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**Cover Image**

UAW Strike, West Campus Picket, day one, UC Santa Barbara.

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## Letter from the Editors

The University of California, Santa Barbara's *Undergraduate Journal of History* is excited to share our Fall 2022 issue. We are delighted to be a space that allows undergraduate students to share their historical research and foster intellectual debate, dialogue, and curiosity. We are grateful to our five authors, as well as faculty and graduate student peer reviewers, who have made this volume possible. Our team of undergraduate editors welcomes new and returning readers.

In this issue of the *Undergraduate Journal of History*, our historians have considered various topics that cross temporal and spatial boundaries. Among the eight papers published in this issue, several consider the role of politics and policy across class boundaries. We are incredibly excited to include the UCSB History 2022 Stuart L. Bernath Prize-winning papers in this volume. The Stuart L. Bernath Prize is awarded to the History undergraduate whose research essay is selected by the History Prizes Committee as the best paper produced in a one-quarter course. Madeline Josa and Samuel Ricci were the winners this year, and we thank them for sharing their work with us here.

We begin with Dane Beatie's article detailing the territory of Morea and its depiction as a "new Sparta." Beatie instead debunks this myth and looks into why Morea succeeded as a territory—less due to its reforms and mainly due to the Ottoman Empire. Beatie questions how this idea of a "new Sparta" has overshadowed the real Morea, how the ruling Palaiologoi used their limited resources to secure their minor success and how Ottoman goals temporarily dictated the survival of a vassal Morea, and why this changed. The second paper, by Parker J. Bovée, traces a distinct transition in Nazi artistic policy, beginning with scathing public critique and condemnation before moving to outright persecution and erasure of artists outside the Nazi idea of Germanic tradition. This article places Nazi artistic policy within their larger ethnocide, identifying two internal wars to create an idealized culture: one through eliminating unfit art and artists while the other focused on representing a new era of German achievement.

Claire Cinnamon follows Catherine de' Medici's path to becoming one of sixteenth-century France's most important political figures. Her unusual circumstances lent their hand to the highly contested characterization of Catherine de' Medici both in her own time and today. Despite evidence of her political intelligence and attempts for peace, Catherine was scrutinized due to her Italian ancestry and her reversal of gender norms. Propelled by the systemic dissemination of libel and gossip in her own time and by her rich yet polarizing historiography, Catherine was left with the ill-attributed legacy as the "Serpent Queen." Cinnamon analyzes the development of Catherine's reputation from relatively neutral to provocatively evil and explains how past lies have the potential to become today's history. Our fourth article, written by Eliciana Jensen, analyzes the life of Saint Cuthbert and the different relics and miracles performed after death. The analysis also details the nature of his miracles performed before and after death. Jensen further draws connections between the creation of the Durham Cathedral and how it was built around the shrine of Cuthbert. The article reveals the importance of Cuthbert's relics, and the objects bring a humanizing aspect to Cuthbert's narrative, while also being

beneficial to the monks at the time. The archaeological and historical significance of the pieces provides more stylistic information on the region and the devotion of Cuthbert's cult following.

Emilia Salcido wrote our next article. Salcido writes about black women's clothing during the time leading up to and following the Civil War. The author follows clothing as a means of control and hierarchy. This social hierarchy through dress began with the introduction of "plantation cotton," a rough, cheap fabric to produce. Salcido analyzes the histories of the inner hierarchies that enslaved people faced daily, from the dress of those working in the field versus those in the domestic sphere to the imbalance of frivolous and extravagant clothing worn by the plantation mistress to distance herself from the enslaved women's dress.

This volume concludes with our two Stuart Bernath Prize Winners. In her article, Madeline Josa follows how women in positions of prominence used fashion as a tool of their political agency to craft a politically-charged public image in the early modern period. Jose examines Isabella d'Este in Italy, Queen Mary I and her sister Queen Elizabeth I of England, and Madame de Maintenon in France. The article also uses other historical analyses of these powerful women to showcase a larger picture of powerful women in the early modern period creating an image for themselves through their clothes. Josa explores the use of fashion as a tool of political agency.

In our final paper, Samuel Ricci analyzes the culture of captivity in the Mediterranean. Ricci records how Barbary corsairs captured thousands of Christian Europeans throughout the early modern period, exposing these Christians to the North African Muslim world by immersion. The article notes that despite the violent nature of this immersion, the Europeans who returned from their captivity shared a substantial amount of information they had learned about the culture and religion of North Africa alongside their tribulations. The article follows the accounts of various captives and their relation to the development of cultural relations between Muslims and Christians along the Barbary coast over the course of over a hundred years.



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## The Pseudo-Sparta: An Examination of The Despotate of The Morea

*Dane Beatie<sup>1</sup>*

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The Roman Empire of the medieval era, known to history as the Byzantine Empire, was the last independent, Greek-speaking state before the Greek War of Independence. It is commonly posited that a proto-Hellenic national identity took root in the Late Medieval Peloponnese, also known as the Morea, during the Late Byzantine Period of 1204-1461.<sup>2</sup> After the chaos and destruction of the mid-14th century, amidst the backlash of the Second Palaiologan Civil War and the utter devastation wrought by the Black Death, Roman Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos sent his younger son, Manuel, to the Morea with the rank of Despot.<sup>3</sup> This marks the foundation of the Despotate of the Morea. This Roman statelet would reclaim most of the Peloponnese from Latin rule and survive past the Fall of Constantinople, with the final strongholds of Roman resistance only falling in 1461. The Morea displays many historical eccentricities; the Medieval Roman Empire had been centered around Constantinople for centuries, except for the Nicaean period of 1204-1461, and typically the capital held out against determined assault while the empire's various enemies took the provinces. Mystras, the more-or-less formal capital of the Morea, was a center of art and learning comparable, if not superior, to contemporary Constantinople.<sup>4</sup> The Roman Empire after the mid-14th century was almost constantly losing territory to the Ottoman Turks, with the capital of Constantinople besieged two times before its final fall and the empire's traditional "second city," Thessalonica, lost twice to the Ottomans. The traditional core of imperial territory lost its former luster and importance, and Constantinople was described as "sparsely populated and sparsely built up" following the Black Death.<sup>5</sup> This narrative of defeat and decline seems to contrast with the success of the Morea at first glance, whose clear cultural influence and political and military success saw them not just hold their lands but even reclaim them from an enemy. However, the Morea is often relegated to the background of such studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Dane Beatie graduated from the University of California at Santa Barbara with a B.A. in History and Classics in June 2022. He is currently studying at Sonoma State University for his Master's in History, and plans to pursue a PhD. in the future.

<sup>2</sup> N. Patrick Peritore, "The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon: A Renaissance Byzantine Reformer," *Polity* 10, no. 2 (1977): p. 172; Stephen G. Xydis, *Medieval Origins of Modern Greek Nationalism*. Balkan Studies, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Derived from the Greek "δεσπότης" (despotes), meaning "lord" or "master." By the Late Byzantine period it was the second-highest rank in the Byzantine court hierarchy.

<sup>4</sup> Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 835-836.

<sup>5</sup> Nevra Necipoglu, "The Social Topography of Late Byzantine Constantinople," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 36 (2010): p. 134.

The main reasons for the success of the Morea in its more than century of existence are its geography, leaders who successfully built up their power during times of peace, the relative weakness of its Latin neighbors, and the goals of the Ottoman Sultanate. Since the Morea's success seemingly contrasts with the failures of the rest of the empire in Thessalonica and Constantinople, the character of the Morea's economy, political life, and military situation warrant an examination to determine what allowed the Despotate to survive for longer than its counterparts in the other imperial appanages. Upon inspection of the available evidence, it becomes clear that this success was entirely relative compared to the difficulties faced by Constantinople and that throughout its history, the Morea's success was due in large part to its distance from the Ottoman heartland. While the Morea was not entirely helpless, its overall success depended on external factors beyond its control. Because of this, the Morea is sometimes viewed as a "vitalic" counterpart to Constantinople, a bastion of culture which displayed a proto-nationalistic bent, at least among its intellectual elite.<sup>6</sup>

### **Hellenic Nationalism and the Morea**

The role of the Morea in the history of the development of Hellenic nationalism is, while important, somewhat overstated by modern scholars. Philosopher George Gemistos Pletho Plethon spent much of his life in the capital city of Mystras and instructed several scholars who would contribute substantially to the Italian Renaissance. Plethon gained notoriety for his eccentric religious and political views but evidently retained enough influence to have the ear of the Palaiologan dynasty and serve as one of the Roman representatives at the Council of Florence-Ferrara.<sup>7</sup> Foremost among those ideas was the idea that Romans were not actually "Romans" but "Hellenes," the latest in a long, unbroken *ethnos* that traced its roots back to the days of Sparta and Classical Athens, bound together by a common language, culture, and history.<sup>8</sup> Plethon was by no means the first person to begin using Classical references to "Hellenes" as a way of referring to the population of the Roman Empire, as similar references started to crop up around the time of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Nicaean Emperor Theodore II Laskaris often used the idea of the "Hellenic" nation interchangeably with the "Romans" that he claimed to be sovereign of and argued for a somewhat modern interpretation of this national project; "In the past, 'Greeks' had been those who lived in Greece; now 'Greece' was wherever Greeks lived," scholar Anthony Kaldellis explains.<sup>9</sup>

However, none of these thirteenth-century writers sought to replace the empire's ethnic self-identification. They instead merely argued that the Romans of their day were descendants of the ancient Hellenes. In this respect, Plethon was much more radical and passed this on to some of his students, such as Laonikos Chalkokondyles, who argued that the Romans and Greeks had always remained separate ethnicities and that the state, which was known as the "Empire of the Romans" had

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<sup>6</sup> Marios Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos (1404-1453): The Last Emperor of Byzantium* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 121. In his notes, Philippides specifically refers to the late Apostolos Vacalopoulos as one such proponent of this view.

<sup>7</sup> Peritore, "The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon," pp. 169-170.

<sup>8</sup> Peritore, "The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon," p. 173.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 374.

effectively become Greek during the foundation of Constantinople.<sup>10</sup> Going further, Plethon identified his proposed Neoplatonist, Hellenic nation with old Sparta, whose ruins lay close to Mystras. The Morea would also be a hotbed of Greek nationalist sentiment against the Ottoman Empire. It would eventually give rise to the Greek Revolution that overthrew Ottoman rule, culminating in the first independent Hellenic state since 1461. And so Plethon, and by extension, the Morea, have taken pride of place in the story of the Greek nation, cited by scholars as one of the "prophets" of Hellenic nationalism, indeed of nationalism as a concept itself.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of the Morea as a cradle of Hellenic nationalism does not seem to hold up to scrutiny. Plethon's shadow looms large over the intellectual history of the Italian and Byzantine Renaissances, and for good reason, but this presents the danger of blinding us to the limitations of his actual influence. Plethon was a radical in the Byzantine intellectual world, and his nationalist project was primarily an attempt to construct a vision of the Morea that did not accurately reflect the complexities of its population and history. The inhabitants of the Morea were a mixture of different cultures, including the native Greeks (with their regional cultural distinctions), the descendants of Slavs who had settled in the 8th century, and Albanians, whose pivotal role in the development of the Morea will be discussed further.<sup>12</sup> Plethon's proposal of a new Sparta centered at Mystras was never treated too seriously, and most of his suggested reforms were never carried out. The Morea remained internally fractured along the lines of heterogeneous ethnicities and local barons, all fiercely autonomous and unimpressed by Plethon's vision of a Platonic kingdom in the Peloponnese. Plethon's New Sparta remained an aspirational goal that was never fulfilled. The Morea of myth is largely a result of post hoc mythmaking from Plethon's writings and the region's eventual role in establishing Greek independence. Without a populace and elite united by a shared, utopian vision of an island for the Hellenic people, other factors must be considered in how the Morea outlasted Constantinople.

## Geography

The internal geography of the Morea (Fig.1) was key to its survival, as the peninsula was divided by mountains and rivers into a series of valleys and highlands, each of which served to give the people of the Peloponnese certain advantages. The capital of the Morea, Mystras, was located in the fertile land of Laconia, a rich land of valleys and rivers that allowed for the growth of important crops such as grapes and olives, indicating an immense agricultural potential and a thriving agrarian economy in

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<sup>10</sup> Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *The Histories: Volume II*, trans. Anthony Kaldellis (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 7. It should be noted that in the same paragraph Chalkokondyles repeats the myth of the Donation of Constantine, indicating his background in the Latin Duchy of Athens.

<sup>11</sup> Niketas Siniossoglu, "Plethon and the Philosophy of Nationalism," in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance*, ed. Jozef Matula and Paul Richard Blum (Olomouc, Czech Republic: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2014), p. 418; Peritore, pp. 190-91.

<sup>12</sup> Peritore, "The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon," p. 174; Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, p. 106.

times of peace.<sup>13</sup> The fertility and rich agricultural output of the Morea stands in strong contrast with the rapidly shrinking territory of the rest of the empire; the population shrank precipitously due to conflict.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the traditional landowning aristocracy continued to hold significant sway and autonomy within the Moreot government. They used the wealth produced from their lands to challenge imperial authority on multiple occasions.<sup>15</sup> When harnessed successfully, the wealth of Laconia alone represented an economic potential sufficient for building projects such as the churches in Mystra<sup>F</sup> or the Hexamilion wall at the Isthmus of Corinth (Fig.2). Likewise, the mountains gave Moreot fortifications a deadly advantage when besieged, one that could not easily be overcome even with cannon, as shown by the failure of the Ottomans to capture the acropolis of Patras by storm in 1446, and Salmeniko Castle's lengthy resistance to siege from 1460 to 1461; both benefited from the mountainous terrain to facilitate their respective defenses.<sup>16</sup> The Morea also had the advantage of its unique position as a peninsula, with the only land route being the Isthmus of Corinth, a thin passage that, theoretically, could be blocked by a single relatively small fortification. The fortification, the Hexamilion, was the fruit of this logic. Though the Ottomans repeatedly breached it, it forced the Ottoman army to assault the fortress before it could make any headway. It allowed the relatively small Moreot army to deploy itself against the far larger Ottoman force, at least in theory.<sup>17</sup> The agricultural wealth of the Peloponnese and its relative defensibility were both the result of its internal geography, which gave it relative prosperity compared to Constantinople and its environs.

Just as the internal geography of the Peloponnese gave the Morea a rich array of agricultural goods and natural defenses, the geographical position of the peninsula in the Balkans gave it a key advantage. The most significant threat to Roman sovereignty was the Ottoman Empire, whose rapid expansion into the Balkans caused trepidation and confrontation from even the Christian powers farther to the west. Hungary fought many wars against the Ottomans from the 14th to 16th centuries, and even France sent troops to aid Manuel II against Bayezid's siege.<sup>18</sup> Ottoman expansion policy placed Constantinople squarely in its sights, as demonstrated by the differing purposes and results of the incursions into their respective territories. Constantinople was under siege three times from 1394 to 1453 to varying degrees of pressure, but each blockade was intended to take Constantinople itself, with only the last succeeding.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, the Ottomans repeatedly breached the defenses of the Morea and launched raids into the peninsula multiple times, only two of which, in 1458 and 1460,

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<sup>13</sup> Sharon E.J. Gerstel, "Mapping the Boundaries of Church and Village," in *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. Gerstel (Washington D.C.:Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013), pp. 354-355.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Kazhdan. "The Italian and Late Byzantine City," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): p. 12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1291705>.

<sup>15</sup> Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, 117, pp. 335-343

<sup>17</sup> Mark C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society 1204-1461* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 208. Scribd edition.

<sup>18</sup> George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), p. 551, p. 555; Philippides, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, p. 202, p. 210.

took any territory that had not already been under Ottoman rule (fig. 3). The lack of territorial acquisitions in the Morea, even when they could do so before 1458, indicates the Ottomans had no territorial interest there, a stark difference from their designs on Constantinople. This is partly due to physical distance from the Ottoman center of power at Edirne in Thrace, meaning the Despotate was on the fringes of Ottoman territory rather than close to its core. Moreover, Constantinople presented a much more enticing target. Constantinople sits on the entrance to the Black Sea, and thus on a major trade route for the Mediterranean, and its harbor at the Golden Horn was deep and well-suited for trade. Constantine I selected the ancient site of Byzantium for this exact reason, giving it a high strategic value as a capital.<sup>20</sup> So long as Constantinople remained outside Ottoman control, the ancient Roman capital was a far more enticing and feasible target for economic and political reasons. So the Ottomans saw little reason to outright annex the Morea.

Once Constantinople fell, the calculus changed; the Morea and its Despots, Thomas and Demetrios Palaiologos, were allowed to linger as Ottoman tributaries, paying a sum of 12,000 gold coins a year after Ottoman assistance in putting down a revolt in 1453.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Palaiologos, in particular, was a troublesome element for both Ottoman Sultan Mehmed and his brother Demetrios. He successfully swayed Italian soldiers to come to his aid during his war upon Ottoman forces garrisoning the Morea after their 1458 campaign to collect tribute.<sup>22</sup> The pro-Latin stance of Thomas, whose Milanese mercenaries seemed to have given him the edge over his pro-Ottoman brother, worried Mehmed because a Latinophile despot could invite Crusading armies from the west to his domain, giving such an alliance a secure base against the Ottomans in the Balkans.<sup>23</sup> The geographical position of the Morea, once giving the Despotate a lifeline and the Porte no reason to annex it, now threatened Ottoman dominion over southern Greece, if not the western Balkans in general. Since the Despots' bickering caused a lapse in tribute, and his partisan Demetrios had failed to maintain control of his territory, Mehmed decided there was no benefit to allowing the Palaiologan statelet the luxury of existence. Mehmed invaded the Morea in 1460, drove Thomas to Monemvasia, took Demetrios to Edirne, and quelled all resistance by 1461.<sup>24</sup> The Morea's geographic position thus was advantageous to its survival compared to Constantinople; so long as the city itself remained in Roman hands, the Despotate was able to maintain itself. But once it had fallen and Ottoman attention could be more fully turned outward, its geography became a liability to the Sultanate and, thus, a reason it had to be subjugated. The geography of the Peloponnese itself and its position within the larger Mediterranean world was a major asset in the Morea's relative longevity and survivability, as much, if not more than its particular political organization.

## Internal Politics

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<sup>20</sup> Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 225.

<sup>22</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 319

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 240.

<sup>24</sup> George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, trans. Marios Philippides (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 80-81; Chalkokondyles, p. 343.

The Morea's political situation was complicated by an eclectic mix of local groups and dominated by nobles who had enjoyed traditional autonomy from imperial rule.<sup>25</sup> To rule the Morea was not easy; it required skilled diplomacy, capable administrative work, and a willingness to relent from military activity when necessary, especially as the territory was relatively isolated from the capital and, for the most part, forced to tend to its affairs. The Morea benefited from times of peace when the despot could consolidate power and resources. The very first Despot of the Morea, Manuel Kantakouzenos, used his reign well, as reflected by the fact that his reign lasted so long (from 1349-1380). Of the Kantakouzenoi included in John VI's power-division plan of 1349, only Manuel would pass away in the office he was given while his elder brother and his father were deposed.<sup>26</sup> Manuel's reign saw the beginnings of Albanian settlement in the region and the successful combatting of Turkish raids in conjunction with the Latin Principality of Achaia.<sup>27</sup> His eventual successor, Theodore I Palaiologos, encouraged the immigration of the Albanians even further, cultivating them into an economic and military asset that would go on to serve the Moreot Despots for the next several decades through his intelligent diplomacy.<sup>28</sup> In turn, his nephew and successor, Theodore II Palaiologos, was noted for building up the Morea with the assistance of his father, Manuel II, and is credited with helping build the Morea into the cultural powerhouse it was known as in the 15th century. Numerous scholars such as Plethon, Cardinal Bessarion, and even the Italian Cyriacus of Ancona arrived at Mystras to partake in the intellectual vibrancy of the era, centered at the Despots' Palace (figure 4).<sup>29</sup> In contrast with the mixed results of policy in the countryside, Mystras was noted as extremely wealthy, a testament to the success the Palaiologoi enjoyed in developing their center of power.<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, the Morea was also wracked with scores of internal conflicts, which limited the capacity of its government to take any meaningful, long-term action against the Ottomans. While the Morea was a rich land with vast agricultural potential, much of this land was either controlled by large monasteries or by various autonomous landowners, none of whom took kindly to efforts to centralize imperial control or use their resources in defense of the Morea.<sup>31</sup> It was these problems, among others, which caused the Neoplatonist philosopher George Gemistos Plethon to write his letter to both Despot Theodore II and Emperor Manuel II, as the exploitation and wealth disparity often grew bad enough that peasants would flee to the Venetian-held towns on the coast to escape their landholders.<sup>32</sup> These tensions culminated in a rebellion in 1453 by large segments of the Albanian and Roman

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<sup>25</sup> Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, p. 106.

<sup>26</sup> Donald M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 105-107.

<sup>27</sup> Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*, 106; Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 207; Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 532. For reference, see map above.

<sup>28</sup> Manuel II Palaiologos, *Manuel Palaeologus Funeral Oration* (Thessalonike: Association for Byzantine Research, 1985), trans. J. Chrysostomides, pp. 118-120.

<sup>29</sup> Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, p. 107.

<sup>30</sup> Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, -. 107.

<sup>31</sup> Peritore, "The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon," p. 183; Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> Peritore, "The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon," pp. 182-83; Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, p. 106.

populations, led by Manuel Kantakouzenos,<sup>33</sup> which had to be put down by an Ottoman army, showing that Thomas and Demetrios were incapable of adequately addressing the problems the Morea faced.<sup>34</sup> The administration was hampered by the autonomy of its landed magnates, monasteries, and autonomous minorities, which prevented adequate reform to the Despotate to combat the Ottomans or improve the livelihood of the peasantry. Likewise, the debilitating economic inequality of Moreot social life, visible to Plethon if not the rest of the intellectual elite, was a critical factor in undermining Moreot independence, as it forced further dependence upon the Ottomans at a crucial moment and dissuaded key resistance against the Ottomans in the future.

Similarly, the Despots proved too divided to adequately lead their realm against the threats they faced. Initially, the Despotate had been ruled by one man who could direct policy as he saw fit. Over time, other sons of Manuel II were granted portions of the Morea to rule, both by assignment from Constantinople and by dowry (Fig. 5). Constantine Dragas, the future Emperor Constantine XI, received territory in the Morea in 1428. His brother Thomas received lands in 1430, which he would rule mostly uninterrupted until 1460.<sup>35</sup> Much like the creation of the Despotate itself, this represented an increasing tendency for power to be dispersed in Late Byzantine politics, with the Roman government relying upon landed family members to keep order. With the previously unified Despotate now ruled by multiple Despots, coordinated policy became harder; George Sphrantzes, a prominent official, historian, and friend to Constantine Palaiologos, blames the first failure to take Patras<sup>36</sup> on a lack of coordination between the brothers in 1428, particularly on Theodore's vacillation between remaining in power or entering a monastery. However, Sphrantzes' close relationship with Constantine makes this blame suspect.<sup>37</sup> At best, the policies of Demetrios and Thomas following the Fall of Constantinople showed a lack of coordination even when their goals were aligned, with both brothers sending diplomats to the West following nearly identical routes, making the same requests for military and financial aid of the Catholic powers.<sup>38</sup> At worst, however, the two engaged in a bloody civil war which devastated the peninsula and forced Mehmed to intervene when it appeared the pro-Western Thomas was about to win.<sup>39</sup> The internal political situation of the Morea was, therefore, fraught with division at every level; from the disparity between urban Mystras and the countryside, the rich magnates and the impoverished peasantry, and even between the Palaiologan Despots, the internal political situation of the Morea was practically defined by division. While the Morea's governance allowed for a degree of stabilization and the construction of a wealthy urban center of learning at Mystras, the divisions at the heart of Moreot politics meant that its internal political situation was more a hindrance than a help to its survival.

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<sup>33</sup> Not to be confused with either Manuel II Palaiologos, the emperor, or Manuel Kantakouzenos, the first Despot of the Morea and the long-deceased ancestor of this Manuel.

<sup>34</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 213; Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 74.

<sup>35</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 33, pp. 45-6.

<sup>36</sup> A coastal city on the far north of the Peloponnese, and by that time the last remnant of the Latin Principality of Achaea.

<sup>37</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 33

<sup>38</sup> Harris, *The End of Byzantium*, pp. 234-5.

<sup>39</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 319.



## Diplomacy

Diplomacy served the Despotate well during its expansion into its Latin neighbors to the north. Indeed, it was the primary means by which the Despotate expanded. It was the aforementioned diplomatic prowess displayed by Theodore I in his dealings with the Albanian settlers that secured the Despotate a vital source of soldiers. Corinth, for instance, had been bought rather than conquered by Theodore I, indicating that Moreot expansionist policy at this time was at least in part dictated by negotiation and purchase rather than conquest.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, most of the remnants of the Achaean Principality were absorbed as dowries in a diplomatic marriage between the Palaiologoi and both the Tocco Lord of Epirus<sup>41</sup> and the heirs to the Principality itself, with the Tocco lands passing to Constantine Palaiologos through his marriage to Tocco's niece in 1428. The rump Principality passed to Thomas Palaiologos through his marriage to Catherine Zaccaria in 1432.<sup>42</sup> The most significant territorial expansions of the Despotate occurred through either purchase or marriage alliance, with offensive military campaigns taking a secondary role to negotiation and alliance (figure 6).

The greatest success of the Despotate in the field of diplomacy was in securing their recent conquest of Patras from the Ottomans. Following the surrender of the city in 1429, Ottoman ambassadors arrived to order Constantine to restore Patras, whose Catholic metropolitan paid tribute to the Sultan, to its previous owners. Constantine dispatched Sphrantzes as ambassador to the Sultan and the Turkish governor of Thessaly, Turahan Bey. As Sphrantzes relates in his chronicle, he discovered that the Turkish ambassadors he was traveling with bore letters from the metropolitan to the Sultan. Sphrantzes then was able to trick the ambassadors into intoxicating themselves, allowing him time to open, copy, and reseal the letters. Armed with the knowledge of what the letters contained, Sphrantzes could stall the Ottoman response to the conquest by requesting a Turkish envoy accompany him to relay the bad news to Constantine, which was granted. He then traveled to Turahan's court and, from there, successfully negotiated recognition of his lord's conquest.<sup>43</sup> This act of espionage and diplomacy indicates that the Despotate was able to successfully navigate the political scene under the gaze of the Ottoman Sultan to accomplish at least some of its goals. Careful diplomatic maneuvering allowed for a Roman reconquest (of sorts) of most of the Peloponnese and to assert its authority in the face of Ottoman opposition and domination. Careful negotiation, marriage alliances, and espionage, therefore, help explain the success of the Despotate compared to the central imperial government at Constantinople.

Unfortunately, diplomatic failures toward the Ottomans also explain both the Fall of Constantinople and the eventual fall of the Morea. Constantinople served as a source of potential political instability for the newly crowned Sultan Mehmed II; a minor member of the Ottoman dynasty had taken up residence in Constantinople as a guest and bargaining chip of the Roman emperor, and

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<sup>40</sup> Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, p. 787.

<sup>41</sup> Epirus is the region of Greece adjacent to the Adriatic Sea. It had been ruled by the Italian Tocco dynasty since 1416.

<sup>42</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, pp. 33-45.

<sup>43</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, pp. 43-4; Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, pp. 115-6.

then-Emperor Constantine XI attempted to use his guest to negotiate lower tribute to the Sultan.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately for Constantine, this move underestimated both the daring of the new Sultan and Ottoman ideology. For young Sultan Mehmed, the period leading up to the Siege of Constantinople was a critical time of consolidation for his regime, and the potential for a Roman-sponsored usurper to gather support among his enemies within and without his realm was plausible. Mere decades ago, a disastrous series of civil wars followed Bayezid I's fall at Ankara. External powers (including Constantine's father, Manuel II) pitted contenders to the Ottoman throne against one another. More pressingly, Mehmed was young and, worse than untested, had been forced to call his father, Murad II, out of retirement to take the throne up during the Crusade of Varna, leaving him with a stain on his reputation he was eager to erase.<sup>45</sup> The conquest of Constantinople would kill two birds with one stone; it would prove his credentials as a holy warrior as well as remove a potential rival, allowing him to prove himself as a worthy successor to his father.

As for ideology, while the Ottoman sultans would claim the title of *Kayser-i-Rum* (Emperor of Rome/the Romans) through their possession of Constantinople, it is notable that Tursun Beg's panegyrical history of Mehmed does not mention this specific idea as a motivation for his move on Constantinople, indicating only the consolidation mentioned above and that "[i]t was intolerable that [Constantinople], surrounded by the lands of Islam, should survive under a Christian ruler," making the idea of jihad a slightly more plausible contemporary rationale for the conquest than claiming the mantle of Roman inheritance.<sup>46</sup> Constantine's failure to accurately gauge his negotiating position concerning the Ottomans was a fatal error that, as will be seen later in this paper, reflects his overconfidence in his prowess as a leader.

Likewise, the disorganized internal administration of the Moreot administration made diplomatic efforts following the Fall of Constantinople ineffective, even though they were arguably in a far better position than Constantinople itself had been. Mehmed's primary efforts following the Fall of Constantinople were directed against the Serbian Despotate and his rival, Regent Jan Hunyadi of Hungary, particularly against the great fortress city of Belgrade (which he failed to take in 1456).<sup>47</sup> Despite the rhetoric Mehmed allegedly espoused, according to Tursun Beg, he seemed reluctant to annex the Morea outright, as he had sent troops to aid the Despots in putting down the revolt of the Albanians in 1454 in exchange for tribute.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, a different court historian of Mehmed, a Greek named Michael Kritovoulos, lists the "Peloponnesians" as among the many peoples with whom Mehmed met and established treaties following the capture of Constantinople, indicating that Mehmed wished (or at least, his court historians wanted us to believe he wished) for decent relations with the Palaiologan Despots.<sup>49</sup> One of Mehmed's later conditions for peace with Demetrios in 1458

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<sup>44</sup> Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. Halil Inalcik and Rhoads Murphey (Bibliotheca Minneapolis & Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978), p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> Tursun, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Tursun, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 75; Tursun, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 39

<sup>48</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. Charles T. Riggs (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p. 85.

was for the latter's daughter to marry the Sultan, making the Despotate connected by marriage to the Ottoman dynasty, a strange demand if he planned to outright destroy it from the beginning.<sup>50</sup> Contrary to many imaginings of the Ottoman Empire as an all-conquering state, the Ottomans did, at times, rely on loyal vassals, as seen by their policy toward Wallachia, where they installed a friendly Voivode to govern the country in 1462. Combined with previous Ottoman attempts to capture the Peloponnese resulting in no actual territorial gains, this indicates Ottoman willingness to allow the Palaiologos brothers to govern as Ottoman dependents.

But the brothers' refusal to pay tribute or send any kind of embassy to Mehmed and their internal conflict made Mehmed's patience thin. Worse than Constantine's hamfisted attempt at dynastic blackmail was the brothers' complete lack of overtures to Mehmed, especially as the threat of conflict with the Italians reared its head, exacerbated by Thomas' Western sympathies and diplomatic overtures.<sup>51</sup> As the Despots could not coordinate an effective diplomatic effort to keep the Ottomans placated or even to retain Mehmed's confidence in their ability to control their domain, Mehmed turned from ostensibly more important matters such as Serbia and Hungary toward the Roman statelet. Internal division had, once more, rendered the primary contributor to Moreot survival ineffective. Unable to be controlled, the Despotate was destroyed.

## Military

While the diplomatic skill of the Moreot rulers helped secure its conquests and continued existence, their military was not as capable and played a significantly more minor role in the Morea's expansion than is traditionally assumed. While Manuel Kantakouzenos enjoyed success against limited Turkish raids during his reign, the number of Turkish attacks that managed to breach the Hexamilion suggests that the general prospect of Roman armies keeping the Morea as a more-or-less independent island to defend against the Turks left much to be desired.<sup>52</sup> The military efficacy of the Moreot army, or its lack thereof, is shown in the capture of Patras; the campaign which finally captured the city followed one which failed, ostensibly due to the failure of the despots to adequately coordinate their armies, with Theodore II vacillating between action and withdrawal.<sup>53</sup> The campaign which did capture Patras almost saw Constantine fall into a trap and face death or imprisonment; a fate averted only by the intervention of Sphrantzes.<sup>54</sup> These failures against the enfeebled Latin principalities suggest that the Moreot army was small and relatively weak, enhanced only by the supply of Albanian mercenaries settled and organized by Theodore I. The Romans fared even worse against the Ottomans, whose technological, financial, and military expertise made them a threat even to major Christian powers, and almost unstoppable to the Balkan principalities of the 15th century. Aside from the earlier Ottoman raids, this can be seen in Constantine's military campaign against Athens, Thebes, and Thessaly from 1444-1446, which resulted in the Ottoman breach of the Hexamilion and subjection of

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<sup>50</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 77.

<sup>51</sup> Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, pp. 125-7; Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 319.

<sup>52</sup> Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 532; Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, p. 210.

<sup>53</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 33.

<sup>54</sup> Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, pp. 113-5.

the Despotate to a hefty tribute in exchange for no territorial or material gains.<sup>55</sup> The campaign saw the Moreot army, Roman and Albanian alike, flee the Hexamilion under assaults from the elite janissaries<sup>56</sup> and Ottoman artillery fire. The total collapse of discipline resulted in a rout that forced Constantine and Thomas to flee to their capital at Mystras.<sup>57</sup> This campaign was so disastrous that Sphrantzes, who would have witnessed all of these events as an important governor under Constantine, makes no mention of it, merely beginning his account of the sordid affair with "On 27 November of [1446], the sultan [Murad II] marched against the Hexamilion, stormed it...Then he advanced all the way to Patras."<sup>58</sup> Considering that modern scholars have tended to look at Constantine's campaign as an example of his vitality and determination, the fact that Sphrantzes makes no mention of it when he otherwise displays little but praise for his friend and master indicates that even contemporaries sympathetic to the Roman cause saw it as an embarrassing failure of leadership, discipline, and prudence - a vainglorious and overambitious decision further undermined by the poor quality of the Moreot army.<sup>59</sup> It is, therefore, clear that the military prowess of the Morea was not as considerable a factor in its success as might appear at first glance.

