

# MADISON HISTORICAL REVIEW

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## About the *Madison Historical Review*

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 next 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 an archival journey to find the voices of those opposed to the Commissioners' Plan of 1811, to a story of how a lesbian relationship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century sought to overturn Orientalism, and including a view of violence during the reign of the Carolingians.

On behalf of the entire journal, I would like to congratulate Ariel Norris, winner of the 2022 James Madison Award for Excellence in Historical Scholarship. Her article, "The Myth of the Crocodile Dundee: The 'White Australian' and the Racialization of Australian Citizenship from 1901-1958," unpacks the fabrication of the national identity of the "white Australian" and details how citizenship was systematically denied to Asian immigrants and First Nations peoples. Norris's work is an excellent example of graduate student research and writing skills.

Furthermore, the addition of Anna Neubauer as Associate Editor provided much support during the process, and for that I am very thankful. Additionally, I would like to thank Rebecca Kruse for her technical support and expertise in operating the journal's Scholarly Commons website. All of us at the *Madison Historical Review* are especially indebted to our faculty advisor, Dr. Philip Herrington, for his 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*.

Giovanni Gibbs, Executive Editor

# **The Myth of the Crocodile Dundee: The “White Australian” and the Racialization of Australian Citizenship from 1901-1958**

Ariel Norris  
Liberty University

2022 Winner of the James Madison Award for  
Excellence in Historical Scholarship

Nestled in the geographical region of Oceania, lies the nation of Australia, a country whose history is as rich and complex as its wildlife, ecosystems, and natural resources. Today, one cannot think about Australian culture and identity without subsequently picturing classic icons such as actor Paul Hogan’s beloved character, Crocodile Dundee, of the 1986 film, *Crocodile Dundee*.<sup>1</sup> When *Crocodile Dundee* was released, the film became an instant classic and Hogan became an “international Australian icon, due to his embodiment of this idealized Aussie bloke.” Describing such a ‘bloke,’ Andrea Waling of La Trobe University writes, “He is white, straight, able-bodied, and good for a laugh. He is practical and good in a crisis, but generally laid back. He rejects individualism in favour of loyalty to his mates. He is a larrikin and a hater of authority.”<sup>2</sup> Though *Crocodile Dundee* is a fictional character, the national image he represents portrays a much

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Waling, “The Myth of the White Aussie Bloke,” La Trobe University, February 10, 2019, <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2018/opinion/the-myth-of-the-white-aussie-bloke>.

<sup>2</sup> Waling, “The Myth of the White Aussie.”

darker history. Key cultural constructs fed into a misleading national identity known as the myth of the “white Australian” citizen. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Australian government systematically excluded non-white participants from Australian society, culture, and national identity by denying “undesirable” immigrants entry to the country, excluding migrants and Aboriginal populations from the benefits of citizenship, and ignoring the issues minorities faced within the nation.

Simply explained, the myth of the “white Australian” is a constructed cultural identity that embodies Australia’s historical national telos, or societal end goal. However, this national personality excluded Indigenous peoples and non-white immigrants. Reiterating this, in *From White Australia to Woomera*, James Jupp argues that Australian culture is the product of “conscious social engineering to create a particular kind of society.”<sup>3</sup> This “particular kind of society” is exemplified by the myth of the “white Australian,” an ideology that significantly influenced the nascent country’s domestic policies regarding the benefits of citizenship and those deemed worthy of receiving them. Additionally, the “conscious social engineering” refers to White Australia Policy, a series of legislative decisions directly designed to restrict and restrain non-white inhabitants of the country from entering or becoming citizens.<sup>4</sup> Before one can begin to survey the ways in which the myth of the “white Australian” became legalized through White Australia Policy, one must first comprehend the myth within the abstract, by briefly discussing the country’s historical

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<sup>3</sup> James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>4</sup> National Museum of Australia, “White Australia Policy,” <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/white-australia-policy>.

ethnic composition and cultural identity.

The British migrants to Australia in the 1880s wanted to create a “new colony for Britain” and believed that their “relationship to Australia was as a resource for the empire.”<sup>5</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that “They saw themselves as the first to take control of and manage the land... [they believed] it was the hard work and determination of these early migrants that developed the nation.”<sup>6</sup> This belief was further solidified by the initial lack of ethnically diverse migrants. Despite the fact that Australia was surrounded by non-European settlers, in the territory’s early years, immigration from Indonesia was rare and traffic from India was primarily for “imperialist purposes to plantation economies.”<sup>7</sup> When Britain established a trade colony in Hong Kong in the 1840s, fears of mass Chinese migration to the Australian colonies perforated society and “picked up” clout in the 1850s, when gold fever compelled thousands of Chinese migrants to seek their fortunes in the Victorian goldfields.<sup>8</sup> By the time Australia became a federation in 1901, 20% of its inhabitants had been born overseas, and a significant minority of these were German and Chinese.<sup>9</sup> However, reflecting efforts to maintain its status as one of the “most British” societies outside of the United Kingdom, Australian social identity became an “Aussie” version of a white British citizen.

There are several key archetypes to highlight when surveying the myth of the “white Australian.” First, “the battler,” an Australian pioneer conquering *terra nullius* and

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<sup>5</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*

(University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Jupp, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Jupp, 5.

the harsh circumstances faced on the frontier.<sup>10</sup> The second term, the “larrikin,” a mischievous individual that disregards social conventions and authority, but overall has a good heart.<sup>11</sup> Third is the “ocker,” an uncultured or uncouth Australian male. Fourth, the “Aussie bloke:” an ordinary, Australian man, who embodies the true “bushmen” national spirit of hardiness and resourcefulness.<sup>12</sup> These figures are vital to this study, because they characterize the perceived (or constructed) identity of the historical Australian citizen. Furthermore, legends such as “the battler” were perpetuated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, and receive a reinvigoration after World War II, due to the differentiation it provided in relation to other similar English-speaking nations.<sup>13</sup>

Though national identity in and of itself is not a negative entity; the description of what “this” is and the limitation of what “this” is not, leads to the disassociation and exclusion of traits, peoples, and practices deemed disconnected or ill-fitted to that narrative. By very definition, the pervading myth of the “white Australian” citizen excludes the country’s non-white participants, such as, but not limited to, First Nations peoples; a culture that has lived and thrived in Australia long before white settlement, and Asian immigrants; a group that helped build

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<sup>10</sup> Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> L, “Meanings and Origins of Australian Words and Idioms,” Australian National University, <https://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/andc/meanings-origins/l>.

<sup>12</sup> O, “Meanings and Origins of Australian Words and Idioms,” Australian National University, <https://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/andc/meanings-origins/o>; A, “Meanings and Origins of Australian Words and Idioms,” Australian National University, <https://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/andc/meanings-origins/a>; and “Dawn Of: The Legend,” Australian War Memorial, 2021, <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/dawn/legend>.

<sup>13</sup> Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 6.

the nation seen today.

It is tempting to imagine all Australian citizens as the fictionalized knife-wielding, crocodile-rassling “Aussie blokes.” However, that stereotype is unrealistic, homogenous, and represents a history of national oppression for Aboriginal peoples and non-white immigrants. Furthermore, terminology surrounding the “white Australian” image suggests positive ideals of trial-hardened individuals battling the odds, shirking authority, paying no mind to social conventions, all the while having a good laugh with their ‘mates,’ whereas in reality, these ideologies are highly simplified and more accurately represent what the Australian nation *desired* to be, rather than what it truly consisted of.

Though terms and constructed ideas are helpful when attempting to comprehend the larger framework of the narrative, the development of the myth of the “white Australian” as an *idea* is a complex ideology. However, the concept as a *practice* can be clearly traced throughout Australian political history by surveying five pivotal legislative decisions and influential eras: the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, World War I, the Native Administration Act of 1936, World War II, and the Migration Act of 1958. To do so, the study must begin by surveying the relationship between the first inhabitants of Australia and the individuals that colonized the land.

Long before white settlement, Aboriginal communities have lived and thrived throughout the continent of Australia, celebrating over five hundred different tribes, each with their own language, culture, traditions, and beliefs. Some estimates place the Aboriginal population from anywhere between 300,000 to one million at the arrival of the First Fleet in Botany Bay. However, those numbers plummeted to a mere 40,000 by the 1901 State census and dropped to 20,000 by the first

Commonwealth census in 1911.<sup>14</sup> Bruce Elder writes that “it is popular mythology that white Australia is an egalitarian society. It is argued that if Australians occasionally stray from this egalitarianism, it is always to support the underdog... For over 200 years Aboriginal people have been underdogs and battlers yet not once have the white public consciousness been touched by their unhappy position.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, James Jupp argues that not only is the image of Australia a constructed identity, but the country itself is an immigrant society. Jupp claims that without the “continual immigration” present throughout the country’s history, contemporary Australia would look drastically different.<sup>16</sup>

1901 marked a significant year for Australia in several regards. To begin, on January 1, 1901, the territory’s six colonies joined together to create the Commonwealth of Australia. Though still under the British government, with this union Australia was now a self-governing Dominion in the British Empire, with autonomous control of its domestic affairs.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Australia passed the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, in an effort to minimize the harmful effects colonization had upon Aboriginal people.<sup>18</sup> Another key development was the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, one of the first legislative publications that legally sanctioned the creation of the “white Australian” identity. Unfortunately, during this time, Aboriginal Australians

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<sup>14</sup> Elder, *Blood on the Wattle*, 256.

<sup>15</sup> Elder, 248.

<sup>16</sup> Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> “A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, Since 1776: Australia,” Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/countries/australia>.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 18.

were not the only people group to have been left out of the national image of Australian society. In the mid-1800s, white Australians grew bitter over the influx of Chinese immigrants pouring into the country to earn their fortunes in the Australian goldfields.<sup>19</sup> During the gold rush era, the population of Chinese immigrants in New South Wales and Victoria was around 60,000, and, in some areas, comprised a quarter of the local population. By 1861, 3.3% of the Australian colonists had migrated from China.<sup>20</sup>

Between 1855 and 1877, the Australian states of Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland all introduced immigration legislation that discriminated against Chinese migrants.<sup>21</sup> Though the origins of the white Australia policy are long and complex, dating back as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in 1901 the first Australian Federal Parliament implemented a national policy that covertly limited non-white migrations to the country to keep Australia “British.” Additionally, in 1901, the government, under first Prime Minister Edmund Barton, passed the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, which excluded

- (a) Any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out a dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in any European language directed by the officer;

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<sup>19</sup> A. Dirk Moses, ed. *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 104.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Jones, “Chinese-Australian Journeys: Records on Travel, Migration, and Settlement, 1860-1975,” (National Archived of Australia, 2005), [https://www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/research-guide-chinese-australian-journeys\\_1.pdf](https://www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/research-guide-chinese-australian-journeys_1.pdf), 14.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, “Chinese-Australian Journeys,” 14.

- (b) any person likely in the opinion of the Minister or of an officer to become a charge upon the public or upon any public or charitable institution;
- (c) any idiot or insane person;
- (d) any person suffering from an infectious or contagious disease of a loathsome or dangerous character...<sup>22</sup>

The law's stipulations required all immigrants entering the country to pass a dictation test. To succeed in this examination, the immigrant needed to write fifty words in a European language, which was determined at "random" by the immigration officer. After 1905, this legislation was expanded to include all languages, European or not. The primary purpose of this stipulation was to allow immigration officers to stop people deemed "undesirable" by the Australian government, such as non-white immigrants, and those with a criminal record, with medical issues, or deemed "morally unfit," to enter the country. If immigrants failed their subsequent test, they were likely to be deported.<sup>23</sup> However, if the immigrant did not pass the dictation test but was deemed "fit" by an officer, they would be permitted to enter the Commonwealth, pending a fine of one hundred pounds and the securing of a certificate of exemption from the

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<sup>22</sup> Federal Register of Legislation. *The Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, (Dec 23, 1901),

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1901A00017>.

<sup>23</sup> "The Immigration Restriction Act 1901," The National Archives of Australia, <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/immigration-and-citizenship/immigration-restriction-act-1901>.

Minister, within thirty days.<sup>24</sup>

The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 was enforced alongside other discriminatory policies such as the practice of registering non-British immigrants as “aliens.” Though the 1901 act was replaced in 1958, the alien registration practice continued until the Racial Discriminatory Act of 1975 banned the discrimination of migrants based on racial grounds.<sup>25</sup> However, more than simply denying immigrants the right to enter the country, migrants within Australia could also be denied citizenship, the right to vote, health and welfare rights, employment opportunities, desirable working conditions, land ownership, and mining licenses.<sup>26</sup> Though these policies kept the “other” out of the country, Australia would not have a clear cohesive national identity until the trials of war established their burgeoning international ranking.

When World War I broke out, Australia had no international procedures. However, their loyalty to the Commonwealth pulled them into the conflict, and they allowed Britain to dictate formal foreign policy. C. Hartley Grattan writes that, “While policies had been developed which had international implications, it was not considered that Australia had a foreign policy peculiarly her own; it was rather considered that the Australian policies were in harmony with the larger Imperial interest and as such, their support was part of the general Imperial task, not a unique and separate duty of Australia.”<sup>27</sup> Despite this “hands-off” approach to global affairs, internally, Australia was preparing for the worst-case scenario.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Federal Register of Legislation, *The Immigration Restriction Act 1901*.

<sup>25</sup> “The Immigration Restriction Act 1901,” The National Archives of Australia.

<sup>26</sup> Moses, *Genocide and Settler Society*, 105.

<sup>27</sup> C. Hartley Grattan, *Introducing Australia* (Sydney: Halstead Press Pty Ltd, 1944), 196.

<sup>28</sup> Hartley Grattan, *Introducing Australia*, 193.

During the early 1910s, fears of the “Yellow Peril” emphasized anti-Asian sentiments, stereotypes, and misconceptions, and permeated Australian parliamentary decisions.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, fears of both external and internal invasion from “enemies of the Empire” – including not only people of Asian descent, but also French, Russian, and German heightened the country’s alarmist tendencies and added greater need for Australia to formulate its own defense force to protect both its own interests and the interests of the Commonwealth.<sup>30</sup> Political theorist Anthony Burke argues that World War I represented a “dark milestone in the imagination of a modern Australian identity.”<sup>31</sup> Additionally, their losses of almost 60,000 men, 65% of their total numbers involved, the highest rate of any Allied nation, convinced the country of its role in the Commonwealth but divided its political leaders. While some wanted to send more men into battle, other leaders became increasingly concerned over the possibility of an Asian army waiting to pounce on a war-weakened Australia.<sup>32</sup> However, more important than the divisions in leadership the war created, was the unified militaristic heritage it inspired; the Anzac tradition.

Though Australia began the war as a protector of the Commonwealth’s interests, as the conflict progressed, the nation’s sacrifices solidified the country’s international ranking and societal personality. The Gallipoli landing is one of the most defining moments in Australian history and identity, an image that remains a vital part of contemporary Australian collective memory. From the start of the war, Australians were anxious to earn their position as a global power. This opportunity came on April 25, 1915, when Australian troops landed on the Turkish Peninsula of

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<sup>29</sup> Moses, ed. *Genocide and Settler Society* 106; Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 39.

<sup>30</sup> Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 39.

<sup>31</sup> Jupp, 42.

<sup>32</sup> Jupp, 43.

Gallipoli, obtaining their place in history through a “baptism of fire.”<sup>33</sup> Here, troops endured swarms of flies that bred in decaying casualties, ate minimal, unappetizing rations, endured strict water limitations and basic latrines, and battled extreme weather, bouts of lice, dysentery, and inhospitable terrain, all while enduring losses of 44,000 Allied soldiers; 8,700 of who were Australian Anzacs (Anzac being an acronym for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps).<sup>34</sup> Though the landing was not a resounding victory for Australian troops (or a victory at all for that matter), the event became engrained within Australian memory as the embodiment of the nation’s “courage, endurance, and initiative.”<sup>35</sup> In addition to solidifying the ‘mettle’ of Australian troops, the battle gave birth to the legend of the Anzac. The Australian War Memorial argues that “Many saw the Anzac spirit as having been born of egalitarianism and mutual support. According to the stereotype, the Anzac rejected unnecessary restrictions, possessed a sardonic sense of humour, was contemptuous of danger, and proved himself the equal of anyone on the battlefield.”<sup>36</sup> The Anzac, also known as the “digger,” showed the “bushmen” spirit of a true “Aussie bloke.”<sup>37</sup>

After the bloody landing at Gallipoli and the subsequent eight-month campaign that followed,

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<sup>33</sup> “Dawn of the Legend: 25 April 1915,” Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/dawn>.

