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CONTRIBUTORS

Annie Yi
Greg Weiss
Department of the History of Art, Yale
University
Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations
Department at Yale

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**THE YALE HISTORICAL REVIEW
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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Each day's headlines – from the tensions of Ferguson, MO to mistrust between Argentina and Great Britain – prove that the conflicts of the past are by no means dead and gone. Whether fought with pens or missiles, votes or dollars, history's flashpoints illuminate the world we live in, and how it got that way.

No war remains on the battlefield: conflicts are shaped as much by observers as combatants. As the British launched a counteroffensive in the Falklands, the media at home drew on tropes of patriotism and treason to reframe the collective memory of empire, argues Jackson Busch '16. Matthew Koo, UNC-Chapel Hill '15, documents the spectrum of American Protestant Christian reactions to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, challenging perceptions of a univocal American policy towards Israel.

Conflicts hardly cease when the guns fall silent; in the debates of politicians and the memories of ordinary people, they rage on. Delving into untold story of the Angolan Civil War, Paul Elish '15 lays out how politics have forced the misrepresentation or willful forgetting of Cuba's involvement. Half a century earlier, as Alexander Saeedy '15 chronicles, revolutionary journalist Victor Serge laid claim to the "spirit of 1917," struggling with a fractured European Left over the legacy of the Russian Revolution.

Our final essays examine America's history of racial conflict, as manifested in children's literature and housing policy. In this issue's cover essay, Joshua Mandell '16 examines the 1939 book *Tobe: A Six Year Old Farmer*: ground-breaking in its sympathetic depictions of African American families, even as it remained mired in the stereotypes of a segregated America. Far from North Carolina's farms, Seth Kolker '15 explores how unlikely allies Robert Moses and Abraham Kazan built the largest cooperative housing project in the world, amid the tensions of integration, class mobility, and the Red Scare.

From the *Review's* own alumnus, we present – through our website – the senior essay of former Managing Editor Andrew Giambrone '14, who explored the archives of the Centre Albert Camus to illuminate the early years of one of the twentieth century's greatest minds, the Nobel Prize-winning author of *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and *The Fall*.

Finally, it is a tremendous pleasure to announce that the American Historical Association has honored Jacob Anbinder '14 (a former Senior Editor) and *The Yale Historical Review* with the Raymond Cunningham Prize, in recognition of "The South Shall Ride Again: The Origins of MARTA and the Making of the Urban South," published in the Spring 2013 issue. We are deeply gratified by this honor, a testament to the potential of undergraduate historical writing. We promise to keep fighting the good fight.

Sincerely,
Spencer J. Weinreich, Editor in Chief
Jacob Wasserman, Managing Editor

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INTRODUCTION: THE TURNCOATS OF FLEET STREET

On May 7th, 1982, three pillars of the British media establishment—*The Guardian*, the BBC, and the *Daily Mirror*—were charged with treason. Not by the state, but by *The Sun*, Britain’s highest-selling daily and the veritable newspaper of record for the easily titillated and barely literate. In a seething editorial, titled “Dare Call It Treason,” the paper blasted critical coverage of Britain’s role in the Falklands conflict.¹

“There are traitors in our midst,” the piece began, before naming each in turn. First came *The Guardian*, which had published a cartoon snidely critical of the war effort. Then the BBC, whose correspondent, Peter Snow, had suggested on air that the British government’s official narrative might not be the unassailable truth. The harshest reproach was reserved for the *Daily Mirror*, *The Sun*’s lowbrow, mass-market rival whose vocal anti-war stance made it a “timorous, whining publication.”² The coverage of all three was “exactly calculated to weaken Britain’s resolve at a time when lives have been lost, whatever the justice of her cause.”³ And dissent was a luxury that Britain could not afford; “We are caught up in a shooting war, not a game of croquet,” *The Sun*’s leader-writer, Ronald Spark, helpfully reminded his readers. Worse still, an anti-war stance indicated a lack of faith in the British nation. The *Mirror*, which billed itself as everyman’s mouthpiece, “has no faith in her country and no respect for her people,” the editorial concluded damningly.⁴

Predictably, *The Sun*’s tirade provoked outrage from all corners of the British media. The General Secretary of the National Union of Journalists called it “odious and hysterical.”⁵ The editor of *The Guardian* labeled it “sad and despicable.” Even a member of *The Sun*’s editorial board, displaying characteristic British understatement, thought that labeling individual reporters as traitors was “a bit much.”⁶

The *Mirror* responded with an equally blistering editorial that, while contesting *The Sun*’s claims, mimicked its rhetoric. “*The Sun* today is to journalism is what Dr. Joseph Goebbels was to truth,” Joe Haines, the *Mirror*’s leader-writer, raged. “Even *Pravda* would blush to be bracketed with it.” *The Sun*, the *Mirror* claimed, was content to push for bloodshed “from behind the safety of its typewriters;” The *Mirror* added, “We do not want to report that brave men have died so that the *Sun*’s circulation might flourish.”⁷ By comparing *The Sun* to the propagandists of Britain’s historical enemies and declaring that it cared more for its circulation figures than the lives of soldiers, the *Mirror* was using the same

¹ Robert Harris, *Gotcha!: the media, the government, and the Falklands crisis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 50.

² Harris, *Gotcha*, 51.

³ Harris, *Gotcha*, 50.

⁴ Harris, *Gotcha*, 51.

⁵ Harris, *Gotcha*, 51.

⁶ Harris, *Gotcha*, 51.

⁷ Harris, *Gotcha*, 52.

rhetoric for which it condemned *The Sun*. In doing so, it bought into the same debate: one over who cared more for British soldiers—and, by extension, the British nation.

Despite its infamy, “Dare Call It Treason” was not an anomaly. Indeed, it reflected a language of loyalty and betrayal that pervaded press coverage of the Falklands War. This paper seeks to explain why this rhetoric came to be, and what its widespread adoption meant. To do so, this paper will unite, in novel ways, evidence that is widely available. The paper proceeds in four parts. First, it will outline the state of the British press at the beginning of the Falklands War, relying on secondary sources to identify the factors that encouraged papers to pander to their readerships. Second, it will examine Margaret Thatcher’s rhetoric, using original speeches and interviews to reveal how she employed tropes like “duty,” “sovereignty,” and “quiet professional determination” to associate support for war with a traditional (and inherently imperial) vision of Britishness. Third, it will demonstrate the pervasiveness of loyalty rhetoric, using editorials from mid and top-tier British papers. Finally, it will, using secondary literature, place the Falklands War in the context of Britain’s imperial decline to explain why this language of loyalty and betrayal could hold such influence in this particular moment.

A narrative results wherein the language of loyalty and betrayal is more than tabloid sensationalism. Most obviously, it extended far beyond the tabloids and into the middle- and top-tier papers. It was encouraged by the competitive nature of the British press, where many titles competed in a crowded market. It was further nurtured by the Prime Minister, who sought to equate support for the war with British identity. And most importantly, this rhetoric had such power precisely because it reflected and reinforced Britons’ longing for the adventure and heroism of the bygone empire. As a result, the conflict was turned into a referendum on Britain’s national mettle, where the millions back home could claim ownership of the heroics of 27,000 soldiers in the South Atlantic.

For the remainder of the conflict, *The Sun* ran the same header on every issue: “The Paper that Supports Our Boys.”⁸ They were cleverly crafting a brand, certainly; but they also seemed to be daring anyone to disagree. Disagreement, after all, would be treasonous.

SUN BLOKES AND TIMES TOFFS: NEWS SOURCES CARVE A NICHE

In one episode of *Yes, Prime Minister*, a political comedy that aired on the BBC, an advisor tries to give the fictional Prime Minister, James Hacker, some advice on dealing with the press. Hacker snaps back:

Don’t tell me about the press. I know *exactly* who reads the papers. The *Daily Mirror* is read by people who think they run the country; *The Guardian* is read by people who think they *ought* to run the country; *The Times* is read by people who actually

⁸ Harris, *Gotcha*, 54.

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do run the country; the *Daily Mail* is read by the wives of the people who run the country; the *Financial Times* is read by people who *own* the country; the *Morning Star* is read by people who think the country ought to be run by another country, and *The Daily Telegraph* is read by people who think it is...*Sun* readers don't care *who* runs the country, as long as she's got big tits.⁹

Though intended for comedic effect, Hacker's rant was so memorable because it rang true. Indeed, it accurately represented the highly competitive nature of the British press, which required that papers carve out a niche or perish, as well as the way that each paper's character connected with broader markers of identity, including class and political affiliation.

By the 1960s, the British press had assumed a three-tiered organization, a rough prototype of the system that prevailed during the Falklands War, and that still persists. At the top are the "quality papers" like *The Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Financial Times*. *The Times*—known as Britain's paper of record, a paragon of journalistic excellence—had fought to minimize its fusty image without sacrificing quality.¹⁰ *The Guardian* was successful in establishing itself as a liberal substitute. And the *Telegraph's* "safely conservative politics and approach to journalism" allowed it to carve a place in the market.¹¹ These papers, while politically influential, have never had much reach outside of the educated classes. In the middle are papers like the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, which were able to market themselves as unpretentious papers that didn't sink to the muckraking lows of the true tabloids. The *Mail*, with its reliably Conservative editorial line, also used political affiliation as a branding mechanism.¹² And at the bottom rest the tabloids, namely *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*.

Nevertheless, a paper on the low end arguably dominated the decade.¹⁷ This section will briefly trace the development of the press up to the Falklands War, identify the competitive pressures that papers faced, and examine *The Sun's* meteoric rise as a case study in crafting a brand and capturing the zeitgeist.

The *Daily Mirror*, under the direction of "presiding genius" Hugh Cudlipp, achieved a circulation of 5 million in 1969—higher than that of any British paper before or since.¹⁸ The *Mirror's* success stemmed from an acute sense of the pro-Labour national mood. But its support of the government soon gave it an establishmentarian air. The paper "was tied to [Prime Minister] Harold Wilson's failures."¹⁹ Many of its once-scrappy senior editors

⁹ Michael Higgins, "British Newspapers Today," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Culture*, edited by Michael Higgins, Clarissa Smith, and John Storey, 279-295 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 286.

¹⁰ Matthew Engel, *Tickle the Public: One Hundred Years of the Popular Press* (London: V. Gollacz, 1996), 248.

¹¹ Engel, *Tickle the Public*, 248.

¹² Engel, *Tickle the Public*, 249.

¹⁷ Higgins, "British Newspapers Today," 287.

¹⁸ Higgins, "British Newspapers Today," 145, 146.

¹⁹ Higgins, "British Newspapers Today," 200.

received titles, the ultimate symbol of ascension into the British elite.²⁰ This made room for an underdog rival to take its place as the voice of the British workingman.

And take its place was exactly what *The Sun* did. When it re-launched in 1969 under new owner Rupert Murdoch, it copied several key elements from the *Mirror*, including the old slogan, “Forward with the People.”²¹ Several features, such as the “Liveliest Letters” section, were obvious knockoffs.²² *The Sun* coupled these elements with innovations— most obviously, frank treatment of sexual themes. In its first week, an editorial declared, “*The Sun* is on the side of youth. It will never think what is prim must be proper.”²³ It began to include pin-ups of topless girls, proclaiming, “*The Sun*, like most of its readers, likes pretty girls. And if they are as pretty as today’s Birthday Suit girl...who cares whether they are dressed or not?”²⁴ It had elevated pandering to the lowest common denominator into an art form.

The lowest common denominator, it soon became apparent, bought papers. By the first half of 1978, *The Sun* had surpassed the *Mirror* in circulation.²⁵ *The Times*, naturally, disapproved of *The Sun*’s meteoric rise; “This is an old way to create a new paper: sex and sensation,” one reporter sniped.²⁶ Even Hugh Cudlipp of the *Mirror* replied with huffy indifference: “The *Daily Mirror* certainly did not wish, certainly in my time, to compete with the tit and bum policy.”²⁷ Later, though, the *Mirror* copied the Page Three Girl idea.

Essential to *The Sun*’s newfound dominance was its ability to craft a coherent brand—as a newspaper willing to buck establishment norms and all sense of propriety to give readers what they wanted. Murdoch doubled down on *The Sun*’s populism by hiring Kelvin MacKenzie, a rowdy anti-establishment figure, as editor.²⁸ MacKenzie dropped the paper’s price and aggressively covered the Royal Family, claiming “indifference to royal claims of special treatment.”^{29 30}

MacKenzie also introduced a new form of polemical conservatism that would inform the paper’s Falklands coverage. *The Sun* had not always been reliably Tory; in fact, it endorsed Labour in 1974 and criticized Margaret Thatcher when she was an MP.^{31 32} This began to change in 1979, when it endorsed Thatcher for Prime Minister.³³ The trend towards

²⁰ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 200.

²¹ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 255.

²² Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 255.

²³ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 255.

²⁴ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 258.