This is not to say that the Moreot soldiery enjoyed no success, even against the Ottomans. One of the last Roman naval victories was fought between the forces of the Morea and those of the Tocco in Cephalonia,<sup>60</sup> near the site of Actium, in 1427.<sup>61</sup> The defeat inflicted upon the Tocco fiefdoms in Greece precipitated the marriage alliance with Constantine, which precipitated the diplomatic takeover of the Peloponnese.<sup>62</sup> The Romans in the Morea proved to be determined opponents on the defensive, whether ambushing Ottoman detachments or defending their acropolites. Patras, the same citadel which had held out for a year against Constantine's efforts, similarly frustrated the Ottomans' attempt to take the citadel in their 1446 campaign, even with the use of the elite janissaries in their assault.<sup>63</sup> Salmeniko Castle, too, held out for more than a year against determined Ottoman attack, even under the personal command of Sultan Mehmed II and against artillery, until the garrison made good its escape to Venetian territory, earning respect even of Ottoman commanders.<sup>64</sup> An under-discussed engagement, however, comes during the Ottoman raid on the Morea in 1452 as part of the prelude to the Ottoman Siege of Constantinople. Turahan Bey, the beylerbey of Thessaly, had been ordered to tie down the Moreots so no aid could be sent to Constantinople. While their raid did penetrate the defenses at the Isthmus, the Moreots successfully

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<sup>55</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 117.

<sup>56</sup> The janissaries were an elite corps of soldiers, established near the end of the 14th century, who were recruited from Christian families as children in a practice known as the *devshirme*.

<sup>57</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, pp. 107-17.

<sup>58</sup> Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 56.

<sup>59</sup> Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, pp. 188-90.

<sup>60</sup> Cephalonia is an island off the northwestern coast of the Morea.

<sup>61</sup> Raffaele D'Amato, *Byzantine Naval Forces 1261-1453: The Roman Empire's Last Marines* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing), pp. 107-8, Scribd edition.

<sup>62</sup> Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragas Palaiologos*, p. 109.

<sup>63</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 117.

<sup>64</sup> Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, p. 343.

ambushed a large Ottoman column. They captured Turahan's son, Turahanoglu Ahmed, who would remain in Moreot custody for several years.<sup>65</sup> The capture of the son of a beylerbeyi (top-level provincial governor), who by all accounts was leading a significant part of the Ottoman forces, shows that the Moreot army was not helpless by any means and could put up considerable resistance to numerically and technologically superior Ottoman forces under the right circumstances. While the army of the Morea seemed to have been of only slightly higher quality than that of its Constantinopolitan counterpart and was by no means as effective an instrument of foreign policy as first glance would indicate, neither was it a purely impotent military power. However, the greatest successes of the Despotate came not from martial action alone, but from diplomacy, with military force playing a secondary role.

## Conclusion

The success the Despotate enjoyed was largely due to its geographical position relative to the Ottoman Empire. The Morea enjoyed success relative to Constantinople, as it was still afflicted by many problems and failures which helped undermine its conquests against the Latins in Greece and its resistance to Ottoman incursions. Once foreign policy calculus shifted with the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Despotate's survival became untenable. On the other hand, the Despotate displayed an ability to use its limited resources and fortunate position to its advantage, as it turned itself into a center of culture in the early Renaissance as important, if not more, than Constantinople itself. The Ottoman Sultans' natural factors and aims dictated the Morea's survival as a semi-independent polity. Still, the efforts of its rulers were able to use both to their advantage admirably.

The significance of arguing against a nationalist reading of the Morea, that it showed itself to be a strong and vitalist counterpart, is because the Greek nationalist reading put forward by Plethon and repeated through the centuries is harmful to understanding the field of Byzantine Studies as a whole. Plethon and his student, Chalkokondyles, were not particularly interested in the history of the Roman Empire between the foundation of Constantinople and the time in which they lived, lamenting the hard times in which their people had fallen and seeking to restore it to what they saw as the Hellenes' glory days, a formula continuing well into the modern era.<sup>66</sup> By re-framing the Morea's prolonged survival and eventual fall in terms of its concrete actions, failures, and ambiguous relations with surrounding powers, we better understand the deeper issues that the Despotate struggled with and gain a deeper insight into the structures of Late Byzantine politics. Furthermore, such an examination helps illustrate how the Ottomans and their smaller Balkan opponents interacted with one another by showing the complexities of their political relationships; the Ottomans were not obsessed with conquering all their opponents and annexing their territory but were very willing to work with and accommodate cooperative principalities that they encountered.

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<sup>65</sup> Makarios Melissenos, *The Chronicle of the Siege of Constantinople* trans. Marios Philippides (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 80-81; Sphrantzes, p. 69; Chalkokondyles, p. 171.

<sup>66</sup> Anthony Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos: Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium, and the Emergence of the West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 216-218.

The problems the Morea faced show the limitations of how successful the Morea was as a political entity. These issues are intrinsically incompatible with the narrative that the Morea represented a staunch bulwark of Hellenic nationalism and vitality compared to the decrepit imperial capital—as seen by the frequent and extremely personal divisions which laid the Despotate low in its final years. The narrative of Hellenic martial glory is also undermined by its dependence upon the Albanian tribes as soldiers, with whom there was also conflict. Aside from the cultural and intellectual worlds, there was no great Hellenic revival, no resurgence of ancient glory. The Despotate's relative success was largely due to external factors that its rulers could respond to but could not wholly change. The "reconquest" of the Peloponnese by the Morea was achieved most directly through political marriage, a custom borrowed from the West, much like the concept of imperial appanages which spawned the Despotate itself. The Morea, rather than being a gleaming island of Classical revival, was a mix of cultures and traditions that lived at the mercy of the Ottoman Empire, whose foreign policy decisions were dictated by geography, one of the few fortunes the Despotate truly enjoyed. The New Sparta, the bastion of a glorious Hellenic rebirth, was a myth. The real Morea was far more mundane in its survival, troubles, and eventual fall than the utopian vision proposed by Plethon.

## Appendix

Figure 1: “Map of the Medieval Peloponnese with its principal localities.”

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10084390>



Figure 2: “Isthmus von Korinth.” <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2261252>





Figure 3: “Eastern Mediterranean 1450 AD,”

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1942033>



Figure 4: “Palace of the Despots at Mystras.”

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3996551>





Figure 5: “Despotate of the Morea ca. 1450 AD.”

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1943532>

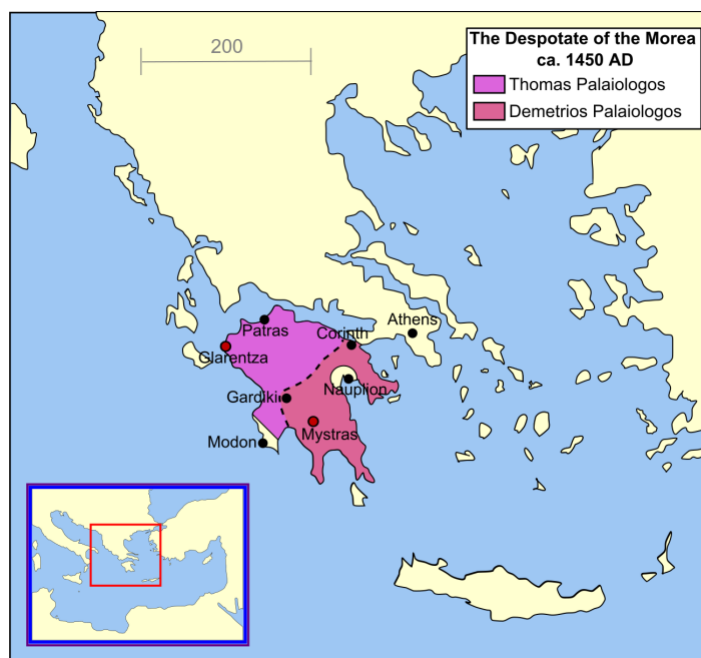


Figure 6: “Map of the Southern Balkans, 1410.”

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=67611502>



## Defining the Volk: Nazi Persecution and Politicization Within Popular Art

*Parker J. Bovée<sup>1</sup>*

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The National Socialist Party's rise to dominate and ultimately reconstruct German politics can be traced along political, economic, and cultural lines. With an intentionally divisive party platform appealing strongly to ethnicity, the Nazi ideology of pride in German identity came at the expense of groups deemed unfit to represent the German people (Volk).<sup>2</sup> By the eighteenth century, ideas of a Volk had begun to solidify with German philosophers Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, both analyzing the word "Volksgeist" for its relation to German identity.<sup>3</sup> Both concluded that the word reflected the national spirit of the Volk, or German people, defined by shared morals, customs, language, national prejudices, and culture.<sup>4</sup> As referenced by German cultural scholar J. Laurence Hare, this definition loosely manifested into a physical image during the Napoleonic Wars but was only ever politicized under the National Socialists.<sup>5</sup>

For the National Socialists, the importance of the Volk was two-fold: service to the Volk and identification of the Volk. Identification rapidly crystallized through party messages idealizing pure-blood Aryans and the removal of Jews, cripples, Gypsies, and general minorities from the population.<sup>6</sup> Service to this Volk took on a more refined meaning. Much of the party platform focused on unity and furthering the status of the Volk politically, economically, and culturally, rapidly segregating German society into combative spheres. This essay will focus exclusively on the cultural component, specifically paintings and sculptures. With these ideas of cultural purity in mind, I will first relate the National Socialists' policies of artistic cleansing to Nazi acts of persecution toward alleged corrupting social influences within the Volk before touching briefly on what state-sponsored art took the form of. Focusing on the cultural aspect of this program, I will identify how high-culture art forms were critiqued, erased, and remade in the hopes of attacking undesirable people. In this work, I argue that

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<sup>2</sup> "Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party," The Avalon Project : Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, n.d. <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/nsdappro.asp>.

<sup>3</sup> Hare, J. Laurence, and Fabian Link, "The Idea of Volk and the Origins of Völkisch Research, 1800–1930s," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 80, no. 4 (2019): pp. 575–596. doi:10.1353/jhi.2019.0032.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, "Von den deutsch-orientalischen Dichtern," in *Frühe Schriften 1764–1772*, ed. Ulrich Gaier (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), pp. 277–95, 283–84, 289.

<sup>5</sup> Hare and Link, "The Idea of Volk and the Origins of Völkisch Research, 1800–1930s," p.582.

<sup>6</sup> deutschen Polizei, "Runderlass des Reichsführers SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei zur Bekämpfung der Zigeunerplage." 8. Dezember. 1938. In: *Ministerialblatt des Reichs- und Preussischen Ministeriums des Innern* 51 (1938): p.2105.

Nazi artistic policy was an extreme example of cultural revisionism to Germany's artistic tradition, mirroring the intensive social engineering of Nazi Germany.

### Literature Preface

It is important to note that the history of National Socialist artistic policy has been thoroughly researched and examined. Specifically, Alan E. Steinweis provides extensive German artistic timelines before and during Nazi dominance. Steinweis successfully argues that the Reich Chamber of Culture was simply the most blatant political body to pursue artistic policies of Gleichschaltung, or coordination, aimed at restructuring the German art scene. *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany* explores this idea wonderfully, constructing a multidecade narrative about government cultural policies that guided art from outside artistic circles. Steinweis expands this analysis to include theater, film, press, and more, furthering his nuanced argument. I believe he falls short in a clear differentiation of National Socialist cultural agendas as opposed to those of Weimar or Imperial Germany. Hitler's Reich Chamber of Culture was more blatant than Steinweis claims, but this is an oversimplification. The two other governments mentioned did control high culture, primarily through the patronage of painting and sculpting, but were never able nor willing to uproot an entire art scene in just a few years. This work argues that the Nazi's blatant and intentional acts of cultural genocide, mirroring the genocide committed within Germany and conquered territories, fueled a mass cultural upheaval that was unprecedented in scale and severity.

This work shares significant overlap with Steinweis' work in analyzing how the National Socialist party manipulated art through direct intervention in the creative process and the title or backstory. While I will be discussing sculptor Arno Breker for this work, Steinweis' work *Anti-Semitism and the Arts in Nazi Ideology and Policy* elaborates on other Nazi-approved artists in varied crafts. I address this, as many historians, such as Jonathan Petropoulos and Pamela M. Potter, fail to adequately address how much significance the National Socialists placed on promoting new artists fitting their political ideals. These two historians analyze the violent persecution of Jewish or other culturally undesirable artists. Petropoulos and Potter's works do well in linking the close relationship between cultural and societal segregation, discrimination, and genocide as the National Socialist party rose in authority. However, both Potter and Petropoulos fail to identify the second wing of Nazi artistic policy: the direct, state-led return to neoclassical architecture and art. This work aims to fill historic policy gaps in how the National Socialist party simultaneously aimed to clean out a degenerate artistic scene while rebuilding it in the state-approved model of masculine neoclassicism.

### Origins of Nazi Artistic Policy

From its 1920 birth, the National Socialist agenda focused on forming a "Union of all Germans in a Great Germany."<sup>7</sup> Yet, how would this strategy be applied culturally? The 23<sup>rd</sup> point in the party's platform is one of the more specific ones, focusing almost explicitly on attacking non-German and politically motivated newspapers apart from a final, more vague section: Newspapers transgressing against the common welfare shall be suppressed. We demand legal action against those tendencies in

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<sup>7</sup> "Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party."

art and literature that have a disruptive influence upon the life of our folk and that any organizations that offend against the foregoing demands shall be dissolved.<sup>8</sup> Here the National Socialists explicitly linked their political enemies to decay in art and literature. Moreover, while not overtly stating it, the “disruptive influence” on German life can be interpreted as Jewish influence due to the 23<sup>rd</sup> point’s heavy focus on Jewish control of media.<sup>9</sup> This link offered a flexible target for Nazi propaganda that slowly grew in scope to include Jews, Gypsies, Blacks, and political dissidents.<sup>10</sup> By politicizing arts and literature as an epicenter of attacks on the Volk, the National Socialists cast doubt upon German art as something infected with foreign, corrupting influence. This opened the door for intense campaigns of artistic regulation disguised as state-building as the party came to power.

The first acts of this cultural revolution came from outside the party. Alfred Rosenberg led the Militant League for German Culture, a cultural offshoot of rising National Socialist ideologies, in public attacks on anti-war artists such as Ernst Balach.<sup>11</sup> While not directly tied to the party, these attacks won favor with party officials, allowing men like Rosenberg and Hans Severus Ziegler to take up prominent positions relating to cultural regulation in 1933 with the total Nazi takeover of the German government. Upon his appointment as a leading Nazi in cultural reformation, Rosenberg immediately resumed publishing scathing, now party-endorsed, attacks on modernist artistic figures.<sup>12</sup> Focusing mainly on style instead of content, other key Nazi cultural figures, such as Joseph Goebbels, took issue with Rosenberg’s failure to identify Jewish influence in his critiques.<sup>13</sup> Goebbels focused explicitly on the artists’ heritage and the social, ethnic, and religious communities they cultivated or affiliated with.<sup>14</sup> If the artist failed to represent Goebbels’ ideal Volk, he labeled their work an unequivocal failure, even going as far as to ban art critique from those outside the party.<sup>15</sup> Forced to mediate between these interpretations with an official party stance, Adolf Hitler’s *Art and Its Commitment to Truth* condemned both modern styles without purpose and over-attachment to the past artistic movements. Instead, Hitler advocated for an art based on Germanic heritage, tradition, and meaning to the Volk.<sup>16</sup> *Art and Its Commitment to Truth* did little to solidify a party stance. However, it

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<sup>8</sup> “Program of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party.”

<sup>9</sup> “Program of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party.”

<sup>10</sup> Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, “Introduction” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., Anson Rabinbach, and Sander L. Gilman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 483–86.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age*, (Ostara Publications, 2019), p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, “Revolution in the Visual Arts?,” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, ( Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 488–89.

<sup>13</sup> Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth*, p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> Wilhelm Furtwängler and Joseph Goebbels, “The Case of Wilhelm Furtwängler (1933),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 532–34.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Goebbels, “Ban on Art Criticism (1936),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013, pp. 492–93.

<sup>16</sup> Adolf Hitler, “Art and Its Commitment to Truth (1934),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 489–92.

did offer a broad justification to rising Nazi cultural figure Adolf Ziegler and others in their new policy of confiscating “degenerate art” across Germany.<sup>17</sup>

### **Barlach, Lohse-Wächtler, Mueller, and Freundlich: What Was “Degenerate?”**

Ziegler capitalized on the party’s undecided position toward artistic reform, possibly in connection to his good graces with both Hitler and Goebbels, to orchestrate the anti-modernist artistic purge against what he deemed “degenerate art.”<sup>18</sup> The lack of firm party definition lent Ziegler greater freedom in his crusade against the German art scene as he targeted modern styles of Expressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Cubism, and generally abstract or modern conceptions of art.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Ziegler took up Goebbels’ offensive on non-German influences by targeting Jews, anti-war advocates, the mentally ill, and Gypsies within the artistic community.<sup>20</sup> Ziegler broadly categorized art of this style and influence under the term “degenerate” and thus unrepresentative of the Volk. This allowed him to confiscate works across Germany.

Ernst Barlach was a focus of this campaign, with both his works *Magdeburger Ehrenmal* and *Hamburger Ehrenmal* (see appendices for discussed images) being condemned as “degenerate.”<sup>21</sup> *Magdeburger Ehrenmal* (Fig. 1) was controversial even before the National Socialists’ ascent due to its harsh anti-war depiction focusing on traumatized soldiers.<sup>22</sup> The sculpture’s use of a cross with dates of World War I is the only semblance of a memorial to the victims as the distraught soldiers are overshadowed by solemn, detached-looking combatants and a religious figure. Similarly, the *Hamburger Ehrenmal* (Fig. 2) sharply reminded Germans of the city’s forty thousand casualties through an inscription on the monument.<sup>23</sup> Headed by a mournful child and detached mother, Barlach again commented on the unseen and forgotten victims of war.

These two works, with *Magdeburger Ehrenmal* representing the global suffering of World War I and *Hamburger Ehrenmal* shaming the supporters of WWI with the deaths of Germans, were treated as anti-nationalist propaganda, a reputation that barred Barlach from the Nazi’s new artistic scene.<sup>24</sup> Barlach is a key example of Nazi artistic persecution, as he had been the target of career sabotage long before his works were officially seized.<sup>25</sup> His choice to speak freely on anti-war views and shame

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<sup>17</sup> Adolf Ziegler, “Speech at the Opening of the Degenerate Art Exhibition (1937),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 500–503.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “The Dialectics of Design and Destruction: The “Degenerate Art” Exhibition (1937) and the “Exhibition Internationale Du Surréalisme” (1938),” *October* 150 (2014): pp. 49–62.

<sup>19</sup> Rabinbach and Gilman, “Introduction” pp. 483–86.

<sup>20</sup> Rabinbach and Gilman, “Introduction,” pp. 483–486.

<sup>21</sup> William M. Chace, “Review of An Artist against the Third Reich: Ernst Barlach, 1933–1938,” *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 2 (2004): pp. 356–357.

<sup>22</sup> Ernst Barlach, “Magdeburger Ehrenmal,” Wood Sculpture, 1929, Magdeburg Cathedral, In *Fotoeins Fotografie*, by Henry Lee, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

<sup>23</sup> Ernst Barlach, “Hamburger Ehrenmal”, Plaster, 1931. Hamburg, Deutschland, Hamburg.de.

<sup>24</sup> Chace, “Review of An Artist against the Third Reich,” pp. 356–357.

<sup>25</sup> Chace, “Review of An Artist against the Third Reich,” pp. 356–357.

toward Germany's role in the war put him in direct opposition with the Nazi's desire to annul the Treaty of Versailles and restore lost German honor.<sup>26</sup> Barlach was to be an example of Ziegler's desire to clean up the artistic community from anti-nationalists, leading to the seizure of his work under the label of degenerate art damaging to the Volk.

Advocating for a mix of both Rosenberg's stylistic message and Goebbels' ideals of artistic purity within the Volk, the following three artists faced artistic and social condemnation from Ziegler. Starting with Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, this artist stood as almost the polar opposite of the Nazi message of pure, Volk-representing art. While not hugely influential in modern approaches, Lohse-Wächtler's focus on portraits of the lower tiers of society raised eyebrows within the party. Party artists often supported paintings of workers and farmers. However, Lohse-Wächtler controversially chose to depict an aging prostitute in her acclaimed work *Lissy* (Fig. 3).<sup>27</sup> Combined with the stylistically distorted features of the prostitute and surrounding characters, the piece strayed away from Goebbels' morally-upright image and Rosenberg's preferred realism style of Nazi art.<sup>28</sup> Lohse-Wächtler's portraits of patients in a mental ward, the same one she was confined in, were also deemed "degenerate" and likely destroyed.<sup>29</sup>

Ziegler's artistic purge coincided with a continued Nazi focus on addressing Germany's mentally ill population. Originating as forced sterilization before rapidly progressing to programs of euthanasia, the mentally ill were gradually considered a societal burden to be solved through mass murder.<sup>30</sup> Both Lohse-Wächtler's struggle with mental health, which eventually led to her murder under this program, and attempts to normalize the mentally ill as artistic subjects in German art convinced leading Nazi officials of her art's moral depravity and "degenerate" nature.<sup>31</sup> Alongside the modern twists distorting the human figure within her work, Ziegler had no issue confiscating or destroying her work as unfit to represent the Volk.

Just as Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler was targeted for her work depicting the mentally ill, Otto Mueller's legacy of depicting Gypsy life and culture prompted the ire of Ziegler and leading officials on artistic policy. Mueller passed away years before the Nazis enacted their artistic purge. Nevertheless, he left two lasting imprints on German art: a reputation as a key figure in German Expressionism and Gypsy-centered work.<sup>32</sup> Notable pieces such as *Landschaft Mit Gelben Akten* (Fig. 4) and *Reclining Figure* (Fig. 5) captured a curiosity toward Gypsy populations depicted as living within nature and apart from German civilization. *Landschaft Mit Gelben Akten*, in particular, emphasized a detachment from reality

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<sup>26</sup> "Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party."

<sup>27</sup> Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, "Lissy," Pencil and Watercolor, 1931. Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, in der STÄDEL BLOG.

<sup>28</sup> Rosenberg, "Revolution in the Visual Arts?," p. 489.

<sup>29</sup> Britany L. Salsbury, "Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler: A Feminist View of Weimar Culture," *Woman's Art Journal* 29, no. 2 (2008): pp. 23-30.

<sup>30</sup> "Psychiatric Eugenics in Nazi Germany," in *From Madness to Mental Health: Psychiatric Disorder and Its Treatment in Western Civilization*, ed. Eghigian Greg, (New Brunswick, New Jersey; London: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 294-311.

<sup>31</sup> Salsbury, "Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler: A Feminist View of Weimar Culture," p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> "Otto Mueller 1874-1930," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 45, no. 3/4 (1966): pp. 59-62.

with brightly-colored, oddly-shaped bodies without any indications of gender.<sup>33</sup> *Reclining Figure* and most of Mueller's recovered works also focused on this depiction of Gypsies as non-human within the expressionist style.<sup>34</sup>

Mueller's works were some of the most heavily persecuted under the "degenerate" label. Nazi officials seized 357 of Mueller's works, many of which centered around his depictions of Gypsies.<sup>35</sup> Mueller himself was also highly speculated to be from a Gypsy family. While not originally the target of the Nuremberg Laws, a series of largely anti-Semitic segregation policies, Gypsy populations became a focal point of Nazi harassment and sterilization efforts beginning in 1933 and ramping up in 1935.<sup>36</sup> Combined with increasingly restrictive interpretations of the Reich Citizenship Law and Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, Nazi racial policies had become focused on targeting the Gypsies alongside the Jewish population as alien groups.<sup>37</sup> It is not a tremendous leap to view the attacks on Mueller's work as a cultural arm of this anti-Gypsy policy, especially when considering Ziegler's focus on cleaning out "artistic degeneracy" unfit to represent the Volk.<sup>38</sup> The mass cleansing of Mueller's work on Gypsies from German museums indicates rising cultural contempt for Germany's Gypsy populations, which bled into coordinated attempts to remove Gypsies from Germany and German art entirely.

Otto Freundlich's *Der Neue Mensch* was also labeled as "degenerate" and became the cover image of Ziegler's Degenerate Art Exhibition.<sup>39</sup> While the piece fits Alfred Rosenberg's critiques of non-realistic art, Ziegler was the one to popularize the image.<sup>40</sup> The sculpture itself was a five-foot-tall head incorporating elements of Cubism and Primitivism in a manner resembling the Easter Island heads. It served as the primary example of Nazi disdain for Primitivism due to Western art's conceptions of Primitivism often centered around former colonial subjects.<sup>41</sup> Yet, this sculpture became especially significant for its use by the Nazis. Contrary to most other works discussed, *Der Neue Mensch* served as the quintessential image of degenerate art. Used in media for the Degenerate Art Exhibition and prominently displayed during the exhibition in Munich, the work took on an alternative theme.<sup>42</sup> The Nazis began to use *Der Neue Mensch* (fig. 6) as the symbol of a failed era in German art, one dominated by Jewish influence and an erroneous focus on non-German bodies.

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<sup>33</sup> Otto Muller, "Landschaft Mit Gelben Akten, Oil on Burlap", 1919. Museum of Modern Art, New York, in *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*, Starr Figura, Peter Jelavich, New York City, New York, USA.

<sup>34</sup> Otto Mueller, "Reclining Figure," lithograph printed in black ink on wove paper, 1919. Detroit Institute of Arts, in *Detroit Institute of Arts*, by Henry Lee, Detroit, Michigan, USA.

<sup>35</sup> Mueller, "Reclining Figure."

<sup>36</sup> Sybil Milton, "Gypsies and the Holocaust," *The History Teacher* 24, no. 4 (1991): pp. 375-87.

<sup>37</sup> *Runderlass des Reichsführers SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei zur Bekämpfung der Zigeunerplage*, p. 2105.

<sup>38</sup> Ziegler, "Speech at the Opening of the Degenerate Art Exhibition (1937)," p. 502.

<sup>39</sup> Otto Freundlich, "Der neue Mensch," Plaster, 1912. Detroit Institute of Arts, in *German History in Documents and Images*.

<sup>40</sup> Rosenberg, "Revolution in the Visual Arts," p. 489.

<sup>41</sup> Ben Etherington, "Primitivism After Its Poststructural Eclipse," in *Literary Primitivism*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018), pp. 3-16.

<sup>42</sup> Rabinbach and Gilman, "Introduction," p. 485.

As referenced by Ziegler in his speech at the Exhibition, the art displayed represented Jewish-funded projects aimed at stripping away the “honor and dignity” of the Volk.<sup>43</sup> Freundlich was also ethnically Jewish, furthering the controversy surrounding his work and leading to his attempted escape and eventual murder in the Majdanek concentration camp.<sup>44</sup> Both Ziegler’s phrasing and choice to use *Der Neue Mensch* as a cover image of Jewish influence for the Degenerate Art Exhibition cemented a link between Nazi-deemed degenerate art and internal rot in the form of Jewish attacks on the Volk identity, a party focus dating back to their original 1920 platform.<sup>45</sup> Yet, if art that genuinely represented the Volk could not depict themes of Gypsies, Jewish influence, colonial peoples, anti-war sentiment, or modern art styles, what was true German art?

### Arno Breker: Sculpting as a Political Tool

According to Robert Scholz, a party art critic, German art aiming to honor and represent the Volk was to be made in the image of the National Socialist ideals.<sup>46</sup> These political ideals were, again, somewhat stylistically confusing when it came to art. Hitler had ambitions of remaking the whole of Berlin in classical Greek and Roman stylings, but these techniques had little to do with a Volk culture. While not expressly German, neoclassicism reflected historic authority calling back to the great Mediterranean military societies and was significantly devoid of foreign influence and meaningless modern styles.<sup>47</sup> Neoclassical art, in other words, was two things: grandiose and militaristic, two key themes of the Nazi regime. This same embrace of grand, monumental architectural style translated to art with the rapid rise of Arno Breker as the preeminent party artist. Famed for his ability to relate neoclassical sculpting styles to Nazi ideals of imposing physical presence and authority, Breker transcended the role of an artist and moved into something of a party organ. Hitler famously renamed Breker’s work from *Der Fackelträger* to *Die Partei* (*The Party*) to merge the masculine style of the work with images of the National Socialists.<sup>48,49</sup> Yes, Arno Breker’s artistic style perfectly fit Hitler’s hopes for an artistic compliment to his architectural visions, but what was the defining characteristic between Breker and other neoclassical artists of the time that inspired such admiration from Nazis cultural appendages?

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<sup>43</sup> Ziegler, “Speech at the Opening of the Degenerate Art Exhibition (1937),” p. 502.

<sup>44</sup> Joes Segal, “National and Degenerate Art: The Third Reich,” In *Art and Politics: Between Purity and Propaganda*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 45-60.

<sup>45</sup> “Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party.”

<sup>46</sup> Robert Scholz, “The Mission of the New German Sculpture: On the Arno Breker Exhibit in Paris (1942),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 509-11.

<sup>47</sup> Pau Schmitthenner, “Tradition and New Design in Architecture (1933),” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 511-14.

<sup>48</sup> Petropoulos Jonathan, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 243.

<sup>49</sup> Arno Breker, “Die Partei,” Sculpture, 1939. Breker-Museum Nörvenich, Nörvenich, Germany, in *Restaging "Degenerate Art": The Politics of Memory*, by Alan Joshua Itkin, in the Berlin Sculpture Find Exhibit.



Just as many artists were alienated over their works' ethnic or political associations, Breker's willingness to morph his art to align with visions from party ideologues propelled him to preeminence in Germany's new art scene. As reflected in party art critic Robert Scholz's review of the *Der Wächter* sculpture (fig. 7), Breker's older work was belittled in comparison with his new sculptures, which drew inspiration from the "content of our new political ideals."<sup>50</sup> Scholz continued his detailing, claiming that Breker's "fusion of form and content" surpassed that of any "artist or art epoch."<sup>51</sup> The value of Breker's art had moved away from the physical content he created and instead been augmented by assigned political values. Breker had not won fame because of any stylistic or thematic exploration. He simply regurgitated neoclassical works under the direction of Nazi cultural figures. This was part of the beauty of neoclassical sculpting. A masculine figure is themeless, leaving the meaning to be ascribed to it. By emphasizing slightly more German facial features or simply allowing the renaming of his work, Breker became the Nazi's leading artist (fig. 8). Success as an artist in the newly Nazi-controlled artistic realm was to be found through cooperation with and alignment with party standards regarding style, content, artists' identities, and, most importantly: state superscription of party themes upon one's art.

### **Relationship Between the Nazi's Artistic Purge, State Building, and Persecution**

So, what does the example of Breker's prominence tell us when compared with the experiences of Barlach, Lohse-Wächtler, Freundlich, and Mueller? Breker's work before his close relationship with Hitler was largely apolitical. Any work with a political twist was implemented at the directive of Nazi officials, with Hitler often suggesting tweaks.<sup>52</sup> This acceptance of Nazi political themes saved, elevated, and cemented Breker as a legitimate artist. The exact opposite can be said of Barlach, who often focused on political themes opposed to Nazi views. Barlach's reputation as an anti-nationalist political artist condemned his work when the Nazis rose to power. If art was to be political in Nazi Germany, it would represent National Socialist ideals. Yet, another realm of persecution remained. Lohse-Wächtler, Freundlich, and Mueller all became staples of degenerate art, largely for apolitical identities or subject matter. Choosing to depict Gypsies or the mentally ill did not fit the image of Volk art. Primitivism, Expressionism, and most modern styles also became increasingly detested as they did not fit the neoclassical stylings of Hitler's regime. Moreover, populations targeted by Nazi social reorderings, such as Jews, Gypsies, anti-nationalists, and the mentally ill, were never to represent the Volk artistically.

Breker's success within Nazi Germany is mainly indicative of the politically malleable nature of his work. The National Socialists sought to associate the Volk image with powerful, masculine art rather than representations of groups they considered inferior. The persecution of artists represented examples of Nazi cultural targets: Jews, Gypsies, and the mentally ill as inferior and unable to contribute to the Volk. Artists who happened to fall into, or associate with, one of these groups often

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<sup>50</sup> Scholz, "The Mission of the New German Sculpture," p. 510.

<sup>51</sup> Scholz, "The Mission of the New German Sculpture," p. 510.

<sup>52</sup> Alan Joshua Itkin, "'Restaging 'Degenerate Art': The Politics of Memory in the Berlin Sculpture Find Exhibit," *The German Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2014): p. 413.

faced professional persecution for it. Nazi artistic persecution of these peoples ran parallel with policy targeting these same groups as anti-nationalists, alien populations, or socioeconomic burdens, making the Nazi policy of persecution of degenerate artists a broader political tool of Nazi social engineering. Conversely, Nazi influence within their carefully curated artistic scene created a cultural arm of party propaganda aimed at binding art the party deemed worthy of representing the Volk to strong affiliations with the National Socialist party amongst the German people.

## Appendix

Figure 1: Barlach, Ernst. “Magdeburger Ehrenmal,” Wood Sculpture, 1929. Magdeburg Cathedral, In Fotoeins Fotografie, by Henry Lee, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.



Figure 2: Barlach, Ernst. “Hamburger Ehrenmal,” Plaster, 1931. Hamburg, Germany. In hamburg.de.



Figure 3: Lohse-Wachler, Elfriede. “Lissy,” Pencil and Watercolor, 1931. Stadel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, IN STADEL BLOG.