<sup>34</sup> Imperial War Memorial, “Nine Reasons Why Gallipoli Was One of the Worst Fronts of the First World War,” <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/9-reasons-why-gallipoli-was-one-of-the-worst-fighting-fronts-of-the-first-world-war>; NZ History, “The Gallipoli Campaign,” <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/the-gallipoli-campaign/introduction>.

<sup>35</sup> “Dawn of the Legend: ‘Worthy Sons of the Empire,’” Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/dawn/empire>.

<sup>36</sup> “Dawn of the Legend: The Anzac Spirit,” Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/dawn/spirit>.

<sup>37</sup> “Dawn of the Legend: 25 April 1915,” Australian War Memorial.

“Australian” became a cohesive national identity. Exemplified by Australian poet Banjo Paterson’s 1915 work “We’re All Australians Now,” he writes, “The old state jealousies of yore/ Are dead as Pharaoh’s sow,/ We’re not State children any more —/ We’re all Australians now!.../ The mettle that a race can show/ Is proved with shot and steel,/ And now we know what nations know/ And feel what nations feel.../ Our old world differences are dead,/ Like weeds beneath the plough,/ For English, Scotch, and Irish-bred,/ They’re all Australians now!”<sup>38</sup> These lines, embodying the country’s increasing collective personality and national pride, also demonstrate the continuity of the “white Australian” citizen, excluding non-white immigrants and Aboriginal peoples, a trend that would perpetuate for decades to come.

Though World War I solidified the perception of Australia as a nation, not all Australians were afforded natural rights of citizenship. Legislation regarding Aboriginal peoples severely limited Indigenous personal autonomy by consolidating Indigenous peoples to settlements and classifying them as wards of the government. In *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation*, Andrew Armitage argues that “Aboriginals were brought to, and effectively confined in, the settlements because they had no other place to live. The expectation of the time was that the original Aboriginal population would eventually die out, and that the settlements would provide a ‘pillow for a dying race.’”<sup>39</sup> Exemplifying this, the Native Administration Act of 1936 stipulated that “Any person who without the authority, in writing, of a protector, removes or causes any native to be removed from one district to another, or to any place beyond the State, shall be guilty of an offense against this

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<sup>38</sup> A. B. Banjo Paterson, “We’re All Australians Now,” All Poetry, <https://allpoetry.com/We're-All-Australians-Now>.

<sup>39</sup> Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation*, 18.

Act.”<sup>40</sup> However, this rule did not apply to men over twenty-one that were biracial or less or did not “live after the manner of the original full blood inhabitants of their full blood descendants.” This act also placed orphaned Aboriginal children in the hands of the Commissioner until twenty-one years of age and gave the Minister the right to restrict any native to their reservation, district, institution, or hospital, unless lawfully employed, holding a permit of absence, a female married to a non-native, or deemed “satisfactory” by the Minister.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, this law also restricted non-natives from entering or remaining on Aboriginal reserves (unless given permission), gave the Commissioner power to authorize an examination of Aboriginal people to ascertain if they carried a disease, and, if found infected, gave leaders the power to enforce treatment. Additionally, it dictated the governor could, at any time, “declare any municipal district or town or any other place to be an area in which it shall be unlawful for a native, not in lawful employment, to be or remain...”<sup>42</sup>

In 1942, Paul Hasluck, a historian and politician, compared the rights afforded to Aboriginal people under this law as being closer to a “born idiot than any other class of British subject.”<sup>43</sup> After the Native Administration Act of 1936 was legalized, Aboriginal people could apply for a “Certificate of Exemption” that allowed Native peoples to live among white citizens, move freely throughout the town, and drink at public bars. However, this certificate effectively stripped the holder of their traditional culture

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<sup>40</sup> *Native Administration Act 1905-1936*, National Library of Australia. <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-55208730/view?sectionId=nla.obj-507973199&partId=nla.obj-507430962#page/n0/mode/1up>, 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Native Administration Act*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Native Administration Act*, 6-18.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Hasluck, *Black Australians* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1942), 160; and Bruce Elder, *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and Maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians Since 1788* (Sydney: New Holland Publishers, 2020), 259.

and heritage. As part of ABC Open’s Object Stories project, Aunty Dorrie Moore shared her own father’s Certificate of Exemption, issued to him in 1957. The certificate states that:

NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT ABORIGINES  
PROTECTION ACT, 1909-1943, SECTION 18c.

[REGULATION 56]

**CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION**

From Provisions of the Act and  
Regulations

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that [Walter Davis]  
[Half] (caste) Aborigine, aged [42] years,  
residing at [Mantle Hill, Moruya] is a  
person who is in the opinion of the  
Aborigines Welfare Board, ought no  
longer be subject to the ~~following~~  
~~provisions~~ provisions of the Aborigines  
Protection Act and Regulations, or any of  
such provisions, and he/~~she~~ is accordingly  
exempted from such provisions.

Issued in compliance with the Resolution of the  
Aborigines Welfare Board and dated the [Twenty-  
first] day of [May], 195[7].<sup>44</sup>

Though the “Certificate of Exemption,” more commonly referred to as a “dog license,” gave its holder certain rights that were not privilege to many Indigenous peoples, it also stripped the holder of their traditional identity. Dorrie Moore recalls that she was working at the Adelaide Hotel in Moruya, a place where her family was

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<sup>44</sup> Vanessa Milton, “Remembering the Days of the ‘Dog Licence’,” ABC Local, February 5, 2014, <https://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/01/31/3935994.htm>; The author has chosen to retain amended words and use brackets to connote the blank fields filled in by the board.

banned without a “dog license,” when her father was awarded the certificate. Moore’s niece, Maureen Davis, stated that “Because once this licence was issued, you couldn’t visit your family who remained on Wallaga Lake Mission. You couldn’t speak the language or practice the culture. Our elders did practice the culture, but it was all kept under lock and key with these licences.”<sup>45</sup> Documents such as the “Certificate of Exemption” reveal Australia’s utter exclusion of Aboriginal peoples as equal participants in the country throughout the mid-1900s. Despite this deeply engrained othering, key events, such as the brewing global conflict, caused a notable shift in the country’s legislation. Whereas World War I inspired the solidification of Australian identity, World War II challenged the limitations of “white Australian” citizenship and aided the eventual broadening of the scope of Australian cultural identity.

When Australia declared war on Nazi Germany in 1939, the country did so as both a separate country and an affiliate of Britain. In 1942, the same year that Paul Hasluck compared Aboriginal rights to those of a “born idiot.” C. Hartley Grattan published *Introducing Australia*, wherein he describes a conversation he conducted with an Australian poet. Regarding the war, the poet stated that,

Australia remains at the core self-reliant, forward-looking, convinced that she has an individual contribution to make to the world future. The present desperate crisis has some extent stimulated her. She knows she cannot go back to the old idea of isolation, the dream of a utopia removed from the world, that nursed her infancy, but, on the other

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<sup>45</sup> Milton, “Remembering the Days.”

hand, she will not be inhibited by the idea of dependence that paralyzed her in later years.<sup>46</sup>

Whereas in the First World War Australians joined the conflict to aid the defense of the Commonwealth, in the second global conflict, the prime minister stated that the defense of Australia, *by Australians*, would be their primary duty.<sup>47</sup> Though Australia was not prepared for a fight in 1939, throughout the course of the war, the country raised four infantry divisions and corps, in addition to army troops. Some forces were deployed overseas, three army troops to the Middle East, and one split between Malaysia and the islands north of the continent, others were ‘surrendered’ to the Royal Air Force to fly against Germany, and some battled in the Atlantic and Mediterranean in tandem with the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Navy.<sup>48</sup> However, among the men conscripted for battle, some that fought for the freedom of Australia were not free citizens themselves.

When Australia entered World War II, the country’s population held approximately seven million white citizens, 80,000 Aboriginals, and 5,000 Torres Strait Islanders (Aboriginal people of a culturally distinctive region in northern Australia, known as the Torres Strait Islands). Throughout the war, over 850,000 Australians served in the military, including 3,000-8,000 Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.<sup>49</sup> Because Aboriginal people were not

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<sup>46</sup> Grattan, *Introducing Australia*, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Grattan, 208.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000), 140.

<sup>49</sup> Until the 1990s, no records were kept to identify Indigenous soldiers in the Australian Defense Force. However, some estimates believe that at least 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders served in World War I and as many as 8,000 during World War II. Additionally, photographic evidence suggests that Aboriginal peoples enlisted in every conflict Australia was involved in, from the Boer War to contemporary battles; Robert G Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*:

citizens, in most states and under most circumstances, they had no voting rights, and their affairs were decided by State and Federal governments.<sup>50</sup> Whereas regular citizens were subject to compulsory conscription due to the Defence Act of 1909, Aboriginal men, unless culturally disassociated with the Aboriginal community, were not required to enlist.<sup>51</sup> Despite this, the day after Australia declared war, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders began to volunteer, and throughout the war, thousands of Aboriginal people served in the Australian forces in different capacities, embodying the Australian “digger” spirit.<sup>52</sup> Gary Oakley, the president of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and Services Association, argues that whereas non-Indigenous soldiers were fighting for their “King and country,” Aboriginal soldiers were fighting for their homeland.<sup>53</sup>

During the early years of the war, fears that Aboriginal people along the vulnerable northern border would give in to Japanese or Nazi propaganda became commonplace. Historian Kay Saunders argues that throughout the continent, German-born pastors of Lutheran Churches, along with Japanese pearl divers and fishermen in the northern territory, were particularly concerning to white citizens. One report, published in 1943, notes that “On these reserves the Aboriginals... have been in touch with indent [sic] Japanese fishermen from Thursday Island for at least two generations... The Aboriginal on the

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*Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Recall the Second World War*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1995), 1; and Bridget Brennan, “Anzac Day: Indigenous Soldiers Thought ‘When we got back we’d be treated differently,’” (ABC News, April 25, 2017), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-25/anzac-day-indigenous-soldiers-shunned-by-society/8468364?nw=0>.

<sup>50</sup> Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, 4.

<sup>52</sup> Hall, vi, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Brennan, “Anzac Day.”

Peninsula is not aggressive and he would consider the Japanese his temporary master and try to get the best terms he could for himself and his family.”<sup>54</sup> Though these alarmist tendencies were an overreaction, Saunders points out that the reaction itself poses a “semi-humorous” conundrum.<sup>55</sup> Saunders argues that by demanding loyalty from Aboriginal peoples and offering no legal grounding for that loyalty through the bonds of citizenship, Aboriginals were asked to “[undertake] obligations bestowed as subjects without any benefits incurred as citizens.”<sup>56</sup> Despite these alarmist fears, Aboriginal men and women did receive the chance to ‘prove their mettle’ in the war.

In April of 1942, anthropologist A.P. Elkin wrote to Prime Minister Curtin that “I think at this juncture we should take every opportunity we can for giving the Aborigines a chance of helping their country, either in the fighting services or as auxiliaries to these services or in factories.”<sup>57</sup> In World War I, hundreds of Aboriginal soldiers volunteered to protect their country. However, in 1939, Aboriginal participation was initially discouraged, out of fear that they might have used their enlistment to apply pressure for rights of citizenship.<sup>58</sup> In June 1941, the head of the Northern Territory Special Operations Section, Lieutenant-Colonel Scott, argued that an Aboriginal unit should be used to guard the Royal Australian Air Force

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<sup>54</sup> Security Report on Cape York Aborigines, 24 March 1943. AA, Canberra, Attorney General's Dept., A 373 file 5903, in Kay Saunders, “Inequalities of Sacrifice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Labour in Northern Australia During the Second World War,” *Labour History* 69 (Nov. 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Saunders, “Inequalities of Sacrifice,” 133.

<sup>56</sup> Saunders, 133.

<sup>57</sup> A.P. Elkin to Prime Minister, 2 April 1942. AA, Melbourne, Dept of Army, General Correspondence series, Series MP 508 file 240/701/217, in Saunders, “Inequalities of Sacrifice,” 134.

<sup>58</sup> Saunders, “Inequalities of Sacrifice,” 134; Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, 11.

bases on select islands in Arnhem Land, and local people should be mobilized to act as guerilla defense units and coast guards. In the Northern Territory, Aboriginal men patrolled key coastal stretches by boat and on foot but were paid nothing for their services.<sup>59</sup> Despite initial hesitation, Indigenous peoples were gradually implemented into defense forces and Torres Strait Islanders served in the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit (NTSRU). Additionally, fifty-nine Torres Strait Islanders were used in the North Australia Observer Unit as horse breakers, airstrip markers, general laborers, and guides, some of whom were paid solely in cheap tobacco, a product nicknamed “Nigger Twist.”<sup>60</sup> Noel Collins, a member of the North Australia Observer Unit, recalls that,

They were trying to do the right thing by us and we tried to treat them as equals but that was hard to do, because in that country they'd lived their lives apart from the white man ... The manager of McArthur River Station was a bit savage on us because he reckoned that we were treating the blacks too well - that we were spoiling them. This manager was the only white man in that district [90 km sw of Borrooloola] and one day he said to us, 'When you fellas move out, we're stuck with the blacks!' In those days then in the Territory, it was nothing to shoot a black if he didn't do the right thing!<sup>61</sup>

Despite the unfair treatment and racial division experienced during the war, Aboriginal people continued to fight for their country.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Saunders, “Inequalities of Sacrifice,” 135.

<sup>61</sup> Collins, found in Saunders, “Inequalities of Sacrifice,” 135.

<sup>62</sup> Noah Riseman, *Defending Whose Country?: Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 40.

Well after the close of World War II, Aboriginal Australians were not afforded equal rights as citizens (as exemplified in Walter Davis' 1957 "Certificate of Exemption"). In an interview with ABC news, Garth O'Connell, the secretary of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and Services Association, recalls that, despite the fact that the Aboriginal Defense Force had equal pay and conditions during the war, when they returned "they [had] to go back to being just another blackfella back in their communities."<sup>63</sup> Others interviewed recalled that "If you can imagine my dad [Gunner Suey of the Australian Imperial Force] coming home, serving three years in a Malaysian prison, and his children aren't allowed to go in the Moree swimming pool."<sup>64</sup> Though additional legislation giving all Aboriginal people equal rights and the privilege to vote would need longer to take place (1967), the "injustice of permitting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander man to fight – and possibly die – for his country, but not to vote, was clear to many."<sup>65</sup> For this reason, in 1949, Prime Minister Ben Chifley amended the Commonwealth Electoral Act of 1918, to allow Indigenous ex-servicemen and women the right to vote in federal elections.

In addition to the small step forward World War II offered to Aboriginal ex-defense forces, in the aftermath of the conflict, pure pragmatism motivated the Australian government to reduce its citizenship limitations to allow diverse migrants and refugees into the country. After the war, the term "populate or perish," first coined in 1937 by

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<sup>63</sup> Brennan, "Anzac Day."

<sup>64</sup> Linda Boney, in Brennan, "Anzac Day."

<sup>65</sup> "Indigenous Australians' Right to Vote," National Museum of Australia, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/indigenous-australians-right-to-vote>; "1967 Referendum," Parliament of Australia, [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2017/May/The\\_1967\\_Referendum](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2017/May/The_1967_Referendum).

Billy Hughs, was reinvigorated due to the country's significant losses.<sup>66</sup> Nations with modest populations that suffered from heavy casualty rates realized that migration would be a vital part of their effort to rebuild infrastructure and increase populations. To reinvigorate its national demographics, Australia revisited the nation's immigration programs. From 1788 to 1996, Britain provided the largest single group of immigrants to Australia, later to be surpassed by New Zealand. However, after World War II, it composed only 32% of the country's total immigration.<sup>67</sup>

Both during and after the war, Australia experienced a significant influx of diverse immigrant populations attempting to flee their war-torn countries. In order to compete with other popular immigration hubs such as Canada and the United States, the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, approved the admittance of 170,000 displaced persons to Australia, representing the largest number of non-British populations to be accepted at a single time.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, the Parliament of Australia passed the Migration Act of 1958, which replaced the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 and effectively terminated the dictation test requirement for migrants.<sup>69</sup> Though this legislation presented a significant milestone in regard to dismantling White Australia Policy within the nation, the stipulations under this act were vague and gave little instruction to legislative officials.<sup>70</sup> However, this act established Australia's visa system for migrants entering the country, a system that is still partially in effect. Reflecting this decision, statistics published by the

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<sup>66</sup> Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 11.

