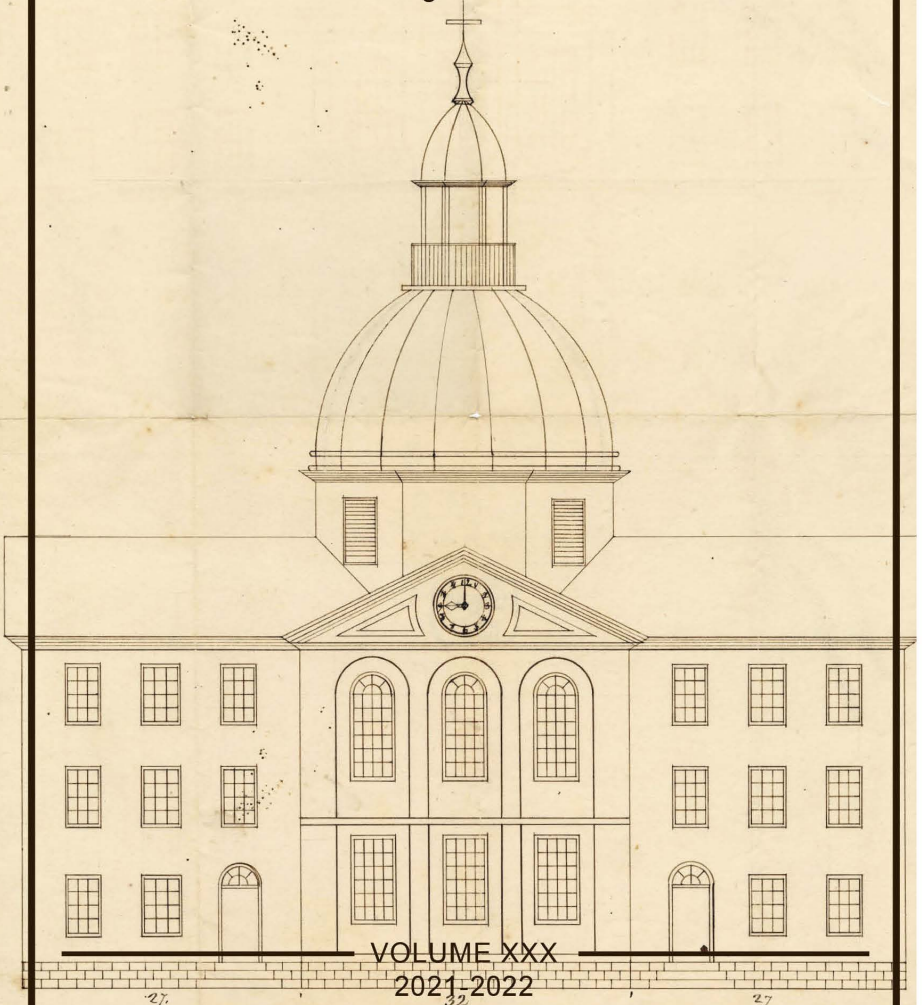


UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

# History Review



VOLUME XXX

2021-2022

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**The University of Vermont  
History Review**



*Volume XXXII*  
*2021–2022*

*The UVM History Review* is an annual publication of the University of Vermont History Department. It seeks to publish scholarly essays written by UVM students and alumni.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<i>Letter from the Editor</i> .....	4
<i>The New Dividing Line: The School Question Viewed Through the Lens of Political Cartoons in the Election of 1876</i> Michael R. Carter .....	5
<i>Venerated and Vilified: Horace Greeley's Role in Print in 1872</i> Tess Hastings .....	41
<i>Genocides, Warfare, and Denials: A Comparative Examination of the Circassian and Armenian Expulsions</i> Caleb Reilly .....	28
<i>"The sun never sets on the American girl": Imperial Symbolism of Lady Curzon's Peacock Dress</i> Sophia Trigg .....	64
<i>Columbus as Food Ethnographer: Depictions of Indigenous Food and Foodways in the Writings of his First Journey to the Americas</i> Richard Witting .....	125
<i>Author Biographies</i> .....	153
<i>Editor Biographies</i> .....	155

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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*Dear readers,*

It is my pleasure to present to you the thirty-second issue of the *University of Vermont History Review*. This annual journal showcases exceptional historical research and writing from undergraduate and graduate students. In the pages below, you will find five fascinating, carefully researched articles. Topics range from Reconstruction era political cartoons, the application of the term genocide, the carefully selected dress of the Vicereine of the British Raj during the 1911 Delhi Durbar, to the writings of Christopher Columbus. This selection showcases a range of historical approaches and, above all, a commitment to honestly representing the complexities of the past on behalf of our authors.

As Chief Editor, I am incredibly proud to have worked with such a great editorial board this year. This publication could not have been completed without their tireless efforts behind the scenes to revise and refine every page of this volume down to each footnote. I would also like to thank each author for their contributions and hard work in this process. Both editors and authors juggled multiple rounds of meticulous revision with their own course loads and busy lives. My gratitude for your dedication cannot be understated—thank you!

I would also like to extend special thanks to Professor Erik Esselstrom for his unwavering guidance and support as our faculty advisor. Thank you to Shari Dike for providing the necessary logistical assistance that this publication, and our entire department, requires. Finally, I would like to thank UVM Special Collections and Lane Dibler for making this edition's cover possible.

I hope you enjoy this year's *UVM History Review*,

Katie Wynn, 10 June 2022

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## The New Dividing Line: The School Question Viewed Through the Lens of Political Cartoons in the Election of 1876

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*Michael Carter*

*Part I*  
*Introduction and Historiography*

In the spring of 1875, Rutherford B. Hayes, erstwhile governor of Ohio, found himself at a crossroads. This proven leader with a successful political track record was facing intense pressure by the Republican Party to throw his hat into the ring and seek his old office once again. Every indication was that the upcoming contest would be hard-fought and close. In order to prosper in such an environment, Hayes felt he needed the right issue or cause, not only to motivate himself, but to capture the imagination of the electorate. Writing to a friend in April, Hayes wondered if the one issue he saw as a winner could or would be brought up: “Are we ready for the Catholic question?” In a letter to another fellow the next month he bemoaned that “the Catholic question is not yet up; it may never be.”<sup>1</sup> By the summertime his tune changed. Hayes witnessed in his home state the emergence of the issue that he felt would get Republicans to the polls, and Republicans nationally were paying attention. Writing in June to Maine congressman James G. Blaine, Hayes remarked “the secret of our enthusiastic convention is the school question. The Democrats take the hint and are in retreat.” The once hesitant Hayes was now confident that “we shall down them on the school

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Michael F. Holt, *By One Vote: The Disputed Presidential Election of 1876* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 60.

and other State issues.”<sup>2</sup> Identifying the nature of this so-called “School Question,” reveals why Republicans felt it would be their ticket to electoral glory in the presidential election of 1876, while also saying much about American politics and culture in the waning days of Reconstruction.

In 1876 it seemed like the Republican Party, which dominated the post-Civil War era, was on track to lose the presidency. The party knew it had to direct voters’ minds away from the scandals and corruption that seemed endemic to it, while countering the Democratic Party’s calls for reform. A bank collapse in 1873 had plunged the nation into economic depression, and restive voters were blaming the Republicans.<sup>3</sup> The party’s civil rights legislation and the seemingly endless federal interference in the South that characterized its reconstruction policies were beginning to fatigue even northern voters. The so-called “Money Question,” a complicated debate on the proper monetary and currency standards for the nation, evinced passionate feelings but served as an ineffective rallying cry that split the party into competing regional factions.<sup>4</sup> Searching for their issue, Hayes and others understood that a growing matter which reflected deep rooted prejudices and concerns among certain segments of the Republican electorate was the so-called School Question, the debate over whether publicly funded educational institutions should offer any sort of sectarian teaching. In broad practice, this had the effect of disallowing the offer of public funds to any type of Catholic education. This debate over American schools and their funding, often a proxy for American “values” over and against the concern of “foreign” immigrant communities, emerged as the wedge issue Republicans sought. This topic grew from a local and state level

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Holt, *By One Vote*, 61.

<sup>3</sup> See Holt, *By One Vote*, 16-17, for information on the Panic of 1873.

<sup>4</sup> See Holt, *By One Vote*, 10-15, for an overview of these issues.

concern into a national and federal debate as the Republican Party perceived that its educational policies could be a new “national dividing line” around which to motivate its core constituencies. The emerging national media culture that was maturing in this era would play a key role in the growth and perception of this issue; political cartoons found in the national publication *Harper’s Weekly* in 1875 and 1876 provide a useful, enlightening way to chart how the School Question was visualized in the minds of Americans and how it shifted from a local issue into a federal matter.

Three general areas of scholarship contribute materially to the argumentation found in this paper. The first regards America’s history of nativism. Broadly speaking, nativism can be defined as the belief that “some influence originating abroad threatened the very life of the nation from within.”<sup>5</sup> The standard argument that emerges from the literature is that nativists in nineteenth-century America equated Protestantism with the foundations of American society. Perceived fundamental American values such as individualism, egalitarianism, and republican citizenship were part of this ethos. Catholics, who were predominantly immigrants, therefore posed an existential threat to American society and politics. With American citizenship being volitional in nature, nativists believed that it would be difficult to assimilate Catholic foreigners into the American project.<sup>6</sup> The struggles of immigrants between maintaining their specific identity and the pressure to conform to an “American” way of life are constituent parts of these

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<sup>5</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 4.

<sup>6</sup> See the paper’s references to the work of Tyler Anbinder, Edward Blum, Leslie Butler, John Higham, and John Pinheiro.



experiences, and contributed to new understandings of American identity and culture into the twentieth century and beyond.<sup>7</sup>

Any inquiry into the School Question requires some exploration of the extant scholarship on American educational systems in the nineteenth century. Scholarship shows that colonial and early national schools, neither public nor private, gave way to the common school movement beginning in the 1830s, one which was profoundly influenced by religious revivals and impacted by the challenges of immigration. Proponents of this trend desired that education should be non-sectarian, and the system generally incorporated a nebulous set of Protestant derived mores in a quest to build a homogeneous and harmonized Union: education was thus viewed as a key incubator of American citizenship and values. The arrival of Catholic immigrants was perceived by common school advocates as threatening this balance, leading to debates on the nature and purpose of education, as well as whether or not differing ideals could be encompassed within the public schools, an issue that still eludes any consensus of opinion.<sup>8</sup>

The third major area of explored scholarship encompasses an array of legal and political studies of the last third of the nineteenth century. The Republican Party, in ascendency since the end of the Civil War, was wracked by allegations of corruption as well as a generalized fatigue with the role of the federal government in Reconstruction. Democrats had made recent electoral gains and were branding themselves as the party of reform. Ulysses S. Grant and the Republican Party recognized how the immigrant Catholic following of the Democratic Party, coupled with the mores of its southern conservative wing, made

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<sup>7</sup> See references to Steven Conn, Frank Coppa, Roger Fortin, Jon Gjerde, and James Gutowski.

<sup>8</sup> See references to Lloyd Jorgenson, Benjamin Justice, Ward McAfee, and Gerard Postiglione.

it vulnerable to claims of opposition to public education and the values it represented. They would seize on the school issue in hopes of reclaiming some of the reform mantle. The emergence of the School Question during the build-up to the election of 1876 represents the federal politicization of this issue, an issue emphasized in the popular press of the time.<sup>9</sup>

*Part II*  
*Catholics and the Common Consensus: The Origins of the School Question*

The School Question must be viewed in light of the cultural climate of post-Civil War America, where there was a rising anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic fervor, an impulse that had been brewing in the antebellum years.<sup>10</sup> One of the main battlegrounds for this sensibility was American education and its connection to American religion. Schooling in early America was neither fully public nor fully secular. Before the middle third of the 1800s

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<sup>9</sup> See references to Charles Calhoun, Kyle Duncan, Steven K. Green, Michael Holt, and Mark Summers.

<sup>10</sup> Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 207. An intense evangelical resurgence in the 1830s helped give rise to Horace Mann's common school movement, which sought to expand primary-level educational opportunities and increase civil control over education. These common schools promoted a nebulous, sedated, and inclusive Protestant ethos that educators claimed was in no sense "sectarian." All denominations read the same King James Version of the Bible, offered the same prayers, and sang the same hymns. The belief that these common schools truly represented a common American culture was widely evinced, with Catholics pointedly excluded. See Lloyd P. Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School: 1825-1925* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 1 and Kyle Duncan, "Secularism's Laws: State Blaine Amendments and Religious Persecution," *Fordham Law Review* 72, no. 3. (2003): 493-593, esp. 503-504.

schools were largely voluntary enterprises, only occasionally aided by government grants. These schools were often affiliated with churches and administered by clergy, with specifically religious instruction being integral to their curricula.

While these schools helped to forge a common American educational identity, they ignored the rapidly increasing numbers of those who did not adhere to the general consensus. Chief among these “non-mainstream” believers were those in the mostly immigrant Roman Catholic community, whose numbers were growing precipitously in American cities between the 1840s and 60s.<sup>11</sup> Anti-Catholic sentiment was deep rooted in the American consciousness, predating independence and able to trace its ultimate roots to the Reformation. The predominantly Protestant character of early nineteenth century America was suffused with ancestral perceptions of Catholics as being foreign, immoral, and opposed to the individual freedoms that Americans so cherished.<sup>12</sup> Much of the American opprobrium towards Catholicism was directed toward the figure of the pope: the papacy’s claims of temporal/political authority in addition to spiritual authority gave rise to a belief in America that Catholic immigrants gave their loyalty to their pope first and foremost, over and above domestic leaders. This perceived blend of the spiritual and political was viewed with discomfort by Americans who understood their origins as being rooted in separation from such ideology.<sup>13</sup> Aside from religious and ideological revulsion, the sense of difference that many Americans projected onto Catholic immigrants led to a widespread belief that they stole jobs from hard-working native-born Americans, and that they had a

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<sup>11</sup> Duncan, “Secularism’s Laws,” 504.

<sup>12</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Steven Conn, “‘Political Romanism’: Re-evaluating American Anti-Catholicism in the Age of Italian Revolution,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 521-548, esp. 523.

greater propensity to abuse substances and commit crimes.<sup>14</sup> Rhetoric from the press and the pulpit gave rise in this era to the first anti-Catholic societies and movements in the United States, many of which fulminated against the belief that Catholics were trying to undermine American society through the co-opting of such seemingly benevolent institutions as schools.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the explosive growth of the Catholic population in the 1840s and 50s gave rise to a series of fierce debates regarding the religious instruction offered in the common schools.<sup>16</sup> Much of these religious offerings were an affront to Catholic religious belief. The Catholic Church did not recognize the King James Bible: only the Douay-Rheims translation was the officially approved English version. Daily individual reading of the Bible violated the Catholic conviction that scripture should be read within a particular doctrinal and liturgical context.<sup>17</sup> What's more, textbooks used in the common schools often mocked Catholics and their faith.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in areas where the Catholic population—and therefore Catholic political power—was growing, there was also growing opposition to Protestant religious practices in public schools alongside the establishment of separate, specifically Catholic schools.<sup>19</sup> As some states

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<sup>14</sup> Tyler Anbinder, “The Ideology of the Know Nothing Party,” in *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History*, ed. Jon Gjerde (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998): 152-160, esp. 154-155.

<sup>15</sup> John C. Pinheiro, *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 16-17.

<sup>16</sup> Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School*, 69.

<sup>17</sup> John C. Jeffries Jr., and James E. Ryan, “A Political History of the Establishment Clause,” *Michigan Law Review* 100, no. 2 (2001): 279-370, esp. 298.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), *supra* note 31 at 220.

<sup>19</sup> Duncan, “Secularism’s Laws,” 505.

continued to codify public educational requirements into law, there was a growing consensus among Catholic leaders that parochial schools were doing the work of the state by providing the required education that Catholics felt they were unable to receive in hostile public schools. This being the case, Catholic leaders felt that Catholic schools should receive public money to support their efforts.<sup>20</sup> The resulting controversy over Protestant religious instruction in America's public schools and the public funding of parochial schools became known as the "School Controversy," or, more commonly, the "School Question."<sup>21</sup>

### *Part III*

#### *The Pope and the Press: Pius IX and Thomas Nast*

Protestant Americans were deeply uncomfortable with any perceived governmental support for Catholic endeavors. Alongside the aforementioned ancestral prejudices against Catholics and Catholicism, Protestant Americans' distaste for Catholics and what they were believed to represent was personified in many ways by the Church's leader during the period in question, Pope Pius IX.<sup>22</sup> The 1864 publication by Pius

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<sup>20</sup> Roger Fortin, *Faith and Action: A History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati 1821-1996* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 114-115.

<sup>21</sup> Steven K. Green, *The Second Disestablishment: Church and State in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 251.

<sup>22</sup> The pontificate of Pius IX spanned the thirty-two years between 1846 and 1878. Initially hailed as a reformer, he became entangled in the complex Italian politics of the mid-nineteenth century. A rising sense of Italian nationalism ensured that the movement for the political unification of the Italian peninsula, known as the *Risorgimento*, was gaining steam, alongside the general dissemination of republican ideals. Nationalists viewed the Papal States, the conglomeration of lands in central Italy that had been ruled by the popes for a millennium, as an unbearable anachronism in this new context,

IX of the so-called *Syllabus of Errors*, which condemned freedom of speech and freedom of conscience, may have been an attempt to reestablish his vanishing traditional prerogatives, but it disturbed many in America, embarrassing the Catholic clergy who were caught unawares by this missive. The *Syllabus* was a prelude to the recognition by the First Vatican Council of 1869-1870 that the concept of papal infallibility, which holds that the pope is infallible on matters of faith and morals, was to be considered a dogma: a foundational teaching of the Church.<sup>23</sup> Though Pius IX was implementing these decrees in direct reaction to the domestic political situation in Italy and the Catholic Church's resultant loss of land and power, American clergy swiftly understood that this would not play well in back in the States: many American bishops present at the council expressed unease about the proclamation, with several leaving early to avoid having to vote on it.<sup>24</sup> The American press mocked the declaration endlessly, with one correspondent writing that "No Catholic can maintain an opinion opposed to the temporal powers of the Pope. Why? Because a syllabus concocted by the Pope himself so declares. The process of reasoning is, then,

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while the pope himself was vehemently opposed to any reduction in the Church's authority, making him and his Church appear staunchly anti-democratic to most American eyes. The precarious nature of the pope's situation and his fear that his spiritual independence would be compromised by a secular government resulted in his dramatic departure from Rome in late 1848. This attracted much American commentary, with the *New York Times* characteristically writing on a potentially permanent papal exile by saying that "there are few persons on this side of the Atlantic who will be apt to regret such an event or to pray for any delay in its consummation." See Conn, "Political Romanism", 535, 542; Frank J. Coppa, "Cardinal Antonelli, the Papal States, and the Counter-Risorgimento," *Journal of Church and State* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1974): 453-471, esp. 463-464; "The Roman States," *New York Times*, 4 March 1859, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Conn, "Political Romanism", 541.

<sup>24</sup> Conn, "Political Romanism," *supra* note 35 at 541.

complete.”<sup>25</sup> The pope appeared to be grasping backward towards an old ideology, and the American conception that the Catholic Church was an outmoded institution with no business in taking on an educational role was solidified.<sup>26</sup>

As these cultural and political standoffs seeped into the pages of the press, no figure better immortalized and exemplified the Republican position on this issue than the German American cartoonist Thomas Nast, whose work appeared in the pages of the New York City Republican magazine *Harper's Weekly*.<sup>27</sup> Nast was a pioneer of American cartooning, able to use his pen to cut to the heart of politicians and policy through his biting caricatures. In Nast's hands, cartoons became a force capable of influencing public perceptions and debates far more eloquently than mere words alone.<sup>28</sup> Nast also symbolizes well the nature of the American press in the mid to late nineteenth century, which was still largely influenced by its roots as an overtly political and partisan enterprise, lacking the boundaries and standards of content that might be expected today.<sup>29</sup> After having worked as a cartoonist since age 15, Nast landed a full-time position at *Harper's Weekly* in 1862. The popularity of his drawings ensured that by the end of the decade he was given the freedom to draw whatever topics pleased him.<sup>30</sup> An advertisement from an Ohio newspaper indicates his growing national appeal: “The admirable

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<sup>25</sup> “Ultramontaniam in the United States,” *New York Times*, 29 November 1870, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Conn, “Political Romanism,” 534.

<sup>27</sup> Justice, “Thomas Nast and the Public Schools of the 1870s,” 171.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics, 1865-1878* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 139-140.

<sup>29</sup> Summers, *The Press Gang*, 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> Justice, “Thomas Nast and the Public Schools of the 1870s,” 174.

pictures of its [*Harper's Weekly*] principal artist, Thomas Nast, are alone worth the subscription price."<sup>31</sup>

Even before the nationalization of the School Question issue, Thomas Nast took keen interest in its local manifestations in New York City. A notorious cartoon appeared in the pages of *Harper's* on September 30, 1871.<sup>32</sup> The issue at hand was a provision snuck into the city's tax bill that provided some public funding to sectarian schools. What was worse, it was promoted by the influential chief of New York's Tammany Hall political ring, "Boss" William M. Tweed. Tweed was perceived by Republicans as the pied-piper of the city's immigrant Irish community, building a Democratic voting bloc through corruption and bribery.<sup>33</sup> When *Harper's* attacked the government of New York City in its editorials, the city responded by removing books published by *Harper's* from school shelves.<sup>34</sup> Nast responded with a blistering cartoon entitled "THE AMERICAN RIVER GANGES," depicting brave American schoolchildren, one with a Bible in his pocket, stolidly standing on a steep riverbank, some behind crying and kneeling in prayer. The children steel themselves against an onrush of crocodiles emerging from the river: closer examination reveals the crocodiles to be Catholic bishops crawling on all fours, the points of their miters bearing fierce reptilian jaws. A crumbling public school flies an upside-down American flag as a symbol of distress, as decent Americans are led off by brutish Irish caricatures to a waiting gallows, Tweed looking on in glee. On the opposite shore stands an immense

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<sup>31</sup> "Harper's Weekly." *The Highland Weekly News* [Hillsboro, OH], 11 November 1869, 3.

<sup>32</sup>This cartoon, perhaps Nast's most famous, is well known and often reproduced. See Thomas Nast, "THE AMERICAN RIVER GANGES," *Harper's Weekly*, 30 September 1871, 916.

<sup>33</sup> Justice, "Thomas Nast and the Public Schools of the 1870s," 182.

<sup>34</sup> Justice, "Thomas Nast and the Public Schools of the 1870s," 186.



Catholic Basilica emblazoned with the words “The Political Roman Church.” The meaning of the cartoon is clear: the political allies of the Catholic Church are willing to sacrifice American children and values to the hungry, beast-like bishops, bearing an ideology that is foreign and in opposition to the mainstream culture. Only the public schools and children educated in them stand in the path of this nightmare. One sees in this post-Civil War cartoon a nation again divided, not between North and South, but between differing viewpoints on church and state. The imagery and venom evident in this cartoon, arguably Nast’s most famous, returned as the School Question became nationalized.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, as the 1876 election was heating up, this very same cartoon would be republished “by request” in the pages of *Harper’s*.<sup>36</sup>

Thomas Nast would later produce a cartoon which captured most adroitly the “mainstream” American fear that the Catholic Church as personified by Pius IX was seeking to impose foreign values on American schools: this cartoon would also show that this issue was widely understood and powerful even before its more specific nationalization as part of the 1876 presidential campaign. Nast portrays a portly Pius IX, wearing a papal tiara inscribed “School,” “State,” and “Church”—proof he wants to unite the three in an unholy trinity—standing at the door of a common public school, luggage in tow. He carries a hat box labeled “foreign goods” and paperwork detailing his claims to infallibility, the supremacy of the Church to the State, and similar material. All of these recent statements disturbed many in the

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<sup>35</sup> Justice, “Thomas Nast and the Public Schools of the 1870s,” 187.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Nast, “THE AMERICAN RIVER GANGES,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 8 May 1875, 384. The caricature of Tweed is removed in the reprint.

press and were widely commented on at the time: proof the pope wanted to import foreign despotism into America.<sup>37</sup> Tucked under the pope's arm is an umbrella, a symbol of tourism or travel, intended to lampoon the situation of the Church in Italy and the pope's status as a fugitive who had to flee his city.<sup>38</sup> A brave schoolboy at the door dismisses papers reading "Vatican



Figure 1: Thomas Nast, "NO CHURCH NEED APPLY," *Harper's Weekly*, 8 May 1875, 385.

Decrees for all Nations" which state that all power civil and ecclesial must obey the "infallible one." Behind him, children garbed in the attire of many nations are taught by Columbia, the feminine manifestation of America. The caption tells the reader that the pope's teaching has been "so injurious to Dame Europa's school" that the adopted children of America have no desire to return to that system. The "infallible one" vows revenge, as he claims to keep

<sup>37</sup> Conn, "Political Romanism," 540.

<sup>38</sup> Coppa, "Cardinal Antonelli, the Papal States, and the Counter-Risorgimento," 464.

the keys of heaven.<sup>39</sup> This cartoon touches on the School Question, but its major emphasis is on how broader American values will always outmatch Old World despotism—personified by Pius IX—particularly in the hearts of immigrants coming to America for better lives and opportunities. Fear of Catholic backwardness and its potential impact on education were part of the more general spectrum of anti-Catholic prejudice before the more specific crystallization of the School Question into a national campaign issue in the future. It can also be seen in this cartoon that there was an emerging sense of there being two Americas: that which understands and abides by the system of common American values, and that which does not.<sup>40</sup>

*Part IV*  
*Princes and Madness: Ohio and New York*

At the same time Pius IX was being used as a general whipping post for anti-Catholic prejudice in the pages of the national press, the interplay of religious and educational issues in local American politics resulted in civic debates in such geographically and politically diverse states.<sup>41</sup> Due to specific sets of circumstances, it was the states of Ohio and New York where these debates loomed largest in the mid-1870s. The debate over the School Question in these two states in 1875 served as springboards for these local issues garnering national attention, and set a template

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas Nast, “NO CHURCH NEED APPLY,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 8 May 1875, 385. See Figure 1.

<sup>40</sup> Other *Harper’s* cartoons of this era would hit home a similar message with their portrayals of Pius and education. See Michael Angelo Woolf, “READING THE LATEST NEWS FROM NEW YORK,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 9 January 1875, 40, and C.S. Reinhart, “THE MENACE OF THE VATICAN,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 22 May 1875, cover.

<sup>41</sup> Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School*, 122.

for the federalization of the education issue and its utilization by the Republican Party as a new justification for its policies.<sup>42</sup> Underlying the nascent debate was the notion that Catholics who demanded accommodations different from “mainstream” Americans served as a source of national division, splitting the recently united country asunder yet again.

The city of Cincinnati served as Ohio’s flashpoint in this emerging debate. In 1873, an Irish-Catholic by the name of John J. Geghan was elected to represent the Cincinnati area in the Ohio House of Representatives. His brief tenure was enough to make his name nationally notorious for its connection to the plethora of emotional issues surrounding the School Question. Geghan introduced House Bill 615 to the Ohio legislature in February 1875. The main purpose of this bill was to safeguard what might be termed “religious freedom” in contemporary parlance, and it ironically included nothing overtly about education. The bill stipulated that inmate in state prisons should be allowed ministrations by clergymen of the denominations to which they belonged, that no prisoner could be compelled to attend religious services, and that churchmen at public institutions should not receive public salaries.<sup>43</sup> Some in the Ohio press saw the bill in this light: “It is in the interest of no religion, but of all... The bill is entirely consonant with the genius of our institutions, and changes nothing that ought not to be changed.”<sup>44</sup>

Other press was not so sanguine in its interpretation of the legislation. Most papers in this era were, as Mark Summers writes, “partisan, blatantly and deceptively so” and were interested in providing sensational stories that played to the biases

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<sup>42</sup> James A. Gutowski, “Bibles, Ballots, and Bills: Political Resistance to Parochial Education in 1870s Ohio,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 51-77, esp. 52.

<sup>43</sup> Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School*, 123.

<sup>44</sup> “Since the Geghan Bill...,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 April 1875, 4.

and prejudices of their readers.<sup>45</sup> Viewed through that editorial spirit, it was feared that Catholic priests would preach to non-Catholic prisoners: a literally captive audience. The most overtly political fear was that Catholic preachers would be emboldened to order their congregations from the pulpit to vote for the Democratic Party and its candidates.<sup>46</sup> This represented an old prejudice that dated back to the time of the Know Nothings, wherein it was believed that all Catholics would vote in an unbroken bloc for Democrats.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately for the cause of his bill, Geghan wrote a very impolitic letter to the Cincinnati *Catholic Telegraph* on 11 March 1875, stating: “We have a prior claim on the Democratic Party. The elements composing the Democratic Party in Ohio to-day—fully two thirds of said party—are made up of Irish and German Catholics, and they have always been loyal and faithful to the interests of the party. Hence the party is under obligation to us, and we have a perfect right to demand of them... they as a party should redress our grievances.”<sup>48</sup> After the bill’s passage during the final session of the Ohio legislature in early 1875, the *Catholic Telegraph* printed another indelicate statement: “The unbroken, solid vote of the Catholic citizens of the State will be given to the Democracy at the Fall Election.”<sup>49</sup>

From a public relations standpoint, these incautious statements proved disastrous for Geghan’s bill and for Ohio Democrats writ large. Whether or not they represented a truly fair and accurate appraisal of the situation, Republican opponents of

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<sup>45</sup> Summers, *The Press Gang*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Gutowski, “Bibles, Ballots, and Bills,” 64.