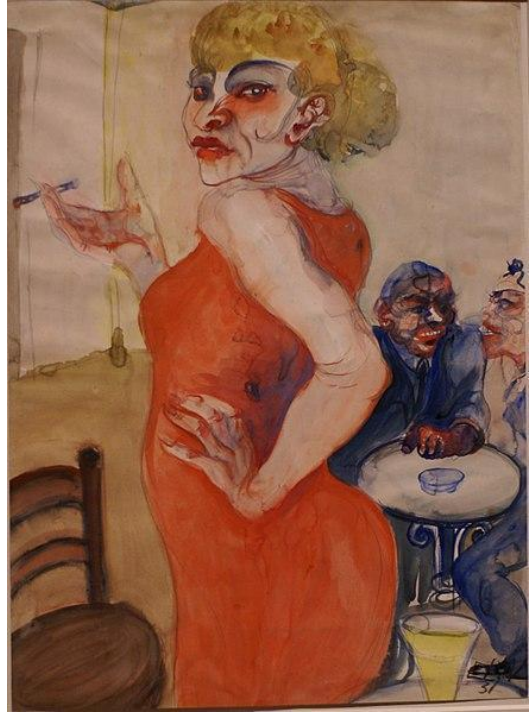


Figure 4: Mueller, Otto. "Landschaft Mit Gelben Akten," Oil on Burlap, 1919. Museum of Modern Art, New York, In German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse, Starr Figura, Peter Jelavich, New York City, New York, USA.

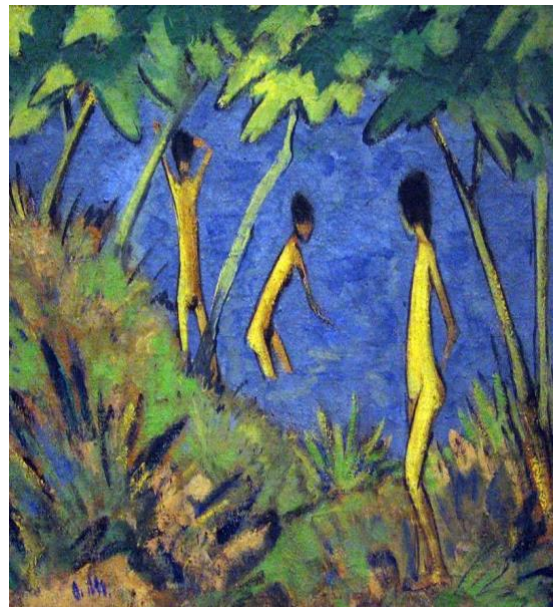


Figure 5: Mueller, Otto. "Reclining Figure," lithograph printed in black ink on wove paper, 1919. Detroit Institute of Arts, In Detroit Institute of Arts, by Henry Lee, Detroit, Michigan, USA.



Figure 6: Freundlich, Otto. “Der Neue Mensch,” Plaster, 1912. Detroit Institute of Arts, In German History in Documents and Images.



Figure 7: Breker, Arno. “Die Partei,” Sculpture, 1939. Breker-Museum Norvenich, by Alan Joshua Itkin in Restaging “Degenerate Art”: The Politics of Memory in the Berlin Sculpture Find Exhibit.



Figure 8: Postcard with an image of Arno Breker's *The Guardian (Head)* (*Der Wächter [Kopf]*). Photograph by Charlotte Rohrbach. Film, Foto, Verlag, Berlin, SW 68. Collection of Anson Rabinbach. Sculpture Find Exhibit



FIGURE 22. Postcard with an image of Arno Becker's *The Guardian (Head)* (*Der Wächter [Kopf]*). Photograph by Charlotte Rohrbach. Film, Foto, Verlag, Berlin, SW 68. Collection of Anson Rabinbach.



## Catherine de' Medici: Unfurling a Legacy

*Claire Cinnamon<sup>1</sup>*

In 1561, two Venetian ambassadors to the French court wrote opinionated letters regarding the state of France and its rulers, where religious tensions were extremely high. Despite their diplomatic purpose, similar time frame, and shared audience of the Venetian Doge and Senate,<sup>2</sup> the two letters portrayed their protagonist, Catherine de' Medici, in an almost paradoxical fashion. Catherine de' Medici, queen regent for her son Charles IX at the time, played perhaps the most significant political role in the French court. Gaining an understanding of her character and intentions was of the utmost importance. The first ambassador, Giovanni Michiel, took a highly admiring view of Catherine. He portrayed Catherine as courageous, reconciling, and clever. Michiel claimed she could handle state affairs and credited her Medici background for her political intelligence. He frequently compared Catherine and her absolute power to that of a king. Michiel stated of Catherine, "she knows how to treat everyone, and particularly the nobility, by whom she has always been loved and revered."<sup>3</sup>

Conversely, Ambassador Michele Suriano wrote that Catherine was cowardly and lacked authority. Suriano also cited Catherine's Medici ancestry, but in this case, as a fatal flaw, leaving her unworthy of the French kingdom. He claimed Catherine lacked administrative experience, was highly suspicious, and needed good counselors. Suriano described Catherine as "timid and irresolute; and not well practiced in governing."<sup>4</sup> Suriano even brought up the scandalous reputations of some of Catherine's ladies.<sup>5</sup> The cause of this disparity is suggested within each letter. Phrases such as "everyone knows" and "he told a few (who then told me)" depict Catherine's notoriety and hint at how gossip circulated. It seems likely that they may have influenced each ambassador's assessment.<sup>6</sup>

Both in her own time, and today, portrayals of Catherine are fiercely polarized. In these two intensely contradictory depictions, coming from men of the same background in the same year, Catherine becomes an enigma. Much of this controversy regarding her character stemmed from the unprecedented power she was allotted as a foreign woman during one of the most turbulent periods of French history. Catherine was therefore villainized due to her reversal of gender norms, her Italian

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<sup>2</sup> Leah L. Chang, Katherine Kong, and Catherine de Médicis, *Portraits of the Queen Mother: Polemics, Panegyrics, Letters*, trans. Leah L. Chang and Katherine Kong (Toronto: Iter Inc., 2014), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Michiel, "Letter from Venetian Ambassador to France, after Returning from His Legation in 1561," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, pp. 113-118.

<sup>4</sup> Suriano, "Letter from Ambassador in 1561," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> Suriano, "Letter from Ambassador in 1561," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, pp. 118-124.

<sup>6</sup> Michiel, "Letter from Venetian Ambassador to France, after Returning from His Legation in 1561," and Suriano, "Letter from Ambassador in 1561," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, pp. 114-122.



ancestry, and her ambition. As she gained increasing political power, the attacks became more frequent and vicious. Although much of what she was accused of was untrue, the condemnation of Catherine was effective. The systemic spread of rumors from the French courts to the public was powerful, turning libel into a potent political weapon. These charges were primarily launched by elite men who hoped to depose women in power while raising their status simultaneously.<sup>7</sup> As a woman in sixteenth-century France, Catherine's political ambitions undoubtedly sparked controversy, while Italian stereotypes portrayed her as an untrustworthy outsider. Additionally, in her position of power, she was forced to make difficult decisions that did not always result in the desired outcome. However, given France's intense religious factions and wars, Catherine did all she could to keep her children and France safe. Despite evidence of her attempts to create a moderate and peaceful rule, Catherine de' Medici's motherhood and ambition led to a reputation that became increasingly villainized as she gained more political power. With accusations rooted in xenophobia and misogyny and the systemic spread of libel and gossip, Catherine was left with the legacy of the "Serpent Queen."

The tumult and tragedy surrounding her life may have lent its hand in formulating such vastly different opinions about Catherine de' Medici. Born in Florence in 1519 to the powerful Medici banking family, her parents Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, and the French Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne died soon after her birth.<sup>8</sup> Catherine, under the watch of her uncle, Pope Clement VII, was left to be used as a pawn for the Medicis. Amongst the many suitors vying for her hand in marriage, Henry, duke of Orléans, the second son of King Francis I, was chosen as the most diplomatically beneficial arrangement.<sup>9</sup> Catherine lived at the French court and married Henry at fourteen, and when Henry became next in line to the throne, she acted dutifully as his queen.<sup>10</sup> After the unexpected death of King Henry II in a joust, Catherine was thrust into a central political role. Throughout the reign of her sons, three of whom inherited the throne during her lifetime, Catherine acted intermittently as queen mother and queen regent. The rise of religious tensions within Catholic France coincided with Catherine's increasing political power. Despite her attempts to keep the peace and to keep her children safe, the Reformation was tearing France in two, pitting Catholics against Protestants. During Catherine's rule, the violence of the French Wars of Religion culminated in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, a tragedy that was ultimately blamed on Catherine herself. Despite her intense and important political role, Salic Law prevented Catherine from officially acting as queen. Salic Law was a fundamental cultural law in France that barred women from inheriting the throne.<sup>11</sup> In addition, it aimed at preventing women from gaining political power by creating a distinction between acting as a guardian for kings in their minority (*tutelle*) which was for the mother and taking on administrative powers (*curatelle*), which was for male relatives.<sup>12</sup> There was a history of fear of

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<sup>7</sup> Una McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation at the Court of Catherine de Medici*, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Héritier, *Catherine de Medici*, trans. Charlotte Haldane (New York: St Martin's Press, 1963), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> R.J. Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici* (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Chang and Kong, *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Katherine Crawford, "Catherine de Medici and the Performance of Political Motherhood," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 3 (2000): p. 645.

<sup>12</sup> Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 20.

women in power, stemming from worries over possible foreign control to suspicions of female manipulation.<sup>13</sup>

Due to her intriguing story, and her central role during a critical time in French history, Catherine de' Medici has a rich and fascinating historiography. Some historians have taken an extremely praiseworthy approach to Catherine, especially recently.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, historians have depicted Catherine as a Machiavellian queen, willing to do anything to gain power.<sup>15</sup> As seen in the Venetian ambassador's reports, the turbulent fluctuations in Catherine's portrayal began contemporarily with her rule. However, for most of history and in popular culture, Catherine's legacy as a malicious schemer has persevered over her depiction as honorable and courageous.

This legacy did not persist on its own; instead, it was propagated through baseless depictions of Catherine by historians. Indeed, the more compelling narrative is one of scandal and malevolence. It was not until relatively recently, historically speaking that scholars began to take a new approach to Catherine's legacy. In his book on the French Wars of Religion, Mack Holt cited N.M. Sutherland, who wrote much of her work in the 1970s, and was the "first historian to try to rescue the Queen Mother's reputation."<sup>16</sup> Coinciding with this shift in thought were new ideas on gender roles. It was not until around Sutherland's time that society would begin to encourage women to take on powerful political roles, something Catherine's alternate legacy would inspire. As Sutherland pointed out in her article on Catherine de' Medici, "there are still few historians who have not been influenced by the legend of the wicked Italian queen."<sup>17</sup> Sutherland claimed that the propagation of her Machiavellian legacy was passed through generations of historians through emotional force. Only recently have historians attempted to analyze her character and politics in their proper context.<sup>18</sup> Catherine's "Serpent Queen" legacy was perpetuated for hundreds of years, and even amongst modern scholarship, there remains some controversy regarding her character. Although what historians have discovered more recently attempts to negate much of her villainous reputation, popular culture has not followed suit. Through the analysis of historical and public perceptions of Catherine, the power of a reputation becomes all the more evident.

After the death of her husband, Henry II, Catherine began to take on political roles that were beyond her gender and therefore put her under intense scrutiny. However, in their proper historical context, Catherine's efforts to maintain peace should be commended rather than condemned. Even before she gained any serious power, Catherine attempted to maintain harmony within the French court. Henry II made his preference for his mistress Diane de Poitiers over Catherine, who was not

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<sup>13</sup> Crawford, "Performance of Political Motherhood," p. 647.

<sup>14</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De' Medici*; Crawford, "Perilous Performances,"; McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*.

<sup>15</sup> Edith Helen Sitchel, *The Later Years of Catherine de' Medici*, (London: A. Constable & Co., Ltd., 1908); Philippe Erlanger, *St. Bartholomew's Night: The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew*, trans. Patrick O'Brian, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962); Ralph Roeder, *Catherine de' Medici and the Lost Revolution*, (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1937).

<sup>16</sup> Mack P Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> N.M. Sutherland, "Catherine de Medici: The Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9, no. 2 (1978): p. 45. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539662>.

<sup>18</sup> Sutherland, "Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen," pp. 45-49.

known for her beauty, quite evident. Although Catherine famously wrote, “never did a wife who loves her husband love his whore,”<sup>19</sup> she did not let this humiliation affect her courtly actions. Despite his lack of reciprocation, she remained loyal and loving to the king and continued to place the country's needs over her own emotions.

Catherine was described as an obedient wife and a doting mother during this time. In her daughter Marguerite de Valois's memoirs, she said her mother “doted on all her children and was always ready to sacrifice her own repose, nay, even her life, for their happiness.”<sup>20</sup> Her dedication to her children is also evident in her continual correspondence with Jean d'Humières, governor of the royal children, to check on their well-being.<sup>21</sup> In 1546 she wrote to d'Humières, asking him “to continue to send me news of them frequently, for you could do nothing else that would please monsieur and me more.”<sup>22</sup>

Catherine also attempted to keep her household free from scandal to keep peace at her court. She was highly involved in the upbringing and welfare of the ladies in her household and proactively tried to safeguard their reputations.<sup>23</sup> In doing so, she was forced to make difficult decisions about which of her ladies it would be beneficial to defend. Catherine managed to control and manipulate the spread of information to protect the women of her court and their collective reputation.<sup>24</sup> Her ability to assess an issue, make a decision that best benefited France, and successfully amass a response was evidence of her political intelligence. However, the negotiating and scheming required to protect the women of her court propelled her stigma as a conniving Medici. Although Catherine's decisions of who she chose to protect and how she did so could seem ruthless at times, it also showed the prudence of a shrewd political leader. Catherine was forced to walk a delicate line between keeping the peace at her court and saving its collective reputation without damaging her own.

Catherine never expected to be queen in the first place, as Henry was the second son of Francis I. However, after the unexpected death of Henry's older brother, Francis, she found herself married to the heir apparent, and eventually, she became the new queen of France.<sup>25</sup> While in this position, she was appointed as regent on two separate occasions while Henry was away. Although she was not afforded any real power during these times, she took her role seriously.<sup>26</sup> As she acquired more significant administrative roles, Catherine had to expand from keeping the peace within her court to keeping the peace in France. Her contemporary, Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, detailed this experience in his biography of Catherine, *The Memoirs of Catherine De Medici*. He was known for his

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Kathleen Anne Wellman, “Catherine de' Medici,” in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 232.

<sup>20</sup> Marguerite de Valois, “Letter II,” in *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois, Queen of France, Wife of Henri IV; of Madame de Pompadour of the Court of Louis XV; and of Catherine de Medici, Queen of France, Wife of Henri II; with a Special Introduction*, (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1910), p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Chang and Kong, *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> Medici, “Letter of December 21, 1546,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 104.

<sup>25</sup> Wellman, “Catherine de' Medici,” in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 231.

<sup>26</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De' Medici*, p. 44.

biographies and used his first-hand experiences while living at Catherine's court to write hers. Although his narrative histories are often said to be subject to bias, they are of great value and insight nonetheless.<sup>27</sup> Brantôme wrote that "there was no disturbance, change, nor alternation in the State because of the King's absence; but, on the contrary, the Queen so carefully saw to affairs that she was able to assist the King."<sup>28</sup> Catherine masterfully fulfilled her maternal and wifely duties despite being primarily disregarded by her husband, both as a wife and political partner.

When King Henry was forty years old, he died unexpectedly during celebratory festivities in honor of the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth de Valois to King Philip II of Spain. As he faced the Comte de Montgomery in a joust, the lances broke, sending a splinter through the king's helmet. Within a few days, the king died.<sup>29</sup> In the wake of tragedy, Catherine courageously and without hesitation took on the responsibilities required to keep France from falling apart. Her son, Francis II, married to Mary Stuart, would rule for a brief period before his devastating death at a young age from an ear infection.<sup>30</sup> On the eve of Francis's death, Catherine wrote a letter in anticipation of the chaos that would ensue from the loss of the king. She wrote, "for the sake of the kingdom, I will take in hand the necessary duty that must be given to the administration."<sup>31</sup> Through a series of unfortunate deaths in her family, Catherine found herself fated for a more prominent role in France's administration than ever expected of her. Charles IX was only ten then, still well in his minority and needing a regent.<sup>32</sup> She insisted that she would heed the advice of her council and that she would pass along the guidance she had received to her son.<sup>33</sup>

With religious tensions rising, Catherine felt she had to maintain authority both to provide a sense of stability for France and to protect the interests of her children, allowing for the propagation of the Valois dynasty. Historically, France had been a Catholic country, but Protestantism began to take root with the Reformation sweeping through Europe. Religious factions destabilized France, stirring anxieties and leading to outbreaks of violence. Marguerite de Valois described her mother as a devout Catholic but acknowledged that even within the French court were lords and ladies attempting to convert her and her siblings to Protestants.<sup>34</sup> The Guises, who were Catholic, and the Bourbons, who were Protestant, were two rival families vying for power and authority during this tumultuous time. The *curatelle* was almost passed to the Prince of the Blood (a royal male with a claim to the throne), the Protestant King of Navarre, Antoine de Bourbon.<sup>35</sup> To ensure that Navarre ceded authority, Catherine offered him the position of lieutenant general.<sup>36</sup> Had Navarre been chosen as

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<sup>27</sup> Brantôme, "The Memoirs of Catherine De Medici," in *Memoirs*, pp. 315-316.

<sup>28</sup> Brantôme, "The Memoirs of Catherine De Medici," in *Memoirs*, p. 333.

<sup>29</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De' Medici*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>30</sup> Héritier, *Catherine de Medici*, p. 141.

<sup>31</sup> Medici, "Letter of December 4, 1560," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De' Medici*, p. 72.

<sup>33</sup> Medici, "Letter of December 6, 1560," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 70.

<sup>34</sup> Marguerite de Valois, "Letter I," in *Memoirs*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>35</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Medici, "Letter of December 27, 1561," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 78.

regent, the delicate religious situation in France might have fractured prematurely, and Catherine's children might have lost their chance at the throne.

Ultimately, Catherine wanted to restore peace to France, which religious divisions increasingly threatened. Catherine took a middle-ground approach to achieve this goal, hoping to compromise with and appease the factions. She immediately took administrative action after being appointed governor of the kingdom and gaining political authority, presiding over domestic and foreign policy.<sup>37</sup> Given the political climate, this was no easy feat, yet Catherine persevered to the best of her abilities. She was intensely involved in developing negotiations, edicts, and treaties for peace. She repeatedly attempted to create harmony between the Guises and Navarres, though her efforts were unsuccessful.<sup>38</sup> In 1560, during Francis's brief reign, Catherine issued the Edict of Amboise and the subsequent Edict of Romorantin, which allotted restricted tolerance to Protestants, appeasing the repressed Huguenots (French Protestants) who were being provoked by the Guises.<sup>39</sup> Despite attempts at reconciliation, France was on the brink of a religious war. In a final attempt at compromise, the Colloquy at Poissy was called in 1561. To Catherine's disappointment, the Colloquy failed due to disagreements over the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>40</sup> Protestantism continued to spread, and violent attacks between Catholics and Protestants became more frequent. The pressure was put on Catherine to take action. She then enforced the Edict of January in 1562, which allowed Huguenot worship in the countryside, angering Catholics.<sup>41</sup> The public was in such an outburst that Catherine was powerless to prevent the escalation of violence.<sup>42</sup> Despite her valiant efforts to induce harmony, the French Wars of Religion were inevitable and began quickly afterward with the Massacre at Vassy in 1562.

Even toward the end of her life, after the tragedy of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, Catherine continued to take on the role of peacemaker. In a letter written in 1572, Catherine asserted that "if anyone transgresses these orders, punish them by law."<sup>43</sup> Catherine continued to boldly confront those who opposed her authority, determined to do what was necessary to maintain order. Further evidence of her devotion to the kingdom of France and its well-being is evident in her travels to Nérac between 1578-9. Despite her old age, and her son Henry III's reign (who ruled following Charles IX's death in 1574), Catherine still traveled to negotiate with Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots.<sup>44</sup> In a letter written to her son, the king, Catherine wrote, "without regard for my age or the length of the journey...but simply because of my great desire to be a mother to all your subjects, I came to this part of the country to execute the edict."<sup>45</sup> Catherine extended her motherhood to include all of France and put herself at risk to continue her contributions to the kingdom and help her

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<sup>37</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De' Medici*, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup> Crawford, "Performance of Political Motherhood," p. 666.

<sup>39</sup> Wellman, "Catherine de' Medici," in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, pp. 238-9.

<sup>40</sup> Wellman, "Catherine de' Medici," in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 242.

<sup>41</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De' Medici*, p. 85.

<sup>42</sup> Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*, p. 52.

<sup>43</sup> Medici, "Letter of August 27, 1572," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> Medici, "Letters of May 30, 1574 and May 31, 1574," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 70; Chang and Kong, *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, pp. 93-99.

<sup>45</sup> Medici, "Letter of February 8 and 9, 1579," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 104.

son bring peace. She dedicated her life to ensuring the prosperity of France and her children. At the time of this letter, Catherine had already witnessed the death of two sons on the throne and the devastating destruction the religious wars brought to France. All the while, due to the restrictions of Salic Law, “she bore the responsibilities of the crown without enjoying its authority.”<sup>46</sup>

Although both Catholics and Protestants criticized Catherine’s conciliatory attitude at the time, looking back, one can see Catherine’s prioritization of politics over religion as a modern approach. In the wake of the Reformation, this was the administrative trend in Europe and one that continues today. However, religious passions were too fervent at the time to appreciate this ideology. Both sides wound up disappointed in and suspicious of the beleaguered Catherine. However, this does not diminish Catherine’s efforts to maintain peace through moderate rule. The Venetian ambassador to France in 1569, Giovanni Correro, addressed Catherine’s impossible position. “I will say that I know of no prince, however wise and valiant he may be, who would not have lost the fight if he found himself in the middle of such a war without the ability to discern friend from foe,” he wrote.<sup>47</sup> Through analyzing her actions within their proper context, Catherine can be credited with an admirable rule, equivalent, or perhaps superior, to what any trained king would have been capable of achieving.

Although Catherine de’ Medici was overall well-liked and conforming in her early years at the French court, kernels of distrust were planted that would flourish wildly throughout her life. Soon after Catherine arrived in France to marry Henry, her uncle, Pope Clement VII, died.<sup>48</sup> His death made the marriage arrangement a futile deal for France diplomatically, as the Pope would no longer be able to fulfill any of his promises. King Francis remarked: “The girl has been given to me stark naked.”<sup>49</sup> Now that her Medici connections were no longer of use, Catherine was in a precarious position. She was a foreign woman of non-royal blood in a new country with seemingly nothing to offer. Considering her husband’s preference for his mistress, Diane de Poitiers, and Catherine’s inability to get pregnant, it appeared that Catherine was disposable. She was possibly at risk of being divorced and sent back to Florence in favor of a new, more fruitful wife for Henry. It was said that being aware of her situation, Catherine offered to step aside, allowing Henry to remarry. Her selfless gesture so moved King Francis that he assured her she would not be forced to leave.<sup>50</sup> Despite the *mésalliance*, Catherine was there to stay. This first hiccup in Catherine’s political life in France foreshadowed a life of struggles as she took on more prominent leadership roles. For Catherine, gaining political power would parallel the development of an increasingly villainous reputation. Giovanni Michiel summarized this evolution succinctly in 1575: “In the beginning, as a foreigner and of Italian blood, she was hardly loved; at present, to tell the truth, she is hated.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Sutherland, “Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen,” p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> Correro, “Letter from Ambassador to France in 1569,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 131.

<sup>48</sup> Wellman, “Catherine de’ Medici,” In *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 230.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Knecht, *Catherine De’ Medici*, p. 28.

<sup>50</sup> Crawford, “Performance of Political Motherhood,” p. 643.

<sup>51</sup> Michiel, “Letter from Venetian Ambassador to France in 1575,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 133.

Catherine de' Medici's troubles with pregnancy had profound implications; if she and Henry could not have children, the future of the Valois dynasty was at risk. Henry had successfully impregnated one of his mistresses, Filippa Duci, four years into the marriage.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the attention and blame were placed on Catherine, who tried everything she could to increase her fertility. She refused to ride on a mule since they were sterile, used diviners and magicians, and even drank mule urine.<sup>53</sup> Her dedication indicates the intense humiliation she must have felt, in addition to personal loneliness and outside pressures from the court. Furthering her shame, Diane de Poitiers had to urge Henry to take Catherine to bed.<sup>54</sup> This emphasized her lack of physical beauty and her futility as a wife. A court physician finally discovered Henry had a deformity. After adjusting accordingly, Catherine had ten children in twelve years, seven of whom survived.<sup>55</sup> Catherine's long-lasting barren years were over, but her initial difficulties with pregnancy, and the lengths she went to get pregnant, were later used against her. For Catherine, motherhood would become the source of her power and security in France; however, it would also play a hand in its eventual destruction.

Catherine was not simply allotted power in the wake of Henry II's death. Law and custom alike prevented Catherine from gaining authority. The queen mother was forced to rely upon her established role as a self-sacrificing wife and mother to justify her political ambitions and legitimize her sovereignty.<sup>56</sup> In the aftermath of Henry's death, while Francis II was king, Catherine underwent an intense mourning period. She dramatically exceeded the mourning expectations of a widow, frequently seen crying over her lost love and even fainting.<sup>57</sup> For the rest of her life, Catherine was solely depicted wearing black, looking solemn in her widowhood.<sup>58</sup> Brantôme noted this in contrast to how "she dressed very richly and superbly"<sup>59</sup> while the king was alive. Catherine's iconography consistently associated her with motherly sacrifices and royal authority through remembrance of King Henry II. Her devotion to her children and her recently deceased husband was inextricably interwoven with her devotion to France.

Sixteenth-century France was a patriarchal society where women were dependent on and subject to men throughout each stage of their lives. Women were confined mainly to the private sphere, where they were expected to act as dutiful wives and mothers. Since men maintained authority in public and private spheres, a popular argument for male monarchy was that the state was analogous to the household, where women were subordinate.<sup>60</sup> Women who chose to step outside their gender

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<sup>52</sup> Wellman, "Catherine de' Medici," in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 230.

<sup>53</sup> Hérítier, *Catherine de Medici*, p. 43; Wellman, "Catherine de' Medici," in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 231.

<sup>54</sup> Hérítier, *Catherine de Medici*, p. 46.

<sup>55</sup> Hérítier, *Catherine de Medici*, p. 48.

<sup>56</sup> Crawford, "Performance of Political Motherhood," p. 644.

<sup>57</sup> Crawford, "Performance of Political Motherhood," p. 656.

<sup>58</sup> Clouet François, *Catherine de Medici*, Images, n.d, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.15678549>.

<sup>59</sup> Brantôme, "The Memoirs of Catherine De Medici," in *Memoirs*, p. 361.

<sup>60</sup> Merry E Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed, (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 292.

roles were therefore seen as threatening to the social order.<sup>61</sup> While married to Henry, Catherine acted within the expectations of her gender role, building up a person as a docile and obedient wife. However, when she fought to extend her role as queen mother to include the administrative aspect of regency, she began to receive backlash.

In contrast to her feminine displays of mourning and motherhood, Catherine acted promptly and fiercely to attain political dominance during the minority of her son, Charles IX. Shortly after the death of Francis II, Catherine wrote of her despair to her daughter Elizabeth de Valois: “And god took him from me... and left me with three little children, and in a completely divided kingdom”<sup>62</sup> Catherine’s fear, distress, and loneliness emanated from her words to her daughter, who was living in Spain at the time with her husband, Philip II. However, Catherine did not succumb to her grief. Instead, she used her only remaining prerogative to protect Charles: her position as queen mother. After negotiations with the King of Navarre, some of which could be viewed as manipulations, Catherine claimed he had “completely put himself in my hands and stripped himself of power and authority under my good pleasure.”<sup>63</sup> Catherine stressed that although the King of Navarre should have attained control of the regency, he undoubtedly handed that power over to her. Her seemingly excessive declarations of authority become logical in light of the intensifying resistance to Catherine’s sovereignty. Fearing challenges from the nobility and the Estates General, Catherine wrote to her cousin, Monsieur d’Estampes, in 1561, claiming they needed to work “for the establishment of my authority and to prevent the conspiracies and machinations that would move to hinder it.”<sup>64</sup> A few weeks later, she wrote to Limoges, her ambassador to Spain, about the fools trying to depose her and her suspicions that the plot may have been instigated by the King of Navarre himself. After telling Limoges of her negotiations, she divulged her ultimate success; she was to maintain absolute power in matters of the kingdom.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout her power struggles, Catherine’s ambition became clear. In her letter to d’Estampes, Catherine wrote of the Estates General, “they dispossess me of the government, leaving me the simple charge of feeding my children.”<sup>66</sup> She was evidently bitter at the thought of solely attaining *tutelle*. Mere motherhood was no longer enough for her and not enough to protect her children either. Catherine understood she was not undertaking an easy task; however, it was a responsibility she both desired and felt she deserved. She claimed she “would prefer them to take away my life along with my honor rather than make me beg.”<sup>67</sup> Catherine’s bold reactions against those who attempted to overthrow her were backed by her assertion that she was qualified for full regency through her political experience and her duty to her children. Although ambition is not inherently evil, it was seen as such when used by Catherine to transgress gender boundaries.

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<sup>61</sup> Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, p. 306.

<sup>62</sup> Medici, “Letter of December 7, 1560,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 72.

<sup>63</sup> Medici, “Letter of December 19, 1560,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> Medici, “Letter of March 11, 1561,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 76.

<sup>65</sup> Medici, “Letter of March 27, 1561,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, pp. 78-9.

<sup>66</sup> Medici, “Letter of March 11, 1561,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 76.

<sup>67</sup> Medici, “Letter of March 11, 1561,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 77.



As religious wars broke out across France, Catherine de' Medici's political role became increasingly important and was thus increasingly scrutinized. Her reputation became the subject of many attacks, mainly targeting her Italian heritage and gender. Italophobia was highly prevalent in sixteenth-century France, mainly due to France's increased reliance on Italy for money and an expanding Italian presence at court.<sup>68</sup> The xenophobic narrative regarding Italians became a unifying agent amongst different groups in France, including both Protestants and Catholics. Anti-Italianism, therefore, became a political tool aggressively wielded toward Catherine de' Medici, particularly in the wake of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, when Italophobia reached its zenith.<sup>69</sup> Italians were stereotyped as wicked and conniving, characteristics placed on Catherine. This was in spite of Catherine being only half Italian; her mother, Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne, was French.<sup>70</sup>

This racism combined with the misogyny that already plagued Catherine's reign. In addition to Salic Law and strict gender roles in France, discourses explicitly targeting women in power were popularly spread. One such polemic against women was *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, written by the famous Scottish reformer John Knox in 1558. Knox declared it "a thing most repugnant to nature, that women rule and govern over men," claiming women were "made to serve and obey man, not rule and command him."<sup>71</sup> Knox's polemic was written as a reaction against an abnormal wave of simultaneous female rulers in the sixteenth century. Women such as Queen Mary I and Queen Elizabeth I in England and Queen Mary I in Scotland ruled in their own right contemporaneously with Catherine de' Medici in France.<sup>72</sup> This belief that it was inherently abominable for women to be in power and that women were by nature incapable of governing was widely held. However, it should be noted that other European countries, like England and Scotland, did not prevent women from taking the throne as Salic Law did in France. Consequently, though objections to female rule were widespread, the intense objections to Catherine's rule in France were justified by law.

Assaults on Catherine's credibility, based on her gender and ancestry, began almost immediately following her official acquisition of power as regent for Charles IX. In Suriano's 1561 letter, he asserted, "it would be enough to say she is a woman: but I would like to add that she is also a foreigner; and what is more, that she is Florentine."<sup>73</sup> These xenophobic, highly gendered stereotypes could be used to defame Catherine without needing further evidence to support their connotations. Women were feeble and unintelligent, while Italians were manipulative and cruel schemers. Additionally, women were seen as physically weak and inclined to duplicity and were therefore highly associated with using poison as a means of killing. Catherine was no exception, and there was even a popular rumor that Catherine was the one who first introduced poison to France from Italy.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Henry Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 93.

<sup>69</sup> Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France*, p. 230.

<sup>70</sup> H ritier, *Catherine de Medici*, p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, ed. Edward Arber, (Southgate, London: University College, London, 1878), pp. 3-4.

<sup>72</sup> Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, p. 291.

<sup>73</sup> Suriano, "Letter from Ambassador in 1561," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 122.

<sup>74</sup> McIlvanna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 114.

Throughout her life, Catherine would be repeatedly accused of poisoning her enemies largely because she was an Italian woman, leading to her nickname, “Madame la Serpente.”<sup>75</sup> Basic, unalterable facets of Catherine’s life were typecast and misconstrued until, to the public, Catherine’s very being was villainized. Catherine’s reputation was being used as a weapon by men who repeatedly attempted to depose her, fearing she might set a precedent for female rule in France.