²⁵ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 258.

²⁶ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 256.

²⁷ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 258.

²⁸ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 269-270.

²⁹ Higgins, “British Newspapers Today,” 270.

³⁰ Jean Seaton, *Politics and the Media: Harlots and Prerogatives at the Turn of the Millennium* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 104.

³¹ Stephen E. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1984), 668.

³² Engel, *Tickle the Public*, 273.

³³ Engel, *Tickle the Public*, 266.

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the Tories accelerated under MacKenzie's stewardship. In one notable incident, *The Sun* blasted Ken Livingstone, the Labour head of the Greater London Council, for supporting the removal of British troops from Northern Ireland. In a front-page editorial on October 13, 1981, *The Sun* called him "the most odious man in Britain." and "the apologist of the criminal, murderous activities of the IRA."³⁴ This was a direct predecessor of the "Dare Call It Treason" editorial and a powerful (if cynical) statement of the paper's identity: *The Sun* of the period was proud of its country, disdainful of the political class, and unafraid to take powerful people to task.

The Sun's rise is illustrative in several ways. First, it revealed the power of a coherent brand. The paper unabashedly embraced its reputation for scandal, sex, and anti-establishment conservatism to its great advantage. Second, it showed how deeply a paper's identity was tied to class and political affiliation. Reading *The Sun* became an affirmation of a nationalist, conservative, working-class identity. MacKenzie fondly described his average reader as, "The bloke you see in the pub—a right old fascist, wants to send the wogs back, buy his poxy council house, he's afraid of the unions, afraid of the Russians, hates the queers and weirdos and drug dealers."³⁵ This "bloke," no doubt, thought little of the snooty, waffling liberals at *The Guardian* or the BBC, so that was the attitude that made it to press.

More importantly, though, *The Sun* was not the only paper that faced these pressures. In such a crowded market, every paper had to create an identity that was distinct and that catered to readers' deepest prejudices. It is hardly surprising, then, that the press succumbed to the rhetoric of loyalty and betrayal when covering the Falklands; when the ever-growing competitive pressure from television is considered, it becomes even less so. Papers had to give their readers what they wanted. They were not just reporting the news, or even voicing political opinions – they were fighting for survival.

REJOICE: THATCHER FANS THE FLAMES

Margaret Thatcher had not planned to address the press on the night of April 25th, 1982. But when news of the British military's capture of St. George, a major outpost on the Falkland Islands, arrived, she strode out of Number 10 Downing Street's iconic front door and into a waiting gaggle of reporters and photographers. Accompanied by her Defense Secretary, John Nott, Thatcher announced that she had "some very good news, and I think you'd like to have it at once."³⁶ She stood silently, facial expression inscrutable, beside Nott as he read a short statement detailing the victory. But when Nott finished and the press pounced, peppering them both with questions, her eyes narrowed and her affect became

³⁴ Engel, *Tickle the Public*, 271.

³⁵ Higgins, "British Newspapers Today," 290.

³⁶ Margaret Thatcher. "Remarks on the recapture of South Georgia ("Rejoice")." Margaret Thatcher Foundation. April 25, 1982.

stern.³⁷ “Just rejoice at that news, and congratulate our forces and the marines,” she commanded.

Thatcher marched back towards Number 10, but the questions—“Are we going to declare war on Argentina, Mrs. Thatcher?”—continued to fly from the press corps. Surrounded by aides, and on the doorstep of the residence, she turned back. In an even more forceful tone, she repeated herself, condensing her message into a one-word edict: “Rejoice.”

This exchange is emblematic of Thatcher’s approach to the press, and to public relations in general, during the Falklands conflict. Reporters asking questions—and fairly straightforward ones, at that—were treated like impertinent pests. Journalists were expected to accept a sanitized statement at face value. Most importantly, they were to celebrate the news of a British victory, not report on it. To not “rejoice,” her tone implied, would be very improper indeed.

Thatcher, as the infamous *Sun* editorial correctly noted, “did not speak of treason;” but it certainly lurked beneath the surface of her rhetoric. In public statements and speeches, she laid out a particular vision of British values—one supposedly based on respect for sovereignty, self-determination, and international norms—and implied that any deviation from that vision was equivalent to a betrayal of the nation at large. Given her tone throughout the conflict, it is hardly surprising that the language of loyalty and betrayal reentered the national vocabulary.

Her speech to the House of Commons on April 3rd, 1982—during an emergency session a day after the Argentine invasion of the Islands—laid out several pillars of this vision.³⁸ First, she argued that the invasion was a direct affront to the universally recognized principle of sovereignty. “British sovereign territory,” she stated bluntly at the outset of her remarks, “has been invaded by a foreign power.” Though the “lawful” British administration had been “usurped,” the Falklands “remain[ed] British territory. No aggression and no invasion can alter that simple fact.” Thatcher blasted her Labour predecessor for allowing Argentina to establish a scientific monitoring station on Southern Thule, an uninhabited outlying island in the Falkland archipelago. When Edward Rowlands, a Labour MP, replied that a scientific outpost on “a piece of rock...which is completely uninhabited and which smells of large accumulations of penguin and other bird droppings” was not equivalent to a full-scale invasion, Thatcher snapped back: “We are talking about the sovereignty of British territory.”³⁹ To stand and do nothing, it followed, was to forsake one of the most essential tenets of the international order.

Thatcher used another central principle of international law, the right to self-determination, to justify her claim that the British must use any means necessary to reclaim the Islands. “We have always made it clear that [the Islanders’] wishes were paramount,” she

³⁷ See *Telegraph* video recording (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHwCbIEVmGo>).

³⁸ Margaret Thatcher, “HC S: [Falkland Islands],” Margaret Thatcher Foundation, April 3, 1982. Other transcripts are available in *Britain and the Falklands Crisis: a documentary record* and *In Her Own Words*.

³⁹ “Lord Rowlands,” *MPs, Lords, and Offices*, parliament.uk

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noted, “and that there would be no change in sovereignty without their consent and without the approval of the House.” Conveniently for Thatcher, the Falklanders wanted to remain British. They were “British in stock and tradition, and they wish to remain British in allegiance.” In reclaiming the Falklands, the British would stand for the right of the islanders – and peoples everywhere – to choose their own fate.

Thatcher also professed respect for international institutions and multilateralism. She noted that Britain “sought an emergency meeting of the Security Council” immediately after the Argentinians invaded. This was partially an act of political self-preservation: when opposition members laughed at the suggestion, she correctly reminded them that “they would have been the first to urge a meeting of the Security Council if [she] had not called one.” Nevertheless, she repeatedly emphasized the international support for Britain’s position. European Community members “condemned the invasion and urged withdrawal” and the NATO Council advocated for continued diplomacy. She also emphasized the British relationship with the United States, which had become especially close under the stewardship of Thatcher and her like-minded counterpart, President Ronald Reagan. She thanked Reagan and U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig “for their strenuous and persistent efforts on our behalf.”

While ignoring the imperial legacy that had allowed people of British stock to populate small islands in the South Atlantic, Thatcher articulated a protective paternalism that harkened back to the days of the Empire. In their unsuccessful defense of the Islands, a small group of soldiers “acted in the best traditions of the Royal Marines” – a tradition rooted in empire and the defense of imperial possessions. And when the last of the British forces left, “the people were in tears.” What the islanders wanted, it was implied, was for Mother Britain to swoop in and rescue them from Argentine rule. “Their way of life is British,” Thatcher concluded, and it was the government’s “duty” to ensure that it could continue.

Thatcher’s insistence that the British stance towards the Falklands was endorsed by international institutions and consistent with international norms indicates her efforts to legitimize an imperial legacy. Given the framing of her argument, to stand against her was to stand against the principle of sovereignty, the right to self-determination, and, most importantly, Britain’s proud tradition of defending its imperial realm; it is no surprise that so few were willing to do so.

Two days later, on April 5th, Thatcher conducted an interview with the BBC.⁴⁰ Though she was dealing with the popular media instead of the House of Commons, she repeated many of the same points. She brought up the sovereignty argument several times, claiming that her efforts to regain the Falklands were “for British sovereignty” and noting that the Argentine invasion did not alter Britain’s claims to the islands. She again applauded

⁴⁰ Margaret Thatcher, “TV Interview for BBC (Falklands),” Margaret Thatcher Foundation, April 5, 1982.

the islanders’ “allegiance to the crown,” arguing that this allegiance gave Britain a responsibility to protect them.

And, by the time of her interview, this pledge of protection had become much more tangible. A military task force—“the biggest fleet that’s ever sailed in peace time,” Thatcher noted—was being assembled. Though her government was still pursuing a negotiated solution, it sought to strengthen diplomacy with the threat of force. Thatcher coyly avoided stating how far Britain was willing to go to recapture the islands, but she warned that the task force was a way to “show [Britain’s] quiet professional determination to retake the Falklands.”

In citing this “quiet professional determination,” Thatcher aimed to connect her efforts with a particular vision of Britishness. Throughout her tenure, Thatcher stressed the revival of “Victorian values,” which she defined as thrift, hard work, quiet self-reliance, and national pride.⁴¹ ⁴² “Quiet professional determination” clearly fit into that mold. She further emphasized the point at the end of the interview, when she stated her hope of succeeding “in a very quiet, I hope, British way.” Throughout, she appealed to a shared British sentiment, using the universal “we” (“we all feel the same”) when articulating her own views. To be British was to support her position.

It is also worth noting that, contrary to *The Sun’s* allegations, the BBC interviewer was polite and levelheaded throughout the interview. His questions were straightforward. He used Thatcher’s title, Prime Minister, frequently. And even the most confrontational question—about whether Thatcher felt responsible for the crisis—was prefaced with an apologetic “I must ask you.” This was far from a contentious exchange.

The same points—sovereignty, self-determination, multilateralism, and a duty to defend British possessions—resurfaced in Thatcher’s remarks to the House of Commons on April 14th, with a few revealing additions.⁴³ By this time, the British fleet had set sail, and Thatcher’s rhetoric escalated accordingly. First, her emphasis on multilateralism became decidedly imperial in tone when she thanked members of the Commonwealth, including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, for their “sturdy and swift action” in support of the British cause. Second, she drew a stark contrast between British liberty and Argentinian tyranny, commending the Islanders for refusing to give up the freedoms that were “their birthright.” And finally, she connected the islanders’ liberty to the British tradition—by definition an imperial tradition—of “recognizing the right of others to determine their own destiny.” This direct reference to empire and the decolonization process linked the Government’s actions to Britain’s identity. In Thatcher’s telling, the defense of the Falklands became an affirmation of Britain’s historical mission.

By May 6th, the day before *The Sun* editorial ran, the conflict had escalated significantly. British forces had recaptured South Georgia and, three days earlier, sunk an

⁴¹ Margaret Thatcher and Iain Dale, *Margaret Thatcher: In Her Own Words* (London: Biteback, 2010), 156

⁴² Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (London: Penguin, 1996), 367.

⁴³ Margaret Thatcher, “HC S: [Falkland Islands],” Margaret Thatcher Foundation, April 14, 1982.

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Argentinian ship, the General Belgrano. Thatcher's rhetoric had also become sharper and, after a prodding question from Tory MP John Page, she directly mentioned the press in the House of Commons.⁴⁴ She was "concerned" that "the case for our British forces is not being put over fully and effectively" by the British media. Though she distanced herself from the debate by citing the objections of others "who watch and listen more than I do," she nevertheless argued that the media should not treat the British and the Argentines "as equals." This reflected her expectation that the media would (and should) act as partisan cheerleaders rather than objective reporters. And once again, she claimed to speak for the British polity at large, maintaining that the press' behavior "gives offense and causes great emotion among many people." Given this language, it is hardly surprising that *The Sun* leveled more direct charges of treason the next day.

In the wake of Britain's victory, Thatcher remained steadfast in her rhetoric, adding only a saccharine dose of triumphalism. In a speech to a Conservative rally in Cheltenham, she declared that Britain had silenced the naysayers, "the people who thought we could no longer do the great things which we once did. Those who believed that our decline was irreversible – that we could never again be what we were."⁴⁵ She went on to directly reference the Empire, proclaiming that those who thought "Britain was no longer the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world" had been proven wrong. "The lesson of the Falklands is that Britain has not changed and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history." The war had reversed the decades of "retreat," "rekindled" the national spirit and spawned a "newfound confidence." In victory, Britain had reconnected with its glorious past. It was, she announced, great once more.

BACKING OUR BOYS: THE JOURNALISTIC ENVIRONMENT

It would be easy to dismiss the bombast that accompanied the Falklands conflict – and the attitudes that underpinned it – as the tawdry excesses of tabloid journalism, a sad race to the bottom by politicians and editors seeking the patronage of Britain's disaffected working class. But the language of loyalty and betrayal employed by *The Sun* and the *Mirror* extended throughout the British press during the period, all the way up to the most venerable papers. This section will examine one mid-market tabloid, the *Daily Mail*, and two quality papers, *The Guardian* and *The Times*. Each embraced the prevailing rhetoric, albeit with a great deal more subtlety than did *The Sun* and *Mirror*.

