth had defied baseball’s Dead-Ball Era. For him, the ball had come back to life. His offensive output was unmatched. The New York Times described his play as, “the greatest baseball ever staged.” Sportswriter Burt Whitman, writing for the Boston Herald, noted that Chicago White Sox manager Kid Gleason considered Ruth, “the greatest hitter I ever saw.” The Herald would later declare Ruth the “King of Swat,” and demanded that baseball “hand the laurel wreath to Big Babe Ruth of the Red Sox. He established himself as the

395 Ibid.
396 Baseball Reference.
397 Ibid.
boss slugger of all time.”

Ruth followed his historic 1919 season with yet more success. In 1920, he hit fifty-four home runs. In 1921, he reached fifty-nine. He was worth 11.8 wins above replacement in 1920, 12.8 in 1921, and 14.1 in 1923. The rest of the league followed his example, with runs per game increasing to 4.87 and average slugging percentage increasing to .401 by 1922. Baseball was leaving behind its Dead-Ball past and emerging into the Live-Ball Era. Later sportswriters and baseball historians accredited this change to Ruth’s breakthrough in the 1919 season. Baseball researcher and sabermetrician David Gordon, for example, argues that the Live-Ball Era could not have begun without the paradigm shift that Babe Ruth started. He writes: “it would take the example of an extraordinary talent, ex-pitcher Babe Ruth… to change the landscape… Ruth worried about nothing but swinging the bat as hard as he could and sending balls flying over the fence.”

According to Gordon, Babe Ruth essentially taught the rest of baseball how to play the game. His superior approach at the plate caught on among Major Leaguers, and with

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401 Baseball Reference.
402 Sabermetrics is a movement in baseball research dedicated to the empirical study of the game and its statistics. It stands in contrast to older methods of researching baseball players, such as through the use of scouts. Among the most notable sabermetricians are Billy Beane, General Manager of the Oakland Athletics, and Bill James, who coined the term in reference to the SABR, the Society for American Baseball Research. The Baseball Research Journal is a publication of that organization.
enough of his counterparts playing the game better, baseball’s offense rose and broke out of its Dead-Ball past. Alongside developments in pitching and baseball construction, the Babe forged baseball into a more entertaining sport. Today, it is widely accepted that Babe Ruth played an integral part in transforming baseball into the sport it has become.

1919 in Chicago: The Black Sox

While Babe Ruth was lighting the world on fire in Boston, darker developments were transpiring in Chicago. Despite his spectacular season, Babe Ruth could not propel the Red Sox into the World Series in 1919. Instead, the Chicago White Sox represented the American League in that year’s Fall Classic. Led by Shoeless Joe Jackson, Chick Gandil, and Lefty Williams, the team looked primed to at least compete for the title. However, apparent disaster struck them in their series against the Reds. Williams lost three games, and fortuitous fielding errors and strikeouts seemed to benefit Cincinnati alone. The White Sox bemoaned the superior luck of their opponents, and the press was shocked at fluke plays that continually allowed the Reds to win games. The New York Times noted how, “Chicago has been saying all along that the Reds have been playing in luck.”

The Albuquerque Journal was quick to spot the hilarity of the White Sox’s ineptitude: “As expert baseball it was as funny as a sack race. It would never have happened just as it did if the sun had not entered the lists and blinded the visiting fielders. It was all the funnier for the reason that the Sox were nine runs behind at the time.”

To the outside world, it seemed as though the White Sox had just choked, beaten by rotten luck and the

superior Reds. The truth, however, was much worse for the
sport. In fact, eight members of the White Sox had
colluded to intentionally lose the World Series. Paid off by
gamblers, these players committed fielding errors, pitched
awful games, and intentionally struck out at the plate.
Rumors spread about the supposed fix throughout the 1920
season. By September, the press picked up on the rumors,
with the *New York Times* reporting that the president of the
American League had been made aware of the scandal.406
A grand jury was called to determine whether a crime had
been committed. Some of baseball’s most powerful voices
were called to testify, including the president of the
American League, the team president of the Chicago Cubs,
and the owner of the White Sox.407 Called, too, were the
White Sox players themselves, and under the pressure of a
grand jury testimony, Lefty Williams confessed to the
crimes, naming his co-conspirators.408 By the end of
October, multiple gamblers and White Sox, including
Williams, Jackson, and Gandil, were indicted and placed
under arrest.409 The scandal threatened to seep into the
National League, as well, where teams, including the
Phillies, Cubs, and Reds, were similarly met with