The ladies of Catherine’s court were also the target of unyielding libel that spread throughout France to discredit Catherine’s ability to rule effectively; if Catherine could not control her court, how could she control France? Scandalous tropes, such as cuckoldry, poisoning, illegitimate births, and incest, were recurring in France and were thus well-known to the public.<sup>76</sup> Out of applying such rumors and accusations to Catherine’s ladies, the legend of the “Flying Squadron” was born. This was Catherine’s supposed network of beautiful spies who would seduce men to achieve their goals.<sup>77</sup> In pamphlets circulating at the time, often written in verse, Catherine was charged with instigating many of the scandals of which her ladies were accused, further intertwining her reputation with that of her court. One such verse was regarding Madame de Sauve, who supposedly seduced Henry of Navarre, the husband of Catherine’s daughter Marguerite and Marguerite’s brother.<sup>78</sup> The verse claimed that Sauve was used to manipulate the two men for political means: “For the peace she was fucked. Catin led her totally naked to the king of Navarre, and with that made the war go away... Catin, you are fortunate to have a stable of whores.”<sup>79</sup> Catherine’s portrayal as a relentlessly ruthless schemer was further developing. In a similar situation, one of Catherine’s ladies, Isabelle de Limeuil, gave birth to an illegitimate child, supposedly fathered by the prince of Condé.<sup>80</sup> Once again, the news spread, placing blame on Catherine in rhyming couplets in 1564: “This noble maiden who was so lovely committed adultery and created a child, but they say the queen mother in this played Lucina and permitted this to profit from the prince.”<sup>81</sup> Despite evidence that Catherine genuinely supported and cared for her ladies and attempted to prevent the dissemination of scandal about her court, the legend of the “Flying Squadron” persisted, as did the reputation of Catherine as a master manipulator.

Although motherhood was Catherine’s gateway to govern, her relationship with her children was a frequent topic of gossip. As was the pattern with her life, narratives regarding Catherine’s style of motherhood were highly paradoxical. These conflicting portrayals were highlighted in her daughter Marguerite de Valois’s memoirs. Although Marguerite described her mother as devoted to her children and a prudent and wise political leader, she did not hesitate to expose her manipulations and schemes. In sharp contrast to her claims of her mother’s love, she also stated that if her mother “chanced to turn her eyes towards me I trembled, for fear that I had done something to displease her.”<sup>82</sup> Marguerite also fell victim to her mother’s political schemes, being set up in a marriage to Henry of Navarre in

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<sup>75</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 114.

<sup>76</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De’ Medici*, p. 235.

<sup>78</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 15.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 17.

<sup>80</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 66.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 66.

<sup>82</sup> Marguerite de Valois, “Letter II,” in *Memoirs*, p. 25.

an attempt to bring peace between religious factions. Marguerite claimed, “I had no will but her own.”<sup>83</sup> While she lacked agency, she seemed to want to please her mother. Whether this obedience was out of respect, fear, or for the good of France is unclear. Catherine’s political machinations may have maligned her at times, even with her children, but they were the unfortunate inevitabilities of being a prudent ruler in the sixteenth century.

From an objective standpoint, Catherine appeared to have protected her children while realistically preparing them for life as royals. In a letter to Limoges in 1561, Catherine discussed her children’s merit, hoping to gain the favor of the King of Spain. She claimed, in addition to her daughter Elizabeth who married Philip II, “I also have other children who would follow in the footsteps of this same devotion, and who are the proper instruments.”<sup>84</sup> Additionally, she asked Limoges to “communicate all of this to the queen my daughter, and instruct her well and warn her about what she needs to do for her part.”<sup>85</sup> Had this message been conveyed by a king, it would not have been out of the ordinary; however, the political maneuvering of children was not considered motherly. Alternatively, Catherine seemed to have faith in her children, including her daughters and allotted them political responsibilities. Nevertheless, criticisms of Catherine’s parenting persisted in a varied fashion. The prince of Condé, for example, wrote two pamphlets in 1562 that alleged Catherine had failed to protect her children.<sup>86</sup> Stories of Catherine controlling and manipulating her children also publicly circulated, likely stemming from Charles IX’s decree upon reaching his majority that he should be considered an adult in every regard except “toward the queen his mother, to whom he reserves the power to command.”<sup>87</sup> Catherine was depicted as cunning and ruthless, a portrayal that would only advance after the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre.

The St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre is a notorious example of the atrocities that can occur due to religious fanaticism. The massacre resulted in the gruesome death of thousands of unarmed Protestants in Paris and beyond by Catholics during the French Wars of Religion. Although ending in tragedy, the buildup to the massacre was rooted in an attempt at peace by Catherine de’ Medici. Hoping to reconcile the relentless religious tensions and violence, Catherine decided to marry her daughter, Marguerite, to the Protestant Henry of Navarre.<sup>88</sup> Protestants gathered in Paris for the wedding ceremony on August 18, 1572, much to the dismay of Parisian Catholics.<sup>89</sup> Just four days later, the massacre was spurred into motion when an assassination attempt was made on the Huguenot leader, Admiral Coligny, after leaving a meeting with Charles IX.<sup>90</sup> Although Coligny solely sustained injuries to his arm and hand, Huguenot leaders blamed the Guises for the attempt on Coligny’s life. False rumors spread that the Huguenots were amassing an uprising, and in retaliation, the Guises went

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<sup>83</sup> Marguerite de Valois, “Letter IV,” in *Memoirs*, p. 33.

<sup>84</sup> Suriano, “Letter from April 21, 1561,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 83.

<sup>85</sup> Suriano, “Letter from April 21, 1561,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 83.

<sup>86</sup> Crawford, “Perilous Performances,” p. 52.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Crawford, “Perilous Performances,” p. 54.

<sup>88</sup> Wellman, “Catherine de’ Medici,” in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 249.

<sup>89</sup> Wellman, “Catherine de’ Medici,” in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 250.

<sup>90</sup> Barbara B. Diefendorf, *The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre: A Brief History with Documents*, (Boston, Mass: Bedford, St. Martin’s, 2009), p. 19.

back to finish the job on the Admiral in a public and violent manner.<sup>91</sup> Soon, in a mob-like frenzy, Catholic citizens began slaughtering Protestants. One first-hand account of the massacre described how “the streets were covered with dead bodies, the river tinted with blood.”<sup>92</sup> Friends and neighbors killed one another in a hysterical manner, beginning in Paris and eventually spreading to other provinces as well. In addition to being a black mark on the history of religion and politics in France, the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre was also a significant turning point in the development of Catherine de’ Medici’s reputation.

Much of the propaganda that spread in the wake of the massacre used Catherine as a scapegoat, accusing her of orchestrating the entire event. Even those who blamed King Charles IX were blaming Catherine, as they believed Charles to be under Catherine’s thumb. Protestant accounts of the atrocity that attested Catherine had planned the massacre were rapidly translated to include Latin, French, English, and German.<sup>93</sup> This allowed the rumors to spread amongst a vast audience. Michiel’s 1572 report went a step further, claiming that the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre was premeditated and that it was Catherine who “conceived it, plotted it, and put it into execution, with no help from anyone but her son.”<sup>94</sup> This implied that the marriage itself was a guise, merely a part of Catherine’s larger scheme to get Protestant leaders to Paris to have them killed. Although it can be argued that Catherine largely miscalculated and underestimated the situation leading up to the massacre, there is no evidence that she acted alone or preemptively.<sup>95</sup> The notion that Catherine was solely responsible for a plot that resulted in the death of thousands immutably changed her reputation. According to Michiel, this cruel political method was foreign; “they blame this on the queen, saying that she is an Italian from Florence, and Medici at that, and therefore she has tyrant’s blood in her veins.”<sup>96</sup> Xenophobia was once again used as justification for accusations charged against Catherine. With the broad dissemination of reports depicting gruesome violence on account of Catherine’s manipulations by Protestants and Catholics alike, the queen mother was in a highly vulnerable position.

With her villainous reputation firmly established, targeted attacks on Catherine became increasingly widespread and profoundly dramatic. One of the most famous polemics against Catherine was the *Marvelous Discourse on the Life, Actions, and Deportment of Catherine de Médicis, Queen Mother*, written in 1576. Although the work was anonymous, it is primarily attributed to the French Protestant Henri Estienne.<sup>97</sup> The work had at least ten versions within a year of publication and was translated into

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<sup>91</sup> Diefendorf, *The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre*, p. 20.

<sup>92</sup> De La Fosse, “Reactions in Paris to the Peace of Saint-Germain, 1570-1571,” in *The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre*, ed. Diefendorf, p. 102.

<sup>93</sup> Hotman, “A True and Plain Report of the Furious Outrages of France, 1573,” in *The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre*, ed. Diefendorf, pp. 82-87.

<sup>94</sup> Michiel, “Report to the Venetian Senate on the Wounding of the Admiral, 1572,” in *The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre*, ed. Diefendorf, p. 92.

<sup>95</sup> Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*, p. 84.

<sup>96</sup> Michiel, “Report to the Venetian Senate on the Wounding of the Admiral, 1572,” in *The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre*, ed. Diefendorf, p. 96.

<sup>97</sup> Chang and Kong, *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, p. 43.

multiple languages, suggesting a planned publishing strategy.<sup>98</sup> The author hoped to rally moderate Catholics and Protestants together under the unifying themes of xenophobia and misogyny.<sup>99</sup> Like other contemporary polemics about Catherine, the *Marvelous Discourse* focused on the queen mother's Florentine origins and gender; however, it also launched wild, unfounded allegations that portrayed Catherine as a malicious monster. Immediately, the discourse made a point to depict Catherine as a foreign "other" who was inherently corrupt due to her low stock and Medici origins.<sup>100</sup> It proclaimed: "that the country, race, and actions of the closest relatives of our queen force us to anticipate terrible things from her.... it was said that the stars clearly threatened the place where she would live."<sup>101</sup> Catherine's birth, due to astrology and her heritage, doomed her from the start.

The *Marvelous Discourse* also accused Catherine of countless poisonings, likening her to a witch. Amongst many others, the poisonings included Henry's older brother, as a means to get closer to the throne, and the Queen of Navarre, so she would not stop Catherine from carrying out the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre.<sup>102</sup> It also charged Catherine with being an atheist, spending excessively, having inappropriate sexual relationships, and corrupting her children.<sup>103</sup> Ultimately, the *Marvelous Discourse* argued Catherine was bringing ruin to France. As regent, Catherine had to constantly face doubts about the legitimacy and adequacy of her rule due to her gender. This discourse played upon the widespread misogyny in France and compared Catherine to Brunhilda, a notorious queen who ruled over the Franks in the seventh century.<sup>104</sup> Their similarities were discussed, as they were both foreign and accused of poisonings, manipulations, and ultimately failing France.<sup>105</sup> The author provided historical evidence of the horrors and ruin that would fall upon the kingdom under the rule of a woman, particularly one of Medici origin. In a final, grand flourish, the paper depicted Brunhilda's deserving death: she was dragged through the streets on the end of a horse and torn to pieces. Since Catherine was determined to have been worse than Brunhilda throughout the discourse, the audience was urged to consider what a proper punishment for Catherine would be, and nobles were called to defy her dominance.<sup>106</sup>

One of the main adjectives ascribed to Catherine, both presently and throughout history, is "Machiavellian." The *Marvelous Discourse*, for example, attributed Catherine's unscrupulous tactics and her uncontrollable lust for power to "her Machiavelli."<sup>107</sup> Today, the term means cunning and ruthless, particularly regarding politics. Given the reputation Catherine had established, this characterization

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<sup>98</sup> Robert M Kingdon, *Myths About the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres, 1572-1576* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 201.

<sup>99</sup> Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France*, p. 121.

<sup>100</sup> "Marvelous Discourse on the Life, Actions, and Deportment of Catherine de Médicis, Queen Mother (1576)," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 143.

<sup>101</sup> "Marvelous Discourse" in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 149.

<sup>102</sup> "Marvelous Discourse" in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, pp. 161, 173.

<sup>103</sup> "Marvelous Discourse" in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, pp. 153, 159, 172.

<sup>104</sup> Chang and Kong, *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, p. 48.

<sup>105</sup> "Marvelous Discourse" in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, pp. 172-3.

<sup>106</sup> "Marvelous Discourse" in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 179.

<sup>107</sup> "Marvelous Discourse" in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 168.

makes sense; however, “Machiavellian” did not always have such a negative connotation. In fact, before the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, particularly in France, Niccolò Machiavelli and his works were revered.<sup>108</sup> It was not until Innocent Gentillet wrote his *Discours contre Machiavel* in 1576 that Machiavelli began to take on his modern interpretation.<sup>109</sup> Machiavelli’s reputation, therefore, declined in conjunction with Catherine’s, exemplified by the fact that *The Prince* was dedicated to Catherine’s father, Lorenzo.<sup>110</sup> The Medici, particularly Catherine, became inherently seen as Machiavellian. Rumors were circulating that Catherine de’ Medici, like other Italians, was using the blood of slaughtered children.<sup>111</sup> This was most likely due to her likening to a witch in discourses and her history of using magic and diviners to get pregnant.<sup>112</sup> The use of universally acknowledged stereotypes regarding gender and xenophobia allowed the seemingly outrageous charges against Catherine to become more believable. Those who spread libel about Catherine knew how to effectively target her reputation until her name became synonymous with the wicked Machiavellian legacy.

However, to firmly establish Catherine’s Machiavellian reputation, these accusations needed to spread and reach the appropriate audiences. Originating from elite men who hoped to dispossess Catherine, libel was disseminated systematically throughout Paris and beyond, irrevocably damaging her reputation. Much of the disseminating scandal and rumors stemmed from parlementaires, who were the most literate group in society and at the hub of information and news in Paris.<sup>113</sup> These men wrote verses in Latin, often sacrificing facts to make their prose more lyrical and impressive to others.<sup>114</sup> Parlementaires spread scandalous libel against Catherine and other women of her court to ease male gender anxieties, which arose when women diverged from their typical gender roles. When a woman’s power or actions became uncomfortable for men, they could simply target their reputation without evidence. Michiel wrote that Catherine conducted herself “not as a woman, but rather as a most courageous man.”<sup>115</sup> Catherine was taking on a man’s role; according to some, she was doing so rather well. It was not her failures but rather her controversial rise to power that prompted attacks on Catherine’s reputation.

In sixteenth-century France, scandalous information took on a variety of formats, easing its propagation and appealing to wider audiences. Although the dissemination of scandal had a long history and was not isolated to Catherine and her ladies, Brantôme acknowledged that “during his [Charles IX’s] reign, the great libellers began however to come into fashion.”<sup>116</sup> This libel took on two main modes: text in prose, such as the *Marvelous Discourse*, and satirical works often written in verse,

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<sup>108</sup> Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France*, p. 130.

<sup>109</sup> Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France*, p. 130.

<sup>110</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1995), p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France*, p. 81.

<sup>112</sup> Medici, “Letter of February 8 and 9, 1579,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 104.

<sup>113</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 75.

<sup>114</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 65.

<sup>115</sup> Michiel, “Letter from Venetian Ambassador to France, after Returning from His Legation in 1561,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 115.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 81.

known as pasquils or pasquins.<sup>117</sup> The parlementaires wrote in Latin, a language not accessible to most of the population.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, to adequately disseminate the rumors, these restrictive works were translated into more accessible forms, such as graffiti, songs, woodcuts, cheap translated printouts, public postings, theater, and mere oral gossip.<sup>119</sup> Aiding in the production and distribution of satirical works was Pierre de L'Estoile, a contemporary Parisian diarist who would collect, copy, memorize, and spread scandalous political writings.<sup>120</sup> All of this was done in an almost orchestrated, circulating pattern through Paris, effectively spreading libel in entertaining and obtainable manners from the courts to the public.<sup>121</sup> Paris was a crowded city with an oral culture accustomed to scandal; therefore, whether factual or not, rumors quickly spread. Despite the gossip's malevolent origins, in the end, Catherine's reputation propagated mainly for entertainment purposes.

Catherine de' Medici passed away on January 5, 1589,<sup>122</sup> after a lifetime of fighting for her family, France, and herself. Catherine ceaselessly faced the tumultuous adversity that seemed to follow in her very shadow until the day she died. After the death of Charles IX, Catherine wrote to her son Henry, who was acting as the king of Poland at the time, to ask him to return as the king of France. She spoke of her despair at having lost so many children and told Henry, "for if it had been you whom I had just lost, I would have myself buried alive with you."<sup>123</sup> Perhaps, then, it was for the best that Catherine passed when she did. Her son Henry III would be assassinated within a year,<sup>124</sup> ending the Valois dynasty and, with it, all that for which Catherine worked so hard. The successor to the throne was then Henry of Navarre, becoming Henry IV. Although he and Catherine did not see eye to eye, Henry IV came to Catherine's defense after her death:

But I ask you, what could the poor woman do... Wasn't it necessary that she play many roles to fool both while protecting her children, who reigned one after the other, thanks to the guidance of such a shrewd woman? I am surprised that she never did worse!<sup>125</sup>

Henry IV pointed out Catherine's impossible position. Despite her constant opposition, she did her best to keep the peace: an impossible task for any ruler, as seen through the religious wars that enveloped most of Europe at the time. Correro noted that "all the resolutions of peace or war that

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<sup>117</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 62.

<sup>118</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 61.

<sup>119</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*.

<sup>120</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 70.

<sup>121</sup> McIlvenna, *Scandal and Reputation*, p. 74.

<sup>122</sup> Mocenigo, "Venetian Ambassador in France, Letter of January 6, 1589," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 137.

<sup>123</sup> Medici, "Letter of March 31, 1574," in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 95.

<sup>124</sup> William B. Robison, "Bad Girl, Bad Mother, Bad Queen: Catherine de' Medici in Contemporary Fiction, Film, and History" in *Bad Girls and Transgressive Women in Popular Television, Fiction, and Film*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 165.

<sup>125</sup> Quoted in Wellman, "Catherine de' Medici," In *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 273.

did not satisfy the nation are blamed on the queen.”<sup>126</sup> As a result of France’s inability to embrace foreign female rule, Catherine became a scapegoat for any troubles the kingdom faced.

Despite the unimaginable level of authority she maintained as a female ruler and her valiant efforts, as Catherine said, at “governing myself in such a way that God and the world will have occasion to be content with me,”<sup>127</sup> France embraced her villainization. Ultimately, Catherine died misjudged and lonely, and her body was treated accordingly. She was temporarily buried in Blois, but due to improper embalming, had to be buried in an unmarked grave for twenty-one years.<sup>128</sup> In his 1963 biography of Catherine, Hérítier described the tragedy: “Madame Catherine had slept for twenty-one years, almost forgotten, in the soil of France; that soil which she had so dearly loved, served, and defended; that soil which she had saved.”<sup>129</sup> In tirelessly taking on the role of protector for her children and France, Catherine was left without anybody to defend her. In 1569, Giovanni Correro wrote, “Nevertheless, she is loved by nobody, or if she is, it is only from fear.”<sup>130</sup> In addition to being devastating for Catherine, the loss of so many of her loved ones may have also played a role in the development of her reputation, as nobody was left to fight for her honor. It seemed as if the very same kingdom she had dedicated her life to had turned against her.

Towards the end of one of his letters written in 1575, Michiel said of Catherine: “it is as if she believes she will never die,”<sup>131</sup> and this rhetorical remark came to fruition in many ways. Catherine’s legacy, as unfairly inaccurate as it may be, stands formidable. Unfounded rumors surrounding Catherine de’ Medici weaseled their way through time and implanted themselves as historical fact. The myths encapsulating Catherine were initially hinged on undermining her dominance, though at present, her reputation in popular culture has been reduced to the villainous character of the “Serpent Queen.” Her legend has become increasingly morphed and ignorant, disintegrating any remaining kernels of truth regarding her successes as a political leader and a mother. The “Black Legend” has been perpetuated through fiction and nonfiction for five centuries,<sup>132</sup> reaching a broad audience as the libel once did during its initial dissemination in Paris. Like her early years as a pawn for the Medici family, Catherine’s fate lies in the hands of others. Contemporaries and historians alike rewrote her history, turning Catherine into a wicked monster while ignoring her true identity.

Catherine’s paradoxical legacy is summarized well in verses reminiscent of an epitaph written by L’Estoile:

The queen who lies here was a devil and an angel,  
Full of blame and full of praise...

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<sup>126</sup> Correro, “Letter from Ambassador to France in 1569,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 131.

<sup>127</sup> Medici, “Letter of December 7, 1560,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 71.

<sup>128</sup> Knecht, *Catherine De’ Medici*, p. 269.

<sup>129</sup> Hérítier, *Catherine de Medici*, p. 469.

<sup>130</sup> Correro, “Letter from Ambassador to France in 1569,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 131.

<sup>131</sup> Lippomano, “Venetian Ambassador in France in 1577,” in *Portraits of the Queen Mother*, ed. Chang and Kong, p. 136.

<sup>132</sup> Robison, “Bad Girl, Bad Mother, Bad Queen,” p. 159.



...She bore three kings and five civil wars,  
 Had chateaux built and towns destroyed,  
 Made many good laws and bad edicts.  
 Salute her passing, heaven and hell.<sup>133</sup>

Even amongst her critics, the disparity is evidence of the lack of credibility behind the myths. Catherine was charged with being too feminine and weak while also said to have the ambition of a king. She was timid and cowardly, yet a Machiavellian mastermind. Ultimately, Catherine's truth became muddled by her array of conflicting characterizations. Basing their hatred on misogyny and anti-Italianism, libel spread, turning Catherine's reputation into a weapon. The persistence of Catherine's legacy can be attributed to present-day society's similarities. The tragic power an unfounded remark can have on a woman's reputation and, on the other hand, the lack of belief in a woman's word and her capabilities, as well as looking upon foreigners as evil, are pretty familiar narratives. By looking at the development of Catherine's reputation, one can comprehend the sad reality that it is not uncommon for past lies to become today's history. Catherine should be revered for her sacrifices, motherhood, and attempts for peace; those who continue to propagate her false legacy as a "Serpent Queen" perpetuate the stigmas we should instead be dismantling.

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<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Wellman, "Catherine de' Medici," in *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*, p. 225.

## An Analysis of Saint Cuthbert and His Relics

*Eliciana Jensen*<sup>1</sup>

Saint Cuthbert is one of the most venerated English saints, whose relics and remains are currently housed at Durham Cathedral, a highly visited pilgrimage site for many believers and scholars. Some historians see Cuthbert as having two distinct individual lives. One was during his years when he was alive and a devout holy man in the seventh century CE, and the other in his afterlife. This analysis focuses on his second life as a saint and how his remains and relics were valuable to the monks of Lindisfarne. His relics were also reminiscent of the man behind the saint; many of his treasures were personal items he carried with him when he was alive. Relics were holy items that were commonly housed in reliquaries. They could be personal items, remains of a holy person, items with bodily fluids, or different personal gospels and books. Holy items could vary, but they had to be associated with a saint or other religious figures.<sup>2</sup> Lay people in the Medieval era often revered relics because of the holiness they represented. They saw them in close relation to talismans.<sup>3</sup> However, relics were also highly valued by different cult leaders, cathedrals, and other church institutions. This was because it legitimized any shrine sites in patronage to a particular saint or religious figure.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the community gave relics their meaning and importance. Many relics were ordinary objects assigned holiness because of their association with a godly figure.

Cuthbert died in 687, and eleven years later, his body was removed from its burial place in Lindisfarne to be examined by the monks for evidence of sainthood. His remains appeared to be undecayed, which they believed was a sign of godliness.<sup>5</sup> The incorruptible remains of a saint were just as crucial as the tomb site and the relics of said saint. This was because all these elements displayed the embodiment of the saint in the afterlife and holiness.<sup>6</sup> Cuthbert's incorruptible body demonstrated his divinity and showed the monks of Lindisfarne that he was still present in their community. His body then experienced centuries of historical conflict and accumulated many holy relics until the end of its journey at Durham cathedral. The monks of Lindisfarne preserved Cuthbert's relics because they influenced the local religious community. This impact involved many different miracles, which

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<sup>2</sup> Hahn, Cynthia. "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?" *Numen* 57, no. 3/4 (2010): p. 286 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20789594>.

<sup>3</sup> Vauchez, André. *Sainthood in The Later Middle Ages*, Great Britain, Cambridge University Press, 1997. p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Peter. *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Backhouse, Janet. *The Lindisfarne Gospels / Janet Backhouse*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1981. p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Woodward, Kenneth L. *Making Saints, How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint. Who Doesn't, and Why*. New York, N.Y: Simon and Schuster. p. 59.

resulted in the creation of a great new cathedral in Durham, which became a center for religious pilgrimage.

It is to be noted that the cult of saints changed over time and developed into one that resembles the modern-day process of canonization. This is also indicative of the globalization of saints and their control by the Catholic papal authority. For instance, specific rules were developed over time for the canonization of a saint. When regulated by the Church, the canonization process consisted of merits, reputation, and remains. The use of merits stood as a way to validate miracles performed by the saint in life and their remains in the afterlife.<sup>7</sup> These remains were often physical remnants or objects classified as relics. The next necessary thing to the canonization process was this emphasis on the reputation of holiness.<sup>8</sup> This was based on the personal history of the saint before their death; it analyzed if they were a devout member of the faith and purely embodied holiness. However, in the early Middle Ages, saintly cults were particular to the region and not controlled by a common religious institution. The regulation of saints by papal decree came later in the thirteenth century.<sup>9</sup> This assertion of control by the Catholic Church came from a need to assert papal authority over Christendom.<sup>10</sup> By incorporating the cult of saints, the Church managed to enhance its power in the communities developed around saintly figures. However, this aspect of religion was an essential part of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. The localized importance of saints spread the faith widely through the populace.<sup>11</sup> During the time of Cuthbert, he achieved saintliness through popular acclamation of the community around his tomb. It is to be noted that sainthood was usually declared through the authority of an acting bishop of the area.<sup>12</sup> The community and different religious figures, such as monks, recognized the signs of godliness, such as devotion to God, miracles, and in Cuthbert's case, the incorruptible remains. The community requested the local bishop to recognize someone as a saint.<sup>13</sup> Based on his history of renowned godliness and the hope of creating a haven for pilgrims, the monks of Lindisfarne recognized him and brought his case forward to the local bishop after Cuthbert's death.

To properly know St. Cuthbert, we must understand his life as a hermit, monk, and bishop. In this article, I use a combination of archaeological sources from C. F. Battiscombe's work *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert* and a contextual source from the seventh century, the Venerable Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert*. Cuthbert was from the northern region of England known as Northumbria. He ventured down a religious path at an early age and moved through different religious ranks. He started as a monk, and toward the end of his life, he became the Bishop of Lindisfarne.<sup>14</sup> In his early career as a holy man, Cuthbert traveled throughout Northumbria on missionary work and preached the word of

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<sup>7</sup> Vauchez. "The Process of Canonization (c.1200 tp c.1270)." p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> Woodward. "Saints, Their Cults, and Canonization." p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Vauchez. "The Process of Canonization (c.1200 tp c.1270)." p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Woodward. "Saints, Their Cults, and Canonization." p. 66.

<sup>11</sup> USCCB. "Saints." 2021. <https://www.usccb.org/offices/public-affairs/saints>.

<sup>12</sup> USCCB. "Saints."

<sup>13</sup> USCCB. "Saints."

<sup>14</sup> Backhouse. "Lindisfarne and St. Cuthbert." p. 7.

God.<sup>15</sup> This is where many of the relics I will discuss later in this article came into his possession. During his travels, there were reports of different miracles that he performed. The miracle work he conducted varied from healing people, witnessing angels, and banishing winds and animals. Many of St. Cuthbert's miracles were recorded in the Venerable Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert*. This is the main primary source I utilize to analyze the miracles of Cuthbert both in his life and afterlife. The Venerable Bede was a monk in the monastery of Jarrow in Northumbria.<sup>16</sup> His work, *Life of St Cuthbert*, was written in approximately 721.<sup>17</sup> He based his writings on an earlier collection of work written anonymously in the late seventh century. According to the prologue of *Life of St Cuthbert*, the monks of Lindisfarne had requested Bede to compose an account of Cuthbert's life and remark on his miracles.<sup>18</sup> In Cuthbert's lifetime, the alluring nature of living as a hermit called to him, and he spent many years on Farne island alone, sometimes entertaining monks who would come and visit him.<sup>19</sup> Cuthbert was a devout holy man who often performed miracles, saw visions, and predicted his death.

One of the miracles he performed while alive was called the "Uncooked Goose."<sup>20</sup> Described in Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert*, it was supposed to explain the importance of obedience when following the word of God. Cuthbert told some visiting monks to cook and eat a goose to have a safe trip home by sea, but they disobeyed and did not eat it. They then suffered seven days of rough seas, only to come back and eat the goose, after which the sea calmed down enough for them to venture home.<sup>21</sup> The nature of this miracle was unusual. We assume miracles were about healing different ailments, and while some of Cuthbert's earlier miracles had healing elements, this one did not. It is to be noted that what made the "Uncooked Goose" strange was the way it implied that Cuthbert's words were the will of God. The defiance of the monks caused them to waste time at sea. It taught them that they should not deny a well-intentioned gift of food, even when they did not feel they needed it. On the other hand, this miracle did reveal an important fact about Cuthbert: he emphasized the importance of following God's will, even in the most absurd circumstances.

Before his death, Cuthbert predicted that his body would become a beacon for religious pilgrims who would venerate him as a saint. Even before his death, the monks saw his importance and took his prediction to heart, knowing he would attract people to their cathedral. He requested a simple tomb on Farne Island, where he spent the last years of his life as a hermit; however, the monks convinced him to be buried at Lindisfarne.<sup>22</sup> Lindisfarne was located on Holy Island, one of the many islands off the English Coast, and served as a monastery for many monks. The Farne Island, where

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<sup>15</sup> Mariner, Dominic. *St Cuthbert, His Life and Cult in Medieval Durham*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> DeGregorio, Scott. "The Venerable Bede on Prayer and Contemplation." *Traditio*, vol 54, 1999. p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Bede, and Marit Ronen. "The Pose Life of Cuthbert (ca.721)." *Medieval Disability Sourcebook*, Punctuation Books, 2020. p. 190.

<sup>18</sup> Bede. *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, trans. Bertram Colgrave, New York: Greenwood Press, 1969. p. 143.

<sup>19</sup> Backhouse. "Lindisfarne and St. Cuthbert." p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Backhouse. "Lindisfarne and St. Cuthbert." p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Bede. "The Life and Miracles of St. Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne." p. 721. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/bede-cuthbert.asp>.

<sup>22</sup> Backhouse. "Lindisfarne and St. Cuthbert." p. 10.

Cuthbert secluded himself as a hermit, was close to Lindisfarne.<sup>23</sup> Naturally, the monks wanted him buried at Lindisfarne to make a shrine dedicated to the holiness that he presented in life. Having Cuthbert's tomb in Lindisfarne would increase the number of pilgrims visiting the holy site. This would also keep Cuthbert and his treasures close and aid the monks in preserving him and his items from danger.

In life and death, Cuthbert was acknowledged as a saint by his followers, as evident through the care his relics received and the impact he had on the people in Northumbria. The monks opened his tomb approximately eleven years after his death to observe his body.<sup>24</sup> They opened his tomb to remove his bones and create an appropriate shrine for them in the monastery.<sup>25</sup> However, they found his body miraculously undecayed and with the appearance of one merely sleeping. An illustration from the Venerable Bede's *Life of Saint Cuthbert* depicted the monks opening his tomb for the first time to observe his body (Figure 1).<sup>26</sup> (It is important to remember that Bede's *Life of Saint Cuthbert* was produced in 721, approximately thirty-four years after the death of Cuthbert.)<sup>27</sup> The illustration showed the monks rehousing the miracle of an incorruptible body, which meant, as I stated earlier, that Cuthbert's presence of holiness stayed with his remains. Throughout history, Cuthbert's coffin was opened approximately three times. The first time was in 698, then in 1104, and then finally in 1827. His newly-found sainthood attracted pilgrims to his tomb soon after the miraculous finding. His prediction that his body would be a haven for the downtrodden and destitute became true, and his body was quickly reported to perform miracles for the sick. The miracles his body performed were different from the miracles he had done in his life. The post-mortem miracles centered around healing people of illnesses and curing cases of demonic possession. The importance of the miracles being centered around his tomb was that his shrine site and relics were the embodiment of his holiness after death. The Venerable Bede recorded these miracles; the handful of instances recorded in this work is centered around Cuthbert's original shrine and tomb at Lindisfarne before the monks fled from Viking raids.

The notable miracles at the tomb of Cuthbert centered around healing monks and young members of the community. One of the post-mortem miracles performed by Cuthbert involved a possessed child. Bede tells the story of the boy, who was "vexed by a most cruel demon, so that he had completely lost his reason, and cried out, howled and tried to tear in pieces with his teeth both his own limbs and whatever he could reach."<sup>28</sup> The child was showing violent signs of harm toward himself and others. Though the exact date of this event is unknown, it likely happened during the seventh century, near the time of Cuthbert's death, given how the boy was healed. Bede explained that the afflicted child was healed through the consumption of dirt soaked in the holy water used to wash

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<sup>23</sup> Mariner. "Cuthbert and Lindisfarne." p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, Michelle. *The Lindisfarne Gospels : Society, Spirituality and the Scribe*. University of Toronto Press, 2003. p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Mariner. "Cuthbert and Lindisfarne." p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> "Monks Observe St.Cuthbert", (721), p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> McMullen, A. Joseph. "Rewriting the Ecclesiastical Landscape of Early Medieval Northumbria in the Lives of Cuthbert." *Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge University Press, 2014. p. 57.

<sup>28</sup> Bede. *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, trans. Bertram Colgrave. p. 289.

the corpse of Cuthbert.<sup>29</sup> In Bede's account, the priest spiritually instructed to take the water-soaked dirt to the boy to cure him. The presence of Cuthbert's holiness was in the water that was used to wash his corpse. Cuthbert's healing power was one of the attractive things about his relics that made him a venerated saint in that region. As recorded by Bede, in Cuthbert's life and afterlife, he cured the laity and people who devoted their lives to God. For instance, in Bede's account, there were eight accounts of him healing men, women, children, and other clergy members when he was alive.<sup>30</sup> In the afterlife, Bede reported three healing stories in his *Life of St Cuthbert*.<sup>31</sup> The miracles provided evidence of faith and God's grace through his remains and brought community members and pilgrims to his cult sites.