The *Mail*, which had long supported the Tories, made its pro-intervention position clear from the start. Though recapturing the Falklands would be a "bloody, hazardous, and formidable enterprise," the paper argued in an April 5th editorial, "It can be done. It must be

⁴⁴ Margaret Thatcher. "House of Commons PQs," Margaret Thatcher Foundation, May 6, 1982.

⁴⁵ Margaret Thatcher, "Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham," Margaret Thatcher Foundation, July 3, 1982.

done.”⁴⁶ It openly supported Margaret Thatcher, claiming that she was “the one person who can...show ruthless determination” in retaking the islands. But the *Mail* had significantly less faith in Thatcher’s ministers: in an April 3rd article, it sharply criticized Foreign Secretary Carrington’s feeble diplomatic stance and Defense Secretary Nott’s weakening of the Royal Navy, blaming the two for inviting the Argentine invasion. But what first seem like accusations of incompetence were taken a step further; in the outraged tone of a spurned lover, the *Mail* declared, “Between them, these two ministers have discredited the traditional Tory claim to be the patriotic party, always ready to spring to the defense of Britain’s interests.”⁴⁷ By linking a willingness to defend the Falklands with patriotism, the *Mail* accused Nott and Carrington of lacking it. The editorial ends with an ominous allusion to World War Two – “We of all nations should understand that appeasing warmongering dictators never pays” – which, essentially, places all opponents of intervention on the side of Hitler. In the *Mail*’s view, the teams were clear even before the task force set sail.

This did not change as the conflict escalated. A May 12th editorial, titled “These Brave Men in our Thoughts” serves as a paean to military bravery and civilian loyalty. After listing the many frightening situations in which British soldiers found themselves during the conflict, the piece transitioned back to the home front. “The support is there. It is not for the most part raucous...but it is pervasive and it is deep.”⁴⁸ The rhetorical link between soldiers and civilians sought to establish noncombatants as partners in the task force’s mission, giving everyday Britons ownership over the military’s successes. Meanwhile, anyone who opposed the war or the justifications behind it was “an unrepresentative minority.” While the *Mail* did not call them traitors, it heavily implied that they were subversives, outside of the mainstream and distinct from most good, patriotic Britons.

Though the high-end papers wrote in longer paragraphs and more elegant prose, they recycled many of the same refrains. In an editorial published on April 5th, titled “We Are All Falklanders Now,” *The Times* framed the recapture of the Falklands as a matter of deepest principle. “The Falkland Islands are British territory, inhabited by British citizens,” it declared in the stern, authoritative voice of a paper of record, “They have been invaded by enemy forces. These forces must be removed.”⁴⁹ The piece circled back to the citizenship theme, stating that the islanders were “our people.” In *The Times*’ view, to oppose recapture was to abandon kith and kin. Like the *Mail*, *The Times* made heavy use of comparisons to World War Two to, in all likelihood, connect with Britain’s glorious imperial past. After the requisite abuse of the Argentinian government—“cheap gangsters” that had violated every standard of decency—the editorial appealed to the home front. “The Royal Navy must know it has the support of the British people.” Moreover, inquests into government incompetence, while necessary, could wait in light of the “urgent need to create unity for the task ahead.”

⁴⁶ “Has She Got the Stomach for It?,” *The Daily Mail* (1896-2004), April 05, 1982.

⁴⁷ “Lord Carrington’s Falklands Folly,” *The Daily Mail* (1896-2004), April 03, 1982.

⁴⁸ “These Brave Men in our Thoughts,” *The Daily Mail* (1896-2004), May 12, 1982.

⁴⁹ “We Are All Falklanders Now,” *The Times* (London) (1785-2008), April 05, 1982.

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Anyone who threatened this “unity,” *The Times* implied, would be a danger to the mission – and to the nation.

Later in the conflict, *The Times* echoed its belief in the righteousness of the British cause while intimating that anyone who compromised on principle was suspect. A May 12th editorial, “You Cannot Joke with War,” took British diplomats to task for granting too many concessions to the Argentinians in negotiations. British diplomacy, the piece declared, had “retreated further and further from the principled deep into the shallows of compromise and expediency.”⁵⁰ But the rush to compromise was described as not just strategic ineptitude, but also a betrayal of the troops and the nation: “If [soldiers] are to go into battle at all, they must go into it fortified by the clearly stated principles and objectives on which they were sent to sea, and on which they had the support of the nation behind them.” The piece then connected a betrayal of the military to a betrayal of civilians, declaring that the abandonment of principle “would be a cruel joke indeed, on our servicemen and citizens alike.” The link between the front line and the home front could not have been made more explicit; compromise, the editorial claimed, did a disservice to both.

It was sometimes what the papers did not write that drove the debate. A pamphlet published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom shortly after the conflict criticized the *Sunday Times* for holding a story that questioned the validity of Britain’s sovereignty claims.⁵¹ According to the pamphlet, reporter Christopher Hird presented an outline to his editors in May, including a 1936 memorandum from the Foreign Office that worried that the Falklands made the British look like “international bandits.”⁵² The story, however, was not published until after the conflict’s denouement. The paper’s fear of “demoralizing” the public was cited as the reason behind the delay. This phenomenon of hesitating to publish unfavorable news went beyond *The Times*, and reflected a reasoning expressed sarcastically by Raymond Williams in the *London Review of Books*: “When our boys are in danger, can we tolerate voices which doubt what they are doing?”⁵³

Unlike *The Times* and the *Mail*, *The Guardian* opposed military intervention in the Falklands; but it still participated in the same rhetorical conversation that the other papers did. While it challenged the Thatcher Government’s specific policies, it also sought to take ownership of the same form of patriotism that she championed. An editorial published on April 3rd, “Far Away, Forgotten, and Now Filched,” offset its criticism with an appeal to nationalist sentiment. The Argentinians, the piece claimed, “are in clear and flagrant breach of international law and guilty of wholly unprovoked military aggression;” British sovereignty claims were “unimpeachable in international law.”⁵⁴ This rhetoric was almost

⁵⁰ “You Cannot Joke With War.” *The Times* (London) (1785-2008), May 12, 1982.

⁵¹ Susan Greenberg and Graham Smith, *Rejoice!: Media Freedom and the Falklands* (London: Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 1983), 24.

⁵² Greenberg and Smith, *Rejoice*, 24.

⁵³ Raymond Williams, “Distance,” *London Review of Books*, June 17, 1982.

⁵⁴ “Far Away, Forgotten and Now Filched,” *The Guardian* (1959-2003), April 03, 1982.

indistinguishable from Thatcher's. Nevertheless, the criticism of her government was unsparring; *The Guardian* decried government "concealment" and (like the *Mail*) argued that Carrington and Nott should have seen the Argentinian invasion coming. The editorial referenced another episode of imperial decline, noting that Parliament's emergency session was its "first meeting on a Saturday since Suez." The implication of this line was clear: the Falklands crisis was just another in a long line of post-imperial catastrophes caused by ministerial incompetence.

The Guardian dramatically increased its rhetoric as the crisis escalated. On April 5th, in an editorial titled "The Fleet Prepares, the Wait Begins," it guessed at the motives behind Thatcher's bellicose response. "Here was the governing party, the party of empire and proud strength, caught in an extremity of feebleness."⁵⁵ The implication that Thatcher's push towards military intervention was for the sake of partisan politics rather than concern for the national interest was strikingly clear, and expressed repeatedly throughout the piece: "The Foreign Office and Ministry of Defense and Number Ten had no friends and few shreds of justification amidst such shambles...so the fleet prepares." The editorial pointedly called the task force "her" fleet, as if it were Thatcher's personal toy to be deployed for political gain. But, again, *The Guardian* also sought to claim the mantle of patriotism: it called Argentina a "heinous regime" upon which it wished nothing but ill. Even as it fiercely criticized the government, the paper still felt the need to hedge.

A few weeks later, on May 17th, "The Record They Choose to Forget" castigated Thatcher and her ministers for paying more attention to a Conservative Party conference than the negotiations with Argentina. "Desks in London were left for lengthy periods," *The Guardian* scolded;⁵⁶ "There is serious question about the Cabinet's good negotiating faith." This was not a direct accusation of treason, but it certainly came close; in putting political interests above the national interest, the paper argued, Thatcher's government was playing a dangerous game.

Several trends are evident in the press coverage of the war. First, papers from across the spectrum of quality and political affiliation embraced a language of loyalty and betrayal. Second, many pieces put the Falklands crisis in conversation with other imperial (or post-imperial) moments, such as World War Two or the Suez Crisis. And third, the papers—with perhaps the exception of *The Guardian*—sought to establish some kind of connection between soldiers and civilians, whereby the bravery on display in the South Atlantic operated symbiotically with the steadfast support of the average Briton. To be British was to be loyal, and to be loyal was to be brave. The following section will explore this third dynamic in greater detail.

⁵⁵ "The Fleet Prepares, the Wait Begins," *The Guardian* (1959-2003), April 05, 1982.

⁵⁶ "The Record they Choose to Forget," *The Guardian* (1959-2003), May 17, 1982.

“GREAT AGAIN”: DECLINE, NOSTALGIA, AND COLLECTIVE HEROISM

“What happens when the cheering dies?” *The Guardian*, in an editorial published two days after Britain’s victory, asked its readers.⁵⁷ When it did, the piece claimed, there would be inquests and commissions and demands to know why the Argentines had been able to invade in the first place, how Thatcher could have averted war, and what was to become of the Falklands now that they were back in British hands. For the moment, though, pride would win out: “Pride in the professionalism of our troops. Pride that Britain can still kick back hard at those who kick us. Pride in the buoyant headlines and feeling of adventure.” Even the serious, liberal, anti-war *Guardian* thought the British deserved their moment in the sun.

It is worth revisiting the last part of that quotation, though. “*Pride in the buoyant headlines and feeling of adventure.*” Here, *The Guardian* articulated what this paper has (so far) danced around. For many British civilians, war was an *adventure*, an adventure that they shared with the soldiers storming distant islands. By reading the *Mirror* or *The Times*, anyone was able to partake in the heroism of war—a safe distance away, of course, from the real bloodshed and heartbreak that war inevitably involves. This sense of shared pride was exploited by competitive newspapers desperate for readers, egged on by Margaret Thatcher’s rhetoric, and both reflected and reinforced by the words that made it to press.

By all accounts, Britons in 1982 were fairly desperate for adventure, or even something to be proud of. The history of Britain’s imperial decline is far too long to explore in any depth here, but it was—and still is—fairly uncontroversial that the preceding half-century had not been kind. After the post-WWII reality of decolonization had set in, successive Prime Ministers from Macmillan to Wilson tried various schemes, from positioning Britain as a broker between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to bolstering the Commonwealth, to maintain Britain’s global relevance.⁵⁸ But these arrangements, “often founded ultimately upon the illusion of strength and not the reality,” tended to fail.⁵⁹ British influence was greatly diminished, and even once-loyal former colonies, like Australia and New Zealand, began to drift away.⁶⁰ Britain, realizing that the Commonwealth’s days were numbered, abandoned its “East of Suez” commitments and entered into the European Economic Community.⁶¹ This was, for the most part, embraced by Labour and Conservative governments alike.⁶² To some, it felt like succumbing to mediocrity.

⁵⁷ “What Happens When the Cheering Dies?,” *The Guardian* (1959–2003), June 16, 1982.

⁵⁸ John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: the Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin, 2012), 359, 365.

⁵⁹ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 365, 366.

⁶⁰ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 375.

⁶¹ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 380.

⁶² Miles Kalher, *Decolonization in Britain and France: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 383.

After a depressing few decades, Thatcher built her reputation around the repudiation of the bipartisan “MacMillan consensus” of controlled decline.⁶³ She led a new faction of Conservatives that thought the Tories should more stridently defend Britain’s imperial legacy. Combining laissez-faire economics with “the nationalism of ‘kith and kin,’” this ideology rose to prominence after her election in 1979.⁶⁴ By the end of the Falklands War, she had “assumed the role of a Churchillian war leader.”⁶⁵ The victory “contrasted starkly with [Britain’s] 1970s image of indecision and decline.”⁶⁶ By positioning herself as the antidote to decades of post-imperial malaise, Thatcher sailed to reelection.