406 “White Sox Would Not Dare Win, Rumor Says,” *The New York
Times*, September 24, 1920, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New
York Times.
408 “Williams Tells of Bribery,” *The New York Times*, September 30,
October 30, 1920, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York
Times.
The scandal overwhelmed the press’s usual sports coverage, as papers across the county ran stories about the White Sox turning state’s witness or the potential collapse of the American League itself. The American and National League owners alike worried that the sport was on the brink of collapse.

The sport worked hard to repair its public image. With public confidence at an all-time low, owners struggled to maintain fan bases and the profits that accompanied them. In November of 1920, the owners of both leagues raised up Kenesaw Mountain Landis as the first Commissioner of Baseball. Landis was well known and well trusted by the public. A federal judge for the District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Landis loved baseball and knew how to hand down harsh punishments. The press cheered his appointment. The *New York Times* lauded his ability to “strike terror into the hearts of criminals.” The message was clear: Commissioner Landis would cleanse baseball of its dirty past. In 1921, he attempted just that, banning the eight leading White Sox from baseball for life. Shoeless Joe Jackson, Lefty Williams, Chick Gandil, and even state’s witness Eddie Cicotte would never play in the Major Leagues again.

Despite Landis’s efforts, the sport was still not seen as clean by the press. The medium continued to search for dirtiness in the sport. In 1924, the *New York Times* reported on a supposed bribery of Jimmy O’Connell, outfielder for

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the New York Giants. Landis banned him from the sport. In 1925, the minor league team in Nashville was accused of throwing games for their opponents from New Orleans. Landis personally questioned the accused. In 1926, the use of resin to dry pitchers’ hands caused a stir, as it had previously been hidden to the public. People worried that cheating had again permeated the sport. Landis publicly came to the defense of the pitchers, declaring the practice fully legal. Still, seven years after the White Sox threw the World Series, these were the types of scandals that continually plagued baseball. Following the Black Sox Scandal, the floodgates had opened to reveal baseball’s sins. Try as he might, Landis was not able to keep baseball’s shortcomings out of the spotlight of the traditional media. Fans, through the press, were continually made aware of scandals. The press repeatedly brought attention to baseball’s dark side, stymying the industry’s attempts to reconstitute its image.

This period in baseball’s history has usually been considered from a social historical perspective. Baseball historians have traditionally focused on the economic factors surrounding the Black Sox Scandal. Of great importance are the reserve clause in players’ contracts, which prevented players from unilaterally leaving teams to seek higher pay elsewhere, and the wealth inequality between players and owners. From this perspective, the Black Sox were merely seeking a higher pay that the team and its owner had denied them, and so had sought illegal

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416 “Pitcher May at Any Time Call for Pinch of His Drying Powder,” Seattle Daily Times, April 1, 1926, NewsBank.
compensation for their labor through gambling. In selecting Commissioner Landis, the owners had stepped in to stop this practice. Landis ensured that players who took these extreme steps would never profit off of baseball again, and so enforced the power of the capitalist owners over their workers. In *Eight Men Out*, famed baseball writer Eliot Asinof takes this position. He notes how important the Landis appointment was to the owners, and how the reserve clause prevented players from demanding fair wages for their labor.⁴¹⁷ However, viewing baseball’s 1920s in this way ignores the fact that scandals continued to plague baseball, even as the Commissioner tried to stop them. This social history of the period cannot adequately account for why scandals persisted if Landis supposedly reasserted the owners’ power. Further, it ignores how baseball was able to mount a comeback despite the public’s extreme lack of faith in the sport by 1921. Further still, it does not take into account how the period’s picture of baseball as a clean sport championed by Babe Ruth was able to coexist with a very different picture of baseball as a dirty sport of cheating and gambling. A cultural perspective, rather than a social one, provides a convincing account that provides answers to these issues. The cultural perspective, in asking how cultural developments impacted baseball’s fans’ view of the game, can address why scandals persisted past Landis’s intervention and how baseball was able to recuperate its image in the public’s eye. By focusing on culture industries rather than economic concerns, the era of 1920s baseball becomes clearer.