<sup>47</sup> Anbinder, “The Ideology of the Know Nothing Party,” 158.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in “The Public Schools of Ohio,” *Findlay* [OH] *Jeffersonian*, 17 September 1875, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in “The Public Schools of Ohio,” *Findlay* [OH] *Jeffersonian*, 17 September 1875, 1.

Catholic schools and Democratic initiatives were instantly able to write that the *Catholic Telegraph* and Geghan himself had “said the quiet part out loud,” revealing their true intentions. A blistering cartoon by C.S. Reinhart visualized this issue in the pages of *Harper’s Weekly* magazine. A stern looking Catholic priest, whip in hand, holds a chain connected to the shackled wrists of a crude caricature of an Irishman, drawn with the simian characteristics inherited from British cartoonists.<sup>50</sup> In the Irishman’s pocket is a paper that reads “Roman Catholic Vote.” A large Catholic church stands in the distance. The priest grips a paper on which is written “Excommunication.” Standing before the priest with bowed head is a personification of the Democratic Party, with a paper in his pocket that reads “Office.” The implication is clear: the Church, armed with the threat of excommunication, controls the votes of Catholic immigrants. Needing this bloc for their electoral success, the Democratic Party accedes to their wishes. Written on a placard above the proceedings is a quote attributed to the *Catholic Telegraph*: “To Democrats who oppose Sectarian (Roman Catholic) Legislation. ‘You have dug your political graves; it will be our fault if you do not fill them. When any of you appear again in the political arena we will put upon you a brand that every Catholic citizen will understand.’” The caption below the cartoon quotes some of Geghan’s prior correspondence<sup>51</sup> In the eyes of the Republicans, the Democrats were nigh on treasonous: selling out American values to a foreign ideology in order to procure votes. The war was on for the American heart, and the “mainstream” and “foreign” camps would be two opposing forces.

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<sup>50</sup> Samuel J. Thomas, “Mugwump Cartoonists, the Papacy, and Tammany: All in America’s Gilded Age,” *Religion and American Culture* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 213-250, esp. 222.

<sup>51</sup> C.S. Reinhart, “SAYS THE *CATHOLIC TELEGRAPH*,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 1 May 1875, 357.

Prior to the Geghan affair, the School Question in Ohio had been adjudicated at the municipal or county level. With the passage of the bill in the state legislature, the issue became a statewide concern. The episode thus grew into a key point for Republicans, eager to claw back control of the Ohio state house and a majority of the state's congressional seats, both lost to the Democrats in 1873 and 1874 respectively. The fact that in this era state legislatures selected the senators that went to Washington made local political concerns weigh even more heavily on national politics.<sup>52</sup> State concerns in Ohio could thus easily swell into national ones, as populous Ohio, with large agricultural and industrial interests, could be seen as a national bellwether.<sup>53</sup> Republicans were eager to latch onto an issue that would resonate with voters nationally: many in the party were panicking over the loss of control of the House of Representatives after the election of 1874, the first time the Democrats had dominated that body since before the Civil War.<sup>54</sup> The School Question was seen as the issue that could motivate the base of Republican voters. The Republicans' eventual gubernatorial candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, was inspired to run on this issue, writing that the top of his campaign agenda was attacking Democrats for their "subserviency to Roman Catholic demands."<sup>55</sup> Right after Hayes' eventual victory in October of 1875, the Ohio press was already competing for the "proud pre-eminence of being the first to nominate Hayes for President," proof that the issues he ran on were viewed as having national appeal.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> "Amendments Needed," *Western Home Journal* [Lawrence, KS], 23 November 1876, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Gutowski, "Bibles, Ballots, and Bills," 67-68.

<sup>54</sup> Charles W. Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 511.

<sup>55</sup> Holt, *By One Vote*, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Untitled article, *Summit County Beacon* [Akron, OH], 27 October 1875, 1.

The School Question in Ohio and the upcoming gubernatorial race had national appeal in the popular press as well. The cover story of *Harper's Weekly* in late August of 1875 showcased Thomas Nast skewering all the intricacies of the Ohio controversy. It was titled "THE ESTABLISHED (FOREIGN) CHURCH IN OHIO" with a further sub-caption reading "The Foreign Governor of Ohio (*the Native governor has the floor*). 'What are you going to do about it?'"<sup>57</sup> The emphasis on "foreign" and "native" governors served to illustrate that the debate was increasingly being viewed as a political and cultural dividing line for Americans, forcing them to question which values were "mainstream" or "foreign." Sitting on an ornate cathedra inscribed "State of Ohio" is Cincinnati Archbishop John Baptist Purcell, himself an Irish-born immigrant who had led the Catholic Church in his city since 1833. During Purcell's over forty-year tenure, the number of Catholics in Cincinnati had grown exponentially. His longevity and personal history as an immigrant meant that he embodied the Catholic Church in his area, as well as the hopes and the fears of observers on either side of the debate.<sup>58</sup> He certainly was often a major foil in the pages of the Ohio press, with a typical article castigating him for "an arrogant ecclesiastical interference in public affairs" due to his stance on the School Question.<sup>59</sup> Purcell is wearing a bishop's miter emblazoned with the words "political foreign church," outlining the Republican stance that Catholics are un-American and seeking to subvert American society and culture. Purcell grasps two keys—traditional symbols of papal authority—that read "church offices" and "state offices," evincing fears that the

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Nast, "THE ESTABLISHED (FOREIGN) CHURCH IN OHIO," *Harper's Weekly*, 28 August 1875, cover. See Figure 2

<sup>58</sup> Fortin, *Faith and Action*, 48.

<sup>59</sup> "The Great Question in Ohio," *Fayette County Herald* [Washington, OH], 26 August 1875, 1.



Catholic hierarchy controls the Democratic vote, and thus the civic rule of the state.<sup>60</sup> In his other hand Purcell grasps a paper on which is written “solid vote” and “Democratic.” Being crushed beneath Purcell’s chair is a darkened figure that the cartoon’s captions and context reveal to be Ohio’s Democratic governor William Allen, the “native” governor, crushed by Purcell the “foreign” governor: this symbolizes the perception that civil

Democratic authorities are taking their marching orders from Rome. Beneath Purcell’s feet is a paper with the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg: “A government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” Nast seems to think it is perishing from Ohio, due to Purcell’s trampling on these sentiments.



Tucked under Purcell’s arm is his bishop’s staff or crozier, though close observation shows that the tip of the crook is made up of

<sup>60</sup> For the Biblical reference to keys as a symbol of power, see Matt. 16:19 (KJV).

many serpents: traditional Biblical symbols of evil.<sup>61</sup> A poster behind Purcell on the wall portrays New York City Archbishop John McCloskey, who earlier that year had been named the first American Cardinal, attired in ecclesial garb.<sup>62</sup> The poster reads “A foreign prince reigning in the United States.” As will be argued in the discussion of New York below, Nast and the editors of *Harper’s* perhaps viewed Catholic efforts as nationally concerted. Another poster portrays “St. Geghan” wearing a halo and holding his bill, with the words “The Representative of ROME, not of Cincinnati” above his head. In the background, a papal coat of arms hangs above the “Ohio Roman Legislature” where grim looking priests and acolytes loom in the threshold, one of them carrying a paper which reads “down with the public schools.” Thus, we see the whole issue outlined from the Republican perspective: the Democratic Party in Ohio is controlled by the foreign Catholic Church which desires to use schools as its means of infiltrating American society. Ohio needed to reelect Hayes as governor to stop this madness, and what resonated in Ohio reverberated nationally.<sup>63</sup>

The ways in which local and state level issues were becoming proxies for a national debate is further exemplified by reactions to the so-called Grey Nun Act, proposed in New York State in 1874 and enacted in 1875. By early 1876 any reference to state policy in New York and the doings of its governor, Samuel J. Tilden, had wide resonance as Tilden was already considered to be the odds-on favorite for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination.<sup>64</sup> Tilden’s reaction to this particular

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<sup>61</sup> The Biblical tale is found in Gen. 3:1 (KJV).

<sup>62</sup> “A Prince of the Church,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 20 March 1875, 2.

<sup>63</sup> For a minor cartoon celebrating Hayes’ victory as a blow against Catholic overreach, see Thomas Nast, “CANONIZED—OHIO, OCTOBER 12, 1875” *Harper’s Weekly*, 13 November 1875, 928.

<sup>64</sup> Holt, *By One Vote*, 96.

legislation thus provided ample grist for the satirizing mill of Republican politicians and publications. To put it simply, the confused but popularized notion of the Grey Nun legislation was that Governor Tilden, eager to scrape for the votes of immigrant Catholics, had with this bill allowed Catholic nuns of the titular religious order the ability to teach children in New York State's public schools.<sup>65</sup> This in turn appeared to open the door to the involvement of the Catholic Church in the public life of the state in ways heretofore unprecedented.<sup>66</sup> "The designs of the Romish priesthood upon our free schools are unmistakable," thundered the *New York Times*. "We are, happily, to have a Republican Legislature this Winter. It is to the Republican Party that the country must look for the defense of its schools from Roman Catholic violation."<sup>67</sup> Not anticipating the flurry of criticism the initiative engendered, a rattled Tilden saw the act repealed three weeks after it was signed, one of the first acts of a new state legislature.<sup>68</sup>

The Grey Nun controversy inspired a series of cartoons in the pages of *Harper's Weekly*. The most elaborate and creative of the bunch appeared as the cover story in January of 1876.<sup>69</sup> The cartoon is set in the Shakespearean milieu of *Hamlet*, perhaps inspired by the recent triumphant return of legendary actor—and

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<sup>65</sup> Holt, *By One Vote*, 51. Holt simply asserts this interpretation of the bill as factual, whereas a reading of the bill's true wording proves that reality was more nuanced.

<sup>66</sup> This issue was covered heavily in the New York press in 1875 and 1876. Scholarly appraisals can be found in Holt, *By One Vote* and Gerard A. Postiglione, "The Opponents of Public Education: New York State, 1870-1880," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 6, nos. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1982): 359-376.

<sup>67</sup> "Catholics and the Schools," *New York Times*, 25 November 1875, 4.

<sup>68</sup> "The Legislature Organized," *New York Times*, 5 January 1876, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Nast, "MADNESS (YET THERE'S METHOD IN IT)," *Harper's Weekly*, 15 January 1876, cover. See Fig. 3.

brother of President Lincoln’s assassin—Edwin Booth to the New York stage after two years’ absence.<sup>70</sup> The cover cartoon is entitled “MADNESS (YET THERE’S METHOD IN IT),” a paraphrase of a line from Polonius in the aforementioned play.<sup>71</sup> Uncle Sam, garbed as Hamlet, stands guard at a castle door emblazoned with the letters “U.S.” He holds a school book in his hand entitled “The ABC’s of a Republican Form of Government.” The building behind him is inscribed with a quote from Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: “A government of the people, by the people, for the

people, shall not perish from the earth.” Below that is a complementary statement: “A government of the priests, by the priests, for the priests shall perish from the earth.” On the opposite door frame, we see that this building is a “State School” and that “our public school system must and shall be preserved.” Uncle



Figure 3: Thomas Nast, “MADNESS (YET THERE’S METHOD IN IT),” *Harper’s Weekly*, 15 January 1876, cover.

<sup>70</sup> “Edwin Booth as Hamlet,” *New York Daily Herald*, 26 October 1875, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 2, scene 2, lines 223-224.

Sam blocks the door and points to a building on the horizon labeled as a “Roman Catholic convent” while a startled nun, dressed in full habit with a cross at her belt, drops a plank inscribed with some of the text of the Grey Nun Act. On the ground at her feet is a line that reads “Church and State,” which she has crossed. The sub-caption of the cartoon has Uncle Sam as Hamlet speak the famous lines directed to Ophelia in the play: “Go thy ways to a nunnery... For wise men know enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery go; and quickly too. Farewell.”<sup>72</sup> This cartoon visualizes yet again the stakes that the Republican Party and press desired to illustrate: the new dividing line between Americans was that of the American State and a foreign Church, and only the Republican Party could defend true American values.<sup>73</sup>

The Grey Nun issue was local to New York State politics, as the Geghan Bill was to Ohio, but they proved useful tools in the Republican effort to nationalize the School Question. The federal government was portrayed in Nast’s cartoons as the sole protector of American schools and values from the perceived threat of foreign Catholic influence. These two state issues when taken together show the national growth and reach of the School Question debate, and the popularization of the dividing line imagery.

### *Part V*

#### *Charting the Divide: Grant Nationalizes the School Question*

A major step in the nationalization of the School Question came with its appearance in speeches by the chief executive,

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<sup>72</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 3 scene 1, lines 148-152.

<sup>73</sup> A minor cartoon on the same theme, combining issues from both Ohio and New York is Thomas Nast, “TO A NUNNERY GO; AND QUICKLY TOO,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 12 February 1876, 136.

Ulysses S. Grant. Observers expressed surprise when on 29 September 1875 the President used the occasion of a reunion of the Army of the Tennessee in Des Moines, Iowa to speak on the debate. Known in some circles as “Ulysses the Silent” for his typical refusal of remarks at these sorts of ceremonies, three thousand veterans may have murmured excitedly, anticipating rousing words from the old general.<sup>74</sup> He “made quite a long speech for him” according to an anonymous correspondent quoted in a Vermont paper. “He said he had concluded to disappoint those who called on him first in expectation of getting a short speech and had jotted down something he wished to say.”<sup>75</sup> Evincing a false modesty, Grant in fact had a prepared manuscript in hand, standing at the dais to deliver what was felt to be his longest ever speech up to that time.

Playing to the soldiers’ military spirit, Grant began by exhorting the men to guard “against every enemy threatening the perpetuity of free republican institutions.” For Grant, schooling and education were the cornerstones of those institutions. He darkly warned that “if we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon’s but between patriotism and intelligence on one side, and superstition, ambition and ignorance on the other.”<sup>76</sup> It is therefore seen here that the perceived cultural divide and competition for the American mind is solemnized as a “dividing line” directly by the chief executive: a major step in the crystallization and visualization of this issue. After tying the issues to the Civil War spirit of a decade prior, Grant pivoted to

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<sup>74</sup> Tyler Anbinder, “Ulysses S. Grant, Nativist,” *Civil War History* 43, no. 2 (June 1997): 119-141, esp. 130.

<sup>75</sup> “The President’s Latest and Longest Speech,” *Burlington [VT] Daily Free Press and Times*, 2 October 1875, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in “Army of the Tennessee – A Lengthy Speech by General Grant,” *Baltimore Sun*. 1 October 1875, 1.

soaring rhetoric about the sacrifices of the soldiers and all they had undergone, invoking the centennial of the Battle of Lexington and the birth of America's freedom.<sup>77</sup> He then stated his belief that all must remain vigilant for the protection of these freedoms: "let us labor to add all needful guarantees for the greater security of free thought, free speech, a free press, pure morals, unfettered religious sentiments, and of equal rights and privileges to all men irrespective of nationality, color, or religion."<sup>78</sup> Coming around to a firm call for a policy proposal, Grant continued to urge the men to "encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar... shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian schools."<sup>79</sup> All children deserved a "good common school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan or atheistical tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family circle, the church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the Church and State forever separate."<sup>80</sup> With these strong words, the president utilized the rhetoric of battle to characterize the debates over the School Question, staking a claim for the Republican position. He also solidified the notion that had been

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<sup>77</sup> Steven K. Green, "The Blaine Amendment Reconsidered," *American Journal of Legal History* 36, no. 1 (January 1992): 38-69, esp. 47.

<sup>78</sup> "Education and Christianity," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 October 1875, 1.

<sup>79</sup> "Education and Christianity," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 October 1875, 1. Note that different printed versions of this text include slightly different wording.

<sup>80</sup> "The Third-Term Platform," *Philadelphia Times*, 1 October 1875, 1.

growing in Republican rhetoric that there was a new dividing line in the battle for American culture: that between Church and State.

Grant's speech was the catalyst for much commentary and reportage in the popular press.<sup>81</sup> It inspired a cycle of cartoons from the pen of Thomas Nast in the pages of *Harper's Weekly*. The first, bearing the caption "THE PLANK – HITTING THE NAIL ON THE HEAD," is worthy of detailed discussion.<sup>82</sup> A determined looking President Grant, hammer in hand, is hard at work constructing a wooden edifice labeled as "The Centennial National Platform" for the election year 1876. Written on several



Figure 4: Thomas Nast, "THE PLANK – HITTING THE NAIL ON THE HEAD," *Harper's Weekly*, 23 October 1875, 860.

of the boards are concepts pulled directly from the Des Moines speech: "Free Schools," "Free Thought," "Free Speech," and "A Free Press." Grant himself is driving the final few nails into a board inscribed "The Public School System Must and Shall be Free." Grant is not only constructing the Republican Party's election platform for 1876: Nast portrays

<sup>81</sup> Steven K. Green, "Blaming Blaine: Understanding the Blaine Amendment and the No-Funding Principle," *First Amendment Law Review* 2, no. 1 (December 2003): 107-152, esp. 137.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Nast, "THE PLANK – HITTING THE NAIL ON THE HEAD," *Harper's Weekly*, 23 October 1875, 860. See Fig. 4.



Grant as driving nails into and confining a ferociously coiled serpent, meant to embody the Catholic Church.<sup>83</sup> The serpent's head is drawn to look like a three-tiered papal tiara, a metonym for the Vatican's spiritual claims.<sup>84</sup> Inscribed on this crown are the words "church," "state," and "school," emblematic of the perception that the Catholic Church would use control of education to blur the line of Church and State separation. A forked tongue darts from the apex of this headdress, with a lower jaw protruding underneath. In the background, Columbia is ushering children into a public school as a young boy clutches a slate on which is written "Free Thought, Free Speech, a Free Press and PURE MORALS." The Capitol looms in the background as bishops and priests, crudely caricatured, lurk in the shadows. A tall placard copies the pertinent elements of Grant's speech. Grant is portrayed as the embodiment of mainstream American values, someone who will defeat the foreign Catholic ideology in the new divide present in American culture: that between the values of foreign Church and domestic State.<sup>85</sup>

Nast is happy to portray Grant as an anti-Catholic crusader, firmly aligned with the Protestant cause.<sup>86</sup> It is true that Grant on occasion evinced what could be portrayed as anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic statements in some of his private correspondence.<sup>87</sup> More notoriously, Grant issued an order during the Civil War expelling all Jews from a military district under his control, writing a letter at the time that referred to Jews as

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83 Holt, *By One Vote*, 51. Holt here calls Nast a "ferocious anti-Catholic bigot."

84 Holt, *By One Vote*, 51. Holt inaccurately refers to this headdress as a miter.

85 A minor cartoon with very similar themes is Thomas Nast, "THAT MISSING PLANK," *Harper's Weekly*, 23 October 1875, 868.

86 Green, "The Blaine Amendment Reconsidered," 48.

87 Anbinder, "Ulysses S. Grant, Nativist," 120.

“unprincipled traders” and a “privileged class.”<sup>88</sup> While certainly not lacking in his own prejudices, the political reality that undergirded Grant’s decision to deliver this speech at this moment was perhaps more prosaic than the ideologues might acknowledge. The truth of the matter is that Republicans had already been embroiled in a different sort of school issue, one that did not trend in their favor. Earlier that year, Republicans proposed the Civil Rights Act, including a nationwide mandate for the racial integration of public schools that annihilated any hope of Republican gains in the South while also making waves in the North.<sup>89</sup> Regrettably, despite progress in the 1860s, the movement for the civil rights of Black Americans increasingly faced backlash and opposition throughout the 70s. Northern states that had cheerfully passed resolutions in support of racial equality found the school integration issue difficult to swallow, and the issue contributed in part to the landslide Democratic electoral victories in the 1874 congressional campaigns. In early 1875 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act with the school integration clause excised from the bill.<sup>90</sup> On one policy level, Grant’s speech could be viewed as an attempt to re-emphasize the issue of universal public education—an issue Southern conservatives and the Democratic Party had no real connection with—by removing the divisive racial element and using the coded nativist language to play to the Republican base.<sup>91</sup> Grant and the Republicans did not want the dividing line of the campaign to be Black vs. White or North vs. South, but domestic State vs. foreign Church.

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<sup>88</sup> Anbinder, “Ulysses S. Grant, Nativist,” 126.

<sup>89</sup> Ward M. McAfee, “Reconstruction Revisited: The Republican Public Education Crusade of the 1870s,” *Civil War History* 42, no. 2 (June 1996): 133-153, esp. 144.

<sup>90</sup> McAfee, “Reconstruction Revisited,” 144-145.

<sup>91</sup> Green, “Blaming Blaine,” 138.



Figure 5: Thomas Nast, "THE POPE'S BIG TOE," *Harper's Weekly*, 30 October 1875, cover.

Believing they had found an issue that resonated with enough voters to stem the feared Democratic electoral landslide, the Republican Party and its media allies continued their attempts to inflate the School Question into a major national issue.<sup>92</sup> The flurry of attention

engendered by Grant's Des Moines speech made it the subject of the cover of *Harper's Weekly* on 30 October 1875. In a cartoon with the caption "THE POPE'S BIG TOE," a stoic, cigar-chomping Grant steps on the slipper-clad foot of Pius IX as he attempts to cross a line on the ground labeled "Church and State," the first concrete visualization of this new dividing line in American culture.<sup>93</sup> Pius is clothed in clerical attire, including a papal tiara,

<sup>92</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 29.

<sup>93</sup> The "Pope's Toe" as a metaphor for the gradual creep of Catholicism into American life was commonplace since at least the early 1870s. See Gutowski, "Bibles, Ballots, and Bills," 58.

and clutches a black umbrella under his arm, another lampoon of his “fugitive” status. Pius’ attire also serves to evoke an effete contrast to the stoic, masculine Grant. In the background, the Capitol building stands protectively over public schools and cheering children. Behind the pope is an ecclesial structure labeled “Roman Church.” Below the cartoon’s title caption is the excerpt from Grant’s Des Moines speech stating that the future national dividing line “will not be Mason and Dixon’s.” This speech is labeled by *Harper’s* as Grant’s “*Speech on our Public School System.*”<sup>94</sup> The utilization of the federal imagery of the Capitol building and the nation’s president continues the growing trend of making the School Question appear to be one of consequence for the whole country. Also of grave consequence is the new dividing line, with Grant and the Republicans guarding the nation from Pius IX and the Democrats.

*Part VI*  
*Forever Separate: Amendments and Aftermath*

The most unmistakable indication that the Republican Party sought to make education and the School Question a centerpiece issue of a national agenda was when President Grant made it the dominant element of his Message to Congress on 7 December 1875.<sup>95</sup> With Democrats now in control of the House of Representatives, there did not seem to be much hope of Grant’s—or any Republican’s—policy proposals making their way through Congress. Knowing these challenges, Grant sought to use the longest annual message of his presidency to highlight the issue he

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<sup>94</sup> Thomas Nast, “THE POPE’S BIG TOE,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 30 October 1875, cover. See Fig. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Anbinder, “Ulysses S. Grant, Nativist,” 132.

felt had garnered such momentum after his Des Moines speech.<sup>96</sup> His language was stark:

A large association of ignorant men cannot, for any considerable period, oppose a successful resistance to tyranny and oppression from the educated few, but will inevitably sink into acquiescence to the will of intelligence whether directed by the demagogue or by priestcraft. Hence the education of the masses becomes of the first necessity for the preservation of our institutions.<sup>97</sup>

In a final sign that what had started as a local issue was now intertwined in national politics, Grant sought to put the full force of the federal government behind the School Question, stating, “I suggest for your earnest consideration, and most earnestly recommend it, that a constitutional amendment be submitted... for ratification.”<sup>98</sup> This hypothetical amendment that Grant desired Congress to take up would require states to “establish, and forever maintain, free public schools... forbidding the teaching in said schools of religious, atheistic, or pagan tenets; and prohibiting the granting of any school funds or school taxes... for the benefit or in aid... of any religious sect or denomination.” This amendment would also “make education compulsory so far as to deprive all persons who cannot read and write from becoming voters after the year 1890.”<sup>99</sup> What is more, the speech proposed the taxation of all church property except for cemeteries and “church edifices.” As the Catholic Church was one of few American denominations that tended to have property beyond

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<sup>96</sup> Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant*, 512-513.

<sup>97</sup> “President’s Message!” *The Reading [PA] Times*, 8 December 1875, 1.

<sup>98</sup> “The President’s Message,” *Huntsville [AL] Weekly Democrat*, 15 December 1875, 2.

<sup>99</sup> “President’s Message,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 8 December 1875, 2.

those categories, this proposal was viewed as being biased against them.<sup>100</sup>

With the issue fully nationalized, few people mistook Grant and the Republicans' true intentions. The party had lost nearly half its seats in the House of Representatives, and they sought to counter the reformist claims of the Democrats by emphasizing the education issue, something Democrats had never been associated with before. The logical way to do this was to appeal to the Protestant prejudices of the party and to make the School Question something of a new "national dividing line," playing upon differences in the electorate to rile them up all the way to the voting booth. Local municipalities and states were early laboratories for the political impact of the issue; now it had truly reached the apex of American political life.<sup>101</sup>

Grant's time at that apex was however coming to a close, and other players seized and sought to capitalize on the issue. Rutherford B. Hayes in Ohio had already won reelection to the governor's mansion on an anti-Catholic platform; erstwhile House speaker James G. Blaine of Maine wanted to steal the fire of the issue and take it to the Republican National Convention.<sup>102</sup> Take it he did, becoming the party's presidential frontrunner by formally proposing to the House a constitutional amendment on 15 December 1875 which read that,

No State shall make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; and no money raised by taxation in

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<sup>100</sup> Anbinder, "Ulysses S. Grant, Nativist," 133. Another religious group that would be impacted by this wording were the Mormons; they too were a Republican target during this election, with a plank in the national platform viewed by many as being directed towards them. See "That Thirteenth Plank," *The Deseret News* [Salt Lake City, UT], 28 June 1876, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Green, *The Second Disestablishment*, 293.

<sup>102</sup> Green, *The Second Disestablishment*, 294.

any State for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund therefor, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect; nor shall any money so raised or lands so devoted be divided between religious sects or denominations.<sup>103</sup>

The national Republican Party gleefully endorsed such an amendment: during its June 1876 convention, it included a platform plank recommending “an amendment to the constitution of the United States, forbidding the application of any public funds or property for the benefit of any schools or institutions under sectarian control.”<sup>104</sup>

It was, however, at this point that the Republicans learned the limits of their power of persuasion if it was not paired with control of Congress. A few days after the Republican convention, the Democrats at their own national gathering declared the agitation about schools to be a “false issue” by which Republicans only meant to “enkindle sectarian strife.” Schooling should be a state issue instead of a federal one, and Democrats resolved to maintain the existing structure “without partiality or preference for any class, sect or creed, and without contributions from the treasury to any.”<sup>105</sup> In August, the Democrats in control of the House ended up passing a watered down version of Blaine’s proposed amendment that denied Congress any enforcement power, stealing the thunder on this issue without upsetting their Catholic constituents.<sup>106</sup> When the Republican controlled Senate

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<sup>103</sup> “Dodging the Issue,” *Summit County Beacon* [Akron, OH], 30 August 1876, 6.

<sup>104</sup> “The National Republican Platform,” *Weekly Herald* [Cleveland, TN], 20 October 1876, 2.

<sup>105</sup> “The Platform of the National Democracy,” *Selma* [AL] *Times-Argus*, 15 September 1876, 1.

<sup>106</sup> Green, “Blaming Blaine,” 46.

failed to pass a more robust version of this amendment, the party found itself in the awkward position of having failed to garner any real momentum with the issue while Democrats could claim they had passed *something*. Suddenly, the Republicans lost what they had hoped would be their touchstone topic.<sup>107</sup> The efficacy of the School Question as a rallying point was greatly lessened from this point forward.<sup>108</sup>

By the time the campaign season of 1876 rolled around, the nation appeared wary towards the policies of the governing Republican Party. Northerners were growing fatigued by the length and expense of the national Reconstruction process as southerners were reacting to it in more violent and troubling ways. The Republicans were marred by scandal after scandal as sordid stories of corruption continuously hit the headlines. The School Question and the deep seated religious, cultural, and social issues it brought to the fore, seemed to be the new issue Republicans could use to rally their base. The popular press, most notably the editorial cartoonists in *Harper's Weekly*, were happy to latch onto this emotive issue, and were instrumental in helping it rise from one of local concern to national prominence. The attempt to promote the School Question as the decisive issue of the campaign reached a crescendo when politicians and the press sought to cast it as the new dividing line of the nation, something as serious and threatening as the old dividing line between north and south that had been so destructive for the nation during the recent Civil War. The ultimate efficacy of using the School Question as a touchstone campaigning strategy ended up being somewhat muted. Congressional Democrats were able to co-opt

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<sup>107</sup> McAfee, "Reconstruction Revisited," 148.