Britain’s weariness regarding post-imperial decline was compounded by a resurgence of imperial nostalgia. This was best illustrated by the rise of the “heritage industry:” art and tourism trafficking in fond memories of empire.⁶⁷ Throughout the 1980s, documentaries, museum displays, feature films and books that showed the “good works, or at least the good intentions, of Britons most directly involved [in the Empire]—and, by extension, of the nation as a whole” were a dominant element of mainstream culture.⁶⁸ This was the result of an obvious bias in collective memory: those ashamed of their involvement in the Empire were far less likely to speak about it publicly; as a result, those who wrote books or starred in documentaries were predisposed to remember their imperial days fondly.⁶⁹ M.M. Kaye, a prominent author, embodied this phenomenon. She declared the British Raj a “golden age,” and her books, which treated the Empire glowingly, were a massive commercial success.⁷⁰ She was one of many who capitalized on this cultural trend. The result was a sort of varnished glory, a sanitized popular history in which the imperial past was seen through decidedly rose-tinted glasses.

Against this backdrop of lingering national malaise and resurgent imperial nostalgia, the Falklands War’s promise of collective heroism and adventure was a powerful inebriant. But it was also problematic in two important ways. First, it failed to bridge a fundamental disconnect between the front line and the home front. Some, at least among the intelligentsia, recognized this at the time. In an essay published in the *London Review of Books*, in June 1982, Raymond Williams decried the “culture of distance” that pervaded media coverage of the war.⁷¹ As Britons watched and read about a conflict unfolding thousands of miles away, “the difference between exercise and action, rehearsal and act” had

⁶³ Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France*, 376.

⁶⁴ Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France*, 376.

⁶⁵ David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1991), 260.

⁶⁶ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 261.

⁶⁷ Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, 386.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 266, 268.

⁶⁹ Buettner, *Empire Families*, 265.

⁷⁰ Buettner, *Empire Families*, 366.

⁷¹ Williams, “Distance.”

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been blurred. Because they were not physically on the battlefield, civilians could not possibly discern what was real and what was not. To counteract that, Williams claimed, “the means and symbols of old imperialist actions” were used to whip up the populace, to turn “the cynical culture of late capitalism, which had used a national flag for underwear or for carrier bags...[into] an honorific fetishism.”

Williams’ piece exposed a key tension. Though Britons were being fed—by the government and the press—a conception of shared heroism rooted in imperial legacy, they did not have the tools to effectively assess whether the heroism, or the legacy, were real in any meaningful sense. This was partially a result of the physical distance between Britain and the Falklands, but the imperial nostalgia movement was also to blame. The press, politicians, and heritage industry profiteers all took advantage of those factors to push their vision of the war and what it meant in the broader arc of British history.

The other, related problem with the idea of shared heroism is that it is often based on manipulation and falsehood. The allure of the Falklands was its offer of “heroic stances” to soldiers and civilians alike.⁷² But these stances were largely a collective fiction. This was made painfully clear shortly after the War drew to an end, when *The Sun* published an interview with Marcia McKay, whose husband had died in the fighting. This was probably quite surprising to Mrs. McKay, as she had never spoken to the paper. It was later revealed that the interview was a fake, comprised of quotes from secretaries in *The Sun*’s office “who were asked to imagine how they would feel” if they had lost a husband in the conflict.⁷³ Murdoch, who had endorsed *The Sun*’s editorial line throughout the War, was reportedly livid, claiming that the incident threatened the paper’s claim to depict the heroism of British soldiers in the Falklands.⁷⁴ *The Sun* issued a rare apology.

There is no better metaphor for the press coverage of the period, and the cultural currents that underpinned it. The interview, like the press at large, like Thatcher, and like the heritage industry, exploited and fed deep feelings of national identity. But those feelings were ultimately an elaborate fan-fiction, based on spurious recollections of empire, honed in decades of depressing decline, and tested by a conflict over tiny islands in the South Atlantic.

False or not, it was a powerful narrative. Paul Milican, a reader who replied to Williams in the pages of the *London Review of Books*, summed it up nicely. The public, he wrote:

Sought any way of rediscovering the heroism it believed it had once possessed and had been told for so long it would regain. To applaud the heroism of others is to be in ourselves heroic; to thrill to the daring tasks and wondrous precision of machinery allows us to forget our declining national significance, which in turn has been so

⁷² Williams, “Distance.”

⁷³ Margaret Jones, “Murdoch Newspaper Made Up Interview,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 9, 1983.

⁷⁴ Engel, *Tickle the Public*, 278.

often and so needlessly equated with our own personal adequacy.⁷⁵

He was right; in the midst of the decade's economic turmoil, Cold War uncertainty, and less publicized British withdrawals from Rhodesia and Hong Kong, the Falklands victory allowed the public to temporarily bask in unearned glory.⁷⁶ The reasoned pleas of Mr. Milican were no match for a long-building tide of national feeling. The War made Britain forget, and that was what mattered.

CONCLUSION: PICKING SIDES

The drumbeat of war has a remarkably distinct sound, consistent across continents and decades. On November 14th, 2001, two months after the September 11th attacks and one month after the U.K. and U.S. launched Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, *The Sun* published an editorial titled "Shame of the Traitors."⁷⁷ The similarities with the "Dare Call it Treason" piece are almost comically striking. It criticized the same culprits—the *Mirror*, *The Guardian* and the BBC—and used nearly identical language. Liberal media outlets, *The Sun* charged, "pumped out anti-war propaganda as if they were the handmaidens of Osama bin Laden." More broadly, the piece argued that leftists and anti-war types were uniformly suspect: "Many on the Left have actively assisted sworn enemies of this country," the paper screeched; "The wobblers should hang their heads in shame." Kelvin MacKenzie would have approved.

To be sure, this paper has explored a very specific historical moment—a span of just a few months. In that moment, the competitive nature of the British press and Margaret Thatcher's rhetoric created a language of loyalty and betrayal. This vocabulary pervaded the British press, from the most august papers to the crudest tabloids. And, most importantly, it reflected and reinforced a culture of shared heroism, rooted in post-colonial weariness and rekindled imperial nostalgia, wherein ordinary citizens could claim ownership of soldiers' bravery and the imperial tradition that it represented. This shared heroism, despite its flaws, became an incredibly powerful cultural force.

That moment has, in some respects, passed. David Cameron, while a Conservative, is no Margaret Thatcher. Further, it is hard to imagine even the most deluded Britons expecting a return to imperial glory when the U.S., arguably Britain's successor, faces challenges to its global hegemony. But the press, under constant pressure from the Internet, is more competitive than ever. More fundamentally, Britain still struggles with many of the same problems that it faced in 1982. How should it remember the Empire? What is its proper role in the world? These are questions that Britain's political class has largely shied away from answering. *The Sun's* 2001 editorial hints that the urge to embrace the language of

⁷⁵ Paul Milican, letter in response to Williams, "Distance."

⁷⁶ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 261, 264.

⁷⁷ "Shame of the Traitors," *The Sun*, November 14, 2001.

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treason, of thinly veiled imperial ambition, of brave British soldiers and decent British civilians versus the world, remains strong. But if Britain is to forge a coherent vision for the future, it must reject the false promise of shared heroism and engage in an honest reckoning with its imperial past.

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A CAMP DIVIDED

PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN REACTIONS TO THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

Unwavering, unconditional support for Israel has become one of the great mainstays of American society, common to Democrats and Republicans alike. But it was not always so. In his essay, Matthew Koo, UNC-Chapel Hill '15, examines the broad spectrum of responses among Protestant Christians to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. He identifies three typologies: “hot” supporters, who allotted Israel a divinely-ordained role in Christian sacred history; “cold” skeptics, who hoped to see the conversion of the Jews; and “lukewarm” moderates, who deplored the violence of both Israelis and Arabs. Koo’s analysis complicates the accepted image of American-Israeli relations and provides much needed nuances in the history of a deeply contentious region.

By Matthew Koo, UNC-Chapel Hill '15
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Professor Michael Morgan
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INTRODUCTION

“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:16, KJV)

Looking back, we shall see the Iraq war and its catastrophic consequences as not the beginning of a new democratic age in the Middle East but rather as the end of an era that began in the wake of the 1967 war...¹

Weighing in on the debate about the Israel Lobby, historian Tony Judt reckons that pro-Israel U.S. policies from the 1967 Six Day War onwards to the aftermath of the Second Persian Gulf War were based on two demands: “cold-war strategic calculations and... domestic sensitivity to the memory of the Holocaust.”² America's unwavering support for Israel over the course of this time period has long been a subject of scholarly controversy. Political scientists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt postulated that the Israel Lobby's clout sustained this special relationship between the two countries.³ The Lobby, consisting of Jewish Americans and Christian Zionists, sought to convince Americans that the U.S. and Israel share common interests and goals.⁴

Such characterizations of U.S. foreign policy, however, obfuscate historical realities and may create a falsely inflated picture of the leverage possessed by Protestant Christians within the Israel Lobby. Thus, this paper seeks to problematize the existing discourse about one component of the Israel Lobby, Christian Zionists, by specifically considering Christian support, or lack thereof, for Israel during the 1970s in general and during the Yom Kippur War (October 6-25, 1973) in particular. The Yom Kippur War was chosen as the focus of this article for two reasons. In contrast to times of relative stability, the extent of Christians' pro-Israel sentiment would likely be easier to discern within this urgent and uncertain crisis situation. The war created much consternation in the White House, as Israel almost resorted to nuclear weapons to stem its losses after a surprise Arab attack. Second, the 1970s was the formative period for the Religious Right, coming before its entrenchment as a staple in American domestic politics during the 1980s. As a result of these two factors, the Yom Kippur War forms a lens through which the nature of Christian opinion towards Israel can be focused.

¹ Tony Judt, “A Lobby, Not a Conspiracy,” *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/19/opinion/19judt.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ei=5087&en=2706f771ea2e35aa&ex=1145592000.

² Judt, “A Lobby.”

³ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 14.

⁴ Christian Zionists are evangelicals who view the Jews as God's chosen people and see return to Palestine and the establishment of the nation-state of Israel as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

This paper argues that instead of a consistent and open show of support for Israel by a monolithic Christian bloc, Christian reactions to the Yom Kippur War were far more complicated and varied. These responses fell into three broad categories: first, Christians who were outwardly fervent in their support; second, others who, although not inherently anti-Semitic, were overtly unsupportive; and finally, those Christians who were ambivalent about the war. This diversity of Christian responses to the Yom Kippur War registers as a blip in the dominant narrative, which posits an upward trend of American support for Israel after the 1967 Six Day War. The 1970s are often depicted as the preparation ground for the increased support for Israel in the following decade. After introducing these three different groups and the particular motivations for their reaction, this paper will offer general explanations for the trifurcation of the Christian bloc by examining the broader domestic and international context, before concluding with some directions for future research.

For this paper's purposes, 'Christians' are defined as Protestants from mainline and evangelical traditions. Mainline Christians tend to be more liberal in their outlook, collaborating and associating with each other in the National Council of Churches, whereas evangelical Christians are a broad church of relatively conservative groups, such as Fundamentalists and Pentecostals.⁵ One might question whether a broad examination of different denominations fundamentally rigs the argument, since the very existence of denominations is a result of theological differences. However, there are two reasons for this broad examination of American Christendom. First, the labels of "conservative" and "liberal" exist on a continuum, with conservative member churches within mainline denominations and liberal churches within the evangelical camp. Although it might be intuitive to just focus on the conservative element (i.e. evangelicals) since they would be the ones most likely to be concerned with Israel, the arbitrary nature of such categories requires a broader examination. Second, fully addressing the question of the Christian Zionists' influence in the Israel Lobby requires an examination of their appeal to Christians who fall outside their camp, not just to those who share their beliefs.

To place this paper's investigation of American Christians' reactions in context, most scholarship concerning American Christians' views of Israel in the lead-up to the Religious Right's entrenchment in domestic politics in the 1980s paints these perceptions as increasingly supportive of Israel's right to exist. Scholars such as Yaakov Ariel and Andrew Preston recognize the 1967 Six Day War as the watershed event in this timeline, one which irrevocably altered Christian sentiment towards Israel as Jerusalem finally came under the control of the 'chosen people.'⁶ Christian opinion towards Israel in the latter half of the 1970s

⁵ According to George Marsden, evangelicals are characterized by their common allegiance to "basic beliefs of the old nineteenth-century evangelical consensus" such as scripture's authority, inerrancy and sufficiency, substitutionary atonement and the need for progressive sanctification and evangelism." See George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1991), 4-5.

