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Religion, Politics, and Cultural Violence in Byzantine Iconoclasm

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Oral Literacy: Abiola Irele and Amos Tutola on the Question of “Text"

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The 2016 United States presidential elections were followed by the discovery of Russian interference in the democratic process. The foreign actor leveraged a combination of social media campaigning, cyber intrusions, and contact with the Trump campaign to “amplify political and social discord” and steer public support to the party of its liking.1 This event represented a loss of innocence for the American public, echoing the threat of the infiltrated communist enemy during the Cold War. President Trump, who had benefited from the Russian actions and was in power when the allegations of interference were made public, chose to deny them. Today, under the Biden administration, Russia faces economic and trade sanctions for a number of offenses including election interference through malicious cyber activities.2 These sanctions are not leveled at the Russian Federation but rather at legal persons, powerful individuals, and organizations that have acted as proxies for the Russian government.3 While these unilateral measures are intended to impose a cost on cyber interference and deter it in the future, there has been no attempt to employ the international legal infrastructure in order to address the Russian violations of sovereignty.

This conspicuous absence of international law in accusations of “bad state behavior in cyberspace” is consistent across international cybersecurity concerns.4 This practice contrasts the trust and reliance on the international legal framework for questions of jurisdiction in land, sea, and air, as well as for claims of human rights violations, among other subjects. The authors of “Beyond Naming and Shaming: Accusations and International Law in Cybersecurity” suggest that “this reluctance to invoke international law might suggest that the law is weak—or worse, irrelevant—in holding states accountable for their cyber operations.”5 This begs the question: is international law insufficient in addressing and resolving transnational cybersecurity issues? This essay explores the relationship between international law and cybersecurity, hypothesizing that the nature of international law as it stands is incompatible with imposing functional and sustainable cybersecurity regulations. Since law has always followed present reality, this essay concludes that a commitment to reframing the international legal system to account for the new dimension of cyberspace—and specifically its disruption of temporality, territoriality, and the actors involved—will be required to mediate their interactions.

The Nature of International Law
The international legal system is a set of treaties and customary laws that regulate international legal persons and their relationship to each other. Since states have exclusive sovereignty over their territories and are the primary political actors on the global scene, the authority of international law is derived from states consenting to be governed.6 They relinquish a portion of their sovereign power and give authority to this institution which is embodied by organizations such as the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, allowing it to govern the relations between nations.7 Countries may only be
bound to international laws with their consent, though what characterizes consent has historical complications. International law can take the form of treaties, whether bilateral or multilateral, or customary law, which is “general practice accepted as law.” For a state not to be bound to international law, it may choose not to sign a treaty or, if it has already been ratified, to withdraw from it. In the case of customary law, the state must explicitly communicate refusal to be bound to it as it is being formed because acquiescence is considered consent.

Historically, international laws have skewed to the benefit of wealthy Western countries and designed to uphold their power. The countries formed in the wake of decolonization were forced to accept and adopt much of international law without say because it had already been established as standard practice prior to their sovereignty. Today, many more states have the ability to advocate for themselves and choose which laws they are governed by. As such, the international legal framework allows countries with relatively less military or economic power to attempt to level the playing field. Nevertheless, structural imbalances continue to shape the international legal landscape, such as the veto power of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council which gives disproportionate influence to the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom. This dynamic further lessens the chance that these countries are subject to laws that they find unfavorable, even if it is to the detriment of other nations.

States have discretion over which international regulations they may choose to adopt, but their consent through the act of ratification transforms their commitment into an obligation. The adherence to these regulations, or failure to do so, is intimately tied to the belief that they will be enforced. In the United States, as in most countries, violations of domestic laws are addressed by law enforcement agencies and ruled on by the justice system. The international legal sphere lacks a similar centralized enforcement mechanism to hold international legal persons to their commitments. In theory, the Security Council does have access to a few broad tools of enforcement, including sanctions, peace-keeping operations, or formal censures. In practice, however, the bureaucratic limitations and ideological reluctance to punish infractions or hold states accountable have lowered the stakes for violating international law. The lack of accountability thus creates a cycle of noncompliance by countries when they are sufficiently powerful or wealthy. As a result, breaches of treaties or customs are instead often met with sanctions by other countries as the only way to communicate their disapproval and to attempt to influence behavior.

The United States, along with the United Kingdom and Australia, among others, staged a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics as a response to the Chinese government’s “ongoing genocide [of Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang region] and crimes against humanity.” These crimes include focused computer network attacks against Uyghurs in China and Pakistan, “opening a backdoor into their computers.” In addition to bilateral actions, thirty-nine members of the United Nations released a joint condemnation of these human rights violations, but this provision falls short as the organization as a whole has yet to officially name these events a genocide. Between China’s role in the Security Council and the legal obligations that follow international acknowledgement as genocide, there is little possibility or will to take action. Should China be found guilty of crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and mandated to cease their actions against Uyghur Muslims, their refusal or non-compliance would undermine the system as a whole and potentially create military tensions. The world’s most powerful nations may feel bound by international law only when it benefits them or when the diplomatic stakes are high enough. This structural dilemma of international law frames attempts at international cybersecurity legislation, especially since cyber-space manipulation simultaneously includes and transcends traditional economic, military, and human rights concerns.
The Nature of Cybersecurity

The evolution of computer networks is unprecedented in its speed and reach. These precipitous developments mean that the definition of cyberspace is constantly expanding, as “computer networks are the pillars of cyberspace.” Nevertheless, cyberspace can generally be understood as the environment where information is transmitted as well as the systems that process this data. Cybersecurity encompasses the security of cyberspace, both in its virtual and physical implications. Narrow approaches define it as the safeguarding of information while expansive ones perceive it as encompassing power and control of this space. Computer network attacks (CNA) and computer network exploitation (CNE) characterize the offensive nature of cybersecurity, while computer network defense (CND) represents the defensive strategies of cybersecurity. State approaches to cybersecurity, concerning both its definition and methodology, reflect their ideologies and priorities regarding information and computer networks.

The European Union’s Cybersecurity Act defines cybersecurity as “the activities necessary to protect network and information systems, the users of such systems, and other persons affected by cyber threats.” Individuals are an essential consideration in this approach, as echoed in the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which prioritizes consumer privacy and choice. The EU’s cybersecurity ideology can be contrasted to China’s. The latter is most notorious for ‘The Great Firewall,’ formally known as The Golden Shield Project, which is its government internet censorship and surveillance program.

The domestic 2016 Cybersecurity Law and the new Personal Information Protection Law expand on the Chinese government’s control and access of data, limiting the power of private corporations and, especially, of foreign entities. While these more recent moves give Chinese citizens unprecedented privacy from private businesses, the laws are ultimately carried out in the interest of national security and ‘peaceful development.’ Domestic cybersecurity policy is indicative of governmental priorities and may as such become a point in common or a fundamental disagreement between states.

Cybersecurity ultimately exists because it protects from threats in cyberspace, managing CNAs and CNEs. Whether these threats have economic, geostrategic, or military implications, the control of information and its access is what empowers them. This is accentuated by the covert nature of cybercrime, as “cyberspace’s technical architecture [has] meant that those responsible could often remain anonymous.” Advertising cyber capabilities is also an essential aspect of cybersecurity for powerful actors, both to serve offensively as a deterrent and defensively to intimidate adversaries. China uses the Tianfu Cup bug-bounty competition in Chengdu to flaunt its offensive power, potentially decreasing its cybersecurity dilemma while still asserting itself on the world stage. At the same time, the country must be careful with the skills it displays to not make itself vulnerable by oversharing. The ability to choose what information is disclosed, taken, or hidden defines power in cyberspace, while the potential of producing desired outcomes without being known as their authors is what makes CNAs and CNEs appealing.

Unlike traditional forms of hard power, cyber capabilities are a relatively cost-effective way for otherwise weak actors to exert influence. Russia, for example, has largely succeeded in meddling in the political outcomes of multiple states despite its numerous economic and military deficiencies. In addition to the US, these targets include Ukraine, Germany, and the Baltic countries. Meanwhile, China is able to supplement its growing military power with cyber offenses that do not require a large, highly organized, and disciplined force. While the economic and logistical accessibility of cyberspace makes it attractive for state actors, an essential aspect of this space is that organizations and individuals are relatively equal players in it. They may conduct CNAs or CNEs for reasons that are not politically motivated, such as financial gain through ransomware. Attribution for CNAs and CNEs is further complicated by the fact that states may sponsor otherwise unaffiliated individuals to
conduct offensive cyber operations on behalf of them so that it is difficult to assign responsibility. The Tianfu Cup is an example of the relationship between public interests and private cyber capabilities, since the Chinese government has prohibited Chinese computer science researchers from participating in international bug-bounty competitions but provides appealing financial incentives for their findings and protections from aggressive Western tech vendors. The equalizing power of cyberspace and the ability for actions to remain covert make cybersecurity regulation both logistically difficult and unappealing for the actors that most benefit from it.

Cybersecurity Governance through International Law

I) The Need for International Cybersecurity Regulation
Cyberspace has emerged in the twenty-first century as a realm that parallels the physical world both in its complexity and interconnectivity. The first programmable electronic digital computer was invented less than a century ago, and the development of digital technologies has occurred at breakneck speed since. The invention of the internet was the start of computer networks, connecting information and people instantly and irrespective of place, so long as they had access to it. Lawmakers for a long time did not see the internet as a subject of regulation, and today a knowledge and information asymmetry continues to limit domestic efforts by governments. This has recently been apparent in the United States during the course of Big Tech antitrust hearings, where lawmakers struggled to conceptualize algorithms and the monetary value of user data. Contrasting these confusions, as of August 2020, “28 states—including China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—stand accused of conducting or supporting cyber operations with serious impacts on governments, people and resources.” International cybersecurity legislation is thus necessary despite incomplete domestic regulations because this domain is inherently not territorially bound and presents a diplomatic threat when nations harness it offensively, with no comprehensive framework to account for it.

II) Inherent Conflicts between International Law and Cybersecurity
There are defining characteristics of international law and cybersecurity which inherently put them at odds. International law is a positive legal system, since its rules are socially constructed and upheld. The legitimacy of this system is derived from the use of these laws and the passage of time. Customary law furthermore entirely depends on common consensus and history of established practice. The linear and conservative development of international law contrasts with the dynamic and rapidly expanding nature of cyberspace and its subsequent cybersecurity concerns and dangers. The former mediates the interests of different state actors, serving as a diplomatic tool and representing the negotiation of differing priorities. The latter is the reflection of technological development, for which ad hoc legislative responses to cybersecurity issues have mostly been in practice until now. This incongruence in pace presents a major challenge to imposing functional and sustainable international cybersecurity legislation, but it is not the only one of such issues.

While there are many players in cyberspace, states are the primary subjects of international law. The extent of individuals’ international legal personality continues to be debated, historically limited to crimes against humanity. Determining the perpetrator of an attack is often not the same as discovering its orchestrator, complicating attempts at accountability. Furthermore, the virtual or non-geographically bound nature of cyberspace activity means that employer and employee in this context do not need to be in the same location or have the same nationality. Territorial borders define jurisdiction, which constitutes the territory and people that an entity—a state—has authority over. Offensive cyber actions may be state executed or state sponsored and, interchangeably, privately sponsored or
privately executed. The lines are logistically difficult to draw, but they are further complicated if countries harbor or facilitate hackers without necessarily directing them. This makes attribution extremely difficult, and clear lines of potential liability even more challenging. A malicious foreign non-state actor harming one country can be tried in its domestic courts, but if a CNA affects multiple countries at once, there is currently no mechanism for a joint trial under international law. Inherent structural dichotomies between international law and cybersecurity, specifically with regards to temporality and primary actors, thus hinder their compatibility, in a context where there is no alternative but for them to interact.

III) Ideological Divides of Cybersecurity
Regulating cybersecurity presents a logistical challenge due to the structure of international law, but ideological differences of its uses, priorities, and practice among nations are also an important consideration. Cybersecurity strategies can be defensive as well as offensive. Additionally, hybrid models have emerged, such as the 2018 Department of Defense Cyber Strategy of ‘Defending Forward,’ a concept of proactive defense. The tension of mediating different state motivations and priorities for the uses of cybersecurity on the international stage is parallel in part to the push for global taxation, which was finally agreed upon in October of 2021 after a decade of negotiations. This deal stipulates that all participating states must tax multinational firms of a certain size a minimum of 15 percent, which should discourage them from shifting profits to low-tax countries. Because smaller, less wealthy nations have historically been able to use corporate taxes as incentives to bring business, a global minimum harms their profits. As such, this multilateral development benefits the wealthier, higher tax countries.

Similarly, strict cybersecurity laws are unappealing to nations that harness cyberspace to make up for economic, geostrategic, and military disadvantages. Low international cyber regulations may also allow states to foster mutually beneficial relationships with hackers or other private actors operating in cyberspace, as exemplified by China’s Tianfu Cup. Ideological approaches to cybersecurity are a practical calculation of whether the protections afforded by strict international legislation outweigh the disadvantages of being regulated. Mediating these perspectives for comprehensive cybersecurity laws will require the bridling of some of the world’s most powerful actors, similarly to the negotiation of financial priorities which the agreement on minimum global taxation required. This will be especially true for states such as Russia and China, who have made cyber activity a key method of exerting power on the world stage while holding veto power on the UN Security Council.

V) Existing International Regulations
The current international legal system is structurally ill-equipped for cybersecurity regulation. The serious potential infringements on the sovereignty of states or the violation of international laws that offensive cyber activity poses have nonetheless engendered attempts at legislation. A few international cybersecurity laws thus do exist, but they are either outdated or insufficient. The Council of Europe’s Budapest Convention of Cybercrime was the first of such attempts, passed in 2001. Two decades and an entire technological revolution later, in November of 2021, the Second Additional Protocol to this convention was adopted. This update attempts to mediate an essential dilemma in regulating computer network activity territoriality. Cyberspace is by definition extra-territorial since it’s operating in a virtual capacity. Its physical infrastructure, the location of its users, and the consequences it can have all cross political borders, if only by the sharing of data or accessing it. The Second Additional Protocol reflects renewed interests and commitment to making international cybersecurity legislation succeed, such as by facilitating emergency co-operation and implementing data protection safeguards.
Nevertheless, two major logistical obstacles still stand in the way: differences of interpretation and failure of enforcement.

V) Interpretation

The Budapest Convention has been followed by a few other cybersecurity-specific legislations, such as the African Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection which was drafted in 2011 and is still not yet in force. Instead, the majority of international law for cybersecurity is the application of existing law. Indeed, the United Nations Assembly, the G20, the European Union, ASEAN, and OAS all affirm that “existing international law applies to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by states.” The issue in this context is interpretation—that of legal provisions that cannot account for the complexities of cyberspace. The Tallinn Manuals on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare are a comprehensive scholarly work by experts on how rules should be interpreted and applied, but they were drafted in a private capacity and without equal input from different regions. Even though some states provide informal feedback, this unofficial work is not conclusive. It reflects the difficult mediation of international law which is subjective and open to interpretation, as well as unspecifically applied to cybersecurity.

VI) Failure of Enforcement

The stakes for ‘bad state behavior’ in cybersecurity are too low, and without an enforcement mechanism, no international legislation applying to it will be meaningfully sustained. Accountability for the violation of international law can take the form of formal punitive measures or peer protest. The former is not sufficiently legally developed in terms of cybersecurity. This means that perceived transgressions do not have the legal framework to substantiate consequences. A resort to the latter has little ground to stand on, since shaming bad behavior “presupposes a norm already in place to generate shame, rarely a warranted assumption for cybersecurity.” As such, malicious cyber activity cannot be “explicitly tied to violations of treaty terms or customary international rules” in the way that violations of human rights or environmental obligations can be pointed to. Without a centralized enforcer or meaningful discipline, this leaves little room for accountability or motivation to follow any sort of cybersecurity doctrine other than the one most beneficial to a state.

Conclusion

International law has always followed and been an interpretation of reality. Some events such as the World Wars, or the advent of modern international transportation methods, were more suddenly consequential on diplomatic relations than others. Timely international legislation was still possible through treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, or the Montreal Convention regulating air travel. As in these cases, international law is not inherently irrefutable with cybersecurity, but fundamental steps have to be taken to make them compatible. The increasing pace of the development of cyberspace activity makes its regulation more a necessity than a possibility. This will mean reconsidering the territorial nature of international law and finding a way to legitimize change independent of the passage of time, which the law traditionally relies on. The responsibilities of individuals and private actors as legal persons will have to be expanded and make room for the reality that computer network manipulation needs few people and resources to be weaponized against many. Ideological divides in the uses and practices will need to be addressed from a historically and geo-politically conscious framework. Ultimately, the increased breadth of the international legal framework will have to be paired with a narrowed space for interpretation and tangible measures for accountability, provided by legislation specific to cybersecurity or the precision of existing regulations.

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Race & the Cold War
African Diplomats, Khrushchev, and the American Press during the Fifteenth UN General Assembly

Samuel Croce

In the process of denouncing the United States, Premier of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev is quoted in the Philadelphia Tribune, an African-American newspaper, as vociferously exclaiming that African diplomats at the United Nations “should have been told... that this [the United States] is a place for white people but not for blacks.”¹

This is only one of several statements which Khrushchev made criticizing racial discrimination in the United States, especially discrimination against African diplomats in New York City, during his twenty-five-day stint leading the Soviet delegation at the UN in September and October of 1960. While criticizing racism and discrimination in the United States was nothing new for the Soviets, Khrushchev’s attacks took on fresh importance during the fifteenth General Assembly of the United Nations which saw the introduction of sixteen new independent African nations to its ranks.²

In light of this event’s significance, it is imperative to reflect on how the American press responded to Khrushchev’s claims, deriding the discrimination experienced not only by African Americans throughout the country but also the experiences and responses of the African diplomats arriving in New York City for their first-ever UN session. In evaluating content published during and shortly after Khrushchev’s time in New York City, it is easy to identify that the mainstream media downplayed both Khrushchev’s claims and the stories of discrimination experienced by African diplomats in New York, while failing to acknowledge the deleterious effects those experiences would have on American foreign policy. However, crucially, the African-American press thoroughly covered Khrushchev’s claims and the discrimination encountered by these diplomats.

Although the interplay between racial discrimination in the United States and the American prosecution of the Cold War has been well documented, there is a paucity of research specifically examining the Black press’ coverage of this tension.³ Therefore, I will fill the gap within this literature by taking the fifteenth UN General Assembly as a case study. This paper serves to illuminate how the African-American press was much more prescient in their concerns over the treatment of African diplomats in the US in comparison to their white mainstream counterparts by comparing articles from the white and Black press. Specifically, I will be looking at the coverage of Kursheev’s comments on US discrimination in both camps, thus highlighting the interplay of American racial discrimination, decolonization, and the Cold War. Through this analysis, it becomes clear that the Black press fully understood the adverse foreign policy consequences of the racist encounters of African diplomats and clairvoyantly understood how US racism related to the Cold War. As will be seen, this connection between foreign policy and domestic race relations persists and must be comprehended and acted on by Americans today.
At the outset of this endeavor, it is necessary to illuminate the historical context in which the fifteenth UN General Assembly took place. The session was an immensely important event and can be viewed as a watershed moment for the transnational organization. The process of decolonization, which had begun in earnest after the end of World War II, eventually gave way to sixteen new independent African nations being admitted to the UN in 1960, which resulted in a majority in the General Assembly of what Iandolo labeled “third world countries.” This in turn created a reality wherein the United Nations complex in New York City was packed full of new diplomats from these African nations ready to engage in international diplomacy on the world stage for the first time.

Tragically, as seen when examining African-American newspapers from this period, these diplomats who were simply trying to do their jobs in New York City faced immense discrimination from Americans. It is important to note that at this time the mainstream media was exclusively owned, operated, and consumed by white Americans — as historians Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff point out: “The segregation of the Negro in America, by law in the South and by neighborhood and social and economic stratification in the North, had engulfed the press as well as America’s citizens.” Therefore it was the Black press that ended up covering stories that highlighted discrimination against Black people (such as the African diplomats), not the mainstream press. For example, the Chicago Courier in their October 8, 1960 piece “African Envoys Face Bias in U.S.” detailed that these diplomats were experiencing discrimination with regard to finding housing in the United States. Additionally, the New Pittsburgh Courier even published an article on October 8, 1960 titled “UN Delegates Appalled by Negro Americans in U.S.”

Khrushchev’s Rhetoric and the Press’ Response
It is necessary here now to shift gears to the foreign policy aspects of this story, especially Soviet Premier Khrushchev’s polemics against American racial discrimination at the United Nations. As Iandolo explains, Khrushchev actually broke with Soviet tradition in attending the 1960 General Assembly in-person because he wanted to woo the newly independent African states into the Soviet camp. Khrushchev undertook two distinct approaches in the hopes of achieving his desired objective. The first of these methods was proposing resolutions and changes to United Nations policy which, while also strengthening the position of the Soviet Union in that body and in its Cold War struggle more generally, would appeal to the sentiments of newly independent states. One example Iandolo notes was
“on September 23 the Soviet delegation submitted to the GA a ‘Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples’ that contained a complete indictment of Western colonialism in all its aspects and demanded its immediate end.” The second means by which Khrushchev appealed to the newly independent nations was his rhetoric at the UN. From the time he arrived, Khrushchev repeatedly endeavored in his statements and speeches to appeal to the newly independent nations both by asserting the Soviet Union’s anticolonial stance as well as projecting the image of the US as the leader of the colonialist and imperialist West. To this point, his first speech to the General Assembly on September 23 was dominated by attacks on the “colonialists” like the United States who sought to maintain the system of what he termed at multiple points “colonial slavery” over the Third World.

But the more relevant topic Khrushchev repeatedly turned to with these rhetorical attacks was the US’s entrenched racial discrimination. Using American racial discrimination to their advantage was nothing new for the Soviets. In fact, Dudziak points out that the US Justice Department in an early 1950s amicus curiae brief in support of Brown in Brown v. Board called for an end to school segregation because, in part, it “furnish[ed] grist for the Communist propaganda mills.” As one can plainly see, the Soviet Union and its leaders often attacked, from the earliest stages of the Cold War, the treatment of African Americans in the US and especially the practice of segregation in the name of harming the international standing of the US. Khrushchev first employed such polemics against racial discrimination at the fifteenth General Assembly during a debate with US Ambassador to the United Nations James Wadsworth over the question of admitting the People’s Republic of China to the UN on October 1, 1960. While Khrushchev still acknowledged and derided the abuse suffered by African Americans in the US as well as the lynching of African Americans, his denunciations of racial discrimination in the United States at this time were novel in that they additionally raised the issue of American racial discrimination negatively affecting the African diplomats who were attending the United Nations for the first time. While attacking Wadsworth, the Chicago Defender, a Black newspaper, wrote that Khrushchev “pointed out that representatives of the African countries here have been denied hotel rooms and turned away from restaurants because they are black.” Khrushchev was also quoted in the Philadelphia Tribune as immediately following up those statements with the declaration that “this is a humiliating offense, an insult to the dignity of every human, and this is white and black America.”

The mainstream press barely covered Khrushchev’s claims regarding the discrimination of African diplomats. Considering the segregated nature of the mainstream press, it is conceivable why when the mainstream media wrote about Khrushchev’s statements in any capacity, they often did so only briefly and treated those statements as unimportant in relation to his other claims. None of the prominent mainstream newspapers provided any headline space to Khrushchev’s charges of discrimination and instead focused on other aspects of his speech such as his vociferous nature, or the fact that the Premier’s microphone was cut off towards the end of his speech for personally attacking Spanish leader Francisco Franco. Clear evidence of this reality is a New York Times article from October 2, 1960 by Jack Raymond titled “Khrushchev View on Bias Criticized” and subtitled “Africans at UN Mention Incidents Here, but Feel Charge is Overstated.” How Raymond and the Times arrived at such assertions is rather confusing as the article itself offers no evidence to substantiate those claims. Rather, Raymond’s article seems to lend credence to Khrushchev’s charges as opposed to exposing their falsity with such statements as “an Arab official confided that he never wore an Arab costume in his own country but that he often did that here [in the US] to avoid anti-Negro prejudice.” A further example is the Chicago Tribune running “Stop Nikita..."
UN Tirade” as its main headline the day after the speech with a massive accompanying article where its author William Fulton dedicated only a single sentence to Khrushchev’s discrimination charges.19 Moreover, in the New York Times article about the speech titled “Khrushchev Warns UN of War Peril Over Red China Issue,” the author Lindesay Parrott failed to mention the Premier’s charges of discrimination against African diplomats and instead wrote that Khrushchev “attacked the United States for its alleged policies of racial discrimination and Negro lynching [emphasis mine].”20 The Los Angeles Times in their coverage of his speech only briefly acknowledged his statements regarding lynching.21

The prominent African-American newspapers of the day did not follow suit; they prominently covered Khrushchev’s claims and wrote about them at length with some explicitly identifying the danger associated with what Khrushchev detailed as well as its solution: a fundamental change in American race relations. The Chicago Defender ran as its main Sunday headline later that week “Nikita Blasts US Race Prejudice” and dedicated an article to his statements and their reception among Africans at the UN.22 The Atlanta Daily World also ran a large headline reading “Mr. K Hits Discrimination Against Negroes in US” with an associated article by Bruce Munn concerning Khrushchev’s statements.23 The Philadelphia Tribune printed all of the excerpts of Khrushchev’s speech which discussed the discrimination of both African Americans and African diplomats under the large headline “Khrushchev’s Speech Takes America To Task For Bias.”24 Regarding the ability of the Black press to identify the danger of African diplomats facing racial bias, Dean Gordon B. Hancock, writing in the Atlanta Daily World on October 18 regarding Khrushchev’s claims and racial discrimination in the US, declared that “if this country is ultimately destroyed its destruction can be directly traced to race prejudice and the vagaries thereof. It has helped to destroy the world’s once glowing image of democracy.”25 By reading Charles H. Loeb’s writing, it becomes obvious that the African-American press understood what the global implications of discriminating against African diplomats were, as well as what the only effective remedy could be. Writing in the Cleveland Call and Post, Loeb opined that the only way to keep racial discrimination from damaging America’s position in the world “of course lies in setting on with the business of wiping out entirely all of the remaining vestiges of racial inequality here at home.”26

This was an astute and prescient observation. As Krenn highlights, Kennedy’s attempts to solve the problem of discrimination against African diplomats (and thereby the issues it caused for the US) were failures and, as a result, the adverse consequences of that discrimination continued to harm the United States.27 It was only, as Plummer contends, “in making desegregation its official policy [with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964], [that] the nation lessened its vulnerability” to its image and efforts abroad being negatively affected by discrimination at home.28

Taking all of the different newspaper articles addressed in this work together, it is easy to see the disparate nature of the responses of the mainstream press and African-American press to Khrushchev’s claims as well as the discrimination faced by African diplomats itself in its initial context of the fifteenth General Assembly of the UN. The fact that the mainstream media broached the connection between ending racism and winning the Cold War in the context of the Brown decision but not with regard to Khrushchev’s claims and the discrimination encountered by African diplomats reflects the white American understanding of segregation in 1960. While a large number of white Americans realized the dangers of explicit public discrimination in the form of state-sponsored segregation, they typically did not comprehend the deleterious effects of what Dudziak terms “private discrimination” against individuals in places like restaurants and hotels.29 Beyond the horrible domestic consequences of racial discrimination (reflected and perpetuated by their limited coverage of racism at the fifteenth General Assembly) the white mainstream press fundamentally
failed at understanding the effects of segregation on US foreign policy in the Cold War.

**Conclusion**

Khrushchev’s statements accurately identified an issue the United States would have to face for years to come: the treatment of important foreign envoys on American soil. In fact, in my research on this topic, Khrushchev’s statements at the UN regarding discrimination against African diplomats appears to be the first mention of this specific issue in a public forum. Once representatives for the new African states began moving in large numbers to Washington DC in order to take up the posts at their nations’ new embassies in the months following the fifteenth General Assembly, Krenn explains that they experienced immense amounts of discrimination in and around the capitol.30 Historian Renee Romano points out that such discrimination was so commonplace that “in early 1961 the African diplomatic corps threatened to leave Washington if the new [John F. Kennedy] administration ignored their grievances” regarding the issue.31 The lack of coverage from the mainstream media about Krushchev’s criticisms (and racial discrimination in general) would ultimately hamper US efforts to conduct successful foreign policy at the same time as it was neglecting its citizens at home.

However it is abundantly clear that those African Americans working at the Black newspapers around the country understood that in a world where decolonization was now a seminally important force in international affairs, the United States could no longer allow even private discrimination to occur at home if they were going to win the Cold War. The fact that the Black press, as opposed to their mainstream competitor, not only thoroughly covered Khrushchev’s claims and the discrimination against African diplomats itself but also realized the danger of that problem from the outset and its solution, is significant for scholars investigating the interplay of race and the Cold War. This work illustrates that the African-American press during the height of the Cold War was immensely cognizant of that connection than their mainstream counterparts — therefore, future studies which wish to explore this intersectionality during the Cold War will benefit from beginning with the contemporary work of the Black press that is often left out of the historical narrative. Additionally, the need for understanding the connection between race and global affairs is as crucial today as it was during the Cold War.

On May 25, 2020 George Floyd was senselessly and horrifically murdered by Derek Chauvin in an act of police discrimination and brutality (not so different than some of the examples from 1960 detailed in this work) which lead to massive protests around the United States. Similar to their historical predecessors, government officials and state-run media in Russia—along with China and Iran—began to attack the United States for Floyd’s death and the continued existence of racism more generally in the name of advancing their own image relative to America’s and thereby aiding in their foreign policy endeavors.32 This reality ultimately illuminates the continued power and validity of the message evident from reflecting on 1960 and the fifteenth General Assembly of the UN: domestic racial politics can and has affected American foreign policy. As their nation now faces a novel and exceedingly dangerous foreign policy environment resulting from Russia’s abhorrent invasion of Ukraine, it is imperative that all Americans realize that the decisions they make regarding race at home can and will affect the success or failure of America’s foreign policy going into this new, uncertain, and perilous future in addition to the hurt and pain that is inflicted within their country.

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The United States National Park System annually attracts millions of visitors from across the world. Most National Parks, including some of the most visited like the Grand Canyon, Zion, and Yosemite, are concentrated in the western and southwestern regions of the country. These regions are home to a diversity of wildlife, including sylvatic rodent populations that carry *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium responsible for plague.1

National Parks are focal points for human interaction with wildlife, and a small but significant number of human plague cases in the last century have resulted from human-wildlife transmission within parks. Evidence indicates that transmission risk may increase as anthropogenic global warming causes rapid and evolving climatic changes and extreme weather events that impact plague reservoirs.2 This reality necessitates comprehensive risk management and effective public education from the National Parks Service and public health agencies, especially because park visitors are often unfamiliar with plague and how to best avoid it. Aggressive educational campaigns, environmental management, and strong interagency networks can reduce exposure risk and improve preparation for human case response.

**Plague in National Parks: Reservoirs and Human Cases**

Plague was first introduced to the continental US in 1900 when ships with rats carrying *Y. pestis* entered the port of San Francisco. In the early 1900s, plague outbreaks among humans were fairly common in populous American port cities. As *Y. pestis* spread from urban rat populations to rural rodent ones, the geographic area of plague expanded, while human cases decreased in number. By the late twentieth century, plague had become endemic to the sylvatic rodent populations of the rural west and southwest, with sporadic cases of human transmission.3 These cases were often due to interactions with wildlife. Since 1970, over half of US human plague patients have had interactions with animals that may have led to infection.4

Confirmed cases of human plague originating in National Parks have occurred three times in the past two decades, once from the Grand Canyon and twice from Yosemite. While only these three cases are directly linked to parks, they may not represent a complete dataset. For example, a Connecticut teenager contracted bubonic plague after visiting the Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park area with his boy scout troop in 2008. However, because the patient visited a variety of locations and the site of contraction was not determined, transmission was not directly associated with a National Park, and the case was handled by public health agencies, not the National Park Service (NPS).5 It is possible that other cases of plague were contracted in parks but not retroactively associated with them as determining the exact site of plague transmission is challenging.

In November 2007, Eric York, a thirty-seven-year-old NPS wildlife biologist died of pneumonic plague three days after performing a necropsy on an infected mountain lion in Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP).6 York had specialized in the study of mountain lions and other large carnivores throughout his short career.7 While plague is often transmitted to humans...
through a flea bite, York’s exposure likely came from his direct contact with the infected mountain lion. He presented with flu-like symptoms to the GCNP health clinic and was found dead in his cabin just three days later. In the summer of 2015, two individuals contracted plague in Yosemite National Park. The first patient was a fourteen-year-old male who was diagnosed with septicemic plague by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in early August. The second patient, an eighteen-year-old female, was diagnosed with bubonic plague by the Georgia Department of Health about a week later. Both individuals had visited Yosemite National Park in the weeks prior to presenting symptoms. Each patient received appropriate treatment and recovered. Examination of the institutional response to these incidents demonstrate the importance of risk communication to park visitors, environmental management of plague reservoirs, and coordination with public health agencies.

Risk Communication
Risk communication is intended to form or alter an individual’s risk perception or the degree to which they believe that they may be exposed to some danger. Initial risk perceptions for plague vary depending on familiarity with the disease. Residents of the southwestern region of the US are likely to be vaguely familiar with plague and the associated risks. Since 2000, an average of seven human plague cases have occurred in the US per annum, clustered in the rural west and southwest of the country. However, the National Park System attracts visitors from all across the country and the world, often from areas unfamiliar with plague. A 2018 study examining the past four decades in Yellowstone National Park found that park visitors are now approaching wildlife more closely than in the past. While this study focused on larger animals and plague is more likely to be contracted from rodents or other small mammals, this trend is still concerning. Human-wildlife interactions can have consequences for the visitor, who becomes at risk of both injury and disease transmission. Unfamiliarity with plague risks and the tendency to want to interact with interesting wildlife put park visitors in danger.

Varied approaches to risk communication are needed, both because individuals interact with signage, brochures, and park staff in varied ways, and because initial risk perceptions regarding plague are varied. Risk communication messages are most effective when tailored to their audience whether that’s a park employee, a local visitor, or an international tourist. After Eric York’s death in 2007, NPS enhanced visitor communication about the risks of contracting plague at the Grand Canyon. York was a park employee and most risk communication targeted other staff, particularly those that handle wildlife. Therefore, NPS officials established comprehensive training, updated animal-handling protocol for park employees, and produced a reference manual outlining safe work practices for wildlife biologists. Grand Canyon staff also began carrying CDC cards identifying themselves as wildlife biologists to inform medical personnel that they may have been exposed to uncommon zoonotic diseases. Furthermore, veterinarians are now consulted before necropsies are performed on carnivores that may carry plague. Because of these policies, Grand Canyon wildlife biologists were able to safely resume field activities, including those requiring interaction with wildlife, in less than a year. Comprehensive and ongoing plague safety training is vital for park employees in order to keep themselves and park visitors safe.

Risk is inherent to these wilderness spaces, so risk communication is essential. Park communication often emphasizes that visitors are responsible for their own safety, and yet the role of the NPS and its employees is in part to facilitate the safe enjoyment of the parks. In response to the plague cases in Yosemite in 2015, the NPS embarked on a rigorous educational campaign regarding plague risk. The campaign involved three press releases, media interviews, website alerts, updates to the park newsletter, signage, and educational pamphlets. These efforts contributed to the overall awareness of park visitors.
and directly helped in the early diagnosis of the second plague patient. Currently, NPS has information about plague on their websites and pages on park-specific sites for parks where plague risk is elevated. These sites have information on plague ecology, transmission, symptoms, and details on how visitors can best protect themselves from the risk of contraction.

**Environmental Management**

Environmental management is also crucial to the minimization of plague risk in national parks. Routine study of plague reservoirs in parks is common, but cases of human plague increase the urgency of this practice. In Yosemite in 2015, NPS completed a thorough environmental investigation to determine the likely sources of transmission for each patient. These investigations included the determination of patient travel itineraries within the parks and visual risk assessments to determine the “abundance of rodents, the type of human activities in the area, and the potential for human exposure to infective fleas.” In areas of suspected transmission, fleas and rodents were sampled from rodent burrows and tested for *Y. pestis* by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), NPS, and California Department of Public Health (CPDH). Risk assessments were then completed for locations visited by each patient and high-trafficked areas of the park. The investigation found evidence of *Y. pestis* transmission in a number of locations in the park, including epizootic activity in the Tuolumne Meadows area, and near Crane Flat and Glacier Point. Five sites with increased risk were temporarily closed and rodent burrows were treated with insecticide to reduce vector populations and were subsequently monitored. Over the following months, employees tracked the presence of and tested rodent carcasses in key locations to monitor the continued risk of plague. As shown in Yosemite, meticulous environmental study can allow for the identification of sites with increased risk of human transmission and the management of that risk. Such meticulous study is not only important in response to human plague cases, but is critical to understanding ongoing plague risk in National Parks. Environmental studies can help predict the distribution of plague over time, identify factors that increase likelihood of human spillover events, as well as examine how climate change will impact plague risk.

**Interagency Coordination and Media Response**

Finally, competent coordination between NPS and public health agencies facilitates strong responses to incidents of plague, including plague diagnosis, investigation of transmission, risk reduction measures, and press communication. Each of the three plague patients were diagnosed by local public health agencies, in coordination with the CDC. After the death of Eric York, officials swiftly identified individuals who had contact with York and all forty were administered prophylactic antibiotics. Upon further investigation, the CDC determined that York was killed by the same strain of *Yersinia pestis* that was found in the mountain lion he had handled. Before this was confirmed, park officials communicated with the public and press with caution, emphasizing the uncertainty about the cause of death. This consciousness and the coordinated press communication resulted in a measured media response. Despite the shocking details of the case, coverage did not extend beyond the local media and websites dedicated to the National Park System, and visitation to the Grand Canyon was unaffected by the incident. In the Yosemite case, public health agencies also participated in the transmission investigation and in the public outreach about plague risk. While these two cases did receive national press attention, most of the coverage contained accurate information about the risk of plague and did not seem to result in unnecessary panic. In fact, the cases lead to a number of informative articles designed to educate the public.

**Conclusion**

In the coming years, US National Parks will continue to attract millions of visitors, and plague
will persist in sylvatic rodent populations that occupy those same parks. A number of human plague cases have originated in National Parks over the last decades, and climate change may increase the risk of spillover from animal reservoirs to human populations. But proper management by the NPS can reduce the risk of human exposure and ensure effective responses to human plague cases. Based on risk communication literature and lessons learned from past cases, three recommendations are salient. First, NPS should build on their plague risk communication strategy by training park employees on risk communication specific to plague. Park visitors receive information from park employees, as well as from park signs, brochures, and websites. Cohesive messaging across interpersonal and mediated communication will increase the likelihood that visitors’ risk perception of plague is accurate and appropriate. Second, maintaining robust relationships with public health agencies will facilitate cohesive responses to future human plague cases. Interagency coordination in the investigation and response to cases reduce further risk of exposure and promotes unified messaging to the media about the incident. Finally, NPS should continue to study and monitor plague reservoirs in all affected parks, including the impact of climate change on plague ecology. Sequencing strains of the bacteria to track plague movement through park reservoirs will be particularly helpful. A comprehensive understanding of plague reservoirs will allow park officials to manage risk in recreational sites, employing strategies such as site closures or insecticide treatments of rodent burrows. Robust risk communication, coordination with public health agencies, and environmental management will allow the National Park Service to minimize plague risk and continue its role in protecting the health of park visitors, as well as the natural world.

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Revisionism and Reparations
Mau Mau Historiography and Ndiku Mutua and Others v. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Financial compensation for colonial subjugation and occupation is at the center of public reassessments of imperialism in the United Kingdom. One of the most notable efforts for reparations was *Ndiku Mutua and Others v. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, a court case led by the British law firm Leigh Day, the Kenya Human Rights Commission, and the Mau Mau War Veterans Association, which secured financial compensation for thousands of Kenyans detained by British and colonial loyalist forces during the Mau Mau Uprising from 1952 to 1960. Two books, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag* by Caroline Elkin, and *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* by David Anderson, both published in 2005, documented the repression against the Kenyan militants and civilians and thus opened public discourse on this subject and later fundamentally contributed to the case’s victory.¹

Leigh Day eventually recruited Elkins and Anderson as key historical witnesses for the *Mutua* case. After the British Court Justice rejected two procedural appeals from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in 2011 and 2012, the British government settled the case for 19.9 million pounds in 2013. Twenty-first-century revisionist history on the Mau Mau Uprising demonstrated how the field could shape academic and public discourse on colonial pasts, culminating in what may be the first major step toward the United Kingdom’s reckoning with its imperial legacy.

A Brief History of the Mau Mau Uprising
Similar to other European settlements in Africa, the Kenya Colony embraced racist policies against the indigenous population.² After the suppression of indigenous resistance, colonial authorities prioritized white European immigration and settlement and removed the agriculturalist Kikuyu from the fertile plains of Central Kenya. The colonial administration pushed Kikuyus into infertile reserves and undermined their cultural belief that inheritable land (*ithaka*) was fundamental to maturation into adulthood.³ Land dispossession chiefly motivated Kikuyu dissent and confrontation against the colonial administration during the Mau Mau Uprising.⁴ Many of the youngest and poorest Kikuyus became militant nationalists that centered land redistribution through violence against Europeans and their indigenous collaborators.⁵ Following the late-1930s mass eviction of Kikuyu squatters on settler land and a series of colonial land use regulations at the resettlement reserve Olenguruone, Kikuyu squatters began adopting a secret traditional practice known as *oathing* that pledged unified anticolonial resistance which quickly spread to Nairobi and much of the Kenyan Rift Valley.⁶ The *Muhimu*, an urban
armed group composed of ex-servicemen from World War II, radicalized the practice with arms networks organization, assassination plans, and arson to settler land. By 1952, British authorities believed almost 90 percent of the 1.5 million Kikuyu population oathed.

Hours after the *Muhimu* killed a loyalist chief on October 2, 1952, Kenyan Colonial Governor Evelyn Baring launched a State of Emergency, granting himself new powers to detain suspects without charge and to administer military actions without direct reference from London. Following the mass-arrest of moderate nationalist leaders in Kenya, Mau Mau fighters launched guerilla attacks at white settlements and Kikuyu loyalist villages. The brutality of village attacks conducted by the Mau Mau and the Home Guard, a loyalist Kikuyu militia trained by the Colonial and British military, flooded both forces with ranks of polarized Kikuyus.

However, the next stage marked a major shift in the British targeting of civilians. On April 24, 1954, Operation Anvil placed the entire city of Nairobi under siege. The British compounded over 20,000 Kikuyus into detention camps alongside another 30,000 that were interrogated and relocated to reserves. Under interrogation, the Home Guard and British soldiers beat and sexually assaulted detainees to force an oath confession, and British officers intentionally neglected disciplining their subordinates. Because the Mau Mau fighters heavily relied on civilian base support from Nairobi, Anvil devastated their offensive capabilities. By December 1954, British command estimated that less than 4,000 combatants remained, yet Baring maintained the State of Emergency until 1960, years after Mau Mau posed any threat to colonial governance. While colonial forces captured, exiled, or killed most of the remaining *Muhimu* commanders, the administration dedicated most of its late counterinsurgency efforts to the Pipeline, a colonial camp system ostensibly designated to “rehabilitate” presumed or actual insurgents. Colonial official Tom Askwith promoted the Pipeline as the core component of the counterinsurgency’s “hearts-and-minds” campaign. In reality, the Pipeline subjected hundreds of thousands of Kikuyus to humiliating conditions in efforts to force oath confessions and centralize community control over civilian support for the Mau Mau.

### Pre-2005 Mau Mau Perceptions and Historiography

British colonial authorities framed the Mau Mau Uprising as an atavist movement. The official 1960 colonial report blamed “a schizophrenic tendency in the African mind” and claimed that the uprising was “wholly evil in its conception.” Upon the State of Emergency announcement, the British press almost universally reinforced official narratives of Mau Mau “barbarism” and “terrorist outrages” in Kenya. However, as authorities struggled to cover-up beatings and murders committed by British forces, most notably Captain Gerald Griffith’s rewarding of troops to kill Mau Mau suspects, more publications grew critical of the British Empire’s failure to live up to its moral high ground. Media depictions of British atrocities soon parted along partisan lines, and a few Labor MPs even called for an independent investigation into colonial abuses. Outrage climaxed in 1959 when the British government falsely reported that ten beaten-to-death detainees at Hola camp were victims of water poisoning. Although no investigation was launched, there was widespread knowledge of colonial abuses since almost the uprising’s beginning. David Anderson aptly pointed out that “what is astonishing about Kenya’s dirty war is not that it remained secret at the time but that it was so well known and so thoroughly documented.”

The first widely-read works about the Mau Mau Uprising were racist and voyeuristic narratives from white “adventurers” who fought against the Mau Mau. British intelligence interrogator Ian Henderson published a book on capturing the Mau Mau leader Dedan Kimathi. In *Mau Mau Man-Hunt* (1957), American mercenary William Baldwin saw the counterinsurgency as a
eliminationist crusade against the fighters, whom he viewed as “diseased animals, which, if left alive, were a constant menace to the community. Only in death was a cure possible.” 24 Fictional novels such as In the Shadow of the Mau Mau (1954) and Something of Value (1955) also depicted the Mau Mau as a wicked and existential indigenous conspiracy that irrationally and inexplicably rebelled against the march of Western civilization. 25

The first major scholarly attempt by Africanist historians to rebut this atavist myth was Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham’s The Myth of “Mau Mau”: Nationalism in Kenya (1966), which correctly acknowledged that the Kikuyu loss of land to white settlers was the main catalyst of the uprising. 26 However, the authors still failed to disclose the severity of British repression during the uprising. In fact, until 2005, there were only three books with considerable reference to British camp abuse: Anthony Clayton’s Counter-Insurgency in Kenya, 1952-60 (1976), Robert B. Edgerton’s Mau Mau: An African Crucible (1990), and John Newsinger’s British Counter-Insurgency from Palestine to Northern Ireland (2002), each of which spent at most a few dozen pages on the topic. 27 All three books lacked substantive details and analysis on the British detention and rehabilitative camp systems. 28

Memoirs from Kenyans who survived British detention facilities provided much more thorough examinations of British abuses and violations than foreign Africanist works. These memoirs arose in a hostile political environment. In a deliberate decision to uphold national unity over the historical grievances of Kikuyus, President Kenyatta and the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party pursued a “policy of amnesia” that discouraged political reflection on Mau Mau in the newly-independent Republic of Kenya. 29 Nonetheless, the 1960s engendered a series of memoirs from the perspectives of Mau Mau fighters and sympathizers, the first of which was J. M. Kariuki’s “Mau Mau” De-taine (1963). Kariuki spent seven years in the Pipeline for oathing and supplying resources to the Muhimu and repeatedly experienced brutal screenings in the detention camps:

“…My face was puffed up and split open, my right knee was fractured just below the kneecap by a club, and my chest was pierced by a strange instrument like a black truncheon with nails in it. I failed to die but the scars on my knees and chest will always be with me and I still suffer from severe attacks of pain in my abdomen and thorax…” 30

In Mau Mau From Within (1966), schoolteacher and reluctant Mau Mau fighter Karari Njama described the mass starvation and horrid sanitation that killed thousands of Kikuyu children and elderly in British rehabilitation facilities, writing that “the whole situation had become [i.e. by the end of 1955] the destruction of wealth and health.” 31 These first narratives were as instrumental in dismantling the “hearts-and-minds” myth of British counterinsurgency as Rosburg and Nottingham’s book was in disproving the atavism myth of the Mau Mau fighters. Several more memoirs followed, including Waruhiu Ito’s “Mau Mau” General (1967) and Bildad Kaggia’s Roots of Freedom (1975), along with fictionalized novels and plays of heroic resistance, most famously the works of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o: A Grain of Wheat (1967), Petals of Blood (1977), and The Trial of Dedan Kimathi (1976). 32 Applying a Marxist interpretation to the uprising, Thiong’o’s writings celebrated the Mau Mau as a nationalist vanguard against the British and the most dramatic episode along a continuum of anticolonial resistance stretching back to Kenya’s early colonization. 33 Seven years before Elkins would compare the Pipeline to the Nazi camp systems, Marshall S. Clough (1998) similarly concluded that the psychological states of former Mau Mau camp detainees markedly resembled the mental wounds of camp survivors during World War II in his study of thirteen Mau Mau fighter autobiographies. 34

Mau Mau Revisionism
By 2005, colonial atrocities during the Mau Mau Uprising were well-documented, and most Mau Mau experts criticized the British handling of the conflict. For the first time, however, Imperial
Reckoning and Histories of the Hanged exposed the full extent of systemic detainee abuse and the degree to which colonial authorities in Kenya and London knew of and sanctioned these abuses.\(^35\) Elkins largely relied on a combination of oral evidence from camp survivors and archival documents to reconstruct, explain, and contextualize the detainment and relocation of the entire Kikuyu population.\(^36\) This project corroborated the accounts from prior published Mau Mau memoirs.\(^37\) Meanwhile, Anderson overwhelmingly relied on the well-maintained colonial administration documentation of 1,099 hangings of Mau Mau fighters—totaling more executions than any other British colonial military emergency.\(^38\)

The comprehensive intimidation and detainment of Kikuyu civilians was the centerpiece of Imperial Reckoning, while Histories of the Hanged investigated a far more specific range of events and characters. Elkins found suspicious omissions to the official colonial reports that only 80,000 Kikuyu were detained in the Pipeline.\(^39\) Rather, she believed that the use of “daily average” numbers to calculate the number of total detainees undercounted detainees who entered and exited the system, leaving the actual number anywhere between 160,000 to 320,000.\(^40\) Elkins also incorporated the villagization program into her analysis, which relocated nearly the entire Kikuyu population into enclosed villages with barbed-wire and armed guards.\(^41\) Anderson’s work, on the other hand, was a far more orthodox and meticulous archival investigation. He fully documented all of the trial documents relating to capital punishment delivered during the Kenya Emergency, revealing the unfair, inconsistent, and arbitrary procedures used by the colonial judicial system to judge and punish suspected fighters.\(^42\)

A historiographical understanding of Africanist studies and Mau Mau Memoirs before 2005 reveals that cruelties examined in Imperial Reckoning and Histories of the Hanged were already common subject-specific knowledge. Both books used this pre-existing information to corroborate years’ worth of original primary source research. Their lucid writing style and public marketing would also boost readership among a shocked public. Unlike Kenyans and Africanist historians, most of the British public held a flattering perspective of the British Empire and shared Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s view in a 2005 Newsnight interview that “the days of Britain having to apologize for its colonial history are over.”\(^43\)

Two dramatic political developments of the early 2000s fortuitously shaped how the world perceived these books. The first was the British-supported US invasion of Iraq in 2003. While neoconservatives at first flattered imperialist comparisons between the United States and the British Empire, revelations of the US torture of inmates at Abu Ghraib and the fatal British beating of a detained Iraqi hotel receptionist whipped up immense public outrage in both countries.\(^44\) Sympathetic book reviews evoked direct comparisons between Iraq and the Mau Mau Uprising, a point not lost on Elkins who later demystified suggestions that the British Empire offered a benevolent counterinsurgency model to the United States’ operations in Iraq.\(^45\)

The second political development was Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki’s removal of the Mau Mau political ban in 2003, prompting immediate demands from the newly formed Mau Mau War Veterans Association (MMWVA) to properly commemorate and reconcile the uprising’s history and memory.\(^46\) Kibaki’s administration also created a task force to inquire on past human rights abuses but declined to investigate the colonial period; instead, colonial atrocities were considered answerable to the United Kingdom.\(^47\) Frustrated by the Kenyan government’s reluctance, the MMWVA pursued an independent reparations route instead, eventually working alongside British law firm Leigh Day and the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC).\(^48\) The KHRC started collaborating with the MMWVA in 2003 to seek out and record the stories of colonial detention survivors. They eventually compiled enough information together for Leigh Day to send a claim to the UK government in October 2006.\(^49\) Unfortunately, the government rejected any responsibility of torture
and turned away all requests for evidence from undisclosed British archives. The next attempt by Leigh Day, the KHRC, and MMWVA would formally incorporate the assistance of revisionist historians to secure evidence of the British government’s actions.

The Historians Go to Court

The KHRC conducted more interviews of survivors and consultations of archival documents until May 2009, when Leigh Day traveled to Nairobi to filter out the KHRC’s interviewees. Together they selected five individual claimants on the behalf of 5,228 total represented survivors: Ndiku Mutwiwa Mutua, Paulo Muoka Nzili, Wambugu Wa Nyingi, Jane Muthoni, and Susan Ngongi. All five claimants had highly-corroborated documentation of neglect and interrogation under colonial detention, including whippings, club beatings, sexual assault, or castration, and still suffered from physical and mental pains decades later. Leigh Day also hired Elkins, Anderson, and Huw Bennett—whose 2007 dissertation was the seminal source on the British Army’s direct role in Kikuyu internment and torture—as historical witnesses to testify on the behalf of the Kenyan claimants.

In June 2009, Leigh Day traveled with the five claimants to London and submitted their claims of abuse to the Royal Court of Justice against the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) — a bureaucratic merger that included the Colonial Office during the Mau Mau rising. The FCO did not contest the claims but attempted to strike out the case in a procedural appeal, arguing that the British government was not liable for actions committed under the colonial administration in Kenya. On April 4, 2011, the day before the first hearing, the FCO “suddenly discovered” a collection of Colonial Office documents at the Hanslope Park archives despite the prosecution’s request for confidential access months prior. The FCO released around 20,000 files that covered thirty-seven colonies during the decolonization period, around 1,700 of which concerned the Kenya Colony. The British government previously denied the existence of these documents, collectively known as the “migrated archives.” The Hanslope Archive reaffirmed much of the revisionist historians’ prior research on the direct connection between London, the British military, and colonial abuses, whether though training loyalist forces, encouraging and participating in torture, or refusing to prosecute subordinates. The historian witness statements following the archive’s release convinced Justice Richard McCombe that the United Kingdom was intimately involved with colonial abuses and thus liable for a lawsuit, so he rejected the FCO’s appeal in Ndiku Mutua and Others v. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2011.

While all three historians valued the confirmation of their previous research, Elkins was otherwise disappointed that the migrated archives featured few groundbreaking revelations about the Mau Mau Uprising. The most significant contribution of the migrated archives by far were two 1961 documents that disclosed the systemized process used to destroy around 3.5 tons of records relating to Colonial Kenya. The first document, a colonial secretary dispatch, ordered that the Kenyan government could not receive files that “might embarrass” the British Government and its armed services. The second document delineated the organization process for papers in Nairobi: “Legacy” files remained with the Kenyan government while “Watch” files were either moved to London or destroyed. The FCO attempted another appeal, this time that the claims passed the limitation period of fifty years. However, McCombe concluded that the British officials were “meticulous” record-keepers of the colonial period, as revealed in the Hanslope Archives, and struck down the FCO again in 2012. McCombe also pointed out that many Mau Mau survivors and lower-ranking British veterans of the uprising were still available as witnesses. He then arranged a trial before the Court of Appeals for 2013.
Fearing an embarrassing defeat in trial, Foreign Secretary William Hague announced a case settlement of 19.9 million pounds to the 5,228 claimants, as well as the construction of a victims commemorative memorial in Nairobi, on June 6, 2013 before the House of Commons. For the first time, the British Government recognized that “Kenyans were subject to torture and other forms of ill treatment at the hands of the colonial administration.” However, Hague also denied the British Government’s liability for the atrocities and instead laid blame on the colonial administration. The 2013 settlement was also a pitiful amount compared to the United Kingdom’s largest colonial reparations payoff. As part of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act, the British government spent over 20 million pounds compensating former slaveowners, 40 percent of the British Treasury’s expenses that year and equivalent to over 16 billion pounds today.

Unfortunately, little suggests that the documents within the Hanslope archives will significantly contribute to future reparations cases, especially as Britain remains staunch as ever defending its colonial past. After all, the 2013 settlement was never an admission of British fault of abuse: Secretary Hague invited future claimants to bring cases to court, but warned on behalf of the British Government that “we do not believe that this settlement establishes a precedent in relation to any other former British colonial administration.” The high-profile discourse over the Mau Mau Uprising took up a prominent role within a transformation of British historical scholarship. Africanists formed original insights on the British counterinsurgency and civilian detention programs in the Kenya Colony since 2005, both complementing and challenging the inferences made from Elkins, Anderson, Bennett, and the Mutua case. In 2014 for example, Katherine Bruce-Lockhart used feminist analysis to explore how colonial authorities used the psychological classification of an “unsound mind” to pathologize the detention of women associated with the Mau Mau along gendered discourses.

Furthermore, as Dane Kennedy observes in “Debating the End of Empire: Exceptionalism and its Critics” (2019), the new Mau Mau scholarship were among the first works of a broader redirection on how historians viewed British decolonization. In particular, the focus on the bloodier aspects of the British response in Kenya encouraged historians to examine similar trends in other British colonies. Until the twenty-first century, the British historian consensus assumed at the very least that Britain was “more liberal in their approach to colonial nationalism than their European counterparts” as evidenced by the violent decolonial struggles that France (in Indochina, Madagascar, and Algeria), the Netherlands (Indonesia), Belgium (Congo), and Portugal (Angola and Mozambique) encountered. The highly
publicized examination of British abuses in Kenya foremost challenged this thesis.

Kennedy suggests that imperial apologists could claim Kenya was an aberration from a typically untroubled process, but equally harsh critiques of other imperial aspects soon emerged. Straying away from the precedent that analyzed how imperial bureaucracy negotiated independence conditions, Mau Mau revisionist history encourages contemporaries to conduct “bottom up” histories of colonial conflict. The most prominent examples include Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper’s study of British India and Southeast Asia after World War II in Forgotten Wars (2007), Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon’s chronicle of Britain’s “dirty wars” in Imperial Endgame (2011), and Martin Thomas’s comparison of British and French imperial suppression tactics in Fight or Flight (2014). The historiography on recent decolonization scholarship portrays what may be the most entrenched legacy of the Mau Mau revisionist historians so far. Of course, this dynamic is itself a reflection of imperialism: while the Mau Mau memoirs produced first-person documentations of colonial atrocities decades before this reevaluation of the British Empire, Western revisionist historians like Elkins and Anderson had access to the well-funded academic institutions and global-spanning media attention that nearly all Kenyans did not.

**Conclusion**

Rarely do historians ever have such an immediate impact on serious political policies as did Elkins, Anderson, and Bennett in their scholarship and assistance to the Mutua case. Although there is serious doubt that Mutua marks a new precedent for future postcolonial reconciliation, it still dismantled the narrative that the British Empire enacted benign colonial rule and decolonization alongside a broader historiographic shift. However, it is also essential to acknowledge the pre-existing narratives that the revisionist historians built upon—most prominently the Mau Mau memoirs—and the good fortune to publish when Mau Mau veterans could legally organize for the first time and when the War on Terror made many Western institutions far more willing to question the consequences of imperialism. Both books arrived at the perfect time to deconstruct the neoconservatism that fell apart in the wake of Abu Gharib. Regardless of Mutua’s legacy or lack thereof, the long road to the settlement case demonstrates how revisionist history can reinforce or challenge understandings of imperialism.

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The Power of Papers
Chinese Immigration Documentation at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Amanda Yen

We were always here. This was the story I learned in the absence of any concrete immigration date, the lesson plucked from the void of history. My own family’s origin story was an engineered folktale of nativity. We did not know where we came from, or when we arrived, so we told ourselves we had always been here.

Of course, this is only a story. I have tried to reconstruct my family’s journey across the sea, but most of the records I have are undated family photos from which I can only guess based on the style of dress and the approximate ages of the great-aunts and great-uncles in the photos. The only legal document I have is an application to the immigrations commissioner at Angel Island, San Francisco, not to enter the United States but to leave it (Fig. 1). In October of 1919, a year of labor strikes and summer uprisings, my great-grandfather Harry Gim sought “a temporary visit abroad,” presumably to China, and applied “for preinvestigation of my claimed status as an American citizen.” Signing his name in Chinese, Harry Gim agreed to depart and return through the Chinese port of entry at San Francisco to provide “such documentary proofs (if any) as I possess,” and to “appear at such a time and place as you may designate, and to produce then and there witnesses for oral examination regarding the claim made by me.” In other words, Harry Gim agreed to participate in a system obsessed with tracking his movements, forever suspecting him of fraud in claiming American citizenship.

The language of Gim’s immigration document reveals the clear schematic of power between Chinese Americans and the United States government in a time of increasing anti-Chinese sentiment coupled with nativist organizing. The document never names Harry Gim as an uncontested American citizen, but as a claimant of American citizenship, whose claim must be corroborated by additional documents, screenings, and witness testimony. Though no laws specified who these witnesses had to be, in practice they were always white witnesses.¹ After the Supreme Court case United States v. Wong Kim Ark (1898) affirmed that even Chinese Americans could not be barred from birthright citizenship,
the US immigration system responded by creating additional obstacles to citizenship that could be used to contest Chinese Americans’ claimed status. Policies that required oral exams and witness testimony to prove American citizenship reflected the “institutionalized suspicion” of immigration officials of Chinese Americans. Documentation of Harry Gim’s claimed citizenship likely took the form of a Chinese Certificate of Identity card, a type of proto-green card that all people of Chinese descent, including US citizens, were required to hold after 1909. Notably, the Chinese were the only ethnic group required to hold such identification cards until 1928, when a similar system was instituted for immigrants of other origins. Therefore, a policy first tested on people of Chinese descent formed the basis of tracking and treating with suspicion those who later arrived in the US, delineating “legal” from “illegal” arrivals. That even US citizens of Chinese descent were not exempt from holding these identification cards demonstrates that in the eyes of the state, citizenship came with more strings attached and more scrutiny to the Chinese than it did to white Americans.

Distinctions between whiteness and Chineseness racialized all persons of Chinese descent in the US regardless of citizenship status. Anti-Chinese attitudes at the turn of the twentieth century can be understood as one step in a long tradition of defining what is American by defining what it is not, and by using Asia as a trick mirror for the West. At the same time that culture producers in America’s intellectual institutions sought to define American culture as a product of Europe, they defined themselves “over and against the Asian immigrant” in an expression of orientalism, affirming the binary understanding of East and West. As white Americans sought to position themselves as the successors of the Enlightenment, they drew inspiration from thinkers who consistently demonized or disparaged Asians, and specifically the Chinese, such as Samuel Johnson, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, and Adam Smith. The United States’ tradition of treating Asia as “a complex site on which the manifold anxieties of the U.S. nation-state have been figured” extends across oceans and time, through the Enlightenment and even back into Antiquity, with figures such as Alexander the Great and the Greek philosopher Hippocrates expressing views of Asians as inferior to their own civilizations. Anti-Asian and specifically anti-Chinese sentiment therefore figured into American culture as an extension of European cultures — ideas of Asian otherness originated in those traditions as well.

Anti-Asian sentiment did not arise spontaneously in America, but migrated across the Atlantic with European settlers who carried their own ideas, and therefore their own prejudices about Asians into the American continent. Yet, in America, Chinese exclusion was also uniquely colored by the tensions of labor and the nation-state. Lisa Lowe explains this struggle between the needs of capital and the needs of the nation-state: “capital needed a cheap, manipulable labor force... it needed the exclusion of further Chinese immigration to prevent a superabundance of cheap labor, and the disenfranchisement of the existing Chinese labor force, to prevent capital accumulation by these wage laborers.” As white laborers, many of them first or second generation immigrants of European descent themselves, organized for higher wages and better conditions, business interests simultaneously sought to create an economic underclass that could not bargain for higher pay, own property, or vote. By disenfranchising Chinese workers, the United States could attempt to create a racially homogenous nation-state and concentrate capital gains into the hands of white Americans who were accepted members of the citizenry. Yet, by keeping Chinese Americans as a temporary labor force within the geographical bounds of the nation-state, the needs of capital actually threatened the formation of a racially homogenous nation-state. The mere presence of the Chinese in the United States and the reliance of big business on their cheap labor constituted a place for them that would continue to threaten
white wage workers and push the Chinese toward imagining new forms of entry.

Chinese immigration also buttressed existing United States campaigns of white supremacy. In the late nineteenth century when Chinese immigrants first arrived in groups on the west coast, the United States was already engaged in a project of settler colonialism and manifest destiny, seeking to establish a white nation-state across the North American continent. Portraying the Chinese as unwelcome foreigners constructed a distinction between immigrants and settlers, strengthening the land claim of the latter at the expense of the former. Delineating immigrants from (white, Anglo-Saxon) settlers furthered the erasure of Indigenous Americans from their land at the same time it deemed more recently arrived immigrants as illegitimate claimants, tightening the hold of white Americans of northern and western European descent on the land.9 In other words, casting the non-white Chinese as immigrants to the American land served to naturalize the claims of white Anglo-Saxon settlers because it obscured the fact that they were not native to the land either.

The Chinese were also targeted for exclusion because they constituted a perceived threat to the existing racial and heteronormative gender order in the United States. As part of the project of orientalism, white American fears of Chinese-ness inscribed gender and sexual perversity onto Chinese bodies resulting in legal exclusion acts beginning in 1875. Although the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is infamous as the first law that explicitly discriminated against a group based on racial and ethnic origin, it was not the first act to target Chinese immigrants for exclusion in practice.10 Seven years earlier, the Page Act banned the immigration of women engaged in “lewd or immoral purposes,” arising from the perception that all Chinese women in California worked as prostitutes.11 From the beginning, Chinese women in particular were hypersexualized in the United States, subject to exclusion because of the perceived threats they posed to white heterosexual gender relations. Stemming from popular beliefs that Chinese sex workers were especially diseased, Chinese women became emblematic of sexual vice, filth, and immorality that threatened the domestic ideal of white heterosexual marriage and parenthood.

Whereas Chinese women represented a sexual threat to the formation of white families, Chinese men constituted a threat to white American masculinity with their different forms of dress and work. Erika Lee explains that in a time when American masculinity was defined by strict codes of dress, short hair, and fitted pants, “both the queue [hairstyle] and the garments were seen as sexually ambiguous” markers of Chinese-ness.12 Furthermore, the only jobs open to Chinese men tended to be traditionally feminine roles, such as operating laundries or restaurants. Again, the essentialized perception of Chinese bodies was intricately tied to the labor they participated in. White Americans used the Chinese nonconformity to traditional gendered forms of work as an example of the threat they posed to the existing order, ignoring the fact that they had created the conditions that led the Chinese to occupy these labor niches by expelling them from mining, industrial, and agricultural work. White Americans also cited the failure of Chinese men to establish families as proof of their inability to assimilate into American culture, again ignoring the structural barriers the United States had constructed to the establishment of Chinese American families, such as the previous banning of Chinese women’s immigration and penalizing white women for marrying Chinese men.

Despite the compounding obstacles to Chinese immigration, assimilation, and acceptance in the United States, exceptions were made to all of the exclusion rules. For example, the 1882 Exclusion Act exempted educated classes of laborers such as teachers, physicians, and missionaries, controlling for the privileged classes of Asian immigrants. As Wong Kim Ark demonstrated, it also could not counteract birthright citizenship, which many Chinese immigrants recognized and seized upon in their acts of resistance. Furthermore, Chinese women were
allowed into the United States as wives of American citizens of Chinese descent, an expression of the law rewarding Chinese Americans who observed US definitions of marriage and partnership. These exceptions provided an important basis for acts of resistance which would constitute early Asian American culture.

The term ‘Asian American’ did not come into use until after the Vietnam War, but as I have shown, Asian Americans existed long before there was a name for us. The term we use now arises from the activism of the 1960s, especially in the wake of the Vietnam war, in which Asian Americans sought to create a unifying pan-Asian identity. It was a rejection of the ascribed term “Oriental,” replaced with a self-defined and distinctly political identity chosen by Asian Americans. In recent history, after the waves of migration during the late twentieth century in the wake of US imperial campaigns in Southeast Asia and “brain drain” from South Asia and East Asia, Asian American culture has been imagined as symbolic forms of the recent immigrant experience: learning traditional cooking, wearing no shoes in the house, translating for immigrant parents, and grappling with the pressures of academic excellence and “tiger parenting.” Such a definition of Asian American culture does not only ignore the experiences of the third-, fourth- and fifth-generation Asian Americans who are the descendants of those like Harry Gim, but it also fails to imagine Asian Americanness as something apart from and encompassing aspects of Asian heritage and American identity. It cannot be something that is formed piece-meal from Asian customs in the physical United States. Therefore, I propose a definition of Asian Americanness that is not simply a material or aesthetic transformation that borrows aspects of Asianness and transposes them into an American context, but rather one that is made of political acts that communicate the diversity of Asian American experiences and the unique place we occupy in this nation.

Turning back to my great-grandfather’s lost immigration legend, I propose two expressions of Asian American culture intricately tied to my unwritten family legend: paper sons and picture brides. Neither of these transformations can capture the full extent of Asian American experiences, but they should be seen as uniquely Asian American in that they could not materialize without the complex forces that brought the Chinese to America and formed a Chinese American identity.

Scholars have used the term ‘paper sons’ to refer to those Chinese immigrants who bought false papers, pretending to be the sons of Chinese men already living in America as part of a class exempt from Chinese exclusion. In my family it was also used to describe those, like Harry Gim, who seized the opportunity presented in the rubble of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. The quake and its aftershocks leveled the city, including City Hall where all of the city’s birth records were kept. Immigrant opportunists like Harry Gim could therefore claim birthright American citizenship without a birth certificate because they had all been lost in the natural disaster. The American taste for opportunity and the correction of origin stories was therefore exquisitely demonstrated by the very people that the US government sought to keep out. Though the US government was determined to see Chinese immigrants as distinct others, their use of these strategies to remain on American soil demonstrated a distinctly American form of resistance and resourcefulness.

A parallel example of immigrant determination can be observed across the gender binary in the story of Chinese picture brides. Because of the exemption that allowed Chinese women to immigrate to the United States as wives of native-born American citizens of Chinese descent, Chinese men in America—fathers and husbands-to-be—often organized marriages on American soil without the presence of the bride herself, exchanging only a photo of the woman as a promise of engagement. Chinese women then left their homes and crossed the sea to marry strangers, raise children, and carve out a new place in an unfamiliar and often hostile
land. Whereas Asian Americans make up about 7% of the US population in 2021, Chinese Americans constituted only 0.06% of the country’s population in 1920 as a result of the exclusion acts. Given their meager numbers in the early twentieth century, it is no surprise that assimilation seemed the necessary tactic for survival.

So, where does that leave their descendants? There are not many written records of what happened to the third generation and beyond, the children and grandchildren of the early sojourners-turned-immigrants like Harry Gim. What else I know of his story comes only orally, leaping language barriers and the lifetimes of family members never met: they moved away from California, to Boston and then Cincinnati, where my grandmother grew up. Later, she would marry a second-generation Chinese man, a US Navy veteran, and they would move back to California, where, in the 1970s, as a middle-aged suburban housewife, she would observe the start of a new wave of Chinese immigration — people who got to keep their culture, whose presence on her cul-de-sac would remind her every day of what she had to sacrifice to survive. Her daughter would graduate as one of ten Asian Americans in a high school class of one hundred, and, in college, would see the place she thought was her grandmother’s village in China but would never know for sure. Later, as a mother herself, she would drive me back to the Bay Area where I would see the jade vases, the koi fish paintings, and the silk tapestries that adorned my grandparents’ walls even though their house had a Tudor exterior, and I would wonder if they could really make up for our lack of language, of custom. California would be a different place by then — my mother’s high school now dominated by black hair, the signs in Chinese and English and Vietnamese and Korean. The kids who looked like me would ask me why I couldn’t speak Chinese, and I’d get used to explaining myself, which was really explaining my mother, and her mother, and the rest of my family across the sea, all the way back to a village in China I don’t know the name of.

I would learn: It’s a privilege to know where you came from, but it’s something else to know how.

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"If the Bible is true, then I’m Christ” said David Koresh in an audio tape recorded for the followers of his apocalyptic cult, the Branch Davidians. Certainly, the path from Jesus Christ’s birthplace in Bethlehem to Waco, Texas is long, fraught, and complex. This essay seeks to chart the trajectory of one individual’s biblical interpretation of the eschatological content of the biblical books of Daniel and Revelations to its collective catastrophic manifestation in the siege of the Waco compound in 1993. It focuses its analysis on the consequences of William Miller’s interpretations, a nineteenth-century preacher that gained a fairly large following called Millerites. When Miller’s apocalyptic predictions fell through, it initiated a series of more extreme splinter groups that ultimately resulted in the violent behavior of the Branch Davidians in Waco. Using Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance, the essay will seek to elucidate the enabling factors in these religious movements, especially focusing on the practice of eisegesis.

William Miller, a New England farmer, became a prophetic Biblical interpreter in the mid-nineteenth century and established his own body of thought regarding apocalyptic messaging in biblical texts. His interpretations and beliefs fostered an entire movement focused on predicting the specific date of Christ’s imminent return and preparing for the concomitant apocalyptic conditions. Although Miller emphasized the presence and absolute importance of the Bible as an ultimate authority, he fabricated apocalyptic predictions based on eisegesis, the unsound process of “reading into a text more or less whatever one wishes to find.” Generally, eisegetical interpretations are discouraged or condemned and are considered intellectually dubious or malevolent. The process, however, requires significant investment by the eisegete: They must be continually modifying their interpretation to account for new or contradictory information. Miller focused his eisegesis on the book of Daniel, and through his interpretations he developed a strongly premillennialist viewpoint.

These apocalyptic viewpoints can be generally categorized as either premillennial, post-millennial, or amillennial. Each view offers a distinct chronology of the Rapture, the Resurrection, the Reign of Christ, and other events surrounding the apocalypse. Premillennialists believe that Christ will return to the Earth at the end of the age in which we live today and create his literal kingdom on earth, while postmillennialists assert that the preaching of the gospel today is extending the work of God until the entire world becomes completely Christian. Amillennialism holds that the millennial reign of Jesus Christ is occurring now and has been occurring for many thousands of years. Although subtle, the distinctions imply fundamentally different cosmological attitudes. Because premillennialists like Miller believe that divine intervention is the only solution to worldly impurity, they hold a largely negative view of mankind.
combined with Miller’s eisegetical readings of David, was what convinced his followers of the impending apocalypse.

William Miller’s eisegetical journey directed him to calculate a precise date upon which Jesus Christ would return and the apocalypse would begin. Using Daniel 8:14 (“And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed”), he eventually settled on the date of October 22, 1844. Miller began preaching approximately ten years before the calculated apocalypse and garnered a fairly large following.9 Miller attracted adherents from a diverse set of social and economic classes under the shared conviction of Christ’s imminent return to Earth.

The success of the Millerites cannot be attributed to a singular aspect of the campaign. Through a synergy of advertising, Miller’s charisma, a hopeful, salvific message, and a clear methodology to be saved, the Millerite population exploded prior to the predicted apocalyptic date. Samuel S. Snow, one of Miller’s most important followers, advanced the cause by creating periodicals such as The True Midnight Cry.10 These publications, in conjunction with Miller’s relentless touring around the region, facilitated the rapid diffusion of Millerite beliefs throughout New England in a very short time. Snow accompanied Miller throughout the east coast and New England, collaborating to popularize the chronological view. Furthermore, Millerites were compelled to recruit their friends, family, and neighbors rather forcefully.11

On October 22, 1844, when the world did not in fact come to an end and divine judgment did not ensue, Millerites were understandably confused, upset, and ashamed. After all, they had spent the last months convincing everyone around them that this date, as calculated by William Miller, would be the last day on Earth. Responses to the so-called “Great Disappointment” were varied; many were angry, having sold all of their possessions and spent all their money as a testament to their faith in the date that Miller had set.12 In an authentically eisegetical manner, a small group of devout followers adhered to the belief in the significance of October 22, 1844, saying that while the apocalypse as may have been conceived had not happened, something more subtle or unnoticed had. The group of people who upheld this belief established themselves as the Seventh-day Adventists, named for their belief in Saturday, the Sabbath, as the proper day of prayer and rest.13

The Seventh-day Adventists, heavily influenced by Protestant values, held that the world had been completely altered on that October 22, 1844, but it had done so invisibly. Their conclusion—called the “Shut-Door” doctrine—professed that only those who had experienced the Great Disappointment had any hope for salvation.14 However, following some extensive theological reflection by the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church, the majority of them switched to the more tolerant “Open-Door” doctrine allowing converts to Seventh-day Adventism to be saved.

The Seventh-day Adventists, and disappointed Millerites in general, provide ample evidence for Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance. In fact, the particular eisegesis and prophecy which Miller built the success of the Millerite movement fabricated the perfect environment for communal cognitive dissonance. In his book When Prophecy Fails, Festinger argues that cognitive dissonance occurs when “two opinions, or beliefs, or items of knowledge… are inconsistent, or if, considering only the particular two items, one does not follow the other.”15 The Millerites’ cognitive dissonance emerged after the occurrence of the Great Disappointment, once contradictory evidence that the world had, in fact, not ended became obvious despite full-fledged belief in Miller’s prophecy. Festinger argued that prior to October 22, the Millerites displayed cognitive consonance since Miller’s views had not yet been challenged. As no event had occurred which challenged what Miller prophesized, Millerites were existing in a state of ignorance which could theoretically be sustained for an indefinite period of time.

The Millerites’ refusal to accept the present reality on October 22, 1844 is the result of
systematic psychological conditioning that follows the cognitive dissonance produced by thoughts and opinions that are completely inconsistent with reality—in this case, the absence of the apocalypse directly clashed with their belief that the world would end.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, Millerite splinter groups were required to produce extensive or convoluted explanations for a contradictory reality. In the case of the Seventh-day Adventists, Festinger argues that the accessory explanations for what may have occurred on October 22, 1844 actually created even more dissonance than before.\textsuperscript{17} The theological wrangling that the Millerite doctrine underwent by the Seventh-day Adventists was extensive and is a clear example of eisegesis and cognitive dissonance in action. Dissonance is predicated on the idea that if a large group of people believe something, then it must be true regardless of what reality may demonstrate. In situations where a person is isolated from others and does not have the influence of differing opinions to support them, it becomes much easier for someone in a position of power to indoctrinate them with ideas, especially if they have support from a group of apparently sane people.\textsuperscript{18}

Most of these apocalyptic sects obtain their theological support from interpretations of the book of Revelations, notably chapter 13. Revelations is considered the keystone to Christian eschatology; in this chapter, the author John of Patmos recounts his apocalyptic visions for the end of the ages. In fact, Revelation 13:18 is the origin of this iconic decree: “This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.”\textsuperscript{19} Though Miller derived his predictions from the Book of Daniel, many subsequent groups focused on Revelation.

The community of the Branch Davidians, a successor of the Millerite movement, emerged from complicated religious circumstances and disagreements within other Millerite splinter groups. The group originated from the Shepherd’s Rod movement founded by Victor Houteff, a man who was excommunicated from the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a result of his desire to reform the faith in accordance with his political views. In his view, the first beast in Revelations 13 is western civilization as a whole rather than solely the Roman Catholic Church while the second beast is again the United States of America.\textsuperscript{20} Revelations 13:11 states that the second beast “had two horns like a lamb.” Houteff argued that this should be interpreted to mean America because America was young, or “lamb-like,” and the horns symbolize the two political parties which govern it.\textsuperscript{21} Houteff argued that the eventual expression of the Antichrist’s presence on Earth would be the implementation of a Sunday observance law by the United States government.\textsuperscript{22}

The Branch Davidians and David Koresh’s interpretations emerged from this precedent of the Seventh-day Adventist tradition and upheld the same views on the two beasts in Revelations 13. Koresh, born Vernon Wayne Howell, was the leader of the cult. He and other high-ranking members of the Branch Davidians held that all of their views were derived rationally and directly from biblical texts and often decried the presence of emotion in religious interpretations.\textsuperscript{23} The magnetism of Koresh’s eisegetical interpretation lies in its complexity. It was very elaborate and difficult to comprehend, and it is commonly held that this complexity is in part how involved people became in the Branch Davidians prior to and during the Waco Siege of 1993.

Scholars held differing views on the Mount Carmel compound before the siege of 1993.\textsuperscript{24} A small body of scholarship on the Branch Davidians existed by the time the Waco siege occurred in 1993, and there was a diverse range of viewpoints regarding the potential dangers of David Koresh and the Branch Davidian group. Some did not believe that David Koresh had the psychological sway to facilitate mass suicide, while others were warier. The fifty-one-day siege, initiated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, resulted in the deaths of all seventy-six Branch Davidians and is undeniably a tragic outcome for which Koresh and his dangerous and delusional interpretations hold the lion’s share of responsibility.
The siege’s post-mortem remains controversial. Some scholars had hoped that negotiators could have attempted to remediate the cognitive dissonance experienced by Koresh and the Davidians. However, this did not seem to be of concern at all to the FBI who believed that Koresh was essentially a con man. Quite a bit of scholarship has proposed alternative methods of engagement that could have prevented such a disastrous outcome. Some blame the FBI for their actions, but that view was often seen as too sympathetic to Koresh and the Branch Davidians themselves. The overarching view is that the FBI should have handled the situation more tactfully and should have taken Koresh more seriously, but the potential for extensive psychological counseling in order to bring the followers of Koresh out of the cult was very limited.

Religious texts, by their nature, are broad, vague, and ultimately subjective, allowing individuals to interpret them how they see fit. As the history of apocalyptic groups in America shows, it is possible for extreme or tragic consequences to arise from eisegetical interpretation. It is important to note that these events are not the norm but instead indicate the vast range of possibilities for religious interpretation. William Miller’s predictions and the following he garnered indicates the power of a religious message when it is accompanied by a charismatic leader. A movement can carry a message much further beyond the realm of rationality with these two components than if it had appealed to faith alone. As seen with David Koresh, it also demonstrates the danger of manipulative interpretation by a person in power or with the potential for power. That someone can convince a group of other people of the righteousness of their message to the extent of the creation of a group suicide pact is a frightening thought, but he was not the first nor last to do so. This tragic event followed a long train of eisegesis originating in the nineteenth century, culminating in the violent and traumatic death of seventy-six people. If anything is to be learned from the tragic outcome at Waco, it is the responsibility we each have to ensure that religion exists as a fulfilling and enhancing aspect of life—not the opposite.

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The relationship between religion and violence receives an inordinate amount of attention in modern discourse where it is repeatedly oversimplified and misinterpreted. Religion is often identified as the impetus for violence which overlooks the nuance in many instances of violence and implies a direct causal relationship that ignores contextual issues. This paper will use the history of iconoclasm in eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium to reevaluate the relationship between religion and violence by exploring how the destruction of religious art serves as a form of cultural violence exhibiting that leaders, both imperial and ecclesiastical, weaponized this debate to fulfill ideological and political goals.

Definition & Frameworks

Though art is obviously inanimate, its destruction can be considered to meet the threshold of violence. In her extensive writings on medieval Byzantine art, art historian Leslie Brubaker emphasizes “the idea that images are symbols of something else, representative of a belief system or political regime, and that the destruction of images is a tangible form of obliterating that system of regime.” Images are highly influential markers of structures of power in society, and their destruction can act as a catalyst for major shifts in those power structures. Brubaker’s conception of images and their destruction is bolstered by Johan Galtung’s definition of cultural violence as “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.” In this sense, the destruction of art operates as a form of cultural violence and can be used to condone other forms of violence, including the inevitable repercussions of the eradication or transformation of a belief system or regime.

This violence is further compounded by the ways in which medieval art occupied a distinct role apart from the modern conception of the role of art in society. Instead of encountering art as discrete or distanced objects as we do in the contemporary age, “Medieval Christian images... were very much part of the daily lives, experiences, and expectations of the people who saw them.” The sacred images at the center of Byzantine iconoclasm were rendered distinct from other images, mostly due to their depiction of icons. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, icons (eikons) are images of God, Mary (Theotokos), saints, and martyrs that receive special veneration, becoming holy unto themselves. Due to the cultural significance they enjoyed, sacred images occupied an incredibly important role in the lives of Byzantine people, rendering their prohibition or destruction a prime example of Galtung’s notion of cultural violence and a crucial tool for the obliteration of an ideology or regime. Byzantine iconoclasm thus emerges as a rich history to explore in its attempts to shape public discourse and secure political power.
To engage in a more robust analysis of Byzantine iconoclasm, it is critical to establish key definitions and theories. From its Greek origins, iconoclasm translates to “image breaking.” More broadly and in a modern context, iconoclasm can refer to the destruction of images, typically for a religious or political reason. In the Byzantine context, iconoclasm describes a specific period in which a conflict over the appropriateness of venerating icons or holy images arose. Though a term like “iconomachy” may be more denotatively accurate, this paper will accord with the general scholarly use of the term iconoclasm.

**Early History & Pre-Iconoclasm**

Before the beginning of Byzantine iconoclasm, early Christian art primarily served a private, funerary role and did not appear publicly until around 313 CE. As early Christians emerged from a Judaic tradition that strictly prohibited the use of images, “some said that the faith of Israel depended on words, not images. These observations opened a long debate over the relative value of seeing and of hearing, of looking and of reading.”

Concerns over the use of sacred images were foundational to early Christian theological debate due to its prohibition in the Mosaic Law, as well as the drive to separate Christianity from pagan Greco-Roman practices that emphasized a long legacy of artistic representations.

Early Christians, however, were not explicitly iconoclastic. Instead, the sparse evidence suggests that early Christian worship was aniconic in an attempt to prevent idolatry. In fact, during the emperor Constantine I’s rule, “there slowly arose a myth of Christian aniconism… The point of this myth is to claim for its adherents moral and spiritual superiority over those who possess or use images.” The core of this debate was not only concern over how to establish a new faith’s traditions and values in the context of its precursors but also how the formation of these traditions and values might grant them authority over others. Nascent Christianity was just as engaged in the struggle for power as it was understood to be derived from God—the battle became manifest in the question over sacred images.

Sacred images emerged as central to this debate due to their ability to mediate between the viewer and the holy figure, thus providing a direct link between the earthly and heavenly realms: “The sacred portrait is best understood as a transparent window that the viewer looks through… rather than at; the gaze does not stop at the surface of the panel, but goes on to the prototype.” This distinction between the material image and what it represents, or its prototype, is fundamental to the debate over sacred images. Pre-Byzantine iconoclasm, theologians, philosophers, and leaders, including Saint Basil who drew the distinction between image and prototype in the fourth century, began to grapple with this difference, though they did not reach any consensus on its exact distinctions and definitions.

Namely, the word “image” is often ambiguous in Byzantine sources. It is often unclear what specific kind of images the writers from the fourth to seventh centuries, examined. They may speak of relics, acheiropoieta, which are images miraculously not made by human hands or man-made images that had been blessed by a living saint. They may also speak of what concerned the periods of iconoclasm: holy portrait and other sacred images. These would be more isolated incidents due to the “cult of images” not yet being widespread. Until about the seventh century, most veneration was directed toward the cult of relics and of the saints, not necessarily holy portraits.

It was not until the late sixth and early seventh century that the cult of images, as a wide cultural phenomenon, began to emerge. The role of sacred images in early Byzantium then shifted, overtaking the cult of relics. Early forms of the cult of images facilitated devotional practices and occupied a defensive, magical role. Most important, perhaps, was images’ role as apotropaia and palladia, or protective images. Palladia became more prevalent in public spaces as they were understood to protect entire cities.
and armies. Ultimately, the foundational power of sacred images in Byzantium resided within their intercessory ability to mediate between the divine and the human, which "is related to the apotropaic or protective function of the sacred image; and it is especially the ability of images to protect an individual (or a city) from harm that we find attested in medieval sources."9 Palladia, often found over doors, powerfully mediated intercession, and it seems fitting that Byzantine society utilized them to a greater extent as military and political threats destabilized their position and sense of security, as will be explored later in this paper. Responses to this emerging cult of sacred images were not rampant until the beginning of iconoclasm.

Early Christian Ecclesiastical Debate

During the early Christian period, theologians began to defend or attack the use of images. In defense of images, Bishop Leontios of Neapolis grappled with the Jewish challenge over the use of images in his series of sermons against Jews in the early seventh century. In reference to Old Testament examples of figures such as Moses and Ezekiel making graven images Leontios writes that, "The Jew says, 'But these likenesses were not worshiped as gods, but were only intended as reminders.' The Christian says, 'Well said; neither are our figures, or images, or renderings of saints, worshiped as gods.' For if they worshiped the wood of an image as divine, then they would certainly worship all manner of wood."10 Leontios’s thinking aligned with much earlier writers such as St. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa whose arguments stressed the importance of religious art’s ability to mediate between the heavenly and the corporeal. Art thus served as a mimetic opportunity through which viewers could approximate the prototype.

Other early Christian theologians, philosophers, and historians expressed contrasting beliefs regarding the relative use of sacred images. One of the first was Epiphanius of Salamis, writing in the fourth century. In a letter to Emperor Theodosios, he wrote, “If it is possible to remove them, well and good; but if it proves impossible, let that which has already been done suffice, and let no one paint in this manner henceforth. For our fathers painted nothing except the sign of Christ, the cross, both on their doors and elsewhere.”11 Epiphanius calls upon the actions of their “fathers,” namely ancient bishops, the apostles, and biblical figures, as evidence against the use of images. He goes on to reject the early iconophile lines of defense which posited that sacred images facilitate remembrance, knowledge, and pious emotion, instead believing that the cross is the only appropriate representation. Views such as those presented by Epiphanius were much more prevalent in early Christian discourse, though this changed around the seventh century when the cult of images arose, in which people understood images as providing intercession between the viewer and the holy realm.

Despite the generally negative view toward sacred images in the early Christian tradition, Christian art continued to be produced, especially after the Edict of Milan proclaimed religious toleration in the Roman Empire, thus allowing Christian art to emerge in the public sphere throughout the fourth and fifth century.12 The Edict of Milan, as well as the larger context of the fourth century, can be considered a liminal event in the progression of Christian art. Without the boom in production of religious art after Christianity was legitimized in the Roman Empire, thinkers like Epiphanius, Eusebius, St. Basil, and Gregory of Nyssa would not have even engaged with the problem of iconography. Furthermore, there is little to no evidence of organized and systematic opposition to or approval of the production of religious art until the first period of Byzantine iconoclasm. Rather, the aforementioned thinkers were merely polemizing and drawing from their own personal experiences. While it is true that the later iconoclast periods in the eighth and ninth centuries rooted their thinking in these emerging attitudes that unfolded and developed over multiple centuries, comprehensive debate over sacred images
did not occur until the beginning of Byzantine iconoclasm.

Though early debates were between ecclesiastical figures, the issue of sacred images was produced and guided by the circumstances of imperial policies regarding religious tolerance. In fact, many early iconophiles’ arguments for the use of sacred images can be traced back to positive imperial perspectives, including those from the Roman emperor Julian. Although Julian’s musings on the use of imperial images were not explicitly religious in nature, he believed that “material images were created as expressions of divine essences which were otherwise imperceptible to humankind except through this particular form.”13 It seems much of the early Christian debate surrounding images was influenced by political and secular thought and practice, though this relationship is still debated by scholars today. Regardless, from the fourth century onward, Christian art occupied both a public and private role at all levels of society and set the stage for more intense debate surrounding its use.

Beginning of First Iconoclast Period

The lead up to Byzantine iconoclasm was influenced not only by artistic traditions in the eighth century but also sociopolitical and historical conditions shaping Byzantine society simultaneously. Shifting loci of power in the sixth and seventh centuries destabilized the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and the rise of competing states threatened the territorial and political power of the Christian world. Attacks by the Persians, Arabs, Slavs, and Avars across Asia Minor and the Balkans posed intense economic and political threats that began to prompt a more widespread cultural questioning of Roman authority.14 Military defeats were often viewed as “divine punishment” indicative of the quality of the leaders. After Justinian I’s death in 565 CE, the concurrent fall of once-flourishing urban centers (save for Constantinople) and the rise of the army’s influence on politics and policy resulted in a society that expressed growing discontent and criticism toward imperial power.15 These rifts caused repercussions theologically within the Christian faith as state and church were entwined in a nearly single unit. The “imperial church”16 attempted to reassert control over a fracturing empire in the seventh century with the formal introduction of the iconophile position of holy portraits in 692 in the Quinisext Council, specifically in Canon 82. Increasingly, sacred images served as the focal point—a proxy of sorts—in a larger theological debate over the limits of the church’s power in an unstable sociopolitical time. With control over representation, the church, and thus, the state, could assert their authority once again.

The multifold conditions of the sixth and seventh centuries contributed to a dramatically shifting society that looked for an explanation for their suffering, and with the canonized acceptance of sacred images, many turned to this emergent discourse to rationalize their experiences. Traditionally, historians have identified Emperor Leo III as the catalyst for imperial Byzantine iconoclasm. In this historical reading, Leo III’s issuing of an edict in the year 726 or 730 (the precise date of which cannot be conclusively established) marked the official start of iconoclasm. This position is not unanimous, however; Brubaker and Haldon note that there is no concrete evidence that Leo III issued an imperial edict that ordered the removal of sacred images. He purportedly first expressed dislike of public sacred images after a volcanic eruption occurred in 726 on the islands of Thera and Therasia which was “interpreted as a sign of divine wrath as a result of the idolatrous practices of the Christians.”17 This belief aligns with the larger consensus that there must be some reason that God’s wrath had befallen the “Chosen People.”

External influences, namely Islam and Judaism, also considered highly influential in developing explanations for the onset of iconoclasm. Scholars have long debated the impact of these two traditions on Byzantine iconoclasm, and Islam in particular emerges as one of the primary aesthetic influences on Byzantine iconoclasm
due to its art largely omitting human figures. According to the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Islamic art is predominantly aniconic, meaning it does not feature representations of living things. Yet, figurative depictions are not expressly outlawed in the Qur'an. Instead, it developed within a complex historical context, encountering the pre-existing aesthetic traditions of Christianity and Judaism.

Theorist Modjtaba Sadria grapples with some of the prominent theories over the prohibition of representative art in Islam and ultimately finds that many of them fall short. He notes that a widely accepted theory contends that the prohibition against representation occurred centuries after Mohammad’s death, meaning early Islam was not always aniconic: “Iconoclasm is viewed as a breakthrough by the Islamic world which, until this point, had no form of art they could call their own… Thus the later ruling against representation provided a means to ‘avoid being confused with the alien world of Christians and by later extensions of Buddhists or of pagans.’”

This culminated in the edict of the Umayyad Caliph Yazid II in 721 in which he expanded the interdiction on figural images to Christian churches under his rule, though the validity of this edict is up for debate as it is solely mentioned in later Christian writings.

The dominant historical view is that Yazid II’s edict influenced Leo III, as well as the belief that Byzantine military defeat at the hands of Arabs was divine punishment for disobeying the second commandment. “Although there is indeed a coincidence of official Byzantine iconoclasm, Christian iconoclasm in Islamic territories, and Muslim attitudes toward figural representation, we would argue that ‘state iconoclasm’ in Byzantium stands apart from the various manifestations of ‘iconoclasm’ in Islamic Palestine.” They distinguish between the Byzantine ban on holy portraiture and the Christian ban, under Umayyad rule, on representation of all living things. Further, they contend that Christian figural art did not actually stop under Umayyad rule, demonstrating a lack of a causal relationship between Muslim and Christian aesthetic practices.

Other scholars, such as Judith Herrin, challenge this assertion, arguing that Islam played a notable role in the onset of Byzantine iconoclasm. Specifically, Herrin notes that her peers Brubaker and Haldon “prefer to interpret the onset of iconoclasm in Constantinople as a reaction against excessive veneration of Christian images, which was a recent development, discount earlier examples of iconophobia and ignore the inherent rivalry between Islam and the older faiths of the region” Herrin contends that there is too great an emphasis on the Byzantine focus on Christian icons as idolatrous and an understatement of the impact of Muslim military victories. Specifically, Herrin notes that, “Once Christian idolatry was identified as the key issue, the removal of icons became an obvious solution.” Herrin aligns herself with the traditional belief that Byzantine iconoclasm emerged as a solution to the military defeats at the hands of aniconic Muslims.

However, the issue of the sources used to demonstrate this connection is tenuous at best: “Any explanation which could throw light on why this deviation had occurred was therefore plausible, so that Jewish and Islamic influence, diabolic intervention, and similar causes were ascribed as motivating the emperors and their evil henchmen.” Iconophiles who emerged victorious from this period sought to rationalize the actions of the iconoclasts from their own framework, leading to an ahistorical representation of what occurred. Thus, the reliance on evidence (of which the surviving majority originates from the ninth century onward) to explain the reasons for the emergence of Byzantine iconoclasm is inherently biased. Scholars such as Ernst Kitzinger believe that the iconophiles shaped the telling of history, though he gives the victors a bit more credit: “Even a story written for defensive purposes may be woven around a nucleus of reality, or, granted that its plot may be pure invention, it presumably reflects actual conditions at least in its circumstantial detail.” What can be taken for truth in the remaining evidence mostly

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derived from iconophiles’ records, is difficult to distinguish.

It is therefore difficult to know the veritable nature of the relationship between Islamic aesthetic practices and Byzantine iconoclasm during the first period mostly due to a lack of conclusive primary written evidence from the time. Although the extent to which Islam first influenced the iconoclastic debate is obscure and possibly unknowable for certain, it is clear that Christian and Muslim regimes sought power in the region, oftentimes through religious art. Conversely, the relationship between Islam and Christianity in eighth-century Byzantium cannot be extrapolated from twenty-first-century historical knowledge.

Debate Surrounding First Period of Iconoclasm

This paper will now engage with one of the most prominent contemporary defenders of images: John of Damascus. In his seminal piece Three Treatises on the Divine Images, he lays out a comprehensive response to the iconoclasts’ arguments against images. He cites Saint Basil’s homily on the Holy Spirit in which Saint Basil argues that because the image mirrors the true form, veneration of the image “passes” to the archetype. John comments that, “If you say that God ought only to be apprehended spiritually, then take away everything bodily… For these are all material: the cross, the sponge, the reed, the lance that pierced the life-bearing side. Either take away the reverence offered to all these, as impossible, or do not reject the honor of the images.” He challenges how the iconoclasts can make a distinction between different forms of matter, particularly when the images that they claim are idolatrous are depicting archetypes worthy of veneration. He further questions how the material biblical words, written in ink, differ from images, as both approximate the archetype they mimic in matter: “What the book does for those who understand letters, the image does for the illiterate; the word appeals to hearing, the image appeals to sight; it conveys understanding.” This line of defense for the use of images that permeates iconophile writings emphasizes how centering the visual can generate a less hierarchical religious system where all people can engage with the holy without needing a clergyman to intercede. The iconophiles diverge greatly from iconoclasts’ interest in maintaining the church hierarchy through controlling how devotion may be expressed.

John goes on to place the veneration of Christian images in opposition to Jewish and Greek images. Namely, he argues that Exodus 20.4, the passage many iconoclasts identified as the prohibition of images, was not intended for devout Christians: “[We] have received the habit of discrimination from God and know what can be depicted and what cannot be delineated in an image.” John firmly believes that dutiful Christians can knowingly determine what ought to be venerated and what ought to be worshiped. He clarifies that God is the only being worthy of worship, though it is appropriate to venerate His "friends and servants," places and things sacred to Him, or rulers appointed by Him. He also pushes back against iconoclast claims of idolatry: “The practices that you mention do not make our veneration of images loathsome, but those of idolatrous Greeks. It is not necessary, on account of pagan abuse, to abolish our pious practice.” He again reminds his audience of the supposedly idolatrous ways of the Jews and the Greeks (sentiments that would have resonated with many at the time) juxtapose faithful Christian veneration of images. He seems to be calling upon a deeply rooted Christian fear of persecution for openly and publicly practicing their faith, almost accusing the iconoclasts of punishing the Christian people.

Despite John of Damascus’s early pushback against iconoclasm, his writings were not given great contemplation until decades after he published them. There is little evidence of widespread opposition to the beginning of iconoclasm most likely because there is no proof that Leo III systematically removed or destroyed
images during his rule. The most he did to implement iconoclasm was to restrict where images were placed in churches. The first period of iconoclasm initiated the debate within the church in the 720s and divided the clergy until the 730s or 740s at which point the majority accepted the rejection of sacred images. It was not until Leo III’s son Constantine V came into power that iconoclasm became widespread and systematic on an imperial level.

Consolidation of the First Period of Iconoclasm

Constantine V is often identified by scholars as the figure responsible for the consolidation of iconoclasm. Under his rule, Byzantium experienced a renewal of infrastructure, foreign policy, and military might. Around the tenth year of his rule, Constantine publicly expressed iconoclast views. Scholars have hypothesized that the reason for this shift might be attributed to an earthquake and a plague that befell Constantinople in the late 740s which he interpreted as a “divine punishment or warning.” As Constantine became increasingly iconoclast, the Church called a synod in 754 to engage with the issue, representing the first official imperial and ecclesiastical policy on the matter. Now known as the Council of Hieria, the synod believed itself to be an ecumenical council, though it was later denounced by the Second Council of Nicaea due to the alleged absence of representatives from the relevant patriarchates. What survives of the Acts from the Council of Hieria can only be found in the Horos provided during the Second Council of Nicaea, thus calling into question its accuracy of the account. According to the Horos, the Acts primarily positioned the eucharist as the only appropriate image of Christ, the centrality of the cross and the church’s authority, an emphasis on words and prayer, and the importance of the clergy. The concrete results of these Acts, however, are difficult to conclusively determine, due to the lack of unbiased and contemporary evidence.

Although the veritable reality of violence against images under Constantine is inconclusive, Constantine violently persecuted monks as he placed them in opposition to the church’s clergymen. Monks became eminent figures in Byzantium after the seventh century, and Constantine understood monasticism as an institution taking away young men from the military and thereby a waste of resources. Constantine is alleged to have publicly humiliated monks in Constantinople as he forced them to march into the hippodrome with women while onlookers spat at them, and the general Michael Lachanodrakon campaigned against monasticism, flogged monks, set their beards on fire, and sold their books and other religious items.

Stephen the Younger is perhaps the most well-known victim of Constantine’s persecution due to his refusal to accept the Acts of the Council of Hieria. As claimed by his vita (a chronicle of his life written decades after his death), he was imprisoned and executed as were hundreds of his supporters. He thus became a martyr for the iconophiles, yet there is sparse evidence, if any, that Stephen the Younger’s execution had anything to do with images. While it is tempting to understand Constantine’s actions as deriving from the Council of Hieria in tandem with his iconoclast policies, modern scholars ought not to confuse causation with correlation, particularly considering the partisan nature of the surviving evidence. Perhaps the iconophile distortion of evidence is just as problematic as the iconoclast behavior they claim occurred as both of them misrepresent history.

End of the First Period of Iconoclasm

After Constantine V’s death in 775, Byzantium reemerged as a powerful and successful state. His son Leo IV maintained his father’s iconoclast position, though he was much less active in its enforcement. After Leo IV’s death in 780, his wife Irene became empress regent until 790. She is perhaps best known for calling the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, effectively ending the first period of iconoclasm, though her reign was not marked by public support of images until around 784 when the patriarch Paul abdicated.
Irene, seeking to strengthen her political position, saw an opportunity to do so through inserting herself in church dogma. She fulfilled Paul’s request that a synod be formed in order to mend the schism that erupted from the Council of Hieria. Irene capitalized on Paul’s abdication not just to reunite the church of Constantinople with the wider Christian community, but also to “disarm the festering hostility against the official line, thus removing the need for the state to involve itself in the repression and half-hearted iconoclasm which had come to be the hallmark of the imperial establishment.” Iconoclasm was no longer the most strategic way for the imperial and ecclesiastical powers to assert their authority. Instead, after a failed attempt to convene the council in 786, Irene summoned church officials once again in 787 to confer on the use of sacred images.

The Second Council of Nicaea, among many other things, denounced iconoclasm, and thus, “for the relaxation, or perhaps abolition of, the prohibition on showing devotion to images was accompanied also by the creation, for the first time… of a systematic cult of images.” The reinstatement of sacred images, along with the veneration shown to them, contributed to a crucial part of Christian devotion even more so than in the period before Byzantine iconoclasm. The production of art boomed during the time between the first and second periods of iconoclasm even as the empire struggled again after a string of military defeats from the Bulgars. However, Byzantium was able to recover quickly due to its economic ties with Isaurian emperors.

The Second Period of Iconoclasm
The onset of the second period of iconoclasm is ascribed to the rule of Leo V a few years after he ascended the throne in 813. His purposes for reinstating iconoclasm were twofold: to explain the military defeats in a similar vein as Leo III and to bolster his own authority. Sacred images emerged as the primary means through which an emperor could impose his will and assert his power over the empire in times of suffering. Leo sought to align himself with the Isaurians, an iconoclast people, and the great iconoclast emperors of the past, namely Leo III and Constantine V: “Leo seems to have reasoned, understandably, that the iconophile rulers had all been either deposed or had died in battle, in contrast to the successes of their Isaurian and iconoclast predecessors.” In fact, many called for Constantine V to return and save the city, and Leo V later heeded those calls by reinstating iconoclasm, though a much milder form with the synod of 815. The second period of iconoclasm, was distinct from the first in that it took a much more mollifying approach. In the synod of 815, “there is no reference to idolatry as such, merely the folly and recklessness of offering to lifeless images what should properly be God’s alone.”

Despite this more lenient form of iconoclasm, iconophile opponents remained, particularly in the years leading up to the synod of 815. One of Leo’s prominent opponents was the patriarch Nikephoros who argued that this was an ecclesiastical issue, not an imperial one. The Second Council of Nicaea fundamentally changed the relationship between imperial and ecclesiastical rule by decreeing that the church was the key legitimator in its dogma, not the emperor. Thus, Nikephoros and others took issue with Leo’s actions as he “presented himself as arbitrator in a debate between two points of view within the church… The patriarch Nikephoros notes that the bishops and other clergy had been tricked or seduced by the arguments of the iconoclasts, with the implication that iconoclasm was a secular and imperial dogma imposed upon the church, with secular motives behind it.” Nikephoros’s views aligned with many iconophiles who believed that Leo V, like Constantine V, was a heretical emperor who strove to impose secular principles on the church. This rising tension between church and state, although not unprecedented, was in much sharper focus in the ninth century, especially in the aftermath of the
Second Council of Nicaea. The reinstatement of iconoclasm, for the iconophile patriarchs and clergy, marked another inappropriate attempt by an emperor to weaponize a theological concern for political gain, rather than allowing the issue to be decided upon by the proper church leaders. It perhaps explains why the iconophiles took such a rigid stance against the iconoclasts, and thus, why they presented evidence against iconoclasts in such a biased fashion—they felt secular drives became too influential on church dogma, thus threatening their own position of power.

The second iconclast period continued under the reigns of Michael II and Theophilos, both of whom maintained a similar iconclast perspective to Leo V, until Theophilos’s death in 842. Over the decades, iconoclasm had become less potent of a tool through which emperors could claim authority. Instead, due to an enormous change in political, economic, and social conditions throughout the eighth and ninth centuries, Byzantium found itself finally rejecting the internal strife of the past century. It was ultimately the empress regent Theodora who convened a meeting of church officials, which permanently reintroduced the use of sacred images, now known as the “triumph” of orthodoxy. The later iconophile writers explained Theodora’s actions as resulting from her intense piety, though she was also undoubtedly influenced by her close advisors. The triumph of orthodoxy was commemorated by a procession during Lent in 843, a feast that is still celebrated to this day, and the iconophile tradition emerged victoriously.

Discussion & Conclusion

The impact on Christian art and devotion post-iconoclasm cannot be overstated. Without the reinstatement of sacred images as appropriate objects through which veneration can occur, the course of Christian art would not have unfolded in the same way. The post-iconclast period saw the standardization and formalization of orthodox iconography with distinct portrait types for each holy person and a growing popularity of certain subjects, particularly the Virgin. This further impacted Western Christian art in its production—the styles a modern audience might identify as Christian is intractably linked to the proliferation of Christian art after Byzantine iconoclasm. Thus, it is evident that Byzantine iconoclasm exemplifies Brubaker’s conception of why images are destroyed as a means of annihilating an ideology. Not only did the iconophile victory change the type of art produced thereafter, but it also affirmed the individual capacity to commune with the divine without ecclesiastical intervention, forever altering how Christianity is practiced and organized. It further resulted in a history riddled with epistemic gaps, as the iconophiles were able to write the history from their own perspective. All of these consequences of Byzantine iconoclasm speak to a cultural propensity for cultural violence that has persisted into the modern era, manifesting in everything from the Protestant Reformation’s destruction of art to the current removal of Confederate statues in the United States.

This paper strives to provide an example for how the relationship between religion and violence is a complex and nuanced one. It is not a unilateral or causal movement from one to the other because the contexts in which violence erupts are steeped in a range of historical processes and contemporary manifestations of political, social, and economic issues. In specific circumstances, religion can certainly account for aspects of violence, though religion is weaponized or misinterpreted as a rationalization for violence. In the context of Byzantine iconoclasm, those in power used religion and its dogma primarily as a method of gaining and maintaining power both during and after the conflict, despite claims that their actions were rooted in deep care for their faith. This period thus serves as a primary example of cultural violence, usurping the dual symbolic power of art and religion, and it may be looked upon as a cautionary tale for the future.

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As God Sculpted Adam
Neoplatonism and Art in the Italian Renaissance

Dami Kim

As Renaissance culture distinguished itself from medieval tradition, contemporary philosophy shifted its preference from Aristotle to Plato because of the latter’s openness to new ideas. Thus, Neoplatonism emerged in fifteenth-century Italy as a way of thought which could reconcile Christian theology with Platonic philosophy. As the Neoplatonic comparison of human art to divine creation grew increasingly prominent, it became a standard for excellence in art. When fifteenth-century Neoplatonists likened humans to the Original Creator, they suggested that artistic skill could approach divine perfection with the gift of God’s grace, establishing a cultural perception throughout the Italian Renaissance which glorified sculpture particularly.

We can study this trend through the lives and works of four Renaissance figures. Marsilio Ficino (1422-1499) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) were two leading Neoplatonists, and they celebrated the human soul and dignity using Biblical narratives as well as Platonic themes. Having established Neoplatonism as the predominant philosophy during the Italian Renaissance, Ficino and Pico also had a lasting impact on the cultural perception of art. They characterized art as a divine endeavor, and this elevated status continued into the sixteenth century. For instance, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) echoed Neoplatonic sentiments in his collection of artist biographies, The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects. Perhaps the artist whom Vasari most respected was Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475-1564), the true Renaissance man who excelled in every type of visual art. In fact, Vasari calls Michelangelo’s Moses (c.1513-1515) divine perfection.

Neoplatonism characterized humans as mimetic beings who can and should strive to achieve divinity. In the Orations, Pico exalts the “wonder” and “miracle” that is man, citing Abd Allah from Islam and Hermes Trismegistus from ancient Greece. While still alluding to ancient thought, Pico constructs a primarily Christian argument. There was often tension between the Church and Neoplatonists as the latter sought to syncretize Platonic philosophy and Christian theology. Hence, Pico draws from the Genesis narrative: God created Adam and said to him, “We have made thee… so that with the freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer.” Pico depicts humans as entities with the God-given freedom to choose their own fate. He ultimately urges his readers to strive for the status of heavenly beings: “Let us... emulate their dignity and their glory. If we have willed it, we shall be second to them in nothing.” When Pico encourages humans to “emulate” divinity, he employs a Platonic theme: mimicry as a natural human tendency. Thus, Pico claims that mankind is capable of rivaling divinity by exercising their will.

Neoplatonists credit God the Artifex as the source of human beauty and art. In Platonic Theology, Ficino describes art as a divine endeavor.
He echoes Origen’s (184-253) comparison between the “human artificer [who] makes his artifacts as beautiful as possible” and “God, the artificer of the world.”7 By emphasizing the parallel between the human and divine “artificer,” Ficino endorses art as a method to emulate the Original Creator. Here, it is important to note that Neoplatonic philosophers do not attempt to make the heretical claim that human ability alone can achieve artistry like God’s; rather, they reiterate that the desire to create beauty has been “implanted in the minds of all by the reason itself of God the artificer; and that it is daily motivated by Him in such a way that our mind naturally desires these principles.”8 Artists are only able to strive for divinity in art thanks to God’s gifts: freedom of choice and the desire to mimic His beauty. As Victoria Kahn puts it, Neoplatonists “celebrate God as not simply a creator but as a maker—an artist or artifex—whose activity serves as a model and authorization of human artistic activity broadly construed.”9 Indeed, God enables the exaltation of humans, permitting and inspiring their endeavors in art.

Similarly, Vasari utilized Neoplatonic concepts to glorify human art in the sixteenth century. The preface of Vasari’s The Lives discusses God’s creation of man: “Thus, the first model from which issued the first image of man was a mass of earth.”10 Vasari alludes to the Genesis creation narrative in which God molds Adam from a “mass of earth.” According to Vasari, man was the first artistic creation. Just as Pico calls God “the supreme Architect” in the Orationes,11 Vasari compares the “Divine Architect of Time and Nature, being all perfect” to “good sculptors [who] bring their imperfect drafts to that state of refinement and perfection they seek.”12 Vasari draws a compelling parallel: Just as God used materials from earth to mold and perfect Adam, artists obtain natural materials to sculpt their statues. This powerful analogy strengthens the argument that art—sculpture, in particular—is a noble endeavor pioneered by God.

Moreover, Vasari echoes Platonic philosophy when claiming that humans can only transcend their lowly status with the aid of a divine spark. He mimics the Neoplatonic claim that God enables the beauty and perfection in human art: “The Master who taught us was that divine light infused in us by a special act of grace which has not only made us superior to other animals but even similar, if it is permitted to say so, to God Himself.”13 Just as fifteenth-century Neoplatonic philosophy emphasized that human ability alone cannot achieve artistry, Vasari points to a “special act of grace” as the reason for man’s achievements. Although he sometimes hedges his words—perhaps fearing that he will be accused of heresy—Vasari calls God a “Master” as if He were a Renaissance artist. While likening the divine to man, Vasari takes care to capitalize the first letter as a mark of distinction. He once again alludes to the Genesis creation narrative: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”14 After God forms Adam, He must breathe life into man for him to come alive. Similarly, the artist may use clay, marble, or bronze to create a sculpture, but it only comes alive with the divine light. Vasari reiterates Ficino’s Neoplatonic interpretation to emphasize that perfection of beauty in manmade art is only possible with God’s blessing.

Within this conception of art, Vasari describes Michelangelo as a gift from God to earth, one who finally reaches perfection in art. Asserting that artistry arises at three levels, Vasari separates The Lives into three sections accordingly. He writes that he has seen artists struggle in vain to reach perfection. As a result, in “The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti,” he claims that God decided “to send to earth a spirit who, working alone, was able to demonstrate in every art and every profession the meaning of perfection in the art of design.”15 While Vasari lauds Michelangelo in many words, he first credits God as the source of great art. Applying the Neoplatonic interpretation, he explains that Michelangelo is only able to reach “perfection in the art of design” thanks to God’s benevolence. Vasari then
suggests that his readers should “call [Michelangelo] something divine rather than mortal.”

Like the Neoplatonists had suggested was possible, Michelangelo achieves the title of being “divine.” In the preface to Part III, Vasari writes that the master artist surpasses Nature and the ancients “by far with the power of his most divine genius through his diligence, sense of design, artistry, judgment, and grace.” Here, Vasari once again echoes Ficino’s belief that God granted the “divine genius,” while also celebrating the skill of the artist himself.

When Vasari states that Michelangelo surpasses Nature, he does not necessarily make a heretical claim. As Pico explains in the Orations: Although the human artist might exceed God’s creations, there is no rank higher than Him. Vasari’s claim that Michelangelo’s artistry exceeds that of the ancients is also notable, seeing as the Italian Renaissance greatly respected the achievements of antiquity. Since Vasari believes this third period to be the pinnacle of artistic achievement, he places Michelangelo above all artists in the past, present, and future.

Examining Michelangelo’s Moses, we can understand Vasari’s claim that the sculpture epitomizes the perfection of beauty in Renaissance Neoplatonism. When Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to build his tomb in 1505, the sculptor designed Moses to be one of the statues decorating it. The statue is larger than life-size, depicting a seated figure. With horns on his head and two tablets under his right arm, Moses symbolizes the biblical figure having returned from Mount Sinai, as narrated in Exodus. In “The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti,” Vasari applauds particular aspects of the sculpture, noting that “the hairs, so difficult to render in sculpture, are delicately carved, downy, and soft, and drawn out in such a way that it seems as if the chisel has become a brush.” He praises Michelangelo’s delicate touch with the chisel, likening it to a much wieldier instrument. After emphasizing the textural illusion of Moses’s flowing beard, Vasari also draws attention to the life-like, expressive features of the figure. Michelangelo further demonstrates his skill through the realism in the folds of Moses’s garments, as well as the movement in his muscles and bones.

Michelangelo reaches the pinnacle of Renaissance sculpture expertly and effortlessly. Most importantly, Vasari claims that those who behold the statue “will be worshiping something that is not human but divine.” He calls Moses, like its sculptor, perfection approaching that of the Original Artifex. Perhaps this was because Michelangelo was inspired by Ficino’s ideal of love and beauty of the human body. Citing the fact that the master must have encountered Neoplatonism through Lorenzo de’ Medici’s circle, Marieke van den Doel posits that Michelangelo himself recognized the divine spark driving his art. Thus, one might speculate that the Neoplatonic glorification of art not only justified but also stimulated the culture of the Italian Renaissance.

The life and status of Michelangelo presents evidence of the hegemonic cultural impact of Neoplatonism in art. Throughout his career, Michelangelo was commissioned to create artworks for people of the greatest wealth and reputation. These patrons considered it an honor to possess a piece by the master sculptor; according to Vasari, even Pope Julius II “would do anything to keep Michelangelo’s friendship.” The artist enjoyed such fame and respect that many honored him upon his death. Vasari reports that everyone declared that Michelangelo’s “true talent possesses such great power” that it is “still loved and honored for its own nature and special merits” even after his last breath. Perhaps the master achieved immortality beyond the soul, according to the Neoplatonic ideal of art. Indeed, his artistry is celebrated even into the present day.

The Neoplatonic appreciation of art proved paramount in the paragone debate of the sixteenth century. In The Book of The Courtier, Baldassare Castiglione presents a discussion over the superiority of painting versus sculpture. This is one prominent example of the paragone (“comparison” in Italian) debate. Romano, one of the characters in The Courtier, states that while both
mediums are “artificial imitations of nature,” sculpture has the greater ability. He presents a Neoplatonic argument by asserting the superiority of sculpture due to its ability to mimic God’s creations. When Vasari compares Michelangelo’s chisel to a brush, he also acknowledges that 

Moses appears realistic because of the master sculptor’s delicate and precise artistry. Although Vasari does not explicitly side with one side of the paragone, he echoes the Neoplatonic understanding of artistry as an imitation of God’s creation.

In the sixteenth century, many sought the opinion of Michelangelo as he excelled at both painting and sculpture. While avoiding direct participation in the debate, he reportedly said to Francisco De Holanda, “In my opinion that painting is excellent and divine which resembles and best copies any work of immortal God.” Here, Michelangelo did not claim that painting is better than sculpture; rather, he believed that the best art must imitate “any work of immortal God.” In the highly contentious paragone debate, the master put forth art’s likeness to nature as the most important standard. Perhaps, then, all proponents of the Neoplatonic ideal ought to pronounce sculpture as the superior medium. Not only do the artworks appear more realistic, but the sculptor’s process also most similarly resembles the creation of man by the Divine Artifex.

The Neoplatonism of the fifteenth century echoed throughout the Italian Renaissance, celebrating art as an endeavor that might approach divine perfection. The important caveat, however, was that this was only possible thanks to God’s grace. As the philosophers Ficino and Pico argued, art could be seen as man’s imitation of the Original Creator. God granted humans the divine spark and free will to desire beauty, and those who strive for divine perfection might achieve it. Using Platonic themes of mimicry and exaltation of humans, Neoplatonism established art as a worthy endeavor. In the sixteenth century, Vasari continued this Neoplatonic glorification of art, comparing the Supreme Artifex’s creation of man to the artist’s creation of sculptures. Just as God breathed life into Adam, He gifted divinity to Renaissance art. Indeed, Vasari writes that Michelangelo and Moses exemplify God’s desire to produce divine perfection.

The Neoplatonic ideal of art had a profound impact on culture beyond the fifteenth century. Not only did it justify respect for artistry, but it also acted as the foundation of unique phenomena such as the paragone and glorification of excellent artists. Neoplatonism thus became inextricably intertwined with the artistic movement of the Italian Renaissance.

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African works of literature have prompted intense debate in their evasion of European academic classifications. In order to articulate authentic self-expression, many African authors draw upon both literate and oral modes of discourse, rendering any dichotomy placed between the two superfluous. Abiola Irele’s 1985 article “Orality, Literacy, and African Literature” critiques the distinction made by “logocentric” academics who privilege the written word as either a primary or more sophisticated mode of expression over orality—a separation that reflects their larger assumption which divides tradition from modernity. Irele endorses a continuous idea of organized expression that encompasses both orality and literacy as “texts.”1 Amos Tutuola’s The Palm-Wine Drinkard, written over forty years before Irele, exemplifies this idea by drawing upon major themes of the Yoruba oral tradition. In organizing his text with elements associated with narrative vocalization, Tutuola challenges the logocentric contrast between tradition and modernity, reflecting Irele’s argument for orality as a relevant framework for contemporary expression. This paper first discusses three elements whose sole association with orality has been critiqued by Irele: stereotyped characters, shared tribalism, and parataxis. Then, it introduces Tutuola and discusses how he utilizes each of these elements to organize his novel, demonstrating Irele’s argument for the continuity between literate and oral texts.

Irele’s argument to expand a definition of “text” to incorporate both orality and literacy counters his contemporaries’ claims that literacy results from societal evolution. Jack Goody and Walter Ong had previously argued against privileging the spoken word—phonocentrism—by putting forth a logocentric view. Irele’s article quotes Ong:

“To put it simply, orality is characterized by… speaker and listener sharing a site, hence shared tribalism… paratactic and non-cumulative narrative… types as narrative personae. Literacy, on the other hand, is marked by… isolation and alienation… syntactic and cumulative narrativity, introspective analysis.”2

Although these characterizations hold some accuracy, Ong’s associations presume that complex meaning only derives from cumulative narration, that isolationism and alienation mark a liberal, civilized society, and that the use of character types preclude development or depth. In short, by correlating literature with development, Ong merits Irele’s critique that “inherent evolutionism pervades the treatment of the question,” starkly dividing tradition from modernity.3 On the other hand, Irele sees orality as a formal and contemporary “means of giving voice to the African assertion.”4 In order to authentically express the nuance of their identity, African authors must draw on both oral and literate modes of organization. Indeed, paratactic sentences, intimacy between narrator and audience, and typed personae become vehicles for expression that Western literary devices lack. Consequently, Irele argues that the definition of “text” must be expanded to include both the oral and literate elements which Ong described.
Tutuola’s text excellently demonstrates the continuity between orality and literature. He seamlessly weaves Yoruba oral elements to structure his novel, challenging Ong’s division and reflecting Irele’s definition of “text.” The *Palm Wine Drinkard* charts the adventures of Tutuola’s eponymous protagonist who sets out on a journey to find his deceased wine tapper in “Dead’s Town.” In an unpredictable chain of events and circumstances, he encounters mythological beasts, meets his wife, finds his palm-wine tapster, and returns home with a magical egg with which he feeds his village during a season of famine. Tutuola attempts to encourage his audience to care for Yoruba heritage by placing its oral tradition within a literary landscape. He invokes the three major Yoruba genres of “why,” moral or didactic, and “tortoise” stories to structure his novel’s parts. The “why” genre explains phenomena through storytelling, such as nature or social orders. Moral or didactic folktales leave the audience with a lesson. Finally, “tortoise” stories are solely meant to be humorous. However, he best reflects Irele’s argument in his use of three particular oral elements: the Yoruba “hero” type, the second-person to address his audience, and parataxis. Each of these elements works within the framework of the three oral genres. As a result, while the reader transitions between genres within *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, the oral elements remain consistently apparent throughout, becoming literary themes that are subsequently developed. The complexity of Tutuola’s novel hinges on his ability to unite literary and oral elements into a single text.

Tutuola’s use of the Yoruba “hero” typology to characterize his protagonist allows him to invoke irony for deeper reflection on contemporary issues. Ong considered character “types” found in oral traditions to be less developed than literary characters, whose personalities or world views are more nuanced or undergo more transformation. Indeed, in the Yoruba oral tradition, the hero was typically a hunter whose nobility necessitated a quest into the forest to overcome spiritual and natural challenges. Granted, Tutuola’s protagonist evokes this traditional role insofar as he enters the forest and hunts wild beasts. However, it is not his virtue but his love of wine which catalyzes the tale. He introduces himself with:

> My father got eight children and I was the eldest among them, all of the rest were hard workers, but I myself was an expert palm-wine drunkard. I was drinking palm-wine from morning till night and from night till morning.

In placing his protagonist within a narrative paradigm and then proceeding to break that type, Tutuola calls into question his narrator’s reliability, and consequently, the dependability of the entire story. Indeed, when the narrator describes himself as an “expert palm-wine drunkard” as though it were his trade, the audience wonders how the narrator is actually perceived by those around him. By the journey’s end, open questions linger as to whether the narrator has any motivation beyond consumption. Tutuola’s break from the hero typology is consistent with his efforts to place the Yoruba oral tradition into a modern, literary context. In doing so, Tutuola demands introspection about the qualities of the contemporary “hero.” He implicitly asks his audience whether their own endeavors are catalyzed by anything outside of consumerism, prompting reflection on resulting contemporary problems such as environmental exploitation. Rather than virtue, perhaps misuse drives contemporary trials. Through his protagonist, Tutuola cynically portrays his perception of the contemporary “hero” and the problems arising from consumerism.

Tutuola directly addresses his readers to create a sense of proximity, characteristic of oral discourse. Ong critiques this intimacy as exclusive and tribalistic—incapable of functioning outside that particular time and space. However, Tutuola repurposes this intimacy to accomplish just the opposite—to remind future generations of their heritage. The narrator directly addresses his audience throughout his story, at one point inviting them to write him advice regarding a court case he needed to judge: “So I shall be very grateful if anyone who reads this story-book can judge one or both cases and send the judgment to me as early as possible.” In this situation, the narrator
invokes audience participation just as an orator might. What’s more, instead of asking for a verbal response, he asks them to work within the same genre as the text—a written one. This directly challenges Ong’s assumption that literacy is individualistic for it facilitates communication outside time and space. By using the second-person, Tutuola exemplifies Irele’s depiction of African orality “as suggestive signposts in the narrative or prosodic movement of a discourse that is still in the future.” Tutuola’s narrative enables future discourse that is both intimate and universal. By creating a sense of shared space, Tutuola effectively achieves his goal to remind his wide audience of Yoruba culture.

Finally, Tutuola’s use of parataxis to organize his text challenges the assumption that narrative accumulation is the only way to create meaning. Although Ong’s pairing of “paratactic and non-cumulative narrative” with orality, and “syntactic and cumulative narrativity” with literacy is not incorrect, Irele critiques his implicit assumption that the former is devoid of meaning on account of its narrative style. To a reader that is accustomed to drawing meaning through syntactical denotation, Tutuola’s final paragraph could appear somewhat senseless:

But when the slave carried the sacrifice to heaven and gave it to Heaven he (slave) could not reach halfway back to the earth before a heavy rain came and when the slave was beaten by this heavy rain and when he reached town, he wanted to escape from the rain, but nobody would allow him to enter his or her house at all. All the people were thinking that he (slave) would carry them also to Heaven as he had carried the sacrifice to Heaven, and were afraid. But when for three months the rain had been falling regularly, there was no famine again.

At first glance, the paragraph’s evasion of the main plot and its laundry list of events make it appear drawn-out and irrelevant. However, analyzing this text with an oral lens allows for new meaning for orality understood horizontally rather than vertically. The paragraph’s overall lack of syntax makes it action-oriented, forcing a reader to follow the thread of events as though they were listening. The parentheses mimic conversational discourse, allowing listeners to keep track of pronouns’ subjects. Here, attention shifts permanently away from the narrator as the slave temporarily becomes the protagonist. Afterwards, the narrative’s focus pans out to examine the people and, finally, their environment. As action moves from center to periphery, the audience remembers Tutuola’s original motivations. Rather than highlighting the narrative, he wants to revive lost reverence for Yoruba customs amongst future generations. Through parataxis, Tutuola seamlessly reorients focus to the relationship between earth and heaven, symbolically suggesting future generations’ relationship to Yoruba heritage and the environment. Parataxis enables Tutuola to invoke future generations’ reunion with Yoruba traditions in form and content.

To conclude, Tutuola’s The Palm Wine Drinkard weaves together oral and literary elements to construct a text reflecting the author’s Yoruba heritage in a contemporary setting. Indeed, the novel’s main organizing elements lend it complexity through irony, allow it to transcend spatial boundaries, and facilitate a plot that meanders between multiple narratives. When asked to speak to the purpose of his writing, Tutuola stated that he had observed a lack of care towards the Yoruba tradition and hoped, “If I do this they may change their mind… to remember our custom, not to leave it to die… That was my intention.” Literature offers a means of communication for the conservation and transfer of oral traditions. On the other hand, oral traditions offer innovative ways to structure literature that invite modern audiences to new levels of imagination or empathy with other cultures. Tutuola’s rich prose exhorts his modern audience to dialogue with the Yoruba tradition through its very existence as a text embodying this reality.

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Flowin’ to the Ocean
Dramatizing the Depths of Legacy through Ritualized Space in *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea*

Robert Pike

The Black identity that propels 2017’s *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* by Nathan Alan Davis is fostered in its opening stage directions that declare the play “a simple ritual.” Theater and ritual work as composite phenomena, blending language, music, spectacle, and narrative into a cohesive event. Central to these paradigms is the demarcation of space: establishing the concrete and/or performative parameters by which the construct operates. In contemporary stage practice, the theatrical conceit is typically reserved for the theater-makers themselves: The production team determines where an audience sits, how a set is moved, the rhythm of transitions, etc. However, through Davis’s explicit use of the ritualistic semiotics of space-making, *Dontrell’s* playtext realizes a rich complexity of Black identity that champions creation, reclamation, and renewal. What is so effective about this approach is the purposeful merging of form and content: pairing the narrative journey of a modern-day African American asserting his space in the world with the essential theatricality of Black communal space-making found in African Diasporic ritual drama. As such, this study first examines the dramatic action of *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* as a modern day migration narrative grounded in the diegetic geographies of the plot. Next, the prescribed stage directions and cadence of the extra-narrative elements of the text are observed as spatial-performative operations extending from African Diasporic traditions. In conclusion, I analyze how both these elements converge in Dontrell’s reunification with his ancestry in the play’s final scene. What surfaces in Davis’s purposeful merging of content and form is a vision of Black artistic generation that responds to the embedded trauma of erasure through an embrace and celebration of Legacy.

The plot of *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* focuses in narrowly around the titular character. Dontrell Jones the Third, “the heir to a haunting and powerful legacy,”2 is an eighteen-year-old Black man residing in Baltimore, Maryland. Much to the pride of his family, he is an incoming freshman at Johns Hopkins University on a full-ride scholarship. The narrative meets Dontrell on a summer night less than a month before classes start. In a dream, he envisions a slave ship with a captive on the deck, a man bearing the face of Dontrell’s father.3 The unnamed man then jumps into the ocean, leaving aboard a woman and their unborn child in the vessel’s keep. This vision sparks in Dontrell a quest: to voyage from his home to the depths of the sea to retrieve his lost ancestor. The plot occupies the two subsequent days from this event. Within that period, Dontrell learns how to swim with the help of his newly met lifeguard-turned-soulmate Erika, a young white woman whose own journey of identity becomes bound up in Dontrell’s pursuit. Climatically, Dontrell confronts his nuclear family’s fears of his all-possessing mission, assuaging their uncertainties of where his search is leading him and ultimately bolstering their familial bonds. Upon garnering their blessings, Dontrell sets
forth with Erika from Baltimore to the Atlantic to meet Fate face-to-face.

For all its simplicity of action, *Dontrell’s* world is textured with warm humor, poetic majesty, and a looming cyclical Destiny. At its core, however, is a spatial enterprise that can be understood as a type of migration narrative as posited in Farah Jasmine Griffin’s *Who Set You Flowin’?* insofar as it is understood as an “attempt to come to terms with the massive dislocation of [B]lack peoples following migration.”

However, Griffin’s formation broadly figures Black migrations towards urban (northern) environs and away from familiar ancestral dwellings, whereas Davis’s play moves from the urban/home space, towards an unknown ancestral locale. As Griffin herself notes, even the most dominant migration narratives are challenged by new visions. Therefore, despite harboring a divergent directionality of migration, *Who Set You Flowin’?* serves as an instructive lens for *Dontrell* because it shares salient structural features described in Griffin’s theory. Chiefly, the two overarching narrative spaces in the play, that of Baltimore and the Atlantic, resonate respectfully with Griffin’s notions of “safe space” and “the site of the ancestor.” The domestic and pedestrian settings that *Dontrell* moves through in Baltimore function as a safe space, serving as *Dontrell’s* “locus of sustenance and preservation.” In the safe space, *Dontrell* relies on the community (composed of his family, friends, and soulmate) that nourishes him, receiving the material and spiritual support to respond to his “priceless vision.”

*Dontrell*’s arc may be a journey of self, but it is not theatrically realized as one. In the production notes, Davis states:

All actors except *Dontrell* are part of the Company. The Company can remain on-stage for most of the play. Their physical placement and focus, presence, or absence visually underscores the action. When a character “enters” or “exits”, this implies entering or exiting the defined space of the given scene... As visual narrator of the action, the Company helps to arrange the set and execute transitions. Transitions should be considered part of the play, rather than masked.

The performative language by which *Dontrell* moves through space is not through a means of photographic realism or set-changes hidden
behind curtains, but through feats of pure theatricality. The audience experiences the drama through these performative acts of creative communal generation produced by the ensemble, beholding the manipulation of space during scene transitions as they would a scene. The text calls for the ensemble to conjure a swimming pool, the Baltimore aquarium, a TV program, various residential spaces, and the ocean itself within the confines of the play space. Moreover, as the Company takes on the non-diegetic work of scene-setting to realize Dottrell’s story, they simultaneously don their roles as the most intimate members of Dottrell’s life, stepping into the action to execute the discursive functions of the narrative “safe space” that cultivates and prepares him for his journey to the sea.

This dual nature of the Company as both story and storyteller is further cemented in the ceremonial cadence of the text. These beats take on various forms throughout the drama by means of language, rhythm, and gesture. Illustrative to this point, before embarking to his ancestor, the Company’s shared chants of “Bum-bum!” aurally embody Dottrell’s heart-beat, rendering his very life-source sonically perceptible to the audience.\(^{15}\) In the “simple ritual” of the prologue, the audience experiences the power of gesture:

“One at a time the actors in the COMPANY approach DONTRELL.

ROBBY: (Giving DONTRELL a mini-cassette recorder.) Keep a record.

SHEA: (Putting a cassette in the recorder.) Speak it right.

DAD: (Holding up a pair of very old shoes.) Walk in these.

ALL COMPANY: Tread light.

ERIKA: (Giving him a sip of water from a cup.) A river for your thirst.

DANIELLE: (Feeding him a piece of cake.) Pack you a snack.

MOM: (Tilting up his head by the chin.) Eyes to the East:

ALL COMPANY: (Claps their hands.) (Clap.)-(Clap.)-(Clap.)\(^ {16}\)

Each of these gestural interactions sync with distinct narrative moments of care for Dottrell throughout the course of the play. As an example, after accepting Dottrell’s path, his father hands Dottrell’s grandfather’s shoes to him, simultaneously echoing the ritual moment in the prologue and thus poetically signaling Dottrell’s narrative cyclicity with his nearer ancestry.\(^{17}\) In the logic of the interplay between space and semiotics, the Company is not merely woven into the fabric of Dottrell’s own search for identity, but it speaks to a larger Black communal identity evident in the African Diasporic tradition of ritualizing the dramatic space. As Beverly J. Robinson argues in *The Sense of Self in Ritualizing New Performance Spaces for Survival,* Ritualizing spaces where rhythms, dance, songs, storytelling, humor, and masking are used reflect the ambitions and intelligence of people who have created their own theater history. These people may have been displaced from their homeland, but they have not lost their self-knowledge.\(^{18}\)

While this “self-knowledge” is certainly evident in the communal storytelling of *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea,* Davis’s overarching use of these traditions are best understood in the final moments of the play: when Dottrell completes his migration by physically diving into the sea alone.\(^ {19}\) The mystery he uncovers in the ancestral space recontextualizes his journey both for himself and the audience.

Though reverberating in the preceding narrative and its theatrical trappings, in the ocean space, ritual becomes augmented and reified in
full confrontation with the ancestor. In *Who Set You Flowin’?*, Griffin expands the concept of the ancestor in migration narratives to not only incorporate the possibility of the actual ancestor as an entity in a narrative but also to acknowledge the ancestor’s availability in custom and tradition.20 In this site of the ancestor, the audience receives both. The ancestor is portrayed corporeally, “part man, part ocean spirit,” yet functions in ritual.21 Speaking in the Yoruba tongue, the ancestor hails the submerged Dontrell as his own, touching his face and saying, “Is this not my flesh…? Is this not my blood?”22 Dontrell, refusing to leave the sea despite his ancestor’s nonverbal urging, breathes in the water and faints. The Company, now assuming roles as ancestors themselves, begin the extensive ritual dance of “Yemaya (Yemoja): Yoruba Goddess of the Ocean, Salt Water, Life and Fertility.”23 After Dontrell wakes up and joins their dance, the ancestors subsequently lift him out of the water onto the safety of Erika’s boat. The ancestor stands with the couple on the boat, outside of the sea, and the Company’s communal stomps end the play.24

The traditions that Davis incorporates motion to a larger system of thought in African Diasporic drama. Though the modern-day Yoruba are a large nationality found in Nigeria and West Africa, some scholars indicate that half of the Africans captured in European slave trade of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were of the Yoruba people.25 As a central people in the African Diaspora, the Yoruba religion spread widely and deeply with practitioners across the globe up to modern day. Along with a pantheon of gods, Yoruba mythology is constituted on a metaphysical system composed of delicately crafted and complex concepts: being and non-being, temporalities, tragedy, creation/destruction, and more.26 In *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea*’s conclusion, much like the water that engulfs him, the protagonist is steeped in an existential conversation with a vast tradition previously obfuscated in the uneven geographies subjected to his ancestral abandoned ancestry. By answering the call, Dontrell confronts what was previously unknown but deeply felt. Immersed in a space of Black aesthetic sublime, he produces a new kind of knowledge found in ritual—a knowledge of renewal. Robinson defines ritual as “a recurring pattern that represents the desire to begin life anew, and the need to find some way of expressing that desire,”27 and, indeed, the ritual dance of Yemaya communally rescues both Dontrell and his progenitors, revealing a place of destruction to also be a space of regeneration.

In these processes of communal ritual, Dontrell finds a nexus of his inherited African ancestral past and the American present he inhabits. However, the play ends without prescriptive futurity of how Dontrell should act on this knowledge. These two temporalities reflect the central identity struggle of W.E.B. Dubois’s concept of “double consciousness” wherein “one ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro.”28 However, even in face of this opposition, Dubois proposes a vision of Black subjectivity that finds that “to attain his place in the world, he must be himself and not another.”29 What *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* so wonderfully accomplishes is stewarding the space for its protagonist to claim that place as himself. In the ethics of empowerment Davis employs, true healing and true understanding are achieved most powerfully through the support our most intimate relationships produce. Answering our own call to Legacy, we can only hope for both the nourishment and the space to join in the dance.

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In Book 5 of the Odyssey, two characters exhibit the same physical reaction in quick succession. After Hermes announces to Calypso the gods’ decision that Odysseus must leave her home island Ogygia, Calypso ῥίγησεν. Once Hermes leaves, Calypso informs Odysseus that she is sending him away; upon hearing her speak, Odysseus ῥίγησεν. These two occurrences of the verb ῥιγέω, defined by R. J. Cunliffe as “to be physically affected by a sudden summons or announcement, be fluttered or thrown into agitation,” appear fifty-five lines apart in sets of nearly identical lines:

_cols_1

Thus he [Hermes] was speaking, and Calypso shuddered, divine among goddesses, and addressing him she spoke winged words…

_cols_1

Thus she [Calypso] was speaking, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus shuddered, and addressing her he spoke winged words…

Despite this repetition of ῥιγέω within Book 5, the verb itself is not common; it occurs just one more time in the Odyssey and a total of 17 times in the Iliad. I argue that the poet repeats ῥιγέω in Book 5 not simply because of its ability to fit the metrical demands of oral poetry, but to create an intentional and thematic juxtaposition between Odysseus and Calypso. In order to analyze the effect of this juxtaposition, an elucidation of the verb’s meaning within context is necessary. Cunliffe’s definition fails to pinpoint what is particularly agitating about the twin announcements in Book 5, and past translations vary in rendering ῥιγέω and its emotional thrust. Examining other appearances of ῥιγέω in Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey reveals that this action often occurs out of dread at the schemes of the gods. The repetition of ῥιγέω in Book 5 serves to contrast Calypso’s dual roles as human-lover and powerful goddess, highlighting her similarity with the mortal Odysseus, who is also caught up in a mortal-divine power hierarchy that holds sway over his relationships. Homer uses ῥιγέω to indicate what the characters in each of his epics fear to the point of trembling; in the Odyssey, this is the loss of intimate relationships.

Defining and Diagnosing ῥιγέω

The repetition of ῥιγέω is thematically relevant and cannot be written off as a result of metrical convenience alone. Surveying the attested uses of ῥιγέω in Homer indeed indicates that the word is part of the oral poet’s formulaic repertoire, with a Homeric formula defined by classicist Milman Parry as “an expression regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express an essential idea.” In the quotations from Book 5 above, ῥίγησεν appears at the same metrical place in the line, in each case following ὥς φάτο (“thus he/she was speaking”). Two
more Homeric occurrences follow the exact pattern ὡς φάτο, ὡς φάτον, while four occurrences have ὡς φήσεν at the opening of the line. In addition, in the Iliad, two occurrences are located in identical lines and two more in almost-identical lines. The remaining eight Homeric occurrences of ῥιγέω vary in form and metrical position. The infrequency of ῥιγέω in Homer is enough to indicate that the formula was not simply inserted by the oral poet wherever metrically convenient or possible. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume some level of intentionality and awareness of nearby repetition on the part of either the oral poet or the person who first wrote the poem down. The poet has formulated, by repeated phrasing, a link between Od. 5.116-117 and Od. 5.171-172; thus, the repetition can be regarded as a juxtaposition that is neither accidental nor incidental. But what exactly is the “essential idea” expressed by ῥιγέω, and what is its thematic significance in Book 5?

Definitions and translations do little to illuminate the thrust of ῥίγησεν in Book 5 as they offer a wide range of perspectives on ῥιγέω and differing diagnoses on what prompts the action. The first definition of ῥιγέω offered by Cunliffe is to “to be physically affected by fear as if by cold, shudder with fear, dread or apprehension.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines “shudder” as “to have a convulsive tremor of the body caused by fear, abhorrence, or cold; hence, to tremble with horror or dread.” But translating ῥίγησεν as “shuddered” in Book 5 does not immediately make clear which emotion—fear, dread, apprehension, or even abhorrence—Calypso and Odysseus feel, or what aspect of the announcements is shudder-worthy. Different translators have attempted to clarify this ambiguity. George Chapman, who was the first to translate Homer into English in 1616, names Calypso’s emotion as “a love-check’d horror,” evoking Calypso’s position as a lover fearing the loss of her beloved Odysseus. In contrast, Samuel Butler in 1900 translates that Calypso “trembled with rage,” and, most recently, Emily Wilson in 2018 that she “shuddered and let fly at him,” both depicting feelings of anger.

In translating ῥίγησεν for Odysseus, Chapman shifts from horror to amazement, writing that Odysseus “stood amaz’d at this strange change” in front of Calypso. Butler and Wilson choose the straightforward “shuddered” for Odysseus. This lack of consistency between translators and even within translations in rendering ῥιγέω is indicative of its difficulties and interpretive possibilities. Even so, it seems strange to assume that the poet meant Calypso and Odysseus to express two different emotions in 5.116 and 5.171, a pair of distinctly similar lines located in close proximity to one another.

Examining other Homeric uses of ῥιγέω shows that it is a reactionary verb; it is an action in response to a cause which Cunliffe mainly identifies as fear. Cunliffe divides his definition into four parts: the first general definition was given in the above paragraph; the second is for uses with an accusative direct object, defined as “shudder at”; the third is for uses with the infinitive, “to shudder from doing”; and the fourth, which applies to the uses in Book 5, is for reactions specifically attributed to “a sudden summons or announcement.” Here I will focus on identifying the cause of the verbal action within context; these categorizations are outlined in the appendix below. In the Iliad, most uses demonstrate fear of an aspect of warfare, whether that be the warrior Hector, injury, witnessing death, the approaching enemy, or the idea of battle in general. Often ῥιγέω is specifically a reaction to seeing a frightening sight used in conjunction with a form of ὁράω, the aorist tense of ὁράω, “I saw.” Two uses are associated with the faculty of hearing in some way. Thus, as would be expected for such a reactionary verb, ῥιγέω is often a response to something with a sensory aspect.

The sensory aspect of hearing is also at play when ῥίγησεν is used as a reaction to speech, both in Book 5 and in the two occurrences in the Iliad that also follow the phrase ὡς φήσεν. In the first, Priam reacts to the herald Idaeus’s announcement of the imminent duel between Menelaus and Paris. In the second, Hera has seduced Zeus to distract him from the battlefield and trembles...
at his angry threats of punishment. Both are clearly reactions of fear and dread, the former of the dangers of fighting and the latter of Zeus’s retaliation. This suggests that, in Book 5, Calypso and Odysseus are both expressing feelings of fear and dread, rather than anger or amazement. But Hermes’s and Calypso’s announcements are not outright threats of violence. So why do Calypso and Odysseus both react with alarm? After all, the report of his upcoming departure should be good news to Odysseus, even if not to Calypso.

A hint towards understanding ῥιγέω in Book 5 is suggested by another use of ῥιγέω, attested three times in the Iliad, which involves fear arising from the knowledge of the intervention of the immortal gods in the ongoing fighting. The Trojans ἐρρίγησαν when they see the portent of a snake that has bitten an eagle, which they identify as an omen of Zeus. When the arrow he is aiming at Hector snaps, Teucer shudders and tells his brother Aias that a god (δαίμων) is working against him. Later, Aias’s spear-point falls off as he faces Hector, and he trembles at the “deeds of the gods” (…ῥίγησέν τε / ἔργα θεῶν) and at Zeus, who plans a Trojan victory (Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, Τρώεσσι δὲ βουλετῶ νίκην). In the latter two passages, the formulaic phrase πᾶχυ μάχης ἐπὶ μήδεα κείρε or κείρει (“he destroyed/destroys entirely the plans of battle”) appears one or two lines after a form of ῥιγέω. This phrase portrays the gods (a δαίμων and Zeus) as actively working against him. Later, Aias’s spear-point falls off as he faces Hector, and he trembles at the “deeds of the gods” (…ῥίγησέν τε / ἔργα θεῶν) and at Zeus, who plans a Trojan victory (Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, Τρώεσσι δὲ βουλετῶ νίκην). In the latter two passages, the formulaic phrase πᾶχυ μάχης ἐπὶ μήδεα κείρε or κείρει (“he destroyed/destroys entirely the plans of battle”) appears one or two lines after a form of ῥιγέω. This phrase portrays the gods (a δαίμων and Zeus) as actively working against the Greeks’ plans for battle, and ῥιγέω occurs at the moment this fact dawns upon Teucer and Aias. These uses of ῥιγέω seem to align especially well with Cunliffe’s idea of “apprehension” in that the characters are reacting to a sudden realization of the threatening devices of the gods.

Divine Threats to Relationships

The replies of Calypso and Odysseus in Book 5 suggest that it is similarly the ἔργα θεῶν—what the gods are doing or plan to do—that strike fear into the hearts of the lovers. Calypso responds to Hermes by calling the gods cruel (σχέτλιοι ἐστε, θοι) for begrudging goddesses their romantic relationships with men (οἱ τε θεαῖς ἀγάασθε παρ᾽ ἀνδράσιν εὐνάξεσθαι / ἀμφαδίην, ἣν τις τε φιλόν πουρέτ άκοιτην). Rather than simply lamenting the fact that Odysseus must leave, Calypso picks a fight with the gods in general for meddling in her love affair. She shudders in response to the interference of the gods, who, as if punishing her, order that her lover leave her. Although a minor goddess herself, Calypso is not above trembling at the might of the more powerful gods, Zeus in particular. Much like Hera fearing being punished by Zeus, Calypso sees the loss of Odysseus as an example of the cruelty of the gods. The quakings of Calypso and Hera are indicative of divine power dynamics where Zeus, a male god, can strike fear in the hearts of goddesses, whether Olympian or non-Olympian. The power divide between Zeus and Calypso explains her dread and prevents her criticism of the σχέτλιοι θεών from implicating herself.

In her response to Hermes, Calypso advances two goddess-human pairings—Eos and Orion, Demeter and Iasion—as other examples of gods interfering with such relationships. She describes these relationships as ἀμφαδίην, ‘public.’ Stanford views ἀμφαδίην as implying that gods “were prepared to overlook secret liaisons with inferior beings, but not open marriages.” ‘Marriage,’ however, is a word rarely applicable when it comes to divine-human relationships, and does not fit well with the examples Calypso provides. But even at the beginning of the Odyssey, the epic narrator portrays Calypso as desirous of making Odysseus her πόσις (λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι, “longing for him to be her husband”). Without going into a detailed analysis of whether the word πόσις entails marriage, it is clear from ἀμφαδίην that Calypso considers her relationship with Odysseus to be more than a clandestine hook-up, and certainly an intimacy of long duration. In that sense, Calypso does desire a ‘marriage’ of sorts with Odysseus, a union which Odysseus’s departure would make impossible. But Calypso’s mythical examples highlight another
potential cause for her trembling: Orion and Iasion both face death for their relationships with goddesses. This suggests that Calypso is not just afraid of Odysseus leaving, but of him dying. The cruelty of the gods brings punishment both to her and, as she seems to think likely, to Odysseus.

If Calypso is indeed shuddering at the idea of Odysseus’s likely death at sea, this may explain the curious manner of her announcement to Odysseus. Calypso leaves the role of the other gods in Odysseus’s send-off out of her speech entirely, speaking in the first person (ἀποπέμψω, “I will send away”). Thus her speech presents Odysseus’s departure as her own plan, placing her in the role of meddling goddess rather than messenger. In response, Odysseus declares that she must be acting deceitfully and actually has something else planned for him (ἄλλο τι δὴ σύ, θεά, τόδε μήθεαι, οὐδὲ τι πομπήν, “Indeed you intend some other thing, goddess, not my send-off in any way”). He sees her announcement of his departure as a dangerous scheme of hers. While Calypso delivers news that is promising for him at face value, Odysseus instead hears the dangerous machinations of a goddess. Rutherdale views this as evidence that Odysseus, through his adventures and wanderings, has developed a heightened suspicion, an interpretation supported by Wilson’s translation (“Odysseus, informed by many years of pain and loss, shuddered”). From Odysseus’s point of view, Calypso is one of the cruel and calculating immortals that Calypso herself complains of lines earlier. In the course of these lines, Calypso has shifted in the hierarchy of power; no longer the lesser goddess shuddering at Zeus, she is the powerful divinity that causes a mortal to tremble. The repetition of ῥίγησεν highlights these dual aspects of Calypso’s divine position. At the same time, the fact that Odysseus ῥίγησεν indicates that he is correctly able to discern the danger to himself—a danger which Calypso is perhaps attempting to hide by failing to mention Hermes’s visit.

Calypso’s message, in potentially threatening Odysseus’s life, also threatens Odysseus’s continued marriage with Penelope, much as the gods’ plan interferes with Calypso’s desired ‘marriage’ to Odysseus. In fact, the only other usage of ῥίγησεν in the Odyssey applies to Penelope, who, upon being reunited with her husband, tells him that she has been constantly afraid (αἰεὶ … ἐρρίγει) that a man may trick her with evil devices. Unlike Odysseus, Penelope shudders at the schemes of mortals, not divinities. However, like Odysseus she fears tricks that would result in their final separation. Her words even echo those of Calypso in sentiment, as she expresses lines earlier that the gods have begrudged them being together:

... θεοί δ᾿ ἰσαύρων ὀίων, 
οἵ νῶιν ἀγάσαν μενόντε 
ἠβῆς ταρπῆναι καὶ γήραος οὐδὸν 
ἐκέσθαι.39

But the gods were granting us woe, who begrudged that the two of us remain with one another to enjoy our youth and reach the threshold of old age.

Penelope’s use of ῥιγέω differs in context and form from the verb’s appearances in Book 5, but the tremblings of Calypso, Odysseus, and Penelope all converge around the fear of the disruption of marriage or marriage-adjacent relationships.

Conclusion
The parallel situations of Calypso and Odysseus in Book 5 are highlighted by the repetition of ῥίγησεν. Both Calypso and Odysseus receive an injunction regarding Odysseus’ departure, but their similarities arise in their analogous reactions to this announcement. Each character is, in a different way, subject to the will of the gods in whether his or her relationship will continue, prompting them to be either critical or suspicious of divine motives. The repetition of ῥίγεω also plays with Calypso’s relation to the fear of divine interference, positioning her first as threatened in her potential ‘marriage,’ and then as a threat herself to Odysseus’s original
marriage with Penelope. By revealing what the characters fear, the use of ῥιγέω is indicative of central conflicts in Homer’s works. In the Iliad, this conflict is war. In the Odyssey, it is the integrity of the οἶκος (“home”), to which marriage is fundamental. The duplicate shudderings found in Book 5 are above all a fear-driven response to the dawning knowledge that the meddling gods are at work.

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Appendix

Odyssey Appearances (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line(s)</th>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Context of ῥιγέω</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.116-117</td>
<td>ὡς φάτο, ῥίγησεν δὲ Καλυψώ, δία θεάων, καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἐπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα:</td>
<td>Speech (ὡς φάτο)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thus he [Hermes] was speaking, and Calypso shuddered, divine among goddesses, and addressing him she spoke winged words…</td>
<td>Calypso reacts to Hermes’s announcement that the gods order her to send Odysseus off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.171-172</td>
<td>ὡς φάτο, ῥίγησεν δὲ πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς, καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἐπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα:</td>
<td>Speech (ὡς φάτο)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thus she [Calypso] was speaking, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus shuddered, and addressing her he spoke winged words…</td>
<td>Odysseus reacts to Calypso’s announcement that the time has come for him to leave Ogygia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.215-217</td>
<td>αἰεὶ γάρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν ἐρρίγει μή τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτο ἔπεσσιν ἐλθών: πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν.</td>
<td>Fear of potential action, with infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Penelope to Odysseus:] For always my heart in my dear breast(s) shudders lest someone of mortals, coming, should beguile me with his words: for many devise evil schemes.</td>
<td>Penelope and Odysseus finally recognize one another and Penelope speaks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Iliad Appearances (17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line(s)</th>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Context of ῥιγέω</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.259-260</td>
<td>ὡς φάτο ῥίγησεν δ´ ὁ γέρων, ἐκέλευσε δ´ ἑταῖρους ἵππους ζευγνύμεναι τοι δ´ ὁρησαλέως ἐπάθοντο.</td>
<td>Speech (ὡς φάτο), War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thus he [Idaeus] was speaking, and the old man [Priam] shuddered, and he ordered his companions to yoke the horses: and quickly they obeyed him.</td>
<td>Priam reacts to Idaeus’s announcement that Menelaus and Paris are about to fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line(s)</td>
<td>Passage</td>
<td>Context of ῥιγέω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.351-354</td>
<td>Ζεῦ ἄνα δὸς τίσασθαι ὅ με πρότερος κάκ᾽ ἔοργε δῖον Ἀλέξανδρον, καὶ ἐμῇ υπὸ χερσὶ δάμασσον, ὥρᾳ τις ἐρρίγῃσι καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων ξεινοδόκον κακὰ ῥέξαι, ὅ κεν φιλότητα παράσχῃ.</td>
<td>Fear of potential action, with infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Dillon</td>
<td>Lord Zeus, grant that I may avenge myself on him who first did me evil, godly Alexander, and overpower him beneath my hands, in order that someone even of men born-hereafter may shudder to do evil to his host, who offered friendship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.148-150 (bis)</td>
<td>ῥίγησεν δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐπειτα ἄναξ ἁγαμέμνων ὡς εἰδεν μέλαν αἷμα καταρρέον ἐξ ὠτειλῆς: ῥίγησεν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἀρηΐφιλος Μενέλαος.</td>
<td>Sight (eidev), War injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meleaus prays to Zeus before he throws his spear at Alexander.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.277-279</td>
<td>τῷ δὲ τ᾽ ἄνευθεν ἐόντι μελάντερον ἠὕτε πίσσα φαίνετ᾽ ἰὸν κατὰ πόντον, ἄγει δὲ τε λαίλαπα πολλήν, ῥίγησέν τε ἰδών, ὑπὸ τε σπέος ἤλασε μῆλα:</td>
<td>Sight (idōn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A simile used to describe the Aiantes and the host of armed battalions of warriors coming alongside them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.350-351</td>
<td>εἰ δὲ σύ γ᾽ ἐς πόλεμον πωλήσεις, ἦ τέ σ᾽ ὀΐω ῥιγήσει πόλεμόν γε καὶ εἴ χ᾽ ἑτέρωθι πύθηαι.</td>
<td>War (connected with hearing, πύθηαι)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diomedes mocks Aphrodite after wounding her in battle.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.596</td>
<td>τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ῥίγησε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης</td>
<td>Sight (idōn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diomedes reacts to the sight of Hector in battle.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.113-114</td>
<td>καὶ δ᾽ Ἀχιλεὺς τοῦτο γε μάχῃ ἐνι κυδιανείρῃ ἔρριγ᾽ ἀντιβολῆσαι, ὅ περ σέ ὀλό το ἀμείνων. Even Achilles shudders to meet this man in glory- bringing battle, although he is much better/stronger than you.</td>
<td>War, Fear of potential action, with infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agamemnon attempts to dissuade Menelaus from fighting Hector.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.254</td>
<td>ῥίγησεν τ’ ἄρ’ ἐπειτα ἄναξ ἁγαμέμνων</td>
<td>War injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coon has injured Agamemnon.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line(s)</td>
<td>Passage</td>
<td>Context of ριγέω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.345 (see 5.596)</td>
<td>τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ρίγησε βοὴν αγαθὸς Διομήδης</td>
<td>Sight (ἰδὼν)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.208-209</td>
<td>Τρῶες δ᾽ ἐρρίγησαν ὅπως ἰδὼν αἰώλον ύφν κείμενον ἐν μέσσοι Διὸς τέρας αἰγιόχοιο.</td>
<td>Sight (ἰδὼν)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.331</td>
<td>τοὺς δὲ ἰδὼν ρίγησ᾽ υἱὸς Πετεῶο Μενεσθεύς</td>
<td>Sight (ἰδὼν)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.34-35</td>
<td>ὣς φάτο, ρίγησεν δὲ βοῶπις πότνια Ἕρη, καί μιν φωνήσας ἐπεα πτερόεντα προσῆυδα:</td>
<td>Speech (ὡς φάτο)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.436</td>
<td>Αἴας δ᾽ ἐρρίγησε, κασίγνητον δὲ προσῆυδα:</td>
<td>Death of comrade in battle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.466-468</td>
<td>Τεῦκρος δ᾽ ἐρρίγησε, κασίγνητον δὲ προσῆυδα: ὄσ πότοι ἢ δὴ πάγχυ μάχης ἐπὶ μήδεα κείρει δαίμων ἡμετέρης, ὃ τέ μοι βιῶν ἔκβαλε χειρός…</td>
<td>Unusual event, Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.119-121</td>
<td>(see 15.467) γνῶ δ᾽ Αἴας κατὰ θυμόν ἀμύμονα ρίγησέν τε ἔργα θεῶν, ὃ ρα πάγχυ μάχης ἐπὶ μήδεα κείρει Ζεὺς ύψιβρεμέτης, Τρώοισι δὲ βούλετο νίκην.</td>
<td>Knowledge (γνῶ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.175</td>
<td>οὐ τοι ἐγὼν ἐρρίγησε μάχην οὐδὲ κτύπον ἱππών.</td>
<td>War and its sound (κτύπον)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview with Director
Richard Boyd

by Will McCormack

Hi professor, thanks so much for meeting with me. My first question is, how did you get interested in becoming a professor, specifically of political thought?

Well, a big part of the story was that I happened to go to college at the University of Chicago. Being a stereotypically intellectual environment, the classes we took at the U of C were centered on the “Great Books.” I had no idea what that meant before getting there, but we were forced, as part of the Common Core curriculum, to read the likes of Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Tocqueville—people I’d barely heard of. I’m not going to say that I was initially very good at it, but I found it fun at least.

At first I was thinking I’d go to law school after graduation, but I really fell in love with ideas based on my exposure there as an undergraduate. I had fantastic professors such as Ralph Lerner, Edward Shils, and Arthur Mann in the History department, who got me interested in the history of ideas and the history of political thought. I thought, “Wow, this is fun. I’d like to continue doing this as long as I can. Why not go on to graduate school and get a Ph.D? At the end of it, if I can’t find an academic job or I don’t like academia, then I can go do something else.” After I finished my Ph.D, I was lucky enough to get a postdoctoral position back at the University of Chicago teaching in the same class that I took as an undergraduate. After teaching there for a few years, getting a tenure track job at University of Wisconsin, then getting hired here at Georgetown, it’s been a dream come true to be able to make a career out of doing something I really do love.

Were there any particular works that were especially mind-opening for you back then?

The first book that got me excited was Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan. For thirty-ish years now, I’ve had a love-hate relationship with Hobbes. I’m pretty sure I disagreed with everything Hobbes said the first time I read the book in college. Then my dissertation work ended up engaging critically with Hobbes, still arguing against what I originally understood him to be saying.

Over the years I read more interpretations of Hobbes, especially the “liberal” reading by one of the figures who has influenced me most, Michael Oakeshott. Leviathan is such a monumental work, and my own experience has been that you
come to understand it layer by layer. There’s the obvious, surface layer: a strong defense of a kind of authoritarian government. Then you peel back that layer and you discover that maybe there are liberal premises underneath, ideas of individual freedom and natural rights. Then you go further and notice that there’s a kind of radical egalitarianism in Hobbes. There’s a way in which his argument becomes more inclusive and potentially attractive versus other strands of “liberal” thinking. I still don’t feel like I’ve completely figured Hobbes out, but that’s what keeps it engaging. You notice new things even after decades of reading the same book.

I love that you allude to these texts as having layers, still containing new insights after decades of study. Yet, as I’m sure you have encountered as a professor, not everyone is as eager to dive in. What might you say to those who are not sold on the enduring value of these texts?

I’m not one of those people who think we ought to accept everything these thinkers say uncritically, some kind of ancient wisdom merely by virtue of the fact that they’re old. But I do think the fact that we’re still reading these books after so many centuries is a testament to their profound and enduring insights into the human condition. Right or wrong, they speak to our current dilemmas if only we’re willing to listen to them.

If we knew nothing about Machiavelli or Hobbes’s life, what century they lived or who they were, I’d submit that their ideas would be just as useful to the world we live in right now. Do they teach us something about political order, authority, or government? I think so.

What many people don’t appreciate is that these books may be helpful in direct proportion to their unfamiliarity. Very often their insights are valuable precisely because they’re different from our own attitudes toward politics. That doesn’t mean that they’re right, of course, but looking at things from more than one angle or from a perspective that is foreign can be helpful. It allows us to see things about our current condition or institutions that might go unnoticed if we’re locked into a strictly twenty-first-century, democratic, progressive, egalitarian way of looking at the world.

One example of where you have studied the interplay between older thinkers and contemporary issues is in *The Cambridge Companion to Democracy in America*, which you edited. I think the chapter title “Tocqueville’s Conservatism and the Conservative’s Tocqueville” is brilliant. Can you share a little more about this piece?

Tocqueville thought about politics in terms of “aristocracy” versus “democracy,” whereas we today think in terms of Left and Right. So how do we translate the former into the latter? The premise of the chapter is not only to highlight the genuinely conservative dimensions of Tocqueville’s political thinking, but also to identify how his ideas have been mobilized by the political Right in the United States. That is, it’s a study of the actual use and deployment of Tocqueville’s ideas by conservative intellectuals and public figures in American politics from the nineteenth to the twenty first century.

The fact that he has these conservative sensibilities doesn’t necessarily mean that he belongs on the political Right, and there’s something historically contingent about us thinking of him today as a conservative. One of the most fascinating things for me was learning more about the context and reception of *Democracy in America* in nineteenth-century France, and how often Tocqueville found himself siding with the center-Left or Left, over and against the conservatives of his own day. He’s a subtle thinker in that he can be claimed simultaneously by the left, as he was in nineteenth-century England, but also by the Right, as from the post-War years onward in the United States.

Have you explored this question of how we remember and utilize political thinkers anywhere else?

This project pulled me into the issue of receptions more than anything I’ve done before. But if
you study political theory, it’s a generic question you have to consider if for no other reason than there are thinkers who’ve been used very obviously to bad ends and contrary to faithful interpretations of their ideas. For example, should we hold Machiavelli accountable for Machiavellianism? Should we hold Nietzsche accountable for the fact that certain elements of twentieth-century German nationalism drew upon him? I think if you asked Nietzsche if this was an accurate reading of his philosophy, he would have said no. But that’s not the end of it. What is it about his ideas that allowed him to be deployed toward causes he would have disapproved of?

In the case of Tocqueville, not only do we have his own life and political career to study, but we also have this book he wrote about America. Democracy in America continues to be read, often in conflicting ways, even by different types of conservatives. One example I give in the book is the US invasion of Iraq. One particular strand of conservatism, the Bush administration and other neoconservatives, were citing Tocqueville in favor of the US invasion and in the name of spreading democracy to Iraq and the world. Other more traditional conservatives were reading Tocqueville as saying the whole project of transplanting democracy is futile. So even within conservatism, there’s no consensus about exactly what Tocqueville meant. I wouldn’t say it is a weakness of Tocqueville so much as a reflection of his subtlety.

While not a weakness, a thinker that can be construed to support opposite ends of an argument is a problem for us as students and scholars. How do you approach evaluating the merits of these interpretations?

I think of it in terms of a range of plausibility. There are some deployments of thinkers that I would say are just interpretively wrong (insofar as one can say such a thing in the soft social sciences). There’s falsifiability in that they rest on clear misreadings or mischaracterizations of the ideas of the thinkers in question.

For Tocqueville, however, what makes it difficult is that if you’re a providentialist believer in democracy, you can find support for that interpretation in Democracy in America. Conversely, if you’re skeptical about the prospects for disseminating democracy by foreign interventions, there are plenty of arguments and examples in Democracy in America that support that position too—so I wouldn’t want to say that either of those is a “wrong” interpretation of Tocqueville. While one may be more plausible or faithful to the whole of his philosophy, they are both rooted in things that Tocqueville actually said and reasonable inferences from ideas he laid out.

So you are saying that there’s always the danger of abuse whenever we infer from Tocqueville’s thought, but there is deep value in applying his ideas to our current moment. Would you say that this is your job as a political philosopher?

I’ve never thought about it that way, but yes, that’s a very insightful way of expressing what I’d like to be doing as a political theorist. I’d like to think of myself as mapping insights and ideas from these earlier thinkers and periods onto the dilemmas of our own age. That’s probably the best thing that we can be doing as political theorists.

How exactly do we avoid this danger of abuse?

Unfortunately, thinkers can easily be twisted around to reach conclusions you’ve already determined. One can imagine lots of ideological deployments of Tocqueville, Nietzsche, Machiavelli, or whoever. Plenty of political discourse, and too much scholarship, is about doing exactly that: making political theorists say what we already think. But rather than starting off with an ideological agenda or political priors, you have to step back like a social scientist and think, “Okay, here’s a problem. What would thinker X or thinker Y say about it?” How do they approach the problem differently? Is there any wisdom or good counsel we can take from their approach that’s contrary to what we might have anticipated? Being inductive rather than deductive or tendentious is a big part of how we avoid the abuses.
Well, what good counsel do you think we can derive on the big picture issues facing our American democracy today?

One example is the incredible sway public opinion exercises over how people think about the world. There’s no better diagnostician of that phenomenon than Tocqueville. He understood the problem of tyrannical majorities and how public opinion could literally crush people on the wrong side—that’s an incredible insight. But at the same time, I’m not sure whether the fact that he was able to envision that danger as early and as profoundly as he did gives us any specific guidance as to whether, say, someone should be canceled because they said something on Twitter. The kind of insights he offers may not always lend themselves to programmatic answers. Even so, it’s vitally important to identify the tendencies of contemporary democracy and to try to find ways to steer in the other direction to offset that drift.

If not in real-world headlines, another domain in which you explore political thought is in your “Politics and Film” class. What are some of the big questions you and your students seek to answer here?

The first big question we approach is the relationship between ethics and politics. How can classic films like *The Godfather*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, or *The Battle of Algiers* shed light on the role of ethics in political life. Should politicians always be ethical? Can otherwise ethical political struggles use means that we would all deem to be unethical such as terrorism? What is the relationship between ends and means in politics? What’s the relationship between law and violence? For each one of the films, we do a short companion reading from a text from the history of political thought. So we’ll watch *The Godfather* and read Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. We watch *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and read Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. By the end of the class, we come to think about these films as being texts themselves with the same kinds of normative aims and raising many of the same questions.

The other big theme in the class is America. *The Godfather* starts off with a character whose name is literally “Good night America.” Even though he says he “believes in America,” he comes to visit the Don because America has failed to give him the justice he thinks his family deserves. So there is this tension between the justice of the American legal system, in so many ways imperfect, and the alternative system of justice offered by the Don. This theme of the sufficiency of the rule of law and the virtues and vices of America runs throughout many of the films.

What do you look for when selecting movies for your syllabus?

Like great philosophy or literature, the very best films don’t offer clear-cut answers to complicated moral questions. We all know films where there’s a moralizing point of view. There’s good, there’s evil, and the filmmaker is heavy-handed in trying to drive their point home. Those may be gratifying—especially if we agree with their point of view—but they’re not really philosophical. By contrast, for almost all the films I choose there’s some degree of moral ambiguity. *The Battle of Algiers* is a great example. We have these charismatic, powerful, and righteous characters fighting to liberate Algeria from French colonialism. They have moral justifications for what they’re doing. Yet, while we might want to sympathize with them, we also have to look at some of the means they use and be rightly horrified. There’s the noble cause of independence but, when you look at that concretely, do the ends justify the means? Does that mean it’s acceptable to plant bombs in milk bars where teenagers hang out and drink sodas? If so, what does this say about our underlying ethics? These films are all case studies in demonstrating the moral complexities and tensions of the real world.

In addition to teaching, you are the director of the Tocqueville Forum for Political Understanding on campus. In your own words, what does the Forum seek to do at Georgetown?

Our broader mission is to encourage the serious study of classics from the Western moral and philosophical tradition on the Georgetown
campus. Concretely, we sponsor lectures, conferences, and other events with speakers who reflect on the ongoing significance of great works of literature, music, philosophy, and political theory. These are public events open to the entire Georgetown community. More specifically, we want to provide a space for undergraduates in particular to get together to explore ideas they’ve encountered inside and outside their classes in a way that is comfortable for them. This part of Tocqueville Forum is largely self-directed by students, but we provide resources to subsidize undergraduate reading groups, informal colloquia with professors, and other occasions to reflect on and discuss ideas.

**How needed do you think a space like this is, maybe compared to your college days at the University of Chicago?**

It’s always relevant, I think. It was maybe less needed at Chicago because this kind of informal discussion was already such a big part of the culture and curriculum there. For at least the first couple of years, we were all reading the same books in our Common Core courses. Intellectual discussion was woven into the life of the university without anyone having to plan or support it.

One thing that seems different at Georgetown compared to Chicago, and now as opposed to back then, is that students tend to default to thinking about things in immediate, practical terms. I don’t know if that’s a difference between institutions or a characteristic of the times, but it does seem different. Tocqueville’s ideas may be great, but what does he tell me about tax reform in America or other very specific policies or reforms? I think the great thing about the Tocqueville Forum, and about these kinds of books, is how they carve out a space for the exploration of ideas that don’t have to be in the service of solving any specific political or technical problem.

Excellent students come to Georgetown because they’re interested in government and making the world a better place. Those are incredibly worthy aspirations, but they are also in some sense practical endeavors, as opposed to just reading books for pleasure and exploring philosophical questions for their own sake.

**Do you have any advice for such students who are picking up these books on their way to changing the world?**

Well, it’s always hard to give advice to such bright, accomplished students. In terms of their intellectual ability, Georgetown students are all capable of going on and accomplishing great things. They can do anything they want in life. Still, one bit of advice I’d venture is that these books encourage us to see the world as a more complicated place than it might seem. By reading these classic texts we cultivate a habit of thinking about the world in terms of trade-offs, rather than easy solutions. They also teach us the significance of what the philosopher Michael Oakeshott called “the voice of poetry in the conversation of mankind,” that is, doing something aesthetic or expressive purely for its own sake rather than as a means toward a specific task or end. There can be intrinsic pleasure and beauty in reading Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, studying political philosophy, or just having a great conversation. We’re not always trying to win an election or solve a problem. It’s that sense of exploring merely for the sake of exploring that has been beaten out of us by modernity. These books are a way of pushing back against that and carving out a space for the pleasures of the journey, rather than always rushing toward a conclusion.
THE FORUM

Conflicting Frameworks: The Relationship Between International Law and Cybersecurity


5 Ibid.


9 Note: This is known as the Persistent Objector Exception Statement of Principles Applicable to the Formation of General Customary International Law, International Law Association, Principle 15.


14 Ibid.


22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.


28 Finnemore and Hollis, 969-1003.


33 Work.
34 Note: Moore’s Law is the observation that the number of transistors in a microchip doubles about every two years and its cost diminishes. This empirical relationship was until recently used to describe the speed of technological developments.


37 Finnemore and Hollis, 969-1003.


44 Work.


47 Ibid.


49 Ibid.

51 Finnemore and Hollis.

52 Ibid.


**Race & the Cold War: African Diplomats, Khrushchev, and the American Press during the Fifteenth UN General Assembly**


4 Iandolo, 133.


9 “POLICE ASSAILED” “UN Delegate Arrested.”

10 Iandolo, 133.

11 Iandolo, 144.

12 Nikita Khrushchev, “Speech by Mr. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, at the 869th Plenary Meeting of the 15th Session

13 Dudziak, 34.


15 “NIKITA BLASTS U.S.”

16 “Khrushchev’s Speech.”


18 Raymond, “KHRUSHCHEV VIEW ON BIAS CRITICIZED.”


22 “NIKITA BLASTS.”


24 “Khrushchev’s Speech.”


27 Krenn, 177.

28 Plummer, 149.


30 Krenn, 168-172.


Plague in US National Parks: Risk Management and Communication


3 K. Kugeler.


8 Ibid.


12 K. Abrams et al.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 L. Rickard et al., 62-82.

16 Ibid., 145-167.


18 L. Rickard et al., 145–167


20 M. Danforth et al., 2045-2053.


22 M. Danforth et al.

23 Ibid.

24 C. Carson et al.
25  L. Rickard et al., 145-167.
26  Ibid.
27  M. Danforth et. al.
30  K. Abrams et. al.

THE ARCHIVE

Revisionism and Reparations: Mau Mau Historiography and Ndiku Mutua and Others v. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3  Ibid., 24.
4  Ibid., 24.
5  Ibid.
6  Anderson, Histories of the Hanged, 41-42.
7  Anderson, Histories of the Hanged, 79.
8  Ibid., 277.
9  Ibid., 230, 277.
14  Elkins, Imperial Reckoning, 132.
15  Ibid., 72.
18  Ibid., 241.
21 Ibid., 401.
23 Ibid., 72.
28 Ibid., 5-6.
33 Ibid., 259.
35 Witness Statement no.3 of David Anderson, June 18 2012, Case No. HQ09X02666,7.
37 Ibid., 450.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.


48 Ibid. 92.


50 Ibid.


52 Particulars of Claim, October 22, 2009, Case No. HQ09X02666, 10-26.


55 Ibid.


58 Witness Statement no.2 of Huw Bennett, April 1, 2011, Case No. HQ09X02666, 8-14.

59 The Hon Mr Justice McCombe, Approved Judgment, May 10, 2011, Case No. HQ09X02666, 57.


61 Ibid., 861.

62 Ibid.
63 The Hon Mr Justice McCombe, Approved Judgment, October 5 2012, Case No. HQ09X02666, 31.
64 Ibid., 31.
65 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
71 Hague.
73 Ibid.
74 For contemporary secondary works on the Mau Mau counterinsurgency and civil policy, see “Kenya’s Mau Mau Rebellion,” 1952-60: Master Reading List” (Warwick University, 2016), https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/students/modules/hi32b/mm_reading_list_2016-17.pdf, 1-13.
76 Dane Keith Kennedy, “Debating the End of Empire: Exceptionalism and its Critics,” in The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 87.
78 Kennedy 92-93.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.

THE SANCTUARY
Eschatology, Millerism, and the Branch Davidians: How Religious Interpretation Can Be Manipulated
2 Ibid., 98-100.
3 Ibid., 71.
4 Ibid., 47.
7 Lowe, 4.
8 Lowe, 13.
12 Ibid., 34.
14 Lowe, 6.
21 Ibid., 4.
22 Ibid., 158.
24 Ibid., 13, 46.
25 Ibid., 59
26 Newport, 158.
28 Knight, 190-191.
29 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 74.
35 Ibid., 75.
36 Ibid.
37 Revelations 13:18.
38 Revelations: 13:11.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Newport, 202.
43 Ibid.

**Religion, Politics and Cultural Violence in Byzantine Iconoclasm**

4 Galtung, 291.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 14.
9  Brubaker and Ousterhout, 6.
10  Barber, 18.
11  Ibid., 87.
12  Noble, 14.
14  Ibid., 29.
15  Ibid.
16  Ibid.
17  Ibid., 79.
19  Brubaker and Haldon, 106.
21  Ibid., 865.
22  Brubaker and Haldon, 799.
25  Ibid., 31.
26  Ibid., 24.
27  Ibid.
28  Ibid., 28.
29  Ibid., 38.
30  Brubaker and Haldon, 56.
31  Brubaker and Haldon, 182.
32  Noble, 64.
33  Ibid.
34  Noble, 67.
35  Brubaker and Haldon, 266.
36  Ibid., 284.
37  Ibid.
38  Ibid., 367.
39  Ibid.
40  Ibid., 373.
41  Ibid., 370.
As God Sculpted Adam: Neoplatonism and Art in the Italian Renaissance

1 Marsilio Ficino published *Platonic Theology* in 1482 in Florence. Just a few years later in 1486, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola wrote *On the Orations on the Dignity of Man* in Florence.


4 Indeed, Pico prepared the *Orations* for his defense at the disputation of 900 Theses, parts of which had been declared heretical by Pope Innocent VIII’s commission in 1486.

5 Ibid, 225.

6 Ibid, 227.


8 Ibid, 239.


10 Vasari, 3.

11 Ibid, 224.

12 Vasari, 3.

13 Ibid, 4.

14 Gen. 2:7, King James Version.

15 Vasari, 414

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid, 282.

18 Humans may be angels or the son of God, but the highest rank they may reach is unity with God “who is set above all things.” Pico, 225.

19 After Michelangelo completed the *Pietà* in 1499, he enjoyed great fame. Pope Julius II called for Michelangelo to design and create his tomb, which the artist completed (though not as a whole) after the pope’s death. —Vasari, 431-435. Today, *Moses* is displayed at San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome. The marble sculpture’s dimensions are 235 cm × 210 cm.


21 Vasari, 434.

22 Ibid, 435.
van den Doel specifically points to Ficino’s *De amore* as Michelangelo’s point of contact with Neoplatonic ideals of art. Michelangelo was also a member of the Accademia Sacra dei Medici with Francesco da Diacceto (1466-1522), who was a Neoplatonist philosopher, pupil to Ficino. Although van den Doel focuses primarily on two of Michelangelo’s *Presentation Drawings* in her article, she demonstrates the impact that Ficino’s ideas had in the rise of the artist’s status. —Marieke van Den Doel, “Ficino, Diacceto and Michelangelo’s Presentation Drawings,” in *The Making of the Humanities: Volume 1- Early Modern Europe*, ed. Rens Bod, Jaap Maat, and Thijs Weststeijn (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), doi:10.2307/j.ctt46n1vz.8, 111-113.

Vasari, 450.


**THE PARLOR**

**Oral Literacy: Abiola Irele and Amos Tutuola on the Question of “Text”**


Ibid., 75

Ibid.

Ibid., 78

See: *The Palm Wine Drinkard and My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* by Amost Tutuola for more on the Yoruba genre.


Ibid., 293

Ibid., 81

Ibid., 75.

Tutuola, 302.

Ibid., 187.
Flowin’ to the Ocean: Dramatizing the Depths of Legacy through Ritualized Space in 
*Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea*

2. Ibid., 6.
3. Ibid., 11.
5. Ibid., 6.
6. Ibid., 9.
7. Davis, 12.
8. Ibid., 53.
11. Ibid., 5.
12. Davis, 53.
15. Davis, 65.
17. Ibid., 63.
19. Davis, 74.
20. Griffin, 5.
22. Davis, 75.
23. Davis, 6.
24. David, 75-76.
27. Robinson, 332.
29. Ibid., 41.
Fear and Trembling in Book 5 of the *Odyssey*

2. Ibid., 5.171.
3. Ibid., 5.116-117.
4. This as well as the rest of the translations presented throughout the paper and in the appendix are my own.
5. Ibid., 6.171-172.
6. Ibid., 23.216.
10. Ibid., 4.148, 4.150, 4.279, 11.254.
11. Ibid., 5.596, 11.345.
12. Ibid., 15.436, 15.466.
13. See appendix for all occurrences.
14. See Austin, 39-40: Context has a role “not in demanding a new epithet for every occasion, but at least in the choice to use or not to use the epithet formula.”
15. Cunliffe, 356.
16. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 15.436.
20. Ibid., 4.279 in simile, 12.331.
21. Ibid., 5.351, 17.175
23. Ibid., 17.175 with κτύπον ἵππων; 5.351 with πόθηαι.
24. Ibid., 3.259.
25. Ibid., 15.34.
26. Ibid., 12.208
27. Ibid., 15.466-470.
28. Ibid., 16.119-120
29. Ibid., 16.121
31. Homer, *Iliad*, 15.34
33 Homer, *Odyssey*, 1.15.
34 Ibid., 5.173
35 Ibid., 5.179.
39 Ibid., 23.210-212.
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