<sup>108</sup> Illustrating well the way the issue had been de-fanged, Nast only ever produced one more cartoon on the subject, appearing late in the election year. See Thomas Nast, "TILDEN'S 'WOLF AT THE DOOR, GAUNT AND HUNGRY.' – DON'T LET HIM IN," *Harper's Weekly*, 16 September 1876, 757.



some of the language for their own ends, and Republicans, the minority party in the House, fumbled their chances to regain the momentum. Though ultimately something of a non-starter in the closely contested election of 1876, the issue of public vs. private education and all of the concomitant cultural baggage associated with it would rear its head again in years to come as the issues of Reconstruction faded into the background. The debates over what it meant to be a “real” American and who could claim those values for themselves were always a part of the School Question, and in the continuing controversies over the social role of charter schools and private vs. public education, they are still argued in contemporary times. Though wearing different guises and discussed in some different contexts, the underlying cultural and ideological issues that characterized the School Question debate remain key controversies for any attempted conception of the American national character. Looking out from a contemporary perspective, one can see the cultural dividing lines that continue to be present in the American body politic: the School Question was never the first of these, as it was not to be the last.

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## Venerated and Vilified: Horace Greeley's Role in Print in 1872

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*Tess Hastings*

*Part I*  
*Two Titans of Print*

Horace Greeley entered the 1872 presidential election against Ulysses S. Grant with an optimistic and largely miscalculated vision for a nation still recovering from the Civil War. Years as a celebrated and successful editor for the *New York Tribune* garnered Greeley a platform from which he could shape public sentiment and assert himself as an American visionary. Greeley's turbulent transition from a Republican who championed black rights and sought retribution for Southern rebels to a candidate on both the Liberal Republican and Democratic tickets who wanted to preserve the nation at all costs rendered him a subject of controversy and mockery during his campaign.<sup>1</sup> Too fresh was the pain suffered from the nation's division for Americans to take up Greeley's invitation to absolve Confederates with open arms. Former Republican allies like Thomas Nast of *Harper's Weekly* criticized the Liberal Republican platform, all but ensuring his defeat in the November election. Greeley's plea for both amnesty and equality, for countrymen to "clasp hands over the bloody chasm" which divided them, was far too inconsistent and forgiving for voters who sought lasting consequences for the rebels and just vindication for former slaves.<sup>2</sup> Nast captured what

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<sup>1</sup> James Lundberg, *Horace Greeley: Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), Location 2719 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> Horace Greeley, "Mr. Greeley's Reply," *The Liberal Republican Movement: The Address of the Cincinnati Convention* (New York: Baker & Goodwin, 1872), 3 May 1872.

he perceived as the editor's ineptitude in his series, "What I Know About Horace Greeley," created to spotlight the discrepancies between Greeley's words and actions leading up to the 1872 race.<sup>3</sup> *Harper's Weekly* was influential in publishing these cartoons as they described the political landscape in a coherent way for both informed and uninformed voters.<sup>4</sup> Nast and Greeley, both titans of the print industry, competed on a national stage for control of the political narrative. Greeley sought to promote himself as the visionary savior of the American public, while Nast was ready to publish each misstep the editor took. The phrases, symbols, and political figures that Nast used to criticize Greeley were recognizable across the country. His portrayals of the politician, which comprised more than fifty cartoons by the time of Greeley's death in November 1872, succinctly and plainly revealed Greeley's inconsistencies and escalated the significance of print media as an agent both of unity and division for a fragile nation.<sup>5</sup>

Nast satirized Greeley's book *What I Know of Farming*, an ode to the agricultural practices Greeley learned in youth, by creating a collection of cartoons titled "What I Know About Horace Greeley." Each cartoon within this series ridiculed Greeley's perceived lack of knowledge as showcased in his writing. For example, Greeley's "brief and plain expositions" and inspired a storm of contempt amongst critics because of how he asserted his agricultural prowess in tones that were both humble

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Nast, "What I Know About Horace Greeley," *Harper's Weekly*, 1 January 1872, 52.

<sup>4</sup> William E. Huntzicker, "Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, and the Election of 1876," in *After the War: The Press in Changing America, 1865-1900*, ed. David B. Sachsman, with Dea Lisica (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2017), 53-68, esp. 53.

<sup>5</sup> "Obituary: Horace Greeley, Journalist," *New York Times*, 30 November 1872; Thomas Nast, "What I Know About Horace Greeley," *Harper's Weekly*, 1 January 1872, 52; "Cincinnatus," 10 February 1872, 132.

and condescending.<sup>6</sup> He explained that his knowledge was meager and rooted in childhood memories of a poor boy's life on the farm, and yet, proclaimed to have lowered the technicality of his content so that the poorly educated farmer could understand his words with ease.<sup>7</sup> If his passages on "Muck – How to Utilize It" or "Farmers' Clubs" were not able to be understood by an average schoolboy of fifteen years, then Greeley had been unsuccessful in making his writing as coherent as he wished.<sup>8</sup> Nast's series' title brought Greeley's arrogance, opportunism, and lack of credibility in *What I Know of Farming* to light, initiating what became a national trend of lampooning the public figure.

Both Horace Greeley and Thomas Nast wielded immense influence in an age that praised printed texts and the cultured reading practices that arose from them.<sup>9</sup> The desire of countrymen to become politically and socially informed through mass-circulation publications like the *New York Tribune* and *Harper's Weekly* granted both Greeley and Nast outsized voices. Greeley not only proved himself a budding entrepreneur who built an empire out of nothing, but also as a new archetype: an editor who saw his platform as a deeply personal instrument through which a public identity could be shaped.<sup>10</sup> It was this "uneasy hybrid of a living, breathing individual and the persona he... created in printed texts" that allowed Greeley to craft a reputation for

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<sup>6</sup> Horace Greeley, *What I Know of Farming: A Series of Brief and Plain Expositions of Practical Agriculture as an Art Based Upon Science* (New York: The Tribune Association, 1871), vii.

<sup>7</sup> Horace Greeley, *What I Know of Farming*, vii-viii.

<sup>8</sup> Horace Greeley, *What I Know of Farming*, 124, 254.

<sup>9</sup> James Lundberg, *Horace Greeley: Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), Location 172 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>10</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 182 of 5250, Kindle.

himself both as a national celebrity and a defender of truth.<sup>11</sup> He was a propagandist who felt called to bring Americans together in the name of fraternity, and the resulting sense of intimacy the editor created through his publication caused “Horace Greeley” to become a household name across the country.<sup>12</sup> In promoting himself as a man who cherished harmony and the elimination of sectionalism, Greeley became a symbol of reconciliation, at least initially.

Nast, also a propagandist, refuted the image of Greeley as an agent of harmony and utilized his stage at *Harper’s Weekly* to reveal Greeley’s political ineptitude and discourage voters from supporting him. His depictions invariably featured Greeley with pamphlets in his pocket that tied into the subject matter of each cartoon, a reference to Greeley’s false claim to knowledge in *What I Know of Farming*. Nast always drew Greeley in a trench coat as a nod to his turncoat tendencies and hunched over with no strong backbone to hold him up. This recurring symbol of the politician’s willingness to be swayed by public sentiment suggested that Greeley lacked the manhood that most Americans believed a president should have.<sup>13</sup>

Nast was successful in his aims, thanks to Greeley’s relentless pattern of inconsistencies that made him vulnerable to public ridicule long before the publication of *What I Know of Farming*. In 1863, the *New York Tribune*’s weekly publications were instrumental in advocating for the “most unrelenting prosecution

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<sup>11</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 128 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>12</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 182 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Warner Blanchard, “Review: American Manhood and the Rhetoric of War,” Review of *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, by Kristin L. Hoganson, *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Oxford University Press: Fall 2000), 661-665 esp. 664.

of the war against the rebellion until it should be utterly crushed, and the authority of the Constitution be fully restored.”<sup>14</sup> Greeley himself spoke with similar fervor, declaring that the war must continue until every member of the Confederate Army fell or the Union recognized their right to secede.<sup>15</sup> To critics, the *New York Tribune*, a long-standing opponent of Democratic principles, shaped every conversation about politics into one of sectional conflict and represented the worst aspects of Northern culture.<sup>16</sup> Greeley, eager to cater to the opinions of others, dramatically shifted his tone in that same year when the *New York Tribune* quickly called for an end to the war, with a summons for both sides to accept disunion as the “best attainable peace.”<sup>17</sup> The *New York Times* was one of many Republican platforms that admonished Greeley and the *New York Tribune* for quickly accommodating the rebels that they had spent months vilifying. Greeley’s actions begged the question: were he and his publication “disloyal—or just fainthearted?”<sup>18</sup> Many questions like this could be asked about the politician in the following years. Was he traitorous—or simply a naive idealist? Blindly miscalculating the state of the nation—or duplicitous, scheming to sympathize with Southerners who could back him politically?

## *Part II*

### *Two Tickets: Credibility Spread Too Thin*

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<sup>14</sup> "The Tribune on Peace and Foreign Mediation," *New York Times*, 5 February 1863, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Horace Greeley quoted in "Some Words on Peace and War: A Statement by Mr. Greeley," *The New York Times*, 29 July 1864, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 254 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>17</sup> "The Tribune on Peace and Foreign Mediation," *NYT*, 5 February 1863, 4.

<sup>18</sup> "The Tribune on Peace and Foreign Mediation," *NYT*, 5 February 1863, 4.

Greeley's departure from the Republican Party and acceptance of the Liberal Republican nomination on May 1, 1872, answered these questions and signaled the editor's final departure from his former allies. The Liberal Republican Party was composed of Republicans who originally supported Grant in 1868 but was, by 1872, anti-Grant, anti-corruption, and were in favor of free trade.<sup>19</sup> The party formed, in part, because of their great dislike for the incumbent who they believed allowed the corruption of New York's Tammany Hall to endure for too long. Liberal Republicans were devoted to branding themselves as Republican abolitionists who were not in favor of Reconstruction, *not* as Democrats or rebels.<sup>20</sup> In May 1872, at their convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, the party nominated Horace Greeley and his running mate, the ardent Liberal Republican Benjamin Gratz Brown, for the upcoming November election. The party was pressured to stray from their long-held values of free trade and civil service reform because Greeley had proved himself a staunch protectionist and apathetic towards corruption.<sup>21</sup> Instead, they centered their attack on Reconstruction, President Grant, and its former members who were denouncing Greeley. Missouri Senator and party leader, Carl Schurz, delivered the Liberal Republican platform which urged for both the "equal and exact treatment [of] all men" and "removal of all disabilities imposed on account of the rebellion which was finally subdued seven years ago" in the belief that "universal amnesty [would] result in complete pacifications in all sections of the country."<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> Andrew Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction: The Liberal Republicans in the Civil War Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), xiii-xiv.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>21</sup> Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction*, 201.

<sup>22</sup> Carl Schurz, "The Platform," *The Liberal Republican Movement: The Address of the Cincinnati Convention* (New York: Baker & Goodwin, 1872), 3 May 1872.

platform, therefore, called for end to discussions on matters already settled by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments of the Constitution.<sup>23</sup>

Nast saw Greeley's presidential ambitions as divisive and began crafting "What I Know About Horace Greeley" cartoons as a caution to voters who entertained supporting Greeley's nomination in May (See Fig. 1). The first of these cartoons, published January 1, 1872, captured Greeley's bailout of Jefferson Davis, the former President of the Confederate United States, to emphasize that Greeley's word was dishonorable, and he was neither a reliable nor respectable candidate for office.<sup>24</sup> Greeley's bailout of Davis was not wildly out of character for the editor who continually rebranded himself and his vision but was the most visible and public demonstration of his infidelity to the Republican Party. Davis was not allowed a trial during his two years at Fort Monroe in Virginia because President Andrew Johnson's government worried that they would not be able to convict Davis of treason before a jury of Virginians.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, Greeley was deaf to the public's ridicule of him and was adamant that freeing Davis was both fair and in the public's interest. He professed he was liberating Davis from "an imprisonment theoretically lawless and practically mischievous."<sup>26</sup> Whether Greeley truly believed he was doing something morally just, or if he was trying to gain favor from the South, was unclear. Regardless, it was received by supporters as Greeley's attempt to make peace with Southerners whom he

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<sup>23</sup> Schurz, "The Platform," 3 May 1872.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Nast, "What I Know About Horace Greeley," *Harper's Weekly*, 1 January 1872, 52.

<sup>25</sup> Horace Greeley quoted in "Mr. Greeley's Reasons for Volunteering to Bail Jefferson Davis," *Chicago Tribune*, 24 May 1867.

<sup>26</sup> "Mr. Greeley's Reasons for Volunteering to Bail Jefferson Davis," *Chicago Tribune*, 24 May 1867.



trusted had understood the weight of their actions during the war and were ready to commit to upholding the Civil Rights Amendments.<sup>27</sup>

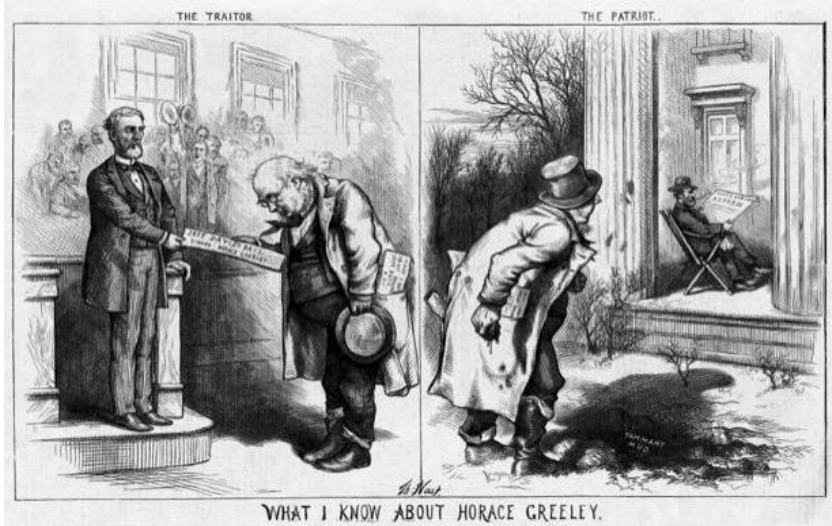


Fig. 1 Thomas Nast, “What I Know About Horace Greeley,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 1 January, 1872, 52.

On the left, Greeley is marked as a “Traitor” posting bail for Davis as onlookers jeer and hector him. On the right, Greeley is depicted as adopting his other persona—for Nast believed it was rare that his words and his actions were closely aligned—“The Patriot,” rearing to throw “Tammany Mud” at Grant, who is innocently reading about civil service reform nearby. Tammany Mud represents the accusations of corruption and negligence within the Republican government, spurred by the Tammany Hall scandals of the early 1870s in New York. In Greeley’s pocket is a paper titled “Tribune,” to emphasize that Greeley had a massive

<sup>27</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 2868 of 5250, Kindle.

platform from which he could control a narrative and simultaneously elevate himself and demonize Grant. With this pamphlet, Nast used the power of *Harper's Weekly* to show that Greeley's role at the *New York Tribune* was biased, particularly as Greeley stepped into the political sphere. In his attempt to treat the South fairly and redeem Davis in the name of national reconciliation, Greeley branded himself as a turncoat in the same way that Davis had when he led the States to secede. In response, Nast's cartoon spotlights Grant's laudable concern for the reform of Tammany Hall and chastises Greeley for betraying Republican interests.

Days before the Cincinnati Convention in May, Nast littered print media with cartoons of Greeley as voices from both sides of race teemed with opinions on the Liberal Republican candidate. "The Farmer Candidate En Route" is an example of Nast taking a final stab at Greeley's competency before the convention (See Fig. 2).<sup>28</sup> In this cartoon, a very windblown and flustered version of Greeley races towards Cincinnati on a pig, with a flyer sticking out of his pocket titled "What I Don't Know."<sup>29</sup> The pig reads "Pig Iron," a type of highly brittle metal, in reference to great difficulty Greeley seems to be met with at each step of his campaign.

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Nast, "The Farmer Candidate En Route," *Harper's Weekly*, 4 May 1872, 360.

<sup>29</sup> Nast, "The Farmer Candidate En Route," 4 May 1872, 360.



Fig. 2 Thomas Nast, "The Farmer Candidate En Route," *Harper's Weekly*, 4 May, 1872, 360.

Nast continues the theme of aiming a spotlight on Greeley's contradicting words and actions, in "Red Hot" (See Fig. 3).<sup>30</sup> The politician is portrayed once again hunched over, now ladling a spoon into a steaming bowl titled "My Own Words and Deeds." The cartoonist renders Greeley disheveled, sweating profusely, and with fogged glasses as the iconic pamphlet in his pocket reads "What I Know About Eating My Own Words." This cartoon is an interesting contrast to "What I Know About Horace Greeley," featured above, because it seeks to make no intricate or

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Nast, "Red Hot," *Harper's Weekly*, 13 July 1872, 560.

symbolic political references, but plainly aims to make Greeley look foolish and unkempt. “Red Hot” is equally important, however, to understanding how Nast’s cartoons were able to reach a vast audience and a range of education levels.

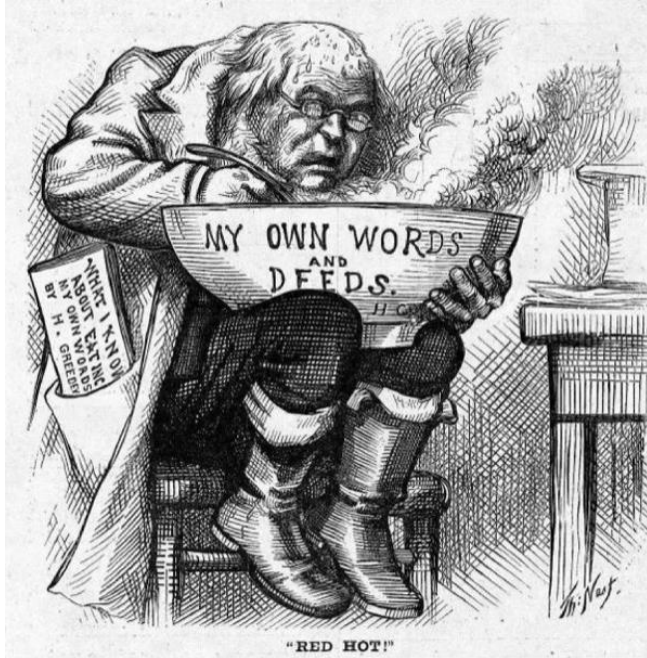


Fig. 3 Thomas Nast, “Red Hot,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 13 July 1872, 560.

The Liberal Republican plea to pardon former Confederates at Cincinnati was interpreted by Republicans as traitorous and scheming from the outset. As a result, when the party took their departure a step further and allied with the Democrats behind Greeley, they were only giving Nast more fodder with which he could criticize them. It was in this alliance between the Democrats and Liberal Republicans that Nast was able to add a truly comic streak to Greeley’s campaign: “with a

torrent of mockery Greeley's old Republican allies had turned a bizarre spectacle into a national circus."<sup>31</sup> Nast depicted this circus in his cartoon "Can He Do It," published on July 6, 1872, in which Greeley plummets through a "Cincinnati" banner held by Schurz symbolizing his success in Ohio, but appears too big to fit through the "Baltimore" banner that represents his prospects at securing Democratic support (See Fig. 4). The Democratic convention, held in Baltimore two days after the cartoon was published, was a desperately needed vote of approval for Greeley. In the cartoon, Greeley must balance one foot on two horses—one that reads "Protection," and the other "Free Trade," to form a bridge between the party's two vastly different ideologies. Only carrying out the most careful and exact balancing act, according to Nast's depiction, would allow Greeley to gain an endorsement from Democrats.<sup>32</sup> Nast highlights how improbable this would be, drawing horses that stare aggressively in different directions, neither one looking intent on bearing Greeley's weight. Greeley, who benefitted from the wealth of powerful corporations, was a protectionist but the Liberal Republicans and Democrats had asserted themselves free-trade proponents in 1872, believing that it was the protectionist tariffs of said corporations that inhibited a fair economic playing field.

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<sup>31</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 303 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Nast, "Can He Do It," *Harper's Weekly*, 6 July 1872, 52.

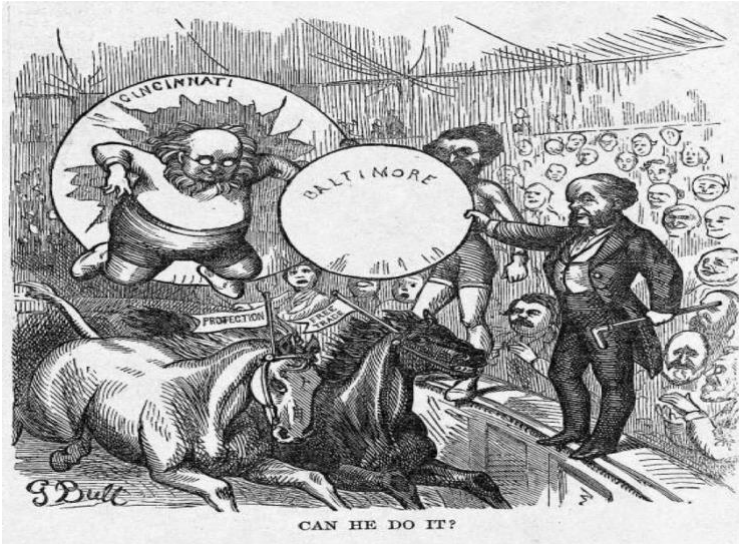


Fig. 4 Thomas Nast, "Can He Do It" *Harper's Weekly*, 6 July 1872, 52.

Democrats were incentivized to support Greeley for two reasons: political and social stability in the South and personal gain through patronage once Greeley won.<sup>33</sup> Nast included in his cartoon Democrats like Benjamin Butler and Tammany Hall ringleader Boss Tweed, who hesitantly watch Greeley in the crowd below, to create a link between Greeley's traitorous character and the calculating politicians who would benefit if he were victorious in November. As a tradeoff, Democrats were forced to accept the Civil Rights Amendments as steadfast values of the nation, accede to the Liberal Republican Platform, and stifle discussion on free trade.<sup>34</sup> In this sense, Democrats were

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<sup>33</sup> David Sutherland, "Edwin DeLeon and the Liberal Republicans in Georgia: Horace Greeley's Campaign for President in Southern States" *The Historian* 47, no. 1 (November 1984): 38-57, esp. 39.

<sup>34</sup> Sutherland, "Edwin DeLeon and the Liberal Republicans in Georgia," 39.

forced to choose between a potential loss of power in both Congress and the White House and begrudgingly biting their tongue to support Greeley in the hopes of a long-term payoff. Ultimately, the “Anything to Beat Grant” spirit mustered a sufficient majority at the Baltimore convention to endorse Greeley and Gratz Brown on the 1872 ballot. Greeley won 686 votes out of 732 in Baltimore and Gratz Brown won 713.<sup>35</sup> Despite these large victories, morale sunk for both the Liberal Republicans and Democrats who believed that the election of Greeley on their ticket reversed and deconstructed their identity. They regarded the nomination both publicly and privately with varying degrees of distain, but the notion that “a crooked stick may be made to beat a mad dog” prevailed.<sup>36</sup>

*Part III*  
*The Bloody Chasm Critique*

In Greeley’s acceptance of the Liberal Republican nomination on May 1, 1872, he had commended his newly adopted party for “casting behind it the wreck and rubble of worn-out contentions and by-gone feuds”—feuds which he once worked so adamantly to pursue. Greeley spoke almost directly to his Republican critics when he called them out as advocates of outdated ideals, whose services were no longer fit to govern a country that needed to progress past Civil War issues.<sup>37</sup> In a further attempt to assert himself as a hero of reconciliation, he lauded the party’s “departure from jealousies, strifes, and hates, which [had] no longer adequate motive or plausible pretext into

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<sup>35</sup> *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention held in Baltimore July 9, 1872*. Boston: Rockwell and Churchill Printers, 1872

<sup>36</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 3160 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>37</sup> Horace Greeley, “Mr Greeley’s Reply,” 3 May 1872.

an atmosphere of peace, fraternity, and mutual good will.”<sup>38</sup> Most importantly, Greeley vowed at the convention that “universal amnesty” for former Confederates and “impartial suffrage” were the noble American values that would mend a fragile nation.<sup>39</sup> Greeley accepted his nomination in the confidence that exemplary men across the country were eager to “clasp hands across the bloody chasm which [had] too long divided them.”<sup>40</sup> It was this plea that beckoned white Southerners who yearned to end Reconstruction and accept their pardon to his side, while their Republican counterparts marked him as a turncoat.

Greeley’s profound declaration gave Nast a new focal point from which he could lay bare how out of touch Greeley’s vision was. “Bloody chasm” cartoons in which Greeley reaches across fallen men to join hands with Democrats or Southerners became widely circulated in *Harper’s Weekly* to show contempt for the ease with which Greeley absolved Southern rebels.<sup>41</sup> In “Let Us Clasp Hands Over the Bloody Chasm,” created later that summer, Nast reinforced his opposition to Greeley’s platform by depicting him reaching out across Andersonville Prison (See Fig. 5).<sup>42</sup> Nast’s cartoons were powerful because the locations and faces in his work were easily recognizable. Andersonville, the deadliest site of the Civil War which held more than 32,000 Union soldiers at one point in 1864, was chosen to appeal to voters who had not forgotten this tragic episode of the war.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Horace Greeley, “Mr Greeley’s Reply,” 3 May 1872.

<sup>39</sup> Horace Greeley, “Mr. Greeley’s Reply,” 3 May 1872.

<sup>40</sup> Schurz, “The Platform: The Liberal Republican Movement,” 3 May 1872.

<sup>41</sup> Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction*, 201.

<sup>42</sup> Raymond F Baker and Edwin C Bearss, *Andersonville: The Story of a Civil War Prison Camp* (Washington: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1972), 1-20, esp. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Raymond F Baker and Edwin C Bearss, *Andersonville: The Story of a Civil War Prison Camp* (Washington: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1972), 1-20, esp. 12.





Fig. 5 Thomas Nast, “Let Us Clasp Hands Over the Bloody Chasm’ – Horace Greeley” *Harper’s Weekly*, 21 September 1872, 732.

Greeley extends out over this wide expanse to join hands across the graves, but there is too much space for him to do so. As such, Nast comments in this cartoon that reconciliation could not be attained, and Reconstruction could not be put to rest. Nast also includes a “Gratz Brown” ticket hanging from Greeley’s coattail in a nod to his running mate, who Nast subtly hints is riding Greeley’s coattails into fame and power. The cartoon again features Greeley with a pamphlet in his pocket to mock his false intellect and desire to promote himself as a mediator; it reads: “What I Know About Shaking Hands Over the Bloodiest of

Chasms.”<sup>44</sup> Nast’s desire to symbolize Confederate mistreatment of Union soldiers in this cartoon is inherently an attack on Greeley and the Liberal Republican platform to pardon and reconcile with Southern rebels.

Nast draws on this theme again in “Baltimore 1861-1872” with prominent figures of Greeley’s campaign to force a spotlight on all those complicit in what he believed was a farce in American politics (See Fig. 6).<sup>45</sup> Nast warns his audience of Greeley’s willingness to sympathize with corrupt, power-hungry men like John Kelly, the New York politician that took over Tammany Hall after Boss Tweed’s fraudulent ring was broken. Again, Greeley bends down, hat held submissively in hand, as he shakes hands with Kelly who steps with disregard on the body of a Union soldier of the sixth Massachusetts regiment.<sup>46</sup> The Democrat holds a gun behind his back and nonchalantly smokes a cigar while Carl Schurz, Charles Francis Adams, and another Liberal Republican linger fearfully in the background. Now, the “Gratz-Brown” ticket that Greeley was so prominently sporting in the Andersonville cartoon is partially concealed, likely to suggest that what the Liberal Republicans stand to gain by riding Greeley’s coattails to power may be encroached upon by similar-minded Democrats. The unconcerned attitude of Kelly whilst Greeley’s partners are pushed to the side is a comment on the nominee’s duplicity and foolishness in creating alliances with Democrats who are simply using him for personal gain. “The Dixie House” looms in the background to symbolize the dangerous ground on which Greeley walks, and that in allying

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Nast, “‘Let Us Clasp Hands Over the Bloody Chasm’ – Horace Greeley,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 21 September 1872, 732.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Nast, “Baltimore 1861-1872,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 3 August 1872, 596.

<sup>46</sup> Nast, “Baltimore 1861-1872,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 3 August 1872, 596.

with Democrats days before the Baltimore convention, Greeley makes himself vulnerable to further criticism from Republicans and wavering voters. Nast's commentary on the vast differences in Liberal Republican and Democratic principles asserts that Greeley running on both tickets in November is not only irrational, but also it condemns him and his supporters to imminent failure.



Fig. 6 Thomas Nast, "Baltimore 1861-1872," *Harper's Weekly*, 3 August 1872, 596.

One of Nast's final cartoons of Greeley, published on the day before the election, is "Clasping Hands Over the Bloodless (Sar)C(h)asm." This depiction of Uncle Sam and President Grant shaking hands across a reconnected chasm, below which Greeley and his supporters lay in disarray, provides a new sense of finality

and closure to an unprecedented election (See Fig. 7). The failed nominee hangs by a thread while his pamphlets flutter out of his pocket as symbols of his campaign like Carl Schurz, the organ that represents the *New York Tribune*, his campaign manager Whitelaw Reid, and Boss Tweed sit in misery beneath him. The numerous men who appear to have been consigned to Hell under the alliance of Grant and Uncle Sam, each played a role in Greeley's election and Nast employs his power at *Harper's Weekly* in a final blow to reveal and mock their failure on a national stage. This cartoon signals an end to Greeley's campaign and foreshadows Grant's win the following day.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Nast, "Clasping Hands Over the Bloodless Sar C h)asm," *Harper's Weekly*, 5 November 1872, 912.



Fig. 7 Thomas Nast, “Clasping Hands Over the Bloodless (Sar)C(h)asm” *Harper’s Weekly*, 5 November 1872, 912.

#### *Part IV* *A Silenced Voice*

Grant triumphed over Greeley with overwhelming support, a victory that the *New York Tribune* attributed not to the incumbent’s popularity, but to the low voter turnout of

Democrats.<sup>48</sup> Greeley's campaign, despite being centered around national reconciliation, was unsuccessful, and he won a mere six states in the 1872 race, all of which were Southern or border territories.<sup>49</sup> Grant's landslide victory spurred the Liberal Republican and Democratic Parties to turn on each other.<sup>50</sup> The defeated and disgraced Liberal Republicans lambasted the Democrats for "showing no zeal during the fight" and "deserting in flocks on the eve of every engagement."<sup>51</sup> In turn, Democrats retorted that the Liberal Republicans presented no competent candidate for office.<sup>52</sup> Many Liberal Republicans felt forced to compromise their values for Greeley's race and revealed their true colors by either supporting Grant's reelection or staying home on November 5.<sup>53</sup> Another Republican publication that had been chastising Greeley throughout the campaign alongside Nast remarked in a sad audit of Greeley's prospects that "if at any time [the campaign] has appeared to bear a sober or serious aspect, it is because of the unaccountable hallucination under which the leading actor has labored, that he was playing a tragedy instead of a comedy."<sup>54</sup> Most shamed by the farce made out of the anti-Grant campaign, however, was Greeley. On November 29, 1872, Horace Greeley died, attributed to grief from the passing of his

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<sup>48</sup> "The Election: Comments of the New York Press," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 November 1872; Michael F. Holt, *By One Vote: The Disputed Presidential Election of 1876* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), Location 178 of 7119, Kindle; Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction*, xiii.

<sup>49</sup> Lundberg, *Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood*, Location 2758 of 5250, Kindle.

<sup>50</sup> "Let Us have Peace," *New York Times*, 1 November 1872.

<sup>51</sup> "Let Us have Peace," *NYT*, 1 November 1872.

<sup>52</sup> "Let Us have Peace," *NYT*, 1 November 1872.

<sup>53</sup> Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction*, xiii.

<sup>54</sup> "Let Us have Peace," *NYT*, 1 November 1872.

wife days before the election and the toll of campaigning.<sup>55</sup> For traditional Republican voters, Greeley's recipe to heal the nation, universal amnesty and impartial suffrage, was not enough to atone for his numerous inconsistencies and highly romanticized view of the nation, or mend his public image shattered at the hands of Nast. For many Democrats, Greeley's protectionist tariff policy and indifference to the spoils system was not worth compromising for. The victory of President Grant and subsequent death of Greeley, who the *New York Times* slated "a hodge-podge of impudence, mock-modesty, flash philosophy, and Pecksniffian morality," heralded the prospect of a tranquil four years free of the untamed political charades that were born out of Greeley's blunders.<sup>56</sup>

The 1872 presidential left lasting effects on how communication and print were able to persuade, unify, and divide a nation.<sup>57</sup> Thomas Nast's cartoon series captures a unique moment in the history of America's Reconstruction where the commands of print media could shape a political narrative and sway public opinion more than ever before. As editor of the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley spent decades honing his ability to mold public sentiment and assert himself as a heroic emblem of national concord but ultimately entered into a toxic relationship with print and politics. The Liberal Republican bolt of the 1870s forced American politicians to address issues of race, fraternity, and civil service reform with increasing caution, and in Greeley's choice to ally with the Democrats, he labeled himself an unstable candidate for the presidency. Greeley stepped onto the political stage during an era of great tension and his vision for

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<sup>55</sup> "Obituary: Horace Greeley, Journalist," *New York Times*, 30 November 1872.

<sup>56</sup> "New York: The Administration Press Continues to Abuse Horace Greeley," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 November 1872.

<sup>57</sup> "The End of a Joke," *New York Times*, 10 November 1872.

reconciliation, too undefined and inconsistent for hostile voters, lost him the credibility and allegiance that he so desperately needed to defeat Grant in the 1872 race. Nast's outsized voice at *Harper's Weekly* succeeded in rendering Greeley's desire to please all in the name of consensus a laughable spectacle, making Grant the only feasible option for American leadership in 1872.



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## **Genocides, Warfare, and Denials: A Comparative Examination of the Circassian and Armenian Expulsions**

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*Caleb Reilly*

*Introduction*

The word “genocide” entered the international lexicon in the waning years of World War II. Since its recognition as an international crime by the United Nations (UN) in 1951, other than Germany’s own genocide—“The Holocaust”—most countries take an active role in either undermining claims of genocide against their ancestral regimes, or in some cases even denying it outright.<sup>1</sup> This essay will examine two disputed ethnic cleansings—the Russian expulsion of Circassians between 1860 and 1865 and the Ottoman Empire’s forced movement of the Armenians from 1915 to 1916—by summarizing the respective histories of the Circassians and Armenians, the policies that enabled massive amounts of death to occur, and the subsequent claim and denial of genocides by the respective victims and governments.

The sources used for this essay were primarily secondary sources. This methodology was for practical reasons—the author possesses no knowledge of Circassian, Russian, or Turkish languages—but also because much of the primary sources available are tainted by political agendas. For example, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau wrote a book on his experiences as the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in World War I called *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*. This damning account of Ottoman intentions itself is problematic as there are counterclaims that Morgenthau’s account was ghostwritten by

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 113.

Armenians on Morgenthau's staff. Even those claims are of questionable origins, as one of their most prominent champions was a staunch defender of Ottoman Actions and intentions during World War I, named Heath Lowry.<sup>2</sup> To avoid these pitfalls, and because the methodology for comparing the two events do not necessitate extensive primary source research, this essay avoids most first-person accounts.

Since this is a comparative examination of the two events, the methodology of relying on secondary sources generally provided the necessary resources for understanding the two different events and comparing them with the other in a larger context. However, one challenge of note is that there is far less scholarship on the Circassian genocide, resulting in fewer available sources to examine the events. A careful cross-examination of the secondary sources used for the Circassian case was necessary to gain the clearest account, but the lack of Circassian scholarship demonstrates that waning interest of the Circassian plight contributes to the pervasiveness of genocidal deniers within the Russian government.

The discussion and comparison of international genocides is an important topic. The two instances of forced removal of the Circassians and Armenians are especially important because the collective remembering of these expulsions has surged and ebbed in a way that skews understandings of the atrocities as genocides. In the introduction to *The Great Game of Genocide*, Donald Bloxham notes that the crimes against the Armenians initially “had considerable resonance in Europe and the USA [but were later] forcibly submerged,” therefore providing dim “prospects for recognition of and response[s] to other crimes past and present

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<sup>2</sup> Heath W. Lowry wrote a scathing critique of *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*. Further supporting information for his severe critiques can be found in: Heath W. Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010).

with less geographical or cultural association.”<sup>3</sup> The international community’s interest in these two instances generally surges with anniversary events—like the sesquicentennial of the Circassian expulsion and the Sochi Olympics in 2014, or the Pope’s official recognition on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian massacre as genocide in 2016. As the survivors and their direct descendants fade, the perpetrating governments feel emboldened to skew narratives to fit revisionist views. Without balanced, truthful histories, Armenian, Circassian, and many other persecuted groups’ experiences could also fade into oblivion. A balanced history of the events—gained through understanding the definition and framer’s intent of the crime of genocide, an analysis of the events themselves, and subsequent denials—shows that these two events were in fact genocides. Using the word “genocide” for these two events is significant because it not only honors the victims, but it also carries with it important legal implications for the offending governments.

### *Defining Genocide*

The concept of genocide first surfaced in relation to the Nazi-led Holocaust. With the Cold War looming, a newly formed organization known as the UN defined the Nazi’s act as genocide and codified it as an international crime. The UN defined genocide first as “acts committed with *intent* [author’s emphasis] to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”<sup>4</sup> It further clarified that genocide is not only killing members of the group and causing bodily harm, but also

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Paris, 12 January 1951.

includes the wider parameters of “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intend[ed] to prevent births within a group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”<sup>5</sup> This definition is important because it provides specific, inclusive parameters for what constitutes genocide. Determining whether an event constituted genocide hinges on the intentions of the perpetrators. The Circassians and Armenians each faced “conditions [that were] calculated to bring about its physical destruction” committed by perpetrators with the intention and knowledge that their actions would destroy the minority groups, which meets the threshold established by the UN for genocide.<sup>6</sup>

With the understanding that the two events meet the requirements for classification as genocide, it remains to be seen whether the label can be applied retroactively. In one particularly striking example, in 2004 the British Parliament refused to retroactively label the expulsion of Armenians as genocide. The Parliament’s justification was that “the 1948 UN Convention on genocide...cannot be applied retroactively.”<sup>7</sup> While the British government’s stance is confirmed by some Parliamentary lawyers, proponents of labeling the Armenian expulsion as a genocide claim that there is nothing in the Article that specifically prohibits retroactive application of the term.

In the genocide resolution’s preamble, however, the UN specifically provided standing to label previous genocides by noting that genocide has always been a bane of humanity. The UN Articles state that “at all periods of history genocide has

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Crime of Genocide.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, Crime of Genocide.

<sup>7</sup> William A. Schabas, “Retroactive Application of the Genocide Convention,” *University of St. Thomas Journal of Law and Public Policy* 4, No. 2 (2010), 37.

inflicted great losses on humanity, and being convinced that, to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international cooperation is required.”<sup>8</sup> By recognizing genocide as a constant throughout history, the UN effectively demanded that modern governments recognize past genocides. Additionally, calling for “international cooperation” is a signal for future government responses against the crime of genocide. Despite being in the preamble, an International Criminal Court prosecutor noted “nothing in the law of treaties suggests that provisions of a preamble have an inferior legal force to other provisions or no legal force whatsoever.”<sup>9</sup> Finally, the UN Genocide Convention convened years after the Holocaust ended, yet signatories largely agreed that the Holocaust was a genocide. Therefore, the first legally recognized instance of genocide was applied retroactively. There is no statute of limitations on murder, and retroactive application and recognition of genocides clearly falls in line with the genocide convention framers’ intent.

### *History of Conflict*

Providing the conflicts’ history will clarify each governments’ reasons for the genocide, although this explanation is in no way meant as justification for genocide. With knowledge of the motivations, it is easier to understand how the two events were different from other rebellion suppressions and highlights the brutality espoused during each against the ethnic minorities, ultimately demonstrating that they should be defined as genocides.

### *Circassians and Russians*

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Crime of Genocide.

<sup>9</sup> Schabas, “Retroactive Application,” 40.

Prior to the Circassian genocide from 1860 to 1865, the Circassians and Russians lived in mutual exclusivity for centuries. Located in the northwest corner of the Caucasus mountains, bordering the Black Sea, Circassia's location was viewed as a liability by the Russian leadership who feared they were susceptible to invasion from Western European powers. To shore up their defenses, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia's tzars established *stanitsas*—Cossack settlements—to secure the area.<sup>10</sup> Until 1860, the Circassians oscillated in a complex balance between accommodation with and resistance to Russian suzerainty.<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously, Russian tactics and suppression gradually became more brutal, with instances of outright murder gradually becoming more accepted by the Russian leadership.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Circassian tribal leaders sought external support from Western European powers, adding to the mistrust of Circassians on behalf of the Russians.

Western European nations sent advisors to encourage Circassian resistance under the guise that they would provide additional support to the Circassian plight. In the late 1830s, while the conflict was relatively small, a British envoy named David Urquhart encouraged the Circassians to continue fighting by promising support he had no authority to provide. While Urquhart was extremely supportive of Circassians, he undoubtedly provided them false hope with the belief that external help was coming in the form of warships, guns, and ammunition.<sup>13</sup> Other than a ship with approximately 40

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<sup>10</sup>Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25-26.

<sup>11</sup>King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, 32.

<sup>12</sup>Walter Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 19-21.

<sup>13</sup>Shauket Mufti, *Heroes and Emperors in Circassian History* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1972), 258.

adventurers and negligible amounts of guns and ammunition, Urquhart's promise was unfulfilled.<sup>14</sup> Supposed Ottoman allies used the Circassians both to fight their long-time Russian enemy and to tip the demographic scales in their favor to counter the rising ratio of Christians within the Ottoman Empire. In a "double game," the seat of the Ottoman government, the Sublime Porte, encouraged Circassians to fight the Russians by promising external support and telling them they were welcome in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup> Requesting support from Russia's traditional enemies exacerbated the Russians' belief that the Circassians remained a security threat and the only option was to either annihilate or expel them from their ancestral lands.

The initial invasion of Circassia began in June 1860, and in September the Circassians met with Tsar Alexander II to seek a truce. The Tsar demanded the Circassians surrender, turn over their weapons, and abandon their ancestral homes for a lowland region within Russia or the Ottoman Empire.<sup>16</sup> The terms of this agreement were unacceptable for the Circassians who knew that moving to the lowlands would result in a large amount of disease from the swampland, and giving up their weapons would leave them vulnerable to Russian atrocities.<sup>17</sup> Thus, most of the Circassians chose to remain and hoped to live peacefully under Russian rule if they stopped attacking Russian military elements.

Russian General Nikolai Evdomikov was dedicated to defeating the Circassians using any tactics he deemed necessary. Convinced the Circassians were a permanent threat, he believed

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<sup>14</sup> Mufti, *Heroes and Emperors*, 256-262.

<sup>15</sup> Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide*, 89-90.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Richmond, "Circassia: A Small Nation Lost to the Great Game" in *Hidden Genocides: Power, Knowledge, Memory*, eds. Alexander Laban-Hinton, Thomas Lapointe, and Douglas Irvin-Erickson (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 115-116.

<sup>17</sup> Shauket, *Heroes and Emperors*, 256.

all Circassians must be either killed or expelled.<sup>18</sup> One of Evdomikov's subordinates defended the Russian Army's actions because "no matter what conditions of submission the mountaineers [Circassians] agree to, this submission will continue only as long as the mountaineers wish...even if we occupied the mountains with fortresses and connected them with roads we would always have to keep a huge number of troops at the ready...and there wouldn't be a moment's peace."<sup>19</sup> In agreement with his subordinate, Evdomikov exhibited his intentions by imploring a mapmaker to wait to complete an ethnographic map of the region because he planned to completely change the demographics through forced expulsion or killing. Evdomikov told the mapmaker that if he "wish[ed] to make [the] map of current interest, then rub out the [Circassians]" because he planned to "expel them" by the end of 1863.<sup>20</sup> Evdomikov conducted these movements using brutal methods.

Evdomikov ruthlessly relocated Circassians from their mountain homes to the coast of the Black Sea where they waited for ships to the Ottoman Empire. Those who refused were killed indiscriminately, even if they were not fighting or did not possess ammunition.<sup>21</sup> The Russians surrounded entire villages, fired cannons on residents, set fire to homes, and burned all the food. Evdomikov then forcibly pushed Circassians to the coast, under brutal winter conditions, knowing many would certainly perish along the way because he did not provide any adequate provisions for shelter or food. His intention was to "liberate us [Russians] from a people [the Circassians] who wish us ill."<sup>22</sup> Even when Circassians built temporary dwellings while waiting for ships to

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<sup>18</sup> Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide*, 78.

<sup>19</sup> Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide*, 78.

<sup>20</sup> Richmond, *Hidden Genocides*, 116.

<sup>21</sup> Richmond, *Hidden Genocides*, 117.

<sup>22</sup> Richmond, *Hidden Genocides*, 93.



bring them to the Ottoman Empire, Evdomikov's troops returned to the area and destroyed any standing buildings. Disease, cold, and wolves were especially lethal for younger children and the elderly.<sup>23</sup> At the coast the Circassians' hopes for rescue were dashed by exorbitant transportation costs and unseaworthy ships.

The Circassians who went to the Ottoman Empire were encouraged by Ottoman promises of resettlement. However, these promises proved short-sighted because the Ottoman Empire itself did not possess the resources to adequately provide for the large influx of refugees. The ships the Ottomans sent were too few and not built for the thousands of refugees flooded onto them.<sup>24</sup> Evdomikov knew that the ships and the conditions under which they were forced to cross the Black Sea would certainly result in their deaths. Some ships were so overloaded with as many as 1,800 people, their belongings, and livestock that they simply foundered during some of the Black Sea's frequent storms.<sup>25</sup>

The conditions to which Evdomikov subjected Circassians falls directly in line with the UN definition of genocide. Evdomikov himself stated to the Tsar in 1864 that it was his "honor" to "[dispatch]...the natives of Kuban Oblast for settlement in Turkey...by force of arms."<sup>26</sup> His armies fought peaceful Circassians and Circassian fighters, making no distinction between the two. Even peaceful tribes that hoped to surrender to the extreme terms of Tsar Alexander II were treated in the same manner and forced to emigrate or be killed. In this instance, their only crime was that they were ethnically Circassian.<sup>27</sup> In 1865, when the operation officially concluded,

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<sup>23</sup> Richmond, *Hidden Genocides*, 117.

<sup>24</sup> Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide*, 88-90.

<sup>25</sup> King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> Richmond, *Hidden Genocides*, 119.

<sup>27</sup> Richmond, *Hidden Genocides*, 117-120.

the population of Circassians in the Caucasus was almost nonexistent. While nearly 500,000 Circassians left for the Ottoman Empire, many perished on the voyage. Between the shipwrecks, death from disease, and the atrocities, the estimates of Circassians deliberately killed because of their ethnicity range from 1-1.5 million.<sup>28</sup> Evdomikov's intentions were to secure Russia by destroying the Circassians, and his subsequent actions demonstrate that the expulsion was genocide.

### *Armenians and Ottomans*

For much of the Ottoman Empire's history, the Muslim majority lived relatively peaceably with religious minorities, including Jews and Armenian Christians.<sup>29</sup> Until the nineteenth century, Ottoman tolerance allowed for differences in religion, although all legal matters were subordinate to Muslim law—called *sharia*. In the nineteenth century, a new set of reforms—called *Tanzimat*—sought to change that tradition and provide equal protection under the law. This Western European-supported initiative ended up backfiring, and the results were unfavorable for the Armenian Christians.<sup>30</sup>

Realizing their newfound voice under the *Tanzimat* reforms, Armenians aired grievances in Constantinople to the Ottoman polity. Under the new reforms, Armenians petitioned the Ottoman government to resolve issues facing them in eastern Anatolia. Many of their concerns centered around the problem created by the influx of Muslim refugees—namely, the Circassians and Muslims from the Balkans. The addition of Circassian refugees strained an already economically challenged

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<sup>28</sup> Richmond, *Hidden Genocides*, 117-120.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174-181.

<sup>30</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 15-16.

area, forcing Armenian Christians to accommodate the Circassian refugees.<sup>31</sup> Adding to the jealousy and distrust between the two groups, the Circassian refugees were given land and a twelve-year tax holiday if they did not move for twenty years.<sup>32</sup> Armenian grievances gained international attention. The resulting conflict between the Christians and Muslims became an international issue, known as the “Armenian Question.”<sup>33</sup> As tensions rose, so too did the violence between the Armenians and Ottoman subjects.

Between settling the Circassian refugees in the frontier due to their “trusted” status as Muslims and empowering Kurdish militias to quell uprisings, mistrust and instances of violence against the Armenians increased between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The Ottoman polity charged Kurdish Muslims with maintaining security in eastern Anatolia through state-sanctioned tribal militias called the *Hamidiye*.<sup>34</sup> The Sublime Porte empowered the *Hamidiye* above others, and they ensured Muslim Kurds would support the Ottoman polity rather than join other disgruntled minorities against it. The *Hamidiye* were emboldened by the Sultan’s requirement for “extraordinary terror” against Armenians who demanded equal rights.<sup>35</sup> While the Ottoman state did not officially utilize state structures to perpetrate these massacres, it also did not protect the victims nor prosecute the perpetrators.

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<sup>31</sup> Antonio Ferrara and Niccolo Pianciola, “The dark side of connectedness: forced migrations and mass violence between the late Tsarist and Ottoman Empires (1853-1920),” *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 92, no. 257 (2019), 615-616.

<sup>32</sup> Ferrara and Pianciola, “The dark side,” 616.

<sup>33</sup> Ferrara and Pianciola, “The dark side,” 617.

<sup>34</sup> Ferrara and Pianciola, “The dark side,” 620.

<sup>35</sup> Ferrara and Pianciola, “The dark side,” 620.

This action—or lack thereof—set a dangerous precedent for inter-communal ethnic violence in the years to come.

After a coup in 1908 that brought the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to power, Turkish nationalism rose amongst ethnic Turks faced with external pressure. The Young Turks were an insurgent group that comprised most of the CUP. As staunch republicans, they defied Ottoman absolutism.<sup>36</sup> While they sought to regain some of the prestige of the Ottoman Empire, the movement was ultimately discredited by losses of territory in the Balkans and ongoing revolts in Albania and Yemen.<sup>37</sup> These losses, combined with the jealousy of advantaged Christian Armenians, fueled discontent which boiled over into occasional anti-Christian violence, most notably with the Cilician massacres in 1909. During these massacres nearly 20,000 Christians were killed, and they themselves killed around 2,000 Muslim attackers.<sup>38</sup> This crescendo of violence gradually built over decades since the *Tanzimat*. It finally exploded with a rapid decision in April 1915 to brutally deport Armenian Christians from the Anatolian frontiers to deserts in modern-day Syria and Jordan.

The Armenian Genocide was conducted under the auspices of securing the countryside during World War I. Officially, the Ottoman Army was to provide safety and security for the Armenians during the movements, but the reality was in stark contrast to those orders.<sup>39</sup> The reason official, public Ottoman orders were not followed was that there was a circle within the ruling CUP that wished to exterminate the Armenians. This group wanted the Armenians exterminated because they

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<sup>36</sup> Stephen Kinzer, *Crescent & Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 14.

<sup>37</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 59-60.

<sup>38</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 60-65.

<sup>39</sup> Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 187.

feared the Armenians would join in sabotage efforts or sedition under Russian leadership against the Ottomans.<sup>40</sup> The CUP used a special organization—the *Teskilat-i Mahsusa*—to carry out the massacres.<sup>41</sup> Many of the *Teskilat-i Mahsusa* members did the killing, but they also employed disaffected Muslim refugees— notably Circassians. This employment of unofficial groups provided the Ottoman government plausible deniability for some of the killings by calling them unfortunate, isolated incidents.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, the CUP directives have either been lost, destroyed, or hidden, so this information cannot be used with certainty to refute subsequent Turkish government claims.<sup>43</sup> This illicit CUP order to exterminate Armenians, however, is increasingly accepted by historians and governments due a preponderance of evidence supporting its original existence.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the lack of documentation has provided subsequent Turkish leaders with the sliver of doubt needed to deny the genocide’s existence and occurrence.

Ultimately, the forced expulsion of Armenians resulted in massive loss of life theretofore unseen in conflicts between the Ottomans and Armenians. CUP operatives and disaffected Muslims beat, killed, and neglected Armenian refugees on such a

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<sup>40</sup>Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 187.

<sup>41</sup>Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 187-188.

<sup>42</sup> Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 116.

<sup>43</sup> As noted in *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey*, Guenter Lewy references an unofficial, handwritten document believed to be written by CUP leader Essad Bey. It was discovered by a British official in Constantinople in 1919 called “The ‘Ten Commandments.’” The “commandments” include directions such as “exterminate all males under 50” and “leave [or “spare”] girls and children to be Islamized.” Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2005), 48-49.

<sup>44</sup> Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 188.

widespread scale that 600,000 to 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives between 1915 and 1916.<sup>45</sup> The Russian leaders clearly intended to cause severe hardship and death—and were successful. With all the evidence demonstrating their intention, and the resulting destruction, this unprecedented loss of life under such circumstances must be considered genocide.

### *Genocide Denial*

Subsequent Russian and Turkish regimes have vigorously fought against applying the term “genocide” to these respective events. The Russian and Turkish governments do not want these ethnic “cleansings” to be labeled genocide because they will lose legitimacy and standing amongst the international community, and they also do not want to be forced to reconcile with the affected ethnic group(s) for the damages prior regimes caused. The cover-ups and denials are rooted in different arguments: Russians generally claim that applying the label of genocide would just be a political tool of the West, and that the Circassians left voluntarily; Turkey’s official cover-up was enabled by their anti-communist position in the backdrop of the Cold War, and the Armenian plight lost legitimacy after a series of large-scale attacks inside Turkey in the latter half of the twentieth century.

#### *Russia’s Denial*

In 2014 the Winter Olympics were held in the former Circassian city of Sochi. On the same day the Olympics began, *The Smithsonian* magazine published an article entitled “150 Years Ago, Sochi was the Site of a Horrific Ethnic Cleansing.” This scathing article primarily targeted Tsar Alexander II for his role in encouraging the seizure of the valuable farmland of Circassians to both build a secure southern border with the

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<sup>45</sup> Lewy, *Armenian Massacre*, 241.

Ottoman Empire, but also for his and subsequent Russian leaders' inability to establish security in the southern provinces of Russia.<sup>46</sup> The article ends by stating "Russia still has not reached a lasting, peaceful settlement with the stateless peoples along the nation's southern border. Stability will not come to the Caucasus until Russia comes to terms with its violent past."<sup>47</sup> This negative press casted a dark cloud over the Olympics, which Russian leaders hoped would showcase its greatness.

Russian President Vladimir Putin refused to acknowledge any of his predecessor's wrongdoing. When asked about the Circassian genocide, Putin responded to critics by stating claims of genocide were merely the West's attempt to "contain" Russia, despite contemporary Circassians' and Russians' desires to live harmoniously.<sup>48</sup> Putin feared that the West would use the issue of genocide to further anti-Russian policies that greatly harm its economy, and other Russian leaders fear that admitting to the Circassian genocide will unravel their attempts to present a unified Russian history. If the younger generation does not believe in Russia's greatness, its leaders worry that unrest will follow.<sup>49</sup> While not denying that many Circassians were moved from their traditional homeland along the Black Sea, Russian leadership prefers to claim that Circassians moved "voluntarily,"

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<sup>46</sup> Smithsonian Magazine, "150 Years Ago, Sochi Was the Site of a Horrific Ethnic Cleansing," Smithsonian.com (Smithsonian Institution, February 7, 2014), <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/150-years-ago-Sochi-was-the-site-horrific-ethnic-cleansing-180949675/>.

<sup>47</sup> Smithsonian Magazine, "150 Years Ago, Sochi Was the Site of a Horrific Ethnic Cleansing."

<sup>48</sup> "Putin Makes the Circassian Issue Part of Russia's Relations with the West," Putin Makes the Circassian Issue Part of Russia's Relations with the West, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12917-putin-makes-the-circassian-issue-part-of-russias-relations-with-the-west.html>.

<sup>49</sup> "Putin Makes the Circassian Issue."

which is a dubious claim since many Circassians lost their lives in the process of leaving their ancestral homeland.<sup>50</sup> Because of Alexander II's offer to move the Circassians to other locations within Russia, Russian policymakers feel emboldened to claim the Circassians left voluntarily. This defense does not consider the fact that the land offered to the Circassians was inferior, and in many cases deemed unlivable by contemporary Circassians and Russians.