⁶ Yaakov S. Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000*, Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 198. R. Scott Appleby,

has also received extensive treatment from scholars.⁷ If the Six Day War is the highlight of the scholarly drama, however, the Yom Kippur War is a dismal footnote with scant study devoted to Christian reactions – and the events of 1973 are either glossed over or referred to as reinforcing pro-Israel sentiments.⁸

Of all the scholars working on this particular period, Caitlin Carenen has provided the most extensive survey of Christian-Israeli relations during the 1970s. However, the primary sources used to support her claims (e.g. newspapers, periodicals, etc) tend not to be as encompassing of general Christian reactions as those consulted for other sections of her argument. For example, especially in researching the Yom Kippur War, her most widely used source is the liberal Christian publication, *Christian Century*.⁹ Professor of Religious Studies Yaakov Ariel, on the other hand, has extensively documented Evangelical-Jewish relations in his recent book, *An Unusual Relationship*, exploring the religious-cultural and political nuances of the relationship during the modern era. Ariel's work, however, is limited because of its sole focus on conservative denominations to the exclusion of mainline denominations. Furthermore, Ariel does not discuss American evangelical reactions to the Yom Kippur War but focuses instead on developments in Israel.¹⁰ Only two 1974 reports funded by the American Jewish Committee focus on early Christian reactions to the Yom Kippur War.¹¹ Given their biased provenance and short-term scope, a more objective and longer-term consideration of Christian reactions is necessary. In a bid to remedy this existing lacuna and provide a more nuanced appreciation of American-Christian reactions to the Yom Kippur War, this paper investigates reports of the American Jewish Committee, Christian periodicals and books, and Jewish-American and secular newspapers. By highlighting the complexities of Christian support for Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, this paper

“The Measure of a Fundamentalist Leader,” in *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, ed. R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 410.

⁷ Gerald R. McDermott, “Evangelicals and Israel,” in *Uneasy Allies?: Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, ed. Nancy Isserman, Byron Johnson, and Alan Mittleman (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 136. Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 576. Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel’s Best Friend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 197-98. Caitlin Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 168-75.

⁸ Yaakov S. Ariel, “A Christian Fundamentalist Vision of the Middle East: Jan Willem Van Der Hoeven and the International Christian Embassy,” in *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, ed. R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 367. Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*, 562. Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*, America in the World (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 247-58.

⁹ Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace*, 238-42.

¹⁰ Yaakov S. Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*, The Goldstein-Goren Series in American Jewish History (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 35-36, 177, 201.

¹¹ “Christians in Israel and the Yom Kippur War,” (Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, 1974). Judith Hershcopf Banki, “Christian Responses to the Yom Kippur War: Implications for Christian-Jewish Relations,” (American Jewish Committee, 1974).

endeavors to push back against simplistic notions of Christian theological rigidity and solidarity, which are too often assumed in larger debates about the Israel Lobby's power.

“HOT”: CHRISTIAN SUPPORT

“I believe that the people of Israel are the chosen people of God.” (Jerry Falwell)

The 1973 Yom Kippur War did evoke pro-Israel reactions from certain American Christians. The responses of most pro-Israel Christians reflected their foundational beliefs, specifically their theological commitment to Premillennial Dispensationalism, a doctrine of Christian eschatology ('study of the end things').. Essentially, Premillennialism predicted the literal, physical return of Christ to establish a millennial kingdom. As a form of Premillennialism, Premillennial Dispensationalism understood God to have dealt differently with humans during different periods of history (dispensations), thereby creating a distinction between the nation-state of Israel and the Christian church.¹² Due to this distinction, God's favor upon the nation-state of Israel was seen to be in operation and binding. These dispensationalists were therefore inclined to privilege the Jews as God's chosen people while emphasizing Israel's important role in the “end time.” In sum, for some Christians, doctrinal beliefs featured prominently in their support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War.

Generally, though not exclusively, pro-Israel responses also originated from the fundamentalist and evangelical camps.¹⁴ Believing they possessed an accurate script of what would unfold, evangelicals watched developments in the Middle East keenly, as though it were a divine drama.¹⁵ Evidence of such beliefs is apparent from articles in *Christianity Today* and *Pentecostal Evangel*. These articles not only showcase evangelical support for Israel, but also how these evangelicals viewed the Yom Kippur War through a Dispensationalist lens. While the war still raged, an article in *Christianity Today* provided pro-Israel commentary from prominent Dispensationalist theologians such as John Walvoord, Hal Lindsey, and Calvary Chapel founder Chuck Smith. Both Walvoord and Lindsey believed that God had everything under control. Theologian Walvoord calmly pronounced with prophetic airs that “Israel will never be destroyed,” and his fellow Dallas Seminary classmate Lindsey echoed

¹² The widespread acceptance of Dispensationalist thought among Christians was, however, complicated, as there were different variants of the doctrinal system that developed over time. See Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 19-23.

¹⁴ Fundamentalists are a sub-category of evangelicals. The militancy of one's beliefs is the key distinction between fundamentalists and evangelicals. Marsden opines that a “...fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something.” See Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 1.

¹⁵ This belief is exemplified by Hal Lindsey's insistence on the back of his book cover that “[t]his book is more up-to-date than tomorrow's newspaper!” See Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming: “A Prophetic Odyssey”* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975).

him, describing possible flashpoints which could possibly “ignite the last war.”¹⁶ When the war broke out, a good number of Smith's followers who were touring Israel reckoned that “the return of Christ was near” and decided to remain to “meet him there.”¹⁷ As staunch believers in Israel's end time role, the outbreak of hostilities in 1973 excited these evangelical Christians—pro-Israel and millenarian sentiments were inextricably entwined.

The specificity of Lindsey and Walvoord's predictions and their unshakeable confidence in Israel's invincibility were, however, not universal among the pro-Israel Christians during the Yom Kippur War. Their views contrast starkly with the more vague predictions of the popular Pentecostal radio-evangelist C. M. Ward, who also subscribed to Dispensationalism. Ward was not inclined to engage in specific analysis and prophetic pronouncements on what would ensue in the Yom Kippur War. Though his reaction was pro-Israel, Ward focused only on the spiritual dimensions and implications of the conflict. In the aftermath of the war, Ward gave thanks for the miracle wrought during the conflict. Reflecting on his previous trip to Israel in November 1973, Ward noted the positive change in Israel's spiritual climate right after the war. He rejoiced that erstwhile apathetic Jews had now become more receptive to the claims of Christianity. Viewing America as a Christian nation, Ward likened American wartime assistance for Israel to a practical demonstration of faith. As “a great nation [America] in the world, [coming] down to help a little nation [Israel],” America, Ward reckoned, would receive God's blessing for aiding Israel.¹⁸ Ward's support for Israel was also interlaced with nationalistic sentiment. In his support for Israel, Ward not only spiritualised the conflict but also articulated the founding myth of America as a Christian nation and the idea of American exceptionalism: Israel was the chosen nation, but America was the chosen instrument, since it was “America alone [who] came to her [Israel's] aid in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.”¹⁹ While the Christian meta-narrative of America's founding as a Christian nation is heavily contested, it arguably influenced Christian opinions of Israel. Particularly in the minds of American Christians, nationalism and Christianity were, to a degree, entwined.²⁰ To conservatives, the secular and the spiritual sphere, the nation-state and the international community, and the community and the individual conscience were all held in dialectical tension. This spiritualized nationalism gave further impetus to the conservative Christian support for Israel.

Though they all shared a pro-Israel stance because of their Dispensationalism, Ward also differed from Walvoord and Lindsey in that he recognized the complex realities on the

¹⁶ “Middle East: Talk of the End,” *Christianity Today*, October 26 1973.

¹⁷ “Middle East,”

¹⁸ In fact, during the 1970s, patriotic sentiments were on the rise among conservatives. See, Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, 557. An example of American Christian nationalism would be Ward's article in *Pentecostal Evangel*. See, C. M. Ward, “Miracle in the Golan Heights,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 1 1974.

¹⁹ Ward, “Miracle in the Golan Heights.”

²⁰ For example, see John R. Rice, “God Bless America!,” *Sword of the Lord*, June 5 1970. Ward, “Miracle in the Golan Heights.”

ground and empathized with them. Walvoord and Lindsey stuck to their prophetic script and emphasized the importance of Israel's 'rightful' borders while simultaneously disparaging the Arab nations for their antagonism towards Israel.²¹ Ward, on the other hand, avoided making such declarations. He urged his readers to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” and readily pointed out the costs of war to the population of Israel, even asserting that “Israel ha[d] most to lose if a fifth Mideast war erupt[ed].”²² Ward's consideration of the costs of conflict clashed with his support of Israel; his constant refrain throughout the 1970s was that the Middle East quandary required a spiritual solution – God.²³

Indeed, in the turmoil of the 1970s, Dispensationalist thought even provided a spiritual roadmap for other Christians outside the evangelical tradition. Cold War fears of nuclear annihilation commingled with fascination about Armageddon. It would not be far-fetched to argue that some mainline denomination Christians, seeking to navigate the chaos, were also caught up in the spirit of the age. The extensive reach of Dispensationalism is evident with Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* being described by the *New York Times* as “the best-selling nonfiction book of the 1970s.”²⁴ The enthusiastic reception of Lindsey's book among American Christians ushered in a host of Dispensationalists, who capitalized on the popular demand for prophecy. The catalytic effect of new media technology, such as Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN, 1973) and Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN, 1961), helped broadcast Dispensationalism to the furthest ends of the country. Arguably, in America, the zeitgeist of nuclear millenarianism affected liberal Christians as well.

An article in the *American Israelite*, a Jewish-American newspaper, sheds further light on the reactions of those mainline Christians who supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War. The report recorded the thoughts of an outspoken supporter of Israel, Reverend Gerald Strober, who commended the “church councils in Long Island, Massachusetts, Seattle and Shreveport and ... ecumenical groups” for their support of Israel during October of 1973.²⁵ In another report by the American Jewish Council, Reverend Ronald Whitney issued a clarion call to New England's Christian clergymen, declaring that, “if interfaith dialogue and the ecumenical spirit are ever to have any meaning, [they] cannot remain silent in this time of crisis and emergency for Israel.”²⁶ Examining Whitney's statement in light of Strober's offers another possible explanation for mainline Christian support for Israel during the war: instead of resulting from Dispensationalism *per se*, this support derived from liberals'

²¹ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 72-74. *The 1980's, Countdown to Armageddon* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 41-45. John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 25-26.

²² C. M. Ward, “Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 26 1975.

²³ “Arab-Israeli Reconciliation Ahead?,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 27 1970; “Israel's Preemptive Strike Policy,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 26 1973.

²⁴ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 191.

²⁵ “Pastor Assails National Council of Churches' Silence on the Arab Aggression against Israel,” *The American Israelite*, November 8 1973.

²⁶ Banki, “Christian Responses to the Yom Kippur War,” 33.

commitment to tolerance and ecumenical unity among the churches. The annihilation of Israel in 1973 would have constituted a setback to their cause. This assertion gains currency when corroborated with another Jewish-American newspaper article in which the Methodist clergyman Dr. William Watters warned that ecumenical, inter-religious efforts would come to naught if there was no outward show of Christian support to Israel during their travail.²⁷ By mocking existing ecumenical efforts as "...occurring during the safety and quiet of the lecture hall and dialogue table," Watters hoped to spur his fellow ministers to outwardly express support for Israel's right to exist.²⁸

Therefore, in response to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, certain groups of conservatives (i.e. Dispensationalists) and liberals found common cause in supporting Israel's right to exist and denouncing the aggression of Arab countries. While there were differences between conservative and liberal pro-Israel responses and even within these two camps themselves, both viewed the state of Israel as instrumental: a means to an end, instead of an end in itself. On the one hand, for Dispensationalists, the Jews were a part of their grand eschatological plan. On the other hand, pro-Israel liberals viewed Israel's existence as a means to the end of greater interfaith, ecumenical dialogue. For this latter group, instead of constituting a crucial element in trans-historical prophecy, Israel's destruction would simply constitute a setback to a more everyday commitment to ecumenicity and tolerance.

Returning to the broader issue of American Christianity's monolithic nature, this section's analysis finds the common characterization as unrepresentative of historical realities. Determining the precise denominational affiliations of pro-Israel Christians is difficult and probably should not be delineated due to the diversity within this category. Assumptions that Christians supported Israel solely as a result of their theological beliefs are likewise problematic because of the complex and multi-faceted nature of these reactions.

"COLD": CHRISTIAN NON-SUPPORT

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:" (Romans 9:6, KJV)

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people?" (Romans 11:1, KJV)

"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off..." (Romans 11:20, KJV)

On 6 December 1973, an article in the *Jewish Advocate* lamented the negative responses towards Israel's struggle as outlined in the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) report.²⁹ In view of such negativity, the ADL resolved to raise awareness among Christians of

²⁷ Pinchas Lapide, "Jews Again Hear Loud, Almost Unbroken Christian Silence in Israel's Hour of Peril," *The American Israelite*, December 6 1973.

²⁸ Lapide, "Christian Silence."

²⁹ Though seemingly salient to a discussion of American Christian views on the Yom Kippur War, the ADL's report was unfortunately only alluded to and attempts to locate the exact report have not succeeded. At the point of writing, the ADL has not responded to the writer's request for their report from the early 1970s.

“the linkage between Jews, Judaism and the Land of Israel.”³⁰ As suggested by the ADL's findings, the presence of Christians who were not supportive of Israel undermines the narrative of monolithic Christian backing. While not an outright anti-Semitic denouncement of Israel, their theologically founded non-support dissociated the nation-state of Israel from the biblical narrative.