**Advertising as Baseball’s Savior**

Though baseball spent the 1920s getting knocked around in newspapers, journalists were not the only

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important force in the media of the period. The 1920s also saw the rise of advertisements as a cultural driver. As Roland Marchand argues in his *Advertising the American Dream*, the twenties marked the first time that advertisements became truly “modern.” In previous periods, advertising had been held in low regard, linked with scam products and disreputable businessmen. It had a “Barnum image,” as Marchand describes it. In the twenties, however, advertising gained reputability. Between 1920 and 1925, the Art Directors Club commissioned exhibitions that put advertisement front and center, the Harvard Business School gave awards for the contributions of advertisers, and famous artists began to do work for advertising firms.\(^{418}\) For the first time, advertisers were able to help facilitate commerce on a national scale, and to influence the popular concept of “desirability.” Towards this end, advertisements changed form. Advertisements from the first decades of the twentieth century had largely focused on products. Advertisers would spend their advertising space arguing for why their product was superior to its competitors. By the 1920s, advertisers had shifted their focus to evoking a personal, emotional response from the consumer. They attempted to tie their products to the individual, and so attempted to appeal to the consumers’ identities “as individuals to retain a sense of control in an expanding mass society.”\(^{419}\) Importantly, in committing to a personal appeal, advertisers more regularly began turning to important figures and celebrities in their ads. Celebrities, as real people, had a more personal appeal than products alone. For example, Fleischmann’s Yeast,


\(^{419}\) *Ibid*, 12.
one of the most successful advertisers of the 1920s, employed the image of “England’s Great Surgeon Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane” to suggest health benefits in its yeast. In advertising directly to the consumer’s emotional drive, modern advertisers made themselves an integral part of 1920s popular culture.

Further, advertisements of the period often portrayed “social tableaux,” which Marchand describes as, “sufficiently stereotypical to bring immediate audience recognition.” This is to say that the figures within the advertisements existed within an idealized image of society more broadly. Advertisements did not purport to resemble life as consumers may have experienced it. Instead, it encouraged them to envision a world in which society was better, or in which they occupied a higher place in society. Women in advertisements were often portrayed as free and modern. They could pursue high fashion and be good wives while forging their own paths and experiencing modern leisure activities. Men, meanwhile, were largely portrayed as quintessential American businessmen. Males in advertisements never held lower class jobs and were always successful in their ventures. Couples’ children were always well behaved and deferent to their parents, a far cry from the picture of unruly children that frightened parents in the twenties. All of these pictures were, of course, unrealistic. Most Americans simply did not have the time or resources to realize this social tableau. However, advertisements made them feel as though they could. Advertisements allowed Americans to conceptualize themselves as part of a superior version of their own society, a better world into which the trials of actual life did not reach. Advertisements encouraged consumers to

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420 Ibid, 17.
421 Marchand, 166.
422 Ibid, 188.
423 Ibid, 189.
424 Ibid.
connect the product with hope for a better life, and so further opened the consumer to an emotional response to the advertisement.

The 1920s saw the rise of advertisements as a popular medium for the first time. Baseball, like other industries, moved to take advantage of the transformation to bolster its own brand. Whereas baseball lacked control over the newsrooms that continually brought light to baseball’s scandals, advertising provided baseball a medium in which it could be portrayed in an ideal way. Baseball could put forward a picture of itself that was clean, progressive, fair, and balanced. Though far from reality, advertising allowed baseball to construct its own social tableau. Front and center at baseball’s social tableau was everyone’s favorite rising star and savior of the game, Babe Ruth.

The Babe in Baseball Advertisements

In the multi-media advertising blitz of the 1920s, Babe Ruth makes continuing appearances. Now playing for the New York Yankees in the nation’s largest market, Ruth, who continued to hit home runs at rates never before seen, was a perfect draw for the nation’s fans. Around New York, Babe Ruth jingles popped up, promoting Babe Ruth and baseball to New Yorkers on the street and in sheet music available for sale. In 1922, for example, famed composer George Groff, Jr. composed a song entitled “Babe Ruth.” Perhaps predictably, the song’s topic was Ruth’s successes on the field. The song goes: “My hat is off to you Babe Ruth, in business or in fun, while you’ve been
making homers Ruth, I have not made a run.”425 This sheet music was available to consumers for twenty cents and was a clear pitch to support the national pastime and its hero, Babe Ruth. The song captures the social tableaux of the period, making note not of Ruth or the game’s failures, but of the “fun” Ruth has while playing and the hope of the subject to emulate Ruth’s slugging prowess. This picture of the sport is an unrealistically pleasant one, one that draws an emotional and hopeful response from the consumer. This song was followed in 1923 by E.S.S. Huntington’s “Babe Ruth Blues.” Unlike “Babe Ruth,” this work was for distribution in popular theaters around town. Actors at the theater would sing this work to the audience. Huntington’s work, however, is similarly unapologetically pro-baseball and pro-Ruth: “Oh! Oh! you big Bambino, you are the king of swat we know, The crowds I’m gonna foller, When I get there I’ll holler.”426 Here, the subject is arriving at the ballpark with mythically large crowds to support Babe Ruth. The subject overtly references Ruth’s status as the King of Swat, a heroic title bestowed on Ruth for his successes. Of course, this picture, too, is romanticized. It ignores the larger, scandalous issues surrounding baseball. But this is the point. This jingle, while promoting baseball, invites consumers to think of baseball emotionally; as a space in which they could march with their fellow man and holler at sports to their heart’s content. It allows them to accept the social tableau and have an emotional reaction that allows baseball to endear itself to them. It works to cover up some of the dirtier aspects of the sport that were fully known to baseball consumers. These jingles were not

unique in the period. Others include Ed G. Nelson’s 1920 “Oh You Babe Ruth!” and Harry Tierney’s 1922 “Babe Ruth.” The jingle was an important aspect of baseball’s attempts at public rehabilitation in the 1920s.

Aside from their jingles, baseball also attempted to fight the press on its own turf. Babe Ruth made many appearances in advertisements in print media in the 1920s. He endorsed many products, as well as baseball itself. Presenting this social tableau in the papers themselves allowed baseball to compete directly with the newspapers’ narratives. Because newspapers reached a large audience, baseball could rehabilitate its image in the minds of a large number of Americans. Many advertisements ran in newspapers in New York, home of the Yankees. Appealing to Babe Ruth’s built-in fan base, these advertisements tried to reach the hearts of New York baseball fans. In New York’s Evening World, advertisements ran promoting a Babe Ruth homerun contest. The boy who could hit the most home runs would be entitled to a hundred dollar prize, the ad claimed.427 The event was sponsored by Rosenwasser Brothers Shoe Company, which also made Babe Ruth’s signature shoe, and so even boys who could not hit long home runs would be given pairs of shoes for their participation. Far from linking baseball to any scandals, this advertisement linked it to wealth and to charity. Later that year, the Evening World ran advertisements for Babe Ruth brand chocolate-coated ice cream baseballs.428 The only images in the ad are of Babe Ruth, a baseball, and ice cream. Babe Ruth and baseball are linked with a sweet treat of childhood, not gambling and

crime as consumers may have read in other stories. Some advertisements sought to sell baseball gloves, the most fundamental piece of baseball gear. They sold Babe Ruth gloves, with Babe Ruth’s signature right in the leather. Consumers could come to own their very own piece of Babe Ruth memorabilia. Of course, the memorabilia were not truly linked to Ruth in any real way. His signature was merely stamped into the leather; he did not sign them himself. Still, the ad allowed the consumer to think of themselves as connected in some meaningful way with Babe Ruth, and so removed their focus from the more dour realities surrounding baseball at the time.