In the late 700s and 800s, there was an unpredictable surge of Viking raids on Northumbria. The raids targeted different monasteries and cathedrals. On June 8th, 793, Viking invaders attacked the Lindisfarne monastery.<sup>32</sup> These were the first events of the Viking Age and the catalyst for the monks of Lindisfarne's flight with Saint Cuthbert and his treasures. His relics were considered precious because of the miracles associated with them and the value the local community held of Cuthbert as a religious figure. The preservation of his relics and the gospels from this initial threat saved them for the future and inspired scholars from multiple disciplines to produce studies of them. These studies focused on the archaeological research published about his relics, including his reliquary, the pectoral cross, and other relics collected in the nineteenth century. The care taken by these monks in protecting the relics of Cuthbert aided them in ensuring that these treasures withstood the test of time.

The monks' hard work and travels ended when they found a suitable place to stop. The community surrounding Cuthbert took refuge in an old Roman camp located a couple of miles north of present-day Durham.<sup>33</sup> They resided there until 995, when they left due to Viking activity nearby. After traveling for a couple of months, they arrived at Durham to lay Cuthbert to rest and create an altar for pilgrims to honor the saint.<sup>34</sup> Cuthbert and his miraculous treasures stayed at Durham Cathedral and are still there today. During the rise of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century, the saint's relics were moved briefly, illustrated by Bede's work displaying how Cuthbert's relics were transported (Figure 2).<sup>35</sup> During the Norman conquest of England, the Normans saw the city of Durham as a stronghold to take over the region of Northumbria.<sup>36</sup> Due to the air of conflict between the Normans and the Northumbrians, the community of St. Cuthbert and Bishop Ethelwine thought they needed to flee from the cathedral and seek refuge in Lindisfarne. By leaving Durham at this time, the community sought to show neutrality in the conflict between the Northumbrians and the

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<sup>29</sup> Bede. *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, trans. Bertram Colgrave. p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> Bede. *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, trans. Bertram Colgrave. pp. 149-154.

<sup>31</sup> Bede. *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, trans. Bertram Colgrave. pp. 149-154.

<sup>32</sup> Backhouse. "The Later History of the Manuscript." p. 87.

<sup>33</sup> Backhouse. "The Later History..." p. 87.

<sup>34</sup> Backhouse. "The Later History..." p. 87.

<sup>35</sup> "Relics of Saint Cuthbert being carried back across.." (1069), p.88.

<sup>36</sup> Arid, M. William. *St Cuthbert and The Normans, The Church of Durham, 1071-1153*, Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998. p. 67.

Normans.<sup>37</sup> This image illustrated how the relics were carried to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne during the flight from William the Conqueror.<sup>38</sup> In roughly 1069, the last Saxon Bishop Ethelwine moved Cuthbert back to Lindisfarne due to fear of the Norman ruler.<sup>39</sup> The story of Cuthbert's community's voyage to escape foreign aggression spread throughout Northumbria. The map shows that their travels between Lindisfarne, also known as Holy Island, and Durham covered a centralized region in Northumbria (Map 1). The journey of his relics started at the Lindisfarne monastery and ended at the Durham Cathedral. During the late eleventh century, Cuthbert's relics were considered important and valuable to the Durham community. It was deemed necessary to build St. Cuthbert a Cathedral. By having the saint's relics and shrine in Durham, he represented an ancient figure to connect the community to their roots; his patronage provided spiritual protection for both his cult and the people of Durham.<sup>40</sup> The Durham Cathedral was built in the saint's honor and became his final resting place where pilgrims could venerate Cuthbert.

The saintly remains of Cuthbert attracted people because of his miracles and perceived holiness. However, Cuthbert's bodily remains were not the only treasures associated with his sainthood. Many relics were buried with Cuthbert at his death, and some were added throughout the centuries. Some objects were not identified with the body during 698 when he was discovered undecayed. Unfortunately, there is no documentation of the items placed in Cuthbert's tomb in 698. However, through the dating of materials the items were made of and scholarly assumption, we can safely assume these relics were with him in the original burial.<sup>41</sup> Some prominent relics were the coffin reliquary, his pectoral cross, a comb, and portable altars.

The reliquary or vessel that carried Cuthbert's remains and his treasures is one of the most fascinating pieces associated with the saint. The wooden artifact has inscriptions of angels, apostles, and the Virgin and child.<sup>42</sup> The outer measurements of the innermost coffin are about sixty-six and a half inches long, roughly thirty-three inches wide, and about eighteen inches in height.<sup>43</sup> The wooden sarcophagus was discovered in pieces due to deterioration over time. In the nineteenth century, the tomb of Cuthbert was opened, and many of the treasures within were documented and compared to other historical objects to date the items and calculate when they were placed with Cuthbert's bodily relics. The archaeological analysis in 1827 discovered that the sarcophagus was contained in two additional coffins, all created at different dates in the saint's post-mortem life. The outermost layer dates back to the sixteenth century; it was made for the reburial of Cuthbert at Durham in 1542.<sup>44</sup> There was not much description of this layer provided by the scholars who observed the tomb at the time. The second layer dated back to 1104 and had been created to house the original wooden coffin

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<sup>37</sup> Arid. "The Foundations of Power: The Church of St. Cuthbert 635-1065." pp. 77-78.

<sup>38</sup> Backhouse. "The Later History..." p. 88.

<sup>39</sup> Backhouse. "The Later History..." p. 87.

<sup>40</sup> Mariner. "Cuthbert and Durham." p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Battiscombe, C. F. *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert; Studies by Various Authors / Collected and Edited with an Historical Introd.* Oxford: Printed for the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral at the University Press, 1956. p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Coffin-Reliquary." p. 203.

<sup>43</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Coffin-Reliquary." p. 215.

<sup>44</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Coffin Reliquary." p. 203.

because of its advanced age.<sup>45</sup> The dates of the outer layers of the coffin show a clear line of care for Cuthbert's relics. This effort from the monks and community aided in preserving the inner layer of the original coffin and the treasures. The innermost coffin was the original vessel of Cuthbert's remains, dating back to 698.<sup>46</sup> Cuthbert died in 687 and was laid to rest in a different coffin than the one that is shown reconstructed at Durham Cathedral today. As seen in the illustration of the innermost coffin, many different images of angels and apostles adorn the outside of the coffin (Figure 3).<sup>47</sup> His body and relics were laid in the innermost coffin after the proclamation of his sainthood in 698, which coincided with the monks discovering his undecayed body. The carvings combine Celtic artistic style and biblical imagery.<sup>48</sup> It is an important archaeological piece that not only holds the saintly remains of Cuthbert but also demonstrates the mindset of Christians in Northumbria at the time and their connection with their roots.<sup>49</sup>

The pectoral cross is one of the oldest relics in the collection, alongside the saint, because it was one of his personal items while he was alive. The cross was a much loved and used item of Cuthbert's, as evident by repairs to the cross before it was buried with him in 687.<sup>50</sup> The Cross is a unique piece of Celtic goldsmithing compared to other crosses from the time.<sup>51</sup> The small personal relic of the saint stayed with him throughout the centuries. When his tomb was opened in the nineteenth century, the cross was found deep in the chest area covered by fabrics, indicating it was set on his original funerary cloth when he was buried.<sup>52</sup> As seen in the photo, the cross is adorned with garnet stones and is a magnificent gold work (Figure 4).<sup>53</sup> The damage on the cross predates Cuthbert's death, suggesting it was a well-worn object.<sup>54</sup> This piece is significant because of the history it tells through its repairs. The repairs on the Cross are visible from the back side: the cross was repaired in antiquity when the lower arm of it was snapped off. A metal sheet was used to repair it that matched the color of the original metal (Figure 5).

Analyzing the material relics, such as the cross, further paints a personal picture of the Saint when he was alive and a revered holy man. The personal objects ground Cuthbert as an actual historical figure and not just a mythological holy man who could wield miracles at will. The preservation of his relics and the devotion of his community after his death to venerate him aided in the survival of the relics into the modern day. If people of Cuthbert's cult and community truly believed in his miracles and that he was present in his relics and tomb, it would show how devoted they were to Cuthbert by preserving and honoring him. The power of belief drove his community to continue to revere him and influenced others around the saint to save him from external threats and build a Cathedral in his

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<sup>45</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Coffin Reliquary." p. 203.

<sup>46</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Coffin Reliquary." p. 204.

<sup>47</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Seventh- Century Coffin Sides", (1956), p. 204.

<sup>48</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Coffin Reliquary." p. 227.

<sup>49</sup> Keck, Andrew S. *American Journal of Archaeology*, no. 4 (1951). p.446. <https://doi.org/10.2307/500283>. p. 55.

<sup>50</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Date and Origin of the Cross." p. 316.

<sup>51</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Pectoral Cross." p. 325.

<sup>52</sup> Battiscombe et al. "Cross Introduction." p. 308.

<sup>53</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Pectoral Cross/ *Actual Size*.", (1956), P.309.

<sup>54</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Pectoral Cross Repairs.", (1956), p. 310.



honor at Durham. When comparing the textual and the archeological sources, the common theme that links them is devotion to faith and the word of God. There is power in the stories of his miracles, much like there is power and presence in his physical relics.

The comb of Cuthbert was found within the coffin near the upper part of the remains alongside the portable altar during the examination of the tomb in 1827.<sup>55</sup> Cuthbert's comb is relatively small in size and is made out of ivory. After it was extracted from the tomb in 1827, it was restored from a state of disintegration (Figure 6).<sup>56</sup> There were historical disputes among scholars as to whether the comb was added to his treasures over the centuries or was one of Cuthbert's possessions buried with him. Peter Lasko, in *The Comb of St. Cuthbert*, goes through the origins of different styles of combs and the probability of the comb being an original possession. It is difficult to find the actual date of the comb due to unreliable sources from the twelfth century.<sup>57</sup> Lasko remarks, "The anonymous author of the life of Saint Cuthbert makes no mention of the comb when he is buried in 687. It may be that the comb, together with other relics, was laid beside the saint when his body was raised and transferred to the new coffin in 698 A.D."<sup>58</sup> Looking back at the sources from the different times, his tomb was opened and the documentation of the relics, it is probable that it had been undocumented in the seventh century. The comb was first documented in 1104 when the monks clothed Cuthbert in magnificent vestments, returned relics to his person, and then situated his altar at the newly built Durham Cathedral.<sup>59</sup> Frequently tombs were opened for veneration purposes such as dressing and honoring the saint. In the case of Cuthbert, his tomb was opened at Durham to redress him in vestments that honored his embodiment of holiness.<sup>60</sup> Lasko hypothesizes that the comb was a personal object that had not been recorded during his reburial in 698. This conclusion provides answers to the debated origin of Cuthbert's comb. It is difficult to date such an object when working on the historical narrative because documentation is missing, and scholars must rely on other sources, such as the basic origins of comb styles.

Like many other relics, the portable altars were discovered in 1827 when Cuthbert's tomb was opened.<sup>61</sup> The grave was opened in 1827 for historic preservation and to corroborate that this was the tomb of St Cuthbert. The grave was opened in the presence of Dr. James Rine, the Librarian of Durham Cathedral, and Dr. Gilly and Dr. Darnell, Prebendaries of Durham. After the Reformation, his grave was situated below the stone floor of Durham Cathedral, and the opening in 1827 was meant to document if it was the grave of St. Cuthbert.<sup>62</sup> The silver and portable wooden altar was located near the comb in the saint's coffin. It was discovered when removing the piece from Cuthbert's coffin

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<sup>55</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Comb of St. Cuthbert." p. 336.

<sup>56</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Comb of St. Cuthbert/ Black and White", (1956), p. 336.

<sup>57</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Comb..." p. 342.

<sup>58</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Comb..." p. 349.

<sup>59</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Comb..." p. 339.

<sup>60</sup> Owen-Crocker, Gale R. "Old Rags, New Responses: Medieval Dress and Textiles." *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, Boydell & Brewer, 2019. p. 6. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvb4bvnq.7>.

<sup>61</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Portable Altar of Saint Cuthbert." p. 326.

<sup>62</sup> Battiscombe et al. "Introduction: Opening of St. Cuthbert's Grave." p. 2.

that it would be best to separate the silver and wooden parts of the altar into two separate objects.<sup>63</sup> The silver element to the altar was mounted on a new piece of wood to allow it to be displayed correctly. Unfortunately, the wooden part of the altar was so badly decayed that it was determined that it would not survive any handling to try to fix the relic. In *The Portable Altar of Saint Cuthbert* by C. A. Raleigh Radford, there is an illustration of the wooden altar with suggested lines filling in the gaps where pieces were missing (Figure 7).<sup>64</sup> Radford analyzed the style of the letters on this piece and dated it back to 651. The material used for the altar was an oak base. Radford concluded that the altar would have been made for Cuthbert during his priesthood and aided him in missionary activities.<sup>65</sup> These objects that are venerated as relics are personal items of Cuthbert's. To reiterate what I stated above about relics, they embody the Saint's holiness. The material objects emphasize his holiness and make for perfect relics to be venerated and represent him in the afterlife. The wooden altar was a part of his personal history from before he became bishop of Lindisfarne. It places Cuthbert as a common religious man spreading the word of God with his altar at his side. This was yet another personal relic protected from the ravages of conflict throughout the centuries.

The silver plating of the altar is two-sided, depicting detailed, stylistic holy imagery. The front piece of the silver plating depicts a priest in robes holding a scroll with Greek carvings around him.<sup>66</sup> Radford noted that this part of the altar included the only six main pieces that survived.<sup>67</sup> As we see in the figure provided in C. F. Battiscombe's work *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*, there is an image of the priest holding a scroll with a heavenly ring around his head (Figure 8).<sup>68</sup> The backplate of the altar features Northumbrian stylistic vine work, pearled edges, and a central focal point of a medallion (Figure 9).<sup>69</sup> There are no suggestive details in the illustration due to the lack of work found on the object and because a few focal pieces are missing due to age. However, even though the silver plates are missing multiple pieces, restoration efforts were made by creating illustrations that suggested what the plates would have looked like. Radford dated the creation of the silver plates to the early eighth century, with some repair work in the ninth century.<sup>70</sup> This means that time and care were put into improving some of Cuthbert's relics. Forming the silver plates and adding them to the original wooden altar are signs of the creation of a reliquary and housing and venerating the original piece. The evidence of improvements to the portable altar suggests a need to preserve the original wooden relic. The improvements act as a reliquary to further add to the longevity of the altar's lifespan. Preventing further deterioration adds to the devotional objects that illustrate Durham's importance as a holy site.

These relics were essential to Cuthbert's shrines in Durham and Lindisfarne, even if they were not visible to the pilgrims visiting the saint. They are now correctly displayed at Durham after the nineteenth century. In Bede's account, many of the relics' and tomb's miraculous working powers

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<sup>63</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Portable..." p. 327.

<sup>64</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Wooden Altar", (1956), p. 328.

<sup>65</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Portable..." p. 328.

<sup>66</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Portable..." p. 331.

<sup>67</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Portable..." p. 330.

<sup>68</sup> Battiscombe et al. "Suggested Restoration of Front of Silver Shrine" (1956), p.331." p. 330

<sup>69</sup> Battiscombe et al. "Back of Silver Shrine", (1956), p. 332.

<sup>70</sup> Battiscombe et al. "The Portable..." p. 334.

were invoked through prayer.<sup>71</sup> This feeds into the notion of Cuthbert's holy presence residing in the relics and his shrine site at his tomb. However, the preservation of Cuthbert and his objects demonstrates the dedication of the monks and the community caring for and venerating him during times of hardship.

The magnificent Durham Cathedral is the present-day resting place for Saint Cuthbert and his treasures. Many people flock to him on pilgrimage to venerate his relics and altar. The creation of Durham Cathedral is entirely thanks to the devotion of Cuthbert's community and a miraculous vision of him instructing his attending monks that his shrine should be erected in Durham.<sup>72</sup> The Cathedral itself started as a wooden structure and built up over time into what it is today. Janet Backhouse in *The Lindisfarne Gospels* dates the stone foundation of Durham Cathedral to 1093. The shrine of Cuthbert was then used as the main focal point of the Cathedral to provide a suitable area to house his relics and a place for pilgrims to venerate the saint.<sup>73</sup> The second opening of Cuthbert's coffin was performed at Durham, and he was moved to behind the high altar in the cathedral. In 1104, the monks of the cathedral opened his coffin. They reported that he was still miraculously undecayed and had a smell described as "the odor of sanctity."<sup>74</sup> Many of his relics were documented in 1104, and Cuthbert was dressed in new vestments. Cuthbert's shrine at Durham is described as a "sumptuous marble shrine, splendidly painted, carved and bejeweled, on a low platform behind the high altar..."<sup>75</sup> The shrine stands to this day unchanged with the original marble work. Still, the relics were removed from the coffin and displayed for all to see. Cuthbert remained a frequently visited site for many pilgrims.

Overall, the post-mortem life of St. Cuthbert and the preservation of his relics provides insight into the different styles of craftsmanship, the community's devotion, and the Durham Cathedral's creation. Many still go to venerate the seventh-century saint of Northumbria and visit his relics. On display at the cathedral is the original 698 coffin of Cuthbert, the ivory comb, and his pectoral cross, as discussed above. The nineteenth-century scholars who documented and analyzed the relics of Cuthbert during the third opening of his tomb aided in uncovering information from different scholarly sources regarding the saint. The case of Saint Cuthbert has fascinated many historians due to the preservation of his relics. Sainly figures are often overlooked as people and are not relatable to the human experience. However, when viewing Cuthbert's relics and the care given to them, we can see that there is a narrative of a man beyond the miracles.

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<sup>71</sup> Bede. *Life of Saint Cuthbert*, trans. Bertram Colgrave. p. 153.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, Michelle. "The Lindisfarne Gospels: Bibliography of The Book." p. 87.

<sup>73</sup> Brown, M. "The Lindisfarne Gospels..." p. 87.

<sup>74</sup> Cavendish, R. "St Cuthbert Reburied in Durham Cathedral - September 4th, 1104." *History today*, no. 9 (2004). p. 54.

<sup>75</sup> Cavendish. "St Cuthbert..." p. 54.

## Appendix

Figure 1: The Lindisfarne Gospels (721)

Credit: *The Lindisfarne Gospels* / Janet Backhouse



Figure 2: Relics of Saint Cuthbert being carried back across... (1069)

Credit: *The Lindisfarne Gospels* / Janet Backhouse



Map 1. Credit: Rosier, Charles C. "Map" in *Writing History in the Community of St Cuthbert, c. 600-1130: From Bede to Simeon of Durham*. Boydell & Brewer, 2020. p. Xiii.

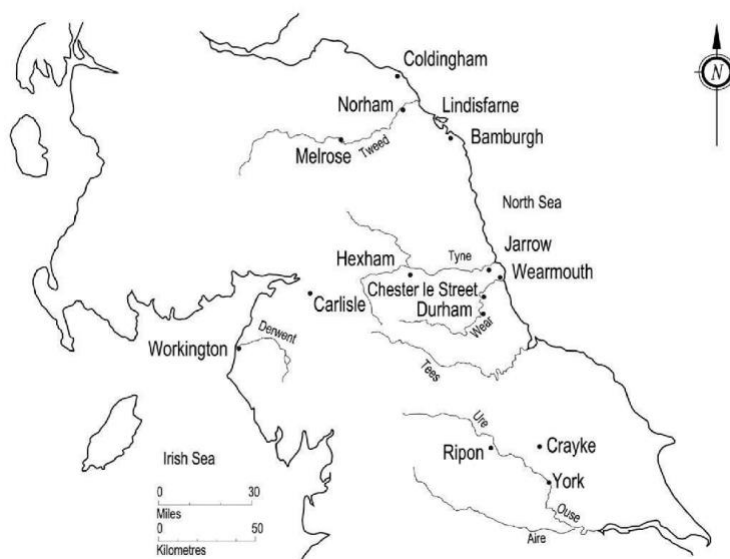


Figure 3: Seventh-Century Coffin Sides (1956)

Credit: *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert: Studies by Various Authors / Collected and Edited with an Historical Introduction*

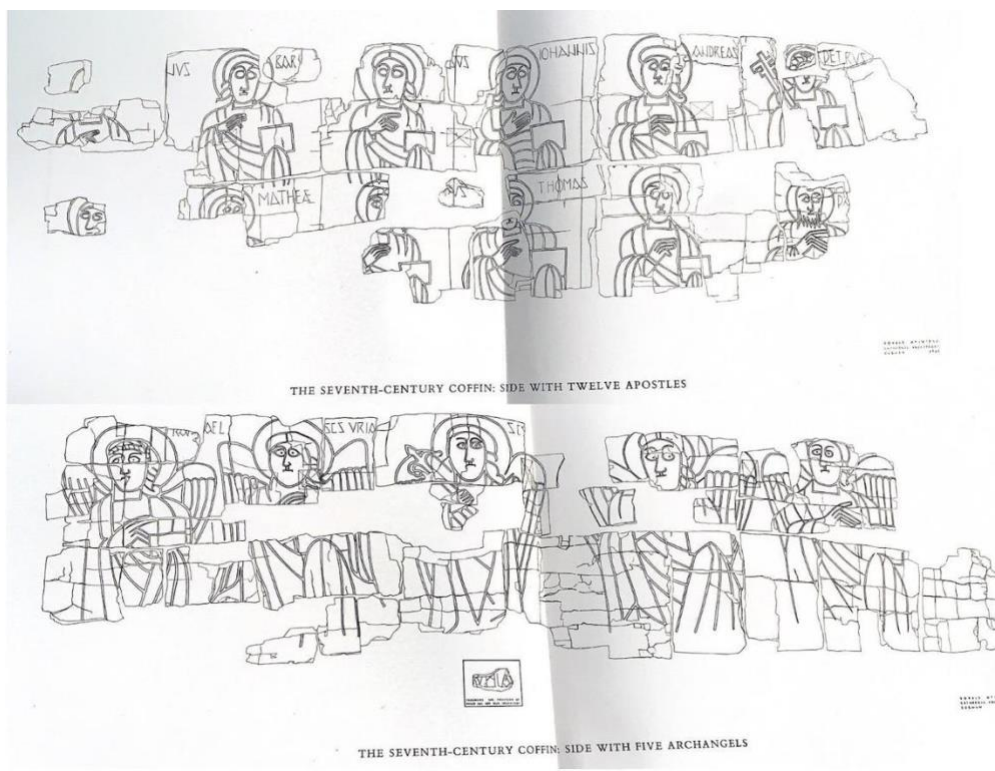


Figure 4: The Pectoral Cross (1956)  
 Credit: *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*



Figure 5: The Pectoral Cross Repairs (1956)  
 Credit: *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*

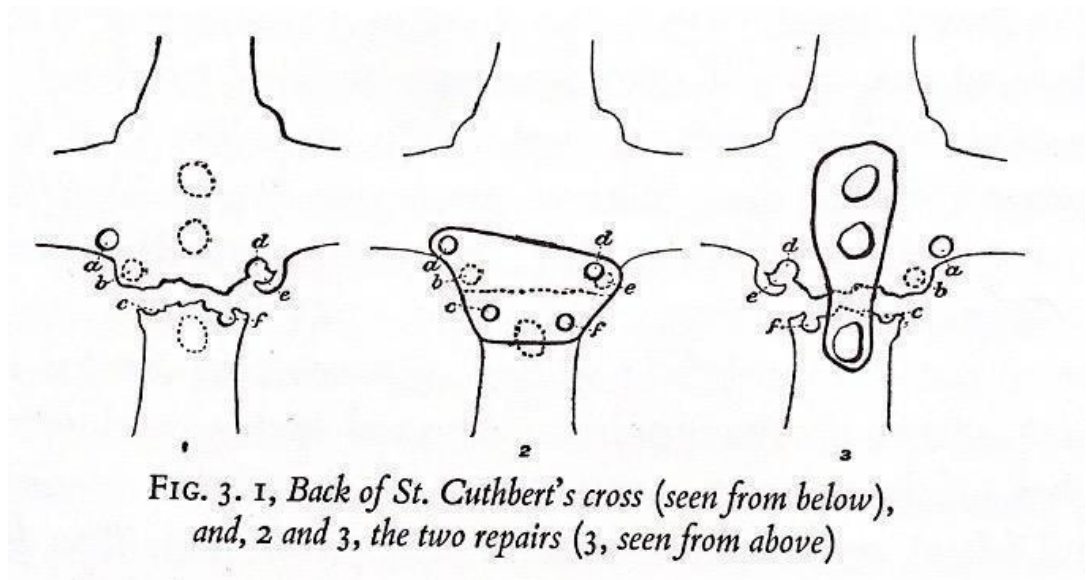




Figure 6: The Comb of Saint Cuthbert (1956)

Credit: *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*

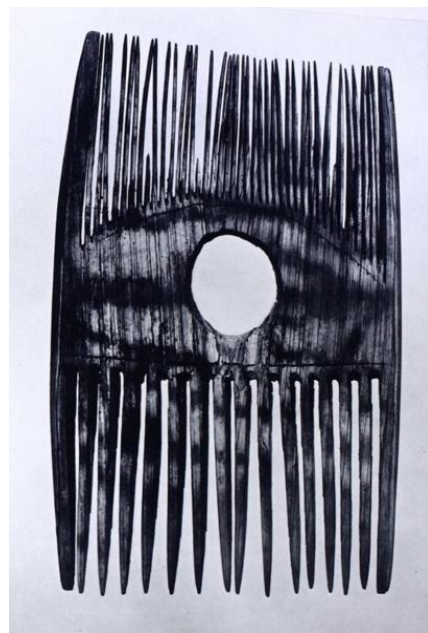


Figure 7: The Wooden Altar (1956)

Credit: *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*

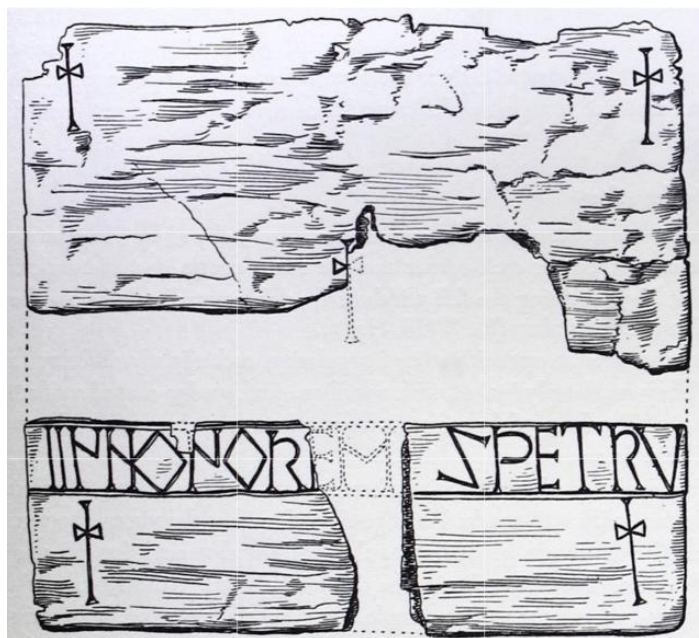


Figure 8: Suggested Restoration of Front of Silver Shrine (1956)

Credit: The Relics of Saint Cuthbert

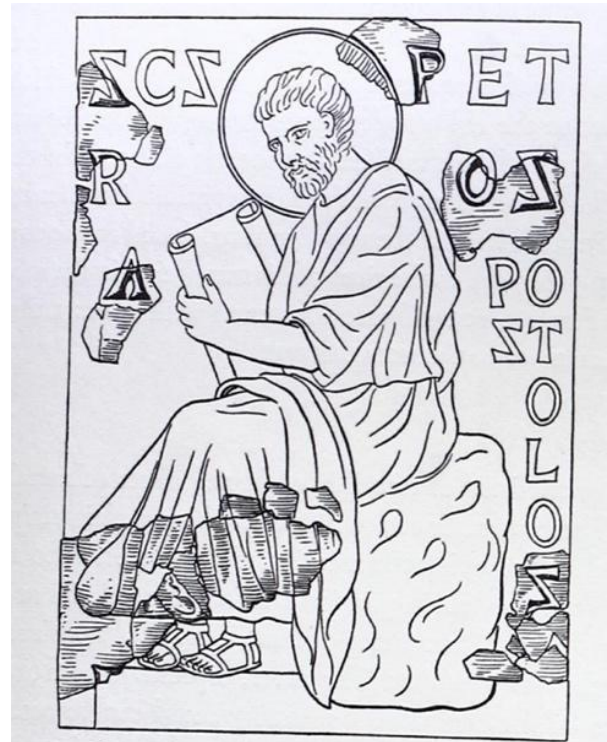
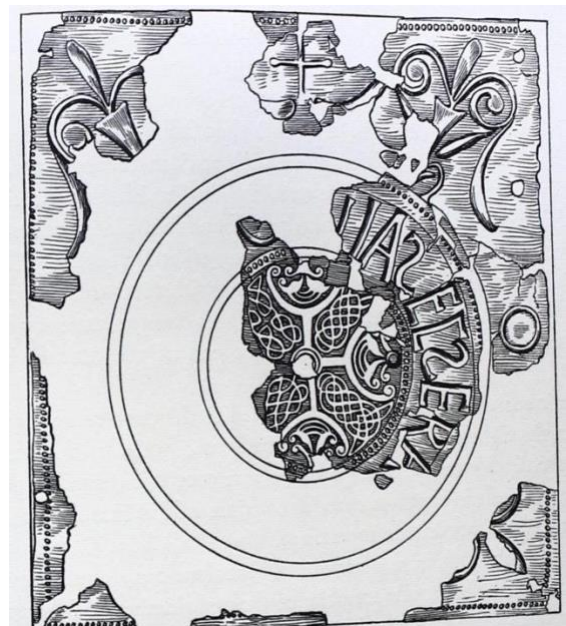


Figure 9: Back of Silver Shrine (1956)

Credit: The Relics of Saint Cuthbert







## The Hierarchy of Dress: Clothing in the Age of Emancipation

*Emilia Salcido<sup>1</sup>*

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The Civil War ended slavery and brought about the question of what emancipation meant to newly freed people. For some, this meant being able to marry, own property, and even vote legally. The importance of clothing as a symbolic and material indicator of what “freedom” meant to the newly freed has long been overlooked in the conversation of emancipation. The cotton manufacturing institution enslaved peoples were once forced to participate in would then return to the clothes of their enslavers, the North, and others worldwide. Enslaved people would get the cheapest materials for their clothing, while the better fabrics went to the white Southerners. Even after emancipation, the racial hierarchy and social status linked to clothing would not change dramatically for Black people, especially for Black women. Emancipation meant new access to more clothing, but with the consequence of the still rigid system of racism and classism that would further hold back a truly freed notion of dress. Enslaved people’s clothing worked off a system of control and hierarchy. Black women’s clothing was continually made to be the lowest form of fabric possible while being compared to both other enslaved people and plantation mistresses. The refugee camps specifically blurred the line between emancipation and slavery by not providing a symbol of emancipation for women’s clothing, which they would then have to seek out what clothing and emancipation meant for them. Black women’s clothing before, during, and after the Civil War was characterized by how those in manufacturing, enslavers, plantation mistresses and even the Union viewed them. Autonomy over clothing was scarce in a society that forced the hierarchy of dress.

The journey of clothing as a means of control started before the enslaved person reached the plantation and began in the markets where they were sold. Enslaved people who would be sold were dressed well to impress the buyers. Their clothing was an indicator of their value as enslaved people. Eyre Crowe’s 1861 image, *Slaves Waiting for Sale, Richmond, Virginia* (Fig. A), depicts the enslaved people dressed significantly better than those clothed on the plantation since they are wearing silk bandanas, a symbol of luxury, and aprons neatly draped upon the women’s dresses. Their clothing symbolizes the uniform of the marketplace, and one can see four men discussing the enslaved women in the background. The clothing of the market was not in the control of the enslaved person and was merely a way to objectify the women for the sole purpose of being sold and benefitting whoever was selling them. The painting brings the enslaved people to the forefront, their figures and clothing more vibrant than the enslavers pushed into the background. The viewer is immediately drawn to look at the enslaved people. Contrasting their nicer clothing with their clothing in the field exposes the hierarchy and imbalance of enslaved people’s clothing within the South.

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Clothing for enslaved people on the plantations was characterized by its cheapness and coarseness compared to the clothing manufactured for their enslavers. A specific type of fabric was designated and regulated for the enslaved people, commonly referred to as “slave” or “plantation cloth.”<sup>2</sup> This fabric was durable yet cheap, making it the optimal choice to cloth enslaved people for two reasons. Because many of these plantation cloths used cotton, it was harvested by the enslaved people but sent either to the Northern states or abroad to Britain for clothing manufacturing. The irony of the enslaved person working to harvest cotton only to receive the “bottom of the barrel” was apparent and justified by the enslavers because of its cheapness and practicality when buying cloth. From Georgian plantation owner James Habersham, one can truly get a grasp of what clothing was manufactured in Britain and for what reason with his letters to William Knox, his London manufacturing agent: “I supposed they may be had in London of Cloth at least stronger and more durable and consequently warmer and more comfortable—You see we don’t have any purpose saving or rather that it is not our motive tho’ the more saved the better.”<sup>3</sup> Habersham, while manufacturing and buying cloth during the colonial period, clearly exercised the point that while the fabric was chosen for its cheapness, this type of cloth was the most convenient and practical for clothing mass amounts of people at one time because of its inherent price point, durability, and ability to keep one warm during the winter months even if it meant there was a stark difference in the enslaver and the enslaved way of dress.

The name “plantation cloth” imposes a hierarchy onto the already hierarchical enslaved system. By calling these coarse fabrics plantation or slave cloth, it signifies their purpose and status when being manufactured. If someone else were to wear these fabrics, such as a Southern white woman, it would degrade their social status solely on the factor of dress and fabric. Plantation cloth was the lowest status of clothing, and it was kept out of white Southerners’ hands by demonizing it as a means of controlling how people dressed.

On other occasions, clothing would be manufactured by enslaved people themselves. Some were given the fabric with the expectation of sewing their clothing.<sup>4</sup> The material would be produced elsewhere, but it made sewing an essential skill for enslaved people who would have to make and mend their clothing and those of their enslavers. Louis Hughes, a formerly enslaved person in Mississippi, describes the women’s ingenuity while creating new garments out of other articles of clothing: “[they] made for themselves what were called pantalets. They had no stockings or undergarments to protect their limbs - these were never given them.”<sup>5</sup> Their clothing was significantly limited, yet Black women found small opportunities to turn controlled clothing into new garments. This often hinged on the resourcefulness and ingenuity that enslaved women had to maintain their clothing and keep themselves and others satisfied with the options of clothing allotted to them. It is

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<sup>2</sup> Madelyn Shaw, “Slave Cloth and Clothing Slaves: Craftsmanship, Commerce, and Industry,” in *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Art*, <https://www.mesdajournal.org/2012/slave-cloth-clothing-slaves-craftsmanship-commerce-industry/>. 2012.

<sup>3</sup> James Habersham, *The Letters of Hon. James Habersham, 1756-1775* (Georgia Historical Society, 1904), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Shaw.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave* (South Side Printing Company, 1897), p. 42.

the smallest form of clothing autonomy that women and enslaved people generally had during this time.

The amount of clothing given depended on the enslaver and what they were willing to buy. Hughes recounts the clothing women were given during different seasons as he states, “the women had two dresses and two chemises each for summer...The women's dresses for winter were made of the heavier wool cloth used for the men. They also had one pair of shoes each and a turban.” In total, this is quite a meager amount of clothing manufactured for durability rather than comfort and priced cheaply, harkening back to ideals from the colonial period, as seen in James Habersham’s letter. It was a system that had stayed in place for decades.

However, clothing given to enslaved people differed on a case-by-case basis all over the South. Henry Box Brown, who had run away from his enslavement in Virginia, added onto what enslaved people were allowed to wear when he explained from an exchange with an enslaver from another plantation: “He [the enslaver] expressed a good deal of surprise that we were allowed to wear hats and shoes,--supposing that a slave had no business to wear such clothing as his master wore.”<sup>6</sup> Brown expressed the limiting nature of being enslaved and prohibited from wearing a particular article of clothing as another means of controlling a group of people, in this case, hats and shoes. The restrictive nature of clothing also created what enslaved people on certain plantations would have dictated as “master’s” clothing or what would be considered free people’s clothing.

Another formerly enslaved person from Maryland, Charles Ball, stated, “In summer they do not require clothes and can perform such work as they are able to do, as well without garments as with them. At the time we received our shoes, and blankets, there was not a good shirt in our quarter--but all the men, and women, had provided themselves with some sort of woollen clothes, out of their own savings.”<sup>7</sup> Ball experienced not getting clothing during the summer for both men and women. At the same time, Hughes recounts the small amount of clothing they were allotted, and Brown identifies the power and control enslavers had on the plantation through the use of clothing. It was up to the enslaved people to either fashion their clothes or buy whatever they could to keep themselves warm during the winter. By not providing a substantial amount of clothing, plantation owners maintained control. There was some autonomy to choose how one would dress freely, but clothing was now relegated to survival rather than a means of pleasure seen in the white Southerners of the time. However, the dress hierarchy delved beyond being exclusive to enslaved people and their enslavers, as there was also a built-in hierarchy to domestic enslavement and fieldwork.

Henry Bibb, a former enslaved person who worked in the fields of Kentucky, described the disconnect and discontent he had for the work of the domestic enslaved people, saying that “I would remark that the domestic slaves are often found to be traitors to their own people, for the purpose of gaining favor with their masters; and they are encouraged and trained up by them to report every plot

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<sup>6</sup> Henry Box Brown, *Narrative of Henry Box Brown, Who Escaped From Slavery Enclosed in a Box 3 Feet Long and 2 Wide. Written From a Statement of Facts Made by Himself. With Remarks Upon the Remedy for Slavery.* By Charles Stearns (Brown & Stearns, 1849), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Ball, *Slavery in the United States, A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball*, (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999), p. 271.

they know of being formed about stealing any thing, or running away, or any thing of the kind; and for which they are paid. This is one of the principal causes of the slaves being.”<sup>8</sup> So while there was a brewing hierarchy without the means of clothing, the way of dress would further divide the domestic enslaved people from those who did fieldwork on the plantations.

There became a social pressure for enslavers to dress them better than their plantation enslaved people because these enslaved people were not only closer in proximity to the enslavers daily but also because they were seen as more intelligent and faithful. *Enslaved House Servants and White Children* (Fig. B) depicts two domestic enslaved people with the plantation owner and their children. Unlike the descriptions from Hughes, Brown, and Ball, the domestic enslaved people got access to better clothing, presumably because of their attachment to the labor of the house. The pressure to dress one group of enslaved people well and to virtually not care about the other created a divide. Plantation mistresses sometimes offered their older clothing to the domestic enslaved women.<sup>9</sup> This would be an additional factor in the division of domestic and field enslaved people. Yet, the passing off of the mistress’ clothing to the domestic enslaved women categorized the enslaved person as “their property” simply by controlling whose clothing they wore as well. By creating a false sense of hierarchy under oppression, it further divides the enslaved people by their clothing.

Another aspect that did not help the perception of enslaved women in dress was the “mammy” stereotype. This stereotype is built on the assumption that the enslaved woman enjoyed her work at the plantation. One illustration (Fig. C) from that time depicts a Black woman folding her apron with a smile. The caption below reads, “Joy Unspeakable.” One can also view the “mammy” stereotype in the illustration *Mammy and Her Pet* (Fig. D). Like Figure C, the woman is dressed in a head wrapping and an apron and is seen amid her work raising a white child. The enslaved woman is drawn looking down at the children lovingly and maternally. This illustration also plays into how white people of the time viewed enslaved women with the mindset that enslaved women did not mind, found joy in doing the work of white enslavers, and that raising their children was a privilege bestowed onto them. The harmful depiction illustrates the wrongdoings of the enslavers as they hold onto the notion that enslavement is enjoyable for enslaved people. Even if the perspective of the illustration is warped, there is some truth to the aprons and head wrappings that give a small glimpse into what women of the time would have worn.

To fully understand the hierarchy of dress, it is essential to include white plantation mistresses as their narrative was heavily related and would help to construct the hierarchy and control that enslaved women were forced into. Fashion for this group of women was not limited to race as they had access to plentiful fabrics, sewing, money, and in some cases, people to sew their clothing for them. However, clothing was also a measure of their femininity.<sup>10</sup> The more ostentatious clothing they could afford was symbolic of their place in the house, and their femininity through dress sealed

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself with an Introduction by Lucius C. Matlack*. (Self Published, 1849), p. 136.

<sup>9</sup> Joan Cashin, “Torn Bonnets and Stolen Silks: Fashion, Gender, Race, and Danger in the Wartime South,” *Civil War History* 61, no. 4, p. 339.

<sup>10</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets,” p. 344.

their status in the household among the enslaved women and their husbands. With these factors in place, there is already an advantage to being a white Southern woman who had the luxury to obtain clothes at their leisure and clothing that could also reflect their style.

One such garment that demonstrated both the changing styles of the mid-1800s and the excessive wealth of the plantation was the hoop skirt. While these items could be obtained abroad, many women found more accessible options in domestic stores. Yet, if a woman truly wanted to show off her wealth and status among the plantation elite, her dress would be decorated, vibrantly colored, and have a full skirt in part to the hoop skirt.<sup>11</sup> The look of excess demonstrated that they could afford all the latest fashions. It helped them stand out from poorer white women while putting them visually in a position of authority above their enslaved people, essentially dressing like royalty. The hoop skirt took up more space than the slimmer silhouettes of the regency era prior. In doing so, it again was an indicator of the larger figure in the plantation.

Other accessories and fabrics contributed to the hierarchy of dress. Silk was imported from China and was seen as highly luxurious because of how much it cost to ship the material to the United States. And as dyes became more widely available, dresses could be more vibrant. Rich plantations could afford to dress the mistress and other family members, like their daughters, with silk that showed off their wealth. Some would even go to extreme lengths to have this clothing. For instance, “Adaline Rodgers of Tennessee estimated that her clothes and those of her daughter were worth approximately a thousand dollars.”<sup>12</sup> The overindulgence of plantation mistresses stemmed from wanting to separate herself from the enslaved women as much as possible. Being able to afford the highest quality and most expensive clothing is one way to do so visually.

Plantation mistresses’ femininity and hierarchy through clothing were also a mocking point for the Union army as they tore up and destroyed Confederate homes that plantation owners and mistresses once lived in. It was typical to grab souvenirs of homes one had destroyed, including taking the dresses of the plantation mistresses to mock them, symbolizing another layer of control this woman once had. Her dresses are no longer the extravagant symbol of control over the enslaved people but a means of mimicry to the Confederacy. It is reported that Union soldiers would parade around in their dresses before throwing the silk gowns in the mud or setting them on fire.<sup>13</sup> The malicious intent behind the Union’s actions does not change the fact that these women did, in fact, own and embrace the hierarchy allotted to them at the time.

Plantation mistresses did everything in their power through their excessive money to separate themselves from enslaved women. The stark contrast of their clothing is symbolized plainly in Charles Ball’s writing as he states, “The one, poorly clad, poorly fed, and exposed to all the hardships of the cotton field; the other dressed in clothes of gay and various colours, ornamented with jewelry, and carefully protected from the rays of the sun, and the blasts of the wind.”<sup>14</sup> This description easily

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<sup>11</sup> Joan Cashin, “Trophies of War: Material Culture in the Civil War Era.” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 3 (September 2011), p. 344.

<sup>12</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets,” p. 343.

<sup>13</sup> Cashin, “Torn Bonnets,” p. 354.

<sup>14</sup> Ball, p. 222.

depicts the reality of one life versus the other. The plantation mistress had the luxury, money, and ability to acquire pieces that reflected both changing fashions and clothing and accessories emblematic of her status in society. This is juxtaposed against the enslaved person, who does not have the money to buy their clothing and is at the mercy of what is given to them. They are bound to the slavery system by clothing. By not being able to choose how one presents themselves to the world freely, there is a loss of one's autonomy. Therefore, clothing would continually be a factor of not only the enslaved experience and how they were perceived, but as emancipation and the Civil War drew near, it would also symbolize the struggle to find what freedom meant to Black women.

As the question of what to do with enslaved people seeking freedom caught up with Union soldiers in the war, it was decided that the place for them was refugee camps. Similar to when enslaved, clothing was scarce. Union soldiers describe the formerly enslaved people coming to the camps with "filthy rags."<sup>15</sup> As mentioned previously with the term "plantation cloth," the language around enslaved people's clothing exposed white people's bias against the formerly enslaved people. Even without mentioning the color and type of fabric on their body, one can observe how white people looked down upon the clothing worn by enslaved individuals.

Women in refugee camps were at a disadvantage. For Black men, clothing was more plentiful as they could join the Union army and be provided with a uniform. The uniform was not only a visual representation of a soldier, but for these formerly enslaved people, it was a visual indicator of freedom. Wearing a uniform and being on the front lines of the war as a soldier meant finding emancipation through war, and the clothing given to men was a symbol of this. While there were some complications of the men paying for the uniform, essentially paying for a marker of their freedom, there was still a clear visual indicator that Black men were fighting for their freedom. However, for women, there was no apparent visible symbol of freedom in clothing. Yet because of the uniformity of men's dress at this time,<sup>16</sup> women could have more significant variance in their clothing. Emancipation in dress could mean whatever they chose it to. While women's clothing in refugee camps was harder to come by because of the better availability of Union uniforms, it does not change the fact that they could explore and play in a new area of dress that could create a personal story of emancipation, not needing to meet the standard of what it meant for the whole group of individuals.

After the Civil War, equality of dress was not a sudden occurrence. Black women's clothing did remain somewhat stagnant. Winslow Homer's 1876 painting, *A Visit From the Old Mistress* (Fig. E), identifies the different balance of power from emancipation. The plantation mistress is dressed all in black, mourning the loss of her husband in the war, but also symbolizes she is stuck in mourning and the previous social structure. Contrasting her clothing with the vibrancy of the Black women makes them stand out more in the painting; the eye is naturally drawn more to them. Additionally, their clothing has not changed in style. They still are adorned with a head wrapping and an apron. They are in a position where four of them are against the mistress, the strength of their clothing being front

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<sup>15</sup> Amy Murrell Taylor, "Clothing Bodies." *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps*. (The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), p. 159.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, p. 169.

and center, along with their unity of numbers, reclaims a small piece of what the women had lost under the mistress.

Although they were technically considered free people as they were not bound to an enslaver, clothing would continue to be a market in which white women could control them. Refugee camp stores that sold fabric and clothing became the primary way for women to distance themselves from slavery further.<sup>17</sup> Clothing was now slightly more autonomous in that a buying privilege was unparalleled while enslaved. Still, some articles of clothing, like the headwrap, were reclaimed as part of the transition to emancipation. Additionally, not all newly freed people moved into refugee camps or the North. Many were stricken by poverty and the sharecropping system that replaced slavery and maintained hierarchal power systems.

The stigma around Black women and their clothing did not fade away overnight. White women could pick and choose what they donated to the refugee camps, a milder form of control over what Black women could and could not cloth themselves with, and even some stores would forbid Black women from buying certain items because of their race. Emancipation, while a celebratory milestone, did not change the racist, controlling, and social status of clothing. Black women were still seen as a second class, and the tactics to keep them looking as such would manifest because of the strategies of the past.

The Civil War and the subsequent Reconstruction serve as a reminder of the limitations and barriers that come from clothing. The term “plantation cloth” reminded the enslaved people of their status in society while serving as a status marker and a warning to those who were free not to wear it. Hierarchies in dress occurred between the labor of enslaved people and the plantation mistress who had the luxury and money to obtain her clothing rather than be forced to make do with a small amount of clothing. As emancipation became more of a reality and enslaved people fled to Union refugee camps, clothing again was marked by the symbol of a uniform. This left Black men free but left Black women to struggle with their role of freedom in dress. Black women’s dress during this time would constantly be a battle between their freedom of dress and society's limitations.

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<sup>17</sup> Taylor, 171.

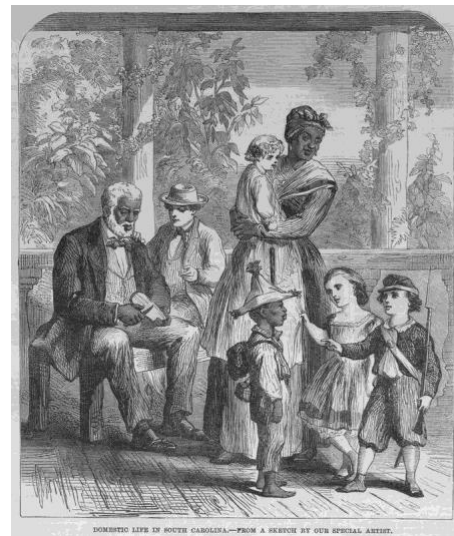


## Appendix

*Figure A:* “Slaves Waiting for Sale: Richmond, Virginia, 1861,” Eyre Crow, Accessed January 19, 2022, <https://eyrecrowe.com/pictures/1860s/slaves-waiting-for-sale/>



*Figure B:* “Enslaved House Servants and White Children, South Carolina, 1863,” Enslaved Children George Mason, Accessed January 19, 2022, <https://ecgm.omeka.net/exhibits/show/the-enslaved-children-of-gunst/item/14>.



*Figure C:* “A Woman Rice Planter, 1914,” Documenting the American South, Accessed January 19, 2022, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/pringle/ill74.html>



*Figure D:* “Mammy’ and Her Pet, 1895, Documenting the American South, Accessed January 19, 2022, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/haley/ill182.html>



*Figure E:* “A Visit From the Old Mistress, 1876” Smithsonian American Art Museum, Accessed January 19, 2022, <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/visit-old-mistress-10737>





**2022 Stuart L. Bernath Prize Winners**



## The Original Power Suit: Fashion as a Tool of Political Agency in the Early Modern Period

*Madeline Josa<sup>1</sup>*

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In 1689, Madame de Maintenon, the secret wife of the French king Louis XIV, had a portrait commissioned of herself wearing royal blue robes trimmed in ermine.<sup>2</sup> By doing so, she followed a historical precedent of women in positions of prominence using fashion as a tool of their political agency to craft a politically-charged public image in the early modern period. The robe Madame de Maintenon was depicted wearing was in a color intended for royalty in the French court. As it was a secret that she was married to King Louis XIV, this use of fashion made an inherently political statement to the court audience of this portrait.<sup>3</sup> Madame de Maintenon was not the first woman to make full use of the tools available to her as a woman with considerable political status and influence. Before her came Isabella d'Este of Italy, Queen Mary I of England, and Queen Elizabeth I of England, to name a few. These well-known women of the early modern period of European history were in positions that required skillful strategy in creating a public image, and fashion was a tenet of this strategy. By utilizing fashion choices as a form of political agency that crafted a public image, these women's fashion choices were tied to European imperial and commercial relationships. Through fashion, we can see how economic factors play a role in creating a public image. There is a strong connection between political image-making and sartorial influence for women in positions of prominence in the early modern period of Europe. Therefore, women in positions of power during the early modern period used fashion as a tool of political agency by crafting a public image and making choices connected to European political machinations.

The early modern period of European history covers four centuries, moving from the fifteenth century through the eighteenth, with significant shifts in European politics and empire. Starting in the fifteenth century, Italy was deep into the Italian Renaissance, which had many causes, one of which being Italy's prime location in the Mediterranean to foster trade along the silk road and across the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>4</sup> This lucrative trade along the silk road allowed new material goods like silk fabric to pour into Italy, causing such an uproar that sumptuary laws were created to control these new fabrics.<sup>5</sup> This trade empire that Italy managed caused more wealth to accumulate in Italy and, coupled with these new material goods, established Italy as the place of cultural hegemony within Europe at

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<sup>2</sup> Justine De Young, "1690-1699" FIT Fashion History Timeline, last updated August 18, 2020, <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1690-1699/>.

<sup>3</sup> De Young, "1690-1699."

<sup>4</sup> Brad Bouley, "History 121A Lecture," (Lecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, October 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello, "East & West: Textiles and Fashion in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Social History* 41, No. 4 (Summer, 2008): p. 892.

the start of the early modern period. Other European courts looked to Italian influence in terms of cultural influence, which included Italian fashion.

As the fifteenth century gave way to the sixteenth, Italy's place as the cultural arbiter of Europe began to weaken. Spain had just started its imperialistic campaign in the Americas, so new material goods and precious metals like silver were now pouring into Spain. This new European imperialism overtook the wealth and material goods flowing into Italy. Consequently, European courts started to look to Spain for cultural and sartorial influence over Italy. Spain was the first to undertake colonial aims in the Americas. This head start over the rest of Europe led Spain to assert its cultural hegemony over Europe for much of the sixteenth century. There is some overlap during the shift from Italian to Spanish influence, as evidenced by the slower adaptation of Spanish styles to Italian fashion.<sup>6</sup>

As the sixteenth century came to a close, Spain's cultural influence started to wane in Europe and began to give way to French influence. Other European countries started to undertake colonial campaigns beyond the borders of Europe, so Spain no longer had the advantage of being first. France became the dominating cultural force in terms of fashion over Spain for many reasons. These included internal commercial success, a distinctly French style fostered by King Louis XIV, and military prowess.<sup>7</sup> A host of political maneuvers enabled France to overtake Spain in terms of European cultural hegemony. By the seventeenth century, Europe looked to France for fashion styles instead of Spain. As seen at the end of the fifteenth century with Italy, during the cultural transition from Spanish to French dominance, Spain slowly switched from distinctly Spanish styles to French-influenced fashion.<sup>8</sup>

As my argument progresses through the early modern period from Italy to Spain to France regarding fashion influence, I will examine women in powerful and influential positions involved in these historic changes. Specifically, I will discuss Isabella d'Este, her fashion influence within Italy and abroad, and historians Carolyn James and Sarah Cockram's interpretations of her influence. I then analyze the English sisters, Queens Mary and Elizabeth and their respective use of fashion in portraiture. Particular attention is given to how English queens made use of Spanish and later French fashion. I also discuss Abigail Gomulkiewicz and Susan Vincent's arguments about court participation in creating Elizabeth's public image. Moving from the English queens to France, Madame de Maintenon will be examined and historians Daniel Delis Hill and Millia Davenport's arguments about her style influence will be explored. Portraiture and surviving material artifacts will be the main sources of primary evidence investigated because it allows us to look at the visual significance of these women's fashion choices.

### **Isabella d'Este**

As the Marchioness of Mantua during the Italian Wars, Isabella d'Este experienced a unique position of prominence within Italy and early modern Europe. At the start of the sixteenth century, the Italian

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<sup>6</sup> Kathryn Hennessy, ed., "Elegant Formality" in *Fashion, The Definitive Visual Guide* (New York, New York: DK Penguin Random House, 2019), p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> Hillary Bernstein, "History 121F Lecture," (Lecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, February 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Kathryn Hennessy, ed., "Female Geometry" in *Fashion, The Definitive Visual Guide*, p. 99.

Renaissance was in full swing partially due to the wealth that poured into Italy through trade on the silk road and across the Mediterranean Sea, making Italy the dominating cultural influence over Europe at this point in the early modern period. Isabella capitalized on this time of Italian cultural hegemony by carefully using and disseminating her fashion and sartorial choices to benefit herself politically. A prime example of Isabella's fashion influence is a portrait titled *Isabella d'Este in Black*, painted by Tiziano Vecellio between 1534 and 1536 (Fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> In this portrait, Isabella is depicted wearing a *zazzara* headdress on her head, a fashion creation of her own making.<sup>10</sup> The *zazzara* headdress was a rounded headdress that used rich fabrics and human hair and complimented the silhouette of the fashion Isabella wore by adding height and curves.<sup>11</sup> The headdress depicted in this portrait was known to be the invention of Isabella, and it became prevalent throughout Italy due to Isabella's influence and clever use of dissemination of the *zazzara*. Because of Isabella's powerful and influential position, many contemporary ladies and acquaintances asked her explicit permission to wear the *zazzara* headdress. Sometimes, Isabella granted permission to these ladies, like Eleonora Rusca da Correggio; other times, she did not give permission to wear her signature headdress, like her extended relative Susanna Gonzaga.<sup>12</sup> Isabella granted or declined requests to wear her signature style to control her influence and retain her authority over the headdress. By putting herself in this position, she made the other ladies of the social and economic circles she occupied subordinate to her since they had to ask her permission. While this particular subordination pertained to fashion, it also spread the subliminal message that Isabella occupied a position of power above others that carried over to other political aspects.

Isabella's dissemination of her fashion choices and creations worked to secure her influential status in Italy. However, she also maintained a fashion and, by extension, political influence over the rest of early modern Europe. In 1515, Isabella's son, Federico, stayed at the French court in Milan. The French had just captured Milan, and he was trying to establish friendly relations between the French and Mantua.<sup>13</sup> The French king asked Federico to request that his mother send fashion dolls of her signature attire to the French court.<sup>14</sup> Fashion dolls were a way of spreading the knowledge of what attire was most fashionable at that moment, as they were mini replicas of ladies' dress styles. Figure 2 is an example of what these fashion dolls generally looked like; this one, in particular, is an English fashion doll from 1680 (Fig. 2).<sup>15</sup> This request can be interpreted in two different ways, as can

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<sup>9</sup> "Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua," Kunsthistorisches Museum, Accessed February 21, 2022, <https://www.khm.at/en/objectdb/detail/1940/?offset=1&lv=list>.

<sup>10</sup> Carolyn James, "Political Image Making in Portraits of Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua," *Gender and History* online only, not yet in print issue (22 October, 2021) <https://doi-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/10.1111/1468-0424.12582>.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Cockram, "Isabella d'Este's Sartorial Politics," in *Sartorial Politics of Early Modern Europe*, ed. Erin Griffey (Amsterdam University Press, 2019), p. 48.

<sup>12</sup> James, "Political Image Making."

<sup>13</sup> James, "Political Image Making."

<sup>14</sup> James, "Political Image Making."

<sup>15</sup> "The Old Pretender Doll, 1680," Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 27, 2022, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O101879/the-old-pretender-doll-doll-unknown/>.



be seen in two recent works of scholarship examining Isabella d'Este's image and her fashion influence. In an article titled "Isabella d'Este's Sartorial Politics," author Sarah Cockram interprets this French king's request as a compliment to Isabella, acknowledging her power and influence over Italy.<sup>16</sup> The French king determined Isabella to be superior fashion-wise to the French court, which had immense political implications in his regarding a foreigner to be superior in any way to those of his kingdom. This interpretation implies that the French king viewed Isabella and Italy as above his court sartorially. Historian Carolyn James offered a different interpretation of this request in her article, "Political Image Making in Portraits of Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua." James argues that this request *undermined* Isabella's political power by taking away her control over disseminating her fashion choices.<sup>17</sup> The French king was likely aware that Federico was in the French court in Milan to establish friendly relations, so Isabella was not in a position to refuse his request for fashion dolls if she wished to cultivate friendly relations. By making this request that Isabella was obligated to accept, the French king took away Isabella's control over her fashion influence. He weakened her power and status as the Marchioness of Mantua. While these are two opposing views on what it meant politically to Isabella to have the French king request fashion dolls of her signature attire, both interpretations speak to her known influence over the courts of Europe sartorially. Whether this request was meant to acknowledge or undermine her position of power, it is still clear that her influence over women's fashion was known and used politically.

While Isabella is a specific example of Italian sartorial power and influence over early modern Europe, in a broader sense, Italy had cultural influence over early modern Europe in the sixteenth century due to the Italian Renaissance. Italy was considered the cultural pinnacle of Europe thanks to the wealth of trade through the silk road and across the Mediterranean Sea (which Italy's geography allowed it to monopolize). This trade brought wealth and new fabrics and material goods exclusively to Italy. Italy's monopolization of these trade routes and spheres of influence in Asia gave Italy immense commercial success in trading. In this way, Italy's cultural hegemony was due to its privileged commercial position.

Italy's fashion influence over Europe in the early part of the early modern period was directly tied to the politics and power of trading and commerce. Italian styles were copied and emulated throughout Europe as a consequence of this trading power Italy held. An example of this broader Italian influence is a pair of chopines currently located at the Victoria and Albert Museum from between 1580 to 1620 (Fig. 3).<sup>18</sup> These particular chopines are Spanish-made. However, chopines are a distinctly Italian shoe style from Venice.<sup>19</sup> These chopines were made after Isabella d'Este's time as the Marchioness of Mantua, but still, within the sixteenth century, Italy retained its cultural influence over Europe. This instance of Italian-style shoes created in Spain provides evidence of Italy's influence over women's fashion in the sixteenth century beyond the specific influence of Isabella d'Este.

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<sup>16</sup> Cockram, "Isabella d'Este's Sartorial Politics," pp. 47-48.

<sup>17</sup> James, "Political Image Making."

<sup>18</sup> "Pair of Chopines, 1580-1620," Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 21, 2022, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74595/pair-of-chopines-unknown/>.

<sup>19</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, "Pair of Chopines, 1580-1620."

## Queen Mary Tudor I

In 1554, artist Hans Eworth completed a painting of Queen Mary I of England simply titled *Portrait of Queen Mary I* (Fig. 4). The painting is of oil paint on oak wood, and the dimensions are 1040mm high by 780mm wide. Presently, the painting resides on display at the Burlington House of the Society of Antiquaries of London.<sup>20</sup> Royal portraiture was a means of propaganda before the invention of photography because it could be displayed for important political figures and guests to see, and it could convey a subliminal message to this targeted audience based on the royal depicted and their wishes. What do the fashion choices of Queen Mary in this portrait reveal about her political influence? What messages did these fashion choices convey to her targeted audience about her power, status, and wealth as the queen of England?

In this portrait of Queen Mary I of England, Mary is depicted standing upright with no surrounding objects around her, such as books, desks, chairs, or other inanimate objects that could convey a subliminal political message to the audience. Mary is not holding any objects; her hands are merely clasped in front of her in a demure pose, showcasing the jewelry on her fingers. The only external object in the painting is Mary's red velvet Cloth of Estate, which makes up the backdrop of the painting. The entire focus of the painting is on Mary herself and what she is wearing. This makes the painting perfect for understanding the political image Mary wished to project at this moment through her fashion choices alone.

To start, I will focus solely on Mary's fabric clothing choices in this painting, and then I will move on to her choice of jewelry and accessories. In this painting, Mary wears a dress requiring a Spanish farthingale. The Spanish farthingale was an undergarment worn under a lady's outer skirt that acted as a support to hold up the shape of the skirt. It was similar in design to what most people are familiar with, the hoop skirt of the 19th century, but instead of being bell-shaped, it was cone-shaped. The Spanish were the ones who first started wearing this type of dress support, so it is called the Spanish farthingale.<sup>21</sup> The conical, stiff shape of Mary's bodice is also Spanish in style.<sup>22</sup> It is so important that Mary is wearing this style and shape of dress because of the date of the painting and its connection to the broader political events of 1550s Europe.

The sixteenth century was the peak of Spanish power in the Americas because no other European countries had established imperial ties with the Americas. Due to this imperialistic prowess, Spain accumulated much wealth and status in Europe. This newfound wealth and status caused the eyes of Europe to look to Spain for influence in the hopes of emulating Spanish success.<sup>23</sup> This emulation of Spain also crossed over into women's fashion, as exemplified in this painting of Queen Mary of England. Mary was the queen of a different country, England, yet she is depicted in a royally commissioned portrait in a Spanish dress style. This depiction illustrates Spain's influence throughout Europe due to Spanish power and status gained from imperialism. While this painting of Mary in a

<sup>20</sup> "Panel Painting Portrait of Queen Mary I," Collections, Society of Antiquaries of London, accessed on January 25, 2022, <https://collections.sal.org.uk/object-lds1336>.

<sup>21</sup> Jazmin Montalvo, "Spanish Farthingale," FIT Fashion Timeline, last modified September 10, 2018, <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/spanish-farthingale/>.

<sup>22</sup> Hennessy, "Female Geometry," p. 99.

<sup>23</sup> Hennessy, "Elegant Formality," p. 94.

Spanish farthingale is evidence of Spain's cultural influence on Europe, it is also evidence of part of the image Mary wished to project to her political audience. Spanish styles were the height of fashion in Europe during the sixteenth century, and this can be viewed as Mary wishing to depict herself as keeping up with fashion. By extension, the politics of Europe since the two are directly connected, therefore bringing herself some legitimacy and political know-how as a monarch in defiance of any political figure who opposed her position of power. Any monarch needs to be viewed as keeping up with the intricacies of world politics and governance, but this was even more important for Mary, who was more likely to be doubted as a female monarch.

Another reason Mary aligned herself with Spanish fashion, in addition to keeping up with fashion and political "trends," is because of the cultural associations of the Spanish. Spanish fashion was known for being stiff, severe, and demure compared to the previous fashion trends that had come out of Italy in the previous century.<sup>24</sup> By wearing clothing associated with the ideas of stiff severity and demureness, Mary also crafted an image of herself as severe and demure. In this way, Spanish fashion served a dual purpose for Mary and was the ideal fashion choice to depict herself. From her clothes in this painting alone, Mary created an image of herself as a severe and demure monarch with enough political know-how to be a legitimate ruler.

Another important aspect of Mary's fashion choices in this painting is the jewels she wears and chooses to depict in this royal portrait. The brooch Mary is wearing on top of her sternum was originally a piece of jewelry listed by Katherine Parr, the last wife of her father, King Henry VIII, as one of the jewels in the coffer of the queen's jewels.<sup>25</sup> This is important because Mary chose to showcase herself in jewelry that rightfully was meant for the queen of England, again legitimizing her position. More important, though, is the pendant hanging from her waist, a piece of jewelry from her father, King Henry VIII's jewelry collection.<sup>26</sup> While the brooch worked to establish Mary as queen, this pendant owned by the former king worked to legitimize Mary's place in a position of power usually reserved for a man. By wearing the previous king's jewelry, Mary established herself in line with the power held by her father. Mary was unwed at the time of this painting, so she had to send a strong political message that she could rightfully hold the position of ruler of a country even though she was a woman.

Of equal importance to the jewelry, Mary depicts herself wearing is the jewelry she is explicitly not wearing. Notably absent from this painting is Mary's wedding ring because she had not yet married Philip of Spain; the wedding would take place in 1554. It is vital to consider Mary's impending nuptials because this may have impacted her fashion choices in this painting. Mary is dressed in a distinctly Spanish style, and while this dress served to establish herself as up with the political times, this style also might have served to ingratiate herself with Philip and the Spanish court. Since she had not yet married Philip, Mary may have chosen to wear clothing from the Spanish court to signal to her court and the Spanish court what was impeding between her and Philip.

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<sup>24</sup> Hennessy, "Elegant Formality," p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> Society of Antiquaries of London, "Panel Painting Portrait of Queen Mary I."

<sup>26</sup> Society of Antiquaries of London, "Panel Painting Portrait of Queen Mary I."

Queen Mary fashioned a strong political image through her clothes and jewelry to convey legitimacy, power, and severity. Since this portrait lacks inanimate objects or superfluous background details, the painting focuses on Mary alone and what she chooses to adorn herself in. Her fashion choices were meant to convey a subliminal message to her political audience and guests. Therefore her fashion can be attributed as a facet of her political agency as a woman in a position of power. Though this is just one portrait of Queen Mary I, it works to establish the image of herself she wished to present, and her fashion choices play a crucial role in that image.