A crucial example of this category is provided by Reformed denominations, which, despite being evangelical in orientation, generally demonstrated non-support towards Israel during the Yom Kippur War.³¹ The common thread that Reformed denominations share is their subscription to a Calvinist interpretive framework of the Bible called Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology views the Christian church as the spiritual forbear of the Old Testament Israel and therefore makes no distinction between the nation-state Israel and the Christian church today. As an alternative framework to Dispensationalism, Covenant Theology does not ascribe special significance to the nation-state Israel. The face of Reformed Christianity in the 1970s, Francis Schaeffer, aptly exemplifies this. He hardly discussed the topic of Israel in his widely distributed writings.³² Instead, Schaeffer's focus was more religious-cultural—he was primarily concerned with combating the tides of secularism and modernism. He did not engage in geo-political forecasting or political lobbying. Indeed, insofar as Reformed denominations viewed the events of 1973 as irrelevant to their theological framework, most of them were decidedly non-supportive by refusing to take sides.

Another example of non-support came surprisingly, and in a way that further illustrates the diversity of views within this group, from within the Dispensationalist camp itself, in the ministry of a prominent Baptist preacher, Dr. John R. Rice. Rice founded an influential newspaper, *The Sword of the Lord* (hereafter *SOTL*), which, by 1974, had a circulation exceeding 300,000.³³ As the editor, Rice was wont to comment on the pressing, even non-spiritual, issues of the day. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, issues in the *SOTL*

³⁰ “Study Finds Much Negative Response to Israel Struggle,” *Jewish Advocate*, December 6 1973.

³¹ Reformed denominations refer to denominations such as the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC), and Protestant Reformed Church (PRC). Though some Baptist churches hold to similar Reformed convictions as the above denominations, labelling them as a denomination is inappropriate given their small numbers and independent polity.

³² Francis A. Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, ed. C. Everett Koop (Old Tappan, N.J.: F. H. Revell Co., 1979). *No Final Conflict: The Bible without Error in All That It Affirms* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975). *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975). *No Little People; Sixteen Sermons for the Twentieth Century* (Downers Grove, Ill., InterVarsity Press, 1974). *Back to Freedom and Dignity*, L’abri Pamphlets (Downers Grove, Ill., Inter-Varsity Press, 1972). *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downers Grove, Ill., Inter-Varsity Press, 1970); *Pollution and the Death of Man; the Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, Ill., Tyndale House Publishers, 1970).

³³ Viola Walden, *John R. Rice: The Captain of Our Team* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1990), 527.

featured Rice's acerbic denunciations of developments in the spiritual (e.g. Bible denying modernism), domestic (e.g. New Deal socialism) and international (e.g. Russian communism) realms.³⁴

Intriguingly, despite Rice's subscription to Dispensationalist thought, no reaction to the 1973 Yom Kippur War registered in the weekly *SOTL*. The absence of any commentary on the crisis merits pause, since Rice had previously written on the Middle East after the 1967 Six Day War. In light of his articles before and after the crisis, Rice's silence can be understood to have arisen from his unsupportive stance and disillusionment with developments in the Middle East. Differing from pro-Israel Dispensationalists, Rice had an alternative perspective on what constituted the 'true Israel.' He rejected the compatibility of Christianity and Zionism, criticizing the latter as secular Jewish nationalism. As long as the Jews remained unconverted, they were "...not Israel in the spiritual sense."³⁵ Therefore, from an eschatological perspective, developments in the modern Middle East were insignificant to Rice.

Rice adhered to his non-supportive position throughout his ministry; arguably, he did not broach the topic of the 1973 war because he felt no need to fan the flames of speculative Dispensationalism. During the 1967 leap in Christian support for Israel, Rice cautioned his readers against attributing "immediate prophetic significance" to Israel's 1967 victory.³⁶ He reasoned that the situation in 1967 involved an unbelieving Jewish population, which was not equivalent to "...the prophesied regathering."³⁷ Later, in 1976, Rice reiterated his convictions in an unusually long 7-page article in which he elaborated further on his particular brand of Dispensationalism with scripture proofs. Expressing his desire for Jews to convert to Christianity, he reasoned emphatically that "...a Jew is only an unsaved person, no better than an unsaved Gentile."³⁸ Finally, a year before his death and in poor health, Rice continued to defend his position in a 1979 response to a critic.³⁹ Rice contended that God's plan "...does not depend on unconverted Jews going by force to take land that belonged to the Arabs."⁴⁰ When juxtaposed against the supernatural power of God, the current situation in Israel was, in Rice's view, a fragile and fallible work of man.⁴¹ His enthusiasm towards the

³⁴ Apart from his fundamentalist spiritual bent, Rice was clearly a patriot and staunch conservative in his socio-political views. See, John R. Rice, "Communism Versus Bible Christianity," *Sword of the Lord*, August 20 1965. "Dangerous Triplets," *Sword of the Lord*, May 13 1960. "War in Vietnam: Should Christians Fight?," *Sword of the Lord*, December 3 1965. "God Bless America!."

³⁵ "Ho, Israel, Repent!," *Sword of the Lord*, May 21 1976, 12.

³⁶ "War in Palestine," *Sword of the Lord*, July 7 1967, 3.

³⁷ "War in Palestine," 3

³⁸ "Ho, Israel, Repent!."

³⁹ Howard Edgar Moore, "The Emergence of Moderate Fundamentalism: John R. Rice and 'the Sword of the Lord'" (George Washington University, 1990), 358.

⁴⁰ John R. Rice, "The Promised Future Regathering of Israel," *Sword of the Lord*, December 14 1979.

⁴¹ *The Coming Kingdom of Christ* (Tennessee: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1979), 21, 43-45.

nation-state of Israel was contingent on the Jews converting *en masse* to Christianity.⁴² Until those conversions came to fruition, Rice was inclined to dismiss developments in Israel as irrelevant and undeserving of particular Christian support; instead, he advocated a just peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors.

The non-support of certain denominations during the 1973 Yom Kippur War exemplifies the diversity of theological beliefs within American Christianity and further clarifies the need for qualification of any claims about the degree and source of American Christian support for Israel during the period surrounding the Yom Kippur War. The very same passages of the Bible (e.g. Romans 11, Galatians 3) on which certain Christians had based their pro-Israel stance were interpreted differently by others as dissociating the nation-state Israel from the biblical narrative. Not only does this diversity of beliefs and positions parallel the findings of the previous section of this article about the non-monolithic nature of American Christians, but it also suggests that the area of eschatology was particularly contested because it fell outside the realm of foundational dogma.⁴³ Compared to other core and more explicitly formulated doctrines, eschatological passages in the Bible were subject to various interpretations. As a result, reactions towards Israel that were grounded in these passages differed, and some alternative interpretations of these passages legitimized non-support of Israel for some Christians.

“LUKEWARM”: CHRISTIAN AMBIVALENCE

“How long halt ye between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21, KJV)

The final category of reactions belongs to American Christians who were ambivalent towards Israel during and after the Yom Kippur War. Lukewarm responses to the conflict generally emanated from Christian denominations and organizations at the institutional level. Differing from their non-supportive and supportive brethren, Christian institutions attempted to straddle the two opposing positions. Outwardly concerned for their standing in the court of world opinion and particularly fellow Arab believers, Christian institutions therefore had to appear as neutral as possible in their responses.⁴⁴ Unlike smaller decentralized ministries who had greater latitude to express outright support or non-support, denominational and organizational leaders shouldered the responsibility of representing a number of their member churches. The disparate and particular views of their member churches called for a cautious and even insipid response for the sake of institutional unity. As pro-Israel Christians and Jewish groups railed against such caution, Christian institutions increasingly found themselves between a rock and a hard place.

⁴² *The Coming Kingdom*, 33-34.

⁴³ The above usage of the term, ‘dogma,’ refers to the core doctrines of the Christian faith, which are deemed as necessary for the individual believer’s salvation.

⁴⁴ Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace*, 163-64.

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Several articles in Jewish-American newspapers highlight the ambivalence that Christian institutions displayed towards the conflict. In *The American Israelite*, Methodist clergyman Dr. William Watters lambasts Christian denominations for “...fail[ing] to react to the crisis.”⁴⁵ Moreover, Reverend Gerard Strober criticized the “continuing failure of the Protestant establishment of the United States to recognize the threat to Israel's survival,” singling out the National Council of Churches (NCC) in particular for its pro-Arab stance.⁴⁶ In Strober's view, the NCC's failure to issue an outright condemnation of Arab aggression was tantamount to implicit support of it.

In addition, the ambivalence of institutions such as the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) is reflected by their deliberate silence in 1973—they issued neither a statement of support for Israel nor a condemnation of Arab aggression. One possible reason for the NAE's silence is its established tradition of human rights activism, exemplified by its 1956 resolution, which urged its “constituency to use every legitimate means to eliminate unfair discriminatory practices, and... deplor[ed] extremist tactics by any individual or organized groups.”⁴⁷ In the context of growing human rights activism in the 1970s, the NAE was probably cautious of taking sides lest it be seen as compromising its position on human rights and world peace. In the wake of the 1967 Six Day War, the NAE's 1970 statement on the Middle East prioritized these two items in an attempt to transcend contentious theological debates about the Israel's rightful claim to the land. The NAE ambiguously affirmed the rights of both sides to “exist as sovereign nations from the perspective of biblical and historical positions” at the same time as it cautioned that tensions between Arabs and Israelis were “another threat to world peace.”⁴⁸ The NAE's refusal to take sides is still further emphasized by their pacifist statement in 1977, which decried the use of military means to solve problems and advocated instead “lov[ing] [one's] enemies...and overcom[ing] evil with good.”⁴⁹

Although not organized specifically in response to the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, the post-1973 ecumenical conferences also hint at the difficulties faced by national and supra-national Christian bodies in taking sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Shortly after the war's outbreak, on the November 25 1973, the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern was released by a group of American evangelical leaders. The Chicago Declaration deplored “...the misplaced trust of [America] in economic and military might--a proud trust that promotes a national pathology of war and violence which victimizes our neighbors at

⁴⁵ Lapide, “Christian Silence.”

⁴⁶ “Pastor Assails National Council.”

⁴⁷ “Human Rights, 1956,” National Association of Evangelicals, <http://www.nae.net/government-relations/policy-resolutions/188-human-rights-1956>.

⁴⁸ “Middle East, 1970,” National Association of Evangelicals, <http://www.nae.net/government-relations/policy-resolutions/260-middle-east-1970>.

⁴⁹ “Use of Force, 1977,” National Association of Evangelicals, <http://www.nae.net/government-relations/policy-resolutions/394-the-use-of-force-1977->.

home and abroad.”⁵⁰ Similar in its desire for world peace, the First Lausanne Congress issued the July 1974 Lausanne Covenant, which prioritized global evangelism while also appealing for greater respect of human rights.⁵¹ The Congress was attended by a host of respected American Christian leaders from various denominations. It is likely that Christian leaders had the ongoing Vietnam War in mind as they issued their anti-war statements, yet their pacifistic sentiments arguably contributed to an institutional ambivalence towards Israel, too.

Nevertheless, further investigation of Christian institutions' lukewarm reactions suggests that such behavior arose, ironically, from spiritual calculations. Their desire for world peace and respect for human rights was instrumental—it was not an end in itself, but a means to the end of global evangelism. The goal of proselytization is implied by Maxwell Dane, the Chairperson of the ADL Program Committee when he cites the “...pressures of missionary groups and institutions in the Middle East” as the reason for Christian institutions' ambivalent reactions during Israel's darkest hour.⁵² Dane's assertion strikes at the inherent paradox of Jewish-Christian relations during this period: the relationship was, at its heart, an uneasy marriage of convenience. Jews recognized the value of American (particularly Christian) support for Israel's survival in a hostile neighborhood, and yet this support created a strange tension between the two groups. Essentially, in their support of Israel, Christians viewed the evangelism of Jews as the highest expression of their goodwill, whereas Jews viewed Christian proselytization as de-legitimizing Judaism and their cultural identity. Israeli Jews pressured their government to curtail missionary efforts, and Jewish fundamentalists even conducted domestic attacks on Christian missionaries.⁵³ Tensions developed when American Christian missionaries relayed their poor treatment to their mission boards back home. Therefore, at the Christian institutional level, these inherent tensions may well have manifested themselves as ambivalence towards the 1973 war.

Ultimately, the polarized nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict and Israel's colossal victory in the 1967 Six Day War made Christian institutions particularly keen to tread carefully and condition their responses on how events on the ground unfolded.⁵⁴ They did so for two reasons: an external concern for their reputation and an internal concern for accommodation. Thus, during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, “lukewarm” Christians found

⁵⁰ “The Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern,” The Center for Public Justice, [http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader\\$928](http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader$928).

⁵¹ “The Lausanne Covenant,” The Lausanne Movement, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html>.