Babe Ruth even dominated advertisements outside of his home in New York. In 1922, for instance, baseball began to advertise official “scorers,” scorecards for professional baseball games. In its Washington Times advertisement, there is no example photo of the scorecard, but rather a large photo of Babe Ruth. The scorecards being advertised are linked not to any local Washington Nationals player, but to the Babe. Even fans of the lowly Nationals could connect their baseball fandom with the player who had revolutionized the sport. The advertisement makes no allusion to any scandals, only to the fun of watching a game and keeping score of hits and outs. The ad ran in editions throughout August and September of that year, ensuring that if consumers saw any stories about baseball, they also saw Babe Ruth and his scorecard. In Kansas, Babe Ruth’s name was evoked in advertisements for Life O’Wheat Breakfast Cereal and E.V. King’s photography. Though these advertisements were unlikely

to have had express approval from Ruth himself, the implication is the same. The advertisements remove Ruth from his actual circumstances. Gone are his and baseball’s ties to cheating in sports and illegal gambling. Evoking Ruth apart from these contexts once again allows the consumer to picture him and his occupation differently. Apart from baseball’s reality, Ruth could be an expression of American greatness. In South Carolina, the *Union Daily Times* ran advertisements for Babe Ruth’s silent film *Headin’ Home*, a biopic. The film was a work of nearly complete fiction, having largely constructed Ruth’s childhood from scratch. The fictional nature of the film worked to separate baseball fans even further from reality. Fans wanted to exist in world separate from baseball’s true issues, a world in which Babe Ruth’s upbringing was ideal and his prowess unmatched. The advertisement allowed consumers to imagine this world, drawing them into the social tableau and far away from baseball’s scandalous reality.

In advertisements in New York and elsewhere, Babe Ruth was a celebrity extension of baseball. Babe Ruth, having already saved the sport from itself once on the field, evoked the image of pristine and proper sport that baseball was failing to evoke in other media, most notably the press. By exiting his reality and entering into the consumers’ imagined reality, Ruth’s image could influence consumers’ views on baseball, stripping away the numerous scandals of the 1920s and replacing them with a heroic image of a clean and American sport. In keeping with Marchand’s concept of social tableaux, advertisements

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centered on Babe Ruth provided consumers with a separate reality that evoked their emotional response and desire to view the national pastime as triumphant and honorable. Consumers were able to see this reality in advertisements, pushing the true reality of gambling and cheating to the back of their minds.

Indeed, advertising, at least in the long run, seemed to be a successful way for baseball to rehabilitate its image. After a drop in attendance following the Black Sox Scandal, attendance had grown to over ten million fans by 1930. Following the Great Depression and World War II, that number topped twenty million in 1948. By 1973, attendance grew to thirty million, and added another ten million by 1978.433 By the 1980s, teams were spending a combined two hundred sixty-eight million dollars on players’ salaries. In 1997, that number topped one billion dollars.434 Far from being destroyed by its greatest scandal, baseball lived to realize its consumers’ hopes for a better sport. Baseball became the true National Pastime, and its successes, not its failure, dominate its fans’ shared memories of baseball history.

The 1920s as a Watershed in the Production of Popular Advertising

Though Babe Ruth’s presence in advertisements for baseball and other businesses certainly worked to push this idealized reality on consumers, it is not immediately clear why this view would have been accepted so readily by consumers and fans. After all, printed advertisements were presented in the very same pages that had damned baseball for its moral transgressions. Advertising jingles may not have met the same immediate resistance, but their reach was limited to consumers of the theater or to those who

433 Baseball Reference.
434 Ibid.
would have bought sheet music for home use. Journalism was a more established media, and its reach was large and influential. Advertising was just coming into its own as a respectable medium. Journalism had the more commanding presence. However, it is advertising’s youth that allows a closer look at its impact. As the 1920s marked the first time that advertising gained popularity and mass appeal, the 1920s function as a “watershed in the ‘production of the popular,’” in James Cook’s words. As advertising gained a mass audience, it also took on new characteristics as a cultural entity.

When a culture industry becomes massified, it opens itself up to conflict. Cook argues that this conflict happens necessarily, and that it is never limited to a simple fight between capitalist and consumer. He opines that there are “struggles that often take place within and across culture industries.” This is apparent in the differing pictures of baseball that advertising and the press put forward in the twenties. As described, advertising’s image of baseball was much rosier than that of the traditional press. Babe Ruth advertisements pushed an image that was far removed from the reality of the day. Meanwhile, the press pushed a much darker image. After the Black Sox Scandal, papers continued to publish about scandals of less and less importance. For example, though the use of pitchers’ drying agents was fully legal, the press pursued it as though it may be a scandal, forcing Commissioner Landis to publicly defend the proper rules of the game.

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436 Ibid, 303.
437 “Pitcher May at Any Time Call for Pinch of His Drying Powder,” Seattle Daily Times.
These two pictures of baseball are in conflict and are mutually exclusive. Baseball could not have been simultaneously a bastion of honor and innocent athleticism and of cheating and conspiracy. These two culture industries, the older press and burgeoning advertising, clashed in their pictures of 1920s baseball.

Further, this conflict was not between the upper and lower classes in a way that may be recognizable to social historians. It is not as though the advertisers were publishing the view of the working people to conflict with the elitist view of the press. No, these media were both to the service of capitalists. Business and baseball owners used advertising as a way to further their own economic gains, as selling scorecards would have boosted box office returns and selling cereal, photographs, or shoes would have boosted sales in those fields. Newspaper owners’ goals were to sell newspapers; publishing scandalous stories about America’s favorite sport helped them to do so. Nowhere is there a working class view. The working class that consumed baseball, newspapers, and advertisements did not have a horse in this race. This is in line with Cook’s assessment of watershed moments in the production of the popular. Though “the production of the popular has never simply unfolded according to some inexorable logic of capitalist expansion,” the production of the popular does involve large-scale conflict between capitalist entities. Cook uses entertainment centers and commercial interests in his example. In this case, the conflict exists between the capitalist pressrooms and advertising firms.

Despite the fact that most people had no real influence over the content produced by the press or by the advertisers, the picture of baseball in the 1920s that persists to the present day is rooted in the images that these media created in that period. Though baseball fans are quick to

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438 “Pitcher May at Any Time Call for Pinch of His Drying Powder,” Seattle Daily Times.
accept the triumph of baseball over its gambling past, the Black Sox Scandal remains tied to the sport’s early days. The conception of the 1920s found in the minds of consumers in that decade persists. Yet, these conceptions remain irreconcilable. The 1920s cannot be both a point of great hope for the sport and of a fundamental failure in baseball’s structure. The press’s insistence of the dirtiness of the sport and advertisers’ social tableau of an ideal baseball are fundamentally at odds. They can no more both be true than if the 1990s was both an era of labor progress and strikes and labor disputes, or if the 2000s was both an era of athletic advances and widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs. The conception of the 1920s is split.

The Split Consciousness of the Baseball Consumer

At this point, it is clear that audiences were aware of both the Black Sox Scandal and of the positive image of baseball put forward in advertising. They knew that the sport was tainted, and yet they came to accept that it was clean, or at least that it could be cleaner. It is also clear that these competing ideas of baseball were being put forward by differing culture industries, the former by the older industry of the press and the latter by the new industry of advertisement. Capitalists controlled these industries and used them to further their own business goals. Yet, while consumers largely accepted the advertisers’ tale of baseball as a clean sport, they never fully lost sight of the press’s tale of the Black Sox, as evidenced by its continual presence in baseball discourse in recent decades. Academics would come to consider the scandal “Baseball’s
Single Sin,” in the words of David Voigt. The Baseball Hall of Fame refuses to seat banned players, and so while the Black Sox are not inducted, their legacy persists with every new class. In 2000, ESPN ran an Eliot Asinof story entitled, “The Black Sox Scandal is Forever.” The legacy of the Black Sox remains, if only in the background.

