

# CLIO

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A BROOKLYN COLLEGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

*Spring 2022 • Issue 1*

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# EXPLORING HISTORY

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*A LOOK INSIDE CLIO*



The past year has taught us the value enshrined in the study of History. We are living through momentous events that are sure to be an inflection point in the progression of History. The study of History has never been more important.

Compiling an edition of Clio during a global pandemic brings its fair share of challenges. Yet we are confident that it is in times like these that bringing you this edition of Clio is of great importance. We as the editorial staff wanted to highlight some of the great work that has been published by fellow Brooklyn College students. To learn more about the great individual students and faculty that have given their time and effort to this publication, please read on.

Our editorial staff has curated a variety of scholarship on a wide range of historical topics for this edition. From 20th Century European History to the History of Childhood, and the History of Transportation, we are sure to demonstrate the breadth of historical knowledge our students possess. Enjoy!



# WRITING HISTORY

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*A LOOK AT THE AUTHORS OF  
CLIO*

**Ian Ezinga** (22') is the author of "A City Discerning Space: Discussions Related to Brooklyn's Mid-Nineteenth Century Transportation Infrastructure." Ian is finishing his junior year at Brooklyn College while taking the Community Semester at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies. He will continue working as the opinions editor of the Brooklyn College Vanguard and pursuing his interests in environmental and urban history while completing his BA in History.

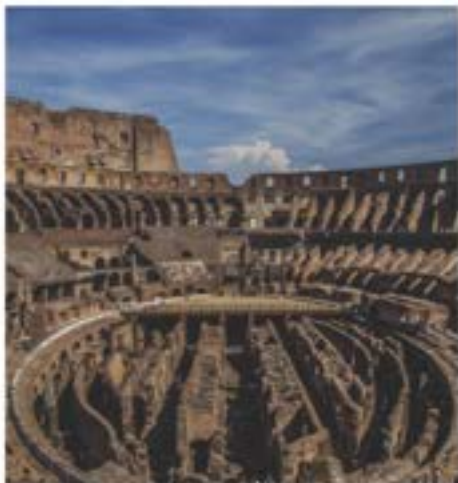
**Natig M. Akbarov** (23') is the author of "Deorientalized." Natig is currently getting his second degree double majoring in History and Political Science at CUNY Brooklyn College. His main research area is Turkic ethnic history in post-Soviet Asia, Caucasus, and Eastern Europe.

**Jonathan Rakhimov** (23) is the author of "Childhood as Construct." He is a History major currently studying at Brooklyn College. His particular interests are Russian, Soviet, and Middle Eastern History.

**Jean-Michel Mutore** (22) is the author of "The English Gaze and Native North America." He is currently a junior History major/English minor at Brooklyn College. He is one of the BC Mellon Mays fellows for 2021-22. His focus is on the colonial Americas and transatlantic slavery.

**Robert Adler** (23) is the author of "Blood Washed Away: Realizing the Role of the Wehrmacht in the Historikerstreit." Robert is currently a sophomore History major at Brooklyn College, where he serves as Vice-President and Treasurer of the Brooklyn College Historical Society. His particular interests are 20th Century European History


**Sean Forde** (21') is the author of "The Contest of Kfar Etzion in Israeli National Memory." Sean is currently a senior History major at Brooklyn College. His interests are contemporary Middle Eastern History.





# FACULTY REVIEWERS

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**Christopher Ebert**, a California native, received his undergraduate degree from San Francisco State University, a school that has much in common with Brooklyn College. Ebert studies and teaches Latin American history from an Atlantic perspective. His research so far has focused on colonial Brazil and Portuguese Atlantic expansion, including trade and shipping. He has also studied Dutch trade and Atlantic expansion. He is now completing a book manuscript based on research in Europe and Brazil on the social and economic history of Salvador da Bahia, Brazil's first colonial capital.

**Philip Napoli** teaches 20th-century U.S. and public history, including courses on the history of the American war in Vietnam, American popular culture, oral history, and the history of immigration. Napoli writes about the history of American war veterans and the Vietnam war. His book *Bringing It All Back Home: An Oral History of New York City's Vietnam Veterans* (Hill and Wang) was published in June 2013. He is presently working with a senior representative of the veterans community on his oral history and conducting interviews with veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan for his next book. For more information, visit his website: <http://www.philipnapoli.com>.

**Michael Rawson** studied with William Cronon while earning his Ph.D. Before coming to Brooklyn College in 2007, he taught at the University of Wisconsin and Stanford University. Rawson is the author of *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston*, which was a finalist for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for History. He is also a member of the faculty at the CUNY Graduate Center. Michael Rawson specializes in environmental, urban, and cultural history and is particularly interested in how ideas about nature have shaped environmental change. His current book project, *The Nature of Tomorrow: A History of the Environmental Future*, is

forthcoming from Yale University Press in 2021. He is also beginning work on a narrative history of Boston.

**Steven Remy** has taught modern European history at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center since 2002. He teaches courses in modern European and German history, Nazi Germany, the politics and culture of memory in 20th-century Europe, terrorism in modern Europe, and historical methodology. Steven Remy is a scholar of modern German history with an interest in the politics of memory in post-conflict societies. His first book, *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Harvard, 2003), examined the responses of scholars to National Socialism. His second book, *The Malmedy Massacre: The War Crimes Trial Controversy* (Harvard, 2017) deals with debates over war crimes trials in the United States and Germany.

**Gunja SenGupta's** current interests lie in 19th-century U.S. and slavery/abolition in the Indian Ocean; sectional conflict; African American and women's history. Her first book, *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas* (1996), dealt with sectional conflict and consensus. In *From Slavery to Poverty: The Racial Origins of Welfare in New York, 1840-1918* (2009), she explored welfare debates as sites for negotiating identities of race, gender, and nation. Her articles have appeared in numerous journals including the *American Historical Review*, *Journal of Negro (African American) History*, *Civil War History*, *Kansas History*, and *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*. Her current projects, funded by Mellon, Whiting, Wolfe, and Tow fellowships/grants, include one on 19th-century United States and slavery/abolition/empire in the Indian Ocean; and another on the history, memory and films of the Black Atlantic.



# OUR STUDENT EDITORS

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## *BUILDING A PUBLICATION*

**Robert Adler ('23)** serves as our Editor in Chief. Robert is currently a sophomore History major at Brooklyn College, where he serves as Vice-President and Treasurer of the Brooklyn College Historical Society. His particular interests are 20th Century European History.

**Rechielle Morales (22')** is one of our student editors. Rechielle is currently a junior History major at Brooklyn College, where she serves as President of the Brooklyn College Historical Society. Her particular interests are 17th and 18th Century American History.

**Ryan Houssein (22')** is one of our student editors. Ryan is a Junior majoring in History and Secondary Education. He wants to study US History, primarily the reconstruction and civil rights eras.

**Jaclyn Rodriguez ('23)** is one of our student editors. Currently, she majors in History and Anthropology with a minor in American Studies. Her interest fields are 18th Century American Social History and Colonization as well as the current social issues impacting minorities in America Today. She is also a member of the Brooklyn College Historical Society.

**OUR PUBLICATION IS GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION OF OUR STUDENT AND FACULTY AUTHORS, EDITORS, AND REVIEWERS**



**THE  
ENGLISH  
GAZE AND  
NATIVE  
NORTH  
AMERICA**

**JEAN-MICHEL MUTORE**



Accounts authored by the earliest English settler-colonists in North America revealed less about the native North American cultures they chronicled than they did about sixteenth and seventeenth century English ideas about gender, sexuality, property, and religion. When the noted geographer and colonization advocate Richard Hakluyt the Elder described the indigenous peoples of North America as “the unarmed people there,” it wasn’t so much an accurate assessment of native North American military power as it was Hakluyt’s sales pitch of North America to a freshly mercantilist England desperate for land and commodities.<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt and his contemporaries observed indigenous people through lenses that reflected English reactions to the upheavals brought along by the Protestant Reformation and the urgency surrounding mercantilist Europe’s competition for economic dominance. This essay draws upon printed sources on early English observations of indigenous Americans to argue that understanding the English promoters’ ulterior motives for documenting Native Americans is key to unpacking their propaganda, which has served as the foundation for long-lasting myths about indigenous American “savageness.” This analysis moreover illustrates the ways in which English constructs of native American character and society reflected and sharpened the European settler colonists’ senses of self and their notions of difference from the colonized “Other.”

“This land growes weary of her Inhabitants,” concluded John Winthrop, the Puritan founder of Massachusetts Bay Company, in his evaluation of New England just before a massive wave of European immigration to the region.<sup>2</sup> Winthrop’s comments represented a common sentiment among English promoters in 1629, that North America was full of rich and untamed land. One of the most prevalent distinctions the English made between themselves and native North Americans was the native peoples’ apparent ignorance of agriculture. Colonist and poet William Wood labelled the Narragansett and

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<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt in Peter Mancall, *Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America 1580-1640* (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 2017), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Winthrop in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 132.

Pequot as “strangers to arts and sciences” and “unacquainted with the inventions that are common to civilized people” in 1634.<sup>3</sup> While judgements like these might have implied outright hostility towards native American culture, the English promoter’s reports of indigenous land use more immediately served as justification for colonization. It should be noted that Wood’s comments about the Pequot preceded the Pequot War of 1637, the most notable early conflict between the natives and the colonists.<sup>4</sup>

The English colonizers’ sensitivity to seemingly uncultivated land reflected the status of English agriculture on the British Isles in the sixteenth century. English agriculture had just undergone a massive shift due to the practice known as enclosure and this practice, combined with England’s sixteenth century population boom from 2.5 million to more than 5 million, resulted in the displacement of the poor and non-gentry.<sup>5</sup> The colonization of America was promoted as a solution to England’s lack of farmland, therefore the abundance of fertile ground and lack of usage had to be emphasized by promoters. Although, since future Colonial Governor of Virginia George Percy described himself stumbling upon a “Paradise” abundant with “many Strawberries, and other fruits unknown” while travelling through the backwoods of Virginia in 1606, it throws into question the credibility of the claim that North America had been uncultivated before the arrival of the Europeans.<sup>6</sup>

As historians have noted, religion emerged as the first trope of difference in British North America, with the English conflating Christianity with civilization and English identity. It could also be used to rationalize the economic project of expropriation. John Winthrop also invoked the word of God in an attempt to offer divine justification of the Massachusetts Bay colonizers’ right to the native Americans’ seemingly uncultivated land: “That [which] lies common & hath never been replenished or subdued is free to any that will possesse and improve it, for god hath given to the sonnes of men a double right to the earth.”<sup>7</sup> Religious rhetoric was often utilized by promoters, either while circulating

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<sup>3</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 150.

<sup>4</sup> Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 150.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Percy in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 120.

<sup>7</sup> Winthrop in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 134.

information among American settlements or across the Atlantic to the English metropole. The English promoters referred to the natives as “heathens” and “infidels” as much as anything else, and a native tribes’ strategic value was closely related to their acceptance of Christianity.

According to William Wood, an English ironsmith who we have few records left of aside from his article “New England’s Prospect”, the Massachusetts tribes acknowledged “the power of the Englishman’s God.”<sup>8</sup> Even Thomas Harriot—the English mathematician and scientist who communicated with Carolina Algonquians firsthand—routinely asserted how easily converted the Wiroans were to Christianity. While trading information about their respective faiths, Harriot perceived that the natives “were brought into great doubts of their owne, and no small admiration of ours.”<sup>9</sup> Even before long-term settlement was a popular concept, as early as 1585, the English were eager to introduce their versions of Christianity to the Western Hemisphere.<sup>10</sup> This could reflect England’s Protestant rivalry with Catholic Spain, as well as the church reform power struggle happening in Europe in the sixteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Especially in the case of dissenters like the Puritans of New Englanders who faced persecution at home, the English colonizers were drawn to the American continent because the land offered a means to practice their faith. Cases like the Massachusetts Bay Colony brought with them a narrative of the Exodus, where the English were a people favored by god but forced to survive in a hostile land. Drawing once again from Winthrop: “god hath provided this place to be a refuge for many whom he meanes to save out of the generall callamitie.”<sup>12</sup> Sentiments like these were common among the colonizers, and were reinforced after the English witnessed the devastation brought by a plague which had spread among native settlements. Harriot, the English scientist, delighted in some speculation that the English were powerful enough to have caused the plague (“it was the worke of our God through our meanes”),<sup>13</sup> while the merchant George Peckham came to the conclusion that Native Americans

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<sup>8</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 155.

<sup>9</sup> Harriot in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 78.

<sup>10</sup> Hakluyt in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 4-11.

<sup>12</sup> Winthrop in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 132.

<sup>13</sup> Harriot in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 80-81.

were simply ungodly, but could be saved by the “benefite of Christianity” in his testimony.<sup>14</sup>

The Christianizing rhetoric of the promoters was fundamental to the English self-perception that by expanding their colonial efforts, they were partaking in colonialism through a “faire and loving meanes,” setting themselves apart from the cruel ways of the Spanish, whose mission at Chesapeake Bay was destroyed by fed up natives in 1571.<sup>15</sup> But despite the English’s pretensions of benevolence, several of their colonizers in North America had participated in the often violent colonization of Ireland in the mid-sixteenth century. As a result, the language used by the English to describe native Americans carried many parallels to the situation in Ireland.

In some cases, the promoters made direct comparisons between the colonized Irish and indigenous Americans. After witnessing a Massachusetts mourning ceremony, Wood could not help but summarize it as “Irish-like howling”.<sup>16</sup> George Percy labelled a short trail in the Virginia woods an “Irish pace” or Irish path.<sup>17</sup> The actions the English committed in Ireland were clearly present in the minds of North America’s early colonizers and their willingness to be violent was just as potent. At the same time, the promoters needed to portray Native Americans as docile so that investors would feel safe, while also emphasizing the capacity of England’s military strength to tame would-be challengers. George Percy noted : “It pleased God, after a while, to send those people which were our mortall enemies to releeve us with victuals.”<sup>18</sup>

Several documents also judged indigenous gender roles and division of labor negatively through the prism of the English colonizers’ own ideas about women. Some colonial writers expressed their distaste for the roles women played in Native North American society. In 1634, William Wood observed how Pequot, Narragansett, and Mohawk women were expected to bear an intense physical workload, writing that Native women’s “qualifications” were more excellent, and native women were more “loving, pitiful” and “laborious than their

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<sup>14</sup> Peckham in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 64.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 123.

<sup>16</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 158.

<sup>17</sup> Percy in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 120.

<sup>18</sup> Percy in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 125.

lazy husbands".<sup>19</sup> George Percy came to a similar conclusion during his 1606 exploits in the Chesapeake region, where he witnessed "[Native] women [who] doe all [the natives'] dragerie."<sup>20</sup> English men saw the centrality of women in indigenous labor as a form of subjugation against women, and they thought very poorly of native men as a result. Wood even went as far as to claim that indigenous women would live much happier lives in English society than they do in their own. "These [Indigenous] women resort often to the English houses, where *pares cum paribus congregatae*, in sex I mean."<sup>21</sup>

The views of English colonizers like Wood and Harriot on indigenous gender roles and labor division give insights into what may be a fundamental difference between North American labor ideologies and Christian-European ideas about the same. For all of Wood's proselytizing about the "suffering" of indigenous women due to the amount of work expected from them, Wood's notes never considered the level of power indigenous women might have as a result of commanding the tribe's agriculture, construction, domestic services, etc.

The fact that English observers only seemed to notice the aspects of native labor that resembled European domestic labor, also goes to show how unfamiliar these early colonizers were with indigenous hunting and gathering practices, slash-and-burn agriculture, scouting and military, which, generally, indigenous men controlled.<sup>22</sup> In George Percy's travels, he notes a couple native men "burning downe the grasse" to control the environment, yet he can only associate the utility of such a practice to war.<sup>23</sup> The perceived ultra-sexism of native North American society is thus a result of English assumptions about gendered power dynamics, and a failure by the English to acknowledge all North American forms of labor.

When Wood did approve of native North American gender roles, it was only for one unnamed tribe's marriage practices. Wood first noted the native

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<sup>19</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 159.

<sup>20</sup> Percy in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 122.

<sup>21</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 162.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Mann, *New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Knopf, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Percy in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 116.

king's ability to have "two or three wives" but not "eight or ten" as had been previously reported by other explorers.<sup>24</sup> Wood explained how a native groom would marry a bride through a procedure of parental approval, dowries, and ceremonies, like in Christian Europe, and how native marriage was sealed through an oath that fell apart only through death or infidelity. Wood related an anecdote of a native man committing adultery with a married native woman and getting beaten nearly to death by the woman's husband as a result. The scandalized husband dragged the adulterous partner "by the hair from his usurped bed, so lamentably beating him that his battered bones and bruised flesh made him a fitter subject for some skillful surgeon than the lovely object of a lustful strumpet".<sup>25</sup> Unlike the other Native cultural practices in Wood's chronicle, this instance of violence garners no critical remarks from Wood, owing to English Puritans' disapproval of adultery in their own society.

What confused Wood more than the violent penalties for adultery was the observation that native North Americans did not execute their thieves. In England, theft was a capital crime,<sup>26</sup> whereas in northeastern North America the Pequot and Narraganset chiefs didn't view it so harshly. Wood concluded "they have nothing to steal worth the life of a man, therefore they have no law to execute for trivials."<sup>27</sup> He added to this point that natives treated life as more sacred because they had a small population, though Wood did not see a contradiction between this and his earlier observations about the natives' use of the death penalty in response to adultery. He and many English colonists were more stunned by the natives' relative lack of materialism.

Wood further commented on the Massachusetts' "king" having not enough laws nor taxes, but ruling nonetheless. "For though he hath no kingly robes to make him glorious in the view of his subjects... they yield all submissive subjection to him".<sup>28</sup> The part about the lack of robes—and, later in Wood's description, the natives' lack of stools and cushions—might have been important to the English because Europeans associated material possessions and clothing

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<sup>24</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 153.

<sup>25</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 154.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, *American Colonies*, 120.

<sup>27</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 152.

<sup>28</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 152.

with civilization. In this case, the lack of robes also carried implications for Native American demand for cloth and wool, which if low, would have boded ill for English merchants who were looking for local trading partners. But to priests and George Peckham, the locals' relative disinterest in material items served as another front for the mission of "civilization."<sup>29</sup>

English promoters in the earliest centuries of colonization created barriers to distance their humanity from that of the natives', but they also knew when to draw connections in contexts convenient to them. William Wood considered native people respectable if they learned English.<sup>30</sup> George Percy enjoyed the "fruitfull[ness]" of native American crops,<sup>31</sup> yet he always saw the people as "mortall enemies".<sup>32</sup> And George Peckham saw exploits in America as similar to England's exploits in Ireland, but on a larger scale. The promoters' documents serve as a clear testament to the intent of and meaning of English identity, and the material interests of settler colonialism. It was all too convenient that their biased interpretations of North American culture and the landscape painted a picture of a barren continent in need of Protestant reform.

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<sup>29</sup> Peckham in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Wood in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 157.

<sup>31</sup> Percy in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 123.

<sup>32</sup> Percy in Mancall, *Envisioning America*, 125.



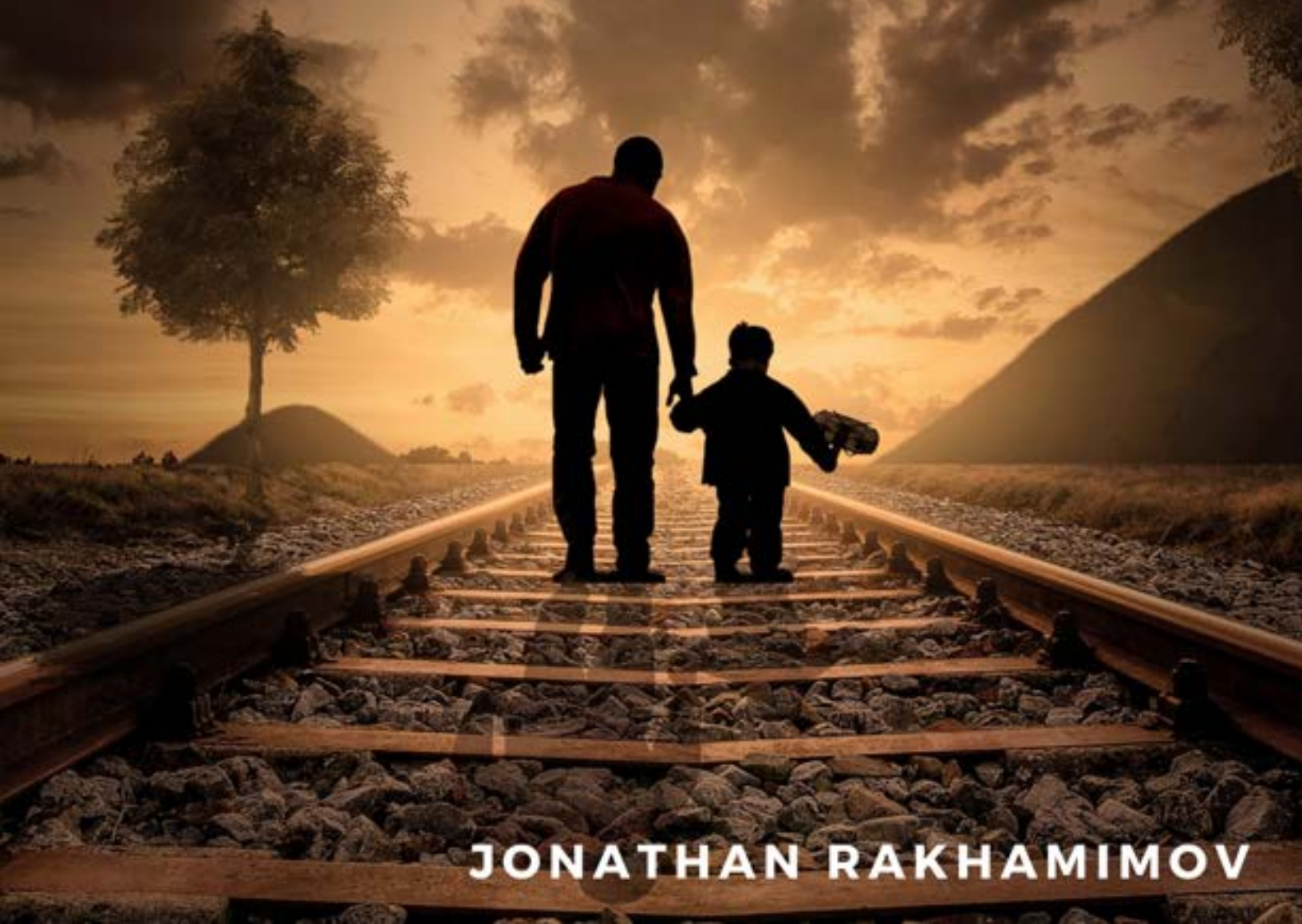
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# CHILDHOOD AS CONSTRUCT



JONATHAN RAKHAMIMOV

## Introduction

Originally published in French in 1960 and translated to English in 1962, French historian Phillipe Aries's *Centuries of Childhood* functions as a foundational for understanding childhood as an analytical category, and the "child" as a historical figure. . Aries's work helped pioneer the field of childhood history by introducing the child as the main subject of historical investigation, and by demonstrating how the concept of, and attitudes toward childrearing shifted throughout the centuries. Aries's contended that childhood was an invention of the seventeenth century, wherein Enlightenment thinkers—namely John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau—contributed to thinking up the modern childhood experience.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars have, however, called these claims and the sources on which they rest, into question. This paper aims to position Aries's thesis as a point of departure for exploring the historiography of children and childhood as a field of study. It pays particular attention to variables like contexts of time, place, class, and culture in determining concepts and experiences relevant to this scholarship, and debates over the reading of evidence on which these interpretations are based.

## Aries's Argument about Childhood

A good place to begin the project of historicizing childhood is Aries' definition of it. As an analytical paradigm and historical subject, Aries conceived of childhood less as a physiological stage of life than an "idea" associated with the advent of a modern conception of family.

The great demographic revolution in the west, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, has revealed to us considerable possibilities of change in structures hitherto believed to be invariable because they were biological. However, it is not so much the family as a reality that is our subject here as the family as an idea. True, men and women will always go

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<sup>1</sup> Anastasia Ulanowicz "Phillipe Aries" (University of Pittsburgh) 1-2. Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 45-50.

on loving each other, will always go on having children. That is not the question at issue.

I accordingly looked back into our past to find out whether the idea of family had not been born comparatively recently, at a time when the family had freed itself from both biology and law to become a value, a theme of expression. The aim of this book is to reply to this question on the modernity of the idea of family.

But how was I to discover, in the documents of the past, references to things which were too ordinary, too commonplace, too far removed from the memorable incident for contemporary writers to mention them? Our experience of the modern demographic revolution has revealed to us the importance of the child's role in this silent history. We know that there is a connection between the idea of childhood and the idea of the family. That is why we are going to study them together.<sup>2</sup>

As the extensive quotations suggest, Aries viewed childhood as an intrinsic part of the family. He aimed to explore overarching changes in the notion and experience of the family through childhood. We must also note that Aries is an European historian, and that his study is Eurocentric.

Given that in the sixty years since Aries wrote, the field of childhood history has grown in size and complexity, the present analysis will focus on two principal vantage points on the historiography of childhood: investment and detachment. Investment refers to what the parents invested in the child—be it monetarily or emotionally, while detachment relates to the extent to which the child's life was separated from adult life. These two dimensions are particularly important because they ask the major questions that demonstrate the feelings of adults toward the child and how those feelings fueled action to guard and separate the child from the adult world. They ask how the parents valued the child, how they put effort in protecting the child, and whether or not a child's life was seen as different vis-à-vis adulthood.

## **Aries: Centuries of Childhood - Art, Account, and Philosophy**

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<sup>2</sup> Phillipe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 9-10.

Aries argued that the concept of the “child” as an innocent being necessitating care from the parent, and free of the cares of adulthood—is a recent, seventeenth century invention. He arrives at his claim through a variety of sources but mainly, he uses studies in art, firsthand accounts, and the philosophy of the child to build his claim. His argument based on art is the following:

In a French miniature of the late eleventh century the three children brought to life by St. Nicholas are reduced to a smaller scale than the adults, without any other difference in expression or features.

In a Psalter dating from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, Ishmael, shortly after birth, has the abdominal muscles of a man.

In the thirteenth century Gospel book of the Sainte-Chappelle, in an illustration of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Christ shown standing on either side of a little man who comes up to their waists: no doubt the child who carried the fishes.

In the world, right up to the end of the thirteenth century, there are no children characterized by a special expression but only men on a reduced scale.<sup>3</sup>

Primarily using religious examples, Aries claims that this early art fosters the idea of children being mini adults, as the children depicted are shown to be different only in size, absent any other common features of the child. This depiction of children in art as “mini adults” signals to Aries that children were not detached from adulthood, and rather, functioned as smaller versions of adults. In Aries’ view, the children in early Christian paintings—before the seventeenth century—were small adults.

Aries’ documentary sources included demographic data; he cited high mortality and infanticide rates, claiming that parents surely could not have invested much emotion in their children. That, it would have been unwise to invest in something that was a very likely loss, and as such, they were indifferent toward their children.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, 38-39.

As late as the seventeenth century, we have a neighbor, standing at the bedside of a woman who has just given birth, the mother of five 'little brats,' and calming her fears with these words: 'Before they are old enough to bother you, you will have lost half of them, or perhaps all of them.' A strange consolation! People could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss. This is the reason for certain remarks which shock our present-day sensibility: 'I have lost two or three children in their infancy, not without regret, but without great sorrow.' Most people probably felt that children had 'neither mental activities nor recognizable bodily shape.'

Nobody thought, as we ordinarily think today, that every child already contained a man's personality. Too many of them died.<sup>5</sup>

To Aries, children were too likely of a loss for adults to have viewed them as a separate entity, let alone one they would have invested in. Therefore, there could not have been much of either, as the child died too early and consequently, adults grew indifferent—whether it be to guard from emotional distress or simply because it was "God's will."

In terms of the philosophy of childhood, Aries cites a great change in thought exhibited by the Enlightenment thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—thoughts exceedingly different than those exhibited in the centuries before. In particular, the empiricism and reason of the Enlightenment changed the perception of the child. Such that, the child had to be appropriately trained.. These ideals were conveyed by two notable Enlightenment thinkers: John Locke and Jean Jaques Rousseau. They brought to light the maxim of *tabula rasa*, wherein the child was, naturally, a malleable being, in need of forging by parents.<sup>6</sup> It was through this forging that parents formulated a childrearing technique exclusive to the child—for the child was blank by nature and required the right ideas to become a functioning member of society.<sup>7</sup> This

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<sup>5</sup> Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*.

<sup>6</sup> *Tabula rasa* - Latin phrase to mean "blank slate." John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). 2. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education* (Ginn Heath & Co, 1883), 11-14.

<sup>7</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, 286-314. John Clarke, *Children and Childhood* (Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 7-8. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 45-50.

forging necessarily was based more on empiricism rather than belief, to take from Rousseau, a child needed the ability to locate where a kite was in the sky from its shadow alone.<sup>8</sup> To Aries, this emphasis on education presents a great disunion from prior thought.

Before the contributions of Locke and Rousseau, the role of parents—specifically aristocratic parents, or those who could afford education—had been to care for the child, in order to safeguard spirit and reputation; such as education in typical aristocratic acts like dancing or singing, learning law to retain economic status, and most importantly, education in theology.<sup>9</sup> Overall then, Aries states that a new context of education and empiricism that displayed a new way of thinking—an invention of childhood. To Aries, parents could no longer be indifferent, and children could no longer be “mini adults,” for the children were now beings with blank minds that urged forming. It places an imperative on the child and on the parent—forming a new identity of the parent as the trainer and caregiver, and a new identity of the child as a young human whose mind thirsts for knowledge. Given Aries’s support for his claims as a whole—as childhood being invented—how does scholarship view it? The answer is not altogether clear but has proven fruitful to the historical understanding of childhood today.

### **Debate over the Aries Interpretation: Readings of Art**

While many scholars support Aries’ claim about the Enlightenment as a turning point in thinking about childhood, several others dissent from other key contentions he advanced. In particular, his reading of art as evidence of the argument that children were seen as “mini-adults” before the seventeenth century has provoked controversy. According to historians Linda Pollock, Barbara Hanawalt, and Peter Fuller, three major critics of Aries, children were not seen as “mini adults,” and in actuality, had their own separate world. To them, Aries’s failure to consider symbolism of the art he cites makes his argument about the art falter. This much is clear when analyzing the studies of Pollock and Hanawalt, where children were seen to have played more than they

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<sup>8</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, 130.

<sup>9</sup> Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, 286-314. Cantor, *The Medieval Reader*, 329-30.

worked and were not immediately thrown into adult life, this much is even true for the children who donned adult garb.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, others go on, the art would not have reflected the natural world, but rather the religious view of the artist, as Aries mostly used religious art as building blocks for his claim.<sup>11</sup> Given that, any person who would try representing Jesus or any holy figure—major or minor—would not simplify the grandiose of the Holy with a mere child.<sup>12</sup> More importantly, however, according to smaller studies of critics, there would be other clues to suggest the appearance of children—which Aries fails to mention; clues such as bare feet or an indication of height to signal that the figure portrayed was indeed a child.<sup>13</sup> Going further, to critics, Aries does not only fail to consider symbolism of art, but its context as well.

To critics, Aries frames childhood as a universal experience in ways that ignore contexts of time and place. For instance, the childhood of a male aristocrat in seventeenth century France is going to be extremely different from that of a female child-laborer in Victorian England. It is imperative for one to understand that childhood depends on a variety of dimensions—race, class, religion, caste, age, sex, etc. Aries holds a universal view by relying on sources that privileged the aristocracy, and the male perspective at that. The significance does not only lie in this generalization but also in the fact that this generalization is false. According to Peter Fuller, even regular portraits of children—absent religion—do not prove useful when it comes to understanding adults' view of them; they would be portrayed as the future aristocrat the parent wished the child to be—adorning the jewelry and dress, and overall, all signs of aristocracy.<sup>14</sup> Then, one cannot even analyze the regular portraits of childhood, as they did not show the parent's view of the child but rather the parent's view of the aristocrat. The trouble does not only lie in the art alone, but also the accounts Aries uses.

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<sup>10</sup> Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 49. Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Childrearing Among the Lower Classes of Late Medieval England" (*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Vol. 8, no. 1, 1977), 1-22.

<sup>11</sup> Clarke, *Children and Childhood*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Clarke, *Children and Childhood*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 47-48.

<sup>14</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 47-48.



## Scholarship on Aries: Documentary Evidence

The trouble with Aries does not only lie in his use of art alone but also his use of primary sources outside art. Namely, Aries claims that since children before the seventeenth century died too soon for the parents to willingly attach themselves, parents grew indifferent and invested nothing into the child as a result. Aries's support comes from his citing mortality and infanticide rates, combined with accounts of parents from the time. Critics posit that Aries greatly exaggerates those rates, and overall misinterprets data on the basis of generalized statements.<sup>15</sup> In that, what Aries does is not only drawing a false conclusion from data but more importantly, drawing a false conclusion from flawed data—such that the statements of a very exclusive fraction of a population are used to reflect on the population as a whole.

Critics argue that Aries overestimated mortality rates, for 80-85 percent of babies survived.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, infanticide was a less frequent occurrence, and as a whole exceedingly rare.<sup>17</sup> Beyond that, once again, Aries uses what seems to be accounts of the aristocracy—when one looks at other case notes of a parent's account at the death of a child, they were severely grief-stricken.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the parents invested heavily in their child, and often, the topics of literature were mostly focused on detailing a parent's grief at the loss of a child—making them not at all indifferent.<sup>19</sup> Thus, for the critics, to say that “nobody thought children had a personality because too many of them died,” would be to misrepresent.

## Scholarship on Aries: On Philosophy

According to studies critical of Aries, children were detached from the adult world, subjects of great investment, and severely mourned in many cases.

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<sup>15</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 49-50.

<sup>16</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 51.

<sup>17</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 50-51.

<sup>18</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 51-54. Michael Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Marilyn Sandidge, “Changing Contexts of Infanticide in Medieval English Texts” in Albrecht Classen, *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 291-306.

However, these works concede that in terms of philosophy, the Enlightenment brought about a new foundation to the idea of childhood—not necessarily one that reflected Aries but one that was a milestone, nonetheless.<sup>20</sup> In their words: “it was ‘not childhood, as such, which was transformed through history,’ but there were profound changes in the social conditions in which the child lived.”<sup>21</sup> This is where there is some continuity with Aries—in his interpretations of the Enlightenment.

There is general agreement among scholars that the Enlightenment’s contribution to the philosophy of childhood is vital. It indicates a change wherein the emphasis on the authority of the Church becomes an emphasis on the authority of parents. This is not to be misinterpreted as the Church having a lapse of power, but rather it is to be understood as the parents having more influence in the lives of their children. For example, prior to the Enlightenment, parents faced fines if their child was not baptized; after the Enlightenment, “natural laws” gave parents discretion with children—in what was taught, how it was taught, when it was taught, etc.<sup>22</sup> Though, in spite of this, Aries’ critics claim that his greater contention is nonetheless “flawed in both methodology and conclusions.”<sup>23</sup> Stemming from his framing of childhood as universal.<sup>24</sup>

Given everything, there is a need to analyze sources from other historical periods and studies about them in order to understand whether Aries is correct in his claim or whether the critics’ statements hold water. Is Aries wrong, did childhood exist prior to the seventeenth century? If so, how is Aries wrong and in what way did childhood shift through the centuries? We must note that the following analysis on childhood—from the Middle Ages to the Victorian Era, to

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<sup>20</sup> Clarke, *Children and Childhood*, 7-8. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 45-50.

<sup>21</sup> Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 48. Peter Fuller, “Uncovering Childhood” in Martin Hoyles, *Changing Childhood* (London: National Book Network, 1981), 88-89.

<sup>22</sup> Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 49-50. Nicholas Orme, “Perceptions of Children in Medieval England” in Reidar Aasgard, *Childhood in History: Perceptions of Children in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Routledge, 2018), 318-20.

<sup>23</sup> Adrian Wilson, “The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès” (*History and Theory* 19, no. 2 (1980)), 132-153..

<sup>24</sup> Nara Milanich, “Whither Family History? A Road Map from Latin America” (*American Historical Review* 112:2, April 2007), 439-458.

the Twentieth Century, respectively—will not only take Europe into consideration, but also other spheres of influence.

### **Childhood in the Middle Ages: Persia, China, and Europe**

Notwithstanding the class-specifics of the Middle Ages, it can be seen that children were greatly invested in—economically and emotionally—as well as sufficiently detached from the adult world. This investment and/or detachment was not abnormal and primarily centered around faith—around questions of God and religion—and not just in Europe. For example, childhood was not only present in the Islamic Middle Ages but also very significant. In his study of childhood during the Islamic Middle Ages, historian Avner Giladi details *hadith* reports found in eleventh century Persian Scholarship.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, in places in the *Ihya* [of al-Ghazali] we do find passages treating in greater detail subjects that have a direct bearing on children. . .the third chapter [on ethics of friendship and brotherhood] deals with attitudes to [the] caring for and education of children. *Hadith* reports are cited expounding respect and consideration for the child, a gentle and kindly manner towards him, and the father's fulfilment of his obligations: ensuring his son of a good education and giving him a suitable name. . .In these reports, the Prophet [Muhammad] is presented as an example of one who treats his children properly. It is told for instance, how he hastened to wash the face of a child—his adopted son—when Aisha, the Prophet's favorite wife, could not bring herself to do so, after which he kissed him; and how he prolonged his prostration posture in one of his prayers so as not to disturb his grandson, who at the moment, was riding on his back.<sup>26</sup>

This in mind, parents clearly invested in the child and cared for it—both in terms of play and work. Despite its specificity toward the male gender, the fact that fathers were obligated to give the child an education and expected to continue prostration during prayer—even if the child was playing around them—shows that the child was understood to have been an entity naturally requiring care and

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<sup>25</sup> *Hadith*: reports - actions, words, and endorsements of the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>26</sup> Avner Giladi, *Children of Islam*. (London: Macmillan, 1992), 47-48.

investment, as well as a being that needed to be treated differently than adults. Significance does not only lie in the fact that these actions were understandable and common but given that they were *hadiths*, it also meant that they were pious. It is clear, then, in the case of the Islamic Middle Ages, Aries does not hold water.

Where the Islamic Middle Ages places emphasis on both investment and detachment, Medieval China—Han Dynasty China in particular—places emphasis more on the former, but even then, Aries' claim is far from true. To start, there was general emphasis on filial life due to the influence of Confucianism; from that, do most acts of proper childrearing and filial children arise.<sup>27</sup>

Early medieval filial piety stories served the same purpose: they were concrete illustrations of the Confucian rites in action. Many of the acts filial children perform are found in the ritual codes, most particularly in the *Book of Rites*. A rule for all children is that in winter they must keep their parents warm; in summer they must keep them cool.<sup>28</sup>

Given that children were to be caretakers for the parent, the parent had to necessarily invest in them—they had no choice to be indifferent, lest they risk their own futures. In other words, for the child to be a caretaker, the child had to be sufficiently healthy and have the knowledge of how to care-take. Furthermore, the child had to be detached because it was well known that it was specifically the child's responsibility to care for the parent; in that, this responsibility was ordinarily a responsibility of childhood, not adulthood. Thus, even in Medieval China did adults invest in children and understand them as detached from adulthood—Aries' claim again does not hold water.

Where Aries should be correct—as it is the locus of his study—is in the Middle Ages of Europe, but it falters here too; studies of Medieval England from 600-1500 CE show this much.

The concern of the Church with children centered on their baptism. . . children being baptized as soon as possible after birth. This was hard to achieve in the early years of Christianity in England. Theologians regarded

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<sup>27</sup> Keith N. Knapp, *Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Medieval China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 31-34.

<sup>28</sup> Knapp, *Selfless Offspring*, 33-34.

children as regenerate through their baptism and any sins they committed as too modest to require confession, absolution, or penances. Only when children reached puberty, would they be told by a parish priest or be propelled by his or her parents to join the adults.<sup>29</sup>

It is not only present in these studies, but moreover, in statements found within the letters of early European monarchs—some dating from as early as 1057 CE—showing that parents cared for children deeply enough to speak for them and include them in prayer letters.<sup>30</sup> Also, this attitude toward children did not only exist in terms of religion, but general legality too—such as the difference in attitudes exhibited toward child offenders and adult offenders.<sup>31</sup> Though it could be argued that the parents were operating on the authority of the Church, this thinking is flawed because even with the Church's interferences, parents still grieved severely at the death of the child—their own, not the Church's.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Aries' claim still does not hold water, as children were invested in and greatly cared for. In all, however, spanning across Europe, The Islamic Middle Ages, and Medieval China, there was investment—emotional, religious, and monetary from the parent in the child. Though, all in all, investment and detachment clearly held itself in religiosity and belief, whether it be Islam, Christianity, or Confucianism. Given this, how did this attitude change in the Victorian Era, post-Industrial Revolution?

### **Childhood in Victorian Era Europe**

The shift childhood exhibited in Victorian Era Europe is slightly nuanced due to the nature of the changes. In that, after the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment's contribution to the philosophy of childhood—the aforementioned *tabula rasa*—there was a schism between childrearing and work. Namely, childrearing became a privilege of upper classes, and the children of

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<sup>29</sup> Orme, "Perceptions of Children in Medieval England," 318-320.

<sup>30</sup> Samuel Guichenon, *L'Histoire Genealogique de la Maison Royale de Savoye*. Dom CL Devic and Dom J Vaissette, *Histoire Générale de Languedoc* (Toulouse, 1879). M.P. Marchegay, *Chartes de Fontcraut Concernant l'Aunis et la Rochelle*. (BEC 19, 1857-58)..

<sup>31</sup> Orme, "Perceptions of Children in Medieval England," 322-24.

<sup>32</sup> Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam*.

the working classes had to suffer the debacles of child labor.<sup>33</sup> This period was a binary time, wherein the new middle-class ideology of children being the family's purpose coincided with the working-class ideology of economy being the family's purpose.<sup>34</sup> Whilst the former group's children were at home being trained, the latter group's children spent their days in the darkness of the factory. Despite this, investment in children within both classes was apparent, as even working-class children were educated. Twenty percent of them could not afford to, however, they went without knowing a single prayer, as represented in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, making money was crucial to the family's survival, so child workers had to be invested in, otherwise the family would starve.<sup>36</sup> Thus, investment did in fact exist.

Though parent's investment existed in both the haves and have-nots, detachment was a pleasure of the haves.<sup>37</sup>

My mother's heart bled when she saw her dear little one so tormented, but what was she to do? So, I had to spend the largest part of my 'golden youth' in the dusty, smoky room of the cigar manufactory, always living and working among adults, while my more fortunate age mates ran around in the bright sunshine in the streets.<sup>38</sup>

In one Northern French industrial region in the late nineteenth century, a certain Madame B. closely supervised the upbringing of her eight children. She kept a notebook about each of them among the family's records. Aiming to 'purge them of all evil thoughts and actions,' she grilled

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Jo Maynes and Ann Beth Waltner *The Family: A World History*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 83-84. Mary Jo Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road: Life Course in French and German Workers' Autobiographies in the Era of Industrialization*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 74-75. Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoisies of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 64-69. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 69-82. Milanich, "Whither Family History? A Road Map from Latin America," 439-458.

<sup>34</sup> Clarke, *Children and Childhood*, 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 79-81. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1853), 449-459.

<sup>36</sup> Maynes, *The Family: A World History*, 82-84.

<sup>37</sup> Milanich, "Whither Family History? A Road Map from Latin America," 439-458.

<sup>38</sup> Maynes, *The Family: A World History*, 84. Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road*, 74-75.

them frequently to keep herself informed about their thoughts and withheld goodnight kisses when they misbehaved.<sup>39</sup>

One child worked through the dust and darkness of a cigar factory while the other worried more about mother taking away his goodnight kisses, one parent worried for the child's life and the other for the child's behavior. From this, one can see that children's and parents' worries, hopes, and responsibilities corresponded to their classes, making detachment of the child dependent on their class. Hence, it has to be said that childhood as an experience existed—but was a privilege of middle and upper classes; simply put, childhood sentiments existed despite childhood experience being limited to upper classes. With the Middle Ages and the Victorian Era in mind, how did childhood change in the Twentieth Century?

### **Childhood in the Twentieth Century**

In the Twentieth Century, the idea of childhood was extremely rampant, enough to give it the name of the "century of the child."<sup>40</sup> With the rise of child labor laws, the investment in the child by the nation-state and the parent proved that childhood was a hallowed experience to be guarded—sometimes even weaponized.<sup>41</sup> In the case of the Soviet Union, for example, children were used to find enemies of the state, some becoming martyrs for it and turning in their parents in for the offense.<sup>42</sup> One such case is unconfirmed but even if it lay in legend, it speaks volumes as to how the government used children and the stories of children to inspire:

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<sup>39</sup> Maynes, *The Family: A World History*, 83-84. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class*, 64-69.

<sup>40</sup> Clarke, *Children and Childhood*, 10-11. Ellen Key, *The Century of the Child* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 1-6.

<sup>41</sup> Olga Sliozberg, *Recollection of a Mother in a Gulag Receiving a Letter from Her Daughter* in Cathy A. Frierson and Semyon S. Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 228. Choi Chaterjee, et. al., *Russia's Long Twentieth Century: Voices, Memories, Contested Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 104-105, 128.

<sup>42</sup> Chaterjee, et. al., *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, 104-105, 128.

But the following year the press began to publicize a new symbol of youthful revolutionary ardor: a thirteen-year-old named Pavlik Morozov. According to the official version, Pavlik was an activist in the Pioneers (the junior version of the Komsomol) who lived in the remote and impoverished village of Gerasimovka in the northern Ural region. In 1932, he reported his father to the secret police for helping kulaks to hoard grain.

His relatives found out about his accusation and retaliated by murdering Pavlik along with his younger brother; however, Soviet justice caught up with them and they were tried and executed. A boy named Pavel Morozov and his brother Fedor really were killed in the village of Gerasimovka in the Urals, but not much else about this story can be confirmed, despite the exhaustive efforts of an intrepid historian to uncover the truth.

Regardless of what actually occurred, hagiographic renditions of Pavlik's life appeared in books, songs, poems, and school curricula throughout the Soviet era and Pavlik became an example to all young people of loyalty and self-sacrifice. Maxim Gorky campaigned to get a monument to Pavlik built in Moscow, and in a speech at a Komsomol rally described "the heroic deed of Pioneer Pavel Morozov, the boy who understood that a person who is a relative by blood may well be an enemy of the spirit, and that such a person is not to be spared."<sup>43</sup>

The weaponization and nationalization of children by the Soviet Union is also very clear in its propaganda posters—showing that children were a different audience that needed to be tailored to, and not just in terms of politics.<sup>44</sup> Other institutions around the globe such as compulsory schooling came into fruition; the training of the child, the concept of *tabula rasa* echoed, and they implicated

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<sup>43</sup> Chaterjee, et. al., *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, 104-105, 128.

<sup>44</sup> Viktor Govorkov, 'Thank you, beloved Stalin, for our happy childhood.' (Izogiz, 1936).



the state as much as the parent.<sup>45</sup> In turn, children were being enfranchised increasingly with education, and now, had some social mobility.<sup>46</sup>

Child labor laws and compulsory education, announced E. S. Martin in a 1913 issue of *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, were quickly turning children into "the luxury of the poor and the indulgence of the better off.

The twentieth century economically useless but emotionally priceless child displaced the nineteenth-century useful child. To be sure, the most dramatic changes took place among the working class; by the turn of the century middle-class children were already experienced "loafers." But the sentimentalization of childhood intensified regardless of social class. The new sacred child occupied a special and separate world, regulated by affection and education, not work or profit.<sup>47</sup>

The Twentieth Century brought about a growing imperative from the state to the child. Simply put, when looking at the overarching timeline of childhood, it is seen to have originated in a deeply religious place—highly invested in and detached—and through the Enlightenment, in the Victorian Era, it became a privilege of the upper and middle classes. It was not until the twentieth century where the state introduced the child as beings necessitating care, as well as beings who experienced life differently than the adults. In other words, though it was by no means universal, children were enfranchised enough to such an extent that adults knew them as different entities and invested in them.<sup>48</sup> Thus, what do the sentiments, given their periods, mean for Aries' claim?

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<sup>45</sup> Lori M. Campbell, "The Twentieth Century Child" (The University of Pittsburgh), 1-4. Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 208-211.

<sup>46</sup> Zsuzsa Millei, "The Cultural Politics of 'Childhood' and 'Nation': Space, Mobility, and a Global World" (*Global Studies of Childhood*, Vol. 5, no. 1, 2015), 3-6.

<sup>47</sup> Campbell, "The Twentieth Century Child," 1-4. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, 208-211.

<sup>48</sup> Brian Platt, "Japanese Childhood, Modern Childhood: The Nation-State, the School, and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Globalization" (*Journal of Social History*, Vol. 38, no. 4, 2005), 965-985; Sliozberg, *Children of the Gulag*, 228. Chaterjee, et. al., *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, 104-105, 128. Key, *The Century of the Child*, 1-6. Lori, "The Twentieth Century Child," 1-4. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, 208-211.

## Childhood Sentiments and Aries

The sentiments in the aforementioned periods show the central fault of Aries: he frames childhood as universal. Affirming that childhood was nonexistent before the seventeenth century due to parent's indifference is flawed because it universalizes childhood—it gives childhood a homogenous form, one that is limited, one that does not echo reality; experiences are greatly dependent on the combination of different variables—of religion, of ethnicity, of gender, to give one a homogenous form would be to reject others. This is where Aries' claim proves to be false. For example, one can look at the before-said case:

My mother's heart bled when she saw her dear little one so tormented, but what was she to do? So, I had to spend the largest part of my 'golden youth' in the dusty, smoky room of the cigar manufactory, always living and working among adults, while my more fortunate aga mates ran around in the bright sunshine in the streets.<sup>49</sup>

In one northern French industrial region in the late nineteenth century, a certain Madame B. closely supervised the upbringing of her eight children. She kept a notebook about each of them among the family's records. Aiming to 'purge them of all evil thoughts and actions,' she grilled them frequently to keep herself informed about their thoughts, and withheld goodnight kisses when they misbehaved.<sup>50</sup>

Taking this case, one can see that if one were to make a generalization about the first account, it would be leaving out the second account, and vice versa. Even given the changes in thinking, the realities remained very class-specific, and thus, what is the reality from the critics' point of view, as well as the historical? That childhood experienced a shift—from religiosity to class-specific childhood to a higher enfranchised childhood.<sup>51</sup> The experience of childhood is not universal, and that does not mean one has to complete the impossible task of

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<sup>49</sup> Maynes, *The Family: A World History*, 84; Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road*, 74-75.

<sup>50</sup> Maynes, *The Family: A World History*, 83-84. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class*, 64-69.

<sup>51</sup> Milanich, "Whither Family History? A Road Map from Latin America," 439-458.

generalizing, rather, one cannot rely on some facts but not others—and, as a whole, one has to consider different points of view.

## **Conclusion**

Upon analysis of Aries, his critics, and other historical sources, one can see that childhood was not, in fact, invented in the seventeenth century, but merely reinvented—stemming from childhood’s major shift through the years. From a notion held in religion, to a limited notion held in empirical training, and most recently to a greater enfranchised notion, childhood was complex and evolved through the centuries. Overall, when examining Aries, the literature surrounding him, and other sources from the times he cites, and beyond, it is clear that the notion of childhood existed and evolved. One cannot draw many conclusions on it as a whole—there are few things one can say that would be true of the whole but studying deeper calls for a grasp on the different forms of childhood and their context. Otherwise, the expectation of one instance in space and time would span to others—one cannot expect the same investment and detachment of Medieval China that they do of Victorian England. Alternatively, when studying such vast topics, one must simplify it in a manner that is easily discernible. If one were to observe the whole, one could not possibly see all its divisions and dimensions, and making a sweeping gesture from one instance to all instances would be incorrect. Instead of drawing conclusions from childhood and family as a whole, one must study it through several instances.

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A CITY  
DISCERNING  
SPACE:

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*DISCUSSIONS RELATED TO  
BROOKLYN'S MID-  
NINETEENTH CENTURY  
TRANSPORTATION  
INFRASTRUCTURE*

IAN EZINGA

Contemporary Brooklyn manages to simultaneously embody two competing spirits: one of stalwart resiliency and one of dizzying change. This change can be witnessed on countless fronts. Contemporary residents only have to look at the Barclays Center or Williamsburg to find some of the starkest examples of rapid change that contains a myriad of consequences. More subtle changes can always be found in the neighborhoods that lie to the South and East. While massive infrastructure projects are not breaking ground every year in these areas, residents can still speak to how their neighborhoods are changing. While some of these changes can feel strictly unique to the twenty-first century, Brooklyn has been in a near constant state of environmental, social, and economic change since its inception. For one to assume that this state of change is unique to the twenty-first century would be the first mistake, charting a course down a path to misunderstanding this complex situation.

The changes that are studied and argued today are incredibly varied. But among the Borough's top concerns are questions about growth and change as well as what these transformations will mean for the equity of the residents and accessibility of the space. These same questions about growth, equity, and accessibility were being asked in the then city of Brooklyn in the mid-nineteenth century. At the same time, the city was looking down the bore of massive transformative changes brought about by the introduction of railroads into the city-proper and outlying communities. Looking at the development of transportation infrastructure in Brooklyn beginning in the mid-nineteenth century helps position modern questions of equity and accessibility within the context of a city that has been constantly changing to address these issues since its founding.

This project takes aim at a small portion of Brooklyn's history; the early years when railroads began stitching themselves into the fabric of the then independent city in order to paint a microcosm of transformation. Using primary sources from *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* as well as data gathered from the 1855 New York State Census, this paper examines three separate conversations which took place in the middle of the century. The sum of these three conversations, which all involve the influence or impact of the railroads, presents a sustained investigation of the way that space was developing in Brooklyn during this time and how residents aimed to address it. The first of these conversations is the discussion over the public's safety, as the new technology entered the daily



routines of Brooklynites who had previously traversed the city either by foot or horse drawn carriage. The second conversation concerns the role of rising or falling property values in conjunction with the construction of the new rail lines. The final discussion handled the question of whether or not to run cars on Sundays. Contained within this last discussion are the more complicated implications of the religious makeup of the city, and the role that railroads played in determining the effective usability of urban space.