⁵² “Study Finds Much Negative Response to Israel Struggle.”

⁵³ Several articles in *Christianity Today* decry the persecution of Christian missionaries by the very people they favoured as the ‘chosen people’. See, “Jewish Furor over Key 1973,” *Christianity Today*, December 22 1972. “Billy Graham on Key 1973,” *Christianity Today*, March 16 1973. “Religious Pressure in Israel,” *Christianity Today*, May 11 1973. Lester Kinsolving, “Grenades in the Archbishop’s Mercedes,” *ibid.*, October 11 1974. “Equal Justice for Gun Runners,” *ibid.*, January 3 1975. “Muted Concern for Israel’s Law,” *Christianity Today*, March 24 1978. “Israeli Law: Toward Convert Control,” *Christianity Today*, February 10 1978.

⁵⁴ Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*, 258-60.

themselves between the Scylla of anti-Semitism and the Charybdis of denouncing the Arabs, sought a middle path, and in so doing incurred the wrath of their pro-Israel counterparts.

INFLUENCE OF BROADER TRENDS ON DIVERSE CHRISTIAN REACTIONS

“Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.” (Acts 19:32, KJV)

Apart from specific institutional motives and developments that influenced certain Christian reactions, the broader domestic and international context also shaped Christian reactions to the Yom Kippur War. The 1970s were confusing and turbulent times for Christians because of three key developments, which are especially crucial in accounting for the motley of responses.

First of all, pertaining to the spiritual realm, the reaction against Modernism coupled with the spread of Charismaticism created much upheaval and divisions within American Christendom. Modernism, a founding tenet of liberal Christianity, abandoned a literary reading of the Bible because of the Enlightenment's and German higher criticism's influence. Despite its origins in the early 20th century, Modernism is relevant to the 1970s because of the negative reaction it continued to receive amongst conservative evangelicals even at that relatively late date. Evangelicals committed themselves to a literal reading of scripture and rejected the modernist tendencies of liberal Christians. In this reactionary atmosphere of anti-Modernism, a commitment to Dispensationalist doctrine was seen as not only compatible but also a logical corollary of reading the Bible literally.⁵⁵ Additionally, Modernism gave rise to the Social Gospel movement, a progressive form of Christianity, in the early 20th century. This historical development is relevant because during the 1960s to 1970s, progressive Christians strongly emphasized the importance of social and political justice in conjunction with the ongoing civil rights movement. To a degree, the ambivalent reactions to Israel during the war arose from this progressive emphasis. Furthermore, on another front, the Charismatic Renewal Movement of the 1960s, with its greater emphasis on the gifts (*charismata*) of the Holy Spirit, further splintered conservative Christianity as Charismatic practices spread from church to church.⁵⁶ At the most fundamental level, these gifts such as the speaking of tongues distressed their non-Charismatic counterparts and led to additional divisions among the ranks of the faithful.⁵⁷ More crucial for the issue of Christian support for Israel, however, was the doctrinal implication of Charismaticism. The unity of the Dispensationalist camp was ruptured by the Charismatics' break from traditional

⁵⁵ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 41-43.

⁵⁶ Owen Chadwick, *The Christian Church in the Cold War*, *The Penguin History of the Church* (London; New York, N.Y.: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 1992), 135.

⁵⁷ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 141.

views of Dispensationalism. With this multitude of views and allegiances, American Christendom was splintered and fractured over the course of the 1960s and into the early 1970s; this scenario provided the pre-conditions for differing responses to the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

In the secular realm, an atmosphere of domestic political upheaval in America further divided Christians and shaped their responses to the Yom Kippur War. The seams of American society were fraying. The unfolding Watergate scandal amidst heightened civil rights activism and Vietnam War protests contributed to a highly charged, cynical and polarized society.⁵⁸ Christians were inevitably forced to choose sides in these struggles, further exacerbating existing cleavages within the group. Some Christians, like Dr. Rice, viewed loyalty to the establishment as their Christian duty.⁵⁹ Others, however, viewed their allegiance to God as requiring them to speak out against the Vietnam War and other human rights abuses that the Nixon administration's *détente* glossed over.⁶⁰ Riding the tide of increased human rights activism, it was also in the 1970s that the atrocities of the Holocaust became entrenched in the American public's imagination.⁶¹ The publishing of Christian biographies and autobiographies, such as Corrie ten Boom's *The Hiding Place* in 1971, had the twofold effect of reassuring Christians that "...true Christians had nothing to do with the persecution and annihilation of Jews" and educating them of how the Jews featured "...in God's plan for humanity."⁶² Especially for Dispensationalist Christians, this public reckoning of the Holocaust's horrors altered the Christian-Jewish relationship and made it their "...duty...to guide the Jews and help them to restore their ancient land."⁶³ Granted, these domestic concerns could also have had the effect of making some Christians less attuned to or concerned with events in the Middle East than they otherwise might have been. At the very least, however, during this period, whatever commonalities American Christians shared were placed under immense stress, and this stress clearly contributed to the diversification of their reactions.

Finally, the dreaded Cold War prospect of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) coalesced with biblical prophecy to forge an ironic point of convergence among all

⁵⁸ Angela M. Lahr, *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 187.

⁵⁹ Dr. Rice often emphasized being loyal to the powers that be. See, Rice, "War in Vietnam: Should Christians Fight?." "God Bless America!." He even went so far as to assert that "capitalism is taught in the bible." See also, "Communism Versus Bible Christianity."

⁶⁰ *Détente*, essentially a foreign policy of realism, was very much seen as "dealing with the devil" as the United States sought to treat the USSR as an equal and tone down the ideological rhetoric so often resorted to by previous administrations. See, Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*, 539-40.

⁶¹ Michael Cotey Morgan, "The Seventies and the Rebirth of Human Rights," in *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*, ed. Niall Ferguson (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 238. Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*, 563; Borstelmann, *The 1970s*, 179.

⁶² Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship*, 153.

⁶³ Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship*, 170.

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Christians, startling many of them into an apocalyptic frenzy. With the prospect of nuclear war already instilling much fear and apprehension among Christians,⁶⁴ Lindsay's 1970 bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, played on and contributed to such fears when he argued that biblical prophecy likely pointed to an impending nuclear conflagration.⁶⁵ Discussing the antagonism between the Israelis and Palestinians, Ward reckoned that "[t]ogether they tip the planet towards the chasm of nuclear holocaust."⁶⁶ A later 1977 resolution by the NAE on the "Use of Force" also reiterated the connection between the "...proliferation of nuclear weapons as nations ... and the lurking danger of a global holocaust,"⁶⁷ and the NCC also chimed in with their own call for "...comprehensive disarmament."⁶⁸ In view of MAD, basic human survival came to the fore of what might otherwise have been more abstract discussions of the political and military significance of events in the Middle East during the 1960s and 1970s. Ironically, this focus generated some points of convergence among otherwise divergent Christian groups and, particularly with respect to the Yom Kippur War, a strong desire for peace in the Middle East.

Overall, the maelstrom of disruptive events and clashing ideologies are crucial factors in explaining both the divergence of Christian responses to the Yom Kippur War in certain aspects and their convergence in others: the domestic and international context shaped Christian support for Israel more than the Christians themselves expected it to.

CONCLUSION

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, KJV)

At times, discussions of the role of Christians on American foreign policy can involve more heat than light, as accusations of a Christian agenda are bandied about. Given the difficulty of truly ascertaining foreign policy motivations, let alone religiously influenced ones, erroneous correlation often takes precedence over a proper examination of cause and effect. In a sense, recognizing the diversity of Christians' reactions to the Yom Kippur War discredits caricatures of American foreign policy being driven by a unified Christian agenda. Moreover, an appreciation of American Christianity's complexities not only qualifies the dominant narrative of increasing Christian support of Israel in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War but also warns against seeing precedents where there are none (the fallacy of precursorism), when one considers the 1970s in light of the Religious Right's prominence in the

⁶⁴ Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Studies in Cultural History (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 126-30.

⁶⁵ Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 161, 166.

⁶⁶ Ward, "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem," 8.

⁶⁷ "Use of Force, 1977".

⁶⁸ "Resolution on Nuclear Weapons," National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, <http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/1977/no-nukes2.php>.

1980s. The rise of the Religious Right was far from pre-determined during the 1970s because the particular context of that era arguably shaped Christians more than they shaped it. Responding to endogenous and exogenous developments, American Christians descended into an uncoordinated medley of supportive, non-supportive and ambivalent groups.⁶⁹

Clearly, what has been articulated in this paper just scratches the surface of the movement's complexities. This paper's analysis is limited due to roadblocks in the research process encountered by its author, which limited his access to materials from important Christian personalities, ministries and organizations. A fuller examination of American Christian views on the Yom Kippur War would benefit from access to archived material of specific personalities (e.g. Hal Lindsey, Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Carl McIntire, Billy Graham, Billy James Hargis, John Walvoord, Oral Roberts, etc.), Christian publications (e.g. *Christian Herald*, *Christian Beacon*, *Moody Monthly*, etc.), denominations (e.g. Southern Baptists, United Methodist Church, Lutherans, Episcopalians, etc.) and even organizations (e.g. the Anti-Defamation League,⁷⁰ Voice of Hope, Christians Concerned for Israel, etc.). A more thorough study of Christian reactions would not only include material from these sources, but would ideally sample sermons and meeting minutes of local churches. In the end, the examination of the Christian bloc relations with Israel in the 1970s has just begun. The typologies of “hot,” “cold” and “lukewarm” Christians may well have a useful role in helping scholars chart the impact of Christians on American foreign policy.

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⁶⁹ Admittedly, such categories of Christian reactions are not strict typologies; rather, the reactions exist fluidly on a continuum.

⁷⁰ It seems reasonable to assume that other ADL publications and positions might likewise turn out to be relevant to discussions of American and even Christian positions on Israel.

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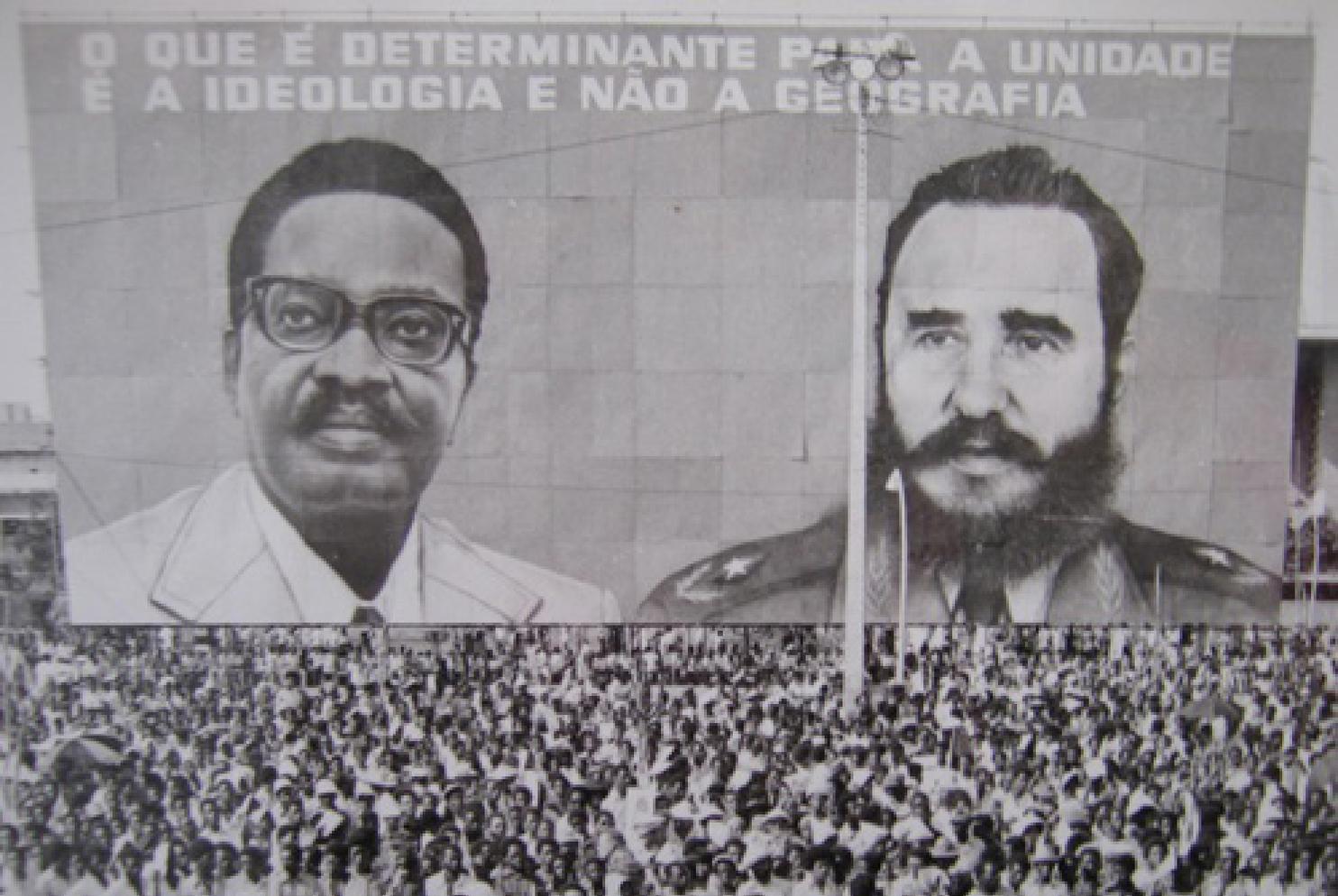
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TITLE IMAGE

“Participants Listen to a Speaker at One of the Plenary Sessions in the Large Assembly Hall at
the Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne, Switzerland.” 1974. Photograph. *Wheaton College*. Jan. 1
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DISAPPEARING HISTORIES REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING ANGOLAN-CUBAN RELATIONS

In the 1970's, rival factions in Angola, propped up by foreign powers, vied for power. However, one outside nation, despite committing tens of thousands of its own troops, neither receives nor seeks recognition for much of its role in the war. Drawing on the records of Fidel Castro and Angolan leaders, Paul Elish '15 lays out the lost story of Cuba's intervention in the Angolan Civil War. Tracing the historiography of Cuban involvement, Elish shows why parties on both sides have sought to minimize or modify the memory of the struggle. While the Americans, Soviets, South Africans, and homegrown rebel groups clashed, Elish describes the hidden history of how a country so often seen as just a Cold War pawn asserted its own influence in Angola.