To further discredit Circassian claims of genocide, Russia attempted to skew historical events. In 2007 Russia commemorated the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary for when the Circassians accepted Russian sovereignty under Tsar Ivan.<sup>51</sup> This anniversary celebration was an attempt by Russia to demonstrate that the conflict between 1860-1865 was an unlawful uprising which forced Russia's need to act, thereby legitimizing Russian actions.<sup>52</sup> This argument's origins are debatable since the referenced agreement was only made with a single tribe out of the many that comprise the Circassian people. Most Circassians resisted Russian suzerainty. The war between 1860 and 1865 started between two nations but ended with the victorious nation (Russia) imposing harsh measures on survivors combined with methodical ethnic cleansing which enabled Cossack settlement.<sup>53</sup>

### *Turkey's Denial*

Like the Russian government, the Turkish regime strongly opposes recognition of the Armenian expulsion as a genocide and

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<sup>50</sup> Valery Dzutsati, "Circassians Want Russia to Recognize 19th Century Conquest as 'Genocide,'" Jamestown, September 20, 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/circassians-want-russia-to-recognize-19th-century-conquest-as-genocide-2/>.

<sup>51</sup> Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide*, 160.

<sup>52</sup> Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide*, 162.

<sup>53</sup> Shenfield, "The Circassians," 151.



was emboldened in its denial by Western nations' actions since the end of World War I. Unlike Russia, with whom the West's relationship has historically been strained, Turkey is a longtime ally of the West, namely Great Britain and the USA. Thus, any criticism of Turkey—the successor to the Ottoman Empire—brings with it high amounts of Western media coverage. Upon the Bolshevik revolution in 1923, Turkey was believed to be a potential bulwark against the Bolsheviks. This importance took on greater meaning with the outset of the Cold War in 1947.<sup>54</sup> Through great power *realpolitik*, Turkey gained greater importance for both the political and economic advantages it offered to the rest of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Therefore, to ensure continued resistance to communism, the international community led by the US government conveniently ignored the Armenian massacre to preserve its relationship with Turkey.

Leaders of the Turkish Republic have denied the Armenian movement resulted in genocide. Turkey's position maintains that massive amounts of Ottoman deaths occurred during the throes of World War I when the Ottoman Empire was faced with numerous threats from the Entente. Being legitimately threatened from within by Armenian separatists, gangs, and Russian Armenians, the Porte claims that it had no other option but to move the Armenians to a new area where they would pose a smaller threat.<sup>55</sup> As it follows, the movements that resulted in Armenian deaths were simply an unfortunate byproduct of defending the nation's security interests. This assertion greatly lessens the legal implications of the word "genocide" since it was not "committed with intent to destroy" and paints the Ottoman Empire's actions more nobly. This defense has obvious

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<sup>54</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 13.

<sup>55</sup> Dadrian "The Armenian Question," 59.

shortcomings, one of which is that the army itself was ordered to care for and protect the Armenians they escorted.<sup>56</sup> The army failed in this respect by not only allowing violence from bandits and gangs to take place against the Armenians, but in many instances even perpetrating violence against the Armenians themselves.<sup>57</sup> This failure to protect Armenians—or in many cases attacking them—along with the deadly forced march they forced Armenians to take came directly from the CUP’s orders, emphasizing that the army was complicit in committing the genocide.

After examining the literature on the expulsion of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire in World War II, Turkey’s claims that ethnic Armenians posed grave amounts of danger to the Empire appear doubtful, but Armenian actions after the war served to strengthen these claims.” Russia had its own ethnic Armenian units, and with previous Armenian calls for assistance to France and England, Ottoman leadership claimed little choice but to consolidate the Armenians due to the existential threat they posed.<sup>58</sup> The Ottomans claimed the Armenians were dangerous, so they were forced to move Armenians to austere locations away from advancing armies. Although most Armenian communities posed no real threat to the Ottoman Empire, this defense was strengthened by Armenian actions in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Between 1973 and 1985, approximately 50 Turkish diplomats were assassinated by an Armenian organization called “the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia,” or ASALA.<sup>59</sup> Despite successfully bringing international attention to the Armenian plight within Turkey and raising the issue of the Armenian genocide, ASALA’s actions

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<sup>56</sup> Kuper, *Genocide*, 114.

<sup>57</sup> Kuper, *Genocide*, 114; and Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 187.

<sup>58</sup> Kuper, *Genocide*., 113-119.

<sup>59</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 219.

paradoxically strengthened Turkey's argument that they were threatened by the Armenians. Armenian actors viciously murdering Turkish ambassadors outside of the context of war showed Turkey's rulers that their predecessors did face an internal threat posed by the Armenians and were further justified.

### *Genocide Reparations*

The UN necessitates reparations for the affected victims of genocide. As noted in *The Great Game of Genocide*, "implicit in the UN's framing genocide in international law was a particular determination to punish the crime."<sup>60</sup> Recognizing previous genocides forces subsequent governments to reconcile with their dark pasts in a very public, expensive manner. Reparations carry with them difficult questions that undoubtedly result in emotional claims of greed or corruption by both sides.

### *Russia's Case Against Reparations*

Russia has attempted to quiet critics by passing the Compatriot Law which allows former Russians to return, be helped with their return, and to not be denied re-entry into Russia.<sup>61</sup> This law places Russia in line with international law requiring countries to provide disaffected peoples the "right of return."<sup>62</sup> However, since its adoption there has been additional requirements levied on those wishing to return which has directly affected Circassians. Namely, there are requirements for applicants to be fluent in Russian and to be familiar with Russian

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<sup>60</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 216.

<sup>61</sup> Mason Wiley, "Circassian Right of Return: Putin the Terrible or Putin the Enlightened?", *American University International Law Review* 30, no. 1. (2015), 142.

<sup>62</sup> Wiley, "Circassian Right," 156.

customs.<sup>63</sup> Circassians forced from Russia in 1865 and eventually raised in modern-day Syria have little chance of Russian fluency. This xenophobic law is meant to make it more difficult for Circassians to return, thereby also preventing a large minority from demonstrating within Russia against the government. By officially offering repatriation, though, Russian leaders can claim that they are on the right side of the argument and want to help anyone who can legitimately prove they were wrongly moved out of Russia.

Russia's modern-day government also contends that the Circassians left of their own volition, therefore forfeiting their right to return. While voluntarily leaving does not mean that one forfeits one's right to return according to the UN, the more doubtful claim is that the Circassians left of their own free will. The few Circassians who remained in Russia under Tsar Alexander II's terms were provided land in undesirable areas, and in untenable positions. As the Russians continued settling additional Cossacks in former Circassian settlements, the latter was relentlessly forced to relocate.<sup>64</sup> In preparing the area for Cossack resettlement, army leadership decided the Cossacks and Circassians could not coexist. During the clearing operations, they claimed that Circassians fought to the death, and "did not want to submit."<sup>65</sup> In fact, in order to accomplish the mission, they claimed "it was necessary to exterminate half of the Mountaineers to compel the other half to lay down its arms."<sup>66</sup> The Circassians who chose to leave, then, chose between leaving or extermination, undercutting the Russians' claims that Circassians left voluntarily.

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<sup>63</sup> Wiley, "Circassian Right," 161-164.

<sup>64</sup> Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide*, 132-134.

<sup>65</sup> Taras Hunczak, ed., *Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000) 261.

<sup>66</sup> Hunczak, *Russian Imperialism*, 261-262.

The Ottoman Empire promised support for a new life in Anatolia for the Circassians who wished to emigrate. The Ottomans, though, were merely executing the mirror strategy of the Russians: rather than pulling from populations deemed friendly from within their own empire, they pulled from outside to change the demographics in outlying communities.<sup>67</sup> By the time these overburdened ships arrived in the Ottoman Empire, they were referred to as “floating graveyards” due to the large number of individuals who perished on the journey.<sup>68</sup> Recruitment efforts certainly enticed the Circassians faced with few good options, but the large number of refugees who entered the Ottoman Empire overwhelmed the strained polity, creating hardships for the refugees.<sup>69</sup> The arrival of Circassians—who were placed in locations where Muslim populations were proportionately low, including eastern Anatolia, the Balkans, and Syria—stretched efforts of locals struggling to survive on their own who were then charged with feeding and providing for additional people on behalf of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>70</sup> The unfortunate chain of events resulted in intercommunal jealousy, mistrust, and violence. In less than a half century, Circassian victims evolved into perpetrators in the Armenian massacres.

### *Turkey’s Case Against Reparations*

If the Armenian genocide was recognized as a genocide, modern-day Turkey would face a large amount of fallout. Recompense would come in the form of lost territory or monetarily. Due to previous skirmishes with the Soviet Union over the Ottoman’s role in the Armenian genocide, they were

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<sup>67</sup> King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, 97.

<sup>68</sup> King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, 96-97.

<sup>69</sup> Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 117.

<sup>70</sup> King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, 97.

faced with retreating to its pre-1920 borders, thereby giving the Armenians a large swath of land to Turkey's detriment.<sup>71</sup> The Armenian genocide being internationally recognized was not something the Turkish government wished to be associated with in any manner, and the amount and type of reparation is not agreed upon by the Armenian community.<sup>72</sup>

Reparations are a hotly debated topic even amongst Armenians. One of the issues with recognizing the Armenian genocide within the Armenian camp itself is the issue of intentionality behind recognition. If Armenian intention is simply to gain recognition to heal wounds and reconcile with each other, there are uncomfortable steps the Armenians must also take to recognize their own subsequent actions in 1918.<sup>73</sup> If, however, they want recognition as a basis for reparations, they claim upwards of \$1.64 trillion must be repaid to families of the genocide, an exorbitant sum of money for an event that Turkey does not even acknowledge as a genocide.<sup>74</sup>

If Turkey agreed to reparations for Armenians, a cascade of additional issues would arise. Instead of admitting Armenian deaths were exceptional or intentional, Turkey's defenders claim there was no intention for Christians specifically to be murdered.<sup>75</sup> Admitting wrongdoing would go against many years of genocide denial and would force Turkish citizens to reconcile with an ugly past. According to one philosopher and genocide scholar, "many people in Turkey aren't willing to use the word

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<sup>71</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 231-232.

<sup>72</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 216.

<sup>73</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 231.

<sup>74</sup> Rick Gladstone, "Armenian Groups Are Increasingly Focused on Reparations for Genocide," *The New York Times*, 23 April 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/24/world/europe/turkey-fear-of-reparations-possibly-in-many-billions-is-a-factor-in-armenian-genocide-denials.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Gladstone, "Armenian Groups."

[genocide]” to describe the Armenian expulsion.<sup>76</sup> In defense of litigation that occurred following World War I meant to settle Armenian debts, the president of the Turkish Coalition of America argued that the litigation resulted in “time-honored agreements” and any reparations for Armenians would ignore “the losses of millions of Ottoman Muslims, who were driven out of their ancestral homes in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Russia and suffered during a century of war at the hands of the great powers and their proxies.”<sup>77</sup> Recognizing one minority group’s deaths without recognizing another’s would force Turkey to confront its past in a manner that not only breaks from decades’ worth of precedence, but would be detrimental to many current Turkish citizens. Ultimately, there is no amount of money possible that can replace a human life. In the case of reparation pay, lowering payments based upon split ancestry, or being unable to provide adequate proof of being affected greatly, would certainly provoke a great amount of outrage. Internal outrage, combined with international pressure, would force the Turkish government to place a large amount of personnel and monetary resources to an issue they would prefer would just slowly disappear.

### *Conclusion*

Examining the UN definition of genocide through the Armenian and Circassian case studies leaves little doubt that both events were, in fact, genocide. The argument against retroactively applying the term “genocide” has been undertaken by lawyers on behalf of governments that do not want to create international angst over historical events. The UN’s definition of genocide

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<sup>76</sup> Gladstone, “Armenian Groups.”

<sup>77</sup> Gladstone, “Armenian Groups.”

allows for retroactive application of the term and for these events to be appropriately labeled as genocides. Military and political leaders inside Russia and the Ottoman Empire sought to exterminate the Circassians and Armenians, respectively, to further political agendas and disguised their efforts as being necessary for their country's security. The arguments refuting genocide range from claiming the pressure is simply meant to justify further economic discrimination against Russia, to forcing a government and its citizens to reconcile with an uncomfortable fact of its past in Turkey's case. The two genocides, examined comparatively, provide scholars with a unique lens to judge specific events before, during, and after they occurred.

Examining these two genocides provides readers and scholars with a valuable perspective over how societies are intertwined. A mere 50 years after suffering through their own genocide, Circassians were witting tools used by the CUP to perpetrate its murderous policies. Upon reflection of this fact, it forces one to wonder how events in the Ottoman Empire may have differed if the Circassians were not themselves persecuted and were allowed to remain in their ancestral land. Would the cascading factors of resettlement that inflamed economic inequality and jealousy between disaffected Muslims and Armenian Christians prevented the Armenians from loudly advocating their case during the *Tanzimat* reforms? Would the *Tanzimat* reforms have been more successful at creating a more inclusive society that accommodated minorities, like the Armenians? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered, but they do provide scholars with the mental space to ask and ultimately question current narratives of each event.



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## “The sun never sets on the American girl”: Imperial Symbolism of Lady Curzon’s Peacock Dress

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*Sophia Trigg*

Electric light from hundreds of incandescent bulbs glowed softly, reflecting off of walls of pearl-colored marble inlaid with thousands of semi-precious stones. At the far end of the hall, framed amongst the fifteen-foot Mughal archways, walked a woman dressed in a shimmering gown of gold and silver thread, her bodice draped with diamonds and lace. Every step she took caused the center of each embroidered peacock feather on her skirt to glint as the beetle wings sewn there caught the light. The crowd clustered in the glittering *Diwan-i-Khas* was filled with English dignitaries, Indian princes, and American aristocrats dancing the night away. It was 6 January 1903, and the State Ball was in full swing, topping off a week of spectacle in Delhi for a coronation durbar organized by Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, and his wife Mary.

Reported on for months in advance of its debut, Mary’s “peacock dress” was a highly anticipated fashion moment. The *Times of London* was the first to comment on its existence on 10 October 1902, saying, “Lady Curzon ... will at that historic function wear a dress of exclusively Indian manufacture. A Delhi craftsman is now engaged upon the gown, which will be the in the main idea of its design a gorgeous piece of silk embroidery work in imitation of peacock feathers.”<sup>1</sup> A month later, English ladies’ magazine the *Gentlewoman* reported that “the dress to be worn by the Vicereine at the Durbar is to be of exclusively Indian manufacture, and designed by her own hands.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “The Delhi Durbar,” *Times of London*, 10 October 1902.

<sup>2</sup> Hebe, “Cosy Corner Chat,” *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 25, no. 646 (November 1902): 673.

After the event, the *Daily Mail* immediately situated Mary and her dress as a standout vision amongst a sea of 5000 attendees at the ball, saying “the climax most properly was the dress worn by Lady Curzon of gold *kincob* (a rich Indian material woven of silk and threads of gold), figured with peacock feathers and woven specially in India, which created a mild sensation.”<sup>3</sup> Initial reports of the event printed in America ignored the details and “Indianness” of her gown.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 4 April 1903 that American newspapers carried detailed accounts of the event, but they



Figure 1: Mary Curzon, Vicereine of India (1898-1905), in her peacock dress. (William Logsdail, 1909, Mary Victoria Leiter, Lady Curzon, oil on canvas, Kedleston Hall, © National Trust / Andrew Patterson.)

<sup>3</sup> The *Daily Mail* misinterpreted the fabric as kincob rather than silk with metallic embroidery. “Close of the Durbar: Etherealising Effect of the Electric Light,” *Daily Mail*, 8 January 1903. The dress weighed over 10 lbs.

<sup>4</sup> See “State Ball at Delhi: Five Thousand Guests at the Palace of the Grand Mogul,” *Washington Post*, 7 January 1903.

still did not mention the peacock pattern, instead focusing on the style and luxury of the gown. The *Evening Star*, a Washington D. C. newspaper gushed, “none of the dresses shone out especially except the famous one of Lady Curzon. ... It is a most beautiful piece of embroidery, the finest gold thread on the palest blue silk, making a most beautiful dress on a most beautiful woman.”<sup>5</sup> Mary’s story, an American girl who rose to the highest female position in the British Empire in India, outranked only by the Queen herself, was particularly persuasive to the American audience, who took on a role of proud parent to their daughter in India. Her beauty and involvement with the empire thanks to her marriage to an Englishman made her a heroine to many upper- and middle-class American women.

Mary Curzon’s sartorial decisions throughout her time as Vicereine of India (1898-1905), and indeed throughout her entire life as a wealthy American heiress, were scrutinized and lauded by Americans and Britons alike. While British papers like the *Gentlewoman* focused on Mary’s role as a Society matriarch and proxy for the Queen, the *Chicago Tribune*, Mary’s hometown newspaper, paid detailed attention to her physical beauty and wardrobe at an outfit-by-outfit level.<sup>6</sup> In an article titled “Across the Seas with the Curzons” that covered her journey to and entry into India in 1898, the correspondent writes about each outfit Mary wore on the ship, *Arabia*.<sup>7</sup> Upon their landing in Calcutta, the *Tribune* devoted another entire article to describing the clothing that Mary brought with her for the beginning of her reign

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<sup>5</sup> Margaret Sterling, “The Durbar Service: Magnificent Costumes Worn at the State Ball,” *Washington Evening Star*, 4 April 1903.

<sup>6</sup> I use upper-case “Society” to refer to the socially focused, upper-class set as opposed to the general term of “society” used to refer to any community.

<sup>7</sup> Grace Corneau, “Across the Seas with the Curzons: Descriptions of the Approach of the New Viceroy to the Empire Over Which He Will Reign—Amusements Aboard Ship,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 February 1899.

in an article called “American Vice Queen in Calcutta.”<sup>8</sup> This type of coverage continued throughout the rest of her life with her outfit constantly noted at public occasions.<sup>9</sup> During the coverage of the 1903 Delhi Durbar, her dress was mentioned in almost every article covering the event while only three of Lord Curzon’s outfits were mentioned: his formal state uniform worn to the opening and proclamation ceremony, his formal court dress worn to the investiture ceremony, and his outfit for the State Ball.<sup>10</sup> The Durbar and the impact of Mary Curzon’s peacock dress were covered by newspapers, periodicals, and magazines around the world. But why did this one dress, worn for only one night, catch the world’s attention?

Mary was well aware of the sartorial attention she was getting. She used her wardrobe to orient herself within the social systems she belonged to and to assert power within the confines of her roles. All cultures utilize clothing to symbolize or affect social status, but Edwardian India was unique in its sartorial complexity.<sup>11</sup> As Vicereine, Mary was acting as the head of a colonized society that contained both Anglo-Indians (Britons

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<sup>8</sup> Grace Corneau, “American Vice Queen in Calcutta,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 March 1899.

<sup>9</sup> Most of Lady Curzon’s were noted simply: “Lady Curzon was dressed in gray,” in “Day of Splendor at Delhi Durbar: Ceremonies to Proclaim Edward VII as Empire of the Indies Begin,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 December 1902; “Lady Curzon was dressed in pale blue chiffon,” in “India Pays Homage: Edward is Acclaimed Emperor by the Loyal People,” *Washington Post*, 2 January 1903; “Lady Curzon appeared in violet colored costume,” in “Durbar Recalls Ancient Glories: Splendors of the Empire of the Great Mogul Reviewed by Curzon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 January 1903.

<sup>10</sup> “Pageant in the Orient: Glitter of Gold at the Opening of the Durbar,” *Washington Post*, 3 December 1902; “The Emperor of India’s Viceroy, Lord Curzon,” *Sphere*, 21 January 1903.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher A. Bayly, “The origins of swadeshi (home industry): cloth and Indian society, 1700-1930,” in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadura (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 287.

living in India) as well as Indian people, whose social and sartorial system carried strong links to caste, religion, spirituality, and history.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, Mary was both aware of and catered to pro-imperial audiences back “home” in Britain and America who ascribed to a fashion system centered in Paris and run by tastemakers within the complex system of upper-class Society. By considering Mary’s clothing within the contexts of fashion, history, culture, and imperialism, we can start to unpack *why* she chose to wear the peacock dress to the 1903 Delhi Durbar, what it meant to audiences, and what considerations she was infusing into her decision.<sup>13</sup>

Past discussions of the Delhi Durbar have occurred primarily within the insular context of the British Empire and, more specifically, the British Empire in India. I will instead be considering the peacock dress at the Durbar as a crucial moment of imperial pageantry and placing the event in a global imperial context. Examining Mary’s gendered labor as an American heiress-turned-vicereine and a Western fashion icon allows us to apply a global lens to the British imperial system and investigate American involvement in global empire through consumerism. Scholarly interest in Mary Curzon herself has tended to focus on her internal self and has not considered her American identity an important topic of inquiry within her imperial role. While Nicola Thomas focused previously on Mary’s experience of India and dress based on her own statements in letters and journals, I will focus on media coverage of Mary’s sartorial story, tracing the ways in which it moved transnationally within the context of

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<sup>12</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds., Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 169-173.

<sup>13</sup> Emma Tarlo discusses the use of clothes to self-define and communicate identity in *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 8.

imperialism. The American media focus on the Delhi Durbar and on Mary herself reveals an earlier stage of imperial involvement for the budding imperial power: through consumerism rather than politics. Western media interest was an essential component of Mary's role in empire and including it in this study helps us place the Durbar in a global context.

Most of the newspapers and periodicals used for this study are based in Britain and America, with the *Times of India* being the exception given its primarily Anglo-Indian readership. Coverage of Mary's clothing, and indeed of the 1903 Durbar itself, was not intended for Indian audiences—they were already witnesses to imperial power.<sup>14</sup> It was the reactions of Americans and Britons that launched the peacock dress into the imperial lexicon. To the British, Mary and the peacock dress were symbols of British imperialism—they forged connections between the Mughal Empire that ruled India for two centuries and their own rule, cementing their place as “rightful” successors. To Americans, Mary and her dress were forward-looking symbols for American imperialism—Mary's trajectory was considered recognition for their contribution to and belief in the Anglo-American alliance and Anglo-Saxonism. Either way, the heavy coverage in Anglo-Indian, American, and British papers of Mary's clothing and position indicated that her image was of strong importance as each country contemplated their relationship to empire.

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<sup>14</sup> The fact that the 1903 Durbar was the last big international, imperial event that did not have a primarily Indian audience is what made the event so distinctive and worthy of analysis. In the years after the Durbar, India saw a sharp rise in nationalism that would eventually destroy Britain's belief that the people of India would cater to their whims as imperial rulers.

*Part I*  
*Bringing the Empire Home*

The average Edwardian person at home did not follow the complex politics and day-to-day happenings in India. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Western audiences experienced India primarily through published travel diaries, personal correspondences, and histories. These depictions took the “romantic” view of empire which, according to David Arnold, “render[ed] the novel and exotic more familiar by attaching it to the cultural norms” of the West while “simultaneously emphasizing what was alien about India’s Oriental or tropical landscape.”<sup>15</sup> Rather than detailing each peculiarity or novel component of India individually, writers interpreted entire “scenes” or “spectacles” for their Western audience, implying a collective significance to the “strangeness” they were experiencing.

At the Great Exhibition in 1851, the “spectacle” found in earlier travel diaries and histories became physical and mobile. It was the spark of a wave of international exhibitions (sometimes called World’s Fairs) that occurred across Europe and America in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Suddenly, the people of Europe could experience and interpret “India” for themselves, feeding their hunger for the alien culture they had read about. As Hoffenberg writes, exhibitions “were lands of the imagination, in which visitors could survey landscapes and peoples, and dream along with the colonists. Such fantasies were made seductively visible and tangible.”<sup>16</sup> The “transportation” of the imagination at

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<sup>15</sup> David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800-1856*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 34.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 129.

exhibitions worked by encouraging people to step out of their urban reality into the fantasy land created by organizers and to “see themselves as part of an implicit narrative of conquest and civilization.”<sup>17</sup> Exhibitions were inherently populist in their conception—the point was to make foreignness available to the masses. The Great Exhibition of 1851 ran from May to October, spanned 26 acres, and welcomed six million visitors who experienced a slice of India as exhibitors displayed it.

Not only did tourists and attendees view scenes from afar, but they were also encouraged to participate and interact with the exhibits—which often contained actors imported from India and other locales—in order to create a tangible link to empire through personal experience. This in turn helped visitors imagine the Raj as a natural part of India’s history—a consistent and historical Anglo-Indian presence that legitimized the then-current presence in and power over India.<sup>18</sup> The British imperial imagination was often personal—a cousin who went to China, an uncle working for the British Raj—and their experience with the materiality of empire followed suit: collecting “exotic” items was more of a hobby to show off imperial connections rather than an aesthetic that could be purchased indiscriminately.

One of the main purposes of colonial and imperial exhibitions was commercial. As Saloni Mathur explains, “through the discerning lens of ‘good taste,’ the Great Exhibition made India visible in London in an unprecedented way. For the first time India’s culture and history were systematically read through its material products.”<sup>19</sup> The international exhibitions

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<sup>17</sup> Jennifer R. Henneman, “Her Representation Precedes Her: Transatlantic Celebrity, Portraiture, and Visual Culture, 1865-1890,” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2016), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 243.

<sup>19</sup> Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 18.



held in cities across the U. S. throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century helped extend demand for products from imperial lands. The upper-class American home acted as an “imperial contact-zone” where people came face-to-face with the materiality of empire, so much so that by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “purchasing imports ... [could] be seen as an act of imperial buy-in.”<sup>20</sup> The American imagination of the imperial system was global—they experienced it mostly through consuming goods, and those goods came from increasingly far-flung locales through trade with multiple world powers. As the American role expanded via their investment in overseas territories, so too was their ability to consider themselves members of the Anglo-Saxon imperial alliance and recognize themselves as potential white conquerors of brown natives. The history and role of India as part of the long-standing British Empire was compelling for those who could see themselves reflected in the story of its subjugation.

Handcrafted items with traditional motifs were central to this fantasy of empire. Situated in opposition to the thunder of Western industrial progress, the products of India were considered a return to a simpler time. At exhibitions, handcrafted materials of imperial lands were often situated alongside electricity and machinery to contrast past and future. As Michelle Maskiell notes, British India “was conceived of by many in the late nineteenth century as a living museum of Europe’s past.”<sup>21</sup> Contemporary historians subscribed to the teleological theory of history—that all cultures marched upon similar paths to

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<sup>20</sup> Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Michelle Maskiell, “Embroidering the Past: Phulkari Textiles and Gendered Work as ‘Tradition’ and ‘Heritage’ in Colonial and Contemporary Punjab,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (May 1999): 363; Cohn, “Representing Authority,” 193.

“civilization” and that some were simply farther along than others. To Europeans, “contemporary Indian handicrafts were living antiques, in the sense that they were products of a civilization that was itself considered antique.”<sup>22</sup> Displaying these “living traditions” at exhibitions allowed visitors to enjoy a collective nostalgia for a simpler past where Indian artisans practiced a more “pure” or romantic and unchanging form of their art.<sup>23</sup>

Exhibition organizers made sure to capitalize on this feeling by inviting “visitors to purchase artwork and other souvenirs, consume food products, travel among the shows, embrace collective memory and nostalgia, march in ceremonies, and act in large-scale historical pageants,” all to stimulate nationalism and imperial pride.<sup>24</sup> Purchasing souvenirs extended the memory of exhibitiongoers’ interaction with “India.” This memory was only extended and reinvigorated by subsequent media coverage of India that encouraged attendees to recall their exhibition experience.

The ephemeral nature of exhibitions heightened the frenzy to attend, document, and commemorate.<sup>25</sup> The audience for exhibitions was broad, but still limited to those who could take time off work, travel to an urban center, and pay for a ticket and lodgings. Extensive media coverage, however, allowed even those who could not attend to create an impression of the nostalgic and “exotic” nature of the exhibits. The symbolic nature

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<sup>22</sup> Maskiell, “Consuming Kashmir,” 41.

<sup>23</sup> Natasha Eaton discusses the effects of nostalgia and the desire for “at oneness” in “Nostalgia for the Exotic: Creating an Imperial Art in London, 1750-1793,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 228.

<sup>24</sup> Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 248.

<sup>25</sup> John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 97.

of exhibitions and other large imperial events, like coronations and durbars, was valuable in cementing the position of the monarchy as the head of empire.<sup>26</sup> Publishing companies and newspapers quickly discovered the public's hunger for nostalgic and "exotic" content and, in turn, helped build imperial patriotism by offering prompt and extensive coverage.<sup>27</sup>

It was into this context of nostalgia and empire that came the 1903 Delhi Durbar. Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India (1898–1905) fervently subscribed both to the nostalgia and pageantry of empire and to the primacy of British India as the natural successor to the Mughal Empire (1526–1800). Planned to accompany King Edward VII's coronation and proclaim him Emperor of India, the Delhi Durbar was Curzon's attempt to assert imperial authority over the diversity, culture, and communality of India. The fact that Delhi was both the seat of power for the Mughal Empire as well as the location of previous imperial spectacles was intentional; Curzon knew that the Durbar was his chance to situate himself within the imperial history of India.