<sup>67</sup> Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 11.

<sup>68</sup> Jupp, 12.

<sup>69</sup> "Migration Act 1958," Federal Register of Legislation, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2021C00156>.

<sup>70</sup> "Administrative Decision Making under the Migration Act 1958," Australian National University, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p318861/pdf/ch02.pdf>.

Parliament of Australia reveal that the nation's average annual growth increased from 3.4 percent between 1949-1950 to 4.5 percent in 1971.<sup>71</sup> Though "populate or perish" promoted pragmatic attitudes towards revising immigrant restrictions, the rise of Australian internationalism was met with severe hostility.<sup>72</sup>

Between 1890 and 1945, the Australian ethnic composition was *perceived* to be 98% British.<sup>73</sup> However, after World War II, the influx of non-British migrants entering the country (52.1% of over 1.2 million migrants),<sup>74</sup> combined with Australia's fading ties to the British empire, led to a rise of 'new nationalism,' a movement in which "Australian" identity a distinct entity, separate from Britain was reimagined to promote *Australian* history, *Australian* film, an *Australian* national anthem, an *Australian* flag, and an *Australian* republic.<sup>75</sup> However, the downfall of British culture created a "vacuum of identity" within Australian society and divided the country between those that embraced its new multicultural composition and those who longed to retain past identities.<sup>76</sup> Reflecting on this era, in 2004 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article that said,

For much of [the] last century, this debate was conducted from a position of weakness. We were never too sure of our place in the world. And never too confident about Australia's role and identity...

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<sup>71</sup> Joanne Simon-Davies, "Population and Migration Statistics in Australia," Parliament of Australia, Dec 7, 2018.

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp1819/Quick\\_Guides/PopulationStatistics](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1819/Quick_Guides/PopulationStatistics).

<sup>72</sup> Greg Melleuish, "Australian Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," Parliament of Australia, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Melleuish, "Australian Identity."

<sup>74</sup> Simon-Davies, "Population and Migration Statistics in Australia."

<sup>75</sup> Melleuish, "Australian Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," 2.

<sup>76</sup> Melleuish, 2.

Until the 1970s, we suffered from the cultural cringe an assumption that our institutions and culture could never be as good as Europe or North America...

It also took us a long time to come to terms with our history, the good and the bad of white settlement and our relationship with Indigenous Australians... After the progressive economic, social and cultural changes of the last 30 years, Australians have a renewed faith in our national identity. We have a renewed confidence in being Australian, drawing strength from the modern Australian story... A nation agonizing about itself is a nation held back by the weight of insecurity and uncertainty. Rare among the nations of the world, the Australian character is outward-going and confident, a larrikin streak among the conservatism of the international community.<sup>77</sup>

Though this publication sheds light on the nation's progression towards an encompassing national identity, it also reiterates engrained national images such as the "larrikin," that still permeated Australian society into the twenty-first century.<sup>78</sup> Despite the persisting presence of Aboriginal Australian and non-white migrants within the nation, Australian legislature systematically separated Australian and Aboriginal culture, segregated Indigenous populations from Western society, and disallowed "unfit" immigrants to enter the nation. Spurred by racialized

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<sup>77</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, "A big country: Australia's National Identity," April 20, 2004. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/a-big-country-australias-national-identity-20040420-gdisby.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Simon-Davies, "Population and Migration Statistics in Australia."

stereotypes, disputes for land, and the persisting thought that the Australian Aboriginal would eventually dissipate, the Australian government attempted to solve the “Aboriginal problem” and promote white Australian citizenship by limiting Aboriginal autonomy, consolidating groups to reservations, promoting the eradication of Aboriginal culture and identity, and limiting the ethnic composure of the country through restrictive immigration policies.<sup>79</sup> However, despite these actions, Aboriginal people continued to overcome unjust circumstances and non-white migrants continued to reinvent their lives in the Australian nation. Proving this, in May of 1967, over 90 percent of Australians voted ‘yes’ to making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Australian citizens, thereby taking the first step towards true national equality.<sup>80</sup> For hundreds of years, harmful collective ideals, such as the myth of the “white Australian,” have corrupted political legislation and social relations, and have caused more harm to Australian minorities than any war. Wars can be ended with peace treaties or compromises, whereas misguided beliefs can persist within the shadows of a society, causing unfathomable devastation to peoples’ lives, cultures, autonomy, and wellbeing.

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<sup>79</sup> Brennan, “Anzac Day.”

<sup>80</sup> Brennan, Elliot, “On this Day: Indigenous People Get Citizenship.” Australian Geographic, Nov 7, 2013.

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2013/11/on-this-day-indigenous-people-get-citizenship/>.

# **Archiving the City: Power, Imagination, and the Commissioners' Plan of 1811**

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## **Prologue: Bolts and Vegetables**

How ironic, I mutter to myself. New York's street gridded plan, my chosen topic for an Archives & Narratives graduate course at Fordham University, is seemingly breadth with manuscripts, collections, and documents, yet I find myself agonizing over two seemingly inconsequential mysteries. As I make my way to downtown Manhattan after disappointingly leaving the Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room in the New York Public Library, I again think; how ironic.

Both mysteries involve John Randel, a surveyor, cartographer, civil engineer, and *de facto* leader of the 19<sup>th</sup> century planning initiative, but the similarities end there. The first mystery involves Randel, an old woman, and an incident of vegetable throwing. The second, once again features Randel, but this time Central Park and metal bolts are the components of the puzzle. Both mysterious propel me out of the historical societies, and libraries, and into the gridded streets of Manhattan.

## **Part 1: The Plan, the Archives, and an 'Estimable Old Women'**

### **Introduction**

In this article, I examine the ways in which Manhattan's grid street plan of 1811 has been narrated, archived, and remembered. To do this, I examine specific

collections and manuscripts, but I also question and problematize how this information is made available for consumption. As my archival endeavors evolve, my interests shift from frantically collecting the documents of the commissioners, to a different set of sources – those who resisted the plan, and I question why these specific sources have been left out of the official narrative.

Before Manhattan’s gridded streets, the tip of the island of was a knot of fragmented streets shaped by local conditions lacking a unifying order. The upper part of the island was a combination of farms, country roads, and the unknown.<sup>81</sup> At the start of the 19th century, as streets emerged as a necessity for the global and rational metropolis, the city began building accordingly. An 1803 ruling condemned streets that “served only their private advantage, without a just regard for the welfare of others, and to the almost total neglect of public convenience and general usefulness.”<sup>82</sup> This precedent laid the groundwork for the Common Council (the City Council of its time) to appoint Gouverneur Morris, John Rutherford, and General Simeon De Witt as “Commissioners of Streets and Roads.” The inaugural assignment the three men were given was momentous; design a plan for the controlled growth of a young, expanding, metropolis.<sup>83</sup>

In 1807 the commissioners appointed John Randel, Jr. as their secretary and surveyor. Randel

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<sup>81</sup> Hillary Ballon, ed., *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811-2011* (New York: Columbia University Press).

<sup>82</sup> Ballon, *The Greatest Grid*.

<sup>83</sup> Artis Wright, “Designing the City of New York: The Commissioners’ Plan of 1811,” New York Public Library, last modified July 30, 2010, <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2010/07/30/designing-city-new-york-commissioners-plan-1811>.

had the task of drafting and executing the street grid plan for Manhattan, which, the commissioners contended, “Appeared to be the best; or, in other and more popular terms, attended with the least inconvenience.”<sup>84</sup> In March 1811, Randel submitted three hand-drawn manuscript surveys, each nearly nine feet long. These surveys have been called “a work of genius,” by Thomas G. Lannon, an assistant curator of the New York Public Library, with the maps still archived in the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs.

The second half of this article hopes to add to the ongoing academic dialogue concerning the “city as an archive.”<sup>85</sup> I dispute the view that archival sites must be municipal buildings and libraries, and instead argue urban spaces can and should be counted as an archive. Using the Commissioners' Plan of 1811 as a real and symbolic guide, I examine how state and social power has been negotiated, contested, archived, remembered, and confirmed within an urban context. Finally, to experience the city as an archive is to be mobile, with walking as perhaps its most essential mode. Keeping with this, research will be interspersed with my own experiences and interactions as a both a city dweller and archivist.

My aim is not to historicize Manhattan’s gridded street plan. There is already an abundance of wonderful scholarship dedicated to this cause. Rather, this article is interested in how historical production is facilitated and focuses on the relationship between state power, memory, and the city. The Commissioners' Plan of 1811 can best be thought of then, as a device used examine these themes.

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<sup>84</sup> Sam Roberts, “No Hero in 1811, Street Grid’s Father Was Showered With Produce, Not Praise,” *The New York Times*, March 20, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/21/nyregion/21randel.html>.

<sup>85</sup> Vyjayanthi Rao, “Embracing Urbanism: The City as Archive,” *New Literary History* 40, no. 2 (2009); Michael Sheringham and Richard Wentworth, “City as Archive: A Dialogue between Theory and Practice,” *Cultural Geographies* 23, no. 3 (July 2016).

The framework applied is inspired by the work of Ann Stoler, Michel Rolph-Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*, Foucault's concepts on power, and Edward's queer practice of the archive, among several other noted scholars of knowledge production and historical narration.

### **The Plan**

The plan most commonly referred to as the "Commissioners' Plan of 1811," is often highlighted as marking a significant turning point in the age of the city and modern urbanism. Although the merits of the 1811 grid as a design have been debated, just about all scholars agree it is the city's foundational act of planning and is crucial to its identity. These documents largely informed the commissioners' original design for the streets of Manhattan above Houston Street and below 155<sup>th</sup> Street, which put in place the rectangular grid plan of streets and avenues.<sup>86</sup>

### **Ruthless Utilitarianism**

There was nothing new about grids. City planners have used them for thousands of years and they were deployed throughout the American colonies, from small New England towns to much larger urban centers. What *was* new about Manhattan's plan was its "ruthless utilitarianism" and its designation as the first large-scale act of eminent domain in the city's history.<sup>87</sup> The city commissioners brazenly used this legal maneuver to

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<sup>86</sup> Reuben Skye Rose-Redwood, "Mythologies of the Grid in the Empire City, 1811-2011," *Geographical Review* 101, no. 3 (2011): 396.

<sup>87</sup> Edwin Burrows, *A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 420.

take land, and swindled proprietors to pay for the paving of the new roads. Money for the lost property was weighed against an estimate of how much the value of the surrounding property would increase once the new roads were paved. In many cases, landowners (and their tenants) lost property and owed the government money in the final tally.<sup>88</sup> The physical force unleashed during the implementation of the grid has been compared to a military campaign, with the aggressors being “the armies of street openers and . . . builders.” This military analogy presupposes a victim—or at least an enemy—that the aggressors ultimately defeat despite any resistance they may encounter.<sup>89</sup>

The plan displaced countless nineteenth-century New Yorkers and generations of Manhattanites were affected. Some fifty years after Randel submitted the manuscript surveys, the *New York Times* estimated that 20,000 squatters lived in Manhattan. Patches of the island north of 57th Street were covered in wooden shacks, built largely by immigrants unable to find affordable housing in the gridded and developed downtown.<sup>90</sup> Squatters displaced by the grid plan experienced a cycle of eviction and resettlement, moving from the site of Central Park to the east side, then the west side and the north end of the island. During the mid-19th century, writers typically described the poor as sinful and uncivilized nuisances, but by the end of the century, when urban development covered the island, journalists began to write nostalgically about “shantytown.” For the city’s squatters, however, there was nothing romantic about the loss and destruction of their homes, and

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<sup>88</sup> Burrows, *A History of New York City*, 420.

<sup>89</sup> Reuben Syke Rose-Redwood, “Re-Creating the Historical Topography of Manhattan Island,” *Geographical Review* 93, no. 1 (2003): 124.

<sup>90</sup> Lisa Goff, *Shantytown, USA: Forgotten Landscapes of the Working Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 2016), 151.

they resisted their evictions with protest and aggressions.<sup>91</sup>

Despite displacement and evictions, the master narrative of the Manhattan grid has been presented as a total and complete victory of enlightenment ideals and rationality over the archaic and unscientific. For instance, *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811–2011*, an exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York, hails itself as the most in-depth examination of this subject. It describes the grid as “the city’s first great civic enterprise and a vision of brazen ambition” and asserts “the 1811 plan is a plainspoken but highly heroic statement.”<sup>92</sup> Several other exhibitions, and numerous other historical works echo these sentiments. But narratives are never definite, and the story of Manhattan’s street plan is not as simple as the triumph of order over chaos. Gridded streets were used to increase real estate values, and planners used state-sanctioned eminent domain powers to enforce their vision of the city.

### The Archives

Reconstructing the archival narrative of the Commissioners' Plan of 1811 presents unique challenges. For one thing, most key documents involving the grid are topographic maps and logbooks. The two key documents scholars have used to narrate the Manhattan's gridded streetscape are *The Appointment of the Commissioners* (1807) and *Remarks of the Commissioners* (1811).<sup>93</sup> The

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<sup>91</sup> Goff, *Shantytown*, 151.

<sup>92</sup> Hillary Ballon, ed., *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811-2011* (New York: Columbia University Press).

<sup>93</sup> Transcription of *The Appointment of the Commissioners*, April 3, 1807. Digitized copy can be found at

former touches on the laying out of Streets and Roads in the City of New York and is housed at the New York State Archives. In the latter, which is stored in New York State Office of General Services, the state-appointed street commissioners explained the economic “convenience and utility”<sup>94</sup> were their primary motivations for choosing the grid plan.

Tucked away in the reserved corners of the New York Public Library and New-York Historical Society, I begin to pour over the notes and field books of John Randel other leaders of the plan. Rare book rooms and appointment-only consultations add to the allure of the archive, to borrow from Farge, as if these privileged spaces contain locked away secrets of the past not meant to be consumed by the public. I painstakingly flip the pages of the commissioners' manuscript report looking for insight. I request more and more documents related to the plan. But in midst of this frenzied approach to research, I recall the words of Ann Stoler; “the mining of the *content* of government commissions, reports, and other archival sources rarely pays attention to their peculiar placement and *form*.”<sup>95</sup> The archival approach I was pursuing, this frantic hoarding of documents, did not allow for critical analysis or thought. Trouillot touches on this when he describes historical positivism saying “the role of the historian is to reveal the past, to discover or, at least, approximate truth. Within that viewpoint, power is unproblematic, irrelevant to the construction of the narrative.”<sup>96</sup> But historical narratives and archives are

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<http://thegreatestgrid.mcny.org/greatest-grid/key-documents/58>.

Transcription of the Remarks of the Commissioners, March 22, 1811. Digitized copy can be found at

<http://urbanplanning.library.cornell.edu/DOCS/nyc1811.htm>.

<sup>94</sup> Remarks of the Commissioners, 1811.

<sup>95</sup> Ann Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 1.

<sup>96</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the*

*always* about power. Afterall, they can decide which stories are told and which are marginalized. Through archives, the past is controlled and the present and future is contested. This represents a tremendous amount of power over shared memory, a collective past, and a modern society.<sup>97</sup> It is then the responsibility of the historian to track how some narratives emerge as dominant while others get silenced in the process of historical production.

By frantically collecting the written documents, maps, and manuscripts of the commissioners I was following a script that has been normalized by the routine repetition of past practice in the discipline. I would never find the marginalized in this way. The archive of the state is neither neutral nor impartial. They are established by the powerful to protect or enhance their position in society. At this moment my methodological approach changes. I begin to look for counter-narratives to the story of the Commissioners' Plan of 1811. Who resisted the plan? Why have their stories been excluded from the dominant narrative?

### **The Archival 'Turn'**

Before delving into a discussion on resistance to the 1811 plan, it seems appropriate to briefly examine some of the flashpoints of academic thought involving the concepts of the archive. Archives have traditionally been thought of as apolitical brick and mortar spaces where documents deemed to have some historical significances are housed and organized, usually by the government or

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*Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 5.

<sup>97</sup> Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 1.

other institutions. This definition of the archive surfaced as manifestations of centralized power and enlightened ideals. As such, older forms of preserving historical memory lost credibility to the written document.<sup>98</sup> But since the cultural turn, the concept of archiving has changed. The shift from archive-a-source to archive-as-subject owes much to Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. For Foucault, archives are not the “the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents, attesting to its own past” or is “the library of libraries.” Foucault sees the “archive” as a figurative social construct upon which to view knowledge, memory, power, and societal ills.<sup>99</sup> Derrida adds to the view of archiving as a theoretical field with *Archive Fever*. Derrida also points out human emotion and feeling in archiving, saying “the archaization produces as much as it records the event.”<sup>100</sup>

Scholars who approach the archive with the most apprehension tend to be those interested in the histories of (nonelite) women, slaves, peasants, colonized populations, and other marginalized actors who until recently did not get to produce written sources with their views on themselves and events around them. Instead of reading sources verbatim, these historians engage the archive more analytically, emphasizing the interpretative nature of analysis and inspecting not just the content of documents but also their form. This type of framework has (broadly) been called reading ‘against the grain.’

### Resistance to the Grid & Counter-Narratives

Reinvigorated, I returned to the archive. Seeking to

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<sup>98</sup> Maria Martinez, “Archives, Bodies, and Imagination: The Case of Juana Aguilar and Queer Approaches to History, Sexuality, and Politics,” *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (2014): 165.

<sup>99</sup> This is fleshed out by Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge*.

<sup>100</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 17.

foreground displaced and silenced nineteenth-century Manhattanites in the record, I consulted librarians and archivists alike trying to find dissenters to the use of eminent domain. I request *A Plain Statement, Addressed to The Proprietors of Real Estate*, housed at The New-York Historical Society by Clement Clarke Moore. In the manuscript, Moore ridicules Randel and the triad of commissioners. Moore comments in the 1818 pamphlet, “Nothing is to be left unmolested which does not coincide with the street-commissioner’s plummet and level. These are men who would have cut down the seven hills of Rome.”<sup>101</sup> Moore was born into a small fortune and doubled it by investing in real estate. He was also a poet and penned the *'Twas the Night before Christmas* poem. Next, I am steered towards the notes of John Jacob Astor, who loathed the seizure of private property and called it the “evil.”<sup>102</sup> But these men spoke out against the plan from a position of immense wealth and privilege. The notion of using these sources as counter-narratives rings false.

The story of New York’s Street gridded plan has been told as the triumph of order over chaos. But so far, the only archival remnants of detractors are the rich and powerful. What of the records of the subaltern? Of the poor and displaced? What of the tenants and renters in downtown Manhattan? Do they exist? Perhaps inspired by Ghosh who combed the archives for traces of the Indian slave he had come across by accident, I continue to look through the notes of the wealthy hoping for the same outcome, but to no avail. Besides the fabulously wealthy, resisters have not been included in this narrative.

### **Vegetables and an ‘Estimable Old Woman’**

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<sup>101</sup> Clement Clarke Moore, *A Plain Statement, Addressed to the Proprietors of Real Estate, in the City and County of New-York: By a Landholder* (New York, 1818).

<sup>102</sup> Gerard Koepfel, *City on a Grid: How New York Became New York* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2015), 151.

Feeling disillusioned, I halfheartedly scan Gerard Koepal's *City on a Grid* (2015) and a throwaway passage piques my interest:

Many likely apocryphal stories about physical aggression have been passed down through the years, perhaps founded in truth but embellished with time, such as the surveyors' supposed retreat from a barrage of cabbages and artichokes hurled by "an estimable old woman" who objected to men running a line through her kitchen.<sup>103</sup>

Fascinated, I turn to Koepal's notes and see the story is from Martha J. Lamb's 1877 text *The History of the City of New York*. Lamb was a New England raised writer who in 1883 purchased *The Magazine of American History* and became its editor. But before this, she had published dozens of fiction, nonfiction, and historical works. I immediately delve into a digitalized copy of *The History of the City of New York*, and there she was...a briefly mentioned and nameless vegetable hurler. But who was this "estimable old woman" (Koepal uses this phrase, lifting it from Lamb) that courageously threw food at Randel and his underlings? After dedicating a substantial amount of time looking for the archival evidence of the poor and working-class, had I finally located a subject to foreground historically? And how did Lamb come to know learn about this episode in the first place? But in searching manuscripts, digitized collections, other writings on the period, I only found recitations of the same story. The only new information I could gather was she had sold vegetables for a living as well. The further papers of Martha J. Lamb are also not of any help. A once promising lead turns to disappointment.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Koeppel, *City on a Grid*, 102.

<sup>104</sup> A digitized copy of *The History of the City of New York* can be found

Many writers of history have conflated oral histories, and particularly *gendered* oral histories with unreliability and skepticism. Koepal clearly thinks this way calling the episode “apocryphal.” Not surprisingly, both the vegetable hurler and Martha Lamb are women. While the traditional archive has overlooked poor elderly women, by counting oral traditions as an archive this voice might be foregrounded. By expanding the metaphorical archive to include spoken traditions more voices would be heard.

### The Archivist's Dilemma

The problems posed by the archive are not unique to a sociocultural historian of nineteenth-century New York. When engaged in scholarship on underrepresented populations, on the marginalized, the othered, the poor, the gendered, and ethnic minorities, many historians have struggled to give voice to silences. Scholars of Atlantic slavery especially speak of a desire to know the unknowable, fill the gaps, and rewrite historical narratives. As Jennifer L. Morgan says, the social historian recognizes that their “scholarship is about more than simply the commitment to writing history but is also fueled by a sense that through correcting archival erasures we are poised to make a much more important intervention, one in which endemic wrongs are righted.”<sup>105</sup> To be clear, it would be utterly distasteful to compare the plight of working class nineteenth-century Manhattanites with victims of chattel slavery, but nevertheless I do feel some desire to foreground this elderly woman in history. She who had bravely resisted state enforced property seizures by

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at [https://archive.org/details/ldpd\\_6499144\\_000/page/n11](https://archive.org/details/ldpd_6499144_000/page/n11). Collections can be found at <https://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss39.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Jennifer L. Morgan, “Archives and Histories of Racial Capitalism: An Afterword,” *Social Text* 33, no. 4 (December 2015): 155.

vegetables. But the written documents simply do not exist.

## Part II: The City as an Archive

### Randel's Bolts

After John Randel submitted his plan in 1811, the young surveyor set out to inscribe the grid throughout Manhattan. Randel resurveyed the island with instruments of his own invention, placing wooden stakes or pegs at every one of the more than fifteen hundred planned intersections. Once done with that task, his crew set about replacing the pegs with more sturdy markers. At some fifteen hundred and fifty intersections, according to Randel's notes, when he would encounter bedrock or boulder, he placed iron bolts to mark his spot. As the city extended up the island, these bolts seemed to have been destroyed as the terrain was transformed.<sup>106</sup>

In 2004, using John Randel's original maps, a team of geographers and professional excavators combed through Central Park looking for remnants of the plan. It has long been suspected that the 1811 Commissioners' Plan was set to include the famous park, but as the grid expanded, some prominent New Yorkers increasingly called for open grounds, which resulted in the Greensward competition and the creation of Central Park.<sup>107</sup> Despite the long odds, an iron bolt, partially destroyed, but plainly set in a bed of lead was found by the team. Fearing desecration, the exact location of John Randel's bolt has not been revealed to the public, although the allure of the bolt has created a thriving online community of amateur historians dedicated to

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<sup>106</sup> Marguerite Holloway, *The Measure of Manhattan: The Tumultuous Career and Surprising Legacy of John Randel Jr., Cartographer, Surveyor, Inventor* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2014), 200.

<sup>107</sup> Holloway, *The Measure of Manhattan*, 200.

finding it.

### Memory and Power

Before delving into a headier discussion on the city as an archive, it is important to briefly discuss memory and power in a modern metropolis. While there can be no one framework for understanding the complexities of the city, the importance of collective memory cannot be overlooked. Collective memory, identified as a legitimate aspect of memory studies by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s, is a social phenomenon that refers specifically to a group's recollection of the past in the present.<sup>108</sup> History, memory, and power are strongly intertwined in the public realm, informing our understandings of the past. In a modern metropolis, symbols of power are common and plain to see. City centers for instance, are filled with presidential monuments, statues of war heroes, and other permanent sites of commemoration, emphasizing a shared past and collective victory. But public spaces infused with the symbolic power of national ideologies have also become fertile ground for groups looking to challenge authority. It is no surprise that a wide array of groups, from Civil Rights organizations to white nationalists have gathered at key spaces of collective memory to link their movements with preexisting national symbols and lay claim to the power of the state.<sup>109</sup>

The scholar of the archive and the historian interested in memory face many of the same challenges. They both attempt to document what has been remembered and what has been forgotten. What memories are ultimately made visible do not randomly emerge, rather they result from decisions

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<sup>108</sup> For more on this see Halbwach's *On Collective Memory*.

<sup>109</sup> Kevin Loughran, Gary A. Fine, and Anthony Hunter, "Urban Spaces, City Cultures, and Collective Memories," in the *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (London: Taylor and Frances Inc., 2015), 199.

and actions embedded within and constrained by society.<sup>110</sup> The landscape and order of contemporary Manhattan reminds us that the grid was not a natural or pre-ordained condition; the city we experience today is a direct result of brazen state enforcement by way of 19<sup>th</sup> century eminent domain practices. In this sense, the physical space New Yorkers exist in is both a real and symbolic representation of state power. State power is constantly produced and reproduced through the workings of everyday life in Manhattan.

### **The City as an Archive**

To be an archivist is to explore, and to experience the *city* as an archive is to be mobile, with walking perhaps its most essential act. Leaving the Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room in the New York Public Library, I decide to wander the streets of Manhattan seeking inspiration, and perhaps even to try my luck at finding the bolt in Central Park. After all, the grid is not just ingrained in the physical fabric of the city; it is also the systems and people moving through it, even if they are doing so unconsciously. While walking, I recall the words of Trouillot, “history is the fruit of power, but power that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.”<sup>111</sup> When considering The Commissioners’ plan, power can be found in the way the story has been archived and narrated, but it is also in its surreptitiousness. Put another way, the paved avenues and streets of Manhattan are reminders of the invisibility of state power.

I find myself in Columbus Park, in what used to be considered Five Points area. Nineteenth-century Five

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<sup>110</sup> Reuben Rose-Redwood, et al., “Collective Memory and the Politics of Urban Space: An Introduction,” *GeoJournal* 73, no. 3 (2008): 161.

<sup>111</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 20.

Points is precisely what the grid commissioners were trying to avoid. Their orderly future city of right angles is the opposite of what developed at the notorious, crime and immigrant infused Five Points. But the abominable intersection (hence the ‘five points’ moniker) lost its points long ago: all that is left is Worth Street (now continuing to the east) with Baxter angling in from the north down to Worth and stopping there. Mosco, the old Cross Street, crosses nothing; it is just a single block long and severed from Worth and Baxter.<sup>112</sup> For those who saw the commissioners' grid as rigid, the vibrant and ear-piercing Five Points was a symbol of how Manhattan might have developed organically. Although just about everything in the neighborhood has changed over the years, while walking through what used to be the Five-Points area, I find myself inexplicably lost in thought and imagination.

To describe a city— its physical and material urban fabric — as an ‘archive’ is not a far-reaching concept. The archeological evidence of the past, the graffiti, the monuments, historic buildings, the plaques, are evident in an urban space. But wandering the city as I am, allows for a certain imaginative quality that defies temporal and spatial boundaries. I am indescribably able to picture the elderly vegetable peddler clearly. I imagine both her life and her food throwing incident. Perhaps the episode even occurred in the wild Five Points area, not far from where I am walking. The energy and euphoria of the city can give you a feeling that you are in contact with the past, much like an archivist who comes across a dusty scrapbook. I cannot know any details about her of course, but her plight is clearer to me than it ever would be in private reading room.

Still deep in thought, I recall what Brent Edwards dubs the *queer practice of the archive*, “an approach to the material preservation of the past that deliberately aims to retain what is elusive, what is hard to pin down, what can’t

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<sup>112</sup> Koeppl, *City on a Grid*, 11.

quite be explained.”<sup>113</sup> This concept is apropos for this discussion, with one variation; when dealing with the *city* as an archive, the elusiveness and ‘what can’t quite be explained’ is not the material preservation, but a sensual almost euphoric awakening and the power to imagine. Yes, cities are indeed a form of archive –but not only in an architectural and physical sense, but also in the feelings they evoke. In this way, the city as an archive becomes a deeply personal form of archival collecting.

Urban imagination as an archival tool relies heavily on speculation. Is this academically unethical? Worse yet, by romanticizing the lives of those displaced and evicted by Manhattan’s street grid plan, do we underscore the fact that their lives and experiences *can’t* be reclaimed? This is something Saidiya Hartman’s *Venus in Two Acts* engages with. The essay calls for “critical fabulation,” which means a way of writing an impossible story to “amplify the impossibility of its telling.”<sup>114</sup> I would not suggest my idea of urban imaginative speculation should replace empirical documentation; rather, that these two realms might work in unison. In sum, we imagine the elderly vegetable peddler only to emphasize the gaps in the traditional archive and highlight impassibility of telling her story, not simply to fabricate historical events.

### Central Park

After spending months researching the Commissioners’ Plan of 1811, I am driven to wander Central Park to try to locate the mysterious bolt. So, on an exceptionally peaceful day I walk the park and think about my archival endeavors. Through the foliage, brush, and trees, the sounds and sights

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<sup>113</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards, “The Taste of the Archive,” *Callaloo* 35, no. 4 (2012): 944.

<sup>114</sup> Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 26, no. 26 (2008): 3.

of the city begin to recede. Once again, as I had done in Columbus Park, I imagine life before the grid. After all, the hills and rocks of the park are reminiscing of Manhattan's topography before the plan. Something peculiar happens just then, perhaps triggered by the serene landscape: I lose interest in the bolt. What would locating the object accomplish? After all, would this frantic collecting, free of analysis, be a return to how I started archival adventures? The imaginative energy of the city makes it an archive, not a singular metal bolt. I decide to abandon my search and enjoy Central Park instead.

### **Conclusion**

With its standardized city blocks and rectilinear street layout, New York's grid plan has come to epitomize the triumph of rationality over chaos. This narrative relies almost extensively on a recitation of the remarks, documents, and manuscripts of John Randel and the commissioners. In using eminent domain, the plan displaced countless nineteenth-century New Yorkers and affected generations of Manhattanites, but these lives exist outside of the official archive. This article adds to the view of archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval, but of knowledge production. By considering the power dynamics and silencing effects involved in the collection, organization, and use of written sources, historians can challenge ingrained societal norms and codes. I have tried to find the poor, the marginalized, and the displaced in the official record but to no avail. My search for counter-narratives also ended with disappointment, which led me to walk the gridded streets of Manhattan.

The city is indeed a form of archive. This archive includes graffiti, monuments, historic

buildings, and plaques, and other contested sites of power. But the euphoric energy of the city encourages us to imagine past lives. This imaginative quality defies temporal and spatial boundaries. In this way, we can break the wheel of the traditional archive and emphasize gaps.

# **When the Queer East Met the American West: How the Same-Sex Relationship Between a Syrian “Princess” and Her “Secretary” Destabilized Orientalism in the Early Twentieth Century**

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## **Introduction**

With their entire household suffering from starvation, Naomi and her husband abandoned their home in the Kingdom of Judah in search of food. Settling where they eventually found sustenance, Naomi and her family established their new home east of Judah, in the Kingdom of Moab. There, Naomi’s husband died, and her two sons married Moabite women. A decade later, Naomi’s two sons died as well. Now without her husband or children, Naomi felt the time had come for her to return to Judah. She instructed her now former daughters-in-law, Orpah, and Ruth, to depart for their respective homes too. Orpah did as Naomi instructed, but Ruth and Naomi had grown close. Ruth dismissed Naomi’s order and pledged to go wherever she went, stay wherever Naomi stayed, call Naomi’s people her people, and consider Naomi’s God her God. Her fidelity to Naomi even extended beyond the physical world. Ruth also promised to die wherever Naomi died and to be entombed with her for eternity.<sup>115</sup>

Despite the story of Ruth and Naomi first appearing in the Old Testament, their love greatly resonated with

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<sup>115</sup> Ruth 1:1-22.

modern lesbian communities. Helen Anderson incorporated the story of Ruth and Naomi into her 1937 play *Pity for Women* to counter dominant narratives of homosexuality as a sinful and criminal act. Because Anderson's main characters, Ann and Judith, live as an openly lesbian couple and pledge themselves to each other using the same words Ruth uses to pledge herself to Naomi, lesbian literary historian Linnea Stenson acclaims *Pity for Women* as the first lesbian work to show resistance from the author—and characters—toward the dominate prejudices against same-sex relationships. Moreover, Stenson argues *Pity for Women* is the first example of anyone using Ruth and Naomi's story as evidence of God's love for same-sex couples.<sup>116</sup> My research suggests this interpretation dates back further than *Pity for Women*, however. Anderson's adaptation of Ruth and Naomi's story is one example of a tradition dating back to at least 1919 when "Princess" Rahme Haidar met her "secretary" Lucille Burgess and they began a beautifully subversive journey together. Their story fills a glaring absence of same-sex desire in the history of early Arab American communities and shows how a Middle Eastern woman and her same-sex partner worked to destabilize Orientalism in the early twentieth century.

### **Rahme Haidar: The Missionary**

Born with an infectious personality to a well-off family who ensured her education was no less than remarkable, Rahme Haidar immigrated to the United States very well-equipped in 1899.<sup>117</sup> According to the 1910

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<sup>116</sup> Helen Anderson, *Pity for Women* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1937); Lori L. Lake, "Lesbian Fiction Herstory: After The Well of Loneliness," last modified October 21, 2016, accessed May 3, 2022, <http://www.lorillake.com/AfterTheWell.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Rahme Haidar, *Under Syrian Stars* (New York, NY: Fleming H.

United States Federal Census and her autobiography, *Under Syrian Stars*, Haidar left her home in Baalbek at the age of 13 and traveled through various European ports and cities until she arrived in the New York harbor with a group of female friends similar in age.<sup>118</sup> At the time, young women often emigrated from the Middle East in groups and relied on assistance from early Arab American communities. Early Arab Americans sought to tame the unbridled sexuality they believed all young women possessed. The community members who aided Haidar and her companions as they traveled in search of modest work, education, and husbands likely imposed these conservative expectations upon them.<sup>119</sup> But Haidar proved resistant to societal constraints. Her professional goals, sexual orientation, and overall visibility challenged these traditional expectations for her life.

Educated at Denison University in Ohio<sup>120</sup> and Chicago University in Illinois,<sup>121</sup> Haidar's collegiate training secured her a position as the superintendent of a

Revell Company, 1929), 25.

<sup>118</sup> Haidar; *Under Syrian Stars*, 26; 1910 U.S. census, Los Angeles County, California, population schedule, Los Angeles City, precinct 76, sheet 75A, enumeration district (ED) 121, dwelling 87, family 95, Rahme Haidar; NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1178.

<sup>119</sup> Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon 1870-1920* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 64-70.

<sup>120</sup> *Denison University Annual Catalogue, 1904-1905* (Granville, OH, 1905), 125; *Denison University Annual Catalogue, 1906-1907* (Granville, OH, 1907), 129.

<sup>121</sup> "Students Hear Princess Rahmie Haidar," *The Trail: The Fortnightly of the College of Puget Sound*, January 8, 1918, 3. Accessed April 11, 2019, [https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1139&context=thetrail\\_all](https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1139&context=thetrail_all); "Princess Haider, Syrian, Princess, Lincoln Visitor," *Lincoln Star*, July 28, 1918; "Princess Haider of Syria Is Visitor in Nashville," *The Tennessean*, November 28, 1920; "Princess of Syria is to Speak Twice in Miami Tomorrow," *Miami News*, February 12, 1921.

Baptist mission in Los Angeles in 1909.<sup>122</sup> Living in the United States for 11 years and 24 years of age at the time she accepted the role of superintendent, Haidar's age, marital status, education, and work defied expectations of modesty and gender. In early Arab American communities, women ought to be married. But many women, Haidar among them, never did. Unmarried women frequently lived with relatives, however. As the following pages show, Haidar's practice of living alone coupled with her exhaustive traveling challenged these traditional practices among early Arab Americans. In the words of a prominent member of the Middle Eastern diaspora in the United States at the time, Afifa Karam, Haidar's autonomy and positionality put her in what many likely saw as a "compromising moral position."<sup>123</sup>

Despite her successes and the occasional misogynist critic, Haidar never became complacent and always strove to expand her sphere of influence. While working at the mission, she attended classes at the University of Southern California (USC). While at USC, her professors exposed her to Shakespeare and drama and, like most acting coaches, they also encouraged her to "develop the inner self" and "prepare the body to express the inner self."<sup>124</sup> Through this education, Haidar mastered her skills in communication, performance, and engagement. Eventually, she earned a post-graduate degree in public speaking from USC, which proved very beneficial in her ability to teach

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<sup>122</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Los Angeles City, CA., pop. sch., ED 121, sheet 75A, dwell. 87, fam. 95, Rahme Haidar; *Annual of the Northern Baptist Convention* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 60; *A Record of the Work of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society*, ed. Frances M. Schuyler (Chicago, IL, 1913), 169-70.

<sup>123</sup> Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 31.

<sup>124</sup> *University of Southern California Bulletin: Year Book for 1908-1909* (Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California, 1909), 230.

classes, present at missionary conferences, and lecture at local social clubs. But Haidar's inner self eventually grew dissatisfied with this small network and desired a wider audience.<sup>125</sup>

For a young woman living in the United States during the Progressive era, studying public speaking, and occasionally lecturing on the nature of her missionary work was about as respectable of a stage career as one could expect to achieve. The Progressives proved particularly ruthless in their condemnation of theater. They saw burlesques as too provocative, minstrelsies as too crude, and melodramas as too emotional. Often literally adjoined to known brothels, theaters themselves were contaminated spaces for Progressives. Blaming theater for corrupting natural-born citizens and poorly acculturating immigrants, the Progressives saw theater as a serious problem in need of a solution.<sup>126</sup>

Compared to their crusades to outlaw alcohol or regulate prostitution, the Progressives tried curbing the influence of theater with a unique strategy. They did not try to outlaw it or regulate it. They knew the popularity of theater would make it impossible to accomplish these goals. Instead, they created spaces and produced content they believed could serve as suitable alternatives to Vaudeville. At the local level, Progressives hosted house parties throughout the country that were essentially variety shows, like those in New York, Chicago, or Boston, but on a smaller scale and with a wholesome core.<sup>127</sup> More

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<sup>125</sup> *University of Southern California Bulletin: Year Book for 1908-1909* (Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California, 1909), 230-34, 377; "Princess Haider of Syria Is Visitor in Nashville," *The Tennessean*, November 28, 1920; "Princess Haider in Lecture on Syria," *Tampa Tribune*, March 24, 1921.

<sup>126</sup> Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Communication of Sex, 1790- 1920* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 109-11.

<sup>127</sup> "Old Circles," *The Chautauquan* 17, no. 2 (May 1893): 235;

importantly for Haidar was the Chautauqua movement, the Progressive era's "wholesome" alternative to the mainstream theater. Promoting educators, bands, performers, and preachers of good moral character, Chautauqua assemblies brought family-friendly entertainment and culture to rural communities throughout the United States. While some women, such as Eva Tanguay, Gladys Bentley, Kitty Doner, and Kathleen Clifford, dared popular stages despite the judgments of Progressives, Haidar satisfied her desire to perform through the Chautauqua circuit.<sup>128</sup>

After six years of lecturing throughout Southern California as a missionary, Haidar began her career as a performer at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1915.<sup>129</sup> But the audience who attended her performance in San Francisco diverged greatly from her usual crowds. Before 1915, Haidar taught physical skills and the English language to recent immigrants or lectured other missionaries about her work.<sup>130</sup> But the spectators Haidar encountered in San Francisco were predominantly white,

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"Drawing Room Work," *Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of California* (San Francisco, CA: Brunt & Co., Printers, 1893), 136; "A 'Faggot Party'" *The Library Journal: Official Organ of the American Library Association* 19, no. 4 (April 1894): 132; "With the Children," *The Christian Evangelist* 38, no. 49 (December 1901): 1563.

<sup>128</sup> "A Princess to Speak at Union Services Sunday," *Albany Daily Democrat*, August 14, 1915; "Naaman, the Leper Drama, Next Sunday," *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, June, 22, 1920; "Tent City is Built on Assembly Grounds," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 29, 1921.

<sup>129</sup> "A Real Princess Visits Bonham," *Bonham Daily*, March 8, 1918; "Princess Had Job Waiting 8 Years," *Bend Bulletin*, October 25, 1923; "Lecture Tour Contract Is Signed by Princess," *San Bernardino County Sun*, November 3, 1923.

<sup>130</sup> Rahme Haider, "Seed Sowing Among Syrians," *Missions: American Baptist International Magazine, Volume 3*, 1912, 564-65; "Appendix D: Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society" in *Annual of the Northern Baptist Convention* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1910), 124-25.

natural-born citizens of the United States who harbored deep misconceptions about, as one Texas newspaper put it, “[Haidar’s] native country—the Holy Land.”<sup>131</sup>

As the scholarship of Ussama Makdisi and Heather Sharkey shows, American Evangelicals greatly fetishized people and places associated with the Christian Bible in the early twentieth century. Before the 1915 World’s Fair, Haidar never imagined herself as a native of “the Holy Land.” In census data, immigration paperwork, and other documents related to Haidar’s travels, she reported connections with Turkish, Syrian, and Lebanese locals but never the Holy Land. These invocations of Christian scripture by American Evangelicals indicated to Haidar that most American Evangelicals possessed no real understanding of the Middle East. Furthermore, the convergence at the 1915 World’s Fair of a small sample of this much larger group showed Haidar that whole communities across the country stood ready for someone to educate and entertain them.

Although Haidar never credited one instance of ignorance as the inspiration for her career as a performer, she reported several times her shock at how little the people of the United States knew about, as they called it, the Holy Land or “the Orient.”<sup>132</sup> The crowd of the San Francisco World’s Fair in particular helped her realize “there was a great demand for enlightening the western world,” which she satisfied by traveling her world’s fair performance throughout the larger Chautauqua circuit.<sup>133</sup> This language

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<sup>131</sup> “A Real Princess Visits Bonham,” *Bonham Daily*, March 8, 1918. Other references connecting Haidar to the Holy Land are available at, “Princess Haider of Syria Is Visitor in Nashville,” *Tennessean*, November 28, 1920; “Princess of Syria Is to Speak Twice in Miami Tomorrow,” *Miami News*, February 12, 1921; “Tells of Beauties of the Holy Land,” *Pensacola News Journal*, May 1, 1922.

<sup>132</sup> Princess Rahme Haidar, *Under Syrian Stars* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), 9- 10.

<sup>133</sup> Haidar, *Under Syrian Stars*, 27.

of enlightenment challenged narratives of "The West" as "enlightening." In a career founded on two transgressive performances, this is Haidar's first. As the following pages show, she goes on to subvert the dominant order of her day by reclaiming narratives of the Middle East from Orientalist tropes through her own "authentic" concoctions. For example, by shifting her audience from immigrants and other missionaries to American Evangelicals, Haidar altered her persona as well. Suddenly touting a royal lineage dating as far back as the book of Genesis, the "Real Live Princess" Rahme Haidar came into being only after the 1915 World's Fair.<sup>134</sup>

### **Rahme Haidar: The Princess**

For American Evangelicals, popular culture greatly influenced their expectations for Middle Eastern people like Rahme Haidar and, according to Linda Jacobs, the "first large-scale appearance of Middle Eastern entertainment" in the United States occurred at the Centennial International Exposition of 1876.<sup>135</sup> But troupes, such as Ali Ben Abdallah's, had been performed in tents, theaters, and churches for over a decade by the time of the Centennial Exposition. World's fairs gave Western audiences opportunities to consume performances and goods from "The East" on a much larger scale, however.<sup>136</sup>

Edward Said theorizes extensively on Orientalism, which he defines as the West's condescending image of the East as the fallen anti-thesis of the West. Defined through contrasts, the West is imagined as rational while the East is seen as violent, the West is democratic while the East is

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<sup>134</sup> "Real Live Princess Will Visit Pullman," *Pullman Herald*, November 11, 1916.

<sup>135</sup> Linda Jacobs, "Playing East: Arabs Perform in Nineteenth Century America," *Mashriq & Mahjar* 2, no. 2 (2014): 89.

<sup>136</sup> Jacobs, "Playing East," 80.

tyrannical, the West is peaceful while the East is barbaric, and so on. These portrayals proved critical in Western powers rationalizing their empirical conquests in the Middle East.

Performances by Middle Eastern troupes at world's fairs usually contributed to the spread of these stereotypes and sales of goods at world's fairs simultaneously linked the East with the new market economy of the West. Thus, as Said argues, world's fairs helped make Orientalism a circular cycle catering to the consumers of imperialism, who were also members of the societies that produced these demeaning images in the first place.<sup>137</sup>

Orientalist exhibitions, such as "Little Egypt" and "Streets of Cairo," entertained audiences at theaters, amusement parks, and world's fairs across the country in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>138</sup> These stereotypes also permeated the emerging world of film. In 1894, Thomas Edison produced a short clip of Hedji Cherif, an Arab acrobat. In the short, as Linda Jacobs notes, if not for his "exotic clothes, he could be any nineteenth-century acrobat."<sup>139</sup> This legacy of using stereotypical images, such as costumes, to define the East, continued with very popular films, such as *Kismet* (1920), *The Sheik* (1921), and *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), where Otis Skinner, Rudolph Valentino, and Douglas Fairbanks all received great acclaim for their portrayals of "Arabs."

While Fairbanks, Valentino, and Skinner portrayed men of the East as romantic, mysterious, and simultaneously barbaric figures, popular culture hypersexualized Middle Eastern women. As the concept of belly dancing became popular in the Western imagination, it transitioned from an indigenous Middle Eastern dance

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<sup>137</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1978), 7.

<sup>138</sup> Jacobs, "Playing East," 84.

<sup>139</sup> Jacobs, 81.

into an erotic performance. In most early Arab American communities, belly dancers wore mesh cloth when exposing their stomachs to maintain the expectation of modesty, but this element quickly dissipated from the attire of belly dancers in the United States and, as time moved on, performances became only more sexually suggestive through movement and other costume choices.<sup>140</sup>

While demeaning images of Middle Easterners filled the imaginations of white American audiences, the Ottoman Empire physically massacred Assyrian people and committed genocide. American Evangelicals felt compelled to aid Assyrians in this humanitarian crisis because they saw Assyrians as the descendants of Biblical figures and their faith compelled them to action.

They viewed Assyrians as the closest earthly descendants of Jesus Christ himself, which we will see that Haidar used in her ruse.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, as Jesus says to his followers in the Gospel of Matthew, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”<sup>142</sup> Thus, coupling misconceptions about the millennia-old nature of Assyrian civilization with their faith in the Gospel as the key to salvation, American Evangelicals took great interest in Middle Eastern politics.

In 1915, coincidentally the same year Haidar began her stage career, James L. Barton and Cleveland H. Dodge founded the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (later known as Near East Relief). Near East Relief grew very powerful once the United States entered World War I and the country literally battled the perpetrators of the Assyrian genocide. By that time, Near East Relief

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<sup>140</sup> “Little Egypt, Oriental Charmer of 1893, Sues; Says Film Version Does Her Wrong,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 30, 1936.

<sup>141</sup> Haidar, *Under Syrian Stars*, 22.

<sup>142</sup> Matthew 25:40.

already had offices throughout most of the country and Haidar had created a modest stage career for herself. She recognized an opportunity in working with Near East Relief. Their offices had connections to churches, Chautauqua meetings, and all sorts of American Evangelical audiences who fetishized the Middle East. Thus, working in collaboration with Near East Relief, Haidar expanded her work throughout the entire United States.

From the hundreds of newspaper articles advertising or reviewing one of Haidar's many performances, we know Haidar produced her shows at no cost to the audience. However, most advertisements stated at the end of the article that "admission will be free but a silver offering will be taken,"<sup>143</sup> or "no admission, but an offering will be taken for Syrian relief work."<sup>144</sup> Her labors clearly helped Near East Relief swell its coffers.<sup>145</sup> How Haidar and Near East Relief divided this collection is unknown but with most audiences numbering in the hundreds, and some in the thousands, Haidar's shows likely proved remarkably profitable for all parties involved.<sup>146</sup> Collecting funds at Chautauqua assemblies, church services, and other Christian-centric gatherings, Near East Relief garnered

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<sup>143</sup> "Syrian Princess to Appear at the Methodist Church," *Anaconda Standard*, March 29, 1917; "Native of Holy Land to Speak," *Great Falls Tribune*, June 3, 1917; "Syrian Princess Will Address Meeting Held in Local Church Sunday," *Eugene Guard*, April 5, 1919.

<sup>144</sup> "Less Theology Alden Advises," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, August 14, 1926.

<sup>145</sup> "Story of the Bible Lands," *Vicksburg Herald*, May 5, 1920; "Princess Tell of Syrian Conditions," *Natchez Democrat*, May 11, 1920; "Princess Haidar Visits Central," *Arkansas Democrat*, October 22, 1920.

<sup>146</sup> "Large Audience Hears Syrian Princess at Baptist Church," *The Eugene Guard*, April 7, 1919; "Princess Rahme Haider," *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, March 22, 1919; "Princess Lectures to Large Audience," *Joplin Globe*, October 25, 1921.

over \$100 million in donations during Haidar's career.<sup>147</sup>

Evoking Biblical images of sacrificial offerings and payments of silver, a Haidar performance began as soon as one read the advertisement. Working with a press secretary, Haidar's show advertisements grew more refined as her career progressed.<sup>148</sup> A typical advertisement opened with essentially the same biography for Haidar. The periodicals usually mentioned her collegiate training, the places she had recently performed, her relationship to either the Chautauqua circuit or Near East Relief, and her Middle Eastern origins.

Next, the periodical typically mentioned how the details of Haidar's life influenced her performances. This segues into a description of "traditional" Middle Eastern costumes, musical numbers, and dances that Haidar promised to exhibit throughout her act. Finally, most advertisements close with a description of who aided Haidar in these performances and other miscellaneous details, such as the admission price statement. The repetition of these advertisements over decades indicates they met the intended goal for them to entice paying audiences through an initial textual performance. But good artists pack their material with subtext and Haidar's advertisements prove no exception.

The biographical information included in these ads did more than entice audiences. Haidar lived at a time in which white Americans had a bifurcated approach to Middle Easterners. White Americans felt comfortable donating money, foodstuffs, and clothing to Middle Easterners who lived *in* the Middle East but the distance

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<sup>147</sup> "History," Who We Are, Near East Foundation, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.near-east.org/who-we-are/>; "Near East Relief and the Armenian Genocide," Encyclopedia Entries on the Armenian Genocide, Educational Resources, Armenian National Institute, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/ner.html>.

<sup>148</sup> "Ex-Newspaper Man Press Agent for the Princess," *Vicksburg Evening Post*, May 5, 1920.

between these two groups proved essential to maintaining this relationship. As Middle Eastern communities living in the United States grew larger, the ability of white Americans to fetishize Middle Easterners became harder. Additionally, the safe distance at which white Americans held early Arab American communities fractured once Middle Eastern immigrants started settling in predominantly white communities and these two groups had to negotiate daily inhabiting the same spaces.

This erosion of white America's ability to fetishize the Middle East resulted in an environment where white communities collected funds for Middle Easterners in the morning and committed horrible acts of racial violence under the cover of night. As a Middle Eastern immigrant woman traveling throughout the southern United States during the apex of Jim Crow, Haidar knew her audience had the potential to beat, rape, and even lynch her. As Middle Easterners became more common in the United States, the stakes for Haidar grew and so too did the boldness of her claims. Unsurprisingly, her alleged proximity to Jesus Christ became more intimate and her claims of royal lineage grew more unique the more common Middle Easterners became in the lives of white Americans.<sup>149</sup>

From romanticizing the notion of a silver offering to

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<sup>149</sup> Akram Khater, "How the Lebanese Became White?," Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies News, NC State University, November 20, 2014, <https://lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2014/11/20/how-the-lebanese-became-white/>; Caroline Muglia, "'Syrians' and Race in the 1920s," Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies News, NC State University, April 27, 2016, <https://lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2016/04/27/syrians-and-race-in-the-1920s/>; Akram Khater, "Fighting Injustice: The Story of Herbert Nassour," Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies News, NC State University, March 25, 2019, <https://lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2019/03/25/fighting-injustice-the-story-of-herbert-nassour/>.

charting her lineage back through the book of Genesis, Haidar seemed to understand that her persona attracted audiences and kept her safe from harassment. Some researchers who have written about Haidar interpret her education, travel, and personality as her positioning herself above other immigrants of the Middle East as if she was ashamed of her reality.<sup>150</sup> However, Haidar's legacy is much less self-centered. She used her skills and ruses to deconstruct the Orientalist gaze that negatively affected all members of the Middle Eastern diaspora. Her work benefited her personally, but she did it for the betterment of all Middle Eastern people.

If Haidar sought only personal gain, she could have constructed a very successful career from belly dancing and parodying other Middle Eastern traditions for predominantly white American audiences as Middle Eastern performers and white actors portraying "Arabs" had done before. She did not self-Orientalize, however. Instead, she reclaimed these tropes. She repeatedly mentioned costumes and music in her advertisements, knowing the unfamiliarity most American Evangelicals had with Middle Eastern culture. Enticing men to attend one of her performances by playing on their hypersexualized imaginations of Middle Eastern women, Haidar challenged their worldview by beginning her shows wearing more clothes than they would have ever expected for an "authentic" belly dancer. Only as a "princess" could Haidar infiltrate these spaces and hold authority in this way. She did not intend her role as a princess to place her above other Middle Eastern immigrants as much as she worked her character to destabilize Orientalism subliminally through seemingly inconspicuous entertainment.

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<sup>150</sup> Amanda Eads, "Rahme Haidar – the Writer," Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies News, NC State University, March 30, 2016, <https://lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2016/03/30/rahme-haidar-the-writer/>.

**BROTHERHOOD CAST FOR “ROMANCE OF RUTH”**



Figure 1. “Brotherhood Cast for ‘Romance of Ruth,’” *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, the Evening News*, May 28, 1934

Like any good performer, Haidar saved her best material for last. The closing remarks of most advertisements for Haidar's shows —the most seemingly innocent part of these ads—contained the deepest of subtexts. Most periodicals closed an advertisement or review for one of Haidar's performances with a statement about those who intended to join or joined her as a part of the performance. Haidar became known for frequently sharing the stage with members of the audience. Figure 1 is a sample of the 100-person ensemble Haidar compiled to help “present the Oriental production, ‘The Romance of Ruth’ . . . written by the Princess Rahme Haider, a native of the Holy Land, and staged under her personal direction” in Wilkes-Barr, Pennsylvania, in 1934. Finding a photograph of the ensemble is rare. Haidar casting the audience and

incorporating them into her performance happened quite often, however. Typically, newspapers ended advertisements and reviews of a Haidar performance with “the cast includes the following:” and then a score or more of names.<sup>151</sup> Implicating locals in her interpretation of Biblical stories, Haidar added to her security for audiences are always less likely to criticize that which they help create.

When Haidar began her career as a traveling performer, she toured up and down the West Coast of the United States. In early 1916, she found herself performing her adaptation of the Biblical story of Naaman the Leper in Washington state. On February 16, 1916, the *Tacoma Times* published an advertisement for one of her performances and included a list of community members who would perform as a part of the ensemble. This list would be as ordinary as any other had it not been for the name Lucille Burgess.<sup>152</sup> At the time, Burgess was approximately 22 years old, living in her father’s house, and had no occupation.<sup>153</sup> Although literate and educated in the musical arts, Burgess had few opportunities to use her talents. Like Haidar, her community had stifling expectations for her.

Very few details regarding the formative stages of Burgess and Haidar’s relationship are available. They seem to have both attended USC at the same time but documents mentioning this coincidence do not make much of their

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<sup>151</sup> “Syrian Princess will Appear in Damascus Play,” *Star Tribune*, February 21, 1926; “Unique Production to be Seen Here,” *Harrisburg Sunday Courier*, April 14, 1935; “Local Cast to Help Princess Present Drama,” *Shamokin News-Dispatch*, June 5, 1935.

<sup>152</sup> “Real Princess to Appear in Biblical Play,” *The Tacoma Times*, February 17, 1916.

<sup>153</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Pierce County, Washington, population schedule, Tacoma Ward 7, Precinct 5, sheet 7B, enumeration district (ED) 280, dwelling 149, family 153, Lucille Burgess; NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1178.

time together on campus. The newspaper advertisements tracking Haidar's travels offer us some insights, however. As previously stated, in mid-February 1916, Burgess performed in one of Haidar's adapted Biblical stories as part of a much larger ensemble of community members. A little over a week later, another advertisement stated Haidar "[was] spending the month in Tacoma."<sup>154</sup> Her month stay was presumably almost finished by the time of this article's publication because her stay began in early February and her last recorded performance in Tacoma during this period happened on 5 March.<sup>155</sup>

Instead of appearing in the newspaper of a nearby town by mid-March, as a follower of Haidar's movements could expect, Haidar vanished from the public eye. She remerged five months later but was still in Tacoma, far outstaying her initial month-long visit. The advertisement for Haidar's July 1916 performance in Tacoma was very sparse. In a single sentence, the periodical commented on Haidar's Middle Eastern heritage, her costume selection, and provided the essential information regarding the time and place of her performance.<sup>156</sup> Haidar's show went presumably well but we cannot know with certainty because, after this July performance, she disappeared again. Emerging four months later in Pullman, Washington, Haidar appears to have finally moved on, but a little piece of Tacoma came with her.

Forevermore listed as Haidar's "traveling companion" in the acknowledgment section of most advertisements for her shows, Burgess seemed to officially sign on as a part of Haidar's troupe during her extended stay in Tacoma.<sup>157</sup>

No source explicitly acknowledged an amorous relationship between Burgess and Haidar. Burgess was

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<sup>154</sup> "Princess in Tacoma Pulpit," *Tacoma Times*, February 26, 1916.

<sup>155</sup> "Here and Elsewhere," *Tacoma Times*, March 3, 1916.

<sup>156</sup> "Personal and Social," *Tacoma Times*, July 28, 1916.

<sup>157</sup> "Real Live Princess will Visit Pullman," *Pullman Herald*, November 24, 1916.

always euphemistically described in advertisements as Haidar's "traveling companion,"<sup>158</sup> "talented musician,"<sup>159</sup> "American college friend,"<sup>160</sup> "able assistant,"<sup>161</sup> or "secretary."<sup>162</sup> Moreover, because they traveled together constantly, any personal discourse shared between them happened over dinner tables, on the road, and in hotel rooms. Thus, the written record lacks a variety of documents with even coded references to their lesbianism. But if Burgess and Haidar's play *Romance of Ruth* (where Haidar played Naomi and Burgess played Ruth) was in the tradition of works like Anderson's *Pity for Women*, then *Romance of Ruth* was the greatest evidence of their relationship *and* their intimate knowledge of the existing lesbian community.<sup>163</sup>

### Conclusion

Although Burgess and Haidar's adaptation of Ruth and Naomi's story predates *Pity for Women*, I am hesitant to claim their play as "the first" in this tradition of lesbians

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<sup>158</sup> "Real Live Princess will Visit Pullman," *Pullman Herald*, November 24, 1916; "Syrian Princess Native of Lebanon will Speak Here," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 6, 1919; "Princess of Syria will Lecture Here," *Pensacola News Journal*, Sunday, April 30, 1922.

<sup>159</sup> "Rahme Haider, Syrian Princess, Lincoln Visitor," *The Lincoln Star*, July 28, 1918; "Real Princess of Syria to Lecture Here Sunday," *Natchez Democrat*, May 8, 1920; "Princess of Syria, Santa Fe Guest, will Speak at Churches Sunday," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 14, 1922.

<sup>160</sup> "Princess Rahme is to Speak in the Baptist Church," *The Ogden Standard*, June 29, 1917; "Princess of Syria is to Speak Twice in Miami Tomorrow," *Miami News*, February 12, 1921; "Syrian Princess," *Daily Press*, April 19, 1932.

<sup>161</sup> "Oriental Drama Presented Here," *Waco News-Tribune*, April 11, 1933.

<sup>162</sup> "Princess of Syria is Guest in Local Home," *Republican-Northwestern*, July 2, 1926; "Local Cast to Help Princess Present Drama," *Shamokin News-Dispatch*, June 5, 1935.

<sup>163</sup> "Romance of Ruth will be Repeated," *[Wilkes-Barre] Evening News*, June 6, 1934.

using Ruth and Naomi's story to normalize same-sex relationships. I shy away from branding them first not only because their method to destabilize heteronormative understandings of love proves more subliminal than Anderson's. More significantly, thanks to recent scholarship on the "long civil rights movement," historians seem to frequently debunk firsts as new research and interpretations come to light. I also argue firsts are detrimental to understanding civil rights history generally. Even if Haidar and Burgess first adapted Ruth and Naomi's story to the stage, to claim them as first severs them from other lesbians who likely interpreted Ruth and Naomi's story as one of queer love long before Haidar and Burgess staged the tale. While the concept of firsts and other superlatives can greatly help historians, they can also sever acts of resistance from the unknown ancestors whose critical thinking and creativity truly generated these concepts.

From 1919 until at least 1935, Haidar and Burgess performed the story of Ruth and Naomi dozens of times. All reviews and advertisements suggest their audiences never noticed the subtext of their show. However, the fact that Haidar stopped performing in 1935 and suffered a heart attack a year earlier is very telling. Considering Anderson published *Pity for Women* only two years later, perhaps the connection between lesbianism and the story of Ruth and Naomi became more apparent to mainstream audiences. Perhaps being a Middle Eastern lesbian who spent decades conning thousands of American Evangelicals in multiple ways added too much stress to Haidar's heart. Sexuality is not biological. But fear of exposure possibly made sexuality biological for Haidar, resulting in a heart condition that led to her premature death in 1939.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Certificate of Death for Rahme Haidar, 14 November 1939, File No. 94207, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Did the political landscape become too dangerous for Haidar and Burgess to continue their charade? It appears so. Before the Progressives criminalized and medicalized sexuality, same-sex relationships proved quite possible. Even amidst the Progressive era, same-sex relationships between women remained somewhat permissible. In her groundbreaking article, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues "nineteenth-century women routinely formed emotional ties with other women" and these "deeply felt, same-sex friendships were casually accepted in American society."<sup>165</sup> "However, this love between women began to be seen as threatening to the social order," according to Linnea Stenson. Stenson argues, "the turn of the century found a new and hostile position formed about female relationships and communities, where changing social and cultural attitudes actively worked to discourage behavior they had earlier worked to foster."<sup>166</sup> Beginning their careers at the start of this transition, Burgess and Haidar's ability to infiltrate and hold space in heteronormative communities diminished greatly with time and, by the 1930s, their secret would not have remained a secret long.

The evidence of their secret hopefully yields future research into same-sex desire in early Arab American communities, which is glaringly absent from the existing body of scholarship. Burgess and Haidar's story also supplements the canon of Arab American histories, which focus almost exclusively on men and the written record.

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<sup>165</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1.

<sup>166</sup> Linnea A. Stenson, "From Isolation to Diversity: Self and Communities in Twentieth-Century Lesbian Novels," in *Sexual Practice, Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 209-10.

Here are two women who performed their way across the United States much earlier than anyone else, while one crafted her publicity machine. With the help of Burgess, Haidar concocted a persona larger than life that destabilized Orientalism using methods that make her almost seem outside time.

# Carolingian War and Violence and the Course of Medieval History

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The Frankish noble dynasty of the eighth and ninth centuries, the Carolingians—named for Charles “The Hammer” Martel, the “founding father” of the Carolingians—supplanted the Merovingian “long-haired kings” as the ruling Frankish power.<sup>167</sup> The full extent of the impressive Carolingian power during the reign of Charlemagne was made possible by an overall grand strategy whose genesis lay in a fundamental propensity toward prompt violence in settling matters and meting out justice to ensure order. A martial political structure, put in place by Pepin of Herstal (who might be considered a “proto-Carolingian”), Martel, and his son Pepin the Short, was also a factor.<sup>168</sup> Although most historians consider Charlemagne’s reign successful, the state of affairs after his death was precarious. With a focus on what Dutton calls the “Carolingian civilization,” this paper explores the nature and the impact of war and violence as determinative factors in Carolingian formation and duration, primarily using the assemblage of primary sources collated by Dutton and supplemented by notable secondary sources.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, this paper will examine the extent to which the violent and warring “Carolingian world”—the appellation preferred by Costambey, Innes, and MacLean—influenced the direction of the Middle Ages and the development of

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<sup>167</sup> Paul Dutton, ed. *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>168</sup> Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>169</sup> Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization*, xiii-iv.

Europe.<sup>170</sup> The Carolingian civilization was relatively short-lived. War and violence were central core components during its entire period, despite contemporaries considering it a Christian empire (a theocratic monarchy under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious).

From the inception of the so-called Carolingian civilization, violence was conventional, just, and proper—even institutionalized and necessary.<sup>171</sup> Bachrach makes a persuasive argument that the Carolingians implemented a long-term grand strategy that developed Carolingian military and political assets to define and ensconce the Carolingian polity among its neighbors and in the Western world based on the use of just war and violence.<sup>172</sup> This grand strategy began with Pepin of Herstal. It was strengthened by Martel and Pepin the Short before Charlemagne skillfully brought it to bear in its complete application in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. The early Carolingians did not necessarily possess any forethought about how such a grand strategy would affect the course of future events. However, it appears they did conscientiously work toward constructing and enhancing the Kingdom of the Franks through a mission they believed to be endowed by God. The Franks were confident they were God’s chosen people; therefore, war and violence at the hands of the Carolingians to carry out God’s divine justice in the name of expanding the *Regnum Francorum* was perfectly reasonable.<sup>173</sup> The early

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<sup>170</sup> Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9-15.

<sup>171</sup> Janet L. Nelson, “Carolingian Violence and the Ritualization of Ninth-century Warfare,” in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Guy Halsall (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 92-3.

<sup>172</sup> Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 1.

<sup>173</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks, Book I*, accessed July 20, 2020,

Carolingians used war, violence, and diplomatic and economic resources over three generations to execute this long-term mission.<sup>174</sup> Charlemagne reaped the benefits of this grand Carolingian strategy and the course of medieval European history was substantially shaped by it. In contemporary hagiographies, biographies, and poetry, violence and war were often front and center in Carolingian civilization. An early example during the genesis period of the Carolingians exists in correspondence from Pope Gregory II to Charles Martel, December 722, shortly after Martel had been victorious in a Frankish Civil War and became the official Mayor of the Palace. In the correspondence, Pope Gregory II recommended the Bishop Boniface to Martel and entreated Martel to defend Boniface “against every enemy.”<sup>175</sup> The very fact that the Pope requested that Martel—already renowned for his martial prowess and battlefield leadership acumen—provide physical protection of Boniface, tacitly by way of violence if necessary, was telling. Violence was acceptable, even preferable under certain circumstances. To be sure, this predilection for violence did not begin with the Carolingians; the Merovingians—whom the Carolingians had initially served and eventually succeeded—had already demonstrated that violence and war were not only acceptable but often preferable. Merovingian ruler Clovis, for example, regularly opted for violence to instill and keep order, as recorded by Gregory of Tours.<sup>176</sup> The Merovingians also used violence to ensure that insolence to God received just retribution. This tradition for the Franks had existed as early as the fifth and sixth centuries. Thus,

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<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/gregory-hist.asp#bo>.

<sup>174</sup> Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 1-5.

<sup>175</sup> “Pope Gregory II Recommends Boniface to Charles Martel, December 722,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>176</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks, Book II*, accessed July 20, 2020, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/gregory-hist.asp#book2>.

Martel and subsequent Carolingians merely adopted and perfected what the Merovingians had already practiced for centuries. Contemporaries held the following to be great virtues: martial skills, military prowess, the ability to win battles, the skills and propensity to execute violent acts when necessary, and the ability to command armies.

Charles Martel—b. 688, d. 741—was the exemplar. Chroniclers even compared him to Joshua of the Hebrew Old Testament. Martel, like Joshua, could ostensibly count on the infinite, supernatural power of God to assist him in crushing the enemies of God and carrying out the grand Carolingian strategy. To be sure, violence and war came naturally to Martel. His nickname “Martellus”—or “the Hammer”—was derived from a disposition composed of fierceness, bellicosity, and courage, even from an early age.<sup>177</sup> Descended from noble ancestors—the Arnulfing and Pippinid clans of the 7th century—Martel came to power because the Merovingian kings had given great power to the Pippinid Mayors of the Palace. The latter had essentially become the *de facto* rulers of Frankish Austrasia. In a violent Frankish Civil War lasting from 715 to 718, Martel led a number of battles, the Battle of Amblève prominent among them, and gained significantly in reputation as a warrior and battlefield commander. He became Mayor of the Palace of both Austrasia and neighboring Neustria, the western realm of the Kingdom of the Franks. He then launched a long period of military expansion, engaging in war and violence with great alacrity, aplomb, and aptitude until he died in 741. Such a protracted period of war and violence arguably led to an increasingly embedded martial ethos in Carolingian society and political structure and set the stage for Charlemagne’s successful future reign.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 1.

<sup>178</sup> Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*, 146.

Martel is best known for his victory in 732 against the invading forces of the Umayyad Caliphate, led by Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi, at the Battle of Poitiers in west-central Francia. In control of Spain since 711, the Umayyad Caliphate had executed military campaigns that pushed up into southern Francia across the Pyrenees Mountains and now threatened central Francia. The measure of the true impact of this battle is sometimes a contested issue among historians. Some historians—such as Edward Gibbon—argue that the battle was highly influential in the course of events for Europe and indeed the Carolingian Dynasty itself. For Gibbon, if the battle had turned out differently, the outcome was clear. In classic Gibbon style, he wrote: “Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mahomet.”<sup>179</sup> For Einhard, Charlemagne’s chronicler, and not exactly known for impartiality, Martel’s victory at Poitiers was anything but inconsequential. Einhard wrote that Martel “so completely defeated the Saracens, who were attempting to occupy Gaul, in two great battles – the first in Aquitaine near the city of Poitiers and the second near Narbonne on the River Berne – that he forced them to fall back into Spain.”<sup>180</sup>

For other historians, the Battle of Poitiers had little effect and is often downplayed. The general assertion is that the Umayyad incursion was nothing more than a minor raid for booty and would not have necessarily resulted in a permanent foothold; moreover, the Muslims

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<sup>179</sup> Edward Gibbon, “Chapter 52,” in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (1776), end of para. 7 “Expedition and Victories of Abderame, A.D. 731,” accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap52.htm>.

<sup>180</sup> Einhard, “The Life of Charlemagne,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader; Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 28.

were overextended and spent.<sup>181</sup> These points are contestable. If one is to properly assess the true and full implications of the battle's outcome for the course of the Middle Ages, one must consider any reasonable alternative effects. With the hindsight of Martel's victory at the Battle of Poitiers, it is easy to say that the battle was not particularly of consequence; however, there are indeed different potential outcomes to consider had the fortunes of Martel been reversed at the Battle of Poitiers.<sup>182</sup>

Gibbon's interpretation is hyperbolic, to be sure, and it is important not to overstate the implications of the battle's outcome. Indeed, it is an arduous and problematic argument that the Muslims could, or would, have conquered substantially more European territory than they did historically, or that Shari'a law would have been imposed on Britons and Anglo-Saxons by conquering Muslims in Britain. Nonetheless, the significance of the battle should not be understated either. There is a compelling argument to be made that had the Umayyad Caliphate's army been victorious, other raids might well have followed in Francia, sapping Francia of wealth, order, and morale. What is more, it is reasonable to posit that Martel and his forces would have been weakened. Weakened or damaged Frankish forces under Martel would have left him—if he even managed to personally *survive* a defeat—exposed to future Umayyad raids and challenges from others seeking power within the Frankish realm. At the very least, his reputation may well have suffered.

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<sup>181</sup> Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain: 710–797* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1989), 87-91; see Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2004), 10; see also Tomaz Mastnak, *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2002), 99-100.

<sup>182</sup> Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Anchor Books, A Division of Random House, 2001), 167.

Furthermore, it is possible he would not have been able to assume power in the aftermath of Merovingian King Theuderic IV's death in 737.

Regardless of whether the purpose of the Umayyad incursion into central Francia was to extend the Islamic realm and acquire Frankish territory or to gain spoils (although there are references in Muslim literature to those who died at the battle as martyrs for Islam), a victory by Islamic forces in 732 at the Battle of Poitiers could have led to a dramatically different course for the developing Carolingian civilization.<sup>183</sup> It is most often injudicious to point to singular events throughout history as "turning points;" the course of history is reliant on a myriad of interconnected factors and circumstances. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that an alternate outcome at the Battle of Poitiers would have led to a future with no Charlemagne (or a different one than history remembers), no Einhard (or one that history does not remember), no Alcuin rising to prominence, no Carolingian scriptoria, no Saxon conversion to Christianity, no Carolingian Renaissance, no Louis the Pious, no Lothar, no Charles the Bald, no Louis the German, and no Treaty of Verdun. With any of these players or events removed or even diminished, it is difficult to see how the course of medieval Europe would not have been entirely different. The *Reconquista* of Al-Andalus should also, at the very least, be questioned as one considers the implications of an Umayyad victory at Poitiers. It is difficult to see how Martel's defeat of Islamic forces at Poitiers after a century of constant, aggressive, and unchecked Islamic expansion could be anything but critical in the scheme of medieval history.

As we know, history unfolded with Martel winning

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<sup>183</sup> William E. Watson, "The Battle of Tours-Poitiers Revisited," *Providence: Studies in Western Civilization* (Providence College Press), 1, no. 2 (1993): 51–68; see also Hanson, *Carnage and Culture*, 2001, 167.

at Poitiers, personally surviving, and ruling Francia. In 737, when King Theuderic IV died, Martel decided against propping up another Merovingian king; he assumed power and ruled until his death.<sup>184</sup> When Martel died in 741, his son Pepin the Short replaced him as Mayor of the Palace. Pepin and his brother Carloman cooperatively ruled the Frankish realm. In 751, after having requested the Pope's blessing in deposing the titular Merovingian King Childeric, Pepin the Short was "chosen king and was anointed by the hand of Archbishop Boniface."<sup>185</sup> Pepin sent Childeric to a monastery and ordered him tonsured. The cutting of his hair was likely seen as symbolic of stripping him of his Merovingian kingship since the Merovingians prided themselves on their long hair and uncut beards. In 754, Pope Stephen authenticated Pepin the Short as king "in the name of the holy Trinity together with his sons Charles and Carloman."<sup>186</sup>

Pepin's rule should not be minimized. He skillfully used war and violence, and through well-executed and aggressive plans, he executed the Carolingian grand strategy and expanded the Carolingian domain beyond that under Martel. Pepin expanded west into Maine, east into Saxony, and southwest into Aquitaine and Septimania. He put down challenges in Bavaria, Auxerre, and Burgundy.<sup>187</sup> For having received papal assistance in the deposition of Childeric and coronation of Pepin as king, Pepin waged war on the Lombards in 755-756. Pepin's war on the

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<sup>184</sup> Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization*, 12.

<sup>185</sup> "The Elevation of Pepin the Short," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 12; see also Einhard, "The Life of Charlemagne," 28.

<sup>186</sup> "The Reanointing of Pepin in 754," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>187</sup> Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 390.

Lombards was the first time there was Frankish military intervention south of the Alps.<sup>188</sup> Einhard tells us that Pepin waged war against Aquitaine for “nine straight years.”<sup>189</sup> In 768, Pepin contracted edema and died.

After Pepin’s death, Charlemagne and his brother Carloman assumed joint control of Francia. The two brothers had an uneasy relationship exacerbated by Carloman’s aides, some of whom advocated for armed conflict to resolve differences.<sup>190</sup> In 769, Charlemagne believed it was essential to finish the war with Aquitaine that Pepin the Short had started. Charlemagne requested assistance from Carloman, but Carloman failed to provide any help. Despite Carloman withholding aid, Charlemagne still executed the operation vigorously to a victorious conclusion.<sup>191</sup> Thus, from very early on, after Charlemagne had taken on his role, he wasted no time in displaying an aggressive posture, using war and violence—or the threat of it—to expand Carolingian power and realm.

The brothers’ strained relationship was short-lived. Carloman suffered an untimely death in 771. At least some part of the success of Charlemagne’s long and fruitful rule can be attributed, in part, to Carloman’s death. While it was undoubtedly inopportune for Carloman, it may well have been a stroke of splendid fortune for Charlemagne; according to Einhard, the Franks were of one accord: Charlemagne became King of the Franks.<sup>192</sup> With no divided realm and no siblings to contest holdings, Charlemagne’s reign was not interrupted by the internecine conflicts and disruption that plagued future

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<sup>188</sup> Phillip Daileader, “Rise of the Carolingians: Lecture 13,” in *The Early Middle Ages*, The Great Courses audio lecture (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2004).

<sup>189</sup> Einhard, “The Life of Charlemagne,” 29.

<sup>190</sup> Einhard, 29.

<sup>191</sup> Einhard, 30.

<sup>192</sup> Einhard, 29.

Carolingians.

On the contrary, reaping the benefits of the Carolingian grand strategy sown by the early Carolingians, Charlemagne was unhindered internally and proceeded to expand the Carolingian realm through war and violence, or the threat thereof, over the next four decades in ways not seen since the Roman Empire proper some three centuries before. During his first three decades in power, Charlemagne focused on waging violent campaigns. Skillfully using war and violence, Charlemagne kept order, defended his kingdom, expanded the empire, plundered neighbors, suppressed uprisings, and converted pagans in neighboring realms to Christianity. Einhard records that Charlemagne waged violent campaigns against the Lombards, the Bretons in Armorica, Islamic warriors in the Spanish March, the Beneventans, the Bavarians, the Slavs or Welatabi, the Avars or Huns, the Alemannians, the Bohemians, and the “Northmen” or Vikings.<sup>193</sup>

Charlemagne’s longest-lasting war, from 772 to 804, was against the Saxons, who, according to Einhard, were the most “dreadful” of Charlemagne’s foes, were “naturally fierce, worshiped demons, and were opposed to [Christianity].”<sup>194</sup> The war was “waged with great vehemence by both sides” and was at once a brutal war of expansion and designed to force the Saxons to convert to Christianity.<sup>195</sup> The Frankish precedent of waging war for religious purposes would have profound repercussions for centuries to come.

In 782 at Verden, Charlemagne summarily executed 4,500 Saxon rebels in response to the decisive defeat of a troop of Franks by Saxons in the Süntel

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<sup>193</sup> Einhard, “The Life of Charlemagne,” 30-7.

<sup>194</sup> Einhard, 31.

<sup>195</sup> Einhard, 31.

mountains.<sup>196</sup> After this event, Charlemagne issued the first Saxon capitulary, forcefully compelling the Saxons to convert to Christianity or face death.<sup>197</sup> Other capitularies upon the Saxons followed, with most containing Christian-based commandments or prohibitions, such as the proscription of ingesting meat during Lent, to be punished by death, or the decree that Saxons must tithe.<sup>198</sup> There can be little doubt that such severe impositions on the Saxons played a significant role in Saxon resistance.<sup>199</sup>

Charlemagne's imposition of Christian ways on the Saxons did not go unnoticed. One of his greatest aids-de-camp was the renowned scholar, deacon, and poet, Alcuin of York, who cautioned Charlemagne in 796 against forcing the Saxons to adhere to decrees of Christianity.<sup>200</sup> In his 796 letter, after first praising Charlemagne for converting many different peoples to Christianity, Alcuin advised caution for Charlemagne in imposing tithing upon the newly converted Saxons. Alcuin referred to the Saxons as "simple people who are beginners in the faith."<sup>201</sup> Using the early Christian apostles as models, he reminded Charlemagne that they never required their newly converted to remit tithes.

While Charlemagne was using war and violence

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<sup>196</sup> Costambeys, et al., *Carolingian World*, 74.

<sup>197</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 104-5.

<sup>198</sup> "The Capitulary on the Saxon Territories," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 66-68.

<sup>199</sup> Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, 73-4; see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 251-2.

<sup>200</sup> Alcuin of York, "Advice to the King on Converting the Saxons," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 125-7.

<sup>201</sup> Alcuin, "Advice to the King on Converting the Saxons," 125-7.

with great proficiency to expand the Carolingian civilization, there were “dreadful fore-warnings” preceding great violence from “heathen men” who were wont to commit “rapine and slaughter” to the north of, and along the coast, of Francia.<sup>202</sup> Thus, it would not be long before the Carolingian civilization would also know the violent ways of these “heathen men.”<sup>203</sup> In 793, the so-called “Viking Age” was inaugurated with a slaughter of Christian monks at the remote and highly regarded Christian monastery of Lindisfarne off the coast of northeastern England. Sea-faring Scandinavian pirates, or Vikings, assaulted the wealthy monastery and its unarmed monastic denizens, killing most or enslaving them, and looting the great Christian site of its wealth. The Vikings did not destroy the Lindisfarne monastery; they were more interested in absconding with booty and slaves, but they did not hesitate to shed blood in the process. Christendom was shocked and appalled at the desecration of this holy Christian place.

Perhaps speaking for all of Western Christendom, Alcuin expressed his distress and devastation at the attack in a letter to the Bishop of Lindisfarne, Highbald, with whom Alcuin communicated regularly and who had somehow survived the sack of Lindisfarne. Alcuin responded to a letter from Bishop Highbald that had informed Alcuin of the violent attack. Alcuin wrote: “...your tragic sufferings daily bring me sorrow; since the pagans have desecrated God’s sanctuary, shed the blood of saints around the altar, laid waste the house of our hope and trampled the bodies of the saints like dung in the streets.”<sup>204</sup> Alcuin went on to console Highbald, writing

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<sup>202</sup> Carruthers, Bob, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Illustrated and Annotated* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2011), 103.

<sup>203</sup> Carruthers, *Anglo-Saxon*, 103.

<sup>204</sup> Alcuin of York, “On the Sack of Lindisfarne by the Northmen in 793,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed., Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 124.

that he would appeal to Charlemagne for assistance in tracking down and liberating those monks who had been taken by the “pagans” as slaves.<sup>205</sup> Alcuin further expressed his great apprehension:

We and our fathers have now lived in this fair land for nearly three hundred and fifty years, and never before has such an atrocity been seen in Britain as we have now suffered at the hands of a pagan people. Such an attack was not thought possible. The church of St Cuthbert is spattered with the blood of the priests of God, stripped of all its furnishings, exposed to the plundering of pagans—a place more sacred than any in Britain... Who is not afraid at this?<sup>206</sup>

Some historians have dismissed Alcuin’s words and descriptions by his contemporaries of Vikings and their violent ways as “mere monkish exaggeration;” however, attempts to balance understanding the Vikings have sometimes led to understating just how violent they were.<sup>207</sup> Before establishing settlements, they invariably carried out extreme acts of brutality, slaughter, and subjugation; and, they engaged prolifically in slaving activities. The first documented Viking attack on Frankish territory occurred during the reign of Charlemagne in 799.<sup>208</sup> As was generally his way, Charlemagne reacted swiftly and firmly; he responded to Viking violence with more violence. In 800, he began erecting formidable defensive fortifications at the mouths of his empire’s major

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<sup>205</sup> Alcuin, “On the Sack of Lindisfarne,” 125.

<sup>206</sup> Stephen Allott, ed., *Alcuin of York, c. AD 732 to 804: His Life and Letters*, (York: William Sessions Ltd., 1974), 18.

<sup>207</sup> John Haywood, *Northmen: The Viking Saga, AD 793-1241* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 11.

<sup>208</sup> Haywood, *Northmen*, 98.

rivers.<sup>209</sup> Charlemagne, his sons, and his grandsons all came to know too well of the violent proclivities of the “Northmen.”

In 800, Charlemagne traveled to Rome because a violent Roman mob had attacked Pope Leo III. The attackers attempted to gouge out his eyes and cut off his tongue. Some of the Roman nobility had failed to get one of their own elected to the papal throne. In the aftermath, the violent mob accused Pope Leo of moral indiscretions. Although injured in the attack, Pope Leo escaped and somehow managed to retain his eyesight and keep his tongue. He fled north seeking protection from Charlemagne, who was engaged in fighting the Saxons. Charlemagne sent the pope back to Rome with an armed entourage who kept him under constant guard. Once he was free from other obligations, Charlemagne proceeded to Rome in support of the Pope.<sup>210</sup>

On December 25, 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as Emperor. Many historians consider the event to be one of the most critical and notable events in medieval history.<sup>211</sup> Charlemagne was the first emperor in over three centuries. He had significantly expanded the Frankish realm through his Frankish forces’ highly effective war-and-violence capabilities, his often decisive and quick tendency to wield them, and his effective and charismatic leadership. The Carolingian grand strategy was on full display. The result was that the Carolingian Empire was recognized worldwide as a powerful political and military polity. Even in the latter years of

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<sup>209</sup> Haywood, 99-100.

<sup>210</sup> Einhard, “The Life of Charlemagne,” 44; Einhard, “Charlemagne and Pope Leo,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 62-65; see also Norman Cantor, *Civilization of the Middle Ages, A Completely Revised and Expanded Edition of Medieval History* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 180-1.

<sup>211</sup> Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*, 446.

Charlemagne's reign, the Carolingian Empire had already made a lasting impact on the course of the Middle Ages.

In 806, carrying on the earlier Merovingian and Carolingian traditions of splitting territories among male progeny, Charlemagne issued a public proclamation that he planned to divide his lands among his three sons: Charles, Pepin, and Louis. Charlemagne granted Charles, the eldest of the three, the central and vibrant section of Francia while giving the other two sons the outlying lands.<sup>212</sup> As it turned out, the proclamation was premature. Charlemagne's sons, Charles and Pepin, both died before Charlemagne. Only Louis outlived Charlemagne, who died in 814. Just before his death, Charlemagne summoned Louis to his palace and crowned him Emperor.<sup>213</sup>

Although many were saddened and deeply lamented the death of Charlemagne—the ruler of Francia for two generations—some considered his death to be an opening for positive change.<sup>214</sup> They considered it a chance for a more just ruler and an opportunity to stamp out the corruption that had crept into Charlemagne's kingdom during his final years. Louis the Pious's supporters and other disenchanted Franks hoped Louis would be the one to bring about these positive reforms; however, during Louis's reign, there would be an extended period of fragmentation, decline, and civil war.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, the Northmen would make their brand of hit

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<sup>212</sup> “Charlemagne’s Division of His Kingdoms,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed., Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 146-151.

<sup>213</sup> Thegan, “Thegan’s Life of Louis,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 160-1.

<sup>214</sup> “Lament on Charlemagne’s Death,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 157-8.

<sup>215</sup> Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization*, 157.

and-run war and violence even more well-known to Francia.

Considered by the biased Thegan to be “the best” of Charlemagne’s sons, Louis early on developed a reputation of piety and fear of God.<sup>216</sup> Louis continued the Carolingian war-and violence tradition: in 816, he dispatched his army to the east to wage war on the Slavs. Louis proved far more cautious than any of his forefathers. According to Thegan, Louis “did everything prudently and cautiously.”<sup>217</sup> However, his penchant for prudence and caution may have contributed to his inefficient bureaucracy and an inability to check his power-hungry sons. In 817, Louis released what scholars call the *Ordinatio imperii*, a proclamation that formalized his succession to his three sons, Lothar, Pepin, and Louis (the German). The reasons for the issuance of the *Ordinatio imperii* at that time remain unclear; however, there is speculation that attributes the act to Louis’s recognition of his mortality when part of the palace at Aachen collapsed on Louis and some of his colleagues.<sup>218</sup> With the *Ordinatio imperii*, the most significant part of the realm was assigned to the oldest of the three, Lothar, who also was made co-emperor. Pepin was to take possession of Aquitaine. Louis the German would preside over Bavaria. These imperial rights were to be fully exercised upon the death of Louis the Pious. Pepin and Louis the German were to exercise veneration for Lothar, lavish him with annual gifts, and seek his counsel on all matters of import.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Thegan, “Life of Louis,” 160.

<sup>217</sup> Thegan, 165.

<sup>218</sup> Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization*, 199.

<sup>219</sup> “The *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 199-203; see also Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 25-

Arguably, the year 822 is when Louis began to squander away the prestige and power that his father and grandfathers had gained so skillfully. Louis felt it necessary to admit publicly and show remorse for his past sins upon counsel from his court. Chief among those sins was the order given by Louis for the blinding of his nephew Bernard after Bernard had attempted insurrection. Charlemagne had expressly forbidden such punishment in his succession arrangement of 806, but Louis had a short memory. Shortly after Louis's heavies blinded Bernard, he died. The death of Bernard haunted Louis; thus, his public penance, and with the penance, arguably, the loss of prestige.<sup>220</sup>

Although history records Louis the Pious as generally feckless and impotent, he demonstrated early on that he was a skilled warrior and effective battlefield commander.<sup>221</sup> In 824, Louis inflicted violence upon the Bretons and "laid waste to the whole land with a great blow" in response to Breton perfidy.<sup>222</sup> Apparently, however, Louis's effectiveness on the battlefield was lost on his sons, and in the 830s, the relationship between Louis and his sons became greatly strained. The Astronomer, another biographer of Louis the Pious, recorded "the Rebellions" in detail.<sup>223</sup> After Louis's wife Ermengard died—the mother of Lothar, Pepin, and Louis—Louis the Pious remarried, taking Judith as his wife. By her, he had a son, Charles (the Bald). The other sons, Lothar, Pepin, and Louis the German, were resentful

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<sup>220</sup> "Louis's Public Penance in 822," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed., Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004), 256-265.

<sup>221</sup> De Jong, *Penitential State*, 14.

<sup>222</sup> Thegan, "Life of Louis," 168.

<sup>223</sup> Astronomer, "Account of the Rebellions," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 256-265.

of Charles, especially after Louis the Pious announced plans to give Charles some lands (to be consummated upon the death of Louis the Pious). To make matters even worse, Pepin and Louis the German resented the elder brother Lothar because of his co-emperor status. Louis the Pious seemed unable to control his narcissistic sons, or at the very least, he tolerated their insolence beyond reason; his sons imprisoned him twice and attempted to seize power. Louis the Pious was freed each time by the younger sons when they reversed their allegiance to Lothar (hoping the act would enhance their standing with Louis the Pious and thus increase their holdings). Through it all, and in the aftermath, Louis the Pious never renounced or disowned any of his sons.

In 838, Pepin died, and Louis the Pious awarded Pepin's lands to Charles the Bald. Lothar was infuriated. Louis the Pious died in 840 after a campaign against the rebellious Louis the German.<sup>224</sup> After Louis's death, the three sons, Lothar, Louis the German, and Charles the Bald, fought a bloody civil war to control the Frankish realm. In what was arguably the beginning of the end of the Carolingian great but relatively short run of success, Lothar was pitted against Louis the German and Charles the Bald in an attempt to gain control of their lands. Just as they had always done, the Carolingians turned to war and violence to settle power, control, and expansion issues, no matter that this time the war was against other Carolingians. Nithard documented the Carolingian fall from grace.<sup>225</sup> Unlike the conflicts between Louis the Pious and his sons, which primarily consisted of posturing, meetings, discussions, and maneuverings, the civil war

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<sup>224</sup> Astronomer, "The Final Days and Death of Louis the Pious," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed., Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 291-4.

<sup>225</sup> Nithard, "Nithard's History," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 297-331.

between the three brothers was bloody, exemplified in the Battle of Fontenoy, recorded by Nithard as having been a “violent battle on the brook of the Burgundians.”<sup>226</sup> The level of violence and slaughter at the Battle of Fontenoy was a “shock” to contemporaries, as chronicled by Engelbert.<sup>227</sup>

During this time of the Carolingian civilization, war and violence were not just limited to the civil war. As the brothers and their factions warred, Northmen attacks on Francia continued to increase in volume and intensity. The Scandinavians likely knew of the internecine violence of the Franks and took advantage of it. Even before Louis the Pious had died, in the 830s, Viking raids had intensified.

In 843, the civil war ended. The three sons arrived at a formal settlement to divide the empire with the Treaty of Verdun. The Treaty of Verdun has sometimes been called the “Birth Certificate” of Europe; however, it might also be reasonably referred to as the “Death Certificate” of the Carolingian Empire.<sup>228</sup> The brothers agreed to split the realm into three parts: Charles the Bald received the western third of Francia, Louis the German received the eastern third of Francia, and Lothar received the middle realm. With the Treaty of Verdun, a division was established that formed the basis for the future states of France and Germany; such was its influence on future events. There was more warring in the 850s, and eventually, the eastern and western realms expanded at the expense of the middle domain.

In the 880s, under Emperor Charles the Fat, the

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<sup>226</sup> Nithard, “Nithard’s History,” 315.

<sup>227</sup> Engelbert, “Engelbert at the Battle of Fontenoy,” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 332-3.

<sup>228</sup> Philip Daileader, “Collapse of the Carolingian Empire: Lecture 18,” in *The Early Middle Ages*, The Great Courses audio lecture (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2004).

empire was once again briefly united under one ruler. Contemporaries longed to see the former eminence of the Carolingians; however, the unity under Charles the Fat was short-lived. Charles the Fat also had to contend with savage Viking raids, which continued to intensify and arguably contributed to his demise. In 885, Vikings laid siege to Paris. Charles the Fat's paralysis during the crisis earned him no followers. With Abbo's chronicling of the event and the Viking wars with the empire recorded elsewhere, it is evident that although the Carolingians had once been so powerfully effective at dominating adversaries so overwhelmingly and expanding the empire, they were now unable primarily to protect the realm and keep it free from the violence of the savage Northmen interlopers.<sup>229</sup>

Interestingly, Dutton suggests that instead of bringing the Carolingian Empire to its knees, the Viking invasions perhaps stimulated Western civilization and helped to reallocate wealth; however, it is difficult to imagine that Viking violence did not play a significant role in the collapse of the empire.<sup>230</sup> To be sure, at the very least, the image, both internally and beyond the Frankish realm, of the seemingly invincible Carolingian Empire had been shattered. The Carolingian grand strategy had run its course. There was perhaps no better example of this than when Charles the Fat paid the Vikings a sum of 700 pounds of silver to break off the siege of Paris and allowed them to attack Burgundy further up the Seine River.<sup>231</sup>

This paper examined the nature and impact of war and violence—both by internal forces and external

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<sup>229</sup> Abbo, "Abbo's Account of the Siege of Paris by the Northmen," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition* ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 514-6; see also "The Annals of St-Vaast for the Years 882-886," in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader, Second Edition*, ed. Paul E. Dutton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 507-512.

<sup>230</sup> Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization*, 507.

<sup>231</sup> Haywood, *Northmen*, 109-111.

forces—in the development and maintenance of the Carolingian world, using a strong collection of primary sources assembled by Paul E. Dutton and a compelling supplement of notable secondary sources.<sup>232</sup> Additionally, this paper has discussed the extent to which the aggressive Carolingians affected medieval history by developing a grand strategy supported by military and political assets that solidified the Carolingian polity through war and violence. Some final words: the Carolingian Empire was the most expansive and most potent state to date after the Western Roman Empire collapsed. Paradoxically, through war and violence and the threat of war and violence, Charlemagne brought peace, security, and education to the Frankish realm, leading to hardy trade and a resurgence of culture, later known as the Carolingian Renaissance. Indubitably, Charlemagne utilized and enhanced the military and political infrastructures created by his predecessors, Pepin and Martel; nonetheless, Charlemagne's accomplishments stand on their own. At the time of Charlemagne's death, the Carolingian Empire was renowned and respected the world over.

Just as the Carolingian civilization came to power through a grand strategy that relied on the sword, its demise came about by the sword. Repeated savage Viking raids, bloody civil wars, political distraction, paralysis, and incompetence plagued it. The relatively short-lived Carolingian Empire indeed left long-lived consequences in the form of Europeanization, specifically with the Treaty of Verdun serving as the genesis for the formation of France and Germany; and, what some historians call a Carolingian Renaissance (made possible by war, violence, conquest, and plunder); conversion to Christianity of neighboring peoples; and, implications for the future in regards to religious or holy war, that is, waging war to

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<sup>232</sup> Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization*, 547-9.

compel an external group to adopt a religion. The Carolingians also bequeathed to posterity the area formerly known as Lotharingia, which continued to be the focus of armed conflict and bloodshed even into the twentieth century.