By Paul Elish SY '15
Written for "History of the Caribbean, 1898 to the Present"
Professor Anna Eller
Faculty Advisor: Daniel Magaziner
Edited by Samuel Becker and Anthony Kayruz

INTRODUCTION

Though not frequently emphasized in Cold War history, Cuban involvement in Africa during the period took on immense geographic and temporal proportions. From the nineteen-sixties to the nineteen-eighties, Cuban internationalists played critical roles in revolutionary turmoil and humanitarian development in countries ranging from Algeria to Mozambique. Most prominent among these internationalist actions was the massive deployment of Cuban troops in Angola in the 1970s and 1980s, where the battle against rebels from the National Front for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and soldiers from apartheid South Africa – groups both backed by the U.S. – stunned observers across the globe. Yet certain politicized historical writings reduce Cuba's history of unilateral action in Africa to proxy maneuvers on behalf of the Soviet Union. In still more extreme cases, the Cuban role in Africa is completely ignored. As a consequence, leading historians of Cuban foreign policy, particularly Piero Gleijeses, have called for greater recognition of Cuba's role in the international arena.

Nonetheless, progress in recognizing Cuba's role raises new questions. Particularly, one must ask whether the need to maintain select historical narratives in the Cuban collective consciousness has skewed Cuba's own understanding of Cold War African affairs. Exploring that theme in the context of Angola under President José Eduardo dos Santos, we bear witness to a smaller-scale Cuban example of "disappearing" history. Conversations between Fidel Castro and dos Santos in the late 1980s and speeches on Angolan independence delivered in 2005 afford opportunities to understand how Castro avoids discussing dos Santos' corruption to maintain emphasis on Cuba's fight for African sovereignty and against South African apartheid.

CUBA'S AFRICAN ODYSSEY

Cuba's involvement in African affairs can be traced to the early 1960s, when Fidel Castro initiated weapons shipments and medical missions to war-torn Algeria. Other missions were to follow in countries across the African continent as Cuban soldiers and civilian volunteers engaged in projects seeking to either demonstrate solidarity with Third World countries through humanitarian aid or to militarily further the global revolutionary cause. Oftentimes, these missions were conducted based on the Castro regime's idealistic revolutionary principles of international revolutionary cooperation. This idealism frequently overlooked financial costs that were largely borne by the Soviet Union, as well as the high political, economic, and human costs that Cuba itself bore in the name of internationalism.¹

¹ An early and commonly cited example of Cuban willingness to make sacrifices in forwarding the internationalist cause relates to Cuban troops being sent to Algeria to stave off a Moroccan attack just after Cuba had made a crucial sugar deal with Morocco. Piero Gleijeses, "The View From Havana: Lessons from

However, African operations also had an element of pragmatism: Internationalism in Africa had the potential to create what Che Guevara termed “two or three Vietnams,” to spread the attention of the U.S. and its allies away from Cuba and more thinly across the globe.² Additionally, the African venue afforded Cuba greater strategic flexibility by calling for confrontations with colonial powers or the defense of established states, as opposed to legally questionable operations against established governments Cuba would otherwise be inclined to carry out in Latin America.³

Yet in spite of Cuba’s recurring involvement in Africa, the deployment of 36,000 Cuban soldiers in Angola in 1975 and 1976 stunned the international community.⁴ Operation Carlota, as the Angola intervention was called, was much larger in scale than previous missions and had its roots in Cuban military aid to Angola during its war for independence against Portugal in the 1960s. Cuban aid to Angola had stopped by 1970, but the 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal suddenly and dramatically changed Angola’s prospects. Now faced with a planned independence date of November 11, 1975, three warring Angolan factions vied for control of Luanda, the capital. South Africa began sending military instructors and weapons to Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA by July in an effort to install an Angolan government unopposed to apartheid and to South African rule in Namibia.⁵ This South African aid was bolstered by support from a U.S. government that was intent on preventing further advances of the Soviet Bloc after witnessing Saigon fall to North Vietnam that same year. In turn, Cuba responded by sending military instructors to the rival, socialist-leaning People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) under Agostinho Neto in August. When South African soldiers entered Angola in October 1975 and were closing in on Luanda in November, Cuba rushed its thousands of troops across the Atlantic. Having astonished all parties (including the Soviet Union, which Castro had not consulted in ordering the deployment), the Cuban surge left the capital in the hands of the MPLA on the designated independence date.⁶ U.S. backing for South African forces dissolved for fear of a new Vietnam-style quagmire,⁷ and the embittered South African mission withdrew from Angola by March 1976.⁸

Cuba’s African Journey, 1959-1976,” in *In From the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War*, 112-133 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008),.113.

² *Cuba, une odyssée africaine*, directed by Jihan El Tahri (Temps Noir, 2007).

³ Gleijeses, “The View,” 122.

⁴ Gleijeses, “The View,” 112.

⁵ South Africa gained control over Namibia from Germany during the First World War and thereafter administered the territory as a province. The International Court of Justice declared the South African occupation of Namibia illegal in 1971, given South Africa’s refusal to acknowledge UN calls for an independence process. *Cuba, une odyssée*.

⁶ Gleijeses, “The View,” 117-119.

⁷ *Cuba, une odyssée*.

⁸ Gleijeses, “The View,” 119.

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Nevertheless, conflict in Angola was far from over. Savimbi and UNITA continued to resist the MPLA administration in this first stretch of Angolan civil war long into the 1980s. By then, Agostinho Neto's death in 1979 had brought a new president, José Eduardo dos Santos, to the helm of the MPLA. Meanwhile, South Africa and the U.S. continued to eye Angola with particular resentment. In Pretoria, the South African government noted that MPLA-controlled Angola was harboring SWAPO, the Namibian independence force, and in Washington, Reagan's aggressive foreign policy was loath to ignore the possibility of reversing the events of the 1970s. The Angolan Civil War ground onward until the South African Defense Force launched a major attack in late 1987 against the Angolan army in southeastern Angola and cornered crucial Angolan units at the small town of Cuito Cuanavale.⁹ Cuba raised its troop presence in Angola to an all-time high of 55,000 soldiers despite USSR reluctance to incur the wrath of the Reagan administration,¹⁰ and the combined Angolan-Cuban forces – with a bill reluctantly footed by the Soviets¹¹ – reversed this second South African incursion by March 1988. Later in that year, Angola, Cuba, South Africa, and the United States settled on a tripartite peace agreement (mediated by the U.S.) that saw Cuba withdrawing from Angola by 1991 on the condition that South Africa grant Namibia independence and similarly withdraw from Angola.¹² Nevertheless, the Angolan Civil War would not come to a complete close until Savimbi's death in 2002.¹³

OPERATION CARLOTA, ERASED

Not surprisingly, the history of Cuban involvement in the Angolan Civil War remains controversial. In studying the literature on the subject, one finds authors disputing even the outcomes of fundamental events with Cuban involvement. Writers sympathizing with the narrative of Cuba's fight against racial injustice in southern Africa (a view to which Nelson Mandela himself ascribed) paint Cuito Cuanavale as a spectacular victory for Cuba and the Angolans against racist forces, whereas other sources are more inclined to describe the battle as a stalemate. While disagreement regarding particular events of the Angolan Civil War is understandable, some contestations of the war's broader themes remain less comprehensible. The leading historian on the subject of Cuba's operations in Africa, Piero Gleijeses, fervently denounces the recurring issue of scholars diminishing Cuba's role in

⁹ Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 516.

¹⁰ Gleijeses, "The View," 122.

¹¹ Gleijeses, *Visions*, 14.

¹² *Cuba, une odyssée*.

¹³ After the 1988 accords, the 1991 Angolan peace agreement established multiparty elections in 1992. However, upon losing to dos Santos in what were deemed fair elections by international observers, Savimbi readily took up arms again and would consistently resist Luanda with violence, just as he had since 1975, until his death in 2002.

events to that of a proxy for the Soviet Union, or sometimes even omitting it altogether.¹⁴ Gleijeses, whose unparalleled access to Cuban archives adds weight to his analyses – of course, we must also take his Cuban sympathies into account – writes critically of Western scholars who “are tempted to ignore” evidence that puts the unilateral nature of Cuba’s decisions “beyond question.”¹⁵

Ultimately, Gleijeses’ account of Cuban involvement in Angola seeks to redress the shortage of English-language histories acknowledging Cuba’s sizable role in African history and politics. In doing so, he champions Cuba’s unique, idealistic approach to international affairs that ran counter to the pragmatism normally adhered to by countries in the modern, globalized world system. Most importantly, Gleijeses lifts up the Cuban contribution to the defense of national sovereignty across Africa and to the toppling of apartheid in South Africa as the pinnacle achievements of Cuba’s African missions.

ASSESSING MPLA AGENCY IN ITS IDEOLOGICAL TRANSITION

However, in the specific case of Angola, the outcome of Cuban involvement is complicated by the nature of the present-day MPLA regime. While Angola today is certainly a sovereign state, and while it continues to prosper according to certain indicators, it is far from being the bastion of socialism that Castro might have envisioned in the 1970s. The

¹⁴ It’s difficult to imagine just how extreme the tendency to omit the Cuban role in Angola can become. In one book on Angolan history published by the Ohio University Press in 2006, the Cubans are replaced by the Soviets as the crucial actor at various points in the Angolan Civil War. The author contrasts Angola with Mozambique in the 1970s by arguing, “Superpower involvement in Mozambique was predominantly covert, but in Angola a war by proxy between the United States and the Soviet Union replaced Vietnam as a focal point of cold war confrontation.” Regarding Angolan independence, Cuba is not mentioned at all. As the author explains, “In Angola independence was gained by compromise after the confrontation of three intervening armies that tried to replace the colonial forces. The population of the capital city may have felt a spasm of euphoria when the guns were held at bay, though not beyond earshot, throughout independence day on November 11, 1975.” Although it’s then noted that the Angolans had “sought help from the most sensitive of America’s opponents, the Cubans” and that “with gentle encouragement from Cuba, attempts were made to seek a policy of harmonization and economic reform,” Cuban troops don’t appear in Angola until the late 1980s in this account. At that point, “the Angolan government was now supported by a Cuban expeditionary force of 30,000 or more troops, which South Africa represented to the anxious West as ‘Moscow’s Gurkhas.’” The degree to which these passages are both inaccurate and misleading is truly astonishing. David, Birmingham, *Empire in Africa: Angola and its Neighbors* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 111, 113, 118-121.

¹⁵ Interestingly, Gleijeses has noted a similar disconnect in U.S. policymakers’ and U.S. intelligence analysts’ understandings of Cuban-Soviet relations on the subject of Africa. From the 1960s onward, U.S. intelligence reports consistently noted Castro’s criticism of the “dogmatic and opportunistic” Soviet Union, Cuban resistance to Soviet advice, and the Cubans’ willingness to make decisions independently of Soviet wishes in spite of initiatives’ Soviet financing. Despite these reports, U.S. politicians in this same period barraged Cuba with criticisms for being a Soviet puppet.. This reduced understanding of events in Angola to conform to a two-superpower notion of the Cold War reflects broader issues relating to Cold War Studies in Africa and Latin America. Gleijeses, “The View,” 120, 124.

MPLA officially abandoned its original Marxist-Leninