

HISTORY MATTERS

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Appalachian State University

For the History Matters family

**The History of *History Matters*
Appalachian State University
Department of History**

Have you ever spent so much time and effort on something that you wanted share it with other people? Have you ever felt unfulfilled receiving only a grade and your own satisfaction as rewards for your hard work? Have you ever wanted to get your work published?

For these reasons *History Matters* was founded. In the spring of 2003, Eric Burnette, a freshman, was looking for an outlet—a venue for his research paper. He figured that other students probably felt the same way. Dr. Michael Moore, who had edited *Albion*, a professional journal of British history, for over 25 years, began advising Eric on how best to go about starting an academic journal for students. Another student, Matthew Manes, was asked to join the interesting experiment, and together they laid the groundwork for *History Matters*.

Our first deadline was in late January 2004. For the editorial staff, it was an extensive and time consuming process of reading, revising, and communicating with both the authors and the Faculty Editorial Board. In the end, the collaboration published one research paper, one research essay, and three editorial book reviews. The first issue of *History Matters: An Undergraduate Journal of Historical Research* was published online on April 28, 2004.

From the beginning, Eric and Matt wanted to expand the journal. The more students involved meant that more students had the opportunity to be published, and the better those papers would be. The 2004-2005 school year saw the participation of the University of North Carolina—Asheville and Western Carolina University, as well as submissions from half a dozen schools nationwide. The 2005 issue was published with two research papers, one from Appalachian State University and one from a student at Villanova University, and five editorial book reviews from all three participating departments.

Since 2004, *History Matters* has grown drastically. Over the years our submission base has increased from 11 papers in 2004-05 to 185 submissions in 2014-15. We now receive submissions from all over the United States from distinguished universities including Yale, Harvard, and Stanford. *History Matters* has also expanded internationally. We receive submissions from Canada, South America, Great Britain, and Australia while also employing international staff members as contributing editors.

History Matters continues to grow and prosper thanks to a supportive faculty, department, university, and most importantly, the students who have worked hard on their papers and work with us to get them published.

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BOUNDED LIBERTY: EDMUND BURKE ON AMERICA¹

I.

Edmund Burke is a political romantic of the first degree. For President Woodrow Wilson, Burke's writing "...takes your breath and quickens your pulse. The glow and power of the matter rejuvenates your faculties."² For British intellectual Harold Laski, Burke offers "...the permanent manual of political wisdom without which statesmen are as sailors on an unchartered sea."³ For conservative theorist Russell Kirk, Burke is no less than "...the Cicero of his language and nation...[T]he resonance of [his] voice still is heard amidst the howl of our winds of abstract doctrine."⁴ Edmund Burke—statesman, man of letters, public thinker *par excellence*—achieved a singular impact on three centuries of Anglo-American political life. Burke was that rare political thinker in the Western canon to espouse the practice of politics over isolated contemplation.⁵ He was assuredly not an academic; as Burke once dryly observed, "He that lives in a college, after his mind is sufficiently stoked with learning, is like a man, who having built and rigged and victualled a ship, should lock her up in a dry dock."⁶ Burke instead embraced a public, political life—from his 1747 founding of the debating society at Trinity College Dublin (which still exists today) to his political associations with William Gerard Hamilton (1758) and the Marquess of Rockingham (1765), his election as member of parliament

¹ Many thanks are due to Professor David Hendrickson and the editors of *History Matters* for their assistance.

² Wilson, Woodrow, *Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President*, ed. Mario R. DiNunzio (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 91-92.

³ Laski, Harold, *Political Thought in England from Locke to Bentham* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 223, 225; qtd. in part by Kirk, Russell, *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* (New York: Arlington House, 1967), 15.

⁴ Kirk, *Edmund Burke*, 211, 213.

⁵ See Hendrickson, David, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 34.

⁶ Yet, "the outline of his adult life more nearly resembles that of a modern professor than it does our idea of a politician." Gopnik, Adam, "The Right Man: Who Owns Edmund Burke?" *New Yorker*, 29 July 2013, 70;

Burke, Edmund, "Miscellaneous Essays," *The Annual Register*, 1760; qtd. in Somerset, H.V.F., *A Note-Book of Edmund Burke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 13; as qtd. in Kirk, *Edmund Burke*, 25-26. University education after the Revolution of 1688 was referred to as "the dark age in English academic history." Schuyler, Robert Livingston, ed., *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from his Economic and Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 6.

for Bristol (1774-1780) and his appointment to paymaster of forces in the Rockingham ministry (1782).⁷ While Burke was never far removed from the world of letters and philosophy, he was particularly engaged in the public pursuit of politics.⁸ As he wrote in a letter of 1774, “Private Life has sorrows of its own for which publick employment is not the worst of medicines.”⁹

This paper examines Burke’s “publick employment”—his time as a statesman, parliamentarian, and public philosopher—on the question of Britain’s policy toward America. As Burke stated, “So many great questions of commerce, of finance, of constitution, and of policy, are involved in this American deliberation, that I dare engage for nothing, but that I should give it...the most honest and impartial consideration of which I am capable.”¹⁰ This paper contends that Burke’s position on these “many great questions” of American affairs offers a useful lens through which to consider his political philosophy writ large. Accordingly, it depicts the historical evolution in Burke’s views on British parliamentary policies toward America (II), and on representation and religious toleration (III). The modest claim is that, by juxtaposing historical context with Burke’s political thought, a Burkean philosophy emerges, one in which a backdrop of traditional authority stands against a field of ordered liberty (IV). The relationship between freedom and authority is vital to reading Burke, for when authority erodes, “...the cement is gone, the cohesion is loosened, and everything hastens to decay and dissolution.”¹¹

⁷ *The College Historical Society*, “Competitive Debating,” accessed 20 September 2014: <<http://thehist.com/competitive-debating/>>; Kirk, *Edmund Burke*, 24; Boulton, J.T., “Introduction,” *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), xix; also see Bromwich, David, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke: From the Sublime and Beautiful to American Independence* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014), 1-5.

⁸ O’Gorman, Frank, *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 11.

⁹ Burke, Edmund, “To the Duke of Richmond,” 26 September 1774, in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, ed. David Bromwich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 79.

¹⁰ Burke, Edmund, “Mr. Burke’s Speech at His Arrival at Bristol,” 1774, in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform*, ed. Bromwich, 45-47, 45-46.

¹¹ Burke, Edmund, “On Conciliation with America,” 22 March 1775, qtd. in Barkan, Elliott Robert, ed., *On the American Revolution: Selected Speeches and Letters* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1972), 119.

II.

On January 12th, 1766, Burke delivered his maiden speech in the House of Commons. The topic was American affairs. The year before, Parliament had passed the Stamp Act, eliciting outrage from the colonists.¹² No records of Burke's remarks survives; however, they were so well received by the chamber that George Grenville, former Prime Minister and architect of the Stamp Act, felt compelled to answer Burke personally on the parliamentary floor.¹³ Horace Walpole, a parliamentary colleague of Burke's, remarked in his *Memoirs*: "There appeared in this debate a new speaker whose fame for eloquence soon rose high above the ordinary pitch."¹⁴ Burke—with his immense skill as an orator—had firmly arrived in the halls of Westminster.

Two months later, on March 18th, 1766, the Rockingham Whig administration, during their brief year in power, repealed the Stamp Act and passed the Declaratory Act, asserting parliamentary supremacy over the colonies.¹⁵ Throughout this period Burke served as a personal secretary to Lord Rockingham and political ally of the Rockingham Whigs.¹⁶ While no records exist of the speeches made by Burke on the Stamp Act, his correspondence with Lord Rockingham indicates that he may have influenced the ministry's thinking on an approach to the question of America. As Burke writes to Lord Rockingham, "The great Evil and danger will be the full and decided engagement of Parliament in this War. Then we shall be thoroughly dipped; and there will be no way of getting out, but by disgracing England or enslaving America."¹⁷ In calling for a moderate and calm-headed approach, Burke aimed to cool the fiery rhetoric emerging from Westminster.

At an hour past midnight on May 14th, 1767, parliament passed the Townshend Revenue Acts, designed to raise funds by redesigning the American

¹² Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke*, 191-203.

¹³ O'Brien, Conor Cruise, *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography and Commented Anthology of Edmund Burke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 108.

¹⁴ O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, 111.

¹⁵ Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke*, 193.

¹⁶ A wonderful editorial cartoon from the period shows Lord Rockingham stirring a large bowl as part of "The opposition Pudding-makers." Burke stands behind Lord Rockingham, supporting him with a basket of flowers—the flowers insinuating that Burke adds both beauty and eloquence to Lord Rockingham's leadership. Anonymous, *The Political Raree-Show*, Published 1 July 1779 (Fielding & Walker) in Robinson, Nicholas K., *Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 21.

¹⁷ Burke, Edmund, "Letter to the Marquess of Rockingham," 22 or 23 August 1775, in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform*, ed. Bromwich, 235.

customs processes.¹⁸ Again, the American reaction was both angry and swift. On November 18th, 1768, Burke rose for his earliest recorded parliamentary speech on America. Aware of Burke's unusual brilliance as an orator, the Rockinghams delegated him as a *de facto* spokesman. Instead of an outright repeal of the Townshend Acts, Burke advocated mitigating their effects on the Americans. Firmly opposed to the ministry, Burke criticized the "hanker" of members of parliament to increase American revenue after the Stamp Act repeal.¹⁹ He also critiqued the strategy of governing with force: six months later, Burke asserted, "Our severity has increased their ill behaviour. We know not how to advance; they know not how to retreat."²⁰ Even at this early date, Burke displayed flashes of displeasure with a political approach rooted in retribution or vengeance. He insisted that, "The more eloquence we display, the further we deviate from wisdom. . . . I never thought America should be beat backwards and forwards, as the tennis ball of faction."²¹ In calling for a less vindictive American policy, Burke demonstrated a keen aptitude for overcoming pride and honor, preferring prudence instead of vengeance.

It was not until May 9th, 1770 that Burke announced to parliament the position of the Rockinghams on the American question.²² Beautifully, the speech reads as vintage Burke: riddled with polemics for leniency towards the Colonies, yet simultaneously in favor of parliamentary supremacy and praise for parliament's decision to pass the Declaratory Act.²³ Another Burkean theme appears in this oration—his trademark skepticism about metaphysical conceptions of political systems and his preference, instead, for a politics arising from the reasonable, practicable agreement of its actors. Burke writes, "Every measure you have taken has been met by a contrary measure. Your acts have not been listened to."²⁴ Burke was no radical democrat, but his remarks nonetheless

¹⁸ Chaffin, Robert J, "The Townshend Acts of 1767," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 27.1 (January 1970), 90-121, 117, 110.

¹⁹ Burke, Edmund, "Speech before the House of Commons in Support of William Dowdeswell's Amendment to the Address of Thanks," 18 November 1768, in Barkan, Elliott Robert, ed., *On the American Revolution: Selected Speeches and Letters* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1972), 2.

²⁰ Burke, Edmund, "Speech before the House of Commons in Support of Governor Pownall's Motion for the Repeal of the American Revenue Act of 1767," 19 April 1769, in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²² Burke, Edmund, "Speech Introducing a Motion for an Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Disorders in America," 9 May 1770, in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 7-21.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

suggest that pragmatic consent plays a meaningful role in British policy toward America.²⁵

Perhaps one of Burke's most profound statements on American affairs can be found in his speech to parliament "On American Taxation" on April 19th, 1774. Burke meant to protest the taxation levied by the Townshend Acts and to account for past mistakes in America, "...to avoid a dull uniformity in mischief, and the unpitied calamity of being repeatedly caught in the same snare."²⁶ Poetically, Burke argued for a minimalist approach to America. "Be content to bind America by laws of trade: you have always done it. Let this be your reason for binding their trade. Do not burden them by taxes: you were not used to do so from the beginning. Let this be your reason for not taxing."²⁷ By returning to a relationship predicated on commerce and not coercion, Burke argued that Britain might more effectively advance her interests in America. More importantly, Burke defends the role of traditional authority derived from the British constitution, viewing the constitution as a castle, threatened both inside and outside its walls.²⁸

If, as Burke wrote, "nobody will be argued into slavery,"²⁹ then it follows that all Westminster's grand political posturing was an ill-equipped solution to the practical problems of American affairs. However, both in this speech and throughout the period, Burke continued to assert one supreme political principle: the principle of parliamentary supremacy over the colonies. As Burke later remarked in a letter of 1777 to the Sheriffs of Bristol, "...if ever one man lived more zealous than another for the supremacy of Parliament and the rights of this imperial crown, it was myself."³⁰ When it came to the "civil war" in America, the principle of parliamentary supremacy still reigned supreme for Burke.³¹

This theme—reconciling the bond between America and Britain by focusing on commerce and opposing new taxes, all the while firmly under the regime of British rule—carries Burke into his majestic "On Conciliation with

²⁵ See Gopnik, "The Right Man," 72.

²⁶ Burke, Edmund, "On American Taxation," 19 April 1774, qtd. in O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, 139.

²⁷ Burke, Edmund, "On American Taxation," 19 April 1774, qtd. in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 65.

²⁸ Lock, F.P., *Edmund Burke: Volume I, 1730-1784* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 352.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁰ Burke, Edmund, "A Letter to John Farr and John Harris, Esquires, Sheriffs of Bristol, on the Affairs of America," April 1777, in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 190.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

America,” a prepared address delivered on behalf of the Rockinghams on March 22nd, 1775. In this *tour de force*, Burke demonstrated a masterful knowledge of American affairs, discussing the population of the colonies, figures of commerce, agriculture, and education, before leaping into philosophical observations concerning the use of force for preservation of territory, obedience, and the nature of concessions.³² Burke lists six factors which inspire liberty in America: descent, form of government, religion in the North, manners in the South, education, and geographic remoteness. As a policy prescription, Burke again mediated between a core claim of protecting “... ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron” between Britain and America, while at the same time advancing the supremacy of Britain as “...the sanctuary of liberty.”³³

His speech lasted for nearly three hours, turning late afternoon into evening. Opinion was split. In a letter to Burke, Josiah Tucker wrote “... you excel in the Art of ambiguous Expressions, that is, in giving one Sense to your Readers, and of reserving another to yourself... you excel, I say, in this Art, perhaps the most of any Man living (sic).”³⁴ Tucker moved systematically to refute Burke’s six factors that inspire liberty in America.³⁵ For Tucker, the various interests at stake were too varied and positioned too far apart to seek the approach to peace desired by Burke.³⁶ Among his peers, Burke’s speech garnered a more supportive reaction. It was followed in parliament, wrote Richard Burke, by “...the loudest, the most unanimous, and the highest stains of applause. That such a performance even from him was never before heard in that house.”³⁷

III.

This paper has thus far sketched the development of Burke’s thought on how the British government should approach America—yet Burke’s political philosophy should be construed out of more than merely his strategic position on American affairs. A comprehensive view of Burke should also arise from his more philosophical insights on the ordering of the *polis*, and, in particular, the role of representation and religion. An examination of Burke’s views on the

³² Burke, Edmund, “On Conciliation with America,” 22 March 1775, qtd. in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 75-88.

³³ *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁴ Tucker, Josiah, “A Letter to Edmund Burke,” in *Josiah Tucker*, ed. Schuyler, 375

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 377

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 394.

³⁷ Burke, Edmund, “Letter to Richard Shackleton,” 22 March 1775, qtd. in O’Brien, *The Great Melody*, 154.

questions of representation and religion elucidates the background role played by traditional authority in Burke's political philosophy as a whole.

On October 11th, 1774, Burke stood for election for the constituency of Bristol. At the time, Bristol was dominated by merchants who traded with America. With a large number of voters, including nearly all property-owners, Bristol served as an important political constituency in British politics—Britain's "second city," behind London.³⁸ The election consisted of an intense three-way race. The two winners—Burke and the radical Whig Henry Cruger Jr.—were asked to give a speech to the electors at Bristol on November 3rd, 1774. Speaking first was Mr. Cruger, vowing to follow his constituents' interests and humbly reflect their opinion in parliament.³⁹ Burke spoke second. Instead of following Mr. Cruger in delivering "...formal, deferential and platitudinous" remarks, Burke, "...ever appreciative of a dramatic moment,"⁴⁰ proceeded to eviscerate Mr. Cruger's theory of direct representation with a rebuttal so stinging that it deserves to be quoted here at length:⁴¹

Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment;

³⁸ Lock, 373-4; Browne, Stephen H., *Edmund Burke and the Discourse of Virtue* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 69; Kirk, *Edmund Burke*, 60; Norman, Jesse, *Edmund Burke: Philosopher, Politician, Prophet* (London: William Collins, 2013), 76.

³⁹ Norman, *Edmund Burke*, 76.

⁴⁰ Underdown, P.T., "Henry Cruger and Edmund Burke: Colleagues and Rivals at the Bristol Election of 1774," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15.1 (January 1958), 14-34, 29.

⁴¹ Norman, *Edmund Burke*, 76.

and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.⁴²

It is in this remarkable passage that Burke established his comprehensive theory of representation.⁴³ In contemporary terms, Burke argued for a parliamentarian who is more than a *delegate* to represent the people; in electing their member of parliament, the people consent to the judgment of the parliamentarian, who acts as a *trustee* of the entire *polis*. Burke's position on representation echoed Josiah Tucker, who, writing in the same year, argued that deputies elected by a district serve not the district but "...the Nation at large... [I]t becomes the Duty of his Office to take Care of the Interests of all the People in general, *because he represents them all*."⁴⁴ In Burke's six-year term as MP for Bristol, he only visited his constituency twice.⁴⁵ Burke's famous disdain of elections was best summarized six years later in a letter penned to Lord Rockingham: "Oh which of my Sins have made me live in Elections! Oh! who shall free me from the body of *this* Death!"⁴⁶ Burke was not keen on elections and he deeply believed that the judgment of a parliamentarian must always supersede the mere aggregate of constituent opinions.

Burke's theory of religion also weighs on his conception of traditional authority and the "ordered" background necessary for ordered liberty. At first glance, Burke appears to endorse a doctrine of religious toleration that recognizes what he called, as a fifteen year old student at Trinity College Dublin, "...the Diversities of Sects and opinions amongst us."⁴⁷ In a letter to William Burghe dated February 9th, 1775, Burke suggests that religious minorities such as "...Jews, Mahometens, and even Pagens..." be offered "...full civil protection..." including "...an immunity from all disturbance of their publick

⁴² Burke, Edmund, "Mr. Burke's Speech to the Electors of Bristol," 3 November 1774, in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform*, ed. Bromwich, 50-57, 54-55; qtd. by *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC* 528 U.S. 377 (2000) at 409.

⁴³ Wood, Gordon, *The American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 2003), 40.

⁴⁴ Tucker, Josiah, "Tract IV: The True Interest of Great-Britain Set Forth in Regard to the Colonies; and the Only Means of Living in Peace and Harmony with Them," 1774, in *Josiah Tucker*, ed. Schuyler, 346-347; qtd., in part, by Hendrickson, *Peace Pact*, 93, 334-335.

⁴⁵ Browne, Stephen H., *Edmund Burke and the Discourse of Virtue* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 70.

⁴⁶ Burke, Edmund, "Letter to Lord Rockingham," 7 or 8 September 1780, in *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* (Oxford, 1981—), volume 9, McDowell, R.B., ed., 508, 509-510, 514, qtd. in Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke*, 389.

⁴⁷ Burke, Edmund "To Richard Shackleton," 15 October 1744, in *Selected Letters of Edmund Burke*, ed. Mansfield, 130.

worships services.”⁴⁸ It is worth noting, also, that Burke experienced “...the Diversity of Sects” intimately—as Horace Walpole pointed out, both Burke’s mother and wife were Roman Catholic, and his father was Anglican.⁴⁹ For Burke in 1790, “...politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement. No sounds ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity.”⁵⁰ In these comments spanning nearly five decades, Burke appears to advance a view of toleration and (limited) religious pluralism.

Yet Burke also defended a state-established church.⁵¹ Harvey Mansfield argues that Burke favored a public religion that might promote a superior will.⁵² David Bromwich interprets Burke’s argument as limited to defending the establishment of religion as an “...instrumental good” which supports “...social stability.”⁵³ Burke reconciled these two positions—simultaneously favoring religious toleration and the state-sponsored Anglican Church—by differentiating between the right to practice religion and religion itself. As Burke writes, “...toleration does not exclude rational preference, either as to modes, or opinions; and all the lawful and honest means which may be used for the support of that preference.”⁵⁴ In short, to tolerate is not to endorse. Burke seems to suggest here a bifurcated system, consisting of a religious establishment coupled with a right to non-interference among religious minorities, promoting free inquiry. Burke advocated a right to free exercise of religion beneath an umbrella of state sponsored religion; a system in which “... the Church and the State are one and the same thing, being integral parts of the same whole.”⁵⁵ In so doing,

⁴⁸ Burke, Edmund, “To William Burghes,” 9 February 1775, in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform*, ed. Bromwich, 60.

⁴⁹ Gopnik; Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, vii.

⁵⁰ Burke, Edmund, “Reflections on the Revolution in France,” 1790, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, volume III (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1901), 246; qtd., in part, by Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke*, 20.

⁵¹ Burke, Edmund, “To William Burghes,” 9 February 1775, in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform*, ed. Bromwich, 59.

⁵² Mansfield, *Selected Letters of Edmund Burke*, 128.

⁵³ Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke*, 20.

⁵⁴ Burke, Edmund, “To William Burghes,” 9 February 1775, in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform*, ed. Bromwich, 60.

⁵⁵ Burke, Edmund, “Speech on the Petition of the Unitarians,” 11 May 1792, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Volume VII (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1901), 43; qtd., in part, by McConnell, Michael W., “Edmund Burke’s Tolerant Establishment,” in *Religious Liberty in Western Thought*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds and W. Cole Durham, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 203-244, 204.

his project offers a *via media* between the dogmatism of religious hegemony and the intellectual anarchy of unbounded religious pluralism.

IV.

This essay elucidates a common thread running through questions of the British position on American affairs, of representation, and of religious toleration—the requirement, for Burke, that liberty be “ordered,” and that freedom of one’s way of life or belief system may not proceed unbounded. Burke advocates, on these subjects, an ‘upper bound’ of political life. In American affairs, the liberty of the colonists remains bounded by parliament. In representation, the liberty of the constituents’ opinion remains bounded by the best judgment of the representative. In religion, the liberty to practice one’s religion freely remains bounded by the background condition of a superior will, as established by the state-sponsored church. Burke is quintessentially a thinker of the limits to freedom.

Burke is a conservative in the sense that his philosophy is based on conserving the structures of an inherited socio-political tradition. If “...pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly,”⁵⁶ as Burke writes in his *Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, then it follows that grounding Burke’s thought, there is perhaps an argument for a radical inequality that humans never submit to willingly. Because the judgment of a representative supersedes the aggregate opinion of constituents, Burke’s theory of representation is rooted in an inequality between the constituent and the parliamentarian as trustee. Because state-established religion elevates *a priori* one system of beliefs and values over another, Burke’s theory of religion is rooted in a philosophical disposition derived from the unequal positions of sanctioned religion and non-sanctioned religion. And, because Burke’s conception of British-American relations is marked by a call for moderation under the framework of absolute supremacy of parliament, Burke’s political theory is rooted in a radical inequality with non-Englishmen. For Burke, Britain—and the British people—reign supreme.

Hannah Arendt makes this last point explicitly in *Origins of Totalitarianism*. For Arendt, Burke’s concept of British liberty as an “...entailed inheritance...has been the ideological basis from which English nationalism

⁵⁶ Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. J.T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 65.

received its curious touch of race-feeling ever since the French revolution.”⁵⁷ Specifically, Burke’s conception of the “rights of Englishmen” can serve, according to critics like Arendt, to intertwine rights with nationality.⁵⁸ Some textual evidence exists for this point of objection. In his speech on May 9th, 1770, he alludes to the “...improper notions of liberty” fashionable amongst the Americans.⁵⁹ More directly, in his March 22nd, 1775 speech, Burke outlines the distinction between abstract liberty and the liberty of Englishmen:

“The colonists...are therefore not only devoted to liberty, but to liberty according to English ideas and on English principles. Abstract liberty, like other mere abstractions, is not to be found. Liberty inheres in some sensible object; and every nation has formed to itself some favourite point, which by way of eminence becomes the criterion of their happiness.”⁶⁰

These passages suggest that Burke views English liberty as intrinsically superior to other forms of liberty, and also derived from an inherited national order. English liberty operates as superior to abstract liberty; the two are unequal precisely because one is tied to English ideas and principles and one is founded outside of societal context. Philosophical inequality therefore grounds Burkean liberty, a liberty that is, by its nature, limited. Even the realm of freedom remains, for Burke, perennially divided.

Just before his death, Burke, “...fearing that triumphant Jacobins would treat his corpse as Cromwell’s had been dishonored at the restoration,” conveyed his wish to be buried where no one might find him.⁶¹ He died just after midnight on July 9th, 1797, and was buried on July 15th at the Beaconsfield church, with some one hundred mourners present.⁶² Burke speaks to us today with an unwavering tone. To read and think with Edmund Burke is to evoke a majestic

⁵⁷ Arendt, Hannah, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Shocken Books, 2004), 232.

⁵⁸ N.B. Arendt takes up this problem by advocating for the “right to have rights.” She might especially question the role of stateless people, like herself, in Burkean political thought. See Arendt, 376.

⁵⁹ Burke, Edmund, “Speech Introducing a Motion for an Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Disorders in America,” 9 May 1770, in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 10.

⁶⁰ Burke, Edmund, “On Conciliation with America,” 22 March 1775, qtd. in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 82.

⁶¹ Kirk, *Edmund Burke*, 19; Lambert, Elizabeth R., *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 168-169.

⁶² Norman, *Edmund Burke*, 168; Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield*, 171.

view of political life: “I think I know America. If I do not my ignorance is incurable, for I have spared no pains to understand it...”⁶³

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⁶³ Burke, Edmund, “A Letter to John Farr and John Harris, Esquires, Sheriffs of Bristol, on the Affairs of America,” April 1777, in Barkan, *On the American Revolution*, 182.

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REASON, RHETORIC, AND RADICALS:
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AS THE ORIGIN OF MODERN
EUROPEAN FEMINISM

They were called furies, scourges and deviants. They were described as corrupt for not conforming to their prescribed gender roles, their activities deemed contradictory to nature. These “enemies of good housekeeping” were also considered “a plague to the mothers of good families.”¹ These were the female participants of the French Revolution, and although their activism was welcomed in the early stages of the Revolution, by 1794 the Republic was attempting to exclude them from the public sphere permanently.

One must inquire what crimes these women committed to draw such harsh criticism and backlash. Many women viewed Enlightenment discourse and revolutionary principles as an opportunity to attain equal status in society, or at least one classifying them as active citizens. Women defended such goals with their political participation and Republican rhetoric concerning equality, individual rights and citizenship. Notable women such as Olympe de Gouges voiced these proto-feminist desires in speeches and writing on behalf of all women. Others, like Etta Palm, advocated a larger political role for women. Why then did the Republic punish such women seeking the very principles that had contributed to its creation? The Republic utilized Enlightenment discourse in a much different manner, one that was directly contradictory to the ideals of the proto-feminists—it drew off Rousseauian theories that a woman’s place was in the home as a docile, virtuous mother. Thus the Republic viewed the actions of the proto-feminists as violent refutations of nature rather than valid claims for citizenship. Seeing this as contradictory to Rousseauian notions of the nature of women, the Republic squashed what remaining political space existed for women and removed radical women from the picture. As a result of this complicated rhetoric, something unprecedented developed. Within the paradoxical principles of the Enlightenment and the Revolution, feminist consciousness began to evolve. Discourse facilitated it, participation nurtured it, and the Republic’s negative response legitimized it; women were “...confronted with a new...source of discrimination, the constitutional denial of women’s rights under bourgeois law.”² Enlightenment reasoning, the mass participation of women in the public

¹ James F. McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 27.

² Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 1.

sphere and Republican rhetoric helped develop the foundation and goals of modern European feminism and feminist consciousness.

This paper begins with a brief analysis of the historiography surrounding the origins of feminism in the French Revolution. The next section focuses on the potential of Enlightenment discourse to both refute and reinforce traditional views of women, as well as its influence on the topic of sexual difference. Subsequently, this paper emphasizes the numerous ways in which women participated in the Revolution, both revealing feminist demands and undermining the role of sexual difference as defined by citizenship. The final section discusses how the Republic, influenced by ideas concerning women's domestic nature, responded to such activities, while the conclusion demonstrates how later generations of feminists drew upon the events and rhetoric of the French Revolution. However, first it is necessary to examine the historical usage of "feminism," "feminist" and "antifeminism" in this paper for further clarification. It is important to remember that feminism in its modern sense did not exist during the Revolution, and that there were no "feminists" or "antifeminists" – there were only those who advocated for the civic equality of women and those who wished for them to remain in the domestic sphere. Our modern terms will be used to indicate such attitudes. It is in this sense that I use the term "proto-feminist" in order to denote those who expressed the first feminist sentiments that would fuel the arguments used by later generations. In addition, it is necessary to clarify that this paper addresses the origins of feminist consciousness, or the recognition of feminist goals and its legitimacy as a movement. Questions regarding women's role in society had existed long before the Enlightenment, however, what makes the Revolution different is that women strove for new opportunities on a much broader scale and proved that female participation in the public sphere was no longer a rare or unique occurrence.

I. Historiography

Considering that women's studies is a relatively new field in academia, it is not surprising that the origins of modern European feminism were hardly discussed until recently. In the 1970s feminist scholar Katherine Clinton pointed to the writings of Enlightenment *philosophes* in her article "Enlightenment Origins of Feminism" as a possible source of feminism. Citing Voltaire, Diderot and especially Condorcet as Enlightenment thinkers who generated a positive change in the perception of women, Clinton argued that their ideas of education, marriage and political reform inspired proto-feminists during the Revolution. Since then, most historians have tended to view the Enlightenment as having both positive and negative effects on the movement. In 1988 gender historian Joan Landes published *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French*

Revolution, in which she noted how the actions of female revolutionaries challenged gender roles and perceived notions of women's "nature." In her arguments she briefly discusses the paradoxical usage of Enlightenment and Republican rhetoric. Another esteemed gender historian, Joan Wallach Scott, would expand on Landes' ideas in her 1996 book *Only Paradoxes to Offer*. In this work she asserts that without the simultaneous presence of discourse concerning natural rights and the repression of sexual difference, feminism would have never developed. Although the new Republic emphasized individualism and equality, women's revolutionary activism was not equally valued within the public sphere. Scott also emphasizes the struggle of female revolutionaries to utilize sexual difference to form a cohesive women's movement while trying to eliminate its more repressive aspects. Karen Offen, a women's historian at Stanford University, followed suit in 2000 with *European Feminisms* and also focused on sexual difference as a major component of feminist struggles, particularly in the French Revolution. Offen draws connections between sexual difference and its role in determining male and female relations in the political sphere. To Offen, feminist struggles are open challenges to male hegemony, and therefore directly affect political development. That same year European historian James McMillan focused on why feminist ideals forged during the Revolution did not resonate with the public in his book *France and Women, 1789-1914*. He pointed to how the Jacobins utilized sexual difference to keep women in the domestic sphere while giving them a place in the revolution through republican motherhood, or the idea that women best served the regime by raising republican children within the home.

Other historians have focused on the activities of notable proto-feminists or on the ways mass numbers of women were able to participate in the Revolution. In the 1990s French historians Darline Levy and Harriet Applewhite chronicled the militant aspect of women's participation, noting that the March on Versailles, the women's movement to arm themselves and the role of women's clubs caused a temporary but "...critically important empowerment of women."³ In *Out of the Shadows*, historian Shirley Roessler explores the mysteries surrounding Théroigne Méricourt's role in the revolution and how she and Olympe de Gouges furthered feminist ideals. In 2009 Lisa Beckstrand expanded research on de Gouges and Manon Roland in *Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism* and evaluated their reputations as "freaks" or "deviants" for acting outside their traditional gender boundaries. The most recent work drawn upon, John Cole's *Between the Queen and the Cabby* (2009),

³ Darline Gay Levy, and Harriet B. Applewhite, "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris," in *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 85.

intensely studies de Gouges and her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*. Cole analyzes each article, extracting evidence of Gouges's feminism, and argues that her language was the boldest and most inspiring of any Revolutionary proto-feminist figure. The origins of modern feminism have only been recently explored by historians, who have studied the effects of sexual difference, republicanism, and notable female revolutionaries. One of the most controversial aspects of early feminism, however, is the influence of Enlightenment discourse on proto-feminist consciousness.

II. *The Enlightenment and the Nature of Women*

The Enlightenment transformed conventional ideas about individualism, government and reason. In the context of proto-feminism, perhaps the most significant and relevant topic the *philosophes* discussed was the "nature" of women. Enlightenment writings on the nature of women and sexual difference came about amidst new studies that focused on the human anatomy. Doctors at the time believed that organs were the "...source of one's impressions and experiences," which led them to emphasize differences in the structure and function of male and female organs.⁴ Though they did emphasize other factors such as brain size, doctors were preoccupied with women's sexual organs and their reproductive ability. Doctors such as Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis concluded that men were distinctly "profound" with "desirable sensibility" while women were distinguishable by their "fleeting feelings."⁵ Enlightenment thinkers then utilized this medical reasoning to address women's place in society. Diderot, for example, connected women's "phantoms [and] delirium" to her uterus, which he deemed "susceptible to 'terrible spasms.'"⁶ Others decreed that women's reproductive organs proved that women's "destiny" lay in the domestic sphere. Destined to be mothers, women were born sweet, tender and docile and therefore meant to "...submit to constraints without protest, for the sake of peace and concord in the family."⁷

The works and teachings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Baron de Montesquieu stressed that the most natural and beneficial place for women was in the home. In works such as *Émile*, Rousseau shows that sexual difference was essential to maintain a true, virtuous republic. He was convinced that "...there are no good morals for women out of a withdrawn and domestic life," as

⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 6.

⁵ Scott, *Only Paradoxes*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷ McMillan, *France and Women*, 5.

woman's purpose was to uphold morality within the family unit.⁸ When women acted outside their designated sphere, Rousseau believed that only chaos ensued. He believed their "loose tongues" in the public sphere would undermine liberty and rationality.⁹ He pointed to the aristocratic women or salon women as examples, maintaining that their improper behavior was detrimental to the family structure and society. Determined to rid society of the vices of salon women, Rousseau maintained that the true republican women—identified by their chasteness, tenderness and obedience—would find happiness in "...becoming virtuous wives and good mothers" who reinforced the moral fabric of society. Though women such as Olympe de Gouges disagreed with Rousseau, others were captivated. Inspired by the stories of Julie in *La nouvelle Heloise* or Sophie in *Émile*, women "...remodeled their lives on his characters" and pursued Rousseau's vision of ideal femininity.¹⁰ Contrary to what contemporary opinions might express, many women felt a false sense of empowerment from Rousseau's ideas. However, even though their motherly role was now seen as crucial and rewarding, they were still confined to the private sphere.

In *The Spirit of Laws* Montesquieu echoed many of the same sentiments. He argued that "the forward march of civilization" weighed heavily on the domestication of women.¹¹ Much like Rousseau, Montesquieu predicted what he thought would come to pass if women continued to occupy the public sphere, using salon women as an example. He maintained that these women's "unrestrained liberty and vanity" plagued the politics at the time and had a negative effect on the virtue and merit of those serving the government.¹² It was his assertion that, once women inhabited the domestic sphere, their vices would give way to their strengths, returning virtue to the home. However, Montesquieu also acknowledged that it was completely impossible to prevent women from being involved with the world. Some interpretations of Montesquieu have maintained that he viewed maternity "...not as the ultimate feminine fulfillment, but as a single and temporary aspect of a woman's life."¹³ Despite this, it can easily be inferred that the ultimate feminine fulfillment would have then been the upkeep of virtue within the home, whether it was a personal or familial task. In sum, Montesquieu and Rousseau expressed some of the most influential ideas concerning sexual difference and the role of women in society. However, many

⁸ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 85.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁰ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 65.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³ Katherine B. Clinton, "Femme et Philosophe: Enlightenment Origins of Feminism," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, no. 3 (1975): 295.

other Enlightenment *philosophes* would not view sexual difference as a legitimate reason for keeping women away from education and the public sphere.

Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, Defoe and Baron de Grimm recognized that while women differed physically from men, this did not affect their mental capabilities. They blamed the common perception that women were incapable of reason on factors outside their nature, contrary to Rousseau. Grimm, for example, argued that "...all the defects with which they [women] are reproached" stem from "...the work of man, of society, and of an ill-regulated education."¹⁴ This mentality allowed them to approach the idea of equal education for women. Defoe maintained that if women had equal opportunities in education they would not suffer from the vices that they were so often associated with. He went as far as to claim that by acknowledging women's superior virtue and cleverness, society was implying that it "...denied women the advantage of education for fear that they should vie with men in their improvements" and potentially surpass men in areas of intellectual achievement.¹⁵ In many cases Enlightenment thinkers viewed their encounters with salon women differently than Rousseau and Montesquieu. Voltaire and Grimm both used their interactions with Madame du Châtelet—an educated noblewoman, mathematician, and physicist—as evidence that women were intellectually capable. Voltaire's friendship with du Châtelet caused him to declare that "...women are capable of all that men are," and he praised the mixing of the sexes in French society, as it facilitated mental stimulation.¹⁶ Although Defoe, Voltaire and Grimm noted that men and women were susceptible to certain traits based on their sex and that historically women had not accomplished as much as men, they blamed this on their lack of educational opportunities. Proto-feminists would use the arguments of these Enlightenment philosophers to advocate for women's education during the Revolution and for decades afterwards.

Only one Enlightenment *philosophe* went as far as to boldly proclaim that women deserved full and equal citizenship in the public sphere. Marquise de Condorcet advocated for women's rights on a radical scale in his most important proto-feminist work, *On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship* (1790). In this essay he focused on seldom discussed topics such as "...civil marriage and divorce, special homes and hospitals for unmarried mothers, birth control, free secular education for all and schemes, [and] that anticipated social security..."¹⁷ In this essay Condorcet emphasizes the hypocrisy of a society

¹⁴ Clinton, "Femme et Philosophe", 290.

¹⁵ Ibid., 289.

¹⁶ Ibid., 288.

¹⁷ Marquis de Condorcet, "On the Emancipation of Women. On Giving Women the Rights of Citizenship." From Condorcet, Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de.

advocating equal rights while at the time ignoring the female half of the population.¹⁸ Drawing on Enlightenment ideals, Condorcet makes his own conclusions regarding individual rights. Arguing that men gain natural rights through their ability to reason, Enlightenment philosophy must in turn give women the same rights, as they too possess these qualities. He also responded to the notion that women's reproductive function hindered them from being able to properly participate as citizens; he questioned whether a female's "monthly indispositions" and periods of pregnancy were different enough from a male's yearly case of gout or colds to justify denying them citizenship. In addition to these arguments, Condorcet was also aware of the Rousseauian claims that women's presence in the public sphere could only cause harm to society. In response, Condorcet asks in his essay how these women could have done any more damage than particular male rulers or the lovers of some empresses. Acknowledging the existence of equally destructive male equivalents, Condorcet states "Men have no real reason to be proud when they cast their eyes over the list of those who have governed them."¹⁹

While Rousseau and Montesquieu argued that women's participation in the public sphere was contradictory to their nature, Condorcet asserted the opposite. He claims that many contemporaries have argued that "...despite being better than men, gentler, more sensitive, and less subject to the vices of egoism and hard-heartedness, women have no real idea of justice."²⁰ Noticing the contradiction, Condorcet declares it is paradoxical to reproach women for this perceived shortcoming when it only exists because society has denied them this very right. He claims that under this logic society "...would also have to deny citizenship rights to anyone who was obliged to work constantly and could therefore neither be enlightened nor exercise his reason."²¹ He would use this same reasoning to refute the assertion that women's participation in the public sphere would distract from duties in the home. Condorcet writes, "Women would no more be forced to abandon their homes than laborers their ploughs or craftsmen their workshops."²² If men could perform civic duties while tending to their other occupation, women could as well. Condorcet worked fervently to quell the emphasis on sexual difference, female corruption and domestic duties. In advocating for women's civic equality, he produced a revolutionary rhetoric

Condorcet: Political Writings. Edited by Steven Lukes and Nadia Urbinati. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012: xxiii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 159-160.

²² *Ibid.*, 161.

that gave life to many proto-feminists and helped establish a foundation for feminist consciousness.

The Enlightenment welcomed new theories regarding the sexual differences of men and women and their effect on everyday social and political functions. Some, namely Rousseau and Montesquieu, drew upon woman's ability to reproduce and concluded that she was destined to occupy the domestic sphere where she could foster virtue in her children. Others, such as Voltaire, believed that women's "faults" occurred largely due to society's refusal to educate them. Condorcet, however, argued that despite any differences between men and women, women were still autonomous beings capable of reason and, therefore, should not be excluded from citizenship. Considering the various Enlightenment ideas about women, it can be seen how these arguments could be employed by both early feminists and antifeminists. The Jacobins would use theories by those like Rousseau when advocating for women's domesticity. However, some women took the ideas of Voltaire or Condorcet as justification for joining the Revolution. Because of the influence of Enlightenment discourse, Karen Offen writes that "...issues of who should exercise authority rose to the forefront of public debate precisely because they had become issues contested in everyday life."²³ Hence women would change the face of participation in matters of the state.

III.

Feminist Participation in the Revolution: Undermining Sexual Difference

Before the Republic was established, the revolutionary leadership supported the acts of the revolutionary women. After all, both men and women utilized Enlightenment language, calling themselves "...the arm of the sovereign nation" and "...the most authentic embodiment and expression of the General Will."²⁴ Women made it apparent early on that they were ready to have a say in the future of France, this conviction manifesting itself in October of 1789. Despite a French "tradition" for women to participate in bread riots, the October Days made it clear that "...the political intervention of women of the popular classes had gone beyond previous experience."²⁵ Furious over the scarcity and high price of bread, the market women of Paris prepared for a march on Versailles. Marie-Rose Barré, a young lace-worker, testified that on October 5 "...she was stopped...by about a hundred women, who told her that it was

²³ Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 29.

²⁴ Levy and Applewhite, "Women and Militant Citizenship", 85.

²⁵ McMillan, *France and Women*, 22.

necessary for her to go with them to Versailles to ask for bread.”²⁶ Unable to refuse the growing mass, she consented. Others were not even given a choice, as was the case for Jeanne Dorothee Delaissement, who “...was forced to go” as the women “...dragged her in and led to the Hotel-de-Ville and then to Versailles...”²⁷ Upon arriving to the palace they stormed the hall of the legislature, and chaos ensued as they interrupted the participating legislators, mocked and intimidated the deputies and even voted on motions regarding grains. In the midst of the commotion, one woman made it to the president’s chair. Historians Darline Levy and Harriet Applewhite conclude that this gender reversal “...can be read as the women’s symbolic seizure of power from deputies whom they perceived to be incapable of representing them...”²⁸ This tended to be the legacy of the October Days and the beginning of what male revolutionaries would describe as “the world turned upside down”—a world where women were fiercely active in the public sphere, acting far outside their traditional gender roles.²⁹ Though they did not invade the palace in the name of republicanism or women’s rights, such deeds undermined the absolute sovereignty of the monarchy. A goal of future feminist movements entered its rudimentary stages as a result of the March on Versailles: to have women’s voices be heard in public and political spheres. They were victorious in some sense, as they successfully brought the King of France back to Paris, within the reach of the people.

Women continued to participate in the Revolution, even during the tumultuous transition to the First Republic. They joined armed marches to display their dedication to liberty and participated in *journées*, or popular uprisings. After being denied formal citizenship by the constitutions of 1791 and 1793, women pursued political activism through clubs and societies. The most radical and significant of these was the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women. Founded in May 1793 and starting with around 170 members, the club leaned towards the republican ideals of the Jacobins. According to their documented regulations, one of the club’s primary goals was to form a society to “...instruct themselves, to learn well the Constitution and laws of the Republic, to attend to public affairs, to succor suffering humanity, and to defend all human beings who became victim of any arbitrary acts.”³⁰ These women aimed to facilitate the spread of Republicanism and did so by means of frequent meetings

²⁶ “Women Testify Concerning Their Participation in the October Days.” From *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*. Edited by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979: 49.

²⁷ “Women Testify,” 48.

²⁸ Levy and Applewhite, “Women and Militant Citizenship”, 84.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “The Regulations of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women”, 161.

and demonstrations. Thus proving the legitimacy and efficiency of their activities in a sphere dominated by men, their procedures included strict regulations as to who could enter the society, how meetings would be structured and how the president and secretaries would carry out their duties. All members, according to Article XV of the club's regulations, had to take the following vow: "I swear to live for the Republic or die for it; I promise to be faithful to the Rule of Society as long as it exists."³¹ In the words of this oath it is abundantly clear to what radical lengths these women were willing to go to for the sake of the Republic, which they viewed as the ideal institution, embodying liberty, equality and justice for all people.

This determinism often caused violent disagreements with the market women, who did not support the club's radical participation in the revolution. The market women's main concern was feeding their families rather than taking action in the political sphere, and they tended to align themselves with the domestic ideology of Rousseau. This tension between women of the Society and the market women would ultimately lead to the dissolution of the Society as well as all female political clubs under the Jacobins. One is left to wonder whether or not the Society really triggered any feminist impulses if: 1) they were at odds with another group of women 2) their actions led to further restrictions of women in the public sphere. However, their actions defied traditional gender norms—they acted outside the domestic sphere, took radical steps that many male revolutionaries also made use of, and sought to prove women's ability to handle the political functions of the state and to uphold republican principles. The "...temporary but critically important empowerment of women" that this club's radical tactics produced was just that—temporary, at least within the Revolutionary scope. Their challenge to male hegemony in the state, however, contributed to the formation of feminist consciousness for years to come.

Pauline Léon and Claire Lacombe, a chocolate maker and an actress, created the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, laying down its principles and serving as founding officers. Together they helped organize and carry out the surveillance, confrontation, and intimidation of those they deemed a threat to the republic. Even before the official formation of the society, however, the two could easily be considered proto-feminist activists. Léon maintained that since "...those memorable days when the Bastille was taken," she could be seen "...inciting citizens against the partisans of tyranny" and defending the Republic.³² Though both women made it a point to speak out against opponents

³¹ Ibid., 163.

³² "Anne Pauline Léon Reconciles Her Political Behavior with Radical Revolutionary Principles and Policies." From *Women in Revolution Paris 1789-1795*. Edited by Darline

such as Roland and Brissot, their most significant cause was the right to arm themselves.³³ In March of 1792 Pauline Léon appeared in front of the Legislative Assembly with a petition signed by over three hundred women, demanding the right to bear arms. Léon told legislators: “We want only to defend ourselves as you do... You cannot refuse... the right nature gives us, unless you pretend that the Declaration of Rights does not apply to women and that they should let their throats be cut...”³⁴ She then cited the various ways women participated in the Revolution as further evidence of the need and right to arm themselves. Her assertion that women’s militant involvement in revolutionary affairs legitimized “...political rights and responsibilities of women” met harsh criticism from the Jacobins, who referred to women’s domestic nature.³⁵ The Jacobins clung to Rousseauian ideas about women, arguing they best served society within the private sphere, where they could foster republican ideals within the home. Nevertheless, Pauline Léon’s push for the right to bear arms and her efforts, along with Claire Lacombe, to organize and run one of the most radical forms of women’s participation in the Revolution set a new standard for women’s involvement in the public sphere, one that had never before been seen.

Lacombe and Léon were not the only women who broke from traditional gender norms in order to participate in the French Revolution. Many notable women, such as Etta Palm, Théroigne de Méricourt and Manon Roland, also contributed to the revolutionary cause. Etta Palm d’Aelders, a public revolutionary speaker and president of the *Les Amies* club, lobbied for women’s rights utilizing republican and Enlightenment rhetoric. Maintaining that nature had created women “...the equal of man in moral strength and was created his superior in...strength in adversity, patience during suffering, and in generosity of soul and patriotic soul,” she advocated for flexible divorce laws, political equality for women, and protection against marital violence.³⁶³⁷ D’Aelders argued that, as women were associated with virtue and charged with “serving the public good,” women’s involvement in political affairs could only aid society and create a virtuous, moral state. Another woman, Théroigne de Méricourt, while not always advocating for women’s rights directly, transcended gender norms as well. She was a rumored participant of the October Days and the *joursées* as well

Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979: 158.

³³ “Anne Pauline Reconciles Her Political Behavior,” 159.

³⁴ Levy and Applewhite, “Women and Militant Citizenship”, 88.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁶ Shirley Elson Roessler, *Out of the Shadows: Women and Politics in the French Revolution, 1789-95*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1996), 59.

³⁷ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 119.

as the founder of the political club *Amis de la Loi*.³⁸ An enigmatic figure of the revolution, she was once kidnapped by French royalists who accused her of plotting to kill Marie-Antoinette. In addition she was accused of the murder of royalist pamphleteer François Louis Suleau, though her involvement in his death was praised by the leading Republicans.³⁹ Though passionate about republicanism, she also supported female armament and in turn the right for women to defend themselves while participating in the Revolution.

Unlike Palm and Méricourt, Manon Roland has traditionally been viewed as an advocate for the republican, domestic ideology rather than as a potential feminist. However, feminist historian Lisa Beckstrand has examined Roland's autobiographical works and concluded that Roland's life and writing subtly undermine the importance of sexual difference and gender norms in the late eighteenth century. Roland was the wife of Jean-Marie Roland, the Minister of the Interior during the creation of the Republic. She collaborated with him on numerous political works in order to propel herself into the revolutionary public sphere. She adamantly maintained that she performed all of her activities within the domestic realm, but as Beckstrand argues, her writings reveal that she questioned this role. Her memoirs detail how she challenged traditional gender roles and repeatedly justified her role as a female participant of the Revolution. Affirming that women are capable of reason, she finds little difference between her activism and that of her male counterparts, stating that "...I followed the course of the Revolution, the work of the Assembly...with an almost unfathomable interest that one can only appreciate with the intelligence of my caliber and my work."⁴⁰ Roland "sidestepped" the domestic realm by participating in political discussions, analyzing and critiquing the conversation and work of male members of the legislature and questioning the societal expectations of women in her private writings. Roland's life and writings reveal that early proto-feminist impulses took many forms. She, Palm and Méricourt, either directly or indirectly, undermined gender norms and reinforced the idea that women had entered the political sphere in new numbers and unforeseen strength.

One woman, however, stands above the rest in her resolve to attain women's civic equality. With passion and zeal, Olympe de Gouges, according to historian John Cole, "...published on current affairs and public policy more often and more boldly than any other woman" and "...demanded the extension of full civil and political rights to women...more uncompromisingly than any other

³⁸ Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁰ Lisa Beckstrand, *Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), 52.

person.”⁴¹ In addition, Gouges advocated for the rights of colored people, children and unmarried mothers. Her goal was full civic equality for women, but she faced the vast barrier of sexual difference. She aimed to strike a compromise by acknowledging that women were different while at the same time aiming to “...refute the prevailing equation of active citizenship with masculinity, to make sexual difference irrelevant for *politics* [my italics].”⁴² Gouges challenged the Republic’s definition of women as passive citizens by taking the stance of an active citizen, but this would pit her against not only republican legislators who disagreed with her, but other women who embraced the domestic ideology. Nevertheless, during the Revolution Gouges managed to publish one of the most important documents for feminist consciousness, the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*.

Questioning men’s supremacy, Gouges wrote the document in a style parallel to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, with several articles especially vocal in asserting women’s rights. Article I reads “...Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights...” which asserts that not only are women autonomous individuals, but also that they deserve the same rights men enjoy—including citizenship.⁴³ After stating that the nation’s sovereignty is dependent on women’s integration into the state in Article III, she argues in Article IV that “...the exercise of the natural rights of woman has no limits other than the perpetual tyranny with which man opposes it.”⁴⁴ Gouges opposes man’s unjust domination over women and argues for law to apply to both the sexes equally. With this perspective in mind, it is in Article X that she asserts that “...woman has the right to mount the scaffold” and to receive equal punishment.⁴⁵ In addition her idea here is that it is a woman’s right “...to think seriously about politics and express themselves before policy-making bodies.”⁴⁶ Though women could be executed by the state, they often did not have the right to express or defend themselves; they were equal in death but not in life. Later articles advocate for freedom of speech and property rights for women, but more feminist notions can be found in her postamble. The postamble is essentially a call for women to accept her principles. She states:

⁴¹ John R. Cole, *Between the Queen and the Cabby: Olympe De Gouges's Rights of Woman* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 7.

⁴² Scott, *Only Paradoxes*, 33.

⁴³ Olympe de Gouges, “The Declaration of the Rights of Woman.” From *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*. Edited by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979: 89.

⁴⁴ Gouges, “The Declaration of the Rights of Woman”, 90.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Cole, *Queen and the Cabby*, 128.

If, in their [men's] weakness, they insist on this inconsistency, contradicting their own principles, courageously use the strength of your reason to oppose their vain pretensions to superiority. Unite under the banners of philosophy, show all the energy of your character, and you will soon see these haughty men, not groveling at your feet in slavish adoration, but proud to share with you the treasures of the Supreme Being. Whatever may be the barriers that they raise against you, it is within your power to overcome them: You have only to will it.⁴⁷

Gouges asserts that the Republic, while emphasizing individualism and natural rights, contradicts itself by denying these rights to women. Furthermore, she calls on women *en masse* to use their ability to reason and participate in the public sphere. The need to rally, in Gouges' view, stemmed from the blatant hypocrisy of the Republic and its use of ideals, especially as women had participated at great length during the Revolution. Gouges, Lacombe, Léon, Méricourt, Palm and Roland all demonstrated that sexual difference in the public sphere was deteriorating, but ideals concerning the domesticity of women, fostered by Enlightenment rhetoric, continued to grow in the new Republic.

IV. The Republic: Attempting to Return Women to the Private Sphere

If women participated with such zeal in the Revolution and aided in the formation of the Republic, one is left to wonder why republican officials went to such lengths to deny women citizenship and a place in the public sphere. One possible explanation can be found in how republican officials viewed women of the Old Regime. Marie-Antoinette was one such woman and was viewed poorly for being both a foreigner and a woman. Numerous political drawings depicted her as a selfish, promiscuous wife who tainted her husband's reign. They often portrayed her as domineering over her husband, who was easily influenced by her feminine charms.⁴⁸ For much of the French population, Marie-Antoinette's alleged "...extravagant expenditures, marital infidelity, scornful airs, the indoctrination of her surviving son, and...the political seduction of her husband" demonstrated all the ill effects of women's deliberate presence in political affairs.⁴⁹ This view triumphed towards other aristocratic or salon women as well. These women had substantial influence in the Old Regime, affecting class power through marriage. Many associated such women with excessively luxurious and

⁴⁷ Ibid., 34-35.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 86.

promiscuous lifestyles, and their reputations worsened as the general populace grew increasingly dissatisfied with the monarchy. Their participation in the public sphere was seen as an implicit rejection of their “nature,” and soon the Old Regime women were seen as having ruined the nation. Their traditional role as domestic mothers now seemed vital to the survival of the new nation, whose foundation depended on the growth of new, republican children. The emerging Jacobins began to believe “it was Woman who had scorned her natural destiny of wife and mother... It was Woman’s voracious appetite for luxury that had ruined the economy and her craving for power that had corrupted the ruined government.”⁵⁰ Those such as Louis-Marie Prudhomme, a revolutionary journalist, labeled the “reign of the courtesans” as detrimental to the nation’s stability and moral capacity.⁵¹ Only with a return to the domestic sphere could the nation flourish again. Utilizing Enlightenment language concerning the nature and place of women, the Republic hoped to ensure the regime’s stability by enforcing a social dynamic keeping men in the public sphere and keeping women at home, where they could produce new generations of male Republicans.

The Republic found an acceptable solution to the radical actions of politically-active women through the idea of the “Republican mother.” Though clearly excluding women from citizenship in the Constitutions of 1791 and 1793, “Republican motherhood” was used to give women a sense of purpose in the Republic. The acts of motherhood were painted “...as the most noble occupation possible for a Republican woman,” and maintained that the virtuous mothers should turn their homes into “schools for patriotism.”⁵² They utilized Rousseauian philosophies regarding the domestic and moral nature of women to support their claim that women’s place was within the home. However, women could still play an important role in the state by raising children who adhered to Republican ideals. They could not just be mothers—they had to be patriot mothers, “...instilling in their children a love of country and rewarding their patriotic husband for their efforts in the struggle to build the new order.”⁵³ Many of the proto-feminists then faced a dilemma. To many of them, nature had granted them the ability to reason and to inhabit space outside the domestic realm. However, stepping outside of the domestic realm meant deviating from nature under Republican or Jacobin ideology. They risked associating themselves with the women of the Old Regime, whose overt presence in the public sphere was associated with the downfall of the state. The Republic now had a solid argument against feminine involvement in the state and proceeded to take further

⁵⁰ Proctor, *Women, Equality, and the French Revolution*, 56.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵³ McMillan, *France and Women*, 29.

action. The aforementioned Prudhomme condemned the activities of female political clubs, arguing that they were harmful to families and the formation of future citizens. With the idea of the “Republican mother” firmly in the minds of its people, the Republic, led by the Jacobins, sought to put an end to the participation of women in the public sphere and restore stability to their nation.

The Jacobins had the opportunity to just do this in the fall of 1793. The activities of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women had grown increasingly bold and in September began to clash with the market women, who disagreed with the Society’s tactics.⁵⁴ The Jacobins used the series of clashes to call into question the legitimacy of the clubs, citing that these women “...had broken through both classical and Rousseauian definitions of femininity.”⁵⁵ On September 16 the Jacobins met to discuss the issue of the Society. They described Claire Lacombe as a woman who “meddles everywhere” and “...is very dangerous in that she is very eloquent.”⁵⁶ Lacombe then tried to speak in her defense but she was met with criticism. The Jacobins assured her that by attempting to defend herself she had committed the true crime, which was “...to cause disorder...in an assembly of people who need to deliberate calmly concerning the interests of the people.”⁵⁷ The Jacobins dismissed her request to defend herself as an irrational fit of feminine hysteria and used her outburst to justify women’s exclusion from the political sphere.

Lacombe, knowing that the Society was losing favor with the Jacobins, gave her own account of September 16 in an attempt to demonstrate that she, and the Society, had only the Republic’s best interests at heart. She maintained that “...the true Jacobins were not at their ordinary place,” for if they were they would know she had only acted on behalf of the Republic.⁵⁸ Lacombe’s report reveals a deeper problem of sexual difference under the Republic—her account details several remarks made by the Jacobins based on her sex rather than the events in question. To Jacobin politician François Chabot, these women “calumniated” their virtuous nature by forming their own political body and

⁵⁴ Levy and Applewhite, “Women and Militant Citizenship”, 95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁶ “The Jacobins Denounce the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women.” From *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*. Edited by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979: 183.

⁵⁷ “Jacobins Denounce the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women,” 183.

⁵⁸ “Citoyenne Lacombe’s Report to the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women Concerning What Took Place September 16 at the Jacobin Society.” From *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*. Edited by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979: 195.

therefore undermined the concept of Republican motherhood.⁵⁹ As Lacombe made her way to the gallery to defend herself, she claimed that Chabot and other Jacobins shouted things like “Down with the new Corday!” and “Get out, miserable woman, or we will tear you to pieces.”⁶⁰ Their cries echoed sentiments that women’s direct involvement in state affairs was harmful to the Republic. Faced with what seemed like an impassable barrier, Lacombe threatened to show “...what a free woman can do.”⁶¹ This comment was met with rage by the Jacobin officials, both for its deliberate departure from Republican ideals femininity and for its provocative challenge to Jacobin rule.

Lacombe admitted a degree of defeat, arguing that the Society had always supported the Republic’s cause and that she was ready to give her life for the sake of republicanism. However, she asserted that the Jacobins did not have the same interests that they had professed upon creating the First Republic—they too had been corrupted by power and they were no longer “friends of liberty and equality.”⁶² The struggle between the Society and the Jacobins resulted in the official banning of all women’s clubs, thus eliminating mass participation by women in the public sphere. However, the reports by both the Jacobins and Lacombe demonstrate that the closing of the clubs was not merely due to events that transpired in the fall of 1793—the issues that were discussed had their roots in the clash of opinions concerning women’s place. The conscious efforts of women to enter (and actively participate in) the public sphere caused the Republic to take drastic measures to return them to the domestic sphere and to create good, Republican mothers. The closing of the clubs was just one step.

With the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women closed, Lacombe and Léon retreated into private life, but the Republic still had to account for the other notable women who had made names for themselves in the public sphere. In the midst of the Reign of Terror, the Jacobins began to eliminate any who opposed them or did not conform to “Republican ideals,” including the women who deviated from traditional gender norms and actively participated in political affairs. Théroigne de Méricourt and Etta Palm disappeared from the public sphere before Jacobin legislators could take legal action. In May of 1793 Méricourt was attacked by a group of female Jacobin supporters. The rivalry between the Jacobins and the Girondins was escalating, and after Méricourt made comments in favor of the Girondins and Brissot, the women became irate and called her a “false patriot.”⁶³ The women proceeded to strip Méricourt naked and

⁵⁹ “Lacombe’s Report,” 189.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁶¹ “Lacombe’s Report,” 192.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 195.

⁶³ Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 88.

beat her brutally. So traumatized by the incident, Méricourt never fully recovered and was institutionalized in 1794.⁶⁴ Etta Palm meanwhile, sensing her safety was threatened, left France entirely in favor of her native Holland. By 1794 both women had ceased their political activities in France, and amidst the Reign of Terror many other women activists retreated back into the private sphere, where Republican motherhood would flourish.

Other proto-feminists were not able to escape the Reign of Terror and the Jacobins with their lives. Condorcet was deemed a traitor by the Jacobins for his writing and went into hiding in 1793. He was arrested in 1794 but would never see the guillotine: he died a mysterious death in prison, where he possibly committed suicide or was murdered.⁶⁵ Manon Roland was also arrested and sentenced to death. Her influence on political writings was a cause for concern, but the Jacobins also cited her amorous relationship with Girondin-supporting François Bruzot as evidence of not only her antirevolutionary activities, but of her lost “feminine virtue.”⁶⁶ Her participation in the salon environment earned her extra criticism. Her pride and her desire to stray from her “nature,” according to the Jacobins, “. . . led her to forget the virtues of her sex, and this slip, always dangerous, ended by causing her to perish on the scaffold.”⁶⁷ She was executed in November 1793, just a few days after the execution of Olympe de Gouges.

Gouges’s writing had always been controversial—she once suggested in one of her pieces that she and Robespierre should drown themselves together in the Seine, feeling that ridding society of his influence was worth her life.⁶⁸ She argued that Robespierre and the Jacobins were extinguishing “. . . all the flames of the Republic and of patriotism,” such as Condorcet, Roland, Brissot and many more.⁶⁹ To the Jacobins’ dismay, one of her final works proposed the idea that French citizens should vote on what type of government they wanted, even if it meant in favor of the monarchy. During her trial, she was deemed an enemy of the Republic and charged with “perfidious intentions.”⁷⁰ The trial examined her writings, which suggested that all parties should have a say in the kind of government they deemed most suitable for the state. Gouges did not recant and was often seen smirking at the charges laid before her. In her defense she cited

⁶⁴ Proctor, *Women, Equality, and the French Revolution*, 164.

⁶⁵ Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 164.

⁶⁶ Beckstrand, *Deviant Women*, 126.

⁶⁷ Proctor, *Women, Equality, and the French Revolution*, 166.

⁶⁸ Roessler, *Out of the Shadows*, 67.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷⁰ “The Trial of a Feminist Revolutionary, Olympe de Gouges.” From *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795*. Edited by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979: 258.

her activities during the Revolution as evidence of her good intentions—she argued that she had made countless sacrifices to uphold the principles of the Republic. However, Gouges' writing advocating "...the reestablishment of a power attacking the sovereignty of the people" was enough to condemn her.⁷¹ After mounting the scaffold, she looked around and cried: "Children of the Fatherland, you will avenge my death."⁷² Gouges' commitment to women's equality even in the face of death helped her to achieve martyrdom among generations of proto-feminists, who would use her passionate writings to incite reform against similar repressive regimes.

Gouges, Condorcet and Roland were dead. Méricourt and Palm had left the dangers of revolutionary France and the women's political clubs, including the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, had disbanded. The Republic, linking women's presence in the public sphere to the corruption of Old Regime women, attempted to suppress the activity of those women who participated in the Revolution and the formation of the Republic. Using Enlightenment reasoning regarding the domesticity, they created the concept of Republican motherhood, which kept women in the private sphere for the purpose of fostering republican ideals within the home. However, many such as Gouges, Condorcet and Lacombe, noticed that by denying women citizenship and a political voice, the Republic contradicted its principles of liberty and equality for all.

V. Conclusion

In his conclusion to *Between the Queen and the Cabby*, John Cole writes: "The Revolution that ignored Gouges's claims also inspired them and those of other feminists..."⁷³ Both the Enlightenment and the French Revolution introduced new ideas of individualism, liberty, sovereignty and citizenship. Just as the revolutionaries used these new concepts to justify the transition to the First Republic, proto-feminists utilized the same language to advocate for women's rights and the opportunity to participate in the public sphere. In a paradoxical twist, however, the Republic then used the same rhetoric to encourage women's domesticity, stating that the nature of women dictated that their sole purpose lies in the home and in the family. The reasoning of Enlightenment thinkers and the cries of the revolutionaries, although laying the foundation for feminist consciousness, also did much to hinder the proto-feminists' progress and "ignored" their cries for justice and equality.

⁷¹ "Trial of a Feminist Revolutionary," 259.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Cole, *Queen and the Cabby*, 231.

Activist women of the Revolution demonstrated that ideas of sexual difference were up for dispute. Women participated on a grand scale in the March on Versailles and in clubs, and individuals such as Gouges advocated for the citizenship and political equality of women. They spoke on behalf of all women and sought to redefine her place in society. Though these aims were ultimately reversed in the latter years of the Revolution and certainly during the Napoleonic era, the actions and writings of the proto-feminists would serve as inspiration for later decades. Academic Joan Wallach Scott notes that Jeanne Deroin, a feminist during the Revolution of 1848, "...thought of herself as an heir to Olympe de Gouges's campaign for women's rights."⁷⁴ Inspired by the boldness of Gouges amidst such a hostile, Republican environment she saw many parallels in her own work. European historian Karen Offen, likewise, maintains that around the same time "...a broad spectrum of writers and social critics" emerged in France and used "Enlightenment formulations" to advocate a restructuring of relationships between the sexes.⁷⁵ Even in the late 1880s the legacy of the women who had participated in the Revolution and the discussion of women's rights was present. French feminist Maria Deraismes asserted the universal importance of how "half of humanity" had been left out of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* and drew upon Condorcet's words concerning citizenship and equality for inspiration.⁷⁶ The actions and ideals of the proto-feminists as well as the Republic's reaction to female participation in the Revolution, served as a stimulus for later feminists and helped define the goals of subsequent movements.

The simultaneous presence of Enlightenment reasoning, Republican rhetoric and the participation of women in the public sphere all shaped the foundation of modern European feminism during the French Revolution. Many of these "deviants" and "furies" of the Revolution would become martyrs in the eyes of later feminists, and the Republican rhetoric that they fought so hard against would serve as a unifying force. From unsavory depictions of salon women to the revolutionary acts of Olympe de Gouges or the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, the French Revolution propelled masses of women into the public sphere for the first time and as a result threw social norms into a state of disarray that would outlive several generations.

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⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

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THE paneled LIVES OF EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN: COMIC BOOKS, SUPERHEROINES, AND AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE 1940S

When scholars examine a society in search of the principles that it holds most dear, popular culture promises an attractive and engaging medium where one can search for answers. Intellectual disciplines such as art history, film studies, and literature demonstrate a constructive merging of critical thinking and entertainment media, whereas other art forms are being mapped out as academic disciplines for the first time. Comic studies is one of these outcast art forms. Due to comics' unserious nature and association with juvenile literature, the medium is only recently being molded into a coherent academic field, though comics have had a history nearly as long as cinema. Despite the hesitation shown by academics in embracing comics as an independent field, "picture stories" have assisted a range of existing disciplines such as the three listed above, in addition to Gender and Ethnic Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, Philosophy, and History.¹

It is in the discipline of history that the comic book has yet to reach its fullest potential as a primary source. While some professional work on comic book content has been published, it is largely aimed at fans instead of academics and emphasizes commemoration and imagery over analysis. This approach grossly underserves the latent capacity that comic books have to reveal historical insights into the society that cherished them. Most notably, the superhero genre of comic books serves a role as an ideological mirror and perhaps a shaper of deeply held cultural and moral values.²

The addition of the superhero genre to the historical narrative is valuable, particularly as one examines how the ideals of a society change over time. It is with the goal of gaining insight into the new experiences of American women brought about by World War II that I turn to the female superheroine characters born of the Golden Age of Comics, an era in societal flux lasting from 1938-1950. During the wartime Forties, women in factories and women fighting crime both expressed autonomy, agency, and competency while remaining within the bounds of conventional femininity. To what extent were comic books *reflecting* cultural adaptations to American femininity and to what extent could they have

¹ Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, *Critical Approaches to Comics: An Introduction to Theories and Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p.1.

² Charles Hatfield, Jeet Heer, and Kent Worcester, *The Superhero Reader* (Jackson : University Press of Mississippi, 2013), p. xiv.

been *shaping* its revision? These are the questions to be explored throughout this paper as it constructs a narrative around the legacy that Golden Age superheroines left behind.

I. The Artists Behind the Wonder Women

Who defined the boundaries of the superhero archetype? Before the war as the first comic books were being published, the majority of creators were liberal, Jewish males who came from lower-middle class or working class backgrounds.³ Men like Will Eisner, Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, Bob Kane, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster represented the majority of writers and artists who used comic books to voice their concerns over the rising threat of Nazism in Europe. With the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' entrance into war, these men were drafted into the armed forces, temporarily leaving one of America's hottest new publishing industries in short supply of experienced, creative talent.

Because of the growing demand for artists and writers, minority groups were granted work opportunities in the creative process that had been closed to them before the war. The result was a diverse cast of comic book creators. Women interested in comic book work especially benefitted, and in 1942 the number of women working in the comic book industry tripled from the previous year.⁴ Female artists like Jill Elgin, Barbara Hall, Ruth Roche, and Tarpe Mills worked on superheroines like War Nurse and the Girl Commandos, Phantom Lady, and Miss Fury. Matt Baker, regarded as the first African American artist in the comic book field, made his entrance into the industry during the war years, creating a character that was appealing to both men and women.

The man behind America's most iconic and enduring superheroine similarly came from a background unassociated with comics. William Moulton Marston, the creator of Wonder Woman, was a psychologist who came from a prestigious academic background. Known for inventing the polygraph lie detector test, Marston also developed an interest in the psychology of comics. After studying the comics and the genre of superhero lore in particular, the scholar concluded that the "picture-story" could be a constructive tool for teaching children strong moral values "worth many times its weight in pulp paper and multicolored ink."⁵ The lesson that Marston wanted to get across to America's youth was one of female empowerment: the belief that women were

³ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, p. 161.

⁴ Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: the Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 33.

⁵ William Moulton Marston, "Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics," *The American Scholar* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1943-44), p. 35-44.

“less susceptible than men to aggression and acquisitiveness” and could bring global peace through love.⁶ For Marston, the problem was that “not even girls want to be girls so long as our feminine archetype lacks force, strength, and power.”⁷ To overcome this obstacle, America needed “a feminine character with all the strength of a Superman plus all the allure of a good and beautiful woman.”⁸ Thus, Wonder Woman was born by Marston’s efforts to expose American youth to a the power of a positive female role model. However, did his message reach its intended audience?

II. Who Was Reading Comic Books?

Due in large part to the defense industry jumpstarting the U.S. economy following the Great Depression, comic books became one type of a variety of entertainment goods consumed on a massive scale by Americans both at home and abroad. As more and more American workers began to earn disposable income, the medium met their growing demand for inexpensive and portable literature that entertained all ages. In 1943, sales increased from the previous year’s 15 million comics books sold a month to 25 million according to *Publisher’s Weekly*.⁹ *Newsweek* attributed the majority of the growing sales in this market to the nation’s schoolchildren and American servicemen.¹⁰

Juvenile readers have faithfully represented a robust portion of comic book readership since the medium’s arrival, a fact of which publishers were more than well aware. Integrating humor and youngster characters into their publications, the comic book industry worked persistently to cater to their target audience. From 1940 to 1942, 75% of comic book revenue came from purchases made by children.¹¹ America’s youth voraciously read what they purchased: by the mid Forties, more than 90% of children aged 6 to 11 read an average of fifteen comic books a month while roughly 80% of adolescents ages 12-18 read twelve comic books a month.¹² Between ages 6-16, female readership trailed male readership by only 4-6%, revealing a representative female interest in

⁶ Les Daniels and Chip Kidd, *Wonder Woman: the Life and Times of the Amazon* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000), p. 19.

⁷ Marston, *Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics*, p. 42.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, p. 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Ian Gordon, “The Comics: Comics as an Independent Commodity, 1939-1945,” in *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), p. 132.

¹² *Ibid.*

comics.¹³ Furthermore, in accounting for the number of adolescents who read comic books “only occasionally,” the final number of readers increases by roughly 10%.¹⁴ Statistics such as these reveal a strong connection between America’s youth and comic book consumption.

Adults were uncertain in how to respond to youths’ steady diet of comic books. Several innovative educators attempted to tap children’s natural interest in the genre by integrating comic books or their characters into education. For example, an English teacher from a Massachusetts high school, with the assistance of D. C. Comics, prepared a language workbook starring Superman that led to his students completing a week’s worth of work in a single evening.¹⁵ One publisher, began a comic line titled *True Comics* that sought to teach young Americans about real historical figures like FDR; however, it failed to capture the interest of children who found the comics “too much like history” and “uninteresting.”¹⁶

In contrast, other Americans had little faith in the educational capabilities of comics and questioned their “undemocratic ideology.” Walter Ong, an American Jesuit philosopher and prominent Catholic intellectual, heavily criticized superhero comic books in his 1945 essay *The Comics and the Superstate* arguing that such characters glorified Fascism to children via “the blind hero-worship motif developed by Hitler and Mussolini.”¹⁷ Other researchers agreed with claims that superheroes bore too great of similarity to the Nazi ideology of *Übermensch*. One article stated outright that such characters made comic strips “Hitleresque.”¹⁸ Criticism of comics’ ideological and moral content proliferated in the post-war period, reaching its ultimate culmination through Dr. Fredric Wertham’s publication of *Seduction of the Innocent*, which instigated a congressional investigation of the comic publication industry.

Besides children and teenagers on the home front, American GIs were the second largest consumer group of comic books. Reading for pleasure was ranked high among off-duty soldiers’ preferred recreational options and was considered an educational and entertaining morale-boosting activity; however, the Army Library Service (ALS) had fallen into a state of disrepair since the

¹³ Ibid. p. 139.

¹⁴ Waugh, *The Comics*, p. 334.

¹⁵ W.W.D. Sones, “The Comics and the Instructional Method,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 18, no. 4, (Dec., 1944), p. 233.

¹⁶ Ruth Strang, “Why Children Read the Comics,” *The Elementary School Journal* 43, no. 6, (Feb., 1943), p. 338.

¹⁷ Walter Ong, “The Comics and the Super State: Glimpses Down the Back Alleys of the Mind,” *Arizona Quarterly* 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1945), p. 38.

¹⁸ Vlamos, “The Sad Case of the Funnies,” p. 411.

previous war and supplies were insufficient to meet the current demand.¹⁹ Consequently, when reading material was desperately sought after by servicemen, comic books did their part to help out the war effort and in fact soon surpassed similar print mediums. Waugh writes: “At post exchanges, the combined sales of *Life*, *Reader’s Digest*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* were exceeded by comic books by a ratio of ten to one.”²⁰ Soon, one in every four magazines shipped to troops overseas was a comic book, and 35, 000 copies of Superman alone went to servicemen each month.²¹

What made comic books so popular among GIs? For one, they were lightweight, inexpensive and easily transportable for soldiers on the go. Hardbound books were inflexible, pricier and difficult to carry, making them less appealing to servicemen in need of equally transitory reading material.²² Action type comic books, such as found in the superhero genre, also attracted army readers. The fictional adventures of inspirational characters offered soldiers an escape from the utter monotony of rigid military life while also providing them with a mythological context that related to their own journeys as war heroes fighting against injustice.²³ Not all Americans perceived comics as beneficial to its servicemen, however. Letters written to the *New York Times* complained that furnishing soldiers with cheap, juvenile literature was “no way to produce an intelligent military.”²⁴ Despite such opinions, comic books remained popular with U.S. soldiers throughout the duration of the war.

The influence of comic books spread beyond the limit of its sales. Similar to magazines, comic books possess the unique characteristic of “pass-along readership” or the circulation of a print source that occurs after the initial purchase. A child might pay for a comic at a newsstand, but later trade it to a friend after they’ve finished it, increasing the issues’ total readership. Additionally, adults contributed to pass-along readership by reading comics via an opportunistic manner that resulted from their proximity to children.²⁵ In the Forties, most comic books had a pass-along value of an average five readers per issue.²⁶ Whether through pass-along circulation or regular readership, comics

¹⁹ Christopher P. Loss, “Reading between Enemy Lines: Armed Services Editions and World War II,”

The Journal of Military History 67, no. 3, (Jul., 2003), p. 823.

²⁰ Waugh, *The Comics*, p. 334.

²¹ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, p. 31.

²² Loss, “Reading between Enemy Lines,” p. 812.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 823.

²⁴ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, p. 31.

²⁵ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, p. 200.

²⁶ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, p. 31.

were exposed to a wide range of the population, successfully penetrating American culture.

III. Characters as Caricatures

Contrary to common perception, Wonder Woman, arguably the most popular and enduring superheroine character today, was not the sole superheroine to emerge in the 1940s nor did her creation mark the genesis of the first female character in a vacuum devoid of feminine heroes. There existed in comic book literature a variety of female roles ranging from headlining leading ladies such as Phantom Lady, to comic anthology characters like Madame Strange, to popular supporting or spin-off roles such as Mary Marvel. These crime-fighting women reflected a significant blend of transition within tradition, a mirror of the new experiences that American women encountered as a result of the war.

Differences in social standing were often observable in the tales of comic book heroines. Forties comics were filled with characters, from orphans to heiresses, who gravitated toward polarizing ends of the economic spectrum. Characters who were members of the social elite offered readers a fictional escape into the lives of the wealthy, whereas working class type heroines related to the reader's everyday problems, playing upon their empathy.²⁷ While there are examples of wage-earning women and debutantes scattered throughout the decade, heroines with an upper class background tended to be more popular in the early Forties whereas heroines with a working class background held greater influence in the Post-War era.²⁸

Superheroines with upper class alter egos tended to use their secret lives as crime-fighters as an escape from the boredom of their tedious, privileged lives. These characters were often the daughters of wealthy, affluent families likely to be found in the local social register. High society superheroines such as Miss Fury, Phantom Lady, and Lady Luck occupied their free time as ladies of repute with fashion, social engagements, and charity work but were always ready for, if not craving, more action. In fact, when the day had been saved, and the adventure was at its end, many superheroines expressed dissatisfaction upon returning to their dull lives of leisure. In one example, Sandra Knight, a senator's daughter who fights crime as Phantom Lady, wakes up one late morning and "hopes something happens for a change [because] I haven't put Phantom Lady to work for weeks!"²⁹ Superhero society girls, like Phantom Lady, got their thrills by

²⁷ Madrid, *The Supergirls*, p. 6, 25.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁹ *Phantom Lady* no. 13, Fox Feature Syndicate, (August, 1947): p. 5.

escaping the private sphere and living a double life filled with danger, excitement, and moral autonomy.³⁰

Not unlike these fictional comic book socialites, some American women looked for a deeper calling outside of their assigned roles in society. The war provided an obvious outlet for such sentiments. For example, Actress Katherine Hepburn, famous for her numerous film roles as eccentric heiresses, voiced her dissatisfaction about being a woman unable to serve a more dynamic role in the war. According to her correspondence with her college friend and active serviceman, Robert McKnight, Hepburn contrasted her life with McKnight's military service as "some mad dream" and in going through the motions of her daily routine, she felt "as though she had been left behind on another planet."³¹ In a later letter to McKnight, she expressed her belief that it was good to be "a vital part of the most active world –however horrible –to feel that you are really functioning to the best of your capabilities. So in a way, I envy you."³² Many other women expressed a desire revealed by the war to "be men," because as one magazine interview explained, "during wartime, girls are doing the best they can, but they are just second. Second to men."³³

On the other side of the comic book coin, working class superheroines lived their lives as career women with a little less glamour and a little more grit. Wage-earning characters such as Madame Strange, Black Canary, the Woman in Red, and War Nurse made their living by holding steady day jobs as reporters, shopkeepers, nurses, secretaries, detectives, etc. For these characters, the decision to moonlight as crime fighters was less motivated by thrill-seeking than the high society heroines popular at the forefront of the Forties.³⁴ The "common woman" heroine was more interested in protecting a personal stake that she held in enforcing justice, whether that stake was protecting the innocent (particularly love interests ignorant of her heroic identity), exacting personal revenge, or simply doing her duty. Dinah Drake was a levelheaded florist with a dry sense of humor who changed into the dynamic and sexually expressive Black Canary whenever her love interest, detective Larry Lance, was likely to find himself in danger. As is common with many other superheroes, the irony is that Lance, the object of Drake's affections, is so smitten by the vibrant persona of Black

³⁰ Madrid, *The Supergirls*, p. 7.

³¹ Katherine Hepburn, *Letters to Robert McKnight*, 1943, from Emily Yellin, *Our Mother's War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 101.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³³ "Tyronne Powers," *Motion Picture Magazine* (June 1943), from Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, p. 102.

³⁴ Madrid, *The Supergirls*, p. 23.

Canary, he fails to see that the woman of his dreams is standing right in front of him.³⁵

Outside of the fictional world, American women were also motivated to step outside of their normal sphere in order to protect men overseas. War posters persuaded women to take up war jobs or join the military corps in order to “bring him home sooner.”³⁶ Guilt was a powerful tool utilized frequently by propaganda makers. Posters with warnings like a “soldier may die unless you man this machine,” threatened women with the death of a soldier if they failed to do their part for the campaign for victory.³⁷ Women were also barraged with the importance of preserving morale. One magazine articles advised soldier’s wives the most important thing they could do to aid the war effort was “don’t mope [because] standing up to heartache and loneliness is your contribution to righting a topsy-turvy world.”³⁸ War posters implied that “longing won’t bring him back sooner” but working a war job might. The pressure applied by propaganda efforts held women responsible for the war in a way that mobilized them to action. However, as more and more women entered into the public roles of war jobs, they found for themselves enmeshed in a battleground of their own.

IV. Women and the Internal War

Wartime opportunities for women created a paradoxical environment where women were both praised for their ability to perform public work competently but also relegated to a domestic sphere, where it was believed their “natural” strengths and limitations placed them.³⁹ The struggle that existed among women who attempted to reconcile these competing social roles fueled an implicit war on the home front—a confrontation over the identity of the ideal woman. Components of female identity—beauty, relationships, influence—all came to be shaped by the changes instigated by the war effort. According to historian Susan M. Hartmann, media images of women expanded, “widening the range of acceptable human behavior, providing positive examples of unconventional women, and blurring traditional gender distinctions; yet, even these new models were rooted in a context which sustained the centrality of

³⁵ Madrid, *The Supergirls*, p. 25.

³⁶ John Philip Falter, “Bring Him Home Sooner--Join the Waves,” 1944.

³⁷ Gail Collins, *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: William Morrow, 2003), p. 371.

³⁸ Patracia Davidson Guinan, “Back Home to Mother,” *House Beautiful* (August, 1943), p. 17.

³⁹ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), p. 1.

women's domestic lives and their relationships with men."⁴⁰ Popular culture, including comic book heroines, articulated and approved of women's new experiences while also cautiously respecting conventional womanhood.

During the early 1940's, a woman's ability to embody the ideals of a certain configuration of feminine beauty largely defined her value.⁴¹ A woman visibly expressed the "right" traits of womanhood through the length of her hair, her wardrobe of dresses, skirts, and high heels and the makeup that she wore. When the war broke out, companies began to market female beauty as a vital point of morale through the use of slogans like "Beauty is her badge of courage."⁴² Women bought into the importance of keeping up a fashionable female appearance, bringing it with them into the workplace when defense jobs became available. Unfortunately, where feminine fashion trends met heavy industry, on-site accidents tended to happen. One 1941 report found that nine percent of injuries among women in shipyards occurred as a direct consequence of failure to wear safe attire such as proper clothing, hair coverings, and safety shoes.⁴³ Adapting to the need for practical clothing in the work place, many women adopted a less conventional appearance, wearing slacks, flat shoes, and shorter hairstyles. Some even began to prefer the comfort of the new wardrobe. One aircraft worker claimed, "I just about gave up dresses during the war."⁴⁴

In giving up the tangible markings of traditional femininity, many women did not realize that they were also compromising a special deference shown toward the fairer sex. By filling men's roles in industrial jobs, it was particularly middle class women who lost their status as protected homebodies and became categorized with women expected to fend for themselves.⁴⁵ For one female defense worker it was when men no longer offered her their seat on the bus, store clerks snubbed her and men leered at her on the street that she realized "being a lady depended more upon our clothes than upon ourselves."⁴⁶ Now that class distinctions of womanhood had been diminished, American women were

⁴⁰ Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 189.

⁴¹ Lori Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con-women: The Female Trickster in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 26.

⁴² Robert R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?: The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), p. 123.

⁴³ Dorothy K. Newman, "Employing Women in Shipyards," *Bulletin of the Women's Bureau* no. 192-6, United States Department of Labor, p. 70.

⁴⁴ Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise, *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), p. 54.

⁴⁵ Collins, *America's Women*, p. 385.

⁴⁶ Constance Reid, *Slacks and Calluses: Our Summer in a Bomber Factory*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), p. 69.

forced to reexamine what the ideal embodiment of feminine beauty should look like.

Comic books reflected a similar struggle in answering to what extent beauty should come to define a female character. The vast majority of women characters in comic books were young, fair, and attractive, and especially headlining heroines were drawn up as creamy, white nymphs without physical flaws. Known as “Good Girl Art,” this popular Forties comic art style is defined by its depiction of women as young, sexy, and often skimpily dressed figures designed to attract the eyes of male viewers.⁴⁷ The creator of headlining heroine Phantom Lady and one of the first African American contributors in the industry, Matt Baker intentionally modeled his leading lady after pin-up girl posters.⁴⁸ This tactic was employed by other comic book artists in order to attract the eye of new readers –both male and female.

A handful of female characters happened to stray from the pin-up “good girl” archetype, and one in particular challenged the idea that a woman’s value is derived by one type of looks. Etta Candy, the faithful sidekick of Wonder Woman, was an overweight sorority girl who put a stop to her former anorexic condition by consuming sweets at every opportunity. This colorful character provided comedic relief while also displaying impressive resourcefulness, dependability and loyalty to Wonder Woman. Saving her Amazon friend on numerous occasions, Etta proved time and again to be a formidable force for good, unlike overtly sexualized comic book heroines; however, this plump sidekick defies the stereotype that female morality is influenced by uniform beauty, rigid bodily discipline and self-denial.⁴⁹ In fact, in one issue when Wonder Woman’s alter ego warns Etta that “if she gets too fat, she won’t catch a man,” Etta goes so far as to suggest that a boyfriend is less valuable than candy because “there’s nothing you can do with him, but candy you can eat!”⁵⁰

Etta Candy’s outlook on dating certainly did not reflect the status quo of the era. Most women considered their looks as the determining factor of whether or not men found them attractive enough to date and potentially marry. As depicted by the 1927 silent film *It*, the American female dream was to attract a

⁴⁷ Richard A. Lupoff, *The Great American Paperback: An Illustrated Tribute to Legends of the Book* (New York: Collectors Press, 2001).

⁴⁸ Trina Robbins, *The Great Women Superheroes* (Northampton, Mass.: Kitchen Sink Press, 1996), p. 72.

⁴⁹ Lillian Robinson, *Wonder Women: Feminisms and Superheroes*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 44.

⁵⁰ Sensation Comics no. 12, (Dec., 1942), from William Moulton Marston and H. G. Peter, *Wonder Woman archives*. (New York, NY: DC Comics, 1998), p. 239.

man, get married and never work again.⁵¹ Young adults in high school and college in particular were the targets of a barrage of media advertising gimmicky products guaranteed to help a girl get a man. Numerous promotions in teen girl magazine, *Calling All Girls*, expressed the belief that every girl needs or wants a boyfriend. Advertisements with claims like “Boys like a good dancer,” “the girl with the good skin gets the dates,” and “*He* likes lovely hair, keep it lovely for *Him*,” were unavoidable and found in a large volume of published periodical material marketed toward women.⁵² Such statements both reflected and shaped a societal belief that a woman could only achieve her fullest potential as a female when she had obtained a boyfriend, and eventually, a husband.

The connection made between a woman’s value and her role as wife and mother is rooted partly in the backlash against the New Woman of the Roaring Twenties. In response to this “new world feminism,” writers such as Harriet Abbott decried women who “smothered their womanhood” by “refusing to have children,” “placing their household in the care of servants” and “selfishly satisfying her personal ambitions.”⁵³ When the Great Depression struck, a social taboo arose around the idea of women who held jobs that belonged to breadwinning men. Women instead, were depicted as the strong anchor of the household to be found in the kitchen, “a corner of reality in a world gone berserk.”⁵⁴ At the end of the Thirties, unemployment rates remained high enough to discourage many married women from entering the workforce. Fictional career girls depicted in magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *True Story* often suffered in their success, demonstrating how dissatisfaction and unhappiness resulted when women left their domestic role.⁵⁵

Women confined to the domestic sphere adopted an increased public role during the war period as the need for workers in the labor force increased. Through the work provided by defense industry jobs and the creation of female military corps, women were able to step into the sphere of men and, due to the war exceeding its expected length, stay there for an extended period. In this climate, women were expressing an agency that had been much more discrete before WWII. However, the literature and propaganda that encouraged women to seize these new opportunities still attempted to craft a public perception of American women that supported the values of a virtuous traditional ideology.

⁵¹ Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con-women*, p. 4.

⁵² *Calling All Girls* no. 31, (July, 1944).

⁵³ Harriet Abbott, “What the Newest New Woman Is,” *Ladies Home Journal*, (August, 1920), p. 154.

⁵⁴ Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

The defense industry “propagated an image of the American woman as wife and mother,” while the WAC countered claims of its existence as “camp-followers” and “mannish women” by characterizing female soldiers as “chaste and asexual.”⁵⁶ With new experiences meeting traditional expectations, women formed a broadened understanding of their female identity.

Comic book heroines speak articulately into the pressures that surfaced as American women wrestled with the concept of feminine autonomy and influence. In popular media of previous decades, female characters who exercised any true, significant power were depicted as innately evil or corrupted by the power.⁵⁷ Women in society who exhibited autonomy, particularly in their sexual expression, were characterized as predators, either lesbians or femme fatales. Exemplified by females ranging from the fictional “vamp” characters of Theda Bara to the real-life seductress and spy, Mata Hari, women with influence were strongly associated with death, danger and deception. Defining these cultural figures as “female tricksters,” scholar Lori Landay attributes this perception to the idea that femininity and autonomy were paradoxical. “Female trickery,” as described by Landay, “highlights the issue of women’s exercise of covert power.”⁵⁸ Women characters must navigate their feminine identity and their wish to be autonomous through the use of covert power such as deception and manipulation to fulfill both of these desires.

Many villainesses in comic books identify strongly with the female trickster trope. A great number of storylines featured conniving villainesses, often a Nazi spy or sympathizer, who used underhanded tactics to ensnare the protagonist. In action comics where the main character was a woman, these deceitful femme fatales served as foils in contrast to the candor and self-control of the virtuous heroine. For example, the central antagonist to superheroine Miss Fury is the beautiful Nazi Baroness, Erica von Kampf. Portrayed as cold and calculating, the Baroness acts through deception, discretely murdering an unconscious man via gas oven poisoning and successfully seducing the love interest of main character Marla Drake. Von Kampf is further contrasted to the compassionate and sympathizing Marla when she violently shakes a little boy. Marla, as her alter ego Miss Fury, later rescues this boy from a mad scientist’s experiment and adopts him. The Baroness, as a villainous female trickster,

⁵⁶ Leila Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 52;

Leisa D. Meyer, “Creating G.I. Jane: The Regulation of Sexuality and Sexual Behavior in the Women’s Army Corps during World War II,” *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 3, (Autumn, 1992), p. 581.

⁵⁷ Fingerth, *Superman on the Couch*, p. 80.

⁵⁸ Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con-women*, p. 29.

illustrates how a powerful deceptive woman commits evil, while Marla Drake represents the counter notion that a woman's true power is seen in her ability to embrace her role as tender caregiver and mother.

Superheroines occasionally complicated the picture of ideal female power and self-control. Most female heroines reinforced the belief that a woman's power must be contained and exercised covertly by separating their hero work from their everyday lives via the secret identity.⁵⁹ Unlike these figures, Madame Strange, a superheroine described as "mysterious, beautiful, and cloaked with an unknown identity" provides an illustration of a powerful woman with no ties to a domestic role.⁶⁰ Madame Strange, unlike Landay's female trickster, openly demonstrates her physicality and hard-edged stance against evil as her crime-fighting strategies prove to be uncharacteristically macho for a leading lady. In a single story plot, Madame Strange menacingly threatens violence, hurls lethal knives at thugs, runs down thugs with a car, aggressively throws an attacker through a wall and flings grenades at the villain.⁶¹ Clearly a breed apart from the average domestic, Strange does not repress her physicality. Yet unlike the majority of other female tricksters, her power represents only a threat *to* evil, not *of* evil. Interestingly, the Madam Strange series was dropped after three issues; perhaps, this was the consequence of featuring a somewhat alien female character.

As American women explored the power of their capability on the job or in the service during wartime, they also came to reexamine the social role of the female. Before the war, a woman's sphere was defined by the cultural limits of "domesticity, sentimentalism, repression of the body, and suppression of the mind."⁶² As the United States entered the conflict, its female citizens were called upon to act against this gendered norm, creating anxiety for many onlookers. Two questions arose almost immediately as women joined the male work force in increasing numbers: "Will all these women go back to their homes at the conclusion of the war?" and "Will they ever be content with their homes again?"⁶³ Such fears were allayed by a common belief that women prioritized the family above all else, or as articulated by one woman "the work is wonderful, but the home comes first."⁶⁴ Put another way, the entrance of women into the public sphere would ultimately be only a temporary transition in American society.

⁵⁹ Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con-women*, p. 148.

⁶⁰ "Madame Strange," *Great Comics*, (Nov. 1941).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con-women*, p. 26.

⁶³ Margaret Culkin Banning, "Will They Go Back Home?" *The Rotarian* (Sept. 1943), p. 28.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

The growing national concern about the crossing-over of gender boundaries made its way into comic books as a number of superheroines wrestled with the consequences of living a double life. Just like the literary female tricksters who experienced fragmentation of the self by ignoring the boundaries of male and female spheres, superheroines lived duplicitous lives torn between their private and public selves.⁶⁵ The most iconic and enduring superheroine of the era, Wonder Woman, experienced many of the challenges that resulted from maintaining a dual identity. In her origin story, Wonder Woman leaves her idyllic island home of Amazons behind to help defend “America, the last citadel of democracy and equal rights for women.”⁶⁶ When Wonder Woman arrives in America, she adopts a civilian identity known as Diana Prince.

If Wonder Woman was the character’s “true self,” why did she need to adopt a secret identity? Perhaps, in order to participate as a woman in American society, she needed to pretend to be less powerful and independent than she really was.⁶⁷ In addition, maintaining dual personas demands a price of admission. Wonder Woman creates for herself “a fractured sense of self sustained by the duplicitous social practices necessary to negotiate the maintenance of submissive femininity while participating in the public sphere of wartime society.”⁶⁸ In order for Wonder Woman to successfully exist in the public sphere of autonomy and the private sphere of femininity, she protects her identities through some measure of deceit. These identities at times compete for her priorities, forcing her to make the decision about which self is her “true and best” self.

V. “*To Be Continued?*”—*The End of an Era*

At the end of the war, time continued to march on, leaving the new questions and experiences of women in an unresolved state of ambiguity as men re-entered the work force and women returned to the home. The future of the superhero comic book looked just as uncertain. With a sudden drop in military demand for reading material, in addition to the loss of wartime foes to serve as superheroes’ primary antagonists, publishers prepared for the worst. Surprisingly, the industry experienced no significant losses, expanding in circulation due to its price stability and new customers brought in by the baby boom.⁶⁹ With the dawn

⁶⁵ Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con-women*, p. 26.

⁶⁶ Wonder Woman archives p. 15

⁶⁷ Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con-women*, p. 148.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁶⁹ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, p. 30.

of the Cold War however, new fears spread across the nation concerning America's moral fiber.

Comic books were called into question regarding their morality and blamed for rising rates of juvenile delinquency. Leading the charge against them was Dr. Fredric Wertham, a German-born psychiatrist who published a book in 1954 that denigrated the industry, *Seduction of the Innocent*. In its pages, superheroes like Batman and Robin and Wonder Woman were labeled as “violent” and “homoerotic.”⁷⁰ The United States Senate opened a subcommittee hearing on juvenile delinquency that focused on the dangers of such material. Before it was revealed half a century later that Wertham had “manipulated, overstated, compromised, and fabricated his evidence,” the comic book industry had received its black eye.⁷¹ It would take several years of adaptation to the need for moral regulation before superhero comics regained a measure their former popularity.

With the impressive influence it held at the beginning of the Forties, the comic book industry was in a position to convey significant messages through the cultural icons it created. Whereas some messages were constructed with intention and purpose, as in the case of Wonder Woman, others like Phantom Lady implicitly arose from the desire to create picture stories that were both titillating and relevant. Whether by coincidence or by design, these superheroines played a part in establishing a precedent of the superhero as a cultural metaphor—representative of the societies they live in. These idiosyncratic role models from the Golden Age lived on in the consciousness of their readers. In 1972, when feminist Gloria Steinem and her team of editors prepared the first full issue of *Ms.* magazine for print, the group chose to feature Wonder Woman on the cover—an illustration of how “you can't have democracy without feminism.”⁷² Perhaps, it is in these later generations of Americans that the legacy of the American superheroine can be seen, working alongside the influence of their mothers—the women who realized what they were capable of during the war and quietly returned to the home at its end, passing on the message to their children that a woman can be anyone she wants to be.

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⁷⁰ Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rinehart, 1954), p. 191.

⁷¹ Carol Tilley, “Seducing the Innocent: Fredric Wertham and the Falsifications that Helped Condemn Comics,” *Information & Culture* 47, no. 4, (2012). p. 386.

⁷² *Wonder Women! The Untold History of American Superheroines*. Directed by Kristy Guevara-Flanagan. 2013.

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WOMEN AND MARIAN DEVOTION IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY: INNOVATIONS IN THE THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS OF GERTRUDE OF HELFTA, MECHTILD OF MAGDEBURG, AND HADEWIJCH

Gertrude of Helfta was a Benedictine nun, in a Cistercian influenced convent. Mechtild of Magdeburg and Hadewijch lived as beguines, though the former entered Gertrude's convent at Helfta towards the end of her life. Despite their differences in affiliation, all three women were part of the same movement, an undeniable thirteenth century increase in the scope, depth, and diversity of female Christian devotion. Some scholars have said, in fact, that this is the first time in history in which one can speak of a specifically female religious experience.¹ One interesting lens through which to examine change and continuity in the theology of thirteenth century female writers, particularly mystics, is that of devotion to the Virgin Mary. In their visionary works, Mechtild, Gertrude, and Hadewijch retain a reverence for Mary's role as an intercessor, in the mode described by Anselm of Bec and Bernard of Clairvaux, among others. However, they reserve their most passionate language for worship of Christ and His humanity. Mary becomes, in these writings, a figure to be emulated, in hopes that the author herself can achieve a similar relationship with Christ. This shift in Mary's role from intercessor and conduit to spiritual model emphasizes the importance of mystical union to these female thinkers, and can be seen as a significant development in medieval theology.

Powerful nunneries, though never as numerous as monasteries, were religious and political forces throughout the Middle Ages. The Saxon nunnery at Helfta was certainly one of the most influential. It was founded in 1229 at Mansfeld (moving to its permanent location in Helfta in 1258), and endowed by prosperous members of the German nobility. Home not only to Gertrude of Helfta and Mechtild of Magdeburg, but also to other powerful and revered mystics and authors such as Gertrude the Great, and Mechtild of Hackeborne, the nunnery was founded by wealthy secular benefactors, and robustly supported by the Church.² Fewer nunneries existed than monasteries, however, and those that

¹ William Wood. "Doctrine of the Western Church—Lecture 5." Oxford University, February 17, 2014.

² Caroline Walker Bynum *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 176. The archbishop of Magdeburg gave land to the nuns, who were respected as spiritual authorities in their own right, rarely dependent upon local mendicant friars, abbots, or bishops for patronage or assistance.

did often had steep financial entrance requirements. Thus, they were resources for only a fraction of the women who desired to live a religious life in this period. Thus, nunneries such as the ones at Helfta thrived, but women also participated in and generated new varieties of religious expression. One of the most significant of these was the beguine movement, so widespread and popular, that a single founder or date of founding cannot be traced. Beguines were women who lived communal lives of chaste and simple devotion and service to God, without the constraints (or support) of a Rule such as those found in nunneries.³ Beguines lived together, prayed together, and usually supported themselves by work, which separated them from the mendicant lifestyle of Dominican and Franciscan friars, though these men frequently acted as their confessors or spiritual advisors. The first definite indication of this growing movement can be found in the 1216 dispensation issued by Pope Honorius III to Jacques de Vitry, in support of a group of beguines in the Low Countries, (including the well-known Marie d'Oignies, whose *Vita* Jacques wrote). Houses of beguines continued to spread throughout northern Europe, and were particularly prevalent in the Low Countries, northern France, and southern Germany. They were encouraged by this initial institutional support, and by the freedom this life offered to women otherwise unable or unwilling to enter formal convents.⁴ Overall numbers are difficult to estimate, but in 1320 there were about one thousand women living in beguinages in Cologne, making up one and a half percent of that city's population. Beguines also made up between two and three percent of the populations of Strasbourg and Basel.⁵ Life as a beguine (particularly in an age where monastic institutions still favored child oblates) was more flexible than life as a nun. Many beguines entered beguinages after widowhood; conversely, some

³ "The Rule of St. Benedict c. 530," trans., Ernest F. Henderson in *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1910), accessed March 31, 2015, *Fordham Medieval Sourcebook*. Convents in this period followed adaptations of the Benedictine Rule, the sixth century guide for monastic life written by Saint Benedict of Nursia, which was the foundational document for all monastic orders, male and female. The Rule governed all aspects of monastic life from sleeping habits and prayer schedules to wine consumption and rules of silence. Male and female monastic houses differed in their adherence to the Rule; it was followed more strictly in some houses than in others. But to live without a Rule at all, as beguines did, was often perceived as dangerous.

⁴ Saskia Murk-Jansen *Brides in the Desert: The Spirituality of the Beguines* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998), 25. Murk Jansen cites the high cost of entrance to many convents, among other reasons as explanations for Beguine popularity. The first Beguines were most likely offshoots of "lay sisters" employed by Cistercian and Premonstratensian convents as nurses or other more worldly occupations.

⁵ Wood, February 17, 2014.

younger beguines later left the community to marry. Others left the group for another religious life. Mechtild of Magdeburg, who had lived as a beguine, took vows at the convent of Helfta in the late thirteenth century, at the end of her life.⁶

Saskia Murk-Jansen identifies two major components of beguine spirituality, its emphasis on the “supra-rational aspect of the human relationship with God,” and its emphasis on didacticism.⁷ Beguines and other women celebrated the incomprehensible majesty of God using paradoxical and visionary language, in both apophatic and cataphatic terms. They were also intent, even in accounts of visions that to a contemporary reader might seem quite personal, upon educating others and bringing them to a shared understanding of the love of God.⁸ Writings by beguine mystics are filled with a dizzying array of images. Perhaps most important were Bridal or Love images. Christ is portrayed variously as lover, bridegroom, friend and companion, and different beguines tended to emphasize different images in their work. Mechtild of Magdeburg uses especially erotic language in discussing her own relationship with Christ, while Hadewijch’s poetry subverts the gender norms of courtly love in interesting ways. She frequently portrays herself as the errant knight, with Christ the object of her affection and zeal.⁹ The eroticism of these chaste women’s conceptions of their relationship with Christ provoked a great deal of question and speculation. Amongst all this, it is important to remember that male religious figures and exegetes such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Origen, and others, also used eroticized language to describe Christ, especially in their exegesis of the “Song of Songs.” Erotic language and love mysticism combined with Eucharistic and visionary devotion to produce a thirteenth-century spirituality in which both men and women were consumed by worship of the Incarnation of the human Christ.¹⁰ In

⁶Frank Tobin. Introduction to *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* by Mechtild of Magdeburg, translated by Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 5. The beguine movement by the early fourteenth century had become more controversial, and its initial approval by the Church sometimes disappeared, especially after the Council of Viennes nominally banned the practice in 1311, an action possibly spurred by Marguerite Porete’s publication of her text *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, which was deemed heretical by some Church authorities. In the later Middle Ages, many former beguines became Dominican, Franciscan, or Augustinian nuns. This increased persecution may have been the impetus for Mechtild to join a convent.

⁷ Murk-Jansen, 35.

⁸ Murk-Jansen, 12.

⁹ Murk-Jansen, 91-93.

¹⁰ Bynum, 185. Caroline Walker Bynum has speculated that these varying types of devotion, all intended towards a greater union with God, were, for these women a substitute for the ways they were cut off from the Church by the increase in male authority and control (particularly over access to the Eucharist) in this period. She sees

the remainder of this paper I will discuss the role that the Virgin Mary, the most beloved saint, and a potent symbol of female devotion, played in the female mystical spirituality of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Mary, mother of God, despite her relatively few appearances in Scripture itself, was an important subject of veneration from the beginning of the faith, and her cult grew substantially in Europe during the eleventh through thirteenth centuries. As a human woman who was also a God-bearer, and a virgin who was also a mother, Mary's paradoxical combination of divinity and humanity, uniqueness, and familiarity, was the crux of her popularity. The identity of Mary as an intercessor, or "mediatrix," able to intervene on behalf of humanity before Christ, first arose in Eastern Christianity, appearing in Latin Christendom by the late eighth century. The idea gained popularity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries due in large part to the influence of the "Three Prayers to Mary," written by Anselm of Bec in 1072.¹¹ The prayers, sent to a fellow Benedictine monk, Gundolph of Caen, are an explication and a celebration of Mary's unique role in Christianity. Mary, the human woman who from whose womb Christ entered the world, was perceived as a conduit for human access to Christ, and a figure of mercy for sinners who feared His judgment. This view could potentially present doctrinal complications—in many folkloric tales, hagiographies, or myths originating from less educated circles, the idea of Mary's intercession as that of a "capricious goddess," granting mercy to her favorites, and shielding them from Christ's "cruelty" abounded.¹² Anselm himself however, is quite clear that Mary's intrinsic mercy, and her role as intercessor and humanity's advocate, is inseparable from God's justice. Mary's humanity and God's divinity are united in the figure of their son, Jesus Christ, who contained both human and divine natures, both justice and mercy, at once.¹³ Anselm's "Three Prayers to Mary" praises the Virgin, but also carefully delineates both the heights and limits of her powers. In 1120, Bernard of Clairvaux composed his own work in praise of Mary, the "Three Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mother." These homilies show Bernard's most famous qualities in their best light—his extensive Biblical exegesis and his passionate, ecstatic language of praise. Bernard is concerned with explicating each of Mary's praiseworthy qualities through an exhaustive exegetical reading of Luke's account of the Annunciation. Most

their visions as tied deeply to their didactic calling. Unable to attain the same status as men in Church authority, they took their authority straight from God himself.

¹¹ Jaroslav Pelikan *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 131.

¹² Benedicta Ward "Introduction" to *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm with the Prologion* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 61-2

¹³ Ward, 64

notable is his praise of Mary's humility, which he writes, permits her noble role as Christ's mother. Bernard remained influential, especially among female mystics. More innovative than his theology was his sublime language, which is more ecstatic than Anselm's, and perhaps unparalleled anywhere in its beauty.¹⁴ However, Bernard is more careful even than Anselm to affirm that all Mary's power stems from her utterly unique role as both a virgin and a mother, a role she was created for and chosen for by God in order to provide Christ's human nature.¹⁵ Bernard urges women to imitate Mary's humility, particularly chaste religious women, whom he characterizes as "haughty virgins," who he thinks have grown too proud about their chastity. Nowhere, however, does he suggest that imitating Mary will help the reader receive the same Grace from God. Indeed, Anselm and Bernard worshipped Mary precisely because she was inimitable.

Though Marian devotion flowered during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, few female authors remain as well known for their reverence to Mary as Anselm, Bernard, and other monastic theologians. Instead, women's most passionate language was reserved for Christ. This reverence for the humanity of Christ, including his physical body, was not a new or necessarily original phenomenon. Bernard was one of the major influences upon female spirituality in this period, particularly his famous "Sermons on the Song of Songs." This provided the most authoritative gloss of the notably sensual "Song of Songs," describing it passionately and convincingly as a spiritual union between Christ as the Bridegroom and the soul as his Bride. Of the female mystics I discuss in this paper, Bernard may have most directly influenced Gertrude of Helfta, as both were associated with the Cistercian order. Gertrude was certainly exposed to Bernard's writings, and used his "Song of Songs" texts extensively throughout her own work in both direct quotation and indirect homage and imitation.¹⁶ Mechtild and Hadewijch were similarly influenced by Bernard's interpretation of

¹⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux. "Four Homilies in Praise of the Virgin Mother," trans., M.B. Said (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993), 3.

¹⁵ Marina Warner *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 131.

¹⁶ Sister Maximilian Marnau. Introduction to *Gertrude of Helfta: The Herald of Divine Love* by Gertrude of Helfta, trans., ed., Margaret Winkworth (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 26. Sister Marnau describes Bernard as Gertrude's main stylistic and theological influence, though she reminds the reader of the ambiguity of Helfta's association. While it was forbidden to fully belong to Citeaux by an early thirteenth century ban on new Cistercian nunneries, Helfta, founded in the middle of that century, was undoubtedly heavily influenced by Cistercian spirituality, and Gertrude is frequently referred to as a Cistercian nun.

the “Song of Songs” the text was the main basis for Mechtild’s conception of the loving, reciprocal union of God and the Soul.¹⁷ Hadewijch’s influences are more varied and more ambiguous, but Bernard was certainly among them.¹⁸ These women saw Christ as the loving Bridegroom to the Soul. They used the language of love as one of several themes in a cataphatic language of devotion, attempting to convey the all-consuming passion of God for the Soul, his Bride, which the Soul strives to reciprocate. In these mystics’ intimate relationship with Christ, their bridegroom, son, confidant, and the one whose suffering they strived to imitate, what was Mary’s place? Despite their Christ-centric devotion, Mary was not unimportant to these mystics. Gertrude, Mechtild, and Hadewijch saw Mary in their visions and wrote of her in their texts. Influenced by Anselm and Bernard’s ideas and imagery, these mystics continued to see Mary as an intercessor and as a conduit between God and (wo)man. However, they also used similar imagery to come to slightly different conclusions. In their texts, Mary is seen as someone to emulate; imitating her humility is not only virtuous, but also a way through which these women could attain a similar union with God.

Gertrude of Helfta most explicitly and frequently described Mary as an intercessor in Anselmian terms.¹⁹ In a vision or “showing” on the Feast Day of the Purification of the Virgin, Gertrude celebrates Mary as an intercessor on behalf of desperate sinners. Gertrude recalls being given the privilege of holding the infant Christ; the compassion she felt for Him enabled her to better pray for those in Purgatory. Gertrude portrays Mary as at first seemingly displeased at Gertrude’s care of the Child, but then the mystic questions this, asking “O Mother of Love, was it not for this that the Source of Mercy was given you as your son, so that through you all the needy might obtain grace, and that you might cover with your copious charity the multitude of our sins and defects?”²⁰ Here, Gertrude seems to remind Mary of her theological role as an intercessor or *mediatrix* on behalf of humanity. At this acknowledgment of her intercessory

¹⁷ Tobin, 14.

¹⁸ Mother Columba Hart O.S.B. Introduction to *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, trans., Mother Columba Hart (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 6.

¹⁹ Bynum, 186. Indeed, Bynum, among others, has compared Gertrude to Anselm for many reasons, most specifically the clear, measured, not “overblown,” but never the less joyous quality to their writings, and the confidence they felt in their role as monastic teachers.

²⁰ Gertrude of Helfta, *Gertrude of Helfta: The Herald of Divine Love* trans., ed., Margaret Winkworth (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 116. This language seems similar to Anselm’s. In “Prayer I,” he asks Mary, “If I acknowledge my iniquity, surely you will not refuse to show kindness?” Although this may seem strange, almost chiding Mary, it is actually a reinforcement of how good and kind she is—it is her role to be kind, and she would never refuse.

role, the Virgin smiles upon Gertrude. The final sentence of the prayer returns to Mary's powers of intervention, asking "may she be for us, we pray, a perpetual intercessor."²¹ In this section Gertrude's conception of Mary's powers of intercession conforms perfectly to Anselm or Bernard's orthodoxy, but other passages marry this concept with Gertrude's perception of her own relationship with Christ, making Marian devotion more compatible with the rest of her text. In Book III of *The Herald of the Divine Love*, Gertrude learns "by a spiritual revelation that she was about to suffer some adversity that would increase her merits, and in her human frailty she was afraid."²² Seeing Gertrude's fear, Christ instructs Mary "to be a gracious mediatrix for her, so that whenever the weight of this adversity became more than she could bear, she could always have recourse to the Mother of mercies who, she knew, would come to her aid."²³ Mary is clearly seen as an intercessor; however, here she protects not a sinner from punishment, but one who is exhausted and pained in the service of Christ. It is interesting to note that here Gertrude encounters Mary through Christ, with whom she has a special, closer relationship. This differs from Bernard and Anselm's work, in which they appeal to Mary as a conduit through whom to access Christ. This theme continues in Gertrude's writing. Frequently she is presented as focused on and immersed in Christ to the exclusion of all other things, including Mary. This single-mindedness is presented as an inevitability of love; However, Christ comforts the lovesick Gertrude. He instructs her on a number of occasions that to honor His mother is also to honor Him. Christ and Mary's relationship is, in Gertrude's conception, rather reciprocal. She loves to see Him praised, and vice versa.²⁴ It is the direct connection to Christ provided by her "showings," that fundamentally alters Gertrude's conception of Mary. Though she continues to see Mary as an intercessor, and her humanity and humility as a way of accessing Christ's divine justice, Gertrude views herself as also directly connected to Christ's humanity, and sees prayer to and praise of Mary as amplifying this connection, not accessing it.

Mechtild of Magdeburg and Hadewijch also drew on Anselm and Bernard's concepts of Mary as intercessor in their visions and writings, though not always with the depth of Gertrude. In a vision in Book VI of Mechtild's *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, Christ describes his mother to Mary as His "shelter" on earth. This protective role extends to humanity, as she is "an advocate of all those tempted, who show sorrow and reverence before the Holy

²¹ Gertrude of Helfta, 118. This collection of the Virgin's virtues seems influenced by Bernard, as recited in his "Homilies."

²² Gertrude of Helfta, 156.

²³ Gertrude of Helfta, 156.

²⁴ Gertrude of Helfta, 184.

Trinity.”²⁵ The rhetoric of Mary as a *mediatrix* and connection between God and Man continues later in Book VI. As in Bernard and Anselm’s accounts, Mary’s mercy and mediating “power over all the devils to keep them away from people” come directly from God, as the protective vessel for his human form; he “pours into her, beyond what he does with all the other saints.”²⁶ The rhetoric of Grace pouring into and flowing through Mary is also reminiscent of Bernard’s conception of Mary as an aqueduct or conduit.

Hadewijch also employs the rhetoric of Bernard, drawn from his “Sermons on the Song of Songs” and from his homilies. In a passage from “Letter Nine,” written to a young beguine, Hadewijch hopes that the young recipient will learn how God “treats his servants and especially his handmaids; how he consumes them within himself.”²⁷ This certainly references the account of the Annunciation in the *Gospel of Luke*, in which Mary, giving her assent to the conception of Christ says, “Behold...I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be me according to your word.”²⁸ Bernard, in his detailed and rapturous exegesis of this passage writes that Mary’s reference to herself as a handmaiden, at the hour of her greatest honor, was a sign of the depths of her humility, and an example to all others in their relationship with God. Bernard’s possible influence on Hadewijch is further supported by the remainder of the excerpt, which describes the “mutual delight” of the love between God and his handmaids “mouth in mouth, heart in heart, body in body, soul in soul, while a single divine nature flows through them.”²⁹ The use of body imagery is reminiscent of Bernard’s work on the “Song of Songs,” while the rhetoric of Grace, and God’s “divine nature” flowing between God and Mary hearkens back to his view of Mary as an aqueduct.

Hadewijch also refers to Mary’s fiat in one of her major Marian works, “Stanzaic Poem Twenty Nine” entitled “To Learn Mary’s Humility.” Praise of Mary’s humility in this poem resembles Anselm and Bernard’s conception of Mary as intercessor. She writes that it was because of her all-consuming love of God, that Mary became “the conduit/Open to every humble heart.”³⁰ However, the title of the poem makes it clear that Hadewijch’s perception of Mary was not only as an intercessor. “Stanzaic Poem Twenty Nine” does not instruct its reader

²⁵ Mechtild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, translated by Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), Book VI.16.

²⁶ Mechtild of Magdeburg, Book VI.39 265.

²⁷ Hadewijch, *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, trans., Mother Columba Hart (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), Letter 9, 66.

²⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux “Homily IV.9,” 54.

²⁹ Hadewijch, Letter 9, 66.

³⁰ Hadewijch, Stanzaic Poem 29, 209.

merely to learn *of* Mary's humility, it instructs them to learn it themselves. After several stanzas praising "They who are filled with high Love," and Mary in particular, Hadewijch addresses her (probably female) readers directly in stanza twelve:

You who are humble and noble,/If you wish Love all unaltered,/As Love lives for herself,/I counsel you: For the sake of fidelity/(Although you suffer pain)/Forsake and give up everything/Then your hearts will become wide and deep;/Then shall come to you that conduit which flowed/To Mary without measure³¹

Instead of emulating Mary's virtue merely in honor of Christ, as Bernard implies in "Homily I" on Mary, Hadewijch implies that if her disciples suffer and maintain humility, they will not only imitate Mary, but the same Grace that flowed to Mary will flow to them as well. Hadewijch offers her readers not only access to the most powerful intercessor, but also the opportunity to attain Mary's closeness with Christ, the opportunity to scarcely need a separate intercessor at all. This powerful and exciting idea appears elsewhere in Hadewijch, albeit sometimes in less explicit terms.

Vision Thirteen, "The Six-Winged Countenance," is one of Hadewijch's most well-known and powerful works. In this vision, God is revealed to Hadewijch, crowned as Love, "in the form of a queen."³² Love, attended by Seraphim, and crowned with humility, introduces Hadewijch to the Virgin Mary, who resides in a place of honor as the highest of the twenty nine "full grown saints" now in heaven.³³ Mary welcomes Hadewijch, exhorting her to "fully taste Love. For you have cherished Love with humility...and, with this lofty fidelity and this entire power, you vanquished Love and made Love one," and praises Hadewijch for the virtues and sacrifice that have opened to her the "secret heaven" in which the vision has placed her.³⁴ This emphasis on the "secret heaven" is interesting—the Seraph who first welcomes her into it, introduces the place of the vision as "the new secret heaven, which is closed to all those who

³¹ Hadewijch, Stanzaic Poem 29, 212.

³² Hadewijch, Vision 13, 298. God presented as a queen may seem strange, but Mother Columba Hart, in a note, traces this presentation back to Richard of St. Victor; it not an original concept of Hadewijch.

³³ Mother Columba Hart, "Introduction," 28. The specificity idea that there are 107 full-grown perfect, 29 of whom are currently in heaven, is, Hart writes, related to medieval theories of numerology. 28 was a number associated with Mary, due to the lunar cycle, the perfect number one added to it as a sort of superlative.

³⁴ Hadewijch, Vision 13, 301.

never were God's mother, with perfect motherhood," then goes on to list various other attributes of Mary—also addresses Hadewijch as "Mother of Love."³⁵ Bernard used this title to address Mary; Hadewijch, in her vision, is associated with the Virgin by the figures she encounters in heaven. Mary herself, by referencing the "secret heaven," seems to corroborate this. And yet, it is clear that Hadewijch, despite the virtue and self-sacrifice for which Mary praises her, has not attained the Virgin's level of immersion in Love. In section twenty-four, Mary tells Hadewijch: "if you wish to have ampler fruition, as I have, you must leave your sweet body here," indicating the importance of abandoning allegiance to the body and focusing entirely on loving God.³⁶ However, Mary also cautions Hadewijch that she must not abandon her body yet, for the sake of those on earth for whom she has responsibility and love, perhaps referring to Hadewijch's charge of the young beguines in her community.³⁷ Mary is not angry at Hadewijch's entry into her special heaven, nor is she threatened by it; she instead counsels Hadewijch on what she must do to reach further perfection in God. This idea of Mary, not as a mediatrix, but as an example and counselor for achieving greater union with her Son's love, is fascinating. It differs substantially from the conceptions of Anselm and Bernard, but, prior to Hadewijch had already been insinuated by other female mystics, including Gertrude of Helfta. Their examples, as well as an explanation of how this concept of Mary is complementary to thirteenth century female spirituality as a whole, will show that this idea of Mary represented an interesting theological development among many female religious figures, and was not unique to Hadewijch.

Hadewijch's radical proposal is that she, or anybody else, can, by imitating Mary's virtues, receive the same Grace that God poured down upon Mary, and attain a similar status in His love. This is related to the ways in which Gertrude of Helfta and Mechtild of Magdeburg present the imitation and veneration of Mary as a way to amplify devotion to Christ. Although neither of these earlier women goes as far as Hadewijch in insinuating that these women can, through Marian imitation, achieve a similar primacy in Christ's affection, they do emphasize a veneration of Mary's humility that is less the result of her virtues alone, and more the result of how much she is beloved by Christ (as they wish to be). Gertrude, in Book III of *The Herald of Divine Love*, meditates upon Mary's virtues. She recounts that as she did so "She prayed that she might obtain for her own heart such attractive and varied virtues that God might be pleased to dwell there also."³⁸ Characteristically though, after her meditation on Mary,

³⁵ Hadewijch, Vision 13, 297.

³⁶ Hadewijch, Vision 13, 301

³⁷ Hadewijch, Vision 13, 302.

³⁸ Gertrude of Helfta, Book III.19, 185.

Gertrude communicates directly with Christ, asking him to “make up for” any deficiency in her prayers, showing not only that she imitates Mary primarily to accentuate her closeness to God, but also that she has a more direct relationship with Christ, than with his mother.³⁹

Mechtild of Magdeburg’s style is more passionate, and her language more sensory and erotic than Gertrude’s. She also yearns for Mary’s close relationship with God. Mechtild writes that when she and others practice chastity, humility, submissiveness, and other virtues, “we are like our dear Lady St. Mary, who was ennobled through these virtues.”⁴⁰ She does not explicitly say that these virtues would prove similarly ennobling for herself, but she does in several striking and unusual passages in *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, use similar language to describe the faith of both Mary, and her sister beguines. Mechtild describe Mary as God’s Bride, created and chosen so that God would have something on which to bestow his Love, after the Fall of Man. She also describes Mary nursing both the infant Christ, and also Holy Christianity (also described as God’s Bride.)⁴¹ Although this tangle of ideas is complex, I cite this example to show the similarity of the imagery Mechtild uses for both Mary, and herself and her fellow beguines. This imagery continues in Mechtild’s view of the Annunciation. Mechtild begins her account with a vision of Mary herself, praying for the very thing that God is soon to manifest in her. She “drew our Lord down here with the sweet voice of her soul,” praying to “serve in this with my chasteness and with all that I have from you.”⁴² This is similar to the devotion of Mechtild and her beguines, who sought to call God to them, in order to serve him and immerse themselves in His love. She tells God of the richness of “the desire I have for you when you draw me up,” which is an insatiable desire to “hang inseparably in your embrace forever.”⁴³ Almost enviously she addresses Mary, who in her uniqueness drew God down to her before she was drawn up to Him. She wonders “how did you fare when with your Son you began to experience the love of the eternal Godhead...?”⁴⁴ The desire for this love informs the whole of Mechtild’s work, as it does Gertrude’s and Hadewijch’s. Their veneration of Mary is grounded in the knowledge that to even approach her position within the Love of God, they must imitate her virtues.

³⁹ Gertrude of Helfta, Book III.19, 185.

⁴⁰ Mechtild of Magdeburg Book VI.32, 258.

⁴¹ Mechtild of Magdeburg, Book I.22, 49. This concept of Mary’s role is undoubtedly odd, and is discussed thoroughly by Caroline Walker Bynum in *Jesus as Mother*.

⁴² Mechtild of Magdeburg, Book V.23, 198.

⁴³ Mechtild of Magdeburg, Book V.31, 213.

⁴⁴ Mechtild of Magdeburg, Book V. 31, 213-14.

Hadewijch, Mechtild, and Gertrude's ideas about Mary not only complement each other, but are also complementary to broader concepts of later medieval female spirituality. There are many ways in which their Marian writings are thoroughly grounded in this movement, but I will concentrate on two broad examples: Christ-centric devotion, and suffering. Of course all Marian devotion is Christ-centric, but these mystical visions are especially so. The love of Christ in these visions seems so overpowering that it blocks out any other devotion. Compared to the work of Anselm or Bernard, the mystics discuss, call upon or venerate few saints, martyrs, popes or other figures of spiritual authority, at least in their mystical visions. At times this near exclusive focus on Christ is almost humorous. Book III of *The Herald of Divine Love* describes Gertrude of Helfta's fixation on Christ as an inevitable symptom of lovesickness. Even on the feast day of the Annunciation, dedicated to Mary, she is upset that the occasion does not also celebrate Christ's Incarnation, but then fears that her single-mindedness may have made Mary unhappy with her.⁴⁵ Mary however, is not a typical saint, and devotion to her was complementary to the worship of Christ, as seen in the response to Gertrude's dilemma (Christ tells her that venerating his mother is pleasing to him). These mystics, as has been described in various examples above, believed that emulating Mary's virtues helped them grow in Christ's love. This imitation of Mary was also seen as a way to imitate Christ in his humanity, often through suffering. In one passage in *The Herald of Divine Love*, Christ, instructing Gertrude on how to venerate Mary, compares Mary's virtues to his own. Mary should, for example, be praised for her humility, which is in turn an imitation of Christ's humility as the savior of humanity. Mary's love and desire for God imitates the love and desire Christ had for the redemption of Man while being whipped and crucified. Her continued faith despite the suffering and death of her son mimics Christ's faith when he descended into hell to rescue sinners.⁴⁶ Clearly many of these examples are related to the suffering of both Mary and Christ for Love, a common and vital theme among these female mystics.

Asceticism has been a facet of Christian devotion nearly since its inception; the Church has always celebrated hermits, penitents, and martyrs (Christ himself being the first). Female asceticism was a growing trend throughout the Middle Ages, and reached the zenith of its extremity late in the period. Hadewijch, Gertrude, and their compatriots tended to disapprove of excessive self-abuse, as distracting and selfish. Instead, as Saskia Murk-Jansen writes of Hadewijch, "it is only by being in the body, by being flesh, and sharing

⁴⁵ Gertrude of Helfta, Book III.20, 186.

⁴⁶ Gertrude of Helfta Book III.46, 215.

unequivocally the humanity of Christ, that it is possible to be one with him.”⁴⁷ These mystical women strove to imitate Christ in all his aspects, including the inevitable suffering of a mortal life. As Hadewijch wrote “We all want indeed with to be God with God, but God knows there are few of us who want to live as men with his Humanity, or want to carry his cross with him, or want to hang on the cross with him and pay humanity’s debts to the full.”⁴⁸ As Mary was the source of Christ’s human nature, devotion to her is intimately related to the concept of suffering as a source of devotion, an example of Hadewijch’s command “Come, desire to suffer in order to ascend.”⁴⁹ Indeed, for Hadewijch, the desire for God is suffering itself. The desire is what creates the “abyss,” in the Soul, that must be filled by Love.⁵⁰ Mary understood this best, writes Hadewijch, in one of her poems. Casting Mary as the first to realize “how entirely must anyone forsake himself/When he wholly gives himself up to Love,” Hadewijch portrays her as the first to understand the sacrifices one must make to achieve total union with God.⁵¹ Because Mary understood these sacrifices and still made the choice she did, she is an example for Hadewijch, and for all her kind.

The Marian devotion of the female mystics of the thirteenth century, especially Gertrude of Helfta, Mechtild of Magdeburg, and Hadewijch represents a development not only of practice, but also of theology. Although they still see Mary as an intercessor in the traditional mode described most famously by Anselm of Bec and Bernard of Clairvaux, their concept of Mary is also tied to their Christ-centered devotion, and to their desire for mystical union with Christ. They see Mary not as a way to access Christ, with whom they already share a close connection, but as a woman to emulate, in order to amplify their own humility, hoping to intensify their relationship with her son. Hadewijch expresses this belief most explicitly, but its threads can also be seen in the writings of Gertrude and Mechtild. Furthermore, the beliefs these nuns and beguines held about Mary were not isolated, but related integrally to other beliefs central to their spirituality, such as the importance of suffering. Although drawing extensively upon the beliefs of other thinkers, these women intensified their

⁴⁷ Murk-Jansen, 98.

⁴⁸ Hadewijch, Letter 6, 61. Saskia Murk-Jansen writes interestingly about how the bestowal of visions does not necessarily mean that the receiver is the most blessed. She writes that, in Hadewijch’s conception at least, visions could be bestowed early in a mystic’s path, to encourage them to continue. In fact, for Hadewijch “The highest form of union with God is that within and by means of the agonizing experience of his absence.” (Murk-Jansen, 101.)

⁴⁹ Hadewijch, Poem in Couplet 5, 329.

⁵⁰ Hadewijch, Poem in Couplet 5, 329.

⁵¹ Hadewijch, Poem in Couplet 3, 322.

devotion to Mary, Christ, and the humanity of both, and this intensification became an innovation.

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PARACELSIANISM AND THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF CHEMICAL MEDICINE

An exploration of the role played by alchemy in the advent of chemical medicine in the sixteenth century reveals a link between alchemy and modern science. The most substantive contribution alchemy made to modern science was by way of the medical theory of a Swiss-German alchemist and physician, Paracelsus (1493-1541). The works of Paracelsus give substance to the proposal that alchemy went well beyond gold making and elixirs of life. Drawing upon a scientific spirit and the alchemical tradition of uniting theory and practice, he created a controversial chemical worldview that challenged orthodox Hellenistic ideas of medicine. Through their medical practices and the controversy that ensued, Paracelsus and his followers made lasting contributions to the medical, pharmaceutical and scientific worlds alike.*

The terms “alchemy” and “chemistry” were used interchangeably until the late seventeenth century. In order to highlight this fact and shake the preconception that the two disciplines were considered separate, some historians of science have recently stated preference for the term “chymistry” as an inclusive alternative.¹ As this paper is an exploration of the topic rather than an in-depth study, it will use the more familiar term “alchemy.”

I. A Brief History of Alchemical Tradition: Unifying Theory and Practice

Many people have a basic understanding of alchemy because it has historically enjoyed a place in the popular imagination. Transmutation, the act of turning base metals into gold, is perhaps alchemy’s most famous characteristic—although life-lengthening elixirs have received their share of fame as well. An entire generation of children recently became familiar with alchemical legend in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. Unfortunately, while popular culture can lend awareness to a topic, it comes with many popularized

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¹ See William Newman and Lawrence Principe, "Alchemy vs. Chemistry: The Etymological Origins Of A Historiographic Mistake," *Early Science and Medicine* 3 (1998): 32-65. *JSTOR*; Marcos Martínó-Torres, "Some Recent Developments in the Historiography of Alchemy," *Ambix* 58 (November 2011): 215-237.

misconceptions as well. As a result, it must be pointed out that alchemy was not simply a matter of combining pre-modern scientific ignorance with greed for wealth and desire for immortality. In fact, alchemical practices were supported by accepted philosophical theories at various points in history.

Transmutation in particular enjoyed a great deal of theoretical support. Lawrence Principe, a well-known expert on the history of alchemy, writes, “Many theoretical frameworks for alchemy would develop in various times and places, and these frameworks both supported the possibility of transmutation and suggested avenues for pursuing it practically.”² The union of Greek philosophy with long-established Egyptian chemical techniques, in fact, sparked the very genesis of alchemy.³ While crafts such as metallurgy, glassmaking, and embalming had been performed for years with only practical (rather than theoretical) knowledge necessary, the Greeks sought philosophical explanations as to why these chemical processes worked the way they did.⁴ The interaction between the theoretical and the practical began to shape the history of alchemy, which, as Principe says, is “. . . an endeavor of both head and hand.”⁵ By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Paracelsus and the interface between the theory and practice would lead alchemy into the world of medicine.

The theoretical history of alchemy can be traced back to Empedocles, the philosopher who postulated that all matter was made up of four elements: air, earth, fire, and water. All substances on earth, he said, were mixtures of these four elements in varying proportions. Aristotle, having absorbed this theory into his own worldview, later attributed four qualities to the four elements: hot, cold, wet, and dry. Significantly, this model implied that one type of matter could be transmuted into another if the correct changes were made to the matter’s qualities.⁶ Therefore, it was early on that one of the primary goals of alchemy was the transmutation of metals. Around A.D. 300, the work of Zosimos of Panopolis illustrates how the fusion of theory and practice established an orderly method for pursuing transmutation. In the fragments of his texts there can be identified “. . . *theoretical principles* that guided his practical work, as well as *practical observations* that supported or modified his theories.”⁷ According to Zosimos, metal substances had two components, which he called their “bodies”

² Lawrence Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 16.

³ Richard Morris, *The Last Sorcerers: The Path from Alchemy to the Periodic Table* (Washington D.C.: Joseph Henry Press), 4.

⁴ Trevor Levere, *Transforming Matter: A History of Chemistry from Alchemy to the Buckyball* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), 4.

⁵ Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy*, 207.

⁶ Levere, *Transforming Matter*, 4-5.

⁷ Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy*, 16.

and “spirits.” The spirits, which carried the identifying properties of the metal, could be changed. The bodies, which were understood to be consistent across all metals, could not. Furthermore, the spirits could actually be separated from the bodies using methods such as distillation and sublimation.⁸ With this model in mind, it is easy to see how, theoretically at least, new metals could be formed using the “spirits” of other metals.

Following the birth of Islam, alchemy underwent an important stage of development. In A.D. 640 the Islamic Empire conquered the Egyptian city of Alexandria, and as a result Muslims encountered Greek culture. The alchemical works of Hellenistic Greeks were translated into Arabic, and soon thereafter, significant advances were being made in the field. Many alchemical manuscripts available from this time are attributed to the mysterious “Jabir.” Historians of science doubt whether “Jabir” was an actual person—it seems more likely that his name was simply a pseudonym representing many different authors. Nevertheless, the works of Jabir are valuable to historians of science who wish to gain an understanding of the theories and practices of alchemy during the Islamic period.⁹ Specifically, Jabir introduces the theory that “. . . metals were mixtures of sulfur, mercury, and arsenic, except for gold, which was made up of sulfur and mercury alone.”¹⁰ Jabir’s sulfur and mercury, however, were “different from and purer” than what naturally occur; “. . . by purifying everyday mercury and sulfur and appropriately adjusting their proportions, the alchemist could make gold.”¹¹ (This theory was to become a great influence for later European alchemists.) It is also in the Islamic period that the idea of the Philosopher’s Stone makes its first appearance. It was believed by many alchemists that from the legendary Philosopher’s Stone, an elixir could be made that would extend the length of life. Consuming the elixir continuously would render the drinker, for all practical purposes, immortal. Thus, in Islamic alchemy, the extension of life became an important goal in addition to the creation of gold. It would remain so for the rest of alchemy’s history.

The next great change for alchemy came when, in the twelfth century A.D., Christian monks began translating Arabic alchemy texts into Latin, making Western Europe the third culture in which alchemy would prosper. Tellingly, the first alchemical text to be translated was *On the Composition of Alchemy*, which famously contained instructions for creating the Philosopher’s Stone.¹² For many European alchemists, the search for the Philosopher’s Stone would become a

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy*, 33.

¹⁰ Morris, *The Last Sorcerers*, 7.

¹¹ Levere, *Transforming Matter*, 7.

¹² Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy*, 51-52.

lifelong ambition.¹³ In this period, some truly revolutionary contributions to alchemical knowledge were made by an Italian Franciscan alchemist who wrote under the name of Geber in the thirteenth century. The pseudonym was a nod to his Arabic predecessor Jabir; Geber probably sought to capitalize on Jabir's reputation as a celebrated alchemist by association. Geber expanded upon many ideas of Arabic alchemy, inventing a type of corpuscularianism “. . . such that inner and outer qualities could be reinterpreted in terms of inner and outer layers of minute particles.”¹⁴ These particles, called corpuscles, are strikingly similar to the concept of atoms in modern science, except Geber's corpuscles could be divided. He even explained chemical processes such as sublimation (the purification of a substance by heating it to a vapor state, which forms a solid deposit upon condensation) by insisting that the “parts” (or corpuscles) of some substances are less densely held together than others.¹⁵ Another intriguing aspect of Geber's writings is that he indicates “. . . alchemical success was God-given, an attitude that reinforced the spiritual aspects of medieval alchemy.”¹⁶ In Medieval Europe, many features of alchemy took on a spiritual meaning. Finding the Philosopher's Stone became a symbol for saving one's soul, and transmutation of a common metal into the ever more desirable gold became associated with the Christian concept of resurrection.¹⁷

II. Paracelsus and Paracelsianism

In the sixteenth century, a Swiss-German physician altered the world of alchemy forever by tying it to medicine. His name was Philipus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, known to most of history as Paracelsus, considered the founder of *iatrochemistry*, or chemical medicine. Historical sources as well as Paracelsus's own writings paint a picture of a revolutionary and iconoclastic figure who rejected canonical medical knowledge. As early as fourteen, Paracelsus became a wandering scholar and physician, traveling from town to town in search of teachers and, later, patients to heal. He objected to the pursuit of transmuting base metals into gold, believing to be a waste of time.¹⁸ He believed alchemy should be put to chiefly medical use,

¹³ Morris, *The Last Sorcerers*, 10-24.

¹⁴ Levere, *Transforming Matter*, 7.

¹⁵ Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy*, 57-58.

¹⁶ Levere, *Transforming Matter*, 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Lest modern readers put Paracelsus on too high a pedestal, however, it should be noted that he was not the first to object to transmutation. Trevor Levere, history of science professor at the University of Toronto, notes that even during the Arabic period of

considering it to be one of the four pillars of medicine, along with philosophy, astronomy, and virtue of the physician. He wrote in one treatise, “The third fundamental part, or pillar, of true medicine, is Alchemy. Unless the physician be perfectly acquainted with, and experienced in, this art, everything that he devotes to the rest of his art will be vain and useless.”¹⁹ With this outlook, Paracelsus and his followers (the various schools of thought inspired by Paracelsus came to be known as “Paracelsianisms”) attempted to take medicine in a decidedly alchemical direction. Paracelsianism’s effect on medicine was shaped, as the effects of alchemy often were, by the interaction of theory and practice. The theoretical component of this interaction, Paracelsus’s medical worldview, is commonly referred to as the Chemical Philosophy.

Like many Renaissance natural philosophers influenced by Hermeticism, Paracelsians believed in the “two-book” conception of nature. This is the idea that God wrote two books, one literal and one metaphorical, both of which physicians should “read” in order to understand the cosmos. The two books are the Holy Scriptures and the Book of Nature. A seventeenth century Paracelsist named Thomas Tymme claimed that the study of the Book of Nature, or natural philosophy, was, as such, a way to glorify God.²⁰ What distinguished Paracelsians from other Hermeticists, however, was their belief that *alchemy* provided the necessary foundations to understanding the Book of Nature, through experimenting in laboratories and through analogy. For these men, the Creation of the world was a chemical event, which “. . . accounted for the production of the three principles as well as the four elements.”²¹ (Where some traditional medieval alchemists had accepted sulfur and mercury as the foundation of all metals, Paracelsus added salt. These three principles came to be known as the *tria prima*, which is one of the most enduring characteristics of alchemical theory, usually illustrated in the form of a triangle.²² Although there is some debate on the topic of whether Paracelsus intended for the *tria prima* to take the

alchemy many believed “metals were natural species, just like animals and plants, and were not interconvertible or transmutable.” (See Levere, *Transforming Matter*, 8.) Indeed, theories regarding the generative and reproductive properties of metals continued to be a topic of debate for centuries after Paracelsus. (See Hirai 2012, Hirai-Yoshimoto 2005, and Luzzini 2011.)

¹⁹ Paracelsus and Arthur E. Waite. *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus, Volume II*, 148.

²⁰ Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, chapter 2 (subsection: Chemistry and the New Science).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² John Read, *Prelude to Chemistry: An Outline of Alchemy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), 27.

place of the four Aristotelian elements, many Paracelsists accepted both concepts and used each of them at their discretion. Some found the *tria prima* particularly attractive because it was commonly seen as analogous to the Holy Trinity.²³ Chemical philosophy went deeper than just a chemical interpretation of Creation, however. The proponents of this theory concluded that if Creation had been a chemical process, it followed that there should still be chemical processes at work in the world. The late Allen Debus, historian of science at the University of Chicago, explains that Paracelsians held a “. . . belief in the macrocosm-microcosm relationship: the universe was conceived to be a vast system with all its parts interconnected; in particular, man was seen as a small copy of the great world, and therefore it was valid to draw analogies between him and the earth or the universe as a whole.”²⁴ This macrocosm-microcosm concept is what enabled Paracelsians to apply chemical philosophy to medicine.

The prevailing medical wisdom of Paracelsus's time was based on Hippocrates' theory that the human body contains four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile), the imbalance of which causes illness. A sick person could be healed, in theory, if a physician could restore the balance of the four humors. Famously, one of the ways this was done was through “bloodletting,” or the draining of blood from feverish patients. Paracelsus, however, rejected the theory of the four humors outright, instead choosing to focus on chemical cures for illnesses. As a result of the macrocosm-microcosm medical philosophy, he pictured the human body as a sort of chemical laboratory, positing that bodily problems could be corrected by finding the appropriate chemical compound.²⁵ Bruce T. Moran, a professor of history at the University of Nevada, elaborates on Paracelsus's chemical philosophy:

“The world so constructed amounted to a gigantic pharmacopeia in which the heavens, as well as plants, animals, and minerals, brought their spiritual forces to bear upon individual parts of the human body. Portions of the terrestrial world could thus be made into medicines for treating specific illnesses by the physician who was led not by ancient texts, but who read instead the “book of nature” and was thus guided by experience.”²⁶

²³ Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, chapter 2 (subsection: Chemical Theory and the Elements).

²⁴ *Ibid*, chapter 2 (subsection: Chemistry and the Geocosm).

²⁵ Morris, *The Last Sorcerers*, 35.

²⁶ Bruce T. Moran, “The ‘Herbarius’ of Paracelsus” in *Pharmacy in History* 35 (1993): 99.

These chemical remedies were spiritually innate in nature, only hidden. The job of the physician was to recognize the appropriate qualities inside nature and interpret how they could be used pharmaceutically. Writes Paracelsus:

“ . . . since, in this place, the true basis of preparing remedies, in which lies the whole essence of medicine, is laid down and established, be well assured of this, that such a foundation must be extracted from the most secret recesses of Nature, and not from the imaginative brain, as a cook dresses a mess of pottage, according to his own judgment.”²⁷

In this sense, the alchemist physician does not *create* remedies as a painter would create a painting. Rather, “. . . whatever is poured forth from the bosom of Nature, he who adapts it to that purpose for which it is destined is an Alchemist.”²⁸ Here, Paracelsus emphasizes that alchemists contribute to human progress by procuring new remedies to ease the suffering of the sick *as well as* glorifying God by discovering the true virtues and remedies inherent within the natural world (Book of Nature).

Paracelsus did not believe his cures were magical, although he did sometimes describe them as miraculous. Instead, he insisted the cures were simply a part of nature. In his *Herbarius*, he explains the healing properties of the essence of the persicaria plant. He claims it is incomparable in its ability to heal open wounds, especially if his prescribed regimen is followed:

“ . . . one takes the plant and draws it through a fresh stream. Thereafter, one lays it on that [injury] which one wishes to heal, and this for as long as it would take to eat half an egg. Then one buries the plant in a moist place so that it will decay. In this way, the injury is made healthy. If I must tell you that some [people] make a cross over the wound and others, in addition, pray [when treating it], I should also add that such things are unnecessary. They do not belong to the cure, for there is [in the plant] an action that works naturally, not superstitiously and magically.”²⁹

This passage illustrates Paracelsus’s conviction that his chemical philosophy was sound. No magic or prayers would be necessary. One did not need God’s help to make the cure work, as God had already ordained the curative properties of the

²⁷ Paracelsus and Arthur E. Waite, *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus, Volume II*, 149.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 148.

²⁹ Paracelsus and Bruce T. Moran, *Herbarius*, in *Pharmacy in History* 35 (1993): 111.

plant at the time of Creation. It was the alchemist's task, then, to unlock the secrets of the Book of Nature and apply them to medicine.

When put into practice, Paracelsus's unconventional theories resulted in novel and useful medical advancements. His acceptance of the homeopathic Germanic folk tradition ". . . that like cures like, that the poison in proper dosage would also be the cure," influenced his followers and resulted in the introduction of inorganic compounds to chemical medicine. While often criticized for their use of potent metallic compounds and apparent toxins, Paracelsians proved to be on the right track. Their use was actually of medical importance, as many were included in the pharmacopeias of the seventeenth century. Mercury, in fact, later asserted itself as the only effective cure against syphilis and was widely used by many physicians who were also critics of iatrochemistry. Paracelsians were ever mindful of their alchemical heritage and proud to be distinguished from other chemical physicians by their meticulous observation of dosages and use of alchemy to extract only the valuable quality from the dangerous substances with which they worked.³⁰

Paracelsus's imagined world system, in which God was the "Master Chemist" and chemical processes explain all natural phenomena in the physical world and within the human body, gave him the theoretical framework he needed to prepare powerful medicines.³¹ However, the theoretical framework needed to be supported by practical experience and observation. Paracelsus's travels had introduced him to Germanic folk medicine. He had observed the cures of healers ignorant of Galenic philosophy and he incorporated these observations into his own medical practices.³² Thus, Paracelsus combined his theoretical ideas about chemistry with the practical medical results he had personally observed. In this way, the interaction of the theoretical and the practical led to the foundation of Paracelsus's work, as it had for many alchemists before him.

III. The Reception and Controversy of Paracelsianism

The controversy of Paracelsianism began with Paracelsus himself. An excellent illustration of this is his time at the University of Basel. After he had spent several years wandering around Europe as a young man, Paracelsus returned to the city of Basel and the Swiss university where he himself had

³⁰ Paracelsus and Bruce T. Moran, *Herbarius*, in *Pharmacy in History* 35 (1993): 111.

³¹ Principe, *The Secrets of Alchemy*, 128.

³² Allen Debus, "The Chemical Philosophers: Chemical Medicine from Paracelsus to Van Helmont," *History of Science* 12 (1974): 235.

studied. He had been offered a position as a lecturer there.³³ His idiosyncrasies immediately stirred up controversy and annoyance among his colleagues. These included lecturing and writing in his native Swiss German vernacular instead of Latin, inviting the general public to attend his lectures, refusing to participate in the university's "act of reception as an external graduate" (perhaps because he would have had to produce a diploma from another university, and it is suspected that he did not have one)³⁴ and "promoting the use of German medicinal plants over the more established classical Mediterranean ones."³⁵ When he first arrived at the university he reportedly performed a public burning of the medical texts of ibn-Sīnā (Avicenna), which was a symbolic rejection of the canonical medical education of the time.³⁶ To the faculty he released a dissenting proclamation, his *Intimatio*, in which he announced that he would be lecturing for two hours every day, not on the accepted medical curriculum of the time, but rather his ". . . original experience in unraveling the secrets of nature and disease."³⁷ On one occasion he invited the faculty to attend a lecture, promising he would be revealing the "ultimate secret" of medicine. When they arrived, Paracelsus began by unveiling a plate of feces. Insulted and disgusted, the doctors in attendance stood up to leave. Paracelsus shouted after them, "If you will not hear the mysteries of putrefactive fermentation, you are unworthy of the name of physicians."³⁸ Obviously he became unpopular rather quickly. Paracelsus only lasted for ten months at the University of Basel before he a dispute with the municipal authorities resulted in his being chased out of the town, after which he began traveling once more.³⁹

It is now easier to understand why Paracelsus was so disliked by other physicians. Dane T. Daniel, historian at Wright State University, asks, "How could the medical establishment, which was grounded in Hippocratic-Galenic theories, e.g., the traditional humoral theories consistently and vehemently

³³ Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Karger Medical and Scientific Publishers, Basel: 1982), 20.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Principe, *The Secrets of Alchemy*, 127-128.

³⁶ This symbolic rejection, however, should not lead us to believe that Paracelsus and other iatrochemists were completely unguided by the works of Avicenna—he inspired Paracelsus's interest in the idea of spontaneous generation, for example.

³⁷ Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 20.

³⁸ Arthur Edward Waite, preface to *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombast, of Hohenheim, called Paracelsus the Great* (London: J. Elliot and Co., 1894), xiii.

³⁹ Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 21-22.

chastised by Paracelsus, not help but be angered and threatened?”⁴⁰ It is likely that established physicians felt their expertise was insulted by Paracelsus, who was known for his pompous nature and flamboyant disregard of authority. His reputation was that of being a perpetually drunk but lucid surgeon who frequently wandered about the countryside carrying a sword named Azoth.⁴¹ His written criticisms were often indelicate, such as in his *Herbarius* when, after providing an apparently foolproof cure for dropsy using an alchemical preparation of hellebore and iron, he chastised, “Do it, you doctor of humors, then timidly shut your trap. What an ass! It is a great disgrace that you cannot heal dropsy. For you have no idea of the correct method and do not know where you are going. Learn to walk along the right path and do not wander in the labyrinth.”⁴² Older doctors felt threatened, too, by the fact that Paracelsians wanted chemical medicines to *replace* the traditional Galenic cures and not simply be added to the medical literature.⁴³ Furthermore, Paracelsus’s theological ideas gave further fodder to his critics: while he began his life as a Catholic, he became known as a religious radical as his life progressed. All of this added to his reputation as an ignominious figure.

Unsurprisingly, Paracelsus continued to manufacture controversy long after his death, though his theories continued to attract many followers. It is difficult to overstate Paracelsus’s later intellectual influence on the European medical and chemical world. Even so, Allen Debus claims this influence would have been hard to predict at the time of his death in 1541. Very little of Paracelsus’s works had been published during his lifetime. In the 1550s, however, a flood of his texts began appearing touting and stories of his miraculous cures.⁴⁴ His writings were then disseminated across Europe and became quite popular, especially among theological and medical renegades.⁴⁵ Some of the noted authors who interacted with Paracelsian ideas include Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576),⁴⁶ Robert Boyle (1627-1691),⁴⁷ Johann Joachim Becher

⁴⁰ Dane T. Daniel, “Coping with Heresy: Suchten Toxites, and the Early Reception of Paracelsus’s Theology” in *Chymists and Chymistry: Studies in the History of Alchemy and Early Modern Chemistry*, ed. Lawrence M. Principe (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2007), 54.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Paracelsus and Bruce T. Moran, *Herbarius*, 110.

⁴³ Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, chapter 2 (subsection: The New Medicines).

⁴⁴ Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, chapter 2 (Introduction).

⁴⁵ Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy*, 129-130.

⁴⁶ Girolamo Cardano, *De subtilitate libri 21* (Norimbergae: Apud Ioh. Petreium, 1550).

⁴⁷ Robert Boyle, *Tracts* (London: Printed by W.G. and are to be sold by M. Pitt, 1674).

(1635-1682),⁴⁸ Robert Fludd (1574-1637),⁴⁹ Daniel Sennert (1572-1637),⁵⁰ Jan Baptist Van Helmont (1579-1644),⁵¹ and Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680).⁵² Scholars such as Debus and Walter Pagel have attempted to classify responses to Paracelsus in the medical world, placing them into three categories: supporters, dissenters and compromisers.⁵³ Supporters (the Paracelsians) were often opposed and heavily criticized by the far more numerous dissenters. Supporters, compromisers, and dissenters could be found all over Europe, often engaging in public disputes.

Llorenç Coçar was a prominent practitioner of chemical medicine with “clear Paracelsian affinities” in Valencia, Spain.⁵⁴ He held the apparent support of the Spanish monarchy, as he was named *protomédico* by Phillip II, a post that gave him the responsibility of overseeing the creation and sale of medicine in Valencia pharmacies. Soon after his appointment, however, he began to receive vehement resistance from colleges, apothecaries and others, who believed he was unfit for the job of *protomédico* on the grounds that he practiced iatrochemistry.⁵⁵ The opposition became so intense that Coçar eventually filed a suit against several groups, claiming he only wanted to be allowed to perform the job to which he had been appointed. Importantly, “. . . the apothecaries relied on the authority of university physicians and Galenic medicine to establish the inefficacy and dangerousness of Coçar’s remedies.”⁵⁶ Coçar, a chair at a medical college, suffered strained relationships with his colleagues—often, they opted to simply ignore his medical proposals in professional meetings.⁵⁷ After Coçar’s death in 1592, chemical medicine in Valencia entered into a long period of

⁴⁸ Johan Joachim Becher, *Actorum Laboratorii chymici Monacensis, seu Physicae subterraneae libri duo...* (Francofurti : Imp. Joh. Davidis Zunneri, 1669).

⁴⁹ Robert Fludd, *Philosophia moysaica* (Goudae: Excudebat Petrus Rammazenius, bibliopolae, 1638).

⁵⁰ Daniel Sennert, *Epitome scientiae naturalis* (Wittenberg, 1618).

⁵¹ Jan Baptist Van Helmont, *Opera omnia* (Francofurti: Sumptibus Johannis Justi Erythropili, Typis Johannis Philippi Andreae, 1682).

⁵² Athanasius Kircher, *Mundus subterraneus in XII libros digestus* (Amsterodami: Apud Ioannem Sansonium et Elizeum Weyerstraten, 1665).

⁵³ Jole Shackelford, “Early Reception of Paracelsian Theory: Severinus and Erastus,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 26 (1995): 124.

⁵⁴ Marialuz Lopez Terrada, “The Making of Chemical Medicines in Valencia during the 16th Century: Llorenç Coçar” in *Chymia: Science and Nature in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Mar Rey Bueno et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 262.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 262-265.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 267.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

decline, as there seem to have been few physicians practicing iatrochemistry in Spain at the time.⁵⁸ This dispute between Coçar and the medical establishment of his city serves as a representative illustration of the tension between traditional and Paracelsian medicine in the sixteenth century.

Another controversy surrounding Paracelsianism was the aforementioned conviction of Paracelsists that some toxins (including “mercury, arsenic and antimony”⁵⁹) could be used as medicines. Allen Debus provides details of an exchange between two Frenchmen, Loys de Launay and Jacques Grévin, in the latter half of the sixteenth century. De Launay had become enthusiastic about the medical use of antimony after reading a manuscript by Pietro Andrea Mattioli. Grévin, a physician, replied that while he was not averse to the practice of alchemy itself, he believed antimony was dangerous, and he had the advantage of having taken it himself, writing that “. . . It was indeed a purgative, but a violent one that left him weakened for eight days.”⁶⁰ Responses between the two were sent back and forth, serving as a public platform for the debate about the use of chemical medicine. The published tracts between de Launay and Grévin were, Debus indicates, a controversial debut of Paracelsian ideas in France.⁶¹

In England there lived one of the strongest and most famous critics of Paracelsus: Thomas Erastus, also a Swiss physician. In 1572, Erastus wrote a tract, *Disputationes de medicina nova*, which lambasts Paracelsian philosophy and everything to which it leads. He appears to personally detest Paracelsus, even resorting to name-calling at one point. Notably, “Erastus opens Paracelsian metaphysics to criticism on theological and religious grounds by characterizing his views as impious, even heretical.”⁶² The criticism did not do any favors for Paracelsus’s popularity, although ironically, many English physicians only heard of Paracelsus by way of Erastus’s critique.⁶³ Perhaps most importantly, Jole Shackelford, historian of medicine at the University of Minnesota, believes that Erastus’s criticism frightened Severinus, an early follower of Paracelsus, and deterred him from composing more works on iatrochemistry, which of course raises the question of how many other Paracelsists were silenced in this way.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 269-270.

⁵⁹ Principe, *Secrets of Alchemy*, 130.

⁶⁰ Allen Debus, *The French Paracelsians: The Chemical Challenge to Medical and Scientific Tradition in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21-26.

⁶¹ Ibid, 29-30.

⁶² Shackelford, “Early Reception of Paracelsian Theory,” 127.

⁶³ Ibid., 126.

Shackelford fears Paracelsian theory was crippled by Erastus's early condemnation of it as heretical.⁶⁴

IV. Conclusion

In consideration of the research delineated in the previous paragraphs, we may conclude that the Paracelsian legacy is a threefold one. First, Paracelsus was chiefly an alchemist, and he challenged the medical establishment of his day in historically alchemical fashion, marrying theory and practice. Rather than just studying the ancients, Paracelsus wandered across Europe and utilized folk remedies, a close analysis of nature and knowledge gained from centuries of metallurgical crafts, incorporating all of this into his theory of how the world was formed. At the same time, he developed his chemical philosophy, which guided his practical work. Tara Nummedal writes that "Like medicine, alchemy has always been both an intellectual and a practical pursuit. . . . Practitioners frequently took books with them into the laboratory; likewise, recipes, descriptions of processes, and images of distilling equipment found their way back into alchemical texts."⁶⁵ A long line of alchemists who allowed philosophy and experimentation to guide each other came before Paracelsus. The Paracelsians appropriated this alchemical heritage and used it to transform the medical world.

The second piece of Paracelsus's legacy is that he utilized what a modern scientist might call an experimental approach in his quest for making sense of how the world worked. He aimed to explore his theories, even if it meant challenging authority and being ridiculed by his colleagues. He investigated the chemical foundations of life itself. He sought a way to understand the composition of the universe, and this without any knowledge of the chemical elements. While he was not a chemist in the modern sense, he did help pave the way for the development of chemistry. Experimentation and a questioning spirit led him to become the renegade he undoubtedly was. (Francis Bacon, the much celebrated "Father of Empiricism," supposedly "read the works of Paracelsians with great care."⁶⁶) No, Paracelsus did not have the answers, but his philosophy and his medical cures contributed to the evolution of medical and scientific knowledge both.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶⁵ Tara Nummedal, "Words and Works in the History of Alchemy," *Isis* 102 (June 2011): 331.

⁶⁶ Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, chapter 8 (subsection: The Chemical Philosophy in Retrospect).

Finally, while Paracelsus's chemical philosophy did provide some contributions to medical knowledge, the so-called "Paracelsian Debates" which ensued after Paracelsus's death were significantly more important. Allen Debus admits that if these debates had not been so contentious, the Paracelsians would have far less historical importance. As it happened, the debate over chemical philosophy was ". . . one of the most crucial scientific and medical problems of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."⁶⁷ Everyone within the scientific and medical communities, whether they supported chemical philosophy and medicine or not, was forced to evaluate their thoughts on Paracelsus's theology, his rejection of the medical canon and the severe critiques of men like Thomas Erastus.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Paracelsus's personal character likely contributed to his lasting legacy. If Paracelsus had not been such a controversial figure, had his methods been more tolerable or his personality more subtle, his chemical philosophy may have been overlooked by his Galenic opponents. Even more significant, his followers adopted his iconoclastic attitude, insisting on a complete medical revolution rather than a mere tolerance for, or incorporation of, their ideas. This stubborn inclination may have been what provoked their opponents to respond with such vitriol (and perhaps it was even designed to do so). Either way, there is no doubt that Paracelsianism inspired spirited debates about matters that hadn't been debated in centuries.

The confidence in Paracelsus's writings would suggest that he felt his chemical philosophy was the key to understanding the universe. Indeed, he appears to be as sure of it as other alchemists were sure of their ability to make gold or the fabled Philosopher's Stone. While modern science appears to illuminate the erroneous nature of these claims, it must be remembered that alchemists, like philosophers, were in the business of pursuing knowledge, and in this sense they actually helped pave the path to modern science. While alchemy's detractors might call it a pseudoscience or an esoteric cult—and there are some truths in those claims, to be sure—Paracelsus proves that alchemy *inspired* much more. As a true alchemist, he did not rely solely on books and the wisdom of the ancients; he also sought practical experience. He insisted upon investigation of the natural world, experimentation in the laboratory and, if necessary, outright rejection of the status quo. As a result, Paracelsus and his chemical philosophers inspired a renewed examination of traditional medical thought.

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⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

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REVIEW: LOWER, WENDY. *HITLER'S FURIES: GERMAN WOMEN IN THE NAZI KILLING FIELDS*. NEW YORK: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 2013.

“We do not think it is proper if woman invades the world of the man and enters his territory; instead we think it is natural for these worlds to remain apart.”¹ Though these vehement words spoken by Adolf Hitler epitomize Nazi ideology with respect to the separate male and female spheres, Wendy Lower’s original work, titled *Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*, debunks this ideology when put to practice. Lower skillfully displays that in reality, the supposed separate realms of men and women within Nazi Germany were not as ‘separate’ as history likes to recall. While historians have commonly seen women in the Third Reich as merely mothers and homemakers, Lower displays that women were just as involved and integral to the Nazi killing machine as were their male counterparts. She estimates that at least half a million women were responsible for the demise of the ‘other’ in Germany and its occupied territories during World War II.

Lower expertly asserts that women preformed unspeakable acts of cruelty and violence out of their own agency. The use of personal letters, diaries, interrogation records, memoirs, and interviews help color this piece of scholarship with a narrative of ‘ordinary women’ coming from all kinds of political, social, and economic backgrounds. The author uses multiple threads of case studies in order to weave an intricate picture of who these women were and what they became by choosing to aid in the Nazi regime and its policies. By adding such texture to her work through individual women’s stories, Lower importantly humanizes these historical characters and helps us to understand that these female perpetrators were more common than we previously thought; not just sporadic cases of sociopaths.

Lower breaks down the commonly believed myth about women not doing politicized work in her chapters on female professions, witnesses, accomplices, and perpetrators. Here, the author asserts that even the most mundane desk jobs helped to equip the Nazi hierarchy with the organizational means in which to implement the ‘Final Solution’. Women ranging from teachers, to nurses, secretaries, and even wives are held accountable in Lower’s

¹ Adolf Hitler, “The Role of Women in the Volksgemeinschaft,” in B. Sax and D. Kuntz, eds., *Inside Hitler’s Germany: A Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich* (Lexington: Heath, 1992) 262-64.

work for their part in indoctrinating society, as well as excluding and exterminating various groups within it. Importantly, women are not presented as only ambitious careerists or hateful anti-Semites. It is understood throughout the work that these women involved were an uncomfortable mix of both phenomena, making it difficult to place them in easily defined categories. Women who supported the Nazi regime were able to act on their own ambitions, experience new possibilities, and fulfill the expectations of the regime all while asserting their superiority through anti-Semitism, hatred, and unbelievable violence.

Towards the end of her work, Lower attempts to explain why these women chose to kill and how they were largely forgotten after the war. Since few women held Nazi leadership roles, women were largely absent from the Nuremberg Trials thus beginning the silencing and withholding of information pertaining to women's involvement in wartime atrocities. However, the most innovative and important part of her work is in her explanation of why women are largely ignored and freed from their guilt and association with the Holocaust. She states, "To assume that violence is not a feminine characteristic and that women are not capable of mass murder has obvious appeal: it allows for hope that at least half the human race will not devour the other, that it will protect children and so safeguard the future. But minimizing the violent behavior of women creates a false shield against a more direct confrontation with genocide and its disconcerting realities."² Here, Lower brings women from the margins into the center of discussion and debate with regard to their forgotten involvement in crimes against humanity.

Wendy Lower's *Hitler's Furies* is an excellent piece of work that demonstrates the need for historians to ask new questions to old answers. Her work reminds us that genocide and hatred is blind to gender, and that we as historians need to make sure our scholarship does not also turn a blind eye to one specific gender over the other. Clearly, there is more work that can be done in this topical area however, Lower has done an important job in furthering the discussion. This work is a crucial piece in understanding the bigger puzzle of women's agency and involvement in Nazi Germany during World War II.

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² Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2013) 158.

REVIEW: HOYOS, DEXTER. *MASTERING THE WEST: ROME AND CARTHAGE AT WAR*. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015.

Mastering the West is a historical narrative describing the Punic Wars that took place between Carthage and Rome from 264-146 B.C. The author, Dexter Hoyos is a retired Associate Professor of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Sydney, Australia. This book details the entire conflict between the two great powers in the western Mediterranean. It was the largest war that the region had ever seen. At its conclusion, Rome became the dominant power in the region and Carthage was completely destroyed and Western civilization descended from the remains of the Rome rather than Carthage. World history could have been dramatically different had the Carthaginians triumphed against the Romans. Dexter Hoyos vividly illustrates the origins, extent, and gravity of this conflict.

Hoyos argues that the Punic Wars were far from an inevitable conflict between the two starkly different cultures. The author attempts to redress the numerous legends and myths that have surrounded this conflict since it began over two thousand years ago. The political background is essential to understanding how the two great powers of the time became locked in a struggle for survival. Hoyos argues that the two republics stumbled into conflict with one another and that neither realized the extent to which they would be forced to sacrifice. Each war is divided into separate sections and examined in minute detail. The thirty page introduction is essential for the reader to understand the conflict and how it developed into a region-wide war.

Hoyos' thesis is that the Punic Wars changed the face of the Mediterranean. Rome became the dominant power in the West and proceeded to conquer the rest of the known world. The author argues that this would never have happened if the Carthaginians had not lost their war with the Romans. Rome essentially disassembled the Carthaginian Empire after the Second Punic War taking territory in Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, and Spain. This expanded Roman influence throughout the western Mediterranean and led to the Roman Empire.

The author supports his thesis by chronicling the course of the war between Rome and Carthage. Part One supplies necessary background information on both republics. Part Two describes the First Punic War and its aftermath. Carthage and Rome's involvement in the nearby island of Sicily inadvertently led to this first major conflict. It lasted from 264-241 B.C. This war saw Rome replace Carthage as the maritime power in the western Mediterranean. Part Three describes the Second Punic War and comprises most of the work.

Readers will enjoy the military analysis of Hannibal's invasion of Italy as well as new criticisms of the legendary Punic leader. At the end of the Second Punic War, Rome had taken the Carthaginian Empire apart. It was left a protectorate of the dominant Roman Republic. Part Four describes the last conflict between Rome and Carthage. Warmongering in Rome and aggressive politicking by Carthage's neighbor Numidia saw the city besieged by two consular armies. In 146, Carthage was destroyed.

Hoyos has extensively researched his topic to cover the entirety of the conflict. Polybius and Livy are utilized throughout the work and are regarded as the most reliable sources of the period. Other sources include Diodorus, Cornelius Nepos, Plutarch, Appian, Lucius Cassius Dio, and Silius Italicus. Hoyos has already extensively published on this topic. He has also published multiple books on the subject including; *Hannibal: Rome's Greatest Enemy*, *The Carthaginians*, *A Companion to the Punic Wars*, and *Livy: Rome's Italian Wars*.

Hoyos' well-crafted arguments are convincing and a product of years of research on his part. He takes drastic measures to undercut the undergrowth of mythology that has developed around the Punic Wars. His efforts may have gone too far. For example, Hoyos leaves out Hannibal's famous oath that he took in Carthage before his father sailed to Spain. There were also other instances where he steps into a historical debate and reduces its importance to the point where the answer is moot. His expertise on the topic gives his opinion the weight necessary to make such claims. I found myself slightly nonplussed at his generalization of some of the historical issues that most authors who write about this period attempt to tackle. Overall, though, his historical analysis is more directed at getting the reader to realize the gravity of the entire conflict. In this, Hoyos succeeds spectacularly and gives a fresh perspective on the conflict.

Overall, this book is an excellent addition to the scholarly work on the Punic Wars. Its prose flow well and paints a concise, realistic picture of Mediterranean politics during the third and second century B.C. Hoyos has managed to resurrect a long ended conflict and imbibe it with the fresh blood of his imagination. The political and military analysis of each war bring a new understanding of the technological innovations and size of the conflict. Hoyos has a knack for understanding the motivations of these ancient peoples through years of teaching and research. While his description of battles are reduced to brief tactical scrutiny rather than pages of graphic conflict it was enjoyable to understand battle from the mind of the general rather than the foot soldier. The numerous maps of different regions and tactical battle maps make diving into the author's work that much more enjoyable. Hoyos' description of the Punic Wars will be particularly illuminating to anyone who enjoys ancient military history. This reviewer highly recommends this work to scholars and students alike.

Overall, *Mastering the West* was well researched, wide in its focus, well written, and chronologically organized.

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REVIEW: THUM, RIAN. *THE SACRED ROUTES OF UYGHUR HISTORY*. HARVARD: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014.

“Xinjiang,” the area of Central Asia in China where many Uyghurs (Turkic Muslims) reside, has always caused tensions between the Chinese government and its native dwellers. In the eyes of the Chinese government, Xinjiang is essentially one of the five autonomous regions embodying China’s territorial completeness and nationalist solidarity. This geographic name, however, represents a watershed point in Uyghur’s psyche en route to Chinese conquest and colonization. Not only do they contest the official Chinese rhetoric of its legitimate rule over Xinjiang because of a shared history, Uyghurs also find this geographic name alienating, merely a symbol of illegitimate, cruel outsider domination.

The Sacred Route of Uyghur History anchors its entrance to this polemics over this geographic name, taking a ground-breaking, but overlooked reading of Uyghur history, in the course of the 20th century. It explores the region as the pre-modern, indeterminate oasis of Altishahr, the Uyghur for “six cities,” and searches for a Uyghur identity within the popular Uyghur historical practice of internal pilgrimage and the textual culture of Uyghur manuscripts without trapping into the post-colonial notion of an imagined community enclosed in the nation-state system. The interplay of the texts and the places allows Uyghurs not only to study their past, but also to express their past. *Sacred Route* challenges placing a nation’s identity in a binary power struggle. This regional Uyghur identity is neither a reaction to the Chinese government’s subjugation nor a simple artefact of resistance, but a reflection of a unique culture system, in which the popular masses, actively and consciously, engage with their common past.

Therefore, *Sacred Route* is also a cornerstone in the history of the study of history. Uyghurs, in Thum’s narratives, are the creators of their history and not merely the recipients of the delineated history based on scholarly written texts. This is a history shaped by mass participation, rather than elitist didactics; a history transmitted in sacred place rather than social institutions; and a history transcending the gap between written and oral modes of historical practice. Thum draws the reader’s attention not only to the content of his narratives of Uyghur

history, but also how this history is transmitted, registered and assimilated into the Uyghur identity.

To tell his story, Thum opens his narrative with the chapter “The Historical Canon,” introducing *tazkirah* (an Arabic term for ‘memory’), the manifestation of textual negotiation of popular local history, to the reader. Thum shows that Uyghurs had a rooted tradition of “our history” where the individual past infused into a collective body of history that was shared by everyone in the community and transmitted through Altishahr manuscripts. From a local desire for Islamic heroic depictions in the 18th century to an accommodation of foreign historical literature in the 19th and the 20th centuries, Uyghurs transformed the history of foreign societies and integrated it into their own indigeneity.

Thum explains two different mechanisms of the transmission and integration of this potpourri of histories. The first one relied on oral performances and public readings at local shrines, and words of mouths re-telling various narratives, that symbolized a profound connection between historical tales, literatures and physical places. The second one turned this form of unwritten text into written words in manuscript form, *tazkirah*. Such intersections of manuscript technology with socially and geographically embedded performances, usually at the shrines, lied at the heart of Uyghur notions of the past which also included “originally intentional and undisguised inventions” of tales and heroic depictions. Thum chooses an adventurous path broadening history’s traditional definition, taking various elements of *tazkirah* into consideration, such as proses and poetries, pilgrimage manuals, monographs, and encyclopaedias. At the same time, Thum argues that oral performances could not divorce from these *tazkirahs*—reading texts aloud from manuscripts at the shrines completed a solitary experience of Uyghur history. These *tazkirahs*, embedded with paramount social values, thus became grounded in the hands of a wide community, and transcended into an important form of cultural capital.

What is impressive with Thum’s research is that he sees manuscripts as not only a medium of contents, but also physical objects for textual negotiation of the past, created and transmitted in culturally specific ways. Such a manuscript tradition mobilized people’s literal, visual, oral and aural senses. On the one hand, the author of the *tazkirah* possessed control over the written text. On the other hand, this written text, conveyed via recitation and disseminated to a broader community, also involved people’s participation in creating historical meanings within the texts, giving them a shared authority over the text. Literate readers could record their own experiences in the margins, whereas non-literate people could re-shape the meaning of the text through hearing and re-telling. As a result, the history embodied in these *tazkirahs* was more dynamic and accessible, not consisting of a standardized lineage of the past, but an evolving

and progressive identity. *Tazkirahs* became an important site of textual negotiation of Uyghur past and solidarity. Thum also juxtaposes the accessibility, adaptability, and flexibility of collective manuscript traditions to the exclusivity, rigidity, and stability of authorship in the post-printing era, criticizing a monopolization of people's history in the hands of scholarly elites.

Thum's narrative of Uyghur history, however, does not end with the written *tazkirah*. He sees the physicality of places symbiotic with the aforementioned site of textual negotiation, incorporating Uyghur internal pilgrimage to different local shrines of Altishahr into this collective history. Not only did these shrines, saints' tombs, provide Uyghur pilgrims with a "physical and geographical link to the past," they also rendered the narrative of their history some legitimacy and sacred authenticity. Thum argues that these shrines became no longer static, merely being venerated by pilgrims, who, however, activated the historical potential of the shrine which hitherto gave the reciprocity of sacredness to them.

In the meantime, such internal pilgrimage brought the convergence of *tazkirahs* from different parts of Altishahr and disseminated the information across geographic and social boundaries, resembling the Uyghur tradition of "our history," which linked each pilgrim's personal life history to the history of the saint, where a sense of the past could be shared across people, and inter-oasis groups of all backgrounds. Thum thus indicates that this transcendence of place shifted the focus of history in Altishahr from the places to the saints, circumventing the barrier of localized education along lines of class and profession, and formulating a system of shared identity bounded by the "network of the *tazkirah*, pilgrim and shrines, the original aspect of the tales, the record and display of participation in the historical tradition."

Thum then proposes that while veneration at local shrines reinforced regional oasis identities within different group, this internal mobility by networks of pilgrimage and collections of *tazkirah* anthologies also promoted the imagination of Uyghurs in other oases sharing the same past, creating an alternative form of imagined community that was "more complex and self-conscious than ethnicity but less homogenous than the nation." This system of networks therefore supported a type of imagined community peculiar to Altishahr's own geographical, historiographical, and political contexts, where chronology and genealogy were replaced by geography and shared memory of saints as the foundation of Altishahri knowledge.

Unlike many historians who approach Uyghurs in Xinjiang from the perspective of a bipolar power struggle, in which Uyghurs have been severely oppressed, lack of political representation, economic power, and cultural solidarity, Thum proposes that the Uyghur reaction to the Chinese regime was

only a contest to the official rhetoric of nationalism which had impeded Uyghur *tazkirah*-shrine tradition and regional oasis identity. Such an outcry escalated when the Chinese regime started to suppress the *tazkirah*-shrine tradition. The government banned internal pilgrimages and religious practices, converted mosques and shrines into secular administrative buildings, and confiscated manuscripts in 60s and 70s, peaking during Cultural Revolution.

This decline in popular Uyghur historical practices was accompanied with the arrival of printing technology in the region, fixating history between the lines of the written text, such as the newspaper. Nationalist history, instead of regional popular history, was discussed, which again became monopolized by central elites, leaving mass participation out of the picture. The Altishahr history rewritten by the state was no longer an embodiment of Uyghur identity, but entangled with the matter of politics and used to underpin the legitimacy of the regime—the oases disappeared as a frame for the organization of history in the face of nationalism.

What is the future of this *tazkirah*-shrine tradition? Can Uyghurs restore their regional oasis identity through the connection of their history to the place? These are hard questions to answer. Instead of using the familiar notion of imagined community and nationalism, Rian Thum brings readers back to the older ways of knowing and belonging. He predicts a downcast in Uyghur textual traditions in the face of the state's monopolizing and archiving of Uyghur manuscripts. He criticizes the detriments of modern printing and preservation culture to the unique author-reader relationship in Altishahr. He is also disappointed with the present one-dimensional study of the past based on the same set of texts written by previous historians.

The Sacred Routes, nevertheless, is a narrative of people's history. Nile Green, director of the UCLA Program on Central Asia, calls this book a "humanist project," which shows us an overlooked and secret history of a people and "expands our sense of how humans can and do interact with the past."

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