While this painting showcases the political agency Mary I expressed through her fashion, it also highlights the imperialistic connection women's court fashion had during the sixteenth century of the early modern period. Though Queen Mary ruled England, she depicted herself wearing Spanish fashion. She fashioned herself this way for multiple reasons, including her impending marriage, cultural associations of severity, and political relevance. However, at the core, it was because Spanish trends set the fashion for the rest of Europe. The reason Spanish court styles were so prominent in other European courts, as exemplified here by Mary, was Spain's wealth and cultural hegemony during the sixteenth century due to their imperialism in the Americas. We can see another example of Spanish fashion influencing European fashion in a part of a smock constructed between 1575 and 1585 (Fig. 5).<sup>27</sup> This is a few decades after Mary's reign. However, it is still within the sixteenth century of Spanish imperial dominance. In this English-made smock part, we see examples of a distinctly Spanish embroidery style: blackwork.<sup>28</sup> Blackwork embroidery was done with black silk thread and was a defining feature of Spanish court fashion. Spain was known for black clothing and embroidery, and this smock part displays this Spanish technique despite being sewn in England.<sup>29</sup> This smock part, coupled with Mary's portrait, is evidence of Spain's influence on women's fashion throughout Europe. Since Spain began to dominate in terms of economic and commercial success in Europe as the sixteenth century progressed, all other courts would try to emulate Spanish success in any way they could, including fashion. In this way, women's fashion choices were linked to European politics and economic success, as we see in the transfer of dominating cultural influence from Italy to Spain and the subsequent shift in fashion influence.

### Queen Elizabeth I

Queen Elizabeth I of England was one of the most powerful and influential women of the early modern period. Her fashion choices were pivotal to her public image of power as queen. What is unique about Elizabeth's attire, though, is the connection and interplay between her and her court regarding her fashion choices. Elizabeth did not spend a lavish amount of money on her wardrobe, despite it being key to her public image, because she received many items of clothing and jewelry as

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<sup>27</sup> "Smock Part, 1575-1585," Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 20, 2022, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78732/smock-part-unknown/>.

<sup>28</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, "Smock Part, 1575-1585."

<sup>29</sup> Gabriel Guarino, "'The Antipathy between French and Spaniards': Dress, Gender, and Identity in the Court Society of Early Modern Naples, 1501-1799," *European History Yearbook: Dress and Cultural Difference in Early Modern Europe* 20 (2019): pp. 13-32.

gifts from her courtiers instead.<sup>30</sup> A prime example of these sartorial gifts received by Elizabeth are the New Year's Gift Exchange records, called the Elizabethan New Year's Gift Rolls. These records kept track of all the gifts given to Queen Elizabeth I for New Year by her court and other important public figures, and these gifts were predominantly ones of clothing, jewels, and accessories.<sup>31</sup> According to the lists of gifts received each year, a large majority of these gifts were from people of Elizabeth's court, like Earls, Dukes, and Ladies, rather than from foreign benefactors because it was a tradition in the English court to give the monarch gifts for New Years.<sup>32</sup> Each gift was meticulously described so that Elizabeth could confidently identify which item came from whom. For example, in the record of the New Year's Gift Exchange from 1559, one of the recorded gifts from the Earl of Westmarlande is "59.11: By Thearle [the Earl] of Westmarlande in a purse of red silke and siluer [silver] knit in haulf Soueraignes."<sup>33</sup> Each gift needed to be so thoroughly detailed in its description because if Queen Elizabeth chose to wear a particular gift, she needed to know precisely what political implications came with each item, which could be discerned from who had given it. These New Year's Gift Rolls indicate that for all of Elizabeth's reign, she received around 200 gifts each year.<sup>34</sup> With most of these gifts being wearable fashion items, Elizabeth could allocate less of her budget to clothing and attire and instead wear what her courtiers had gifted her. This wearing of sartorial gifts came with strings attached, of course, as is discussed by Abigail Gomulkiewicz in an article titled "The Gender Dynamics of Dress Gifts from Elizabethan Men at the Court of Elizabeth I": "They [dress gifts] were not simply given altruistically, but were given with an expectation of a return, whether this be future political favour or ... an immediate tangible benefit of land."<sup>35</sup> While Elizabeth, as queen, maintained control over her fashion choices and how she chose to present herself, her courtiers also played a role by giving her these gifts described in the New Year's Gift Rolls. Wearing a gift from a courtier who held an unpopular political opinion or had recently been part of a scandal could insinuate that Elizabeth supported this person's unpopular political opinion or disregarded the scandal that the courtier had been a part of. That being said, she could choose which gifts to wear, but it was not a decision she could make to purely fit the image she wished; she also had to consider the political strings attached to each gifted garment.

Elizabeth had to be especially vigilant about these subversive political messages regarding gifts of jewelry she received. Many jewelry gifts were meant to display a visual meaning crafted in the symbolism of the components of the jewelry, so in addition to considering the political maneuvering inherent in the giving of the jewelry gift, Elizabeth also had to consider the symbolism in the jewelry item itself. Many of the jewelry items Elizabeth received from the New Year's Gift Exchange

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<sup>30</sup> Susan Vincent, "Queen Elizabeth: Studded with Costly Jewels," in *Sartorial Politics of Early Modern Europe*, ed. Erin Griffey (Amsterdam University Press, 2019), p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> Jane Lawson, ed., *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges 1559-1603*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Lawson, *New Year's Gift Exchanges*; Vincent, "Queen Elizabeth: Studded with Costly Jewels," p. 124.

<sup>33</sup> Lawson, *New Year's Gift Exchanges*, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> Lawson, *New Year's Gift Exchanges*.

<sup>35</sup> Abigail Gomulkiewicz, "The Gender Dynamics of Dress Gifts from Elizabethan Men at the Court of Elizabeth I" *Gender and History* 33, no. 2 (July 2021), p. 358.

contained visual symbolism that she had to consider in her image-making process. An example of the visual symbolism that Elizabeth had to contemplate is a gift from 1578 from the Earl of Ormonde: “78.21: By therle [the Earl] of Ormonde a fayer Juell of golde being a phenex [phoenix] / the winges fully garnessed with Rubyes and small Diamondes / and at the fete thre feyer Diamondes and two smaller in the top abranche garnessed with Six small Diamondes thre small Rubyes and iij very meane perle and in the bottome thre perles pendant.”<sup>36</sup> While the description of this piece of jewelry makes it out to be quite exquisite and worthy of a queen, Elizabeth had to decide if she wanted the symbolism of a phoenix associated with her before she could think about the political strings attached to the gift-giving itself and whether or not she decided to wear the jewelry. Sometimes, these courtiers giving symbolic jewelry knew of the symbols and ideals that Elizabeth wished to be associated with, and sometimes they referenced emblem books to create jewelry ripe with symbolism for Elizabeth in the hope that she would identify her public image with the symbols they had provided.<sup>37</sup> In an article titled “Queen Elizabeth: Studded with Costly Jewels,” Susan Vincent succinctly states, “jewellery declared loyalty and suggested policy. To give it curried favour; to wear it endorsed its claims.”<sup>38</sup> While a gift may have been valuable visually in depicting Elizabeth how she wished to be seen, there were more political implications Elizabeth had to consider than just her visual presentation regarding fashion. In the case of these court-gifted implements, Elizabeth expressed her political agency. She engaged in political machinations through her fashion choices while also displaying the connection between her fashion and court figures in England.

Another asset of Elizabeth’s political image-making with fashion beyond the political strings associated with sartorial gifts is one we have already seen in use: royal portraiture. There were many portraits of Queen Elizabeth I painted during her reign, some more famous than others. However, we will be looking at one portrait from her younger days as a princess and one from the end of her reign as queen so we can distinguish the differences in the fashion that Elizabeth chose to wear. The first portrait was painted by William Scrots in 1546 and is titled *Elizabeth I when a Princess* (Fig. 6).<sup>39</sup> In this portrait, Elizabeth is wearing a pomegranate-patterned crimson silk dress with a skirt front and undersleeves made of a fabric called *cloth-of-silver* tissue with gold.<sup>40</sup> Sumptuary laws reserved this undersleeve and skirt front fabric for royals, so wearing this fabric in a portrait asserted Elizabeth’s status as royalty.<sup>41</sup> However, Elizabeth’s dress shape is most relevant in this portrait, especially in comparison to later portraits. This portrait depicts Elizabeth in a dress supported by a Spanish farthingale, hence the gown’s conical shape in the skirt. This style of skirt was already seen in the

<sup>36</sup> Lawson, *New Year’s Gift Exchanges*, p. 226.

<sup>37</sup> Emblem books were illustrated books with explanations about the symbolic meaning behind certain design motifs and were used by embroiderers and jewelry makers to create pieces. Gomulkiewicz, “The Gender Dynamics of Dress Gifts from Elizabethan Men at the Court of Elizabeth I,” 351.; Vincent, “Queen Elizabeth: Studded with Costly Jewels,” p. 124.

<sup>38</sup> Vincent, “Queen Elizabeth: Studded with Costly Jewels,” p. 124.

<sup>39</sup> “Scrots, William. ‘Elizabeth I when a Princess’,” Collections, Royal Collection Trust, 1546, Accessed February 27, 2022, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/404444/elizabeth-i-when-a-princess>.

<sup>40</sup> Royal Collection Trust, “Scrots, William, ‘Elizabeth I when a Princess’.”

<sup>41</sup> Royal Collection Trust, “Scrots, William, ‘Elizabeth I when a Princess’.”



portrait of Mary discussed above, which makes sense since these two portraits were painted only a few years apart. Elizabeth is wearing a Spanish style of dress in this portrait of her in her younger years as a princess, illustrating the Spanish influence on other European courts due to their cultural hegemony.

This next portrait, titled *Queen Elizabeth I* but nicknamed “the Ditchley Portrait,” was painted in 1592 by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (Fig. 7).<sup>42</sup> The shape of Elizabeth’s dress is very different in this portrait compared to the earlier portrait. In this portrait, Elizabeth is wearing a dress supported by a French farthingale (also called a wheel farthingale) instead of a Spanish farthingale. The French farthingale was crafted by wearing boned hoops of whalebone or metal over a padded roll, which created its signature shape of a circle jutting out from the hips.<sup>43</sup> By the 1590s, forty-six years after *Elizabeth I, when a Princess* portrait was painted, Elizabeth had transitioned to wearing the French farthingale instead of the Spanish farthingale. This is a significant change because Elizabeth shifted from wearing Spanish-influenced styles to French-influenced ones, indicative of the Europe-wide transition from following Spanish styles to following French styles as the sixteenth century progressed. In addition to being a signifier of this Europe-wide transition, Elizabeth could have rejected the Spanish style because of English politics with Spain. By the late 1580s, the conflict between England and Spain was at a boiling point due to religious differences (Catholic Spain and Protestant England), English pirate attacks on Spanish ships, and the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>44</sup> Due to this intense conflict with Spain, it would not make sense for Elizabeth to continue embracing and honoring Spanish styles by wearing them. This transition to French styles can also be seen as a political image-making move. Both of these reasons for Elizabeth to shift styles are important to look at because not only do these portraits tell us that the cultural, and by extension sartorial, the hegemony of Spain began to wane as the sixteenth century came to a close, but they also give insight into another way Elizabeth utilized fashion as a political tool. In Spain’s place, we see the rise of French influence and the start of France’s cultural hegemony over Europe that dominated the seventeenth century.

### Madame de Maintenon

Madame de Maintenon, or Françoise d’Aubigné, became the secret wife of the French King Louis XIV in 1683 following the death of Queen Marie-Thérèse.<sup>45</sup> Because the marriage was a secret, Madame de Maintenon could not overtly display her connection to the king. However, she still needed to emphasize her higher position in court and her relation to the king. Despite the marriage being a secret, Madame de Maintenon still had a significant influence on fashion in the court which she

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<sup>42</sup> “Queen Elizabeth I (‘The Ditchley portrait’),” People and Portraits, National Portrait Gallery, Accessed February 27, 2022,

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02079/Queen-Elizabeth-I-The-Ditchley-portrait> .

<sup>43</sup> Summer Lee, “1592 – Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, Elizabeth I (1533-1601), Queen of England”

FIT Fashion History, Accessed February 27, 2022,

<https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1592-gheeraerts-ditchley/> .

<sup>44</sup> “The Spanish Armada: History, Causes and Timeline,” Royal Museums Greenwich, accessed March 15, 2022,

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/spanish-armada-history-causes-timeline>.

<sup>45</sup> De Young, “1690-1699.”

established through subtlety in displaying her position of prominence to the king. As evidenced above, fashion in portraiture was a key for women in prominent positions to craft their public image, and Madame de Maintenon was no different. In a portrait attributed to Claude-François Vignon from the last third of the seventeenth century, Madame de Maintenon is pictured in attire meant to subtly display her status and relation to the king (Fig. 8).<sup>46</sup> The ermine-trimmed robe wrapped around Madame de Maintenon in this portrait is a shade of blue called royal blue and was intended for royalty.<sup>47</sup> The connection here is apparent; through the color of her robes, Madame de Maintenon placed herself in a position of royalty without actually declaring herself so. The royal blue is not the main color she is wearing, so the symbolism is subtle. However, to anyone who viewed the portrait, it would be clear that Madame de Maintenon held an esteemed position in the eyes of the king since she could wear a color intended for royalty. This portrait worked to express Madame de Maintenon's prominent position, which resulted in sartorial influence over court, without outright stating her marriage to Louis XIV.

Because of the work Madame de Maintenon did to display her status in the eyes of the king, she influenced the fashion styles of the court because her status garnered respect. In the 1680s, gown bodices started to be cut in a less-revealing style, with the neckline being raised and narrowed to cover the shoulders.<sup>48</sup> Multiple historians believe this new bodice style resulted from Madame de Maintenon's influence. Daniel Delis Hill argues that it was because of Madame de Maintenon's "conservative religious views and also because of her mature years."<sup>49</sup> Historian Millia Davenport states that it was under the "insistently moral influence of Madame de Maintenon" that not only did bodice necklines become less revealing, but sleeves became elbow-length as well.<sup>50</sup> Madame de Maintenon was known for her piety and strict religious views, which crossed over into how she dressed. Because she influenced the court due to her subtly-expressed relation to the king, the rest of the ladies of the court began to dress in a less revealing way to emulate Madame de Maintenon's style. An example of this style can be seen in a portrait by Louis Elle le Père from 1688 of Madame de Maintenon (Fig. 9).<sup>51</sup> This portrait depicts Madame de Maintenon in a black, conservative dress color, with a high neckline and elbow-length sleeves. This portrait displays both of the fashion changes that Hill and Davenport argue result from Madame de Maintenon, and here she is wearing them and supporting this argument.

While Madame de Maintenon affected the style of dress in the court with her more conservative fashion, the French court as a whole influenced the type of dress worn by the rest of European courts as the seventeenth century progressed. The French began wearing a type of dress called a mantua, which consisted of an overdress split in the front part of the skirt to reveal an underskirt in the seventeenth century.<sup>52</sup> This was the base type of dress that Madame de Maintenon

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<sup>46</sup> De Young, "1690-1699."

<sup>47</sup> De Young, "1690-1699."

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Delis Hill, *History of World Costume and Fashion* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2011), p. 411.

<sup>49</sup> Hill, *History of World Costume and Fashion*, p. 411.

<sup>50</sup> Millia Davenport, *The Book of Costume* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1948), p. 519.

<sup>51</sup> De Young, "1690-1699."

<sup>52</sup> Joan Nunn, *Fashion in Costume* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2000), p. 69.



affected by raising the neckline and lengthening the sleeves, but the dress itself remained the same. The Mantua was distinctly French (despite its Italian name), but it spread to other courts rapidly. We can see evidence of the widespread reach of the French mantua in an Italian fashion plate from 1689 captioned “Dama Francese vestita da Sultana con la ventarola,” which translates to “French lady dressed as a sultan with a ventarola” (Fig. 10).<sup>53</sup> In this fashion plate, a lady is depicted in a French mantua. However, this fashion plate was printed in Italy. Historian John Nevinsom describes a fashion plate as “a costume portrait indicating a suitable style of clothing that can be made or secured,” which means by this definition, this illustration was meant to advertise to Italian women the suitable style of dress for 1689, which was a French dress.<sup>54</sup> French mantuas were being touted as the fashionable style of dress in Italy, which indicates the shift in sartorial superiority towards France during the seventeenth century. As established above, Spain held a position of cultural hegemony for the sixteenth century due to their imperialistic machinations in the Americas. However, in the seventeenth century, this cultural hegemony switched to France. King Louis XIV of France fostered internal commercial success in France through manufacturing and industry, as well as consolidated power into an absolute monarchy, which resulted in France surpassing Spain as a cultural influence within Europe.<sup>55</sup> Following Spain, France retained cultural hegemony over Europe during the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth, as evidenced by this Italian-made fashion plate.

## Conclusion

Italian cultural hegemony in the first part of the early modern period was heavily linked to Italy’s monopolization of trade along the silk road and across the Mediterranean Sea. Italian styles were the height of fashion during the fifteenth and start of the sixteenth century, and Isabella d’Este and her sartorial influence are prime examples of this. Isabella was once described as a “Machiavelli in skirts.” She used the tools of political agency available to her, fashion choices and dissemination, to craft a public image and maintain her status and influence in Italy and beyond.<sup>56</sup> Isabella used fashion to subordinate others to her, as with the *zazara* headdress, which had international consequences, as seen with the fashion dolls the king of France requested and the request’s entanglement with sartorial control. Without Italian trade superiority, Isabella would have been unable to use political agency to put herself in a position of sartorial influence and, as a result, would have had a much weaker political and cultural position and status.

Spanish imperialism of the Americas caused Italian cultural hegemony to dwindle as the sixteenth century continued, with Spain replacing Italy in terms of cultural influence. Italy no longer had the most lucrative way of obtaining material goods in Europe, so now European courts tried to

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<sup>53</sup> “Dama Francese vestita da Sultana con la ventarola, 1689,” Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 27, 2022, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O577804/dama-francese-vestita-da-sultana-fashion-plate-van-westerhout-arnold/>.

<sup>54</sup> John Nevinsom, “Origin and Early History of the Fashion Plate,” *United States National Museum, Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology*, Bulletin 250, Paper 60 (1967): p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> Hillary Bernstein, “History 121F Lecture,” (Lecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, February 2021).

<sup>56</sup> Cockram, “Isabella d’Este’s Sartorial Politics,” p. 34.

emulate Spain over Italy. The English court exemplifies this emulation of Spain, with Queen Mary I using Spanish fashion in portraiture to manufacture a public image of herself that credited her with political relevance and established superiority. Mary understood fashion as a way of conveying a political message; a tool later carried on by her sister Elizabeth. In addition to utilizing Spanish fashion, she paid careful attention to her jewelry for symbolic meaning. Spanish imperialism was the cause of Spain's cultural hegemony in the sixteenth century, and because of this, Mary emulated and used Spanish fashion to further her political goals.

Queen Mary's sister, Queen Elizabeth, carried on in the same vein as Mary in using fashion to convey a political message. Elizabeth made great use of sartorial gifts in fabricating her public image and, in turn, pulled on attached political strings to these gifts. Elizabeth's fashion in her public image can be understood as an interplay between her and her court, as her New Year's Gift Exchange records illuminate. Through Elizabeth's public image in portraiture, we can also see the transition in cultural hegemony within Europe from Spain to France towards the end of the sixteenth century. Elizabeth switched to French fashion styles towards the end of her reign in the 1590s. This is evidence of the resulting shift in cultural influence due to the decline of Spanish imperialistic power and the vitality of France's internal commercial success. This switch also points out Elizabeth's political use of fashion, seeing as Spain and England were locked in conflict during this switch in fashion styles.

French cultural hegemony continued well into the seventeenth century thanks to King Louis XIV's political maneuvers within France and on the battlefields. France overtook Spain in terms of fashion influence as Spanish imperialistic success in the Americas continued to decline. The French mantua dress showed this continued French influence long into the seventeenth century, as we see Madame de Maintenon affecting the mantua's finer style points in the 1680s and 1690s. Madame de Maintenon continued in the steps of Isabella, Mary, and Elizabeth before her by using fashion to establish her public image and convey political meaning. She used portraiture to subtly send political messages and secure her influence in the court, which is observable in the changes to the mantua that occurred in the 1680s when she secretly married King Louis XIV.

These women used fashion to carry out their political goals and express their political agency. They each crafted a public image for themselves that carried political weight, and this public image was closely tied to European economic politics. The trend cycles of fashion that these women used to their advantage were the result of shifting European commerce endeavors, internal and external, throughout the early modern period and shifting cultural hegemony. External political factors like economics and trade affected the trend cycle of fashion in Europe. However, these women used these fashion trend cycles to support and enhance their public and political image, turning fashion into a political tool rather than simply reflecting politics.

## Appendix

Figure 1: “Isabella d’Este, Marchioness of Mantua,” Kunsthistorisches Museum, Accessed February 21, 2022, <https://www.khm.at/en/objectdb/detail/1940/?offset=1&lv=list> .



Figure 2: “The Old Pretender Doll, 1680,” Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 27, 2022, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk> .



Figure 3: “Pair of Chopines, 1580-1620,” Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 21, 2022, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk> .



Figure 4: “Panel Painting Portrait of Queen Mary I,” Collections, Society of Antiquaries of London, accessed

on January 25, 2022, <https://collections.sal.org.uk/object-lds1336> .



Figure 5: “Smock Part, 1575-1585,” Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 20, 2022, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78732/smock-part-unknown/> .



Figure 6: “Scrots, William. ‘Elizabeth I when a Princess’,” Collections, Royal Collection Trust, 1546, Accessed February 27, 2022, <https://www.rct.uk/collection> .



Figure 7: “Queen Elizabeth I (‘The Ditchley portrait’),” People and Portraits, National Portrait Gallery, Accessed February 27, 2022, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections> .



Figure 8: “Portrait of Madame de Maintenon,” FIT Fashion History Timeline, last updated August 18, 2020, <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1690-1699/> .



Figure 9: “Portrait of Françoise d'Aubigné (1635-1719), Marquise de Maintenon, with her niece Françoise d'Aubigné (1684-1739), the future Duchess of Noailles,” FIT Fashion History Timeline, last updated August 18, 2020, <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1690-1699/> .



Figure 10: “Dama Francese vestita da Sultana con la ventarola, 1689,”  
Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed February 27, 2022,  
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk> .





**Culture of Captivity:  
Piracy, Slavery, and Cultural Contact in the Mediterranean**

*Samuel Ricci<sup>1</sup>*

On Easter Tuesday of 1678, the *Speedwell* set sail from Exeter on a long voyage meant to travel across the Atlantic Ocean to Newfoundland, Bilbao and the Canary Islands, and then back to England.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately for many crew members, the ship would never see home again. The journey was cut short when Barbary corsairs set upon the *Speedwell*, and the crew would be captured and sold into slavery in the port city of Algiers. Among those captured was a young sailor, just fourteen or fifteen years of age, who would go on to serve as an enslaved person for the next fifteen years of his life, observing the Muslim world very closely. During these fifteen years, the young man was forced to convert to Islam and became the first Englishman on record to make the hadj to Mecca before he was freed and escaped to England.<sup>3</sup> The young man's name was Joseph Pitts. He would record his experiences in *A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans* a decade after his escape. This text revealed a nuanced understanding of Muslim life that might seem surprising, considering that the man who wrote it had been captured and abused by Muslim corsairs, slave traders, and enslavers. Pitts was part of a long tradition of freed captives narrating their accounts of the Barbary corsairs and North Africa. Across the centuries, these accounts can potentially offer a large variety of different perspectives on this experience. This posed a question for me: how did the Barbary corsairs' capturing of Europeans inform the understanding of North African Muslim society and religion, and how were Christian-Muslim relations affected?

From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, piracy ravaged the Mediterranean Sea. Hundreds of thousands were captured and enslaved by these corsairs, primarily along the coasts of North Africa, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Morocco, and Egypt. Of the small minority who achieved freedom, several would record or express their experiences in autobiographies, histories, and even literature. Animosity and distaste for the North Africans and Turks are found in virtually all European captivity narratives throughout this period, regardless of the religious background or country of origin of the enslaved, with the only significant divergence being which elements of North African society the writers found to be particularly obscene and vile. The primary difference between these narratives is Europeans' conception of the culture, religion, and society of their captors and masters. This knowledge evolved throughout the early modern period to become more understanding and tolerant of these things, allowing them to reflect upon European society.

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Pitts, *A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans...The Fourth Edition* (London: T. Longman, 1738), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 121, p. 180.



Studying the Barbary corsairs and captivity narratives from North Africa as part of the broader history of Christian-Muslim relations is not a new field of study. During the late 1960s through the early 1980s, new ground was broken on Christian-Muslim relations during this period, partially spurred on by Fernand Braudel's book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, which called attention to the relations between "the West" and Islam during this period and challenged the traditional notion of a divided "west versus the rest."<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. Friedman's research challenged the veracity of the early modern Europeans' belief that captivity in North Africa was exceptionally arduous and the Muslims were particularly cruel enslavers, much harsher than enslavers in Europe, by demonstrating that while the conditions aboard the galley ships and in the mines were indeed brutal, they were not unique to North Africa. Many Muslim captives in Europe reported similar situations, and "no evidence that, as a rule, [captives] were subjected to deliberate, purposeless physical brutality."<sup>5</sup> She argued that in many ways, Christian enslaved people could experience better conditions in Algiers than their Muslim contemporaries in Europe, as many enslaved Europeans were given work in domestic settings or specialized vocations. This meant they were taken better care of and not subject to the lash, and if they proved exceptionally talented, they could receive special privileges.<sup>6</sup> Another contribution to the study of the Barbary Coast during these decades, though not specifically of captive narratives, was J. F. P. Hopkins's *Letters From Barbary 1576-1774*, a collection of translated Arabic and Turkish correspondence to England from the North African rulers. These letters demonstrated how the governments of England, Morocco, and the North African city-states negotiated for the return of captives, especially in the case of Ahmad al-Mansur, Sultan of Morocco, who tried to establish respectful relations with Queen Elizabeth I.<sup>7</sup> However, as far as discourse on the topic, things began to slow down during the 1980s, and it would not be until the twenty-first century that scholarship would start to pick up again substantially.

After September 11, 2001, there began a resurgence in studying these narratives, whether it be fueled by Islamophobia or countermeasures against it, and the discussion of the Barbary Coast and Christian-Muslim relations grew toxic. US politicians invoked the Barbary corsairs in their justifications for the War on Terror, and soon historians such as Robert C. Davis would produce works like *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery*, bringing Islamophobia and the "west versus the rest" conflict back to the forefront of the discussion on the Barbary Coast. This association with the past became further exacerbated by the hostage events of the *Maersk Alabama* and Captain Richard Phillips, where the Barbary corsairs were now being hailed as the predecessors of the Somali pirates in this war between east and west.<sup>8</sup> Captive narratives were once again used to stir up Islamophobic perceptions, and historians began to dispel these perceptions, such as Gillian Weiss, in her work

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<sup>4</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Volume II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 798-802.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. Friedman, "Christian Captives at 'Hard Labor' in Algiers, 16th-18th Centuries," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13, no. 4 (1980): 616-632 at pp. 619-622, p. 626.

<sup>6</sup> Friedman, "Christian Captives," pp. 623-24.

<sup>7</sup> J. F. P. Hopkins, *Letters from Barbary 1576-1774* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 1, pp. 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> Adrian Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary: Corsairs, Conquests, and Captivity in the 17th-Century Mediterranean* (New York: Penguin Group, 2010), pp. xviii-xx.

*Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, using France's involvement in North Africa to give a more nuanced view of Christian-Muslim relations during this period.<sup>9</sup> Nabil Matar goes a step further in his reexamining of history, addressing what he sees as a seriously egregious error on the part of Western historians. Due to the obsession with the violence against Christian Europeans by Muslim corsairs in the west as their possessive nature of a *mare nostrum*, early modern Muslim captivity narratives have been virtually erased from memory, and it is this that contributes to the Islamophobic associations of Barbary corsairs and modern-day terrorists and Somali pirates.<sup>10</sup> My research is more akin to that of Matar and Weiss, seeking to understand better Christian-Muslim relations rather than to compare the Barbary corsairs to modern-day Muslim extremists or Somali pirates. I am fascinated with the cultural contact historians like Braudel and Friedman observed. To better understand this, the captivity narratives of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries will be the best place to start.

European captivity in North Africa had occurred since at least the thirteenth century, especially as a result of the *Reconquista* in Spain, where Muslims were being forced out of the Iberian Peninsula for several centuries. However, the phenomenon began to take off during the early modern period due to the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the formation of the North African city-states, and the rising strength of the Sultanate of Morocco under Ahmad al-Mansur.<sup>11</sup> The Barbary Coast, the term used to describe the North African semi-autonomous city-states of Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis and the independent Sultanate of Morocco, was where the majority of European Christian captives wound up in slavery, the majority taken at sea by the Barbary corsairs, privateers of the Ottoman Empire primarily stationed out of these North African city-states.<sup>12</sup> The Spanish Crown, following a violent invasion after the success of the Reconquista in 1492, had controlled this region. Still, after the death of Ferdinand II in 1516, these states rebelled, and the Barbarossa brothers, corsairs for the Ottoman Empire, reclaimed the territory and established the city of Algiers.<sup>13</sup> Of the hundreds of thousands who were captured between the years 1530 and 1780, it is estimated that only about five percent were able to regain their freedom and return to Europe.<sup>14</sup> These captured Europeans were often Spanish, Portuguese, French, or Italian because of their proximity to North Africa. Still, many

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<sup>9</sup> Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Nabil Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity Through Arab Eyes, 1517-1798* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), p. 8; Nabil Matar, "Two Arabic accounts of captivity in Malta: Texts and contexts" in *Piracy and Captivity in the Mediterranean 1550-1810*, ed. Mario Klarner (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 258-274 at p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Mark, "'Free, unfree, captive, slave': António de Saldanha, a late sixteenth-century captive in Marrakesh" in *Piracy and Captivity in the Mediterranean 1550-1810*, ed. Mario Klarner (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 99; Maria Antonia Garces, *Cervantes in Algiers: A Captive's Tale* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), pp. 19-20.

<sup>12</sup> Mario Klarner ed., *Piracy and Captivity in the Mediterranean 1550-1810* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Antonio de Sosa, *Topography of Algiers*, ed. Maria Antonia Garces and trans. Diana de Armas Wilson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011 [1612]), p. 102.

<sup>14</sup> Mark, "'Free unfree,'" p. 100.

others were captured, including the Dutch, English, and Icelanders. Those set free were often liberated by their families, governments, or redemptionist Christian organizations, both Catholic and Protestant. Catholics, though, often had orders dedicated to achieving this liberation, such as the Lazarists, Trinitarians, and Mercedarians. However, there are accounts of those who could free themselves by escaping.<sup>15</sup> The writings that came out of these captives, historical, autobiographical, or fictional, are the foundation of our understanding of this period and will prove to be the foundation for recognizing the cultural exchange that occurred.

Spain and Portugal's relationship with the North African states was a particularly tenuous one, and some of the earliest detailed captivity narratives come from the Spanish and Portuguese. These accounts were almost entirely negative, demonizing the Muslim captors. Yet, many still bore evidence that the captives had an intense curiosity for the culture and society they found in North Africa. One example of this tendency is Doctor Antonio de Sosa's *Topography of Algiers*, which epitomizes both this demonization and curiosity. Sosa was a Portuguese cleric who lived in captivity in Algiers between 1577 and 1581. During his time, he wrote extensively about his surroundings in what would later be published in 1612 as a three-volume collection called the *Topography and General History of Algiers*, of which the *Topography of Algiers* was the first.<sup>16</sup> Within the *Topography*, Sosa relates a great deal of information about the city of Algiers, from the social hierarchy to the people's cultural practices, observing the elements of their society with great detail. For example, he discusses the methods and domestic work of women in Algiers with fascination. Sosa notes the social and ceremonial nature of childbirth to the North Africans and the active nature women take in the community. Daily activities include visiting the local chapels, tombs, and farms with their children and attending parties and other social events with their neighbors.<sup>17</sup> Sosa acknowledges that during his time, there were many works in circulation discussing the customs of Muslims, so his goal in these sections of the *Topography* was to examine the traditions of the Algerians "beyond what Muhammad commands."<sup>18</sup> His work is a significant breakthrough in understanding Christian-Muslim relations and Algerian society during the late sixteenth century. Few writers before or since go into the same detail Sosa does.

Despite Sosa's curiosity about Algiers and the thorough account this curiosity produced, he makes it clear throughout that he despises the people of Algiers and Muslims as a whole. However, Sosa does so in conflicting and contrary ways, showing his understanding of their culture. Sosa calls the Ottoman Turks who immigrated to Algiers "the vilest of people, stupid and villainous, and for this reason, the Turks call them jackals." However, even in this critique, he concedes that some still manage to be moral, upright men.<sup>19</sup> He also disrespects the Qur'an harshly, saying it "consists of an infinite number of tall stories that Muhammad dreamed up, all contrary to good doctrine and repugnant to reason and to all philosophy and science." Yet, he later goes on to discuss the merits of

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<sup>15</sup> G. N. Clark, "The Barbary Corsairs in the Seventeenth Century," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 8, no. 1 (1944), p. 23; Friedman, "Christian Captives," p. 617.

<sup>16</sup> Garces, *Cervantes in Algiers*, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, pp. 194-5, pp. 203-6.

<sup>18</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 216.

<sup>19</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 124.

Islam from the standpoint of devotion.<sup>20</sup> When describing the *marabouts*, highly respected religious figures in North African Muslim communities, Sosa says they are “highly ignorant” and, in some extreme cases, public rapists. On how they pray, he says they repeat the prayers so many times and with such speed that “they drool all over their chests. And, in the end, their brains are fried, and they fall to the ground like dead men. And these same men are taken for the greatest of saints.”<sup>21</sup> However, in the following passage, Sosa commends them for their devotion, charity, and kindness, despite their “blindness” and “bestial” lives.<sup>22</sup> Sosa was particularly harsh in his criticism of sexuality and sexual deviancy in Algiers. Though the public raping by the *marabouts* was despicable in his eyes, he was explicitly disgusted by the “wickedness of sodomy” that he believed may have caused the diabolic renegades, or Christian converts to Islam,<sup>23</sup> to forsake their religion. Nevertheless, he still defends them in their “youthful ignorance.”<sup>24</sup> Still, Sosa demonstrates some respect for the Algerians and Turks, dedicating a portion of his account to tell of the virtues of the “Moors,” and even says that Christians could adopt some of these virtues.<sup>25</sup> He admires their cleanliness and companionship and their refusal to blaspheme, gamble, speak ill of the sultan or religious figures, or duel one another.<sup>26</sup> Sosa’s relationship with the culture and society of Algiers is complicated and may be informed by the popular beliefs about Islam at the time, which poised Islam as a farce and the antithesis of Christianity. This ideology permeates Sosa’s work, making it difficult to determine precisely what Sosa saw as valuable in North African society. Many of the things Sosa notes may have been appealing to him. While he could not explicitly state this for fear of offending his patrons and rulers, his inclusion of these details suggests the possibility that Sosa was internalizing and benefiting from his experiences in Algiers.

During the same period that Sosa was a hostage, a companion of his and one of the most famous Spanish authors of the early modern period was also enduring captivity in Algiers: Miguel de Cervantes. Cervantes was captive in Algiers between 1575 and 1580 before his ransom was paid, and he could return home to Spain. Unlike Sosa, who wrote an extensive autobiographical and historical account of Algiers, even including a biography of Cervantes in his *Dialogue of the Algerian Martyrs*, Cervantes chose to express his ordeal in fictional literature.<sup>27</sup> Cervantes wrote multiple works inspired by his time in Algiers, including *La Galatea*, *Life in Algiers*, *The Dungeons of Algiers*, and what is widely known as “The Captive’s Tale,” three chapters found within his major work *Don Quixote*.<sup>28</sup> The latter account tells of a young sailor, narrating his tale to Don Quixote in a tavern, who sailed throughout the Mediterranean before being captured by corsairs and forced to work as a galley rower. The sailor

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<sup>20</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 176.

<sup>21</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 177.

<sup>22</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, pp. 178-180.

<sup>23</sup> This can be pejoratively referred to as “turning Turk,” especially for those renegades who became corsairs after their conversion.

<sup>24</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 244.

<sup>26</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>27</sup> Garces, *Cervantes in Algiers*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>28</sup> Garces, *Cervantes in Algiers*, pp. 1-3.

tells of the harsh cruelty of his captors, his life in the *baños* (bath houses) of Algiers, and his eventual escape from captivity.<sup>29</sup> “The Captive’s Tale” focuses heavily on the suffering captives faced in Algiers, focusing on the traumatic events that Cervantes likely witnessed during his time in Algiers, and is also reflected in Sosa’s *Topography*.<sup>30</sup> The young sailor says of his experience, “nothing gave us such Affliction, as to hear and see the excessive Cruelties with which our Master us’d the other Christian Slaves,” and that he witnessed Christians being hanged, impaled, mutilated, and beaten for the Turks’ pleasure, as they were “naturally an Enemy of Mankind.”<sup>31</sup> Much like Sosa, Cervantes takes a strictly negative stance against the Turks, dehumanizing them as ruthless, two-dimensional villains for his literature. Cervantes makes it clear that he holds no sympathies for the corsairs and emphasizes that they are cruel masters, a reflection of his own traumas he must have experienced during his five years of captivity.

These depictions are contrasted, however, with those of other Muslim characters within the text, specifically the *renegados* or renegades. When the captives are presented with a note written in Arabic along with forty Spanish gold crowns, the young sailor enlists the help of one of these renegades. The renegade, he says, “had shewn me great Proofs of his Kindness” because those renegades who sought to escape and return to their homes needed the writing of an enslaved Christian to serve as an affidavit to prove he was “an honest Man and has always been kind to the Christians.”<sup>32</sup> The writer of the note is also revealed to be Muslim, an unmarried woman named Zoraida who seeks to convert to Christianity as she has been visited by *Lela Marien*, or Our Lady Mary, who has inspired Zoraida to escape Algiers and convert.<sup>33</sup> The narrative switches gears from there forward and becomes a romantic tale of escape, in which Zoraida helps the captives in the nearby *baños* to escape. Though Cervantes does not offer much in the way of tolerance of Muslims, he does examine interesting elements of cultural contact through these two repentant Muslims. The renegade is given a sympathetic image, as despite his being called a sinner, Cervantes portrays him as a good man who ultimately assists the enslaved Christians achieve their freedom and decides to redeem himself before the inquisition. He represents the thousands of Europeans who, from the European perspective, lost hope in returning to their homelands and converted to Islam to preserve themselves. While Cervantes holds his reservations with these people, as converting to Islam is an egregious sin, he is willing to accept them back so long as they repent and reconvert, and he shows no disrespect for their adoption of the culture of Algiers. The same goes for Zoraida, who fits the archetype of a Muslim who chooses to convert to Christianity. Once again, Cervantes does not disparage her ethnic and cultural background as long as she embraces the “true religion” of Christianity. Since Cervantes uses Zoraida as a romantic interest for the captive, it is unclear if this openness to Muslims converting to Christianity and being accepted into Christian society was limited to women. However, given the Spanish Empire’s passionate attempts at converting North Africans during their conquest following the *Reconquista*,

<sup>29</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. Peter Motteux (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 334-340.

<sup>30</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, p. 340.

<sup>32</sup> Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, p. 342.

<sup>33</sup> Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, pp. 343-7.

Cervantes likely was open to and welcoming Muslim converts to Christianity in whatever form this took.<sup>34</sup> This is by no means a tolerant view, perhaps even less so than Sosa's account, and we cannot neglect how Cervantes demonizes the vast majority of the Muslims in his works. Still, the cultural influences of North African society he learned from his captivity have crept into literature.

Not all of the Spanish and Portuguese accounts that came out of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were so demonizing of the Muslims. In Mario Klarer's edited *Piracy and Captivity in the Mediterranean 1550-1810*, Peter Mark discusses the account of the Portuguese Antonio de Saldanha, whose narrative was unique and relevant due to its "generally positive tone toward the Sultan [Ahmad al-Mansur]" even after fourteen years of captivity.<sup>35</sup> Saldanha was a contemporary of Sosa and Cervantes, captured in 1578, but rather than being taken to Algiers, he was taken to Marrakesh, Morocco. Further, his experience was vastly different from most other Spaniards and Portuguese due to his elevated social status.<sup>36</sup> Unlike Saldanha's peers, he had a much closer relationship, one of professionalism and respect, with his master al-Mansur. He observed much more tolerance among Muslims towards Christian captives. Mark even goes so far as to argue that North African Muslim societies allowed for a more comfortable life with more opportunities for social promotion than those on the opposite shores of the Mediterranean.<sup>37</sup> This is mainly due to al-Mansur's desire to modernize the sultanate and build its industry to match that of the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Portugal, and other major European powers of the era, whom al-Mansur tried to emulate. Saldanha's account of his captivity in Marrakesh, entitled *Cronica de Almançor Sultão de Marrocos*, observes how al-Mansur was a brilliant, diplomatic leader and tolerant of his Christian subjects and captives, primarily artisans from England, France, or the Netherlands. These captives lived privileged lives, being allowed daily mass in their secluded and protected community (called a *prisão*) and even being encouraged to cultivate their own vineyards and olive groves, of which they could reap the benefits.<sup>38</sup> Ellen G. Friedman confirms that this practice of allowing captives to worship at mass and placing them in protected communities, called *baños*, also occurred in Algiers, the same place Cervantes describes in *Don Quixote*.<sup>39</sup> It should be recognized that these captives were by no means free, though they could theoretically "turn Turk" at any point and raise their social status. We know from Cervantes and later English accounts like Joseph Pitts that this did not always allow captives to emancipate themselves.<sup>40</sup> Still, the toleration Saldanha observed in al-Mansur's court, when compared with the accounts of Sosa and Cervantes, paints a more nuanced and complex image of what life was like on the Barbary Coast and the degree to which cultural contact influenced Europeans, as well as how Europeans influenced Muslims like al-Mansur.

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<sup>34</sup> Garces, *Cervantes in Algiers*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>35</sup> Mark, "Free, unfree," p. 100.

<sup>36</sup> Mark, "Free, unfree," p. 101.

<sup>37</sup> Mark, "Free, unfree," p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> Mark, "Free, unfree," p.105.

<sup>39</sup> Ellen G. Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp.60-81.

<sup>40</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 182.

Following the turn of the seventeenth century, anti-Muslim sentiments were far from being quelled in Western Europe. They were expanding to new frontiers far beyond the shores of the Mediterranean. In 1627, corsairs from Algiers and Salé invaded Iceland, at the time a possession of the Kingdom of Denmark, to acquire enslaved people, some of whom could be used for ransom. Among these captives was the Reverend Ólafur Egilsson, a Lutheran minister who was captured along with his family. However, he was quickly released to negotiate a ransom for his fellow captives.<sup>41</sup> Egilsson resided in the Westman Islands, and he portrays himself as a very pious and well-educated man, frequently citing scripture, continuously showing reverence to God as he relates his account, and at one point, he even implies he can speak German.<sup>42</sup> In a typical Protestant manner for the period, Egilsson is exceptionally concerned with his salvation and believes that the tribulations he is undergoing are meant to be a punishment or a test for him to draw nearer to God; he writes that “everything happens as the Lord wants, when we are judged, then are we punished by God, so that we are not lost eternally.”<sup>43</sup> In Protestant captive narratives throughout the early modern period, “the personal core of these narratives is nearly always a justification of the captives’ Protestant beliefs, and an apologia explaining how the captives’ faith remained intact despite the many trials and tribulations they had to face at the hands of their masters,” and Egilsson’s account follows this trend.<sup>44</sup> Rather than internalizing the experience of his captivity in Algiers as an opportunity to improve his piety by modelling it after the Muslims, which Sosa seems to have done, Egilsson views the experience as a punishment meant to test his piety and loyalty to God, in whom Egilsson never loses faith. In this way, Egilsson learned very little about Muslim society during his time in captivity compared to Sosa or Saldanha, which can also be attributed to his brief stay in Algiers. His narrative provides an alternative perspective on the experience of captivity. Though we find that Egilsson despises his captors just as much as Sosa and Cervantes, he has a unique cognizance of them that is crucial to understanding the evolution of Christian-Muslim relations in captivity narratives.

As already stated, *The Travels of Reverend Ólafur Egilsson* is consistent with captivity narratives of other Europeans in its expression of utter resentment of the Turks and Algerians, whom Egilsson finds despicable. Egilsson repeatedly refers to the Turks as the “evil pirates” and even calls them the “servants of Satan.”<sup>45</sup> Though God is testing his faith, the corsairs ultimately take him from his homeland and subjugate his wife and children to slavery in Algiers. Egilsson views the community in

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<sup>41</sup> Ólafur Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend Ólafur Egilsson*, ed. and trans. Karl Smári Hreinsson and Adam Nichols (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016 [1628], p. 42, p. 82.

<sup>42</sup> Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity*, p. 51; Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Auchterlonie, *Encountering Islam: Joseph Pitts: An English Slave in 17th century Algiers and Mecca* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2012), p. 73.

<sup>45</sup> Several sources refer to the “pirates” or “rovers” as the ones who captured them, but in almost every case, these so-called pirates are in fact the Barbary corsairs, professional privateers. Still, the actions between these corsairs and actual pirates were very similar, making it difficult to distinguish, and for the captives, making the distinction would have been the least of their concerns. See W. R. Owens, “Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, and the Barbary Pirates,” *Journal of the English Association* 62, no. 236 (Spring 2013): 51–66 at 53; Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend*, p. 8.

Algiers as full of sin, observing that “many there are who look fair and embellish themselves in order to better carry through their evil business, as David says. Whatever happens, we are the Lord’s.”<sup>46</sup> This concern with the appearance and extravagance of the North Africans is not shared by Sosa, who admires their cleanliness, dress, and culture. Still, these things emerge as prideful and vain for someone as religiously minded as Reverend Egilsson. Egilsson also found the renegades to be the cruellest of the Turks, unlike Cervantes and Sosa, who believed the natural-born Turks were the vilest.<sup>47</sup> Despite these minor differences, the general sentiment of hatred remained, even across the significant religious and ethnic divides between the Catholic Iberians and the Lutheran Scandinavians.

Even though this animosity defines Egilsson’s account of the corsairs, he could still find humanity in the Muslims he encountered. However, he does so in a way that is unlike his Iberian predecessors. Cervantes’s narrative only sympathizes with the renegades. It converts his fictional captive encounters, with the rest being nothing more than antagonists. Sosa describes the humanity of the North Africans in terms of the virtues that he admires, still viewing them as a definitive “other.” Egilsson, similar to Cervantes, paints a very two-dimensional image of the pirates, but in two crucial instances, he acknowledges that despite their cartoonish villainy, they are people. When Egilsson’s wife was suffering through childbirth aboard the ship carrying them to Algiers, the pirates helped care for the mother and child, giving them their shirts to keep the newborn.<sup>48</sup> Despite the violence Egilsson witnessed when the corsairs sacked his home, he does not deny that his family and friends were treated with a degree of hospitality during his time with them. However, the most interesting way in which Egilsson recognizes the basic humanity of his captors is in describing what they look and behave like, giving a very candid response:

Truly speaking, they are like other people: different in size and look, some small, some large, some black. Some are not of Turkish origin at all, but are Christian people of other countries such as England, Germany, Denmark, or Norway...in truth, they [the Turks] are not a wicked looking people. Rather, they are quiet and well-tempered in their manner.<sup>49</sup>

These may not seem very tolerant-minded or even revolutionary, but this was a crucial distinction. Rather than measure the humanity of the corsairs in terms of “Christian-ness” or European concepts of virtue, Egilsson grants his enemies basic equality. Though he sees them as evil people, utterly deplorable and full of sin, he still recognizes them as people diverse in appearance, ethnicity, and ideology. This sort of recognition will continue by future authors like Joseph Pitts. While Egilsson deviates little from earlier captive narratives in how he views the corsairs, his perspective will characterize a growing apprehension of the corsairs, Muslims, and North Africans that was emerging.

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, the captive narrative genre grew in popularity. One narrative from this period came from Germain Mouette, a Frenchman from a town near Chartres, captured by the corsairs in 1670 at 19. Mouette gave a harrowing account of the brutality during his

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<sup>46</sup> Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend*, p. 36.

<sup>47</sup> Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend*, p. 18-19.

<sup>48</sup> Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend*, p. 22.

<sup>49</sup> Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend*, p. 18.



eleven years as a captive in Salé, one of Morocco's major cities, as he witnessed a great deal of violence and suffering at the hands of the Sultan of Morocco and the enslavers. Mouette's account, titled *The Travels of the Sieur Mouette, In the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco During his Eleven Years Captivity in those Parts*, tells of captives being subjected to backbreaking labor, primarily backbreaking construction projects. At the same time, he and the other enslaved people were poorly fed and constantly beaten.<sup>50</sup> However, it was likely even more distressing for Mouette to witness the sadistic violence against his fellow captives. Mouette watched many men get abused, seeing a man beaten and butchered to death before being fed to dogs. On another occasion, a man was thrown into the lions' den as punishment after refusing to convert to Islam (miraculously, the man was not eaten).<sup>51</sup> Mouette observed that the Sultan was a fierce leader, who, due to the disrespect of a Genoese pirate, swore he "would never give Liberty to any Christian, for any Price whatsoever," and that the mere sight of the man made him quake.<sup>52</sup> The tribulations Mouette experienced were harsh, a far departure from the experience of Saldanha in Morocco less than a century earlier, but not all of his contemporary captives shared the same suffering. Claude Auxcousteaux de Fercourt, a nobleman from Paris, captured around the same time as Mouette, acknowledged that though his experience as an enslaved person was one of hardship and brutality, this was not the case for all of his peers. He commented that "not all slaves meet as unhappy a fate as ours; those lucky to fall into the hands of a true Muslim or natural Turk suffer only insofar as they have lost their liberty."<sup>53</sup> These generous masters would comfort the enslaved by reminding them of the temporary nature of their stay, assuring them not to worry for "God is great, the world so-so; God will lead the way; an occasion will arrive for you to return home."<sup>54</sup> For some Protestants, the persecution they faced in Europe was much more frightening than the prospect of captivity on the Barbary Coast. In a sermon to some members of his community, one pastor from the Netherlands who had returned from North Africa confirmed as much; "several among you [who] were captives in Barbary,' he observed in 1686, 'know by experience that Barbary is humane in comparison to our ungrateful homeland' and Muslims are 'lambs' as compared to lupine Catholics."<sup>55</sup> These sorts of acknowledgments of kindhearted, generous Muslims are rare to find in accounts such as Mouette's due to the hardship he faced, which naturally informed his opinion of the religion and society of the North Africans. Even still, he decided to write about the culture of the Moroccans and Islam, but he is exceedingly irreverent, likely due to his harsh treatment.

Mouette's account is unique in that he is one of the first captives to dedicate a significant portion of his narrative to discuss the tenets of the Muslim faith and Moroccan society. Sosa had claimed there were many texts available to his audience on the topic of Islam, and while Paul

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<sup>50</sup> Germain Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur Mouette, In the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco During his Eleven Years Captivity in those Parts* (London: J. Knapton, A. Bell, D. Midwinter, and W. Taylor, 1710), pp. 23-30.

<sup>51</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur*, p. 17, pp. 34-6.

<sup>52</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur*, p. 17, p. 24.

<sup>53</sup> Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs*, p. 68.

<sup>54</sup> Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs*, p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> Gillian Weiss, "A Huguenot captive in 'Uthman Dey's court: Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripoly (1685) and its author" in *Piracy and Captivity in the Mediterranean 1550-1810*, ed. Mario Klarner (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 245.

Auchterlonie observes that knowledge had improved since the medieval era, he also notes that “it is remarkable how little was known about the history, beliefs, structures and practices of Islam during this period.”<sup>56</sup> In light of this, it is quite extraordinary that Mouette wrote about these beliefs and practices in his narrative during this period. *The Travels of the Sieur Mouette* cover many elements of Islam accurately, including the Five Principal Articles of Faith, the religious holidays and sabbath day, and their ban on gambling.<sup>57</sup> However, most of what Mouette writes is reproving, disrespectful, and in some cases, blatantly incorrect, leaving little room for nuance or tolerance. Much like Sosa describes the *marabouts* as uneducated fools, Mouette recounts that the Qur’an states that “all Idiots and half-witted Person be look’d upon as Saints, which is religiously observ’d, and they are Canoniz’d whilst living.”<sup>58</sup> The fact that Mouette wrote an account of Muslim beliefs demonstrates an understanding of Islam that previous authors did not. Still, it cannot be taken as accurate or genuine, as it is rife with critiques and inaccuracies. Mouette also seems to find the “Moorish” women particularly attractive, not unlike Sosa, who goes on at length about their fashion in his *Topography*.<sup>59</sup> Rather than end there, Mouette goes on to develop a portrayal of the women as seductresses while he and some of his Christian comrades nobly resist these temptations. He says that the enslaver’s wives were very fond of the enslaved Christians, as their husbands (as part of the Muslim faith) were circumcised, while the Christians were not, and these women would “use all Arts to gain the Affections of their own Slaves.”<sup>60</sup> In some ways, Mouette’s account is a regression, reaffirming the fears of Europeans about the barbaric practices of Muslims and the cruelty experienced by Europeans in North Africa. Nevertheless, Mouette still has his place in the study of Christian-Muslim relations during this period and still exhibits some literacy on Islam and Muslim ways of life.

Just before Mouette’s account was published in English for the first time, Joseph Pitts had published *A Faithful Account* describing his experience in Algiers and Mecca. His work is perhaps the most genuine and comprehensive account by a European about Islam and North African society published during the early eighteenth century, if not the early modern period as a whole. Pitts was from Exeter in County Devon, one of the wealthiest port cities in England during the early modern period, making it no surprise that he chose to become a sailor at a young age.<sup>61</sup> County Devon was also one of England’s most fiercely Protestant regions, and Pitts was raised as a Presbyterian.<sup>62</sup> This upbringing would inform how Pitts prefaced his account, which like Egilsson, is focused on justifying his faith and his adherence to Christianity, even though Pitts forcibly converted to Islam due to the “barbarous Cruelty” of his first master, whom he despised.<sup>63</sup> Pitts’s *A Faithful Account*, written about ten years after his return to England, is characterized by his desire to reconcile his time as an apostate. Despite his rejection of Islam as “false worship” and his sour disposition towards the Turks and

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<sup>56</sup> Auchterlonie, *Encountering Islam*, p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur*, p. 77-89.

<sup>58</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur*, p. 89.

<sup>59</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur*, p. 95; Sosa, *Topography*, pp. 198-202.

<sup>60</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur*, p. 96.

<sup>61</sup> Auchterlonie, *Encountering Islam*, pp. 66-7.

<sup>62</sup> Auchterlonie, *Encountering Islam*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>63</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 183.

Algerians, Pitts's account may be considered to be not entirely one of propaganda. In fact, it is the most accurate, neutral account of the Muslim faith of all the captive narratives treated here and gives the most sympathetic view of North African people and their customs. This makes Pitts's work the most valuable source of genuine understanding and tolerance that came out of piracy in the Mediterranean during the early modern period. It demonstrates the changes made since the earliest accounts in the sixteenth century.

In the same way that Mouette discussed the beliefs of Muslims in his account, Pitts writes extensively about Muslim traditions, religious beliefs, and holy sites. However, his narrative is much more accurate and less condescending than Mouette's. This is likely due to Pitts's conversion, which no other author examined here had undergone. Even after his conversion to Christianity, Pitts tries to give as honest and direct an account of Islam as possible without the judgments found in Mouette's version. On the topic of the divinity of Jesus Christ in the Muslim tradition, Pitts tries to correct misunderstandings he saw being perpetrated by other writers; he remarks that "tis true, they own Christ to be a great Prophet, and born of the Virgin Mary...but they never own him to be the Son of God, (as some have related) or acknowledge his Doctrine as the last will and Word of God."<sup>64</sup> This is a direct contradiction of Mouette's account of the Muslim stance on Christ, as he says the Muslims call Christ *Robo Alla*, or Son of God.<sup>65</sup> Pitts also dispels certain rumors about the Muslims, such as the myth that many of them take many wives, to which Pitts responds that "there is not one in a thousand hath more than one, except it be in the country, where some here and there may have two."<sup>66</sup> He also contradicts the myth that when turning Turk, renegades throw a dart at an image of Jesus Christ, saying that those who furnish this myth "deceive the World."<sup>67</sup> In relating this information, Pitts does not come across as contemptuous or intolerant like the previous accounts of Islamic practices such as Mouette's, but instead shows erudition and a degree of tolerance in his narrative, far surpassing any that could be seen in previous authors' works. However, this is not to say that Pitts cannot compare with those who came before him. The internalization of his experience in North Africa and the Near East was similar to Sosa's curiosity and desire for knowledge of the culture. He views his time in Algiers as a learning opportunity. In the preface to *A Faithful Account*, Pitts laments:

It is a shame, indeed, to Christians to take a View of Zeal of those poor blind *Mahometans*...If they are so zealous in their false worship, it must needs be a Reprimand to Christians, who are so remiss in the True. And I pray God they may take the Hint, and learn thereby to bless the Goodness of God, that he hath continued his Gospel to them, while such a vast part of the Globe is devoted to a vile and debauch'd Imposter.<sup>68</sup>

A similar sentiment about the lessons that could be learned from the Muslims' piety can be found in Sosa's *Topography*. One of the virtues Sosa describes is devotion, observing that "He who finally

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<sup>64</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 73.

<sup>65</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of Sieur*, p. 77.

<sup>66</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 39.

<sup>67</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 199.

<sup>68</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. xii.

determines to live like a good Muslim is indeed a devout one...observant of the Law and as devout in making the salat at the proper hours, attending the mosques when required, fasting, and abstaining from wine and liquor. Christians, God willing, should be as devout in their holy observances of the precepts of God.”<sup>69</sup> Both Sosa and Pitts value this devotion shown by the Muslim people and see it as an opportunity for Christians to learn and grow from it. Pitts differs from Sosa, however, in that he shows pity towards Muslims that they are so blind that they have been led astray in their faith (at least in his mind). In contrast, Sosa merely admires the devotion while still rejecting any notion of sympathy for them. Pitts stands apart from these previous authors in that he both admires some of their qualities and ways but also respects their humanity in a manner not even Egilsson could, taking pity on them in their misguided worship of a false prophet. Pitts has an understanding of Islam that is greater than nearly every European who was fortunate enough to return home from the Barbary Coast and gives an account of Islam that has more validity and accuracy than almost all other accounts in early modern English history.<sup>70</sup>

While it is much more challenging to determine what the positive influences of a life in captivity were for the likes of Sosa, Cervantes, Egilsson, or Mouette (if there were any at all), it is evident that Pitts did indeed benefit from his time under his third *Patroon*, or master. As Friedman notes, enslaved people in Algiers could elevate their status through specialization in their work, and Pitts acknowledges that he was poised to benefit from this.<sup>71</sup> His third master was a very wealthy and well-educated man who was a relative of the current *Dey*, or king, of Algiers.<sup>72</sup> As a result, his master wished for Pitts to be well versed in his reading and writing so that one day he might work as a master of writing or as an accountant, which ultimately never came to fruition. Still, Pitts became much more immersed in the culture and society than many of his predecessors, so he struggled to leave Algiers and his master. They had freed Pitts and promised him a substantial inheritance, as “he was like a Father” to him.<sup>73</sup> Pitts chalks this struggle up to his being tempted by Satan, which is to say this conflict was a very serious one to him.<sup>74</sup> It must have been tough for him to abandon his life as a Muslim despite his desire to return to his true father and Christianity. He expresses this dilemma after his father writes to him, which is why he claims he is battling temptation.<sup>75</sup> No other account under discussion shows this sort of turmoil regarding whether or not to leave North Africa. However, then again, no other account displays the same level of intimacy with the North Africans that Pitts had. Not only had Pitts learned from his experience, but it also shaped him into the author he would become, as there is little evidence that he received any education before this time. While these may not have necessarily been positive experiences for Pitts, they broadened his perspectives. They made him more understanding and sympathetic to people frequently demonized by past writers and

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<sup>69</sup> Sosa, *Topography*, p. 246.

<sup>70</sup> Auchterlonie, *Encountering Islam*, p. 102.

<sup>71</sup> Friedman, “Christian Captives,” p. 224.

<sup>72</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 225.

<sup>73</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 239.

<sup>74</sup> This is similar to Egilsson’s belief that his experience was meant to be a test from God, perhaps a sign of shared Protestant values.

<sup>75</sup> Pitts, *A Faithful Account*, p. 204, p. 238.

contemporaries like Daniel Defoe.

During Pitts's lifetime, captivity narratives were becoming a much more popular and widely circulated literary genre in England, meaning the English people were well exposed to the Barbary Coast. These narratives were typically "rudimentary, inaccurate, or distorted sources," and they demonized the violence and brutality of Muslims and North Africans to the point that they became "the strongest and most negative influence on British understanding of Islam and Muslims in the early modern period."<sup>76</sup> The genre was so popular that Daniel Defoe, writer of the famous novel *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, was able to include Muslim pirates as the antagonists in a brief episode of the titular character's sea adventures, a natural enemy and threat of which the English were acutely aware and would have found believable.<sup>77</sup> The fact that Pitts was writing such a tolerant account of the Muslims at the same time as these vilifying works shows that while cultural contact and tolerance were growing, there was still resistance to be found. Most of England and Europe were not receptive to the view Pitts promoted. The expansion of the captivity narrative genre in England may have coincided with texts that showed a growing understanding of Islam. However, like in Spain and France, most works promoted Islamophobia. Toleration and acceptance, especially towards what many believed to be hostile, barbaric, and cursed people, is not something that comes naturally, and even for Pitts, it was challenging to accept. However, there is another side to Defoe's vilification of the Barbary corsairs that reveals that not all Europeans were motivated by hatred of Islam but instead were concerned with more secular conflict. A shift in captive narratives during this time focused on England extending its imperial territories and potential British occupation of North Africa. In late-seventeenth-century England, "captives started representing themselves as providers of intelligence that would be useful for future British occupation and domination. The nightmare of captivity became the dream of empire."<sup>78</sup> In the case of Defoe, W. R. Owens believes that the "dream of empire" manifested itself in Defoe via the dream of a Pan-European invasion force sent to invade Barbary to defend English international trade, which was expanding at the time due to its colonial possessions in North America and the West Indies. Defoe saw Barbary piracy and privateering as enemies of commerce. With the combined efforts of Christendom, he believed a force of "fifty or sixty thousand men" could easily conquer North Africa.<sup>79</sup> His vision would never come to fruition, but remarkably, Defoe would propose such a move when Europe was deeply divided by religious differences at this point in time. While this crusader-like mindset may have looked past Christian differences, one would expect it to leave little room for toleration of North African Muslims. Yet, Defoe justifies his rationale as not being a matter of religion or ethnicity. Defoe promotes trade between Christians and Muslims so long as they do not engage in piracy. He trivializes the idea of declaring war on North Africa purely based on being "infidels," as that would result in pointless wars with all "Heathen Nations."<sup>80</sup> While this is certainly not the same understanding Pitts' account of

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<sup>76</sup> Owens, "Defoe, Robinson Crusoe," pp. 55-6.

<sup>77</sup> Owens, "Defoe, Robinson Crusoe," p. 57.

<sup>78</sup> Owens, "Defoe, Robinson Crusoe," p. 57. See Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 126-2.

<sup>79</sup> Owens, "Defoe, Robinson Crusoe," pp. 62-4.

<sup>80</sup> Owens, "Defoe, Robinson Crusoe," pp. 64-5.

Algiers offers, it demonstrates that captivity narratives could be used not just as an Islamophobic tool but also to justify more secular understandings of the Barbary corsairs. While some Europeans were entirely apprehensive of any form of tolerance towards Muslims, others were able to look past religious differences in Europe and the Muslim world for their secular goals.

Thus far, this paper has primarily focused on how Christian conceptions of Islam and North African culture were informed by European captive narratives to varying degrees of success. However, there was also evidence from a Muslim perspective that, at least in some regards, Christian-Muslim relations had improved over the centuries outside of Pitts in England. Less than a decade after Pitts wrote *A Faithful Account*, an Egyptian Muslim named Ahmad al-Sayyid was captured by Maltese corsairs on his way home from Sidon in 1713.<sup>81</sup> Not dissimilar to how his Christian contemporaries wrote of the Muslims, al-Sayyid was none too pleased to have been captured at sea, and he wished that God cursed the Knights of Malta for what they had done to him and his family.<sup>82</sup> However, al-Sayyid describes a very different kind of corsair than in some earlier Muslim accounts. Earlier accounts of the Knights of Malta from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries describe them as “wicked infidels” who were brutal and cruel to their Muslim captives. Still, in al-Sayyid’s account, the Maltese are hospitable, generous hosts to their captives.<sup>83</sup> During al-Sayyid’s stay in Malta, he says

We continued to enjoy his hospitality, I mean the *kbawāḡā* [slave merchant], until the end of Ramadan, fasting and breaking our fast every night over twelve kinds of succulent foods...On the Ramadan Feast, his wife prepared a grand dinner for us, which she served on about twelve silver plates. This Christian woman hosted us generously.<sup>84</sup>

It is never explained how the Maltese were aware of Muslim customs and religious practices, nor is any reason given for treating their captives with such high respect, especially given their notorious treatment of past Muslims. Mouette also acknowledges that the treatment of Muslims by Christian pirates was much more favorable during his time: “for the Moors, who daily expect either the Christians or the Turks should come into their country, say, they had rather have the Christians, because they are more merciful, and will spare their lives.”<sup>85</sup> This may not be an entirely accurate statement since Mouette had a particularly negative view of the Turks due to his harsh treatment and would likely make them out as worse than Christian pirates. It seems, though, that he is taking the word of the Moroccans rather than his own when he says this. In any sense, it is clear that the understanding of Islam and Muslim people for Christian corsairs had improved over the past century, at least in the case of the Maltese if Mouette’s word is not to be trusted. This demonstrates that cultural contact in the Mediterranean was successfully creating more tolerance, at least in the case of the

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<sup>81</sup> Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity*, p. 72.

<sup>82</sup> Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity*, p. 72.

<sup>83</sup> Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity*, p. 63.

<sup>84</sup> Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity*, p. 73.

<sup>85</sup> Mouette, *The Travels of the Sieur*, p. 8.

Maltese, despite the conditions of captivity that were the likely cause.<sup>86</sup> Based on al-Sayyid's account, there is evidence that in at least some cases, there was a level of toleration, understanding, and appreciation shown to the Muslims and their customs that had not been present in years prior, and it coincided with an understanding that had been building in European captive narratives over the centuries.

Over the late sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries, captivity narratives from enslaved Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean evidenced and contributed to a growing European cognizance of North African religion and culture. The different perspectives of these writers contributed to this image to varying degrees, with accounts like Egilsson and Cervantes's being much briefer than those of Sosa, Mouette, or Pitts, and some writers may even have negatively impacted views of toleration and understanding of the Barbary Coast. No author, not even the most open-minded of them, wholly embraced the North African way of life or their religion, and none advocated for any equality or peace between Europeans and Muslims. Despite all this, these narratives coincided with a growing awareness of Islam and North African society in Europe. I argue that they were invaluable to developing more tolerant Christian-Muslim relations by the end of the early modern period.

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<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, due to a lack of sources from the Italian Peninsula and surrounding islands translated into English, it was difficult to prove in this paper that this understanding is a direct result of European and Barbary piracy and slavery in the Mediterranean.