Unlike the international and imperial exhibitions that took place around Europe and America, the Delhi Durbar was not intended as a spectacle for the general masses; it was a high society occasion aimed at the upper-class visitors coming in from the West. Though it did have exhibits displaying Indian art and handcraft, these portions of the Durbar camp were more afternoon amusements than the main event. The real draws were the balls, presentations, banquets, dinners, and garden parties attended primarily by American and British guests. One of the purposes of the Durbar was to help place Calcutta on the international social circuit. Though Calcutta had a small Season modeled after the ones in London and New York, it had never been enough to attract

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<sup>26</sup> John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>27</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 3.

an international audience. The Durbar was meant to draw the American and British elite to India with the hope that the magical locale would help establish it as an imperial social center.

The crowning social event at the Durbar, the State Ball on January 6, 1903, took place in the *Diwan-i-Am* (the public hall) and the *Diwan-i-Khas* (the private hall) within the Red Fort, the former location of the mysterious Mughal “peacock throne” that had since been lost to history.<sup>28</sup> The mystery of the throne and the majesty of the location combined to create a setting that played on the imagination of the Western audience and embedded the British Raj into the opulence of the East. So embedded did this image become that, three years later, a reporter reminisced on the magical scene of the ball, stating “there never had been such a ball, and assuredly there never will be again.”<sup>29</sup>

Similar to press coverage of the London or New York Seasons, the coverage of the Durbar was extensive. American and British newspapers sent correspondents to India to cover the event and Anglo-Indian newspapers covered the lead-up to the event in detail. The *Times of India* ran a regular feature called “Delhi Day by Day” which followed the construction of the infrastructure for the Durbar and Curzon’s frequent visits to oversee the process. As David Cannadine explains, the Durbar was Curzon’s “opportunity to make a case, to impart a message, to impress an audience, to reinforce a sense of identity and of community, and to cement those links between past and present about which he

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<sup>28</sup> The Durbar took place between 30 December 1902 and 6 January 1903. The State Entry and the Imperial Proclamation were the two principal events, but before, between, and after these were social gatherings where Viceroy and Vicereine acted as Society hosts.

<sup>29</sup> “The Late Lady Curzon: Some Recollections,” *Times of India*, 15 August 1906.

cared so dearly.”<sup>30</sup> By situating the Durbar within the physical space created by a previous emperor of India, Curzon invited the press to make connections between the Raj and the Mughal Empire, encouraging the public to see the Raj as the legitimate continuation of Indian imperial rule and the new rightful owners and protectors of the magnificent buildings and culture left behind. The Durbar demonstrated the Raj’s control over India, its resources, its people, and its wealth in a way that was easily digested by the international audience.

*Part II: The American Vicereine and the Cult of Imperial  
Celebrity*

Amongst all the pageantry and splendor of the larger public spectacles at the Durbar were smaller ceremonies, dinners, balls, and receptions, over which Lady Mary Curzon exhibited her own measure of imperial power. As Vicereine, her role at the Durbar was as hostess and tastemaker, and she was responsible for arranging and attending the social events that many of the American and British visitors attended. She did not take a prominent role in the spectacle of the opening ceremony and state events, yet her clothing and presence at those occasions were always noted. Mary was acutely aware that her image as wife to the Viceroy was as important as his image as appointed ruler. Her fashion, comportment, and abilities as a Society wife were consumed by worldwide audiences who helped shape her husband’s legacy.

Vicereines were not permanent residents of India—they had to protect their reputations and those of their husbands during their term as to preserve their social standing upon returning to

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<sup>30</sup> David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 82.

England. Vicereines have always had a role in public relations, but before the onset of mass media, it was less visible; their names were known and their writings sometimes published, but their images and physical bodies were not covered in the same way as Mary Curzon's was at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> Mary's story, to American upper-class women, was both relatable and hypothetically attainable. Born Mary Victoria Leiter in Chicago in 1870 to businessman Levi Leiter and his wife Mary Carver, Mary was privately educated and often travelled to Europe with her mother and sisters. After relocating to Washington, D.C., Mary became a prominent debutante in Society and was presented in London. There, she met George Nathaniel Curzon, a member of parliament who had not yet inherited a title from his father. They married in April 1895 in Washington, D.C. and went to England to join London Society. Because of her experience in politics in the upper-class set of Washington, Mary fit in well as a politician's wife. In 1898, that role moved to a new level when George Curzon was appointed Viceroy of India by Queen Victoria and Mary became Vicereine by his side.

Mary's Americanness, to the Americans, was both a virtue and a reason for her elevated position. As the *Chicago Tribune* exemplified throughout the summer of 1898, Americans were proud to claim credit for George Curzon's appointment, saying "the most remarkable feature of the situation, however, is that his American wife will be one of the strongest reasons for

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<sup>31</sup> Christina Casey, "Subjects and Sovereigns: The Husbands and Wives Who Ruled British India, 1774-1925," (D. Phil thesis, Cornell University, 2017), 3. The growth of professional journalism at the end of the nineteenth century coincided with a those in power's growing dependency of those in power on the coverage the press provided. Public demand for coverage increased the incentive for newspapers to cover minute details of the vicerealty, but that same coverage also played an essential role in propping up the status of the aristocracy and imperial system.

appointing him.” Mary was one of a long line of American heiresses to marry into the British aristocracy and while the American people felt conflicted about this trend, the *Chicago Tribune* was clear in its stance regarding Mary.<sup>32</sup> In an article titled “Triumphal Progress of a Chicago Girl,” the *Tribune* expressed pride that an American girl could hold her own, saying,

The best example of the marvellous adaptability of the American girl can be found in Lady Curzon, who has advanced from a simple American life into one of the most brilliant positions in the world, yet the grace, dignity, and tact she has shown makes one lose himself in admiration of the wonderful quality of the American girl that makes her the equal and often the superior of those born of royal blood in the older European countries.<sup>33</sup>

The influx of American women and wealth into Britain’s patriarchal aristocratic system of status was not lost on the British, who, in one article in the *Gentlewoman*, called it the “invasion of the fair American,” and in another in the *Daily Mail*, commented, “the sun never sets on the American girl.”<sup>34</sup> However, the incorporation of these women into British Society was sometimes welcomed. The *Daily Mail* explained “the achievements of American women like Mary Leiter serve to counteract the bad

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<sup>32</sup> Some were pleased to see the advancement of Americans on the world stage, some were upset that hard-earned American wealth was being absconded with overseas.

<sup>33</sup> “Triumphal Progress of a Chicago Girl: A Correspondent of The Tribune, Aboard the Ship, Describes the Trip of the Vice Regal Party to India,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 January 1899.

<sup>34</sup> Signa, “Of American Duchesses and Others, Part I,” *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 28, no. 705 (January 1904): 49; “Titled American Women: How They have Invaded Europe,” *Daily Mail*, 15 January 1903.

impressions which the deeds of our trust magnates and millionaires have spread in foreign lands.”<sup>35</sup> American women brought social tact, “intellectual force and vigor,” and new world charm to Britain, which, many believed, was beneficial to their established imperial system.<sup>36</sup>

As America embraced its own imperial tendencies at the end of the nineteenth century, the appointment of an American vicereine by Queen Victoria came as a welcome endorsement of their new involvement in imperial politics. An American stationed in India, upon hearing of the Curzons’ appointment just after the Fourth of July, wrote, “Mrs. Curzon is an American woman—wealthy, accomplished, charming. ... Two days ago—it was Independence day—one heard the wish expressed on all sides that the day might be signalized by a great American victory.”<sup>37</sup> Mary’s appointment, to him, was akin to a national victory. Americans attributed this success directly to Queen Victoria’s estimation of their daughter’s virtues and a testament to the long-running Anglo-Saxon alliance between the two countries.

The early nineteenth century saw American writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt

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<sup>35</sup> “America’s Tribute,” *Daily Mail*, 19 July 1906.

<sup>36</sup> Excerpt from the *Daily Mail* quoted in “Empire Mourns for Lady Curzon: Death of a Former Chicago Girl, Who Made British History, Is Grieved as a National Loss, Loved Almost As Queen,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 July 1906; Lady Violet Greville, in the *Gentlewoman* also remarked, “that at the rate the British nobility is contracting alliances with American heiresses, it will soon be impossible to get even a Prime Minister or Cabinet official for England who does not boast of American blood. ... This sweeping statement may be received with the customary addition of a grain of salt, but certain it is that the all-conquering daughters of Columbia are becoming every day more potent features in the world’s history,” “Our American Cousins,” *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 27, no. 698 (November 1903): 696.

<sup>37</sup> “Throne for Mary Leiter,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 July 1898.



Whitman produce travel diaries that often positioned the American missionary presence opposite the British military and governmental involvement.<sup>38</sup> However, by the end of the nineteenth century, faced with their own potential for imperial involvement in the Philippines, the Americans began to look at “India through British eyes and news and views of India largely came via London and the British Foreign Office,” through newspapers and periodicals to the American public.<sup>39</sup> According to Balkrishna Gokhale, “the usual stereotypes about India, heat and dust, wild animals, and deadly reptiles, strange religions and demeaning customs, fatalism and poverty, disease and destructive forces, still persisted.”<sup>40</sup> However, Mary provided a counterpoint to that narrative. The contrast between the stereotypical views of India and the glamour of the viceroyalty, with all of its displays of wealth and social events, made Mary’s position even more enticing to the American public.

Queen Victoria, arguably the first imperial celebrity of the age of mass media, had created a public mold of a woman in power into which Mary could place herself as Vicereine. As Plunkett explains in his work *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*, the British people were given a more intimate look at the leaders of empire through increased availability of newspapers, prints, and photographs carrying their images.<sup>41</sup> The formation of celebrity culture revolves around the formation of “public intimacy” or the “illusion of availability” between the celebrity and her audience.<sup>42</sup> As we will see in the coming section, the constant feed of both imagery and articles focused on Mary,

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<sup>38</sup> Balkrishna Govind Gokhale, *India in the American Mind* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1992), 64.

<sup>39</sup> Gokhale, *India in the American Mind*, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Gokhale, *India in the American Mind*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> Plunkett, *Queen Victoria*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Henneman, “Her Representation Precedes Her,” 17.

her social involvement, and her dress fostered relatability and familiarity. This familiarity, combined with the physical and status-based distance between the public and Mary, created a tension, a “need in the hearts of the public” to consume more information about her.<sup>43</sup>

With full knowledge of the importance of public opinion, Mary took an active role in shaping her image in the press:

offering patronage to writers and editors, maintaining links with American journalists, supplying her own images to magazines, and firmly requesting to read and approve articles before they went to print.<sup>44</sup> As reported in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on

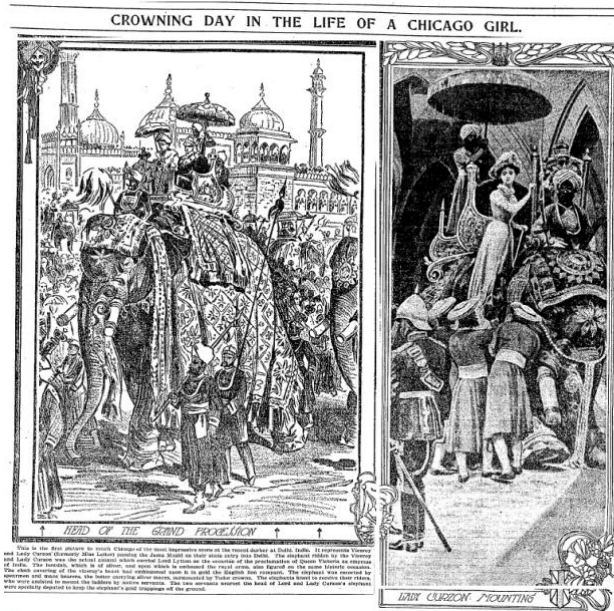


Figure 2: "Crowning Day in the Life of a Chicago Girl." Lady Curzon mounting her elephant and processing into the Delhi Durbar opening ceremonies. (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 February 1903.)

<sup>43</sup> Henneman, "Her Representation Precedes Her," 20.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender and Empire," 93; Nicola Thomas, "Exploring the Boundaries of Biography: The Family and Friendship Networks of Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India 1898-1905," 501; 511, 514; Thomas, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender and Empire," 201.

January 7, 1906, “it is calculated that Lady Curzon receives more press cuttings than half a dozen crowned heads, for she has made arrangements that every article and paragraph which mentions Lord Curzon’s name shall be sent to her not only from the United Kingdom and the United States but also from India, the colonies, and Europe.”<sup>45</sup>

While not all the press was positive, with some complaints of extravagance or “claiming undue privileges,” the American view of Mary during her time as Vicereine was overwhelmingly one of pride and triumph. She was frequently referred to as “Vice-Queen,” “American Queen,” “Vice Empress,” “an American sovereign,” and “Queen over 150 Queens.”<sup>46</sup> In articles, her portrait was often the largest image on the page—larger than the Viceroy’s. Her activities in India, including her entrance into the country in 1898 and presence at the 1903 Delhi Durbar, were described as “triumphal,” a feeling of righteous victory at a daughter of America playing a prominent role in empire. The mentions of Mary personally “taking the Mughal throne,” and references to “her future throne” and “her empire,” place Indian imperial continuity in American hands. National pride is woven into the American media coverage of her rise to the viceroyalty. Coverage of her dress, aristocratic social skills, and connection to the Anglo-American alliance within the context of India was what drove American consumption of her image.

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<sup>45</sup> “Lady Curzon Looks Wreck,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 January 1906.

<sup>46</sup> “Imperial Delhi,” *Times of London*, 11 December 1899; Grace Corneau, “Bombay Welcomes the Curzons: Viceroy and Vicereine of India Received by Salvos of Artillery and All the Pomp and Circumstance of Oriental Costume—The American Vice Queen Greeted with Wild Enthusiasm by the Native Women,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 February 1899; “Throne for Mary Leiter,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 July 1898; Julian Ralph, “An American Sovereign I,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 6 May 1899; Julian Ralph, “An American Sovereign IV,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 10 June 1899.

Britain, on the other hand, was not an emerging imperial power, but a society primed to accept and idolize the imperial celebrity. The wave of histories and biographies centered on India and its British rulers published in the mid-nineteenth century “drew a distinction between the corrupt rule of the eighteenth century and the future potential for British rule by a new generation,” and prepped Britons to look out for and idolize the next iteration of Indian ruler.<sup>47</sup> According to John MacKenzie, the later Victorian era produced an “ideological cluster” surrounding empire that consisted of “renewed militarism, a devotion to royalty, an identification and worship of national heroes, together with a contemporary cult of personality, and racial ideas associated with Social Darwinism.”<sup>48</sup> The pomp and circumstance that surrounded Lord and Lady Curzon everywhere they went combined with the proliferation of imagery and photographs of them in India “helped to reinforce the idea of a global imperial family.”<sup>49</sup>

To Britons, Mary fit into a narrative of young, white, imperial celebrity situated within the rural, mythical land of India. Though she was American, her dedication to her husband’s position and her willingness to both look and act the part resonated with the British audience. Her appropriate dress and social ability were signs that she fit into the English aristocracy and was an acceptable representative for the British Raj. Rather than a symbol for imperial potential, Mary was a symbol for an empire that *was*. The *Daily Mail* expressed their delight that her proper comportment would help her further her “distinguished husband’s career,” and the *Manchester Weekly Times* wrote, “those who have had the honour and good fortune to meet this lady will not need to be told how well she is qualified, by gifts of

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<sup>47</sup> Casey, “Subjects and Sovereigns,” 76.

<sup>48</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Casey, “Subjects and Sovereigns,” 10.

personal grace and character, to share the splendid position of her husband, not merely with dignity and tact, but with advantage and benefit to India.”<sup>50</sup> The British were convinced that Mary’s predicted success in the role of Vicereine would be because of her personal abilities as an upper-class woman rather than because of some inherent American quality.

The Society of the British Raj was molded after London’s Society in that women were the primary arbiters of social acceptance and rejection, and were responsible for hosting gatherings, at which people could mingle, network, and search for spouses. Mary’s success in this realm was just as important to the British as was her ability to support her husband. In an article in the *Lady’s Realm*, a British upper-class magazine, Miss Hilda Dundas wrote a feature on the Calcutta Season that highlighted the social events, proper dress, and contrast between the Indian and Anglo-Indian participants.<sup>51</sup> In the article, Mary is clearly cast in the role that the Queen would normally take in London: recipient of the debutante presentations, and hostess of the most important balls and social events. Mary’s success in this realm was important to the upper-class British women who looked to Mary to fulfill her role as a woman of Society.

Mary’s image as a pioneer for American imperialism and a representative of British imperialism was held up by the extensive coverage of her dress and physical presence at events.

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<sup>50</sup> “America’s Tribute,” *Daily Mail*, 19 July 1906; “The New Viceroy of India,” *Manchester Weekly Times*, 19 August 1898.

<sup>51</sup> Hilda Dundas, “Society in Calcutta,” *Lady’s Realm* 13 (1902): 57-64.



Whether accompanied by her husband or not, Mary's outfit was described, often in detail, by British and American papers alike. Much of this description centered on Mary's visual impact as a Western, Anglo-Saxon, white woman within the proverbial "sea of natives" around her. But far from a passive subject, Mary used the focus on her image and dress to enhance her position as an imperial icon.

### *Part III* *Fashioning a Vicereine*

From the beginning of her years as Vicereine, Mary knew her appearance and presentation would come under intense scrutiny from global audiences. She also recognized that the primary interaction the public would have with her would be visual. Mary cared deeply about the impact of her personal appearance, was often upset when the media portrayed her as out of step and took pains to ensure she was dressed appropriately for each public occasion.

As soon as she heard she would be the new Vicereine of India, Mary began to “think imperially” about her role and amass a “trousseau of unprecedented magnificence.”<sup>52</sup> Her new position required that she be dressed as a monarch—and monarchs shopped at the House of Worth in Paris. In the late nineteenth century, Paris was the center of Western fashion and any woman able to affiliate herself with the designers in that city took on its qualities of civilization and modernity. Growing up wealthy in America, Mary would have been familiar with the House of Worth as a destination for both English and American women to create their wardrobes each year.<sup>53</sup> Shopping at this familiar atelier would have broadcast Mary’s membership to the “imagined community of consumption” woven throughout the West.<sup>54</sup> Worth also had a reputation for clothing many of the American heiresses who married into the British aristocracy.<sup>55</sup>

Because she was a loyal customer and knew her value to Worth as an incoming vicereine who could popularize fashions on an international scale, Mary often used her social capital to negotiate pricing, arguing that her gowns were too expensive. In one such tiff, Jean-Philippe Worth defended his pricing, noting that the gowns he made for her were equivalent to those he made

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<sup>52</sup> Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 36; “Mr. Leiter Paid the Bill: Furnished the Funds for Lady Curzon’s Magnificent Indian Trousseau,” *Washington Post*, 18 December 1898.

<sup>53</sup> Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 70.

<sup>54</sup> An imagined community is a group of people who identify with a common ideal or philosophy, but do not necessarily share physical space or other common characteristics of “community.” In this case, women from across the Western world all valued shopping at Parisian fashion houses as the pinnacle of social achievement. Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 67.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas, “Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender and Empire,” 67.

for European royalty and that they were worth the price.<sup>56</sup> Mary replied that her “dresses were of the simplest description” and that she would shop elsewhere, perhaps with rival designer Jacques Doucet.<sup>57</sup> The fact that Mary was able to reject the designs of the top Parisian designer and, indeed, argue with him with no threat of being banned as a customer speaks to the power she wielded as a “brand.” Through her continued patronage of Worth and the other designers in Paris while in India, Mary helped maintain the commercial power of the Western fashion system, strengthened her relatability as a fashion icon, and cemented her place in the media as an imperial icon.

The media followed her preparation for her new role closely, but her arrival in India with a large array of Parisian gowns was the primary topic of articles covering the Curzons in late 1898. The *Chicago Tribune* wrote, “Lady Curzon brought with her to India the most costly and beautiful gowns ever made for an American woman. They were made by four of the leading costumers of the world. Exclusive of millinery and lingerie, the gowns, about 100 in number, represent between \$50,000 and \$60,000.”<sup>58</sup> The *Graphic* in London noted the impact of these gowns in India, saying, “probably in India such gorgeous apparel will please and delight the Eastern mind, and convey to them a convocation of power, but the precedent will be a hard one if for the future the wives of all our Viceroy and principal officials are expected to dress up to such a standard.”<sup>59</sup> The *Times of India*, following the lead of the British papers, said, “There are nearly a

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<sup>56</sup> Jean-Philippe had, by 1898, taken over the company from his father, Charles Frederick.

<sup>57</sup> Nicola Thomas, “Embodying Imperial Spectacle: Dressing Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India 1899-1905,” *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 385.

<sup>58</sup> Corneau, “American Vice Queen in Calcutta,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 March 1899. \$50,000 in 1898 equals roughly \$1,600,000 in 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Lady Violet Greville, “Place aux Dames,” *Graphic*, 4 February 1899.



hundred gowns, and many of them are more splendid than those possessed by many a queen.”<sup>60</sup> This reaction indicates that Mary spent a significant amount of time and personal wealth in preparing for her public image in India. While this trend did not extend to future vicereines, Mary’s intense focus on her wardrobe indicates her own particular interest in image-making and her potential for celebrity.

The media made a point to cover Mary’s fashion both before and after she became Vicereine of India.<sup>61</sup> Her style was described during the coverage of her wedding as “simplicity itself, and yet simplicity of the most splendid kind.”<sup>62</sup> Likewise, the *Gentlewoman* upon her death, wrote that Mary was, “remarkably simple in her style of dress,” and that “one of the greatest and most artistic English modistes of the day once remarked that Lady Curzon was a specially difficult customer, because she had no desire to create styles, but always insisted that her gowns should be made with the utmost simplicity, but of the most exquisite and somewhat substantial materials.”<sup>63</sup> “Simplicity” to an Edwardian woman would have meant something quite different to its modern interpretation. Edwardian gowns were often embellished with huge amounts of lace, tassels, various layering techniques, and used colors from across the spectrum. Mary seems to have kept her embellishments light and her colors neutral, preferring to wear light blue, cream, white, and other pastels with only the occasional pop of color or added

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<sup>60</sup> “Lady Curzon’s Dresses,” *Times of India*, 3 January 1899.

<sup>61</sup> Coverage of her 1895 wedding in Washington, D.C. contained extensive descriptions of her wedding trousseau. Mary’s time as a debutante was also a topic of interest for the American press given her upper-class status, eligibility, and wealth.

<sup>62</sup> “Wed at the Capital: Marriage of Miss Leiter and Hon. George N. Curzon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 23 April 1895.

<sup>63</sup> “Our American Cousins,” *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 33, no. 838 (July 1906): 111.

embellishment at a large or important event. This “simplicity” was lauded as a fashionable trait, as seeming to be “trying too hard” by loading on embellishments was a sign that a woman did not belong to the social status she was aspiring to.

Newspapers used Mary’s color scheme to their advantage when describing her fashions, alluding to her role as a white woman ruling over a country of brown people. Many articles about her time in India situated Mary’s light-colored wardrobe against the deep jewel-tone pigments found in Indian dress. In his four-part article in *Harper’s Weekly* entitled “An American Sovereign,” Julian Ralph wrote, “no European costuming can for an instant compare with the gaudiness of the rich and deep-toned dress of the common people. They illuminate the streets of the native quarter as if they were the fragments of a rainbow scattered over the dull earth.”<sup>64</sup> Likewise, the *Ladies Realm* referred to Indian women during the Calcutta Season as a “background” to the lightly-dressed European women while describing “the wonderful scarlet, orange, magenta, sky-blue, pea-green, and every conceivable shade of colour of the natives.”<sup>65</sup> Of course, these clothing descriptions carried intensely racial connotations for the Western reader: light colored dresses on light bodies were directly contrasted with dark, rich colors on darker bodies. The contrast between Mary’s pastel, neutral colors and the “kaleidoscopic” natives enforced the elevation of the white, Anglo-Saxon woman chosen to lead the empire and the “otherness” of the Indian women, who were there to be observed rather than emulated.<sup>66</sup>

But that contrast was not absolute. Mary did incorporate Indian embroidery and fabric into her fashions, playing with transculturation and creating new forms of imperial expression

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<sup>64</sup> Ralph, “An American Sovereign I,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 6 May 1899.

<sup>65</sup> Dundas, “Society in Calcutta,” 50.

<sup>66</sup> “Latest Intelligence: The Delhi Durbar,” *Times of London*, 2 January 1903.

through dress. Once Mary arrived in India, her strategy for sourcing new clothes became more varied. Her family sent her accessories and she purchased underwear and children's clothing from British ready-made firms, but she also had new day-clothes made in India out of fabric from Europe or simple, lightweight Indian cloth.<sup>67</sup> But since she could not easily return to Europe to purchase more bespoke garments and evening wear, she ordered a few dresses per year from Worth via telegram.<sup>68</sup> Many of these gowns utilized Indian embroidery or Indian cloth in their construction. According to Thomas, "it is thought that Mary gave her embroiderers in India a pattern she wished to be worked on. These lengths were then sent to Paris to be made up by Worth into evening dresses."<sup>69</sup> Mary's preoccupation with her appearance and her careful and complex use of imperial systems of fashion production and transcultural exchange suggests that she was intentional in her creation of hybrid fashions. By fusing Indian embroidery with Western couture fashion, she was wrenching a



Figure 4: Detailed views of the peacock dress at Kedleston Hall. (National Trust, "Caring for Lady Mary Curzon's Peacock Dress," Accessed May 16, 2021.)

<sup>67</sup> Thomas, "Embodying Imperial Spectacle," 374, 378.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas, "Embodying Imperial Spectacle," 384.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Empire," 69.

traditional artisan craft out of the past and into a decidedly modern form—mirroring what her husband and the organizers of imperial exhibitions were doing with Indian motifs and other objects.<sup>70</sup>

The history of hybridity in fashion—between Western and European modes of dress—is long and varied. Second-hand shawls, jewelry, and clothing made their way back to England throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries alongside wives of imperial officials and East India Company employees returning from India. These women were a significant force in increasing contact with the products of empire. Emma Tarlo and others have argued that Anglo-Indians did not consume any Indian products or recreate Indian styles within their homes in India. As Tarlo puts it, it was “important for the Englishman in India to prove that he was as English as his fellows at home.”<sup>71</sup>

This assumption was complicated between 1898 and 1905, however, by Mary’s wardrobe and utilization of both Western and Indian fashion systems. By adopting Indian fabrics and embroidery into her primarily Western imperial image rather than fully adopting Indian dress or fully rejecting it, Mary created her own transcultural style—between the expected boundaries of East and West. The dress that most clearly and memorably embodies Mary’s control over the imperial fashion system is the “peacock dress” that she wore to the State Ball at the end of the Delhi Durbar on 6 January 1903. The dress itself was a ball gown designed by Worth but followed a pattern familiar to Mary—she had had very similar designs made before. The fabric itself was silk, completely embroidered in gold- and silver-coated threads in the shape of concentric peacock feathers by the workshop of

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas, “Embodying Imperial Spectacle,” 395.

<sup>71</sup> Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 37.

Kishan Chand from Chandni Chowk in Delhi.<sup>72</sup> At the eye of each feather was a green beetle wing meant to evoke an emerald and reflect in the electric lighting used in the *Diwan-i-Khas*. Mary's decision to use Indian embroidery on a western form followed the British tradition of co-opting secular Indian ornamental design onto Western products.<sup>73</sup> This strategy of incorporating Indian motif and hand labor into a Western dress design allowed the Western viewer—the one Mary cared about most—to enjoy the pattern and colors of Indian embroidery without needing to “engage with or contend with problems of interpreting unfamiliar Indian objects.”<sup>74</sup> To the American audience, the fact that Mary used Worth to create the dress indicated her still-strong connection with the Paris-based Western fashion community. Paired with her use of Indian embroidered fabric, this exemplified her control over the imperial systems of fashion production—a commercial engagement with imperialism that Americans could aspire to.

Mary's intense engagement with transcultural and global fashion systems was highly gendered labor. While it was

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<sup>72</sup> Mr. Melton-Prior, “The Imperial Durbar at Delhi: The Impetus to Native Industries,” *Illustrated London News*, 17 January 1903; William Eleroy Curtis, *Modern India* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2011). This shop is also said to have embroidered Queen Alexandra's coronation robes earlier that year and was clearly a favorite of Mary's. It also appeared with a different spelling: “Kishanchaud” in “Day of Splendor at Delhi Durbar,” *Chicago Tribune*, 30 December 1902.

<sup>73</sup> For more see Abigail McGowan, “‘All that is Rare, Characteristic or Beautiful’: Design and the Defense of Tradition in Colonial India, 1851-1903,” *Journal of Material Culture* 10, no. 3 (2005): 268, 284.

<sup>74</sup> For more on the practice of divorcing Indian designs from their original purpose and additional commentary on the Western practice of cataloguing non-Western cultural design, see Cristin McKnight Sethi, “Women's Work: Phulkari, Flora Annie Steel, and Collecting Textiles in British India,” in *Women, Gender and Art in Early Modern Asia*, ed. Mellia Belli Bose (New York: Routledge (Ashgate), 2016), 184.

considered appropriate for women to embellish their clothing with glittering thread and jewels, men's clothing in the Edwardian era was kept simple and unadorned in order to adhere to standards of masculinity. Incorporating Mughal motifs and forms into men's dress would have been seen as gaudy and too feminine.<sup>75</sup> Mary's focus on her own appearance in the press was not something Lord Curzon needed to do himself—the few times his dress was mentioned in newspapers were the few times that he deviated from the normal Englishman's dress. The lack of reporting on his clothing betrays the gendering of Mary's role as the one worthy of regular physical description and subjection to outfit policing by the public. The ability to command labor that is physically distant from yourself is, in itself, a marker of power; one that Mary used frequently during her time in India. The *Chicago Tribune* writes, “sharing her husband's sympathy with the magic east, she took care to emphasize that sympathy and in a manner that appealed directly to the native mind. Her gowns on ceremonial occasions were embellished with native jewelry adorned with Indian embroideries, while the dresses of her little daughters were made of tasteful Indian fabrics.”<sup>76</sup> By wearing Indian embroidery during the Durbar—a spectacle created to show the world the British Raj's control over Indian wealth and resources—Mary was displaying her own control over Indian art and the means of its production while also showing her power as a Western imperial celebrity.

Mary's utilization of Indian artisans and designers during the creation of her imperial symbolism echoes the system of patronage that existed during the Mughal Empire. Christopher A.

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<sup>75</sup> Femininity was one of the main Western complaints about Indian men's dress and was something that Anglo-Indian men and the Viceroy himself would have wanted to avoid in order to maintain the masculinity of the British Empire.

<sup>76</sup> “Empire Mourns for Lady Curzon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 July 1906.

Bayly explains that “this helped to emphasize the king’s immediate concern for the welfare of his producers.”<sup>77</sup> The shift between the historical model of patronage—“I will have an embroidery workshop”—to patronage through exchange—“I will hire an embroiderer for specific projects”—during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries released the regal or viceregal power from long term obligation to the artisans of India. However, by utilizing Indian embroidery on her gowns for the most reported-on and public occasions such as the opening ceremony of the Durbar and the State Ball, Mary showed her audience in Europe and America that Indian embroidery was a viable industry that could be considered fashionable and aspirational.

American reaction to the peacock dress generally lauded Mary for her prowess in mastering the fashion systems in both India and Europe to produce such a landmark garment and situated her as the “star of the show” at the State Ball. As the *Evening Star* went on, “but for the few native costumes, which were quite eclipsed by the many Parisian ones, we might have been in London, Paris or New York. None of the dresses shone out especially except the famous one of Lady Curzon.”<sup>78</sup> The American audience cared more about the aesthetics and craft of her garment than about the connections between the dress’s motif and India’s imperial past.

While the British press similarly complimented Mary’s aesthetic beauty and construction of her dress, they also recognized its references to historical Indian traditions of incorporation and authority. These references to an ancient and mystical Indian past, where clothing had physical transformative properties, inspires an emotional connection to the exotic and nostalgic image of India. Not only was the peacock dress a

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<sup>77</sup> Bayly, “The Origins of Swadeshi,” 298, 302.

<sup>78</sup> Sterling, “The Durbar Service,” *Washington Evening Star*, 4 April 1903.

reference to Mughal textile traditions, but the fact that its debut occurred in the Mughal *Diwan-i-Khas*—the seat of Mughal power in India and the last known location of the infamous “Peacock Throne”—indicated Mary’s intention to supplant the memory of the throne in that space. Her knowledge of this history is evidenced by a letter to her family dated 30 October 1899, where Mary describes how “the famous peacock throne used to be here but was carried off to Persia long ago by a Persian conqueror.”<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, hearing of the location of the State Ball, Indian, American and English papers all carried the story of the throne in late 1902 during the planning stages of the Durbar, priming the audience to imagine the event in this way.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> John Bradley, ed., *Lady Curzon’s India: Letters of a Vicereine* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1985), 46.

<sup>80</sup> “The Delhi Durbar,” *Times of London*, 5 January 1903; “The Great Durbar at Imperial Delhi,” *Sphere*, 3 January 1903; “Imperial Delhi,” *Times of London*, 2 January 1903; Sir Edwin Arnold, “The Throne of Solomon: Rhapsody Apropos of the Report That Lord Curzon Will Use It at the Coming Durbar,” *New York Times*, 21 December 1902.



A writer for the *Gentlewoman* noted the use of Indian embroidery by Lady Curzon at the Durbar, and earlier by Queen Alexandra for her coronation robes, and prophesized “I expect now the great Durbar is over we shall see an ebullition of Indian embroidery appearing on all our friends’ dresses during the next London season.”<sup>81</sup> In fact, the *Gentlewoman* started to predict the imminent prevalence of Indian-Western hybrid fashions



in late 1902, noting that Mary and her sister Daisy had been helping their friends place orders with Delhi craftsmen in preparation for the Durbar.<sup>82</sup> They went on to say, “the Durbar is sure to be responsible for a change of fashion.”<sup>83</sup>

Regardless of whether Indian embroidery began to make its way into Western fashion en masse, the *Gentlewoman*’s belief that Mary’s utilization of it in her Durbar gowns would result in a style change in Europe shows her power as a leader and

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<sup>81</sup> Lady Howard Vincent, “Art Needlework,” *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 26, no. 657 (February 1903): 192.

<sup>82</sup> “The Durbar,” *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 25, no. 647 (November 1902): 717.

<sup>83</sup> “The Durbar,” *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 25, no. 647 (November 1902): 717.

trendsetter in English Society. By capitalizing on her unique position as imperial celebrity and exerting control over imperial fashion systems, Mary had successfully crafted her image as an idealized symbol of and for Western empire.

### *Conclusion*

The 1903 Delhi Durbar was created and publicized by the Curzons in an effort to “rebrand” the British Empire as a strong, yet modern world power with India as its crowning jewel. For the many women hoping for Mary’s success as a key player in the imperial system, the Durbar had been a great triumph. American women had seen one of their own in control of a vast community of fashion and luxury that stretched across the new world, the old world, and beyond. British women had observed and generally approved of an American-turned-aristocratic Lady keen on upholding the tradition of social prowess and role of political wife within an ongoing empire.

While magnificent and glamorous descriptions of the fashion and pomp of the Durbar were appearing in the American and British papers in February 1903, the Anglo-Indians working at the *Times of India* were already thinking about the legacy of the event, writing:

But when all has been said that can be said about the Delhi gathering—and no pen will ever describe it adequately—there will still remain the stern moralist who will ask, ‘What good has it all done? We have read glowing descriptions until we are sick of them. But was it worth the expense? Will it have any lasting effect?’ Well, these are difficult questions to answer, but an answer must be given to him. I think a very large proportion of the people—at any rate the English people—who came to the durbar came in a rather

scoffing spirit; and I think further that very few of them are inclined to scoff now.<sup>84</sup>

Clearly, the British residents of India were very aware of the potential impact of the Durbar and were interpreting the event as an opportunity to prove their value within the wider empire. But did the hostess of this event similarly consider the legacy of her famous garment?

Though historians have identified myriad imperial references within Mary Curzon's wardrobe, she herself may not have been aware of the breadth of impact her clothing had on various contemporary populations. As Tarlo notes, "people may *seek* to communicate their identity or beliefs through wearing certain clothes, but they cannot guarantee that their message will be understood in the way they intended."<sup>85</sup> This emphasizes the distinctions between what someone wore, what they intended others to read from what they wore, and what was read from what they wore.

Regardless of Mary's intentions, the impact on contemporary audiences is clear. But the contemporary interpretation of the peacock dress is just that, contemporary. As Paul Sharrad notes, "for all their materiality, objects are slippery, their meanings change according to the circumstances we encounter them in."<sup>86</sup> This paper has pinpointed Mary Curzon at the Durbar State Ball as the moment of meaning for the peacock dress. But after it left the glittering *Diwan-i-Khas* in the early morning hours of 7 January 1903, the dress's meaning changed and was re-interpreted by historians and the general public. Clothes, like many other social phenomena, are detachable and

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<sup>84</sup> An excerpt from the *Times of India* in "Luchman Prosad and His Viceregal Burden," *Sphere*, 7 February 1903.

<sup>85</sup> Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 18.

<sup>86</sup> As quoted in Thomas, "Embodying Imperial Spectacle," 395.

contain meaning only when worn by an individual and considered in context of her movements.<sup>87</sup> The peacock dress while it was on Mary's person and situated within the imperial spectacle of the Delhi Durbar, carried with it all the meaning this paper has alluded to; of empire, of Anglo-Saxonism, of beauty, and of fashion. To the British at home in 1903, Mary and her peacock dress symbolized the British Empire as they understood it to be—a logical successor to the Mughal Empire in India, a land of mysticism and luxury, and the crown jewel of the Empire. Mary, as its social matriarch, had successfully fulfilled her role as a fashion trendsetter and a modern imperial icon. Her incorporation of Indian motifs in her dress mirrored a traditional patronage of artisans that recalled the imagined past of a “British India.” To Americans, Mary's engagement with the materiality of Western and Eastern fashion spoke to their primary experience of empire: through consumption. Having a “daughter” on an imperial throne served as an augury of America's future engagement with imperialism in the East. Mary's continued utilization of the aristocratic fashion system centered at Paris indicated that she had not lost her identity as a member of that imagined community that united wealthy American and European women.

After Mary's death in 1906, her life was described in detail in obituaries across the globe. Almost every one of them mentioned her role at the 1903 Delhi Durbar and many alluded to or mentioned the beauty of her shining peacock dress at the State Ball on 6 January. It is testament to the gendered system in which Mary lived that while her husband was remembered for his political decisions, most notably the highly controversial partition of Bengal in 1905, Mary was remembered most prominently for her dress sense and patronage of various charities and Indian arts. Two excerpts, one from England and one from America, perfectly

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<sup>87</sup> Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 16.

encapsulate the reaction on both sides of the Atlantic to Mary and her role in empire. On 19 July 1906, hours after her death, the *Times of London* wrote “what impression Lady Curzon’s queenly figure made on the assembled princes and native rulers of India at the great Coronation Durbar of 1903 in Delhi is known; it has passed into history.”<sup>88</sup> The *Chicago Tribune*, meanwhile, wrote, “she always was perfectly dressed.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> “Obituary: Lady Curzon in Kedleston,” *Times of London*, 19 July 1906.

<sup>89</sup> “Empire Mourns for Lady Curzon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 July 1906.

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## Columbus as Food Ethnographer: Depictions of Indigenous Food and Foodways in the Writings of his First Journey to the Americas

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*Richard Witting*

In the past four decades, the character of Christopher Columbus, once lauded as the discoverer of the ‘New World,’ has, along with many of his statues, been torn down and cast out as a source for reliable history.<sup>1</sup> While his castigation as a national symbol is wholly justified, his writings still remain valuable and rare ethnographic snapshot of the precolonial cultures of the *Caribbean* before the disruptions of transatlantic trade, disease, slavery, and depopulation. Columbus’s logbooks and journals are also the first descriptions of the food and foodways of Indigenous People in North America. This paper looks at how food was recorded by Columbus on his first voyage, and how European foodways may have shaped his journey, motives, and views of the people he encountered. Keeping a wary eye on the reliability of the author and the document itself, this paper explores Columbus’s background, as well as the story of the text and its translations.

To first establish Columbus’s credibility as an author and the broader lens through which he viewed the world, this paper begins by examining the depictions of his first voyage to the Americas as written in *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (Diario de a Bordo de Cristóbal Colón)* and his *Letter to the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of*

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Kubal, *Cultural Movements and Collective Memory Christopher Columbus and the Rewriting of the National Origin Myth* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

*Castile*,<sup>2</sup> focusing on the history of the writings and questions of authorship. The paper then examines European food and foodways<sup>3</sup> in Columbus's time to contextualize his depictions. After assessing Columbus's validity as ethnographer, and his cultural viewpoint, the paper then focuses on his depiction of food and foodways among the Indigenous Peoples<sup>4</sup> he met, focusing on three topics: Columbus's sharing of foods with those he met, his search for spices, and the rumors of *cannibalism* within his narrative. By focusing on one aspect of this first encounter story—food—it is possible to gain insight into the motives of Columbus and how he perceived the Indigenous Peoples he met. By considering and comparing these insights with other academic and archeological findings we can also reassess how credible these writings are.

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<sup>2</sup> The primary sources for the *Letter* and *Journal* used in this paper are two recent translations by King's College of London. Columbus, Christopher. *Diary*. 1492. King's College London, 2015.

<http://www.ems.kcl.ac.uk/content/etext/e020.html>; Columbus, Christopher. *Letter to the Monarchs*. King's College London, 2015.

<http://www.ems.kcl.ac.uk/content/etext/e020.html>. These were chosen because their recent translation and that they are easily searchable. Also used secondarily was *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (During His First Voyage, 1492-93) and Documents Relating the Voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real*. Edited by C.R. Markham, Hakluyt Society, 1893. Markham was a British Geographer and explorer whose admiration for Columbus is made very clear in the introduction to that work.

<sup>3</sup> In social science, "foodways" can be understood as the cultural, social, and economic practices relating to the production, procurement, preparation, presentation, and consumption of foods.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Yellow Bird. "What We Want to Be Called: Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels." *American Indian Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1999): 1-21. Gregory Younging. *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples*. Brush Education, 2018.

## *Onomastic Methodology*

To respect the rhetorical sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples, this paper makes a number of style choices in acknowledgement of Indigenous self-determination and self-naming practices by 1) using Indigenous endonyms when possible, 2) when unavoidable, italicizing European exonyms for Indigenous Peoples, or for words derived from racial endonyms, and 3) using neutral terms often if there isn't an accurate endonym available.<sup>5</sup> Europeanized toponyms for places are used, notably the word *Caribbean*.<sup>6</sup> The word 'anthropophagy' and 'anthropophagists' are used in place of '*cannibalism*' and '*cannibal*' for their neutral etymology not linked to racial categorizations.

### *Section I: Authorship and History of the Writings*

For the last four-hundred years, the details in Columbus's journal were largely taken at face value and accepted as fact. A critical reexamination of these writings and their history, however, shows a more complex story that calls into question their accuracy and reliability as sources and to see where the truth

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<sup>5</sup> 'Indigenous Peoples' in this paper is used to refer to the people of the Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles, and the Lucayan Archipelago that Columbus encountered on the various Bahamian islands, Cuba, and Hispaniola. "Indigenous People" is used to refer to the individuals in those tribes collectively. 'Taino,' 'Carib' and 'Arawak,' are believed to be Indigenous words and are often used by scholars, and some who are (or see themselves as) descendants of the original Indigenous Peoples of these islands. Each of those terms however has its own complex story beyond the scope of this paper to explore.

<sup>6</sup> 'Caribbean' is etymologically related to the problematic words 'Carib' and 'Cannibal' which are explored later.



may have been obscured or stretched based on his motivations and world view.

Central to this process is understanding the ascribed author and central figure of the diary: Christopher Columbus. Though there are many theories about Columbus's origin, the generally accepted account is that he was born in Genoa in 1451 to a father who was a tradesman. From a young age Columbus went to sea and worked as a sailor, trader, and business agent for Genoese merchants. His voyages took him to many parts of Europe, the Mediterranean, and North Africa, where he became familiar with matters of trade and the value of commodities. From 1477 to 1485, Columbus was based out of Lisbon where his brother lived and worked as a cartographer. There he married a Portuguese noblewoman from the Island of Madeira, with whom he had a son, Diego, who would later inherit from his father the governorship of the *Indies*. After the death of Columbus's first wife, he had a second son, Ferdinand, with a Spanish woman who would later become a scholar and biographer of his father.<sup>7</sup>

There is much scholarly speculation about his motives for seeking to sail across the sea. Some attribute it to an enlightened and inspired desire to explore and discover with many of the books he owned and read survived in his son Ferdinand's library and his notes in the margins showing him to be a well-read, dynamic thinker and dreamer. Coming from a modest background in a class-conscious era, Columbus ostensibly would have been motivated to elevate his rank and status by a successful voyaging across the Atlantic. Gaining patronage and honors from the monarchs of Spain could, and did, catapult his family into a much higher social bracket. If he could find a route to East Asia it would connect Europe to the highly lucrative spice trade that

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<sup>7</sup> Delno West, "Christopher Columbus and His Enterprise to the Indies: Scholarship of the Last Quarter Century," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1992): 254-77.

had been disrupted by the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453.<sup>8</sup>

Columbus may have also been motivated by his religious beliefs. One passage from the First Journey (written in the third person<sup>9</sup>) states that the goal of the voyage was to fund a crusade to retake Jerusalem:

And he says that he hopes to God that, on the return journey which he intended to make from Castile, he would find a barrel of gold which those he was to leave behind would have bartered for, and that they would have found the gold mine and the spices; and in such quantity that the Monarchs would be able in three years to undertake preparations for the conquest of the Holy Land, just as (he says) it was my declared intention to Your Highnesses that the whole of the profit from this my enterprise should be spent on the conquest of Jerusalem and Your Highnesses laughed and said you were pleased and that, even without this expedition, that was your intention. These are the Admiral's words.<sup>10</sup>

His later writings expressed strong Christian sentiment and suggest that he believed he would discover the Garden of Eden in the Americas.

While it is not known for certain how or why Columbus set his mind on the idea of crossing the Atlantic, after many petitions to different monarchs across Europe to fund such a voyage he finally received patronage from the Monarchs of the

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<sup>8</sup> West, "Christopher Columbus and His Enterprise," 254-277.

<sup>9</sup> This third person account reflects the transcribing by Bartholomew Las Casas, explained further in the proceeding paragraphs.

<sup>10</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, "Wednesday 26 December."

newly formed kingdom that would become Spain.<sup>11</sup> Whether for glory, wealth, status, inspiration or religious conviction 1492 Columbus set sail from the Canary Islands, out into the “Ocean Sea,” and began recording what he found in his *Diario* with the intent to give that document to his patrons, the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile,<sup>12</sup> upon his return.

*The Writings of the First Journey:*

Descriptions of Columbus’s first voyage are found in two primary sources, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (Diario de a Bordo de Cristóbal Colón)* and his *Letter to the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile*. While the letter is reliable as a primary document, with very early versions still in existence and multiple contemporary editions close in date to the original for comparison, the *Journal* has a much more complex story that demands consideration before accepting its credibility as a firsthand source for ethnographic details.

The *Journal* was given to Queen Isabella by Columbus upon his return, a copy was then made, and the original returned to him. No copies of these first two versions exist, nor do any full text versions of the *Journal*. The oldest known version is a copy of the *Journal’s* abstract—a summary of each entry—presumably written by Columbus after the fact. This version was copied from the original abstract by an unknown scribe employed by Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566) who then himself wrote the edition that is the origin of all surviving translations. The Las Casas copy was found in the early 1790s by Martín Fernández de Navarrete (1765-1844) who then transcribed it, made some corrections and updates, and published it. However, the Las Casas

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<sup>11</sup> West, “Christopher Columbus and His Enterprise,” 254-277.

<sup>12</sup> Henceforth referred to as just ‘the Monarchs.’

copy went missing in 1925, so it cannot be fully verified. The Navarrete edition is considered to contain few mistakes or changes. From that edition all the English translations have been made.<sup>13</sup>

Since the discovery of the Las Casas copy of the *Journal*, scholars have debated the validity of the document. Some see it as a complete fabrication, others a mixture of truth and error, and some as a near perfectly accurate account. It is also likely that Las Casas may have transcribed some parts but not others, changed portions of the writing from third person to first, and paraphrased what Columbus's original writing in his own words.<sup>14</sup>

Since scholars attribute some, if not all, of the oldest versions of the *Journal* to Bartolomé de las Casas, either as editor or even a second author, it is worth considering his biography and the reflection of his voice in the pages of the *Journal* as we read it today. Born in Seville in 1484—also to a merchant family—Las Casas first journeyed with his father to the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean at age 18. Upon arriving in 1502 he became a slave owning *hacendado*<sup>15</sup> on the island of *Hispaniola*, and in 1510 he became the first priest ordained in the Americas.<sup>16</sup> In his younger years Las Casas was part of the brutal Spanish colonial system and took part in slave raids and military campaigns against the Native Peoples there. During the conquest of Cuba as a Chaplain, Las Casas witnessed and unwittingly participated in atrocities committed by the Conquistadors to the Indigenous people there; but these events served to fundamentally alter the

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<sup>13</sup> Emiliano Jos, "Las Casas, Historian of Christopher Columbus," *The Americas* (1956): 355-62.

<sup>14</sup> Margarita Zamora, *Reading Columbus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> A Hacendo was the master of a colonial estate (Haciendi).

<sup>16</sup> The Island containing the modern countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

priest's perspective. Deeply moved by the suffering of the Indigenous People he saw being brutally exploited and massacred, he returned to Europe and reported what he had seen. Las Casas would spend the rest of his life deeply committed to exposing Spanish atrocities and fighting to protect the Indigenous People of the *Caribbean* whom he understood to be humans with souls to be saved.<sup>17</sup> These views were controversial as they jeopardized the colonial system which the Spanish Empire would become increasingly dependent on, and beholden to, for its own survival and prosperity.<sup>18</sup> Las Casa's perspective is critical to consider when reading the writings of Columbus, which Las Casas undoubtedly left his mark on. When weighing the motives and meanings of Columbus's descriptions of the New World, we must consider how an individual like Las Casas and his presence in these documents factor into our interpretations.

#### *Columbus' Voyage:*

Having secured the investment of a commission, funding, and ships from the Monarchs, Columbus departed from the *Canary Islands* on September 6, 1492. While no list exists of the content of his ship, we know that on board they carried wine and a year's worth of food for the crew, including the staple ship food *Baicoli*—a hard biscuit that was twice baked and often full of weevils as well as salted fish, beef, and pork. They also carried ample stores of water and fortified wine.<sup>19</sup>

Columbus's ships sailed for 33 days, finally spotting land on October 11th. Columbus's speculative calculation was that he

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<sup>17</sup> Jos, "Las Casas, Historian of Christopher Columbus," 355-62.

<sup>18</sup> Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York: NYU Press, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> Mariani-Costantini Aldo and Giancarlo Ligabue, "Did Columbus Also Open the Exploration of the Modern Diet?" *Nutrition Reviews* 50, no. 11 (1992): 313-19.

would reach Japan, where he hoped to find a route to the spice trades that originated in India and China. The conclusion he reached when he arrived on the island of Guanahani (*San Salvador*) was that it was Indi and so the Indigenous People he met he referred to as *Indios*.<sup>20</sup> For three months Columbus traveled through the Bahamas, along the East side of Cuba, and down the coast of the island of Quisqueya (*Hispaniola*). Along the way the *Journal* records Columbus' observations and reflections about what he saw and the peoples he met.

Most of his reflections about the Indigenous people he met are consistent and oft repeated. In his diary, he described them as passive, handsome, “naked as their mothers bore them,”<sup>21</sup> generous, honest, healthy, fearful, and that they readily gave all they had—willingly bartering for small bells or glass beads. He reflected that they were lighter in skin than people from Guinea and that they would fall to the ground praising the Christians as having come from the heavens. Sometimes, he described how they would canoe out to meet his boat, noting that they were often curious and interested in trade. Other times, they were terrified and fled when they saw his ships approaching. Only one village reacted with hostility, but its members were soon cowed by demonstrative violence. Columbus also states that they were of strong physical prowess, but that they knew little or nothing of war and violence. They had no religion—but were not idolaters, and that they were eager and ripe for conversion, and would make exceptional Christians and subjects.

In the *Journal* Columbus often speaks directly to the Monarch, which suggests that he was planning to give the *Journal* to Ferdinand and Isabella upon his return. With his royal patrons

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<sup>20</sup> At this time any lands, or people, in Asian might be lumped under the category of India / Indians, hence why Columbus believes he was in Japan, or “the Lands of the Khan” (China) but refers to the places and people as such.

<sup>21</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Thursday 11 October.”

in mind, he likely would have been selective of what he recorded and how he interpreted his experience. Given this discretion, it is not surprising that the people he met were portrayed as ideal subjects and perfect converts. Columbus's narrative paints a picture of a Garden of Eden, inhabited by childlike, innocent people who labor little and had no conception of good or evil as Christian Europeans did. The only exception to this peaceful narrative of Native peoples created by Columbus was the savage tribe known as the *Canabe*, *Canib*, or *Carib* who were rumored to be anthropophagists and savage warriors. Though Columbus never found these rumored savages, their mythology created an ideal villain for the explorer to present to the Monarchs if they preferred war and subjugation to diplomacy, colonization, or peaceful conversion.

Though we can doubt his motives, the recorded praise that Columbus gave the people he met could be accurate. But it is worth remembering that the aforementioned narrative originates from the surviving copy transcribed and edited by Las Casas. Las Casas was both an advocate for Indigenous People but also a supporter of the Church and Spanish powers. This copy may reflect his selections from the original that supported his own beliefs that the Indigenous Peoples were good, kind, and innocent souls for whom conversion was ordained; and that Columbus was also a good man. We have no recorded information about how or why Las Casas came to transcribe the *Journal* as he did. As such, it seems completely plausible that it was never intended to be seen or published at all. The copy made by Las Casas may have emphasized the passage's importance to him with no intent to mislead, much as how any scholar might write notes on a subject they are researching that only focuses on their own scholarly

interests.<sup>22</sup> Certainly the character of Columbus in this first writing gives no prediction of the atrocities and cruelty he would commit on his later voyages. Whether this is a change in him, or reflective of the editing of La Casas, we may never know.

### *Section II: European Food and Foodways*

By looking at how food and foodways are portrayed in a story, we learn important information about the people and societies depicted. Before examining the depictions of food and foodways in Columbus's journal, it is worth considering some of the foodways of Early Modern Europe to understand the systems the explorer and his noble audience would have seen as normal, good and desirable, or abnormal and taboo.

Prior to the fifteenth century the food and foodways of Medieval Europe differed little between serfs and aristocrats. Over time, as land was enclosed and wealth distribution became uneven, diets changed, becoming both more codified and socially stratified. By the mid-fifteenth century in Early Modern Spain, this meant that the commoner ate a diet of fish and vegetables and grains, such as wheat and rye, mainly in the form of bread. This bread was baked in communal ovens to conserve wood, which was a commodity which became increasingly expensive and rare as European populations grew and forest resources became increasingly depleted. Furthermore, the commoner had little

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<sup>22</sup> Las Casas reports elsewhere that he was a boy in Spain when Columbus returned from his first voyage and saw the arrival and, despite the genocide Columbus would later initiate, Las Casas seemed to generally admire him and was acquainted with both his sons, one of whom was the first governor of the colonies. While Las Casas was a humanist he still believed in the supremacy of the Christianity and the Spanish nobility.



access to meat as hunting privilege and forest access were reserved for the nobility.<sup>23</sup>

While the dietary ideals of the Catholic Church condemned heavily spiced foods, large feasts, and meat consumption as markers of the sin of gluttony, the wealthy flaunted their access to these three commodities. Rare spices as luxury items or medicines in Early Modern Europe commanded a high price, and some, such as mastic, were themselves worth by weight more than gold.<sup>24</sup> By conspicuously consuming these foods nobles could show their status and wealth, and those wishing to move up the social ladder used foods to this goal. Spices acted as an important driver of exploration first by the Portuguese, and later by the Spanish.<sup>25</sup> This accelerated with the exportation of sugar plantations to the *Caribbean* Islands, establishing an intercontinental system of slavery, sugar production, and trade, all for the purpose of sweet calories that the wealthy would flaunt as confectionary sculptures.<sup>26</sup>

In the fifteenth century, how and what a person ate was a powerful marker of their place in the social order and carried religious and spiritual meanings associated with certain food choices.<sup>27</sup> In Spain, some foodways even risked incrimination by

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<sup>23</sup> Jodi Campbell, *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Paul Freedman, "Mastic: A Mediterranean Luxury Product," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 26, no. 01 (2011): 99-113.

<sup>25</sup> Omri Bassewitch Frenkel, "Transplantation of Asian Spices in the Spanish Empire 1518-1640," (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Sugar, which we now see as a cheap commodity, in Early Modern Europe was considered a medicine and spice and would later become the most important symbolic food to mark wealth and status. Mintz.

<sup>27</sup> Jews and Muslims both having differing religious taboos and cultural customs—kashrut and halal—around which foods were or were not eaten, they were eaten and when. Despite this seemingly rigid picture Spain still had (has)

the ever-watchful Inquisition seeking to root out heathens, *Marranos*, and *Moriscos*.<sup>28</sup> Even kings were not above criticism for practices such as dining while sitting on the floor in the style of a Muslim.<sup>29</sup>

### *Section III: Columbus and Indigenous Food*

*Come and see the men who have come from heaven;  
bring them something to eat and drink.*<sup>30</sup>

We have two academic lenses through which we can examine the food and foodways of the precontact Indigenous Peoples of the *Caribbean*. The first is through archeological studies which employ techniques to detect and analyze food residues on cookware. While this is an effective method for determining what was eaten, it does not reveal how or why food was prepared and consumed. The second is the potentially biased but richly detailed Spanish writings of the period of exploration from the early fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries, Columbus's being the first of such writing. Looking closer to see how food plays a role in his documentations, three themes stand out: his observations of foods eaten and shared with him; his quest for, and imagination of, rare spices; and the fearful tales of savage flesh-eating *cannibals*.

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many blended food and foodways from the centuries of cultural *métissage* with the Spanish Jewish and Moorish peoples of the Iberian Peninsula.

<sup>28</sup> *Marranos* were Jews forced to convert to Catholicism or face exile, but who persisted in practicing Judaism after their conversion. *Moriscos* were former Muslims forced to convert to Catholicism or face exile.

<sup>29</sup> Olivia Remie Constable, "Food and Meaning: Christian Understandings of Muslim Food and Food Ways in Spain, 1250–1550," *Viator* 44, no. 3 (2013): 199-235.

<sup>30</sup> Columbus. *Diary*, "Sunday 14 October".

*Sharing Food and Hospitality:*

*They put some grain in a dish of water and drink it, and the Indians the Admiral had with him said that it was very good for the health<sup>31</sup>*

Like many other parts of the world, Christian Europe had strong traditions of hospitality. These traditions were embedded in many of the tales from Greek and Roman myth as well as in the Bible.<sup>32</sup> On many occasions when Columbus approached a village, he would be offered hospitality and food not unfamiliar to these tales. Columbus records this food being plentiful and the Peoples welcoming. His are the first recorded observations of many now familiar foods that would be carried around the globe and become important parts of food traditions around the world, including capsicum (chili) peppers,<sup>33</sup> cassava, sweet potatoes, peanuts, yuca, and corn. In addition to the foodstuffs, the manner in which a Christian traveler was received factored into the ways in which Indigenous villagers were characterized.

Columbus was at times given a place of honor with the “king” of the village. When visiting with Guacanagarí, the Cacique of the Caciczgo of Marién<sup>34</sup>, the *Journal* states,

The Admiral went ashore to eat and arrived just as five kings, who were subjects of this one called Guacanagarí, had arrived, all with their crowns

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<sup>31</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Sunday 16 December.”

<sup>32</sup> Kevin D. O’Gorman, “Modern Hospitality: Lessons from the Past,” *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 12, no. 2 (2005): 141-51.

<sup>33</sup> Hot peppers, chili peppers and sweet peppers are all from the same family and indigenous to the Americas — not to be confused with black pepper.

<sup>34</sup> A *Cacique* was the leader of an Indigenous group. A *Caciczgo* were the lands the ruled. Marién was the northwestern part of Hispaniola.

indicating their high rank, and the Admiral tells the Monarchs that Their Highnesses would have been very pleased at their bearing. On reaching the shore, the king came to meet the Admiral and took him by the arm to the same house as yesterday where he had a dais and chairs...<sup>35</sup>

These encounters portray the Indigenous Leaders as honorable, but also humble and deferential to Columbus, and by proxy to the Monarchs he served and was writing to.

Columbus very often compared the sights—particularly the food—he observed in the New World to those found in Castile (Spain). He described the fishing practices of Indigenous sailors, stating,

He took nets to fish and before he reached the shore a mullet just like those in Spain jumped into the boat... The sailors fished and killed others, and soles and other fish like those of Castile... [he] heard a nightingale sing and other birds like those of Castile... He found myrtle and other trees and plants like those of Castile, for that is what the land and the mountains are like.<sup>36</sup>

These comparisons read as though Columbus was trying to sell these lands as a new Spain, sparsely populated by noble and innocent souls waiting for the conversion and leadership of the Monarchs and the Catholic Church.

*The Search for Spices:*

... *the spices they eat...*

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<sup>35</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Sunday 30 December.”

<sup>36</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Friday 7 December.”

*are many and worth more than pepper and allspice.*<sup>37</sup>

Believing that he had arrived in Asia, Columbus imagined plants he found there to be valuable Asiatic commodities, when in fact they were not. Prominent among these imagined spices was mastic, a tree resin then more valuable than gold, that grew only on the Mediterranean island of Chios.<sup>38</sup> Columbus, having visited Chios himself, would have been well aware of the value and rarity of this spice. In addition to mastic, he believed he had found other highly valuable and rare spices and medicines including rhubarb, ginger, cinnamon, clove, aloe, and pepper—none of which were native to the Americas.<sup>39</sup> This troubled search for spices is evident in Columbus's diary, which described "a thousand different kinds of trees all laden with fruit which the Admiral believed to be spices and nutmegs... except that they were not ripe and could not be identified."<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Columbus believed that these spices were to be found in infinite quantities—a delusion he also applied to the sources of gold that eluded him. In his diary he stated,

There is also an infinite amount of aloe here, although this is not something from which to make a great fortune, but from mastic much can be expected because it is only found on the island of Chios and I believe that they earn a good 50000 ducats from it, if I remember

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<sup>37</sup> I believe this is a mistranslation as allspice (*Pimenta dioica*) is native to the *Caribbean* so its value would not be known at this point.

<sup>38</sup> Mastic can still only be found in Chios and remains highly valuable. Paul Freedman, "Mastic: A Mediterranean Luxury Product," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 26, no. 01 (2011): 99-113.

<sup>39</sup> George B. Griffonage, "The Materia Medica of Christopher Columbus," *Pharmacy in History* 34, no. 3 (1992): 131-45.

<sup>40</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, "Thursday 6 December."

rightly...<sup>41</sup> The island of Cuba which I hear from these people is very large and very busy and where there is gold and spices and great ships and merchants.<sup>42</sup> He hopes to God that, on the return... he would find a barrel of gold which those he was to leave behind would have bartered for, and that they would have found the gold mine and the spices; and in such quantity that the Monarchs would be able in three years to undertake preparations for the conquest of the Holy Land.<sup>43</sup> These are the innumerable islands which appear on world maps at the eastern edge. He says that he thought that there were great riches and precious stones and spices on them.<sup>44</sup>

The Indigenous People he spoke with—that he seemed to have learned to speak with in a short time—repeatedly indicated to him that the things he sought—gold, spices, and *cannibals*—would not be found on their island. They did, however, suggest that if he continued in another direction to another location, he would be sure to find them. As his diary from Sunday 4 November 1492 states,

They showed them the cinnamon and the pepper and other spices which the Admiral had given them, and the people said... that there was a lot of it nearby to the SE, but that they did not know if there was any thereabouts.<sup>45</sup> The Admiral showed the Indians there some cinnamon and [black] pepper... and they recognized it... and made signs that there was a lot of it nearby to the SE. He showed them gold and pearls,

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<sup>41</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Tuesday 1 January.”

<sup>42</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Monday 12 November.”

<sup>43</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Wednesday 26 December.”

<sup>44</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Wednesday 14 November.”

<sup>45</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Tuesday 6 November.”

and some old men replied that in a place which they called Bohío there was a great deal of it.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the prevalence of spices there, he did not often mention the food itself being notably spiced in the *Journal*.<sup>47</sup> He did mention the capsicum chili—its Indigenous name being *ají*—which he called *pepper* for its piquant heat was akin to the black pepper corn which originates in Indonesia, stating, “There is also much ‘ají’ which is their pepper, some of which is worth more than [black] pepper, and all the men eat it with everything and find it very healthy; fifty caravels a year could be loaded with it on Española.”<sup>48</sup>

Regardless of other motives, securing funding from his patrons for future voyages and justifying the expenses of his first one, was likely his main priority, and he likely was willing to exaggerate to meet those ends. As such, his depictions of the lands and people he discovered appear superimposed with his desires, needs, and aspirations. Foremost of these beliefs was that he had reached India or China, and that the land he had found was overflowing with wealth, spices, and docile Christian souls to be either saved or enslaved.

Turning to other academic sources we can compare his writings with what is known about the archeological and ecological picture of the precontact *Caribbean* cultures. Like many other later European writers, Columbus saw the islands of America as wild, uncultivated, and sparsely occupied compared

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<sup>46</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Sunday 4 November.”

<sup>47</sup> In the letter however he says, “... the cold was very harsh there this winter; but they are used to it and withstand it with the help of their food which they eat heavily seasoned with hot spices.”

<sup>48</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Tuesday 15 January.”

to Europe.<sup>49</sup> Despite these perceptions, the Indigenous Peoples of the *Caribbean* had complex relationships with the fragile environments and ecosystems of their islands. As Mariani Constantini Aldo points out, their diets reflected a slower subsistence level of activity, and low caloric intake.<sup>50</sup> This would later be disrupted by the intensive processes of Spanish colonization combined with the high-caloric manual labor forced upon them. This relationship Indigenous Peoples had with their islands' environments had developed significantly over the six millennium since people had first arrived in the islands. It is likely that their cultures had complex sustenance patterns that could support their population within that fragile, and limited, ecosystem found on islands. This was achieved through a mixture of agriculture and hunting that allowed Indigenous islanders were to gather sufficient carbohydrates from plants and proteins and fats from animals despite there being no ruminants. Moreover, such patterns of consumption allowed them to extract the necessities of their diet from the island's flora and fauna without causing environmental collapse. First amongst the plants they consumed was cassava root, a highly poisonous food if not prepared correctly. Supplementing this were fruits, seeds, and green vegetables. In all, over 100 species of edible plants have been recovered from archeological sites. Sources of meat were varied including, rodents, birds, reptiles and a great variety of fish and seafood. Much of the starches came from cultivated fields and gardens, but animals were largely not a managed resource.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

<sup>50</sup> Aldo, "Did Columbus Also Open the Exploration of the Modern Diet?" 316.

<sup>51</sup> Lee A. Newsom and Elizabeth S. Wing, *On Land and Sea: Native American Uses of Biological Resources in the West Indies*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004).



*Anthropophagy, Caribs, and Cannibals:*

...those people are, he says, evil-doers  
and he thought they were from the Carib  
and that they were man-eaters”<sup>52</sup>

One lasting effect of Columbus’s interpretation of foodways was his invention of the word, and idea, of *cannibals* and *cannibalism*. On January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1492, the *Journal* reads: “The Admiral... says that the people on the previous islands were very afraid of the Carib and some called them ‘Caniba,’ but ‘Carib’ on Española, and that they must be a daring people for they roam these islands eating anyone they can capture.” While anthropophagists appear throughout history and in mythology, the word *cannibal* has its origins in this tale. This possibly fictitious tribe that Columbus came to understand through numerous reports were described as fierce warriors and man-eaters who would kidnap and consume their captives. In his journal they always seemed to be in the distance: on the next island, or around the corner and just out of reach. The Indigenous People he spoke with showed fear of the *Caribs* and their man-eating practices, one of his informants even displays a wound from a *Carib* bite, but Columbus seemed to not make much of these stories. Appearing skeptical at first, he states,

The Indians enjoyed themselves very much with the Christians and brought them certain arrows belonging to the *Caniba* or *Cannibals*, and they are made from the stem of a reed with fire-hardened points inserted at the tip and are very long. They showed them two men with pieces of flesh missing from their bodies and gave

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<sup>52</sup> Columbus, *Diary*. “Sunday 13 January.”

them to understand that the *cannibals* had eaten mouthfuls of them. The Admiral did not believe it.<sup>53</sup>

It is worth noting that Columbus spoke with Indigenous people with whom he had only a few weeks of interaction in which to learn their language. Since the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas had no contact with the languages of Europe and Asia for 20,000 years,<sup>54</sup> it can be safely assumed that Columbus and Indigenous Americans were speaking in the most distant of languages possible from each other. While some of Columbus's entries note the difficulty of translation, he often seems very confident in what they said to him, though later scholars—Las Casas included—would point out how wrong a number of the words he recorded were.<sup>55</sup>

The mythology and literature of Europe and the Mediterranean contained many tales of anthropophagists. Herodotus placed them on the distant edge of the known world, along with dog-headed people, and Amazons. In Greek myths the practice of anthropophagy is seen in Chronos consuming his children, or when Tantalus feeds his children to the Gods. This practice was seen as the worst sort of primitive barbarism. Similarly, Alexander the Great was said to have encountered flesh eaters further out from the Greek world, and with Marco Polo's journey these primitive people would move further away to Asia. In the medieval era, anthropophagy was applied to the dreaded Huns, Tartars, and Muslims.<sup>56</sup> Columbus would have known of

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<sup>53</sup> Columbus. *Diary*, "Monday 17 December."

<sup>54</sup> Assuming the Bering Land Bridge Theory that humans migrated into North America at that time.

<sup>55</sup> For example, the *Carib* lived on the Island of Bohio—which was the word for house. These references can be found in the footnotes section of the Kings' College Translation of the Journal.

<sup>56</sup> Merrall Llewelyn Price, *Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

many of these stories and legends and seems to follow in this literary tradition by finding, or resituating, these savages in the *Caribbean*.

At first, Columbus aligned both their identity and name with his belief that he had reached China. He states, “It seems that they are harassed by people of intelligence because all these islands live in great fear of those from Caniba. I repeat what I have said before, he says, that Caniba is quite simply the people of the Great Khan who must be very close by and must have ships in which they come and capture them, and because they do not return, they believe that they have been eaten.”<sup>57</sup> Later, after he stops traveling Northwest toward where he would have found Japan had there not been a continent in between Europe and Asia, his skepticism disappears and he seems to be looking for the *Carib*—possibly to initiate a confrontation. As his diary states, “The Admiral told him by signs that the Monarchs of Castile would order the Caribs to be destroyed and brought to them with their hands tied.”<sup>58</sup> This change in attitude towards the Carib was one that would instead provide a convenient enemy for the Monarchs if they wished to make war. Columbus also sought Indigenous peoples out to capture them to bring back with him. As his diary describes, “He wanted to send men out tonight to look for the houses of those Indians to capture some of them, believing them to be Caribs.”<sup>59</sup>

Beyond these accounts not much more takes place regarding the Carib that Columbus hears of and seeks out. Like much of Columbus’s narrative, if he had returned to Spain and

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Heather Blurton, “The Flesch of a Sarazeyn: Cannibalism, Genre, and Nationalism,” *Cannibalism in High Medieval English Literature*, (2007) :105-131.

<sup>57</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Tuesday 11 December.”

<sup>58</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Wednesday 26 December.”

<sup>59</sup> Columbus, *Diary*, “Monday 14 January.”

never come back, we could accept him as an imperfect ethnographer and somewhat self-centered explorer. Instead, Columbus returned to the New World with disease, weaponry, and the desire to enslave and brutally exploit the Indigenous Peoples to an unprecedented degree.<sup>60</sup> In 1503, Queen Isabel drafted an order allowing only cannibals to be captured and enslaved. Using the cannibals as a justification,<sup>61</sup> Columbus divided the Indigenous people into a familiar binary of good and evil Indians—one type to be admired for their innocence and goodness, and the other to be hated for their savagery. This fiction would generate a lasting fear of the cannibal ‘other’ that would continue to appear in narratives for years to come.

While it is possible that anthropophagy was practiced by Indigenous Peoples in the *Caribbean*, it was likely rare and of a religious nature. Moreover, the fixation on it was most likely a uniquely European phenomenon, or a misinterpretation of inter-island exchange and warfare.<sup>62</sup> Unlike the other two categories of foodways this paper examines, we can largely remove the idea of cannibalism from the foodways of the Indigenous Peoples and instead relocate it to an examination of the taboos and foodways of Europe. Considering cannibalism through this lens is especially important considering Peter Hulme’s argument in “Columbus and the Cannibals: A Study of the Reports of Anthropophagy in the Journal of Christopher Columbus,” in

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<sup>60</sup>Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism and Terrorism* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011).

<sup>61</sup>Jeff Berglund, *Cannibal Fictions: American Explorations of Colonialism, Race, Gender and Sexuality* (Madison, Wisc.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

<sup>62</sup>N.L. Whitehead, "Carib Cannibalism: The Historical Evidence," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes Paris* 70 (1984); William F. Keegan, "Mobility and Disdain: Columbus and Cannibals in the Land of Cotton," *Ethnohistory* 62, no. 1 (2015): 1-15.

which he posits that the true motives for Columbus's exploitation of the Carib were his quest for gold from cannibals.<sup>63</sup> By re-visiting Columbus's writings from the perspective of food and foodways, we can reexamine the ways in which we understand Columbus and evaluate his motives in a more nuanced way.

### *Discussion*

Fifty years ago, if asked what Columbus's motivation was for coming to the New World many would have perhaps given an uncritical answer based on a textbook, a children's story, or from cultural collective memory. This answer would have been polished and rebranded in the 500 years since Columbus set sail, painting a picture of the man as an exceptional hero and *discoverer* of a "New World" set to imagery of his three boats landing, and innocent natives falling at his feet in awe of the advanced civilization from which he had come. His motives were understood in simplistic ways that glorified his achievements: as a visionary quest to discover new lands, to prove the world was round, or to sail to reach India, to name a few. Much of the scholarship and public opinion in the last 30 years has reassessed Columbus and saw not a national hero, but the initiator of an Indigenous holocaust wherein millions of people, and entire cultures, were exterminated thorough disease, exploitation, and persecution. These actions and their consequences continue to echo through the cultures of South America and the Caribbean, carrying such a black mark that—even if Columbus's original motives were admirable or inspired—we must seriously consider whether all admiration should be ceased entirely. As we continue to work to understand systemic imbalances of power and

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<sup>63</sup> Peter Hulme, "Columbus and the Cannibals: A Study of the Reports of Anthropophagy in the Journal of Christopher Columbus," *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv* 4, no. 2 (1978): 115-39.

injustice, this critical, or even harsh, judgment of historic figures is necessary to understand a more honest and complex national narrative.

This does not mean, however, that we should abandon the texts of Columbus entirely. Was Columbus exceptional, or were his accomplishments more indicative of his time, culture, and place in history? Did he set an example for others to follow, or could we assume that the same process would have eventually happened with whoever would have been the next European explorer? Regardless of these bigger picture questions, history records Columbus as the first European to explore the Americas, and rather than removing his name from all history books, honest inquiries that work to understand a more honest picture of him should continue to be pursued. Careful and intentional examination of his works from specific perspectives yield important insights into the European and Indigenous cultures of the late fifteenth century. This paper seeks to carry this out by analyzing Columbus's writings through the lens of food. By pulling on the threads of the story where food and foodways weave into Columbus's narrative we highlight three major points of inquiry: the positive portrayals of the diets of the Indigenous Peoples he met, his quest for Asiatic spices of monetary and symbolic value to the nobility of Europe, and the maligning of the possibly fictitious *Canibe* tribe as anthropophagists.

Within the records of his interactions, Columbus seemed to be generally enthusiastic and optimistic about the Indigenous Peoples he met, and between them existed many moments in which food was exchanged, and meals were shared. His reports were positive about their simple but bountiful foods. Should he have wished to paint a different picture, he might have emphasized the more exotic parts of their diet such as lizards or rodents; or, he could have noted that they ate on the ground in a manner like that of the maligned Saracens. He also described

them as eating vegetables, fruit, bread and fish, this diet would have reflected familiar European ideas of what a good peasant Christian would eat. Other fields of research concurrently support what he observed about the diet of the Indigenous People he met, verifying, in an important if small way, that Columbus can be considered a trustworthy ethnographer.

In contrast, Columbus's search for and observations of spices—none of which were there—portrays the explorer as potentially delusional, fraudulent, or, at the very least, a bad naturalist. Columbus spent much of his time in the *Caribbean* searching for these rare and valuable commodities. His desire to find them was so strong that he postulated erroneously that many species of plants that he saw were Asiatic varieties that were not in fact native to the Americas. It is certainly reasonable to assume he was simply misled by his inaccurate estimations of the size of the earth which led him to think he was in South-East Asia and hence in proximity to those spices, but he also he knew these reports of unlimited spices could motivate the Monarchs to fund a return voyage.

While he believed these spices were present in great quantities he did not observe or record the Indigenous People as using them in their diet significantly. One logical reason for that is that they did not have them to cook with, yet it is worth noting that they had, and used, capsicum peppers, which are arguably the most potent spice in the world. While it is possible the peppers the Indigenous People had might have been milder, their use limited, or that as a new spice their value was unknown, it is also plausible that he left out the Indigenous Peoples' consumption of them so as not to associate their foodways with that of the prestigious nobles of Europe, the primary consumers of spices there.

In contrast to his favorable, and seemingly accurate, descriptions of those he met and the food he ate, were his

depictions of the *Caniba*, whose traits of savagery and diet of human flesh rendered this imagined people as a familiar boogeyman to a European audience, always on the edge of civilization and just beyond reach. This fictitious account of *cannibals* would later set the stage for genocide-level, sanctioned violence, cruelty, exploitation, and enslavement. Columbus as a liar, exploiter, and unreliable source in this regard.

An examination of Columbus's first journey, his writings about it, and the history of those writings, reveal that while we cannot solely rely on these documents as a source of absolute truth about Columbus, his motives, or the Indigenous People he met, they still are important documents historically and historiographically when studying American and global history. For many, the story of Columbus's first landing is a Genesis-like moment, marking a beginning point in their national myth. From Columbus's interpretations, motivations, and observations about the Indigenous Peoples he met, a process of categorizing and imagining Indigenous Peoples of the Americas began, though this process could also be seen as a continuation of a European tradition going back to the travel writings of Marco Polo and Herodotus, where the people on the farthest edge of their civilizations were imagined as mythical, idealized, or monstrous.<sup>64</sup> In Columbus's writings we find the first example of the Indigenous Peoples of America being divided into two archetypical roles—as either the good, innocent, obeisant, helpful allies of the culturally superior Europeans, or as the savage and violent *cannibals* to be overcome, civilized or killed. Though food is generally not seen as central to this story, by looking at its role in these writings we can ultimately explore these themes in

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<sup>64</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian, from Columbus to the Present*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (New York: Vintage Books: 1979).



depth, as well as verify and question the text, its meaning, and what its impact is on history.

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## Author Biographies

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**Michael R. Carter** is a graduate student in history at the University of Vermont. A proud native of Burlington, his research interests encompass all aspects of the experience of the United States in the First World War, with a particular emphasis on how that conflict impacted Vermont and Vermonters. In addition to his current focus on late nineteenth and early twentieth century American history, Michael has studied late antique and medieval European culture and philosophy, earning a B.A. in religion from St. Michael's College, and an MDiv from Boston College. A Catholic priest, Michael has worked with communities from Selma, Alabama to Salem, Massachusetts. Currently teaching as an adjunct at St. Michael's College, Michael is known to enjoy strange movies and loud music. Michael would like to offer special thanks to Professor Nicole Phelps for her advice and guidance with the piece that appears in this volume.

**Tess Hastings** is a senior from Essex, Vermont studying history and community entrepreneurship. She is passionate about the Antebellum Era, Gilded Age, and Industrialization of American history. Outside of these interests, she is interested in food insecurity, community development, and travel. Tess hopes to pursue a career that ties in both of these fields, where she can use lessons and patterns from her studies to inform how to aid Vermonters in need.

**Sophia Trigg** is a graduate student studying Victorian and Edwardian British cultural history. Her primary areas of research are historical dress and women's utilization of fashion to navigate contemporary social structures. Originally from Williston, Vermont, she earned her B.S. in secondary education with a concentration in history and social studies from the College of

Education & Social Services at UVM in 2014. While completing her master's degree, she works full time at the College of Arts & Sciences at UVM to bring work- and place-based learning to undergraduate students as the Experiential Learning Coordinator.

**Richard Witting** is a Burlington local who's had a lengthy career as a chef and event organizer. His cooking interests led him to return to school to study anthropology at UVM for his undergraduate degree in 2016, focusing on food and culture. He is currently pursuing his MA in history focusing on Vermont's food history.

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## Editor Biographies

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**Katie Wynn** is a senior from Hawthorn Woods, IL who will graduate in May 2022 with a B.A. in History and Political Science. Her research interests focus on the intersection between cultural and women's history. In the spring of 2020, she was awarded the Best Undergraduate Essay by the UVM History Department for her paper titled *Forging the Female Monarch: Cultural Redefinition of the Monarchy in the Victorian Era*. In May 2022, Katie completed and defended her honors thesis titled *The Feminization of the British Monarchy from Queen Victoria to Princess Diana* with her advisor, Department Chair and Professor Paul Deslandes. In her free time, she enjoys playing on the UVM Women's Club Ice Hockey team and taking her boxer Brody for long walks. Katie is the 2022 recipient of the UVM History Department's Paul D. Evans Award for Excellence in History and the Elliot A. Brown Award for the Outstanding Senior in Political Science.

**Liam Hilferty** is a second-year graduate student at UVM working on his M.A. in History. His research interests include modern Europe, World War II, and the Holocaust. During the beginnings of the Covid-19 pandemic Liam applied to the university's Advanced Master's Program, which allows students to enroll in graduate level courses during their final year of undergraduate study. Liam completed his B.A. in Spring 2021, majoring in History with a minor in Holocaust Studies. During his time at UVM, Liam has worked as a graduate teaching assistant for Professor Charles Briggs and Professor Andrew Buchanan. He is currently writing his thesis about Ukrainian nationalist monuments in the United States and focusing on issues of collective memory and the legacy of the Holocaust in Ukraine.

**James Francis Hughes II** is a Graduate student in the field of History with a focus on modern European history. Particularly, that which concerns the German-speaking lands from the late 19th century to the present-day. He works at the Carolyn and Leonard Miller Center for Holocaust Studies library in Billings where he helps to organize the German and English language acquisitions. Before coming to UVM, James earned an undergraduate degree in history at UC Berkeley, where he also graduated with Honors. He is currently working on a project which focuses on the destruction of Jewish populations at the hands of their Polish neighbors, particularly in the Białystok region of Northeastern Poland beginning in June of 1941. In addition to that, he is also beginning work on a research project which focuses on German queer culture during the Weimar and Nazi eras.

**Juniper Oxford** is a first-year graduate student in UVM's M.A. history program, studying nineteenth and twentieth century American history. In 2021, she graduated from Southern Illinois University Carbondale with a B.A. in history and a minor in political science. Her primary academic interests include third parties in American politics, women in social movements, and LGBTQ+ history. Juniper is currently a research assistant for Professor Nicole Phelps and has also served as a graduate teaching assistant under Professor Melanie Gustafson. Next year, she plans to write her thesis on the lives of trans women in early to mid-twentieth century American history.

**Eleanor Setchko** is originally from the East SF Bay Area in California and has no idea how she ended up in Vermont but does not regret it in the least. She is a senior graduating in May 2022 with a B.A. in History and a minor in French and will be remaining at UVM for another year as a graduate student in

History through the Accelerated Master's Program. Eleanor's primary area of study is medieval French history, with especial interest in the development and consolidation of structures of authority and the influences of religion on this development. She has also studied the more recent history of France and Francophonie in substantial depth, from the revolutionary to Napoleonic to 19th-20th century colonial and post-/neo-colonial periods. After leaving UVM, Eleanor plans to follow her passion for research and organization in the realm of library studies and library science.

**Patrick Sullivan** is a graduate student in his first year of the Master of Arts in History program. His main areas of interest include national identity and popular thought in late nineteenth-century Europe. Prior to studying at UVM, he graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a minor in German. There, he completed an undergraduate thesis analyzing French nationalism and Revanchist literature. During his past several months at UVM, he has had the pleasure to work at the Miller Center for Holocaust Studies and to assist Professor Sarah Osten as a Teaching Assistant. His main project at the Miller Center consists of editing an upcoming collection of essays titled Poland under German Occupation, authored by Professors Jonathan Huener, Andrea Löw and several other scholars of Poland and Nazi Germany. Stemming from his areas of historical focus, Patrick intends to complete a master's thesis on the subject of national identity formation in the German Empire.

**Michael Tobin** is a senior and in his first year of UVM's Accelerated Master's Program. He is interested in American political and social history at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a particular focus in masculinity and gendered cultural identity. In

addition to serving on the board of the History Review, Michael works as a tutor in the Undergraduate Writing Center. In his free time, he enjoys playing card games, watching movies, and drawing cartoon monkeys.

**Nick Wendell** is a junior from Manhattan majoring in History and minoring in Studio Art. He is fascinated by the culture of the common person and loves to study social, military, architectural, and religious history from across the globe. Some of his favorite artistic styles include expressionism, impressionism, and symbolism. He is passionate about folk music, illustration, reading, ultimate frisbee, and nature. He loves to read across all genres, but his favorite is historical fiction. He also loves to watch football and faithfully support Everton FC despite their impending relegation from the English Premier League.