This presence of the Black Sox idea in the background of baseball’s imagination lends itself to Cook’s formulation of a split consciousness in the consumers’ minds. Cook describes how consumers are shaped by culture industries. In this case, the advertising culture industry has shaped the attitude of baseball consumers. It has led them to believe that baseball is a clean sport with honorable stars like Babe Ruth. Having undergone this shaping at the hands of advertisers, baseball fans have become better consumers, as evidenced by the rebound of the sport in the period following the Black Sox Scandal and its immense growth in the decades to follow. In this way, the advertisers’ shaping has paid off. However, Cook also describes how consumers are conscious of this shaping. Culture industries are not able to fully hide their influence from their consumers. Though it may seem like the influencing happens seamlessly, this is not the case. In fact, consumers are aware that the culture industries are changing their attitudes. Cook writes that consumers’ consciousness is “at once shaped by culture industry formulas and conscious of the shaping.” Clearly, baseball consumers are aware in this way. Even in the 1920s as advertising came into the spotlight, consumers encountered baseball’s scandals in the older industry of the press. Babe Ruth advertisements in newspapers found

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themselves juxtaposed with articles about gambling in baseball. Even as they were being shaped by advertisements, consumers could not and did not miss the reality of scandal. It is clear that the consumer consciousness remained split in this way. Though 1919 is widely viewed heroically for Babe Ruth’s breakthrough, the Black Sox Scandal could not be erased from the fans’ shared consciousness. From Hall of Fame asterisks to academic study to modern articles in sports journalism, the Black Sox Scandal persisted despite consumer consciousness being shaped at the hands of an advertising industry that benefited from pushing the incident as far outside of the collective memory as possible.

Because the advertising industry arose as a culture industry in the 1920s, it can be examined in terms of Cook’s formulation. Babe Ruth’s heroic 1919 season that propelled him into baseball lore provided a means for the advertising industry to establish a social tableau in the minds of consumers by featuring Ruth as a celebrity extension of baseball. This conflicted with the reality being presented in the press; that baseball was consumed in gambling scandals, most notably the Black Sox Scandal, that not even Commissioner of Baseball Kenesaw Mountain Landis could contain by himself. Papers all over the country ran concurrent stories about baseball conspiracies and Babe Ruth advertisements. While consumers would largely accept the heroic narrative being presented in advertising, the juxtaposition of these conflicting narratives ensured that the Black Sox Scandal remained in fans’ collective memory of the period. The 1919 season has claimed a triumphant connotation because of Babe Ruth’s ending the Dead-Ball Era because of advertising’s arrival as a culture industry, but it also inspired this split consciousness in a Cookian sense, in
which baseball consumers’ attitudes have been shaped in a way such that they are aware of the change. This accounts for the positive attitudes about 1920s baseball that persist even while baseball fans remain aware that the sport’s darkest hour took place in the same period.
Book Reviews


In this comprehensive food history book, beer writer Jeremy Banas narrates the history of a famous San Antonio brewery, Pearl, from its troubled beginning to its slow death and the legacy it left behind. The Pearl is mentioned in some food history books about San Antonio Beer but there was not a comprehensive story of this company; this is the first book-length study on its history. Banas uses a plethora of primary and secondary sources ranging from local newspapers to governmental documents from the nineteenth century. The work is an exhaustive look at the significance of the Pearl in San Antonio as an allegory for the city’s history and the legacy that is still felt today.