The term conversation was taken from the pages of Brooklyn's longest running paper, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The paper had a wide readership and in addition to channeling both global and national events through the lens of how they impacted Brooklyn, it also examined the more quotidian happenings around the city. The paper published letters to the editor which often took the shape of back and forths between competing opinions over issues which divided the residents. Among these issues were those pertaining to transportation infrastructure, which, with the introduction of railroads, was a hotly contested subject. Reportings from Common Council meetings, news stories about developments or tragedies along the lines, as well as the thoughts from the paper's staff all coincide in a colorful portrait of a city grappling with the transformative effects of this new technology and the infrastructure it required. Referring to these issues as conversations helps situate the problem within the competing interests which pushed or pulled action in their desired direction.

## **Public Safety**

The coming of the trains drove heated discussions over public safety in the face of a rapidly changing built environment. Public safety in regards to city-run transportation services remains an important discussion today. But the issues that are being discussed in the twenty-first century are those that remain after nearly two centuries worth of filtering, which has addressed some of the more grave concerns of the people. Looking at Brooklyn in the 1850s offers insight into the risks to residents' health and safety that, despite being distinct from those found in the present. Nonetheless, the writings documenting their concerns exhibit a similar fervor and earnestness as those of today. The railroad, like other industrial developments, underwent its trials of effectiveness while being simultaneously embedded into society as the accepted solution. Why

should progress, efficiency, and modernization be held up by the dams of reasons and the toils associated with arriving at an entirely foolproof solution?

This question is important insofar as explaining the rate at which the development of railroad infrastructure swept through the nation but also goes a long way in explaining the many tragedies that residents had to shoulder in order to reap the promised rewards. The pages of *The Brooklyn Eagle* are littered with stories detailing accidents that range greatly on the scale of seriousness. It became a part of readers' daily routine during the 1850s to hear about accidents that occurred across the tri-state area or along the lines that connected New York City to the lands that lay upstate. These accidents often involved a derauling and sometimes a significant number of casualties. At this time, accidents along rail lines were simply a reality of traversing the country at speeds well exceeding those that could be achieved by the most experienced riverboat captains or the freshest team of horses. In metropolises, derailings were still a danger. Many of the accidents, however, took the form of passengers falling off cars or pedestrians falling in front of a car as it barreled down the tracks. While this problem persists today the accidents that occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century were a result of residents having to adapt to new ways of travel. Also at fault were the railroad companies who, by following the well respected laws of commerce and efficiency, sought ways to construct and operate rail lines at a minimal cost.

Journalists during the 1850s, and over the course of the century, kept themselves busy trying to stay on top of the slew of incidents where passengers or those simply nearby were injured or killed by accidents that occurred on the railroads. Even though there are countless reports of these accidents, it is safe to assume that many incidents of smaller consequence went unreported. But whether the stories made it to print, residents of Brooklyn were intimately familiar with accidents along rail lines. This familiarity was so great that there was a large amount of editorializing simply on the frequency of tragedy. In the pages of Brooklyn's other major periodical, *The Brooklyn Evening Star*, one impassioned writer opined on the state of railroad tragedies that swept the nation and in their own city. "When this business of killing passengers with impunity is to stop, we cannot imagine. In almost every instance, the parties concerned are released from all blame in the matter. We need a reform in this killing business, but where, when, or how it will commence, we are at a loss to

imagine.”<sup>1</sup> This “killing business,” that the writer spoke of would claim over 250 lives the following year with many hundreds more injured.<sup>2</sup> The writer concluded his short piece by leaving readers with a lofty statement that does well to explain the normalcy of death by railroad writing, “some even think that travelers are getting used to being killed.”<sup>3</sup>

There were many participants in the conversation about the public’s safety in the face of railroads entering Brooklyn. Of these, perhaps some of the most significant were those whose own injury or death advanced the issue and nailed home the ever-present danger for the other residents. Patrick Grant, for example, was a passenger who suffered the unfortunately common fate of having a leg rolled over while jockeying for room on a crowded rail car.<sup>4</sup> Or that of Thomas Broderick, a young boy who traveled to Greenpoint on an errand for his mother. “On his way back he bought a piece of pie, and the conductor directed him to go on the platform to eat it which he did, and while taking his meal, either fell or was pushed off.” Once on the tracks, Thomas actualized a mother’s worst fear as he was run over by a train car operated by the City Railroad Company.<sup>5</sup> Another story is that of a baker who, along with his horse, experienced a horrific affair with a train belonging to the Long Island Railroad which was passing through Brooklyn near Court Street. The carriage was “struck by the train and smashed into atoms. The horse was instantly killed, and the wheels of the cars passed over the feet of the driver, cutting off several of his toes.” The accident was attributed to the restlessness of the horse although some who witnessed the incident thought the engineer had enough time to react in a meaningful way in order to avoid the worst of the damages.<sup>6</sup> These events and many more made the publishing of a table which compiled the deaths and injuries related to railroad accidents far from out of place in the pages of *The Eagle*. Following the table, the writer of the article quipped, “Who cares? The passengers are cut up, but the dividends go on.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Brooklyn Evening Star*, October 9th, 1857, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 8th, 1854, 2

<sup>3</sup> *Star*, November 22, 1852, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Eagle*, July 5, 1854, 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Eagle*, September 9, 1854, 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Eagle*, October 7, 1850, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Eagle*, August 16, 1853, 2.

Concerned citizens often took to the newspapers to share their own harrowing stories and share their thoughts on the state of public safety in the face of the new technology. One such citizen by the name of Charles A. Meigs took to the pages of *The Eagle* to write, "I beg you to notice in your valuable journal the following facts, as an illustration of the regard paid by our railroad corporations to the lives of our citizens, and of the necessity of some action on the part of the community relative to the running of locomotives within the city limits." Meigs goes on to tell a story which details himself and his family traveling along Franklin Avenue on their way to church when they, "met a locomotive and tender, without any cars attached, backing down from the Bedford Depot, in an easterly direction, at a rapid rate." Meigs had been aware of such possibilities because of prior incidents and made a point to keep a keen eye out for any signs of railroad movement. But in this instance, "no bell was rung, no flag man on the spot, or any prevention whatever taken to notify us of its approach; and as a house intervenes at this point, we could not see the locomotive until it was crossing Franklin." The horse became immediately frightened, reared and took off down the sidewalk along Atlantic Street parallel to the tracks. The horse, uncontrollable, raced along the sidewalk which was set between five and six feet above the tracks (a common arrangement for early track layouts). Eventually, in order to avoid taking the horse and carriage into what was essentially a pile of rocks and stones, Meigs had to take the vehicle down onto the tracks to race ahead of the locomotive which had not made any effort to slow down. Over the course of crossing down into the tracks and entering a "most fearful race for [their] lives," some of the passengers were thrown from the carriage and came within inches of the moving train. Fortunately for Meigs, he was able to write that "by a most merciful interposition of Divine Providence, we all escaped with our lives."<sup>8</sup>

Meigs was determined to use this story as a call to action. "Now, if such management of steam in a city is suffered to continue, by our city fathers, we Bedfordites will be compelled to migrate to some region where human life is a matter of greater consideration than it seems to be with this company." Meigs continued, writing, "Another remedy we have, and may be obliged to adopt, and that is, to travel as I used to in the backwoods, with a good rifle, always ready to protect my life and property." The angry Bedfordite made clear that his

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<sup>8</sup> *Eagle*, January 15, 1857, 2.

account could be confirmed by multiple reliable witnesses.<sup>9</sup> His anger is that of one who, along with his son and daughter, had just brushed up against death. The near fatal accident came about for three primary reasons: the lack of procedures in place to signal train movement, the lack of sufficient and safe infrastructure to pass alongside train tracks safely, and more generally that the new technology often found itself incompatible with the more traditional means of travel.

Returning to the question posed at the start of this section, however, there were certainly dissenting opinions to the idea that railroad companies were entirely malignant entities that insisted on putting profits above the lives of the people living in Brooklyn. In an opinion piece published in *The Eagle* in September of 1853, one Brooklyn resident addressed “those who pretend to write for public instruction.” They opened by writing that if the people who wrote about railroad accidents “were a little more under the influence of common sense, they might effect some real good in their diatribes.”<sup>10</sup> The writer continued, with what comes off as a cool passion for what they hold as reason:

“The amount of nonsense which they sometimes utter, in the form of advice to railroad companies, upon the prevention of accidents, is a melancholy reflection upon the general intelligence and mechanical knowledge of the age. The superficial egotist gives his advice with all the assurance of self-conceit, imagining that he is enlightening the world, when, in reality, he is a quarter of a century behind the improvements of the age, and his suggestions have long ago been found practically worthless... There is no really useful suggestion ever made in regard to the safety of railroads which the owners of them are not ready to adopt instantly, if it is within their power, yet there is none which they do adopt which meets with the public approbation if it involves a reduction of speed.”<sup>11</sup>

This opinion is considerable in part because of the point the writer makes in regards to the public’s disapproval of safety measures taken which reduces the speed of travel that they have come to enjoy. The writer almost humanizes the railroad companies as thankless purveyors of a public utility who are damned

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<sup>9</sup> *Eagle*, January 15th, 1857, 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Eagle*, September 1, 1853, 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Eagle*, September 1, 1853, 3.

when catastrophe occurs but also damned if anything is done to ameliorate any hazards that would impact the efficiency of the lines. Another consideration which this opinion holds is that when handling the language of efficiency, who better to trust than the railroad companies aiming to arrive at the best possible service. If the lines are unsafe, surely they would lose the profits which are underpinning the operation. The owner of this opinion avoided doling out any sympathy for the victims or paying any credence to the general frustration that people had with the consistency of tragedy. Their aim was perhaps simply to cut down the flood of opinions which did not advance the discussion revolving around this issue.

In another opinion piece published in *The Eagle* in October of 1857, titled "Nobody to Blame," the author makes a case for rationalizing the year's crashing of financial markets by comparing it to the discussion being had on the dangers involving the railroads. The author, who remained anonymous, opened by writing that, "In all calamities the public generally pitch upon somebody as a scape-goat on whose devoted head the vengeance of public opinion descends." Using the example of a "coroner's verdict in a railroad accident," in the case of many modern catastrophes, the masses are often left with no concrete verdict as to who they can blame.<sup>12</sup> Markets rise and fall, battles come and go, but when it's all said and done, progress will continue to march on.

## **Property Values**

Another discussion revolving around the new train lines that was hashed out in the pages of Brooklyn's periodicals was the concern over property values. Specifically, how these values fluctuated as a result of the coming trains, faltered at the behest of lines not being built quick enough, or how communities felt threatened if no lines would be able to reach them. The railroad of course promised, and subsequently delivered, far more changes than simply the speed at which one could traverse the city. An efficient urban rail network also suggested heightened efficiency in moving goods and executing services. This increased efficiency would mean that businesses would seek to decrease the distance between their warehouses and storefronts to the tracks. It also meant that landowners who had gotten lucky, or unlucky as some felt, or had preemptively purchased land along a new line had a lot more at stake when

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<sup>12</sup> *Eagle*, October 9, 1857, 2.

discussions over completing rail lines came up. Additionally, many communities felt threatened by the possibility that without the railroad, their land would become a commercial desert that was cut off from the rest of the city and the economic opportunities that came with it. Together, these concerns and the overarching conversation that they are a part of can speak volumes to the extent at which infrastructure had grand implications for the function and eventual form of Brooklyn. In the same way that discussions of value today are married to concerns about proximity to transportation infrastructure, Brooklynites of the nineteenth century also had a lot to worry about when rail lines began laying their roots.

One of the large concerns that property owners of Brooklyn had when faced with the reality of rail entering their city, was that of how they would be powered. Steam engines had been around for some time when the Long Island Railroad received its charter to begin laying tracks with the aim of connecting ports that lay further up the Eastern Seaboard to New York City. The initial plan was to have trains leave Brooklyn, which was sufficiently connected to Manhattan through ferries, and arrive at Greenport on Long Island. Once at the port, ships could quickly move passengers or freight to cities along the Atlantic, Boston being the most notable of them. The problem the railroad ran into, in part because of the sort of accidents described in the previous section, was that much of Brooklyn was vehemently opposed to the running of steam-powered trains within the city limits. But the threat posed to public safety was not their only concern; steam also meant a lot of noise. With the peace and quiet being at risk and danger around every corner, property owners in Brooklyn were not unilaterally thrilled at the prospect of trains entering the city.

The growing questions revolving around new railroads being built, what sort of technology they would be operating on, as well as what it would mean for property owners, led Brooklyn's Common Council to appoint a railroad committee in early January of 1853.<sup>13</sup> The Committee would go on to have an important role in the implementing of new rail lines and the regulation of them. Council meetings that involved an expected report from the Committee often had large audiences in the chambers who would vocalize their support or opposition to their findings or recommendations.<sup>14</sup> One of the first orders of

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<sup>13</sup> *Eagle*, January 11, 1853, 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Eagle*, December 20, 1853, 2.

business that the Committee had to contend with, was the question over whether to allow steam-powered cars to run in the city. Two years previously, the Common Council had already passed a resolution which had prohibited the use of steam-powered trains within the city. Signed by the mayor on June 11th, the bill went into effect on July 1st, 1851 and rescinded any company, the LIRR most notably, from using steam within city limits and restricting the speed of any horse-drawn cars to just five miles per hour.<sup>15</sup> Less than two weeks after the bill was signed into effect, however, the LIRR had disobeyed the ordinance and was running steam locomotives on Atlantic Avenue.<sup>16</sup> An injunction was issued by New York State Judge John W. Edmonds, on behalf of the company, against the Mayor of Brooklyn. The injunction would halt any interference of the company's rights until a court proceeding would be able to clarify the legality of the Common Council's restrictions. An eventual agreement was reached which allowed partial use of steam in the city but remained a hotly contested issue up until the forming of the Committee on Railroads.<sup>17</sup>

When having to first address their position on the use of steam within the city, the Committee would state that they "concur with the action of the Common Council heretofore, so far as that action expresses the opinion that the use of steam within the limits of the city, is objectionable; and they believe if it were an open question, few or no advocates among our citizens would be found in its favor." Appealing to the arithmetic of having so few in support, and so many in opposition, the committee often laid their reasoning at the feet of upholding the interests of their constituents. The Committee furthered their stance on the use of steam by conclusively stating that, "the paramount objection to it is that it materially depreciates the value of property along the lines of the Railroad and in its vicinity, owing to the danger both to life and property which it produces. This depreciation is marked and indisputable."<sup>18</sup>

The question of depreciating property values due to railroads had been discussed in the Common Council chambers before the creation of the Railroad Committee. A year previously, Alderman Marvin, who would later serve on the Railroad Committee, presented a report from the Street Committee which

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<sup>15</sup> *Eagle*, July 5th, 1851, 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Eagle*, July 11th, 1851, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Eagle*, October 10th, 1851, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Eagle*, February 22, 1853, 2.



sought to address a number of issues including the continuous stream of petitions to lay railroad tracks in the city limits. In the report, Marvin stated that “property owners along the streets were almost unanimously adverse to the railways proposed to be introduced; and as the Common Council should not be influenced by a desire to benefit a few, but for the general good the citizens, the committee reported adverse to the prayer of the several petitions.”<sup>19</sup> Although the Common Council regularly sought to uphold the interests of property owners fearful of the coming railroads, the mounting pressure to construct new lines would inevitably find some success in receiving grants from the city.

The question of running steam cars remained a regular feature in *The Eagle* for years to come. But with concessions having already been granted to the companies, the tide began to swing in favor of having railroads in the city. By 1853, the header “City Railroads” ran almost weekly in the pages of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. This column would provide readers updates on the latest developments in the railroadification of Brooklyn and make note of Common Council hearings, construction progress, and plenty of speculation about the future of railroads in the city. This column certainly held the view that the city was ready for railroads and carried a different tone than stories and opinions printed alongside it that documented the many tragedies and their supposed downsides. A piece under the City Railroads header published in September of 1853 opened with, “We are to have railroads in the city, so say the Alderman and so say we all. The noisy and disagreeable omnibuses shall soon cease to jump over the cobble-stones, pitching the passengers from side to side and preventing the utterance of a word except in tones louder than Gabriel’s French horn.”<sup>20</sup> The common issues that people had with the horse drawn omnibuses, which were functioning essentially as large carriages, would be solved by rail cars that “glide along smoothly and don’t cause an earthquake as they pass. They afford more peace and comfort to the people than the stages, and once we become accustomed to their advantages we shall be astonished at our own stupidity in being without them so long.”<sup>21</sup> This joyous tone aside, many problems lay ahead for the popular acceptance of the railroads. One of them

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<sup>19</sup> *Eagle*, November 30, 1852, 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Eagle*, September 27, 1853, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Eagle*, September 27, 1853, 3.

being the outlying communities who felt short handed by the lack of access to this new technology.

The column began hitting print in the months leading up to the incorporation of the Brooklyn City Railroad Company and the subsequent construction and management of their new lines. While there was much excitement about the need for establishing a competent rail network,<sup>22</sup> there was also some skepticism afoot after the incorporation officially took place on December 17th, 1853.<sup>23</sup> A sizable portion of this skepticism was held by citizens who did not think that a company who won contracts on the basis of being the lowest bidder would be capable of meeting the expectations of its charter and adequately serving the city of Brooklyn. The frustrations about the City Railroad Company failing to meet the expectations of their charter found a home in the City Railroads column. A printing of the column published in March of the following year opened by stating, "The people of our city are beginning to inquire why the construction of the railroad about to be established in Brooklyn has not yet commenced." It was understood that all of the materials were purchased and the streets had been properly graded, yet construction was being held up by the contracting out of the labor. Either way, the author continued, writing that, "the public are impatient for the construction of the railroads, and are anxious to enjoy as soon as possible."<sup>24</sup> In the years that followed, the excitement to enjoy the new lines turned into anxiety over whether these lines would even be built for some neighborhoods. The Common Council received numerous petitions from residents which asked for the City Railroad Company to be further compelled to complete the work on a section of rail. In the event of them failing to comply within a certain time frame, citizens would go so far as to demand that charges be brought against the company.<sup>25</sup>

There were of course plenty of obstacles for the railroad company to overcome in order to meet the conditions of their charter. But at every turn, there was an army of frustrated Brooklynites. This frustration was captured in an early column of City Railroads stating, "these railway cars are the people's property, and we hope they be fixed on such a basis as to serve the interests and meet the

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<sup>22</sup> *Eagle*, September 26, 1853, 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Eagle*, December 20, 1853, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Eagle*, March 25, 1854, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Eagle*, April 15, 1856, 2.

wants of the public at large."<sup>26</sup> This idea of the railroads belonging to the people and the citizens having every right to demand what was owed to them by the City Railroad Company was commonplace in the newspapers.

In a letter to the editor concerning the construction of the Fulton Avenue Railroad, the author who went by T. A. R., eloquently wrote about his frustrations with the company's delays. He described a petition submitted by the City Railroad Company which asked for more time to complete construction as, "a specimen of cajolery, falsehood and insolence." The writer described the peoples feelings towards the company's delays by adding that, "no one acquainted with its character for duplicity ever believed for a moment, in fact, it was looked upon as a ruse from the beginning." The delays were attempted to be explained by the encountering pools of water along the path but this was shot down by an assertion that "there is no water and never has been any, above the level at which the rails must be carried." Additionally, the author explained that any recent rains were followed immediately by frost which would have stopped any deep seepage to a point at which would halt construction for this long. After exposing the falsehoods in the Company's statement, T. A. R. asked, "Can the most consummate insolence go farther than this? And will the Common Council submit to it or will asset its owners dignity?"<sup>27</sup>

Another piece, signed by "Verbum Sapienti Sat." (word to the wise is sufficient), spoke to this frustration. They wrote, "When the Common Council granted to the Brooklyn City Railroad Co. a charter to tear up our streets and lay their rails therein for the ostensible purpose of running cars to accommodate the travelling public, it was on the condition and with the express understanding that persons living on the outskirts of our city should come in for their share of the benefits equally with those more convenient to the ferries."<sup>28</sup> The frustration mounts as the author makes clear that those who have rail access, are often in walking distance to their places of business, worship, or leisure anyway; it is the people further from the city center that are being dealt the bad hand. They continued to argue that the company only "run their cars just so far from the ferry as is profitable to themselves, and notwithstanding the cars themselves say 'to the city line,' yet people living beyond those profitable points, must walk to the

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<sup>26</sup> *Eagle*, September 27, 1853, 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Eagle*, December 12, 1856, 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Eagle*, January 3, 1856, 2.

termini in some cases half a mile or more, while before the roads were built the stages ran to their very doors." The writer continues to affirm that the company has thus far failed to meet the strictures of their charter which requires them to lay rails through Flatbush Avenue, through Furman street, and to to extend their tracks on Fulton Avenue to the city limit. The company's failure to meet fundamental requirements was the premise of the piece, but the author also shared his frustration with the raising of fares and banning of smoking on the platform of the cars. Nearing the end, the author wrote that, "I know I speak the minds of hundreds who have heretofore rode daily over their roads that will in future walk, as I will unless we can smoke on the cars."<sup>29</sup>

### **The Sunday Question**

The last discussion this study was able to more thoroughly examine is one whose concern lies mostly on how to use the rails once they were built. The conversation in question arose when the City of Brooklyn had to decide whether the horse-drawn train cars would operate on Sundays. This issue, which more contemporary New Yorkers might find difficult to imagine, was hotly debated in the press and on the floors of the City's legislature. What would become referred to as "The Sunday Question" does a lot of work in showing modern readers the way that a seemingly mundane concern was hashed out on a stage which was rife with diverse characters with different national heritages and different faiths. This issue is seemingly unique to Brooklyn in the 1850s, however, there is still much to learn from the way a diverse cast of citizens acted out their roles in a drama to define the function of their city.

Many of the conflicts that arose in the battle to decide the urban form and character of Brooklyn during the mid-nineteenth century all shared a similar point of origin: petitions to the Common Council of the City of Brooklyn. The Board of Alderman, which served as the primary governing body within the council, had nineteen seats representing each of the city's nineteen wards. The aldermen spread their duties across a variety of standing committees whose level of importance ranged from the Lamps and Gas committee to the War and Military committee.<sup>30</sup> Of the roughly twenty committees, the Railroad

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<sup>29</sup> *Eagle*, January 3, 1856, 2.

<sup>30</sup> William G. Bishop, et al., *Manual of the Common Council of the City of Brooklyn for 1858-59* (The Council, 1863), 16-17.

committee, as previously mentioned, was one of the most influential when it came to determining the eventual shape of Brooklyn.

The Railroad Committee was flooded each week with petitions from regular citizens, businessmen, and notable community figures all with the aim of guiding the direction of the conversation revolving around railroads towards their favored ground. This ground could be a physical one pertaining to proposals for new lines or a more proverbial one akin to questions regarding whether or not cars should be allowed to operate on Sundays. The Sunday question quickly became a hotly contested issue when people initially began questioning the purpose of not allowing trains to run on the Sabbath. This battleground, whose outcome is of no surprise to any modern reader, still provides scholars a useful insight into the sort of cultural conflicts that were commonplace in Brooklyn during this time.

In accordance with the City's new charter signed into effect in April of 1854, Brooklyn would also include the city of Williamsburgh and the town of Bushwick.<sup>31</sup> This newly incorporated city was home to a substantially diverse population. This diversity is drawn primarily along the lines of national heritage; using nationality as opposed to race makes sense in this case because nearly 98 percent of the 216,355 people living in Kings County in 1855 were white according to that year's New York State Census. Of this predominantly white population, 47 percent were born outside of the United States.<sup>32</sup> This mass of foreign-born citizens helped comprise the third largest city in the country. Apart from the streets they shared and the color of the skin, perhaps the next greatest common denominator of these people was their religious inclinations.

While the range of faiths and denominations within was vast, Christianity easily enjoyed the greatest share of Brooklyn's faithful during the 1850s. According to the 1855 State Census, the city was home to 149 different churches which boasted an estimated weekly attendance of over 83,000.<sup>33</sup> With nearly 40 percent of the city attending some sort of religious service each week, it becomes readily clear why the question of running rail cars on Sundays became such a huge deal. While not making up a clear majority, church goers still represented a significant contingent when it came to setting the norms of their

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<sup>31</sup> *Eagle*, April 5, 1854, 2.

<sup>32</sup> 1855 New York State Census.

<sup>33</sup> 1855 New York State Census.

city and, in accordance with the norms of the day, counted numerous influential residents among their ranks. When a petition appeared before the Common Council in late January of 1856 that respectfully asked for a limited number of trains to run on Sundays for the purpose of attending religious services, a storm was sparked whose waves rippled through the opinion section of *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* for years.

The original petition that was signed by people who claimed to represent residents of the sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth wards did not call for the rail lines to be fully operational on Sundays. The petition rather called on the Common Council to direct the City Railroad Company to “run their cars upon Sunday from their depot in the eighth ward, to the City Hall, at such times and under such proper regulations as your Honorable Body may from time to time direct.”<sup>34</sup> The petition’s purpose was to alleviate inconveniences that were commonplace among citizens in the aforementioned wards who needed to travel to other parts of the city to attend their preferred service. Commenting on the petition, the editors of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* wrote,

“The character which our city has acquired as a moral and church-going community, is one of its best distinctions, and the quiet and Christian-like repose of its Sabbaths should never be needlessly interrupted. The running of Railroad Cars on Sunday for the purposes of secular traffic would be offensive to a large class of citizens whose sentiments are worthy of respect and consideration. A limited number of cars however to run at stated intervals to remove the inconvenience complained of in the above petition could meet with no reasonable objection.”<sup>35</sup>

The paper, similar to the petition itself, initially assumed a moderate view of the problem at hand. But the piece goes on to color the issue by referring to the inconvenience in question as “a matter of great notoriety.” Addressing an opinion the paper published whose author took an entirely negative opinion of operating trains on Sundays, the writer continues by insisting that the paper prefers, “argument and reason to clamor as being more likely to produce conviction. For our own part, we can see no reasonable objection to the running of a limited number of cars provided care is taken to confine the accommodation

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<sup>34</sup> *Eagle*, January 31, 1856, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Eagle*, January 31, 1856, 2.

thus afforded to the actual necessities of the public."<sup>36</sup> The paper insisted that people gave reasons for their positions as opposed to just sharing loose thoughts.

The opinion which the editors of *The Eagle* took issue with because of its poor application of reason, was signed "One of the people," and remarked that any removal of the Sunday prohibition would "certainly [be] a breach of good faith." The short piece finished by defining its purpose as to "sound a note of alarm, and call attention to this subject. Let those who feel opposed to this movement consider it before it is too late."<sup>37</sup> The note of alarm was heard, and the following editions of the *Daily Eagle* saw a number of responses. After thanking the paper for offering up a space for a civil debate, one such responder guessed that "One of the people," was probably someone who lives "within easy hail of the church where his favorite minister holds forth." The humble owner of the diatribe went on to remind his ideological adversary that, "there are thousands of Christian men, and especially Christian women and children of Christian parents, beyond the reach of those influences in the midst which he lives." Similarly to the petition and the opinion of the editors, this writer who signed his piece as "Out Towards Bedford," also opposed the general running of cars on Sundays, but deemed it important for some accommodation to be made.<sup>38</sup> This author's pen name speaks to his proximity to the city center. By making the point that "One of the people" must live near the city center and have no need for the trains to run on Sundays, "Out Towards Bedford" addresses the lack of access that those who live on the city's peripheries have to contend with. With the vast amount of denominations and different churches throughout the city, the question of accessing them became an issue as the city continued to sprawl.

"One of the People" returned to the second page of the *Daily Eagle* a few days later to further clarify his stance on the issue and provide some reasons which had been requested by the editors of *The Eagle*. While claiming to be able to offer many, "One of the People" provided just two in the interest of keeping it short. The first of which was simply put as running trains on Sundays

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<sup>36</sup> *Eagle*, January 31, 1856, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Eagle*, January 31, 1856, 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Eagle*, February 1, 1856, 2.

“would be a sin against God.” Second, “it would be a breach of faith with the people.” Before closing, they assured readers that they would share more reasons after the ones they had disclosed were satisfactorily answered.

The original petition had been submitted in January of 1856. Following a spring and summer of vibrant demands for Sunday train access, the new mayor, Samuel S. Powell, weighed in on the issue in his first address to the city. He came out in strong approval for running cars on Sundays, saying, “Very many of our citizens find it in accordance with their duty or inclination to visit different and distant parts of the city on Sunday.” Powell outlined why they needed the cars by arguing that those who are unable to travel by rail on Sundays can only do so “at the expense of a private conveyance, or a long and toilsome journey on foot; the effect of this is to prevent many persons in moderate circumstances from becoming residents of the outer wards and as a consequence exercises a depressing influence on the value of property.” In his reasoning, Powell brings up not just the question of accessibility, but also that of property values which would suffer if people would not move due to lack of access. His recommendation would be to reach an agreement with the railroad company which allowed for a sufficient number of cars to run, allowing those that wanted to travel on Sundays to do so without great hindrance.

The question was eventually posed to the Common Council after an outpour of citizens littered City Hall with petitions and letters urging to allow for Sunday cars.<sup>39</sup> With the Council being in agreement, the question was then posed to the directors of the City Railroad Company. *The Eagle* ran a piece April 8, 1857, that read, “We are enabled to inform the people [of] this city that their wishes in the matter of accommodation for Sunday travel are to be defied. The Common Council, being accessible to the popular influence, yielded to the pressure of public sentiment, but the directors of the Railroad Company, hedged behind the barriers of a monied monopoly, defy the people to their teeth.”<sup>40</sup> The vote ended with four in favor and eight against. Half of the votes cast among the majority “based their opposition on sanctity,” while the other half voted “on dollars and cents, fearing the Sunday cars would not pay.” *The Eagle’s* piece ends with an authoritative remark, asserting that “it is probable

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<sup>39</sup> *Eagle*, March 17, 1857, 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Eagle*, April 8, 1857, 2.



that the vote may be reversed in a short time; if not the people will have to assert their rights in a way that will bring this monopoly to its senses."<sup>41</sup>

The masses of citizens who called for the running of the cars were let down and angry. Following the sentiment of *The Eagle's* piece, one writer who went under the penname "A Liberal Citizen," responded to the news a few days later. "The question," they write, "therefore, arises, are we to submit patiently and quietly to the doctrine of these eight bigotted, stupied fanatical *celestials*, or are we to show them, by prompt and decisive action, that we can and will assert and maintain our rights, as citizens, whether they like it or not."<sup>42</sup> The people kept up their attempts to organize around this issue. They kept the pressure on the Common Council and the directors of the City Railroad Company through meetings, sermons, and continued discourse in the paper.<sup>43</sup> By May, it was understood that the Railroad's directors were going to hold a meeting to reassess their decision.<sup>44</sup> The verdict, to the elation of the paper, was that they would experiment with the running of cars on Sundays for three months.<sup>45</sup> The following Monday after the meeting, *The Eagle* raised a toast to the tune of "success to the Sunday car," and gleefully reported cars full of quiet, respectful, church-going citizens.<sup>46</sup> The experiment would be extended further and further from its start date until it became a regular facet of weekly travel on Brooklyn's rails.

The Sunday Question is best understood only after taking into account the extensive religious makeup and the continual sprawl of the growing city. These two factors found a joint issue with the running of the cars on Sundays. A citizenry that insisted on more accessibility and the right to travel prevailed over a conservative board of directors who also harbored concern over the profitability of the Sunday cars in question. This saga grows in size and color upon an even more thorough examination of the pages of *The Brooklyn Eagle* during this time. As much as it can grow, however, the core of the story will remain steadfast. The citizens of Brooklyn insisted that those who lived in the outer wards of the city

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<sup>41</sup> *Eagle*, April 8, 1857, 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Eagle*, April 10, 1857, 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Eagle*, April 18, 1857, 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Eagle*, May 11, 1857, 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Eagle*, May 13, 1857, 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Eagle*, May 18, 1857, 3.

had an equal right to traverse their environment as those who lived in the center, and the railroads would be the tool to do it.

## **Conclusion**

The pages of the *Brooklyn Eagle* and other publications are filled with examples of citizens demanding change and questioning the forces at large. These examples whether found on the topic of public safety, the value and usability of their property, or the influence of religion, all go to show a community set on discerning their own space. Derivatives of these same questions are still being asked today. The conversations that are examined in this study do not go so far as to answer the questions that Brooklynites, or New Yorkers more generally, may have about the future of their city. They certainly help, however, frame those questions within the lineage of a long fought battle to define the space they occupy.

The introduction of railroads into American cities is important because they did the most work in transforming the urban form of cities such as Brooklyn and had a massive impact on the way that people conducted their lives and companies did business. The twenty-first century is delivering it's own slew of transformative forces into cities. Whether they are self driving cars, underground highways, designated airspace for drones, or a myriad of other possible technologies, the way people use cities is in near constant flux. As citizens and local governments navigate these changes, it is important to remain vigilant on the discussions between private and public entities, individual or communal concerns, and the ways in which these forces can either clash or coincide.

It would not be too arduous of a task, as goes the way of most dismissive thinking, to neglect any reflections on mid-nineteenth century infrastructure transformations when faced with addressing modern questions of equity and accessibility in urban spaces. Using a broad perspective that takes past events into account, however, will always bolster a movement's ability to tackle a problem at hand. Perhaps when faced with the difficulties of subway deserts in Brooklyn or Queens, you could address the issue of accessibility knowing that people have been fearful of being left out of the city at large ever since the first rail lines were announced. Or perhaps when self driving cars are being quickly stitched into the fabric of our transportation network and showing a number of risks to both passengers and pedestrians, the problem might be handled

knowing that people have always been rightfully fearful of new technology and its integration into communities. While the Sunday Question is seemingly unique to the days of old, not having express trains run through Queens on the weekends means extra hours of commuting for those who do not have a job that falls within the traditional work week. Although there are certainly rational considerations being made for not running these cars as frequently, people are still being left out of the conveniences that public transit could provide at no fault of their own. Surveying the past helps contextualize modern efforts to reimagine urban space along a timeline that spans back to any city's founding. Bearing this timeline in mind, cities can have their efforts to reconceptualize their form and function remain steadfast in the face of mounting challenges.

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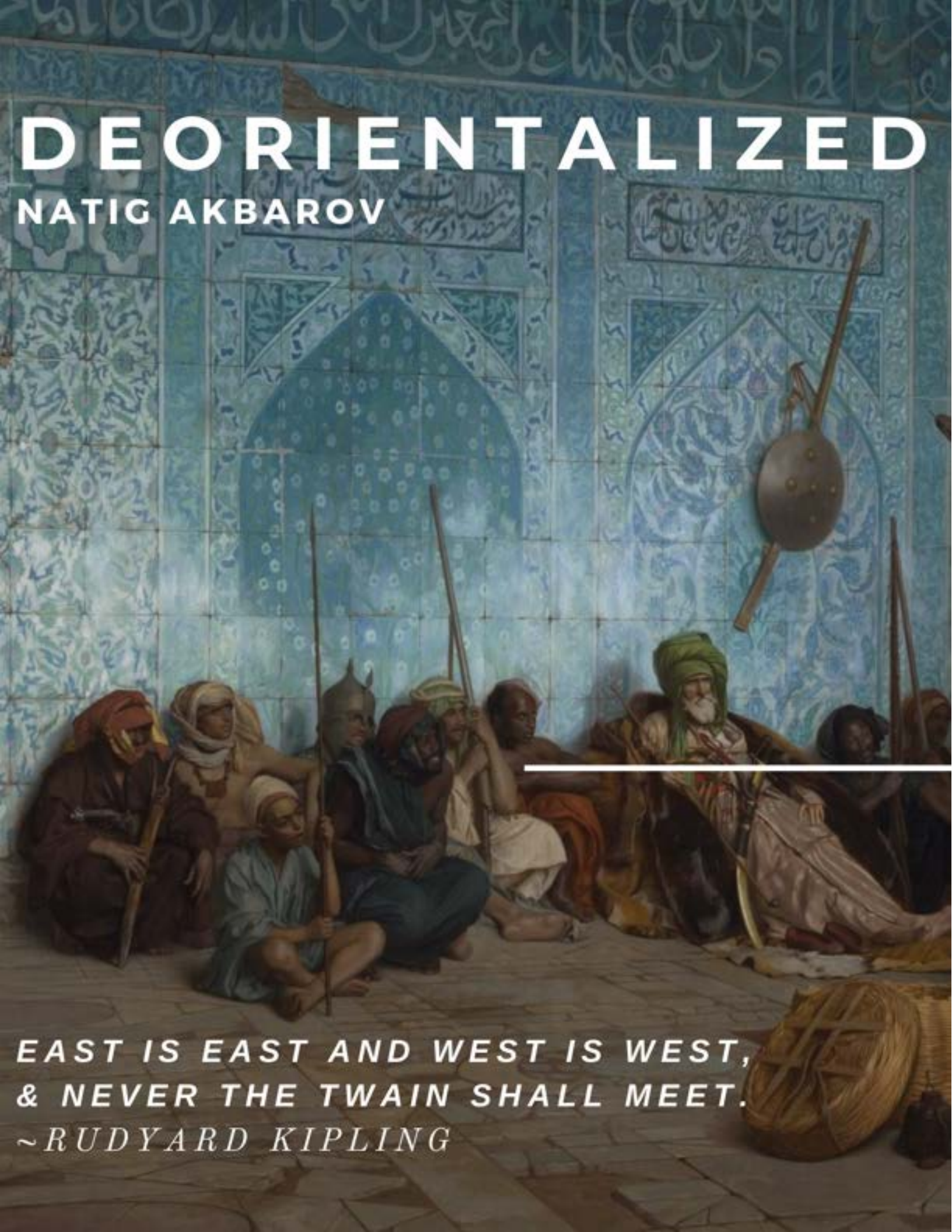
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# DEORIENTALIZED

NATIG AKBAROV



EAST IS EAST AND WEST IS WEST,  
& NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET.  
~RUDYARD KIPLING

## Introduction

In the past half-a-century, the study of the phenomena of colonialism and the problems of interaction between the East and the West has reached a qualitatively new level in historiography. This acceleration cannot be imagined without intense and sharp debates on the problems of Orientalism, imperialism, nationalism, modernization, and recently globalization developed on the basis of the postmodern challenge to traditional epistemology, which dominated European intellectual thought since the Enlightenment. The period between 1960s-1990s is considered to be a modern Renaissance of history when multifarious, and relatively new historiographical methods started to rise, debates on a global scale, intertwine and in some cases, even contradict themselves. The central dispute was the 'invasion' of relations between the East and the West in the historiography of the post-structuralist theory of critical discourse through interdisciplinary contacts with other humanities such as literary criticism, anthropology, regional studies, and cultural studies. As a result of this interaction, the so-called "theory of colonial discourse" arose, and the former hegemonic ideas of the West about the East and other non-European societies were deconstructed. A shaft of publications about the representations of the 'Other' and a postmodernist criticism of European racism and other forms of cultural domination followed. One of the theoretical ideologies that had a tremendous impact on the historiographical awareness of that epoch was "*Orientalism*" proposed by Edward Said.<sup>1</sup> This political/cultural theory explained the western approach in creating a discourse of the historical path regarding the colonized East and became very influential for the discipline of history. The conceptual idea and history is crucial to understanding this theory, revealing both the positive influence and academic critiques to Edward Said's "*Orientalism*."

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Said used quotation marks to show the ironical difference with the *Orientalism* of previous centuries.

## **Background**

Edward Said belonged to the generation of such neo-intellectuals like Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Edward Carr, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Nancy. However, his life path was unique and to understand the thoughts, feelings, and scientific ideas of E. Said, his biography needs to be taken into consideration. A Palestinian who was born in Jerusalem in 1935 under the conditions of Western domination in the Middle East, from the first steps of his life he seemed to live in several worlds and felt the impact of different cultures, lifestyles, ideas, and values. The pseudo-European lifestyle of a young man who lived in Cairo since 1943 with activities such as a school, church, club, music lessons, gymnastics for 27 years, was accompanied by obligatory living in the summer in a remote Lebanese village where his father sent him. Harsh abstinent village life with a minimum level of comfort, constant work, and strict discipline was, according to his parents, supposed to return the son from another world and remind him that he was, is and always would be an 'Arab.' Such summer 'holidays' were hard for Edward, and led to emotional collapses and mental exhaustion.<sup>2</sup> In the short time of the Six Day War, Said experienced an internal coup. A sophisticated connoisseur of classical music, a polyglot and cosmopolitan, who had long broken ties with the cities of his birth and youth, Jerusalem and Cairo, he felt himself to be a "Palestinian refugee" after Israel's seizure of Palestinian Territories.<sup>3</sup>

## **Academic Career**

Notwithstanding a complicated life in two worlds, Said subsequently succeeded in making a brilliant scientific and professional career in the West. Hence he taught at prestigious American universities like Harvard University and Princeton University and wrote more than two

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<sup>2</sup> Deane Seamus, "Under Eastern and Western Eyes" (*boundary 2* 28, no. 1., 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Maya Kucherskaya, "The Story of a Delusion" (*Domestic Notes*, 2007).

dozen books, some of which became scientific bestsellers. Nonetheless, the feeling of losing one's world – Palestine – seemed never to have left him. In 1999, E. Said's memoirs were published under the significant title "Out of Place: A Memoir", which embodied the author's integral feeling that there was no certainty and confidence in bias-free community, language, racial stereotypes and cultural patterns. It seems that being 'between' cultures and worlds predetermined the subject of scientific research and numerous works by E. Said, in the center of which were the collaboration of East and West, colonialism, and the destiny of Palestine.

However, his most important personal contribution to the study of these problems was undoubtedly *Orientalism*. It is impossible to imagine the high level of theoretical research that has been achieved in recent decades without the impetus that this book gave to the development of the analysis of colonial discourse and postcolonial theory. This work was a challenge to the established academic notions, a recognition followed by a shocking effect of understanding and awareness of the possibilities.<sup>4</sup> It is not a coincidence that the last chapter of his book *Culture and Imperialism* is entitled "Freedom from Dominance in the Future."<sup>5</sup> *Orientalism* marked the beginning of the author's struggle for the oppressed Eastern past, which was inextricably linked with the struggle for the potential future it could have.

## **Historiography**

The book *Orientalism* is indisputably one of the foundational texts for the academic field of postcolonial research. The author analyzes the cultural representations that are the basis of Orientalism, a term he revised to refer to the patronizing insight of the West and descriptions of Middle Eastern, Asian and North African societies – generalized as East. He sustains that the Orientalist scholarship was and remains inseparably linked to the imperialist societies that produced it, which does intrinsically

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (Routledge, Taylor, and Francis, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).



political work, slavishly puts it into action, and is thus intellectually suspect. Said further condemns the social, economic, and cultural methods of the ruling Arab elites, which he portrays as imperial satraps, assimilating the romanticized 'Arab Culture' created by British and American Orientalists. *Orientalism* in Said's interpretation manifested the beginning of an entirely new tendency of vivid conceptual and innovative works. For instance, the concepts developed by E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger of "imaginary communities," "hybridity" and "mimicry" by H. Bhabha, and "Euro-orientalism" by L. Wolff along with the scientific activities of the Subaltern Studies Group, which created a whole trend in Indian historiography - are only some of them.<sup>678</sup>

Orientalism as a theoretical model was intended for consumption in the West and only for the West itself. Nevertheless, its significant function was to reveal to the non-Western cultures a 'truth' about themselves in a manner acceptable to the West. In a situation studied by E. Said, one group or culture decided that another group was not capable of representing themselves, and took the responsibility to speak, write and act on their behalf – about them, for them, without consulting them.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the power of the West allowed him not only to dominate the East but also to speak for it, to represent it as 'typically Eastern.'

Grounded on the ideas of M. Foucault about the inextricable connection of knowledge and power, Said concluded that the Enlightenment project was, among other things, an attempt to make Europe dominant over all other cultures and societies of the world through colonial expansion.<sup>10</sup> The imperial power of the West was

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<sup>6</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Homi Bhabha, *Of Mimicry and Man* (1984).

<sup>8</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the map of civilization on the mind of the enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> As one of the epigraphs to the book "Orientalism", E. Said chose K. Marx's phrase from the work "18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte": "they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented."

<sup>10</sup> Rashmi Bhatnagar, *Uses and Limits of Foucault*, 1986.

connected with the epistemological mandate, which it imposed on the subordinate nations. In his cultural self-critique of Orientalism, Said states that “since it was the science of incorporation and inclusion, through which the East was constituted and then presented in Europe, Orientalism was a scientific movement whose analog in the world of empirical politics was colonial accumulation and the acquisition of the East by Europe. The East, therefore, was not the interlocutor of Europe, but its silent ‘Other.’”<sup>11</sup> In this explanation, Said exposes that the epistemological charter was based on Western-designed representations of non-European parts of the world, representations that emphasized the cultural distance, the otherness of the ‘Other.’

Most importantly, the emergence of *Orientalism* and other works by E. Said led to a radical revision of research priorities and approaches in the study of European colonialism, to the discovery of new, previously ignored layers in colonial contacts and clashes. The focus of research shifted from socio-economic and political history to the study of culture. Special attention is paid to the problems of the relationship between culture and colonialism, colonization of mind and body, construction of knowledge about colonized, inventions developed by Europeans knowledge into the consciousness of the colonized themselves and several other aspects of colonial interaction. This change in research priorities stimulated the desire to deconstruct the imperial chronicles and artifacts of colonial experience with a primary goal: to show how the knowledge presented in them and by them was an essential component of the arrogance of European culture and the domination of Eurocentrism. In terms of using historical sources for the historiographical research, after *Orientalism*, historians started to refer not only to the texts of archival documents, but also to literature, music, architectural constructions, street planning, rituals, stamps, toys, and other eastern artifacts neglected in

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<sup>11</sup> Edward Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered” (*Cultural Critique*, no. 1: 89-107, 1985).

colonialist historiography. Thus imperial narratives have been subjected to a different type of filtered reading.

## **Critiques**

The concept of Orientalism by Said is inseparable from serious changes in the historiography of Oriental studies, anthropology, and postcolonial theory. After Said published the book *Orientalism*, the many major historians criticized his ideas. The reason for this was that Said put the professionalism of Western researchers into doubt, accusing them of preconceived and political engagement. It is still unclear why Said's *Orientalism* had such a significant, and according to some, destructive, effect on the historiography of Oriental studies, since it was not the first attempt to criticize Western science. A critical analysis of Western knowledge of the East existed before the work of Said. For example, Abdurrahman al-Jabarti, an Egyptian chronicler and witness of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, did not doubt that the expedition was both an epistemological and military conquest. Then the investigations of A. Malik, B. S. Kona, and L. Tibawi tracked relations between European ideas and rule in the East.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, it was Said's book that provoked an unprecedented reaction.

Karl Marx, while criticizing pre-colonial Indian society was convinced that the colonial rule of England, in addition to robbery and violence, brought closer the time for the liberation of the people of India from the "Yoke of the Capitalism."<sup>13</sup> Having cited several quotations from Marxist articles about India, commissioned by the New York Times, Said argues that Marx had found a vivid expression of the influence of the Orientalist discourse of supremacy of the West over the East, which even Marx could not resist. A popular Marxist Philosopher Ajaz Ahmad accurately noted that the emotional-psychological analysis prevailed in Said's attitude to Marx. Hence, instead of putting the specific words of

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Gran, "Review of orientalism" (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*. 1980. Vol. 100, No 3., 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Ilya Joffe, *Profession: Orientalis* (Left.Ru, 2006).

Marx in the general context of his views on historical development, Said expressed an unsupported, purely speculative thesis that "good, progressive Marx" broke for being unable to withstand the pressure of the lexicographic censorship of Orientalist science and Orientalist art.<sup>14</sup> Ahmad insists that he exposed almost a primitive racist thought: "These people do not suffer - they are Eastern people, and they should be treated differently."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the allegation that the "West-Eastern Divan" by Goethe was for Marx the primary source of knowledge about the East looks completely frivolous, purely based on the fact that Marx quotes Goethe's lines in his articles on India.<sup>16</sup>

Modern authors such as the British historian David Cannadine have corrected many of the arguments of Said. Cannadine demonstrated that the cultural exchange between the metropolis and the colonies was two-way. British "Ornamentalism," which imitated Indians in the kitchen, in fashion or a spiritual quest, was the rule rather than the exception. More importantly, in their colonies, the British preferred to notice something like this rather than exoticism: to deal with familiar ideas, rather than with exotic and dangerous disorder.<sup>17</sup>

Another criticism that Said's Orientalism faced was by a British-American historian Bernard Lewis. Lewis' main opposition is that European Orientalists studied Islam already in the 16th 'Magnificent' century even before there was a plan of subjugating the Middle East in any politically chartered way.<sup>18</sup> Lewis argues that Orientalism is an aspect of humanism and denounces Edward Said for politicizing the Arab world. Furthermore, Lewis claims that Orientalism advanced due to Western humanism, which was autonomous of the preceding Eurocentric

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<sup>14</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, "Marx on India: A Clarification" (2005).

<sup>15</sup> Ahmad, "Marx on India."

<sup>16</sup> Gran Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World" (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*. 1980. Vol. 100, No 3., 1990).

<sup>17</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: how the British saw their empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Bruce Thornton, "Golden Threads: Former Muslim Ibn Warraq stands up for the West" (*Books and Culture*. City Journal, 2007).

expansion of imperial colonialism.<sup>19</sup> An Australian political journalist, Imre Saluzinszky, also grounded his critique on political soil. He argued that Said preferred to write in the essay form to "emphasize the personal while at the same time entailing a political dimension."<sup>20</sup> According to Saluzinsky, Said also was "polyphonic: that is, to articulate and develop his views by deploying other thinkers."<sup>21</sup> Another critic, Harvard University Professor on Middle Eastern Studies, Roger Owen, emphasized that by concentrating on the studies of French and English orientalists, the scholar disregarded the works of German orientalists (who had significant influence in oriental studies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), as well as Italian and Hungarian, who lived in states whose foreign policy was not directly linked to the aim of controlling in the East.<sup>22</sup> Another critic, Albert Hourani, pointed out that Said objectively underestimated the essence of scientific knowledge and in vain attributed "Orientalism" not only to politicians and poets but also to Orientalists.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

Just as Said had his subjective prejudices against oppressors, the scholars who criticized him also based their claims on implicit biases and conflicting interests. That is exactly what transforms a historical event into a filtered, balanced, and credible source because of alternative and diversely opposite opinions while creating a useful tool for learning, analyzing and teaching History for the future graduates. Even though some of the criticisms were well-grounded, Said's positive contribution to historiographical awareness in terms of cultural influence to the science of history cannot be diminished. Edward Said's book utterly shook the

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<sup>19</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Imre Saluzinszky and Jacques Derrida, *Criticism in Society: interviews with Jacques Derrida, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, Frank Kermode, Edward Said, Barbara Johnson, Frank Lentricchia, and J. Hillis Miller* (Methuen, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Saluzinszky and Derrida, *Criticism in Society*.

<sup>22</sup> Roger Owen, "The Mysterious Orient" (*Monthly Review*:31:58-93, 1979).

<sup>23</sup> Albert Hourani, *The Road to Morocco* (Yale Research Company, 1984).

academic thought and gave rise to intense, controversial polemics, which continues to this day. Despite the fact that Edward Said was not a historian himself and similar to his namesake E. H. Carr was universally subjected to political interpretation, the book "Orientalism" should be considered as the second most influential meta-theory after Marxism that brought a new breath to the discipline of History and reshaped it on a global scale around the "deOrientalized" (thanks to Said) countries of the world.

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# BLOOD WASHED AWAY



*REALIZING THE ROLE OF THE  
WEHRMACHT IN THE  
HISTORIKERSTREIT*

**ROBERT ADLER**

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the world professed its dedication towards uncovering and punishing the crimes against humanity of the Nazi regime. In the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, the Allied Powers gathered to try those responsible for the crimes of World War II. Thousands upon thousands of documents and other recorded evidence was produced to prove the unique depravity of the crimes committed in the name of Nazi Germany. Yet in the conclusion of those trials, the world seemed to want to forget. A new Cold War was brewing, and America's old enemy the Wehrmacht (the German military) would become a staunch ally in the fight against communism. With that mindset, war criminals were released and the highest echelons of the former Wehrmacht received the media spotlight. The spirit of enmity towards the ruthless German Army became lost in the struggle against the communist threat. As the decades passed, however, a new generation of historians began to unearth the true crimes committed by the Wehrmacht in World War II. Soon, historians began to debate the nature of the Wehrmacht's role in World War II. The quarrel over Nazi Germany's past, or the *Historikerstreit*, would become a struggle of the present, destined to disprove the Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht.

The notion of a Clean Wehrmacht was pervasive within post-war Germany. Backed up by the testimony of former German generals keen on diverting attention from their actions, early West German historiography and the public in general were oblivious to the criminal actions of the Wehrmacht. This has prompted many questions about the development of the myth. Why did the myth persist in German historiography? Why did historians struggle to disprove a myth that not long ago dominated historical thought of the period? How was the myth uncovered, and how have historians incorporated the new evidence? Such questions became the center of the debate over how historians grappled with new evidence to answer what the Wehrmacht's role was in the crimes of the Third Reich. Over the past half-century, historians have progressively deconstructed and disproved large sections of the myth and have largely overturned its once dominant position in the historiographical literature on the Wehrmacht.

## Post-War Historiography and "The Myth"

In the aftermath of World War II, America would be at war again. This time, it would be a Cold War with its former ally, the Soviet Union. America would have to move past old struggles and make peace with its former foe. Insofar as waging a war against communism, America had forgotten its previous war with Germany. The new West German government would be seen as a bulwark against the new threat. As German historian Rolf Dieter-Müller explains, "The large majority of officers loyal to the regime had confidence that the Western Allies would realize the danger their Soviet allies posed to the entire Western world. The Wehrmacht would then be an indispensable part of the defense against the 'flood of Bolshevism.'"<sup>1</sup> As such, in the formation of the post war government, former Wehrmacht officers would become the foundations of West Germany's new army, the Bundeswehr.

As a result of the increased power afforded to former Wehrmacht officers, they would be at the center of their historiography. Muller notes that most if not all academic research on the Wehrmacht was initially conducted by former Wehrmacht officers.<sup>2</sup> This includes work by the United States Army Historical Division, which retained the work of former Wehrmacht general Franz Halder in their accounting. This proved central to the original creation of the Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht. Here, The German Army was presented as a professional army that conducted itself independently of Nazi ideology<sup>3</sup>. Alexander Pollak, a historian working with the Hamburg Institute for Social Research on Wehrmacht history, proposed central elements of the myth within the post-war culture, in referencing the myth within Austria:

- Focusing on a small group of the guilty.
- The offsetting and relativizing of war crimes.
- Denying responsibility for the war.
- Claims regarding the naivety and apolitical outlook of 'ordinary' soldiers.

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<sup>1</sup> Rolf Dieter Müller, *Hitler's Wehrmacht, 1935-1945* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 199.

<sup>2</sup> Müller, *Hitler's Wehrmacht*, 203.

<sup>3</sup> Omer Bartov, "German Soldiers and the Holocaust: Historiography, Research and Implications," (*History and memory* 9, no. ½), 162.

- Writing heroizing obituaries of generals and soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

These points would form a central portion of the early Wehrmacht historiography, and of future debates. These rarely disputed views were spread by former German officers (who would often write the histories themselves), politicians, and the popular media, giving way for a positively skewed outlook on the professionalism of the German Wehrmacht.

Historians have provided various explanations for why this myth was allowed to persist. Israeli Wehrmacht historian Omer Bartov states that the lack of objective historiography of the Wehrmacht was simply due to lack of interest: "much of the material eventually used by scholars had been available long before it was examined. What was lacking in those first two decades was scholarly interest, not evidence, as well as the more obvious limitations imposed on research by the vast amounts of material and the laborious process of its organization and categorization."<sup>5</sup> As such, for most of the 1950s and 60s, historical output on the Wehrmacht would be relegated to positive descriptions perpetuating the Myth.

German historian Hans-Adolf Jacobsen was the first to challenge the myth in Wehrmacht historiography during the 1960s. His paper, in the *Anatomie de SS States*, detailed one of the war crimes directly committed by the Wehrmacht. His paper, on the Commissar order, an order on the mistreatment and execution of political officers, changed the idea that the Wehrmacht did not perpetrate war crimes.<sup>6</sup> Previously, there had been an inclination amongst followers of the myth to believe that the Wehrmacht had not carried out the order. However, Jacobsen provided a detailed account that proved to be a landmark paper in beginning the process of unearthing documentation of the Wehrmacht's war crimes. Subsequent historians such as Manfred Messerschmidt<sup>7</sup> and Christian Streit<sup>8</sup> began to engage themselves with other parts of the Wehrmacht's atrocities, such as maltreatment of prisoners and collaborations of the

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<sup>4</sup> Hannes Heer, *The Discursive Construction of Memory: the Wehrmacht's War of Extermination* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 137.

<sup>5</sup> Bartov, "German Soldiers and the Holocaust," 164.

<sup>6</sup> Bartov, "German Soldiers and the Holocaust," 166.

<sup>7</sup> Manfred Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht Im NS-Staat* (Hamburg, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht Und Die Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945*, (Dietz, 1997).

Wehrmacht with Einsatzgruppen (mobile death squads), respectively.<sup>9</sup> These early studies began to decode the myth surrounding the Wehrmacht's actions.<sup>10</sup>

While much of the historiography surrounding the original landmark papers deals with activities unrelated directly to the Holocaust, subsequent studies showed increasing levels of cooperation with the SS in the Holocaust as well. Muller notes how there was an expectation among German soldiers that they should "provide understanding and assistance" to SS units within the Eastern Front, even when it involved turning in their own soldiers who were found to be of mixed descent.<sup>11</sup> It is also important to note the influence of West German government historical projects in unearthing new documents as well. "In this," said Muller, "the Military History Research office played an exemplary role. Its studies, which have been strongly debated, at least internally, challenged the traditional image of the Wehrmacht."<sup>12</sup> Consequently, a strong argument began to form surrounding the Wehrmacht's culpability in war crimes through the unearthing of new documents, leading to new historical interpretations that questioned the German conscience.

### **The Myth Through the *Historikerstreit*: Conservative Viewpoint**

The true historical debate began with Conservative attempts to contextualize these new sources as a part of the broader *Historikerstreit*, a quarrel over how to incorporate Nazi Germany into German historiography and memory. Scholars would begin to either echo or question previous Conservative interpretations and contribute to the debate over the Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht. Conservative interpretations were more sympathetic to the Wehrmacht, arguing for a greater pride in Germany's past, and seeing the Wehrmacht as a guard against Bolshevism.<sup>13</sup> The first document which propelled Germany into the *Historikerstreit* would be Conservative historian

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<sup>9</sup> Bartov, "German Soldiers and the Holocaust," 166.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Shepherd. "The Clean Wehrmacht, The War Of Extermination, And Beyond," (The Historical Journal, vol. 52, no. 2, 2009), 456.

<sup>11</sup> Müller, *Hitler's Wehrmacht*, 149.

<sup>12</sup> Müller, *Hitler's Wehrmacht*, 203.

<sup>13</sup> Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).

Ernst Nolte's "The Past that Would not Pass."<sup>14</sup> In it, Nolte presented what would grow to become central viewpoints surrounding the *Historikerstreit*. Nolte presented a view that crimes committed by Germany, including the Wehrmacht, on the Eastern Front came about as a "rational" response to Soviet aggression. British historian Richard J. Evans writes how Nolte believed German Army units, in complementing Einsatzgruppen units in the murder of Jews, were acting on a rational basis of countering partisans. Evans paraphrases Nolte's view that "the extermination of an entire people is a possible policy of an occupying army that wants to destroy the basis of illegal resistance in the occupied population."<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Nolte would argue that German war atrocities were comparable to other contemporary events, ranging from the Armenian Genocide to the Vietnam War.<sup>16</sup> As the debate progressed, other Conservative historians would begin to echo these viewpoints.

Historian Andreas Hillgruber would become a central aspect of this interpretation. Andreas Hillgruber, in his book *Two Kinds of Downfall*, compared the extermination of the Jews and war crimes committed to the treatment of Germans in conquered territories by the Soviets.<sup>17</sup> He would argue that the German Army had an "ethic of responsibility," to wage a war against the Red Army.<sup>18</sup> His main argument proposed that the role of the Wehrmacht was in defending Germany from the ferocity of the Soviet Red Army. He wrote, "The historian is left with only one position... he must identify with... the German Eastern Army... which sought to defend the population of the German East from the orgy of revenge of the Red Army, from the mass rapes, the arbitrary murders and the indiscriminate deportations."<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the historian Michael Stürmer would advocate for greater pride in Germany's past in his essay "History in a land Without History," writing how history could be used as a method of achieving greater national pride.

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<sup>14</sup> Ernst Nolte, trans. James Knowleton and Truett Cates, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?: Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow*, 82.

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Nolte, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*

<sup>17</sup> Omer Bartov, *From Murder in Our Midst : The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Martin Broszat, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, 125-129.

<sup>19</sup> Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 74.

Stürmer would point to national polls of Germans in comparison to American national pride to argue that Germans should develop a more favorable outlook on their history in order to increase levels of national pride to that of Americans. The Conservative argument as presented therefore represented an attempt to contextualize the actions of the Wehrmacht to create a positive image.

### **Countering the Conservative Narrative: Revisionist Counterarguments**

The historical philosopher Jurgen Habermas's "A Kind of Settlement of Damages," published in 1986, would be one of the first Revisionists to question Conservative interpretations from historians such as Sturmer, Nolte and Hillgruber. Habermas would argue that historians such as Hillgruber have attempted to uplift the cause of the Wehrmacht, noting how through describing the "mass rapes, the arbitrary murders and the indiscriminate deportations," it creates a narrative that can "push the struggle of the German Army...in a positive light."<sup>20</sup> Subsequent pieces by historians such as Christian Meyer<sup>21</sup> and Micha Brumlik,<sup>22</sup> noted how the Wehrmacht became the enablers and protectors of the SS to operate from behind by fighting at the front, witnessing the horrors without resistance. Others would be more direct in their critique. As German historian Hans Mommsen<sup>23</sup> explains, "the leadership of the Wehrmacht rather willingly made themselves into accomplices in the policy of extermination. It did this by generating the criminal orders and implementing them." These arguments further attempt to contradict the original points of Conservatives such as Nolte by advancing the unique nature of the crimes of the Wehrmacht. As such, the debate would initially be centered on countering ideological arguments between the Conservative and Revisionist scholars.

Subsequent historians have directly attacked the arguments presented by Conservative historians. Bartov critiques Hillgruber's interpretations through careful examination of his quotes; most notably, he points out that Hillgruber himself believed that the Wehrmacht committed crimes on the Eastern Front. Bartov offers a direct quotation in support of his interpretation, that the Wehrmacht's responsibility was "to prevent... the threatening orgy of revenge

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<sup>20</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Christian Meyer, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, 24-33.

<sup>22</sup> Micha Brumlik, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, 45-50.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Mommsen, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, 114-125.

by the Red Army against the German population for all the crimes carried out [by the German Army]."<sup>24</sup> Additionally, Bartov points out how this defense seems to discard the Wehrmacht's deadly Criminal Orders. "No mention is made here of the 'Barbarossa Orders,' which promulgated the notion that the war on the Eastern Front should not be fought by the Wehrmacht according to any accepted custom or law, since it was a 'war of ideologies' directed against a vast horde of Slavic Untermenschen (less than human) led by a criminal 'Jewish-Bolshevik clique.'"<sup>25</sup>

However, even in considering the arguments of Hillgruber as justifying Wehrmacht brutality as a "Bulwark Against Bolshevism,"<sup>26</sup> would the Wehrmacht's actions still be justified? Evans argues that "it is rather sophistical to suggest that the German Army was justified in executing all captured Soviet political commissars merely because of a general belief in the Brutality of Bolshevism."<sup>27</sup> In addition, Bartov points out that Hillgruber attempts to rationalize German rapes of Soviet women, characterizing them as enemy agents.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the arguments of Bartov and Evans helped to deconstruct the Conservative viewpoint.

New historical interpretations from the unearthing of documents such as by Streit and Messerschmidt, and by more contemporary historians such as Bartov and Evans were "answered by Sturmer's and Nolte's attempts to place Nazi Germany within a larger historical context, and by Hillgruber's insistence on empathy with the individual Landser."<sup>29</sup> As such, the debate about the crimes committed in the name of the German Army would be a consequence of ideological interpretations. Conservative historians would contend that these atrocities were common sights of war and a necessary response. These Conservative interpretations were countered by historians, notably Habermas, Bartov and Evans, through careful analysis and critiquing of their work. Through these techniques of meticulous analysis and direct refutation, they were able to

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<sup>24</sup> Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 73.

<sup>25</sup> Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow*.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow*, 54.

<sup>28</sup> Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Omer Bartov, *Hitlers Wehrmacht: Soldaten, Fanatismus Und Die Brutalisierung Des Krieges* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2001), 9.



deconstruct the Conservative narratives and show the unparalleled terrors perpetrated by the German Reich.

### **The Wehrmacht Exhibition in the Public Sphere and Continuing Scholarship**

The historical debate, if not for its controversial subject matter, would not have received much attention in the popular presses until after the Cold War. Yet the *Historikerstreit*, with historians providing powerful critiques and arguments, further helped the debate spill over into the public sphere. As such, while the historical debate was being fought by Conservatives and their detractors in the historical arena, their counterparts in the public sphere would engulf Germany in a question over their own relation to the past. While in the historical sphere the argument would be settled, in the public sphere, great controversy ensued. The Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht in the public sphere would be dispelled only after the conclusion of the Cold War through the attention surrounding the Wehrmacht Exhibition. The exhibition, curated by historians with the Hamburg Institute for Social Research in the 1990s compiled documentary evidence, such as copies of the orders, as well as a great amount of photographic evidence of atrocities committed by the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front.<sup>30</sup> The exhibit focused on three specific cases in which the Wehrmacht committed atrocities:

It showed how, during 1941, the first year of the war in the Southeast and the East, all male Jews in the Serbian zone of military administration, under the guise of defense against Partisans, were detained as 'hostages', and then progressively murdered.

It testified to the way in which the Sixth Army, whilst passing through the Ukraine during the summer and autumn of 1941, provided active assistance to the SS Einsatzgruppen responsible for murdering Jews.

It revealed how, from day one of its three-year occupation of Belorussia, the Wehrmacht waged a remorseless 'racial war' against Jews and 'Slavic sub-humans'; how it was responsible for the massive, planned, death toll of hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war; how it colluded in the 'Final Solution' by registering, marking with the Yellow Star,

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<sup>30</sup> For more on the exhibition, see Heer, *The Discursive Construction of Memory*, 227-250.

ghettoizing and murdering Jews in the villages; how it murdered, in collaboration with other occupation forces, hundreds of thousands of civilians under the pretext of the Partisan war - or transported them into forced labor in Germany.<sup>31</sup>

The exhibit was controversial amongst the public, especially the third point above, despite its general praise amongst the historical community. While the original exhibit contained certain errors in attribution of photographs, the organizers corrected the images and reopened the exhibit after a thorough re-examination.

The exhibition and the debate that ensued was central to the destruction of the myth in the public sphere. Yet in the reaction by some to the exhibition, we can see how "the image of an "unblemished Wehrmacht" was still firmly rooted in parts of German society."<sup>32</sup> This image, to Heer, was reflective of "the way that most Germans wanted to see themselves: that they - like the Wehrmacht - had remained upstanding, even in a state which was ruled by a gang of criminals, and that they themselves had become victims."<sup>33</sup> Critics also used the controversy over misattributed photographs to attack the exhibit. But for most, as the German public began to see the powerful images of the "War of Annihilation," the notion of a Wehrmacht with clean hands quickly faded away.

While the historical debate over whether the Wehrmacht was culpable in war crimes has settled, there still remains debate over how the historical field progresses with this topic. New documents are always being discovered, and with that comes new opportunities for interpretation. Recently there has been a shift in who we study, from the larger Wehrmacht to smaller formations. Historians have also focused more on studying the factors that influenced ordinary soldiers' actions during the war, and the impact of political ideologies on the ordinary soldier. There still remains an active debate over the culpability of individual army units in the conduct of the war, and various motivations for the conduct are being considered. Contemporary historian Ben Shepherd notes how thoughts on "ideology, careerism, ruthless military utilitarianism, and the pressure of circumstances played in shaping Wehrmacht conduct."<sup>34</sup> Historians

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<sup>31</sup> Heer, *The Discursive Construction of Memory*, 226.

<sup>32</sup> Heer, *The Discursive Construction of Memory*, 231.

<sup>33</sup> Heer, *The Discursive Construction of Memory*, 233.

<sup>34</sup> Shepherd, "The Clean Wehrmacht, The War Of Extermination, And Beyond," 456.

have discovered new documents, including diaries, post-war judicial records, and personnel files. New shifts in Wehrmacht historiography can thus provide a deeper understanding into the individual crimes of Wehrmacht units as a result of these new discoveries. Following the Wehrmacht Exhibition, historians such as Muller and Martin Brozsat have also called for a more nuanced interpretation, or "historicization," of the Wehrmacht's actions. As a result, historians have largely attempted to "avoid[] the pitfall of allowing moral condemnation, however justified, to blunt fuller historical understanding."<sup>35</sup>

### **The Dangers of Social Memory in Shaping History and Other Conclusions**

An interesting point of view comes from the Conservative historian Michael Stürmer, in his discussion of German social memory in relation to their past. "How will the Germans themselves see their country, the West, themselves tomorrow,"<sup>36</sup> he asked, reminiscing of a period of German history where Germans could be "proud" of their national heritage. There is considerable question as to this point's deviation from the ideals of historical pursuit. The *Historikerstreit* and the Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht as a whole have questioned what the role of the historian in the public sphere is. This is where the historian can see the dangers of conflating History with Social Memory. The Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht from its inception has been rooted in an idea of Social Memory. The advocacy of Stürmer of German pride in their history reflects a departure from historical objectivity in the pursuit of a political objective. It was thus essential for historians to critically engage and deconstruct these myths. As such, the "victory" of the Revisionists over such narratives represented a victory against those who sought to distort and defame historical fact.

The lack of interest in the close examination of documents during the 1950s and 60s led to a strongly disseminated illusion that the Wehrmacht did not commit atrocities of war. The 1980s and the beginning of the *Historikerstreit* would lead to the beginning of a debate which focused on how these new documents and orders connecting the Wehrmacht to war crimes would be interpreted into the broader context of World War II. The ultimate dissolution of the myth in the public sphere would come as a result of the Post-Cold War 1995

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<sup>35</sup> Shepherd, "The Clean Wehrmacht, The War Of Extermination, And Beyond," 457.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Stürmer, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, 16.

Wehrmacht Exhibition, a culminating result of the works of numerous historians. Yet the struggle between historians in how to interpret the Wehrmacht trickled into the public sphere and became a national debate as well. As the historical literature evolved throughout the 50s to the 80s, more evidence has become available for historians to interpret. As a result, historians began to question how the Wehrmacht fit into the broader *Historikerstreit*. The struggle over interpretations of the Wehrmacht's role in the war are clear and of utmost importance to historical examination of World War II. Competing interpretations and the counter arguments involved became a clear struggle to determine the fate of the Wehrmacht and Germany's past. While the struggle ultimately led to the discrediting of the myth, the work of historians has only begun, with new opportunities arising to explore the crimes of the Wehrmacht in German history.

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A black and white photograph of a large crowd of people gathered outdoors. In the background, there is a large, light-colored structure, possibly a tent or a large building, with a dark, leafy roof. The crowd is dense, and many people are looking towards the camera. The overall tone is historical and documentary.

**THE CONTEST OF  
KFAR ETZION IN  
ISRAELI NATIONAL  
MEMORY**

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**SEAN FORDE**

The nation of Israel is a relatively young one, having been created less than 80 years ago. Its population consists primarily of immigrant Jews and their descendants as well as native Palestinians. The Jewish population living within Israel can be further divided into categories based on ethnicity, language and level of secularization. Consequently, several different interpretations of what being an Israeli citizen means, exist. The division of communities based on various factors has led to ideological and political conflicts between the groups that live there. Of significant importance are the events, individuals and groups that are recognized and remembered within the Israeli national memory. To be included in the national memory means to be seen as Israeli by other Israelis. Therefore it is important for these groups to have something that they can identify with, but is also a part of the national memory. Sometimes, however, discrimination and/or disagreement over who controls the narrative of an event, individual's or group's history can lead to conflict that leaves certain groups out of this national memory.

One important divide that reveals this contest for the national memory is that between the Mapai (Labor) party and Religious Zionists. For approximately 30 years after the founding of Israel, Mapai dominated politics and the national memory, choosing what was admitted and what remained on the sidelines. This, however, did not mean that what wasn't selected for the popular memory was completely forgotten. Religious Zionists maintained their own community memory with the hopes that someday their story would become an addition to the mainstream Israeli history. By looking into what specific events certain groups want to be included and how these events change the narrative of Israeli history, we can gain broader insight into the political, religious, economic and national history of the state. One example of a historical event in Israeli national memory that was, for the most part, set aside by the Labor party, and championed by the religious Zionists was the siege of the Gush Etzion (Etzion Bloc) kibbutz settlements in 1948, and more specifically, of the Kfar Etzion settlement that was apart of it. The story of Gush Etzion was a famous one within Israel, but had differing levels of importance depending on the group and time that it was brought up. These factors, community and time, reveal the political, religious and ideological importance of events that occurred during the formative years of the Israeli state.

Gush Etzion was a collection of four Kibbutzim settlements that lay between Jerusalem and Hebron. There had been several attempts to settle the area in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with all but the last failing. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) sought to buy this land from the Jewish landowners who owned it because of its location. At the time, the region was still under British mandate and mandate law



designated its sale illegal. This did not dissuade the JNF, and it may have bolstered efforts to acquire it. The JNF believed if they established a Jewish majority there, then they would be better able to negotiate it into the Jewish state that would come when the mandate ended.<sup>1</sup> The land was not suitable for agriculture and water was difficult to distribute in the settlements. Its main reason for settlement was because of its proximity to Jerusalem and because Zionists believed that any land that could be settled in Eretz Yisrael should be settled.

All four settlements were founded between 1943 and 1947.<sup>2</sup> Kfar Etzion was the first of these and was situated on top of a hill in the Judean Mountains. By settling here, the hope was that it would inspire others to settle areas deemed more hospitable. Its location between Jerusalem and Hebron also opened up the possibilities for Jewish settlements to inch closer to Hebron and allow it to be under control of the future Jewish state as well. Despite the difficulty of constructing, working and living in this area, its residents remained. This was in part because of the style of living that kibbutzim fostered, a socialized form of living where members share the space and utilities that provided the necessary support for its members to be able to live in it. The hardships they faced reinforced religious feelings of the importance of the work that the settlers were doing there.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations declared that two states would be created in the mandate area, one Jewish and the other Palestinian. Gush Etzion was not to be included within the Jewish state. Arabs rejected this plan and fighting broke out within the mandate region. Gush Etzion, being surrounded by Palestinian villages, was cut off from any other Jewish settlements and remained isolated for the duration of the war. Skirmishes between Arab Legion forces, Arab regulars and members of the Kibbutz occurred throughout the end of 1947 and into 1948. Several relief efforts were attempted by the Jews in Palestine but they were not successful. In *Kfar Etzion: The Community of Memory and the Myth of Return*, author David Ohana lists a number of events that occurred between the UN's declaration and the fall of the Arab bloc. Each of these events, though minor in importance for the grand outcome of the war, are remembered because of their heroic rhetoric and contributions to Israeli national identity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Yossi Katz and John C. Lehr "Symbolism and Landscape: The Etzion Bloc in the Judean Mountains," (*Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 4, 1995), 731.

<sup>2</sup>Katz and Lehr. "Symbolism and Landscape," 732.

<sup>3</sup>David Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of Memory and the Myth of Return" (*Israel Studies* 7, no. 2, 2002), 147-148.

In early May 1948, Arab forces attacked Kfar Etzion and on May 12 and 13 they commenced the final battle. A combination of Arab Legion forces and Arab regulars broke through the defenses of the settlement. Of the 131 Israeli fighters within the settlement during that fight, only 4 survived.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish settlers attempted to surrender, but the Arabs disregarded it and a massacre ensued<sup>5</sup>. The fight to the death by these IDF fighters became symbolic for the Israelis and the battle itself was seen as a version of the war on the macro-level. The battle was fought by an outnumbered Jewish force, under attack by overwhelming Arab forces, which is how the war was remembered in the national memory. The sacrifice by the men and women within Kfar Etzion to protect Jerusalem is what makes the story particularly important in the context of Israeli history. A story like this invoked emotional responses, ideological beliefs and could serve as political, military and national propaganda. The day after the fall of Kfar Etzion, Israel declared its independence and became an official state. This adds even more ideological importance to the fall of the settlement. Its sacrifice immediately preceded the creation of the state and its eventual victory in the 1948 war. When Kfar Etzion fell, the other three settlements opted to surrender to the Arab forces, so that they may be spared the same fate that the inhabitants and fighters of the former met. These men and women were taken as prisoners for the duration of the war.<sup>6</sup> After the war ended, Gush Etzion became part of the West Bank region that was annexed by Transjordan. For the time being, Jewish settlement in that area became impossible and the Etzion Bloc became a rallying cry for religious Zionists who believed that all of Eretz Yisrael should be settled by Jews.

The political and ideological divide that existed in 1948 between those in power on the left and the religious Zionists had been there since before the establishment of the state of Israel. One claim states that when delegates of the religious Zionist movement met with David Ben-Gurion in 1935 to complain of discrimination within the mandate, Ben-Gurion responded by saying, "You are also deprived in the cemeteries. Where are your sacrifices for building the country?"<sup>7</sup> It would appear that the differences that separated Zionists from religious Zionists had existed long before the events of Kfar Etzion came to be a source of conflict between them. The discrimination that existed toward religious Zionists by the more secular Jews, set the stage for competition over who gets to control the narrative of the Kfar

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<sup>4</sup>Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of," 148.

<sup>5</sup>Dror Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth: The Story of Kfar Etzion in Religious Zionism 1948-1967" (*Israel Studies* 21, no. 1, 2016), 135.

<sup>6</sup>Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth," 135.

<sup>7</sup>Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth," 138.

Etzion story. Failure by Mapai to properly integrate religious Zionists and their community's history into the national memory resulted in a contrast between the two groups. The events and tragedy of Gush Etzion served as both an obstacle and asset to the Mapai leadership. It inspired those who heard it and invoked real emotion among the Jews of Israel. However, it was a story that came at the cost of religious Zionist lives and to tell it would require the incorporation of their story. Or so this is what religious Zionists thought. Rather than absorb the religious Zionist's community history into that of the national history, Mapai leadership sought to appropriate Kfar Etzion into their own narrative that gave it a more secular and nationalist meaning.<sup>8</sup> Although ceremonies and memorials to the fallen were held to honor those who died fighting at Kfar Etzion, the religious Zionist community felt that it did not represent the sacrifices that they had made, nor did it help to alleviate the discrimination that they experienced within Israel.<sup>9</sup>

It is understandable that the primary objective of those with political power in Israel at its creation would be the establishment of national identity. While the citizens of Israel found commonality in their religion, they came from dozens of different countries, spoke different languages, and were war weary both from the 1948 war and World War II. Establishing a national identity that all, or most, of these people could associate with was vital in creating a stable, viable nation that they could trust to protect them. However, using the story of Kfar Etzion to demonstrate nationalist heroism lessens the sacrifice made by the religious Zionists, at least in the national memory.<sup>10</sup> Religious Zionists saw the story of Kfar Etzion as one that belonged to their community but could still be used to introduce them into the mainstream national memory of Israel.<sup>11</sup> In fact, religious Zionists were so fervent in their desire to have this story be their chapter in the national memory that their community, for the most part, ignored other stories from the war in order to focus on it<sup>12</sup>. In the first memorial service to those who died at Kfar Etzion, Mapai leader David Ben-Gurion gave a speech in which he thanked those who sacrificed their lives to protect Jerusalem and the young state.<sup>13</sup> Before the holidays were separated, the Knesset had made the day of the fall of Kfar Etzion a national holiday, Memorial Day, which was celebrated the day before Independence Day. This declaration reveals that Mapai understood the importance

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<sup>8</sup>Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth," 136.

<sup>9</sup>Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth," 138.

<sup>10</sup>Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth," 133.

<sup>11</sup>Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth," 139.

<sup>12</sup>Greenblum, "The Making of a Myth," 139.

<sup>13</sup>Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of," 148.

of the story. However, although they attempted to tell the story of Kfar Etzion from a nationalist perspective, the determination by the religious Zionists to keep it within the context of their community led to its neglect by the nation. The story was not forgotten by the Israeli people, but it was overshadowed by other holidays, memorials and ceremonies that Mapai had more control over. If Mapai could not control the narrative, then it would not be admitted into the Israeli national memory. Despite this, the legend of Kfar Etzion remained an important one among religious Zionists

The emotional attachment to Gush Etzion was strong among all those who had been forced to leave the region during and after the 1948 war, but it was strongest among the survivors, widows and orphans of Kfar Etzion who had been evacuated in January of 1948. Since they had all come from Kfar Etzion, the community tried to keep the families together in a new settlement in order to foster the relationship between the people. The evacuation of this community was an important chapter of the war in its own right and only furthered religious Zionist interest in the care and redemption of them. The survivors formed close bonds with one another due to the unique circumstances that they all shared. In 1950 a new settlement was founded for them. All 120 survivors of Kfar Etzion settled within it as well as a few more settlers.<sup>14</sup> Instead of diffusing into other settlements, kibbutzim or cities, this group retained close ties with one another which allowed their common history to flourish. This was done in a number of ways, each of which contributed to the maintaining of the Kfar Etzion story as one with which they could all identify. Two groups, "The Organization of the Survivors of Gush Etzion" and "The Organization of the Sons of Gush Etzion" were established in the years following the fall. The former served to help the widows and families of the fallen. The latter sought to preserve their memory by keeping the children together, publishing books, pamphlets, radio broadcasts and any and all information about those who died and the settlement that was lost. Summer camps and youth groups were created with the express purpose of maintaining the social ties between these children.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, individuals began to move away from the shared settlement but rather than forget about or abandon the story of their fathers, they established the Etzion Bloc Association which also worked to maintain social ties and compile information about Gush Etzion.<sup>16</sup> Books written by survivors about Kfar Etzion and its fall also contributed to the legacy. The families of the fallen attended an annual memorial service held in the Jerusalem cemetery that also helped to preserve

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<sup>14</sup>"Kfar Etzion People Found New Village" (*The Palestine Post*, 1950), 2.

<sup>15</sup>Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of," 150-151.

<sup>16</sup>Katz and Lehr, "Symbolism and Landscape," 735.

their memory.<sup>17</sup> Poems, books, articles, newspaper stories and interviews were created by the survivors, and other religious Zionists, and demonstrate the emotional attachment that they had to their lost home. All of these factors contributed to the culture of upbringing that the orphans of Kfar Etzion experienced. For their entire lives they were told of the sacrifice of their parents and were reminded of it constantly through the social groups they formed and information they were given by those who were old enough to remember the Etzion Bloc and the people who had lived there. According to Sara Yael Hirschhorn's book, *City on a Hilltop*, there had been no real effort by any Israeli PM's to retake Gush Etzion, and it was unlikely that any negotiations with Transjordan would have resulted in successfully acquiring it diplomatically.<sup>18</sup> While the story was only a footnote in the context of the 1948 war for the majority of Israelis, it was essential to the religious Zionist identity. It was within this community that it perpetuated and incubated, awaiting the day that it would finally bring religious Zionists and their contributions to Israel into the national memory.

That day finally came with the conclusion of the Six Day War in 1967. The overwhelming Israeli victory saw the nation occupying huge swathes of land, including the West Bank territory, which contained Gush Etzion. The religious Zionist narrative of Kfar Etzion, which had been fostered within their community for almost two decades, now came to the forefront of Israeli politics. For a variety of reasons, religious Zionism, its community memory, and the story of Kfar Etzion could no longer remain on the sidelines of Israeli history and politics. For the survivors, orphans and widows of Gush Etzion this was an opportunity to resettle the land that they had lost. For the greater Jewish community, parallels were being drawn between the religious Zionists of Gush Etzion returning to their homeland and the Jews of the diaspora, who were returning to Israel. Even before the war had ended, some had already thought of resettling Gush Etzion. One man, Moshe Moshkowitz, who had moved to Gush Etzion in 1945, explained how he and other religious Zionists had always dreamt of returning to the Etzion Bloc. When he learned that Israeli soldiers had captured West Bank territories he immediately began to write "Suggestions and Plans for the Rebuilding of Gush Etzion," which outlines how resettlement could be implemented in the occupied territory.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Katz and Lehr, "Symbolism and Landscape," 735.

<sup>18</sup>Sara Yael Hirschhorn, *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2017).

<sup>19</sup>Hirschhorn, *City on a Hilltop*, Chapter 3.

Although illegal under international law, the Israeli government sanctioned settlement in Gush Etzion. Several reasons contributed to this decision. Settlement in occupied territories has been a point of contention within Israeli politics, yet the decision to settle Gush Etzion was broadly supported. One reason for this was that many Israelis saw this as repayment for the sacrifices made by those at Kfar Etzion to defend Jerusalem. Since the land had been purchased by the JNF prior to the 1948 war it was also seen as returning land that should have been included within the state upon its creation anyway.<sup>20</sup> While other proposed settlements were based on religious and political ideology, the resettlement of Gush Etzion was supported by nearly two decades of hope for its return. Religious Zionists had been successful in maintaining the legendary story of Kfar Etzion and it had payed off in the aftermath of the 1967 war. Another was the rise of Messianism and active history within Israel. Messianism and active history were the beliefs that The Messiah will come not as a result of chance, but rather because Israelis are paving the way for his arrival.<sup>21</sup> Under this ideology, some Jews believed that it was necessary to settle any and all parts of Eretz Yisrael, to bring about the arrival of The Messiah. Although resettlement of Kfar Etzion began prior to the founding of Gush Emunim, a right-wing nationalist-religious group, its members still contributed to the resettlement. One of the founders of Gush Emunim and a Son of Gush Etzion, Hanan Porat, was a fervent believer in the messianic ideology. To him, the resettlement of Kfar Etzion represented the first step in the path towards redemption.<sup>22</sup> The opportunity to resettle Gush Etzion, which few could have predicted would have occurred in their lifetimes, reinforced the idea that settlement of the whole land of Israel was divinely sanctioned. A third reason given for the settlement of Gush Etzion was that it would provide security for Jerusalem and Hebron as it had done during the 1948 war. The idea was to settle border regions with Israeli citizens in order to create a majority. This would, in theory, keep these areas safer from future Arab attacks and also provide a foothold to create more settlements. This claim was disputed however, since the region of Gush Etzion had no Jewish residents in the interwar period and there were several Arab villages in the area which would cause conflict if it was to be settled.<sup>23</sup>

An Israeli did not have to be a Messianist to support resettlement and many who did support it were not. However, since the resettlement of Gush Etzion was so

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<sup>20</sup>Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism and the Six Day War: From Realism to Messianism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>21</sup>Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of," 165.

<sup>22</sup>Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of," 165.

<sup>23</sup>Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of," 167.

popular it established a precedent that the future Gush Emunim organization could use to advance the agenda of additional settlements. The resettlement of Gush Etzion was illegal but was still sanctioned by the Israeli government. Gush Etzion was the perfect region to begin settlement because of its widespread support. From then on, Messianists had a model off which to base future settlements. For example, the previously mentioned Son of Gush Etzion, Moshe Moshkowitz petitioned the Israeli government to allow the construction of another settlement in Gush Etzion, called Efrat.<sup>24</sup> His request was granted after the Yom Kippur War, which bolstered efforts to settle occupied territories for fear of future defensive wars.

Another example would be the area of Gush Etzion itself. According to *+972 Magazine*, the name Gush Etzion, and the land that it encompasses, has been remade over the years to aid in West Bank settlement. In the article "Undoing the Myth of Israel's Flagship Settlements," the author writes that less than 1/5th of the land in modern day Gush Etzion was a part of the Gush Etzion that had been purchased by the JNF prior to the 1948 war. Despite this, the modern day Gush Etzion is approximately two times larger than pre-1948 Gush Etzion. Since the name "Gush Etzion" evoked a positive national consensus towards settlement, then expanding its borders would give some legitimacy to the settling of regions that were once not a part of it, but are no.<sup>25</sup> This appropriation of the name Gush Etzion further demonstrates the politics of memory in Israel and how a form of unspoken agreement was made by religious Zionists who had their narrative included within the national memory and the right, who were able to use the story to justify settlement, land seizures and border expansion.

The contest over who controls the story of Gush Etzion within Israeli memory is just one example of competition and ideology within Israeli politics and society. Shortly after it had occurred it was a major rallying cry for the Jews living in their newly founded country. Refusal to compromise on which community the story belonged to, by both religious Zionists who wanted it to be their gateway into the national memory and secular Zionists who wanted it to unite Jews under a nationalist ideology, allowed the story to fall to the sidelines of mainstream Israeli history. Rather than being forgotten as a footnote in the 1948 war, religious Zionists took special care to preserve, honor and immortalize the memory and sacrifice of those members of their community who died in the battle. Their dedication to the preservation of this story paid off in the aftermath of the 1967 war, where their story and their community were

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<sup>24</sup>Hirschhorn, *City on a Hilltop*, Chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup>Dror Etkes, "Undoing the Myth of Israel's Flagship Settlements" (*+972 Magazine*, Dec 31, 2016).

cast into the spotlight and the resettlement of Gush Etzion was supported by a large percentage of the population. The popularization of the Gush Etzion story in 1967 also provided the opportunity for Messianists to appropriate the emotional influence of it and advance their own agenda of settlement throughout all of Eretz Yisrael.

The historiography of the story of Gush Etzion, as seen by various groups within Israel, demonstrates the diversity and conflicts of these groups when it comes to identity defining features and history. Different ideological interpretations of religion, politics and nationalism contributed to the contest of national memory. Exclusion of religious Zionists by Mapai from the mainstream community memory of Israel is a case-study for how minority groups, in any nation not just Israel, adopt and identify with features, histories and practices that give their communities shape. Kfar Etzion is just one example within Israel in which the story of a marginalized group was pushed to the sidelines of history. However, unlike most other groups, the religious Zionist narrative played a major part in Israeli history and as a result it was no longer possible for it to be ignored by those in power. The contest for who controlled the narrative of Gush Etzion in Israeli national memory contributed, in part, to its immortalization in the mainstream community memory of Israel.



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