Banas approaches this by breaking down the Pearl's history over six crucial periods. The first period discusses the origins of City Brewery (1883-87) and its ever-changing ownership. This time of instability for the Pearl includes accusations of embezzlement against the original owner and another owner, who upon purchasing the company left the state and brewery behind. Otto Koehler ended the tumultuous first period after he took over and stabilized City Brewery in 1887. The second period sees the rise of the second iteration of the Pearl brewery, called the San Antonio Brewing Association (SABA), bolstered by Koehler’s decision to acquire the iconic recipe known as XXX Pearl Beer from Germany. While more prosperous, this period was also plagued with controversy, including the scandalous murder of Koehler by one of his mistresses,
as well as the beginning of Anti-Saloon laws in Texas by 1915. In his examination of Otto Koehler’s death, Banas relies on court proceedings and newspapers to narrate public perspective on the case.

The third period begins with Prohibition in full swing and Koehler’s widow, Emma, taking over the company. Emma revolutionized the company by having SABA take a backseat and converting its resources into its Alamo Industry, later known as Alamo Food Company. Emma turned Prohibition into a profitable period for the company; SABA became the only surviving brewery in San Antonio.

According to Banas, the fourth period was the golden age for the Pearl. After the death of Emma Koehler, Otto A. Koehler, nephew to the original Otto A Koehler, took complete control of SABA and rebranded it to its final iteration, the Pearl. Under Otto A. Koehler’s management, the Pearl expanded nationally and internationally, assisted by their feature at the 1966 World’s Fair hosted in San Antonio.

The fifth period covers the rapid decline of the brewery. A series of poor leadership decisions and risky business strategies between 1979 and 2001 led to the collapse of the beloved company. One of the major culprits for the collapse was Vice President Frank Spinosa’s compromise on the quality of the beer in exchange for marketing and product gimmicks. After merging with a Louisiana company, Southdown Corporation, and later with the General Brewing Company, the current owner of Pabst Blue Ribbon beer, the Pearl brewery was forcibly relocated out of San Antonio and the original location was closed in 2001.

In the final sixth period, the original brewery was converted into a mixed-use complex. Between 2002 and 2018, the year this book was published, the brewery became a reclaimed space for businesses, restaurants, and even a new micro-brewery. The Southerleigh, a bar and
restaurant operating within the old complex, has integrated the Pearl’s original kettles and machines to brew their own beer. Banas regards this sixth period as a post-brewery revival since freshly brewed beer is still produced onsite.

Despite the crisp narrative, constant shifts in the timeframes sometimes gets it confusing. Banas wants to reach a larger audience and assumes the reader is not well versed in the topic and thus provides an overwhelming amount of information that jumps backwards and forwards in history with little context on the transitions. For instance, the original Otto Koehler hired a nurse to take care of his wife Emma, who was “…virtually an invalid and perpetually bedridden.” (pg. 40) This is the same Emma who was able to take over the company, consolidate power, and become heavily involved in the business. (pg. 59)

Although it is very possible for someone with disabilities to head a successful business, the only explanation Banas provides is a throwaway comment that Emma was “reinvigorated” after her husband’s death. (pg.66) Between these points in history, Banas discusses a wide scope events that impact SABA both before and during Emma’s transition to power, but without any real comment on her sudden shift from a person perpetually bedridden to the majority owner and driving force of a large, innovative company.

While examples like this are prevalent, Banas does provide an unbiased narrative throughout the book. This point is crucial, as there are few food histories written on the impact of alcohol in Texas and Banas makes numerous points that allude to a larger food history that are worthy of further study. One such point is the temperance movement that existed and thrived in Texas five years prior to the federal passing of Prohibition in 1920. Another is the impact of German immigrant brewers who upheld the
German Purity Law of 1516 before the passing of the U.S. federal Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906, which allowed a seamless transition for Texas brewers to expand across the country, while their competitors adjusted to the new regulations. Overall, this book provides an archetype for historians to further explore the broader food history of Texas and the specific role of alcohol in the formation of the state. Lastly, as this book is written for the uninitiated audience, it provides an accessible understanding of the Pearl brewery and its importance to the identity of San Antonio; one that could even rival the Alamo.

—Zachary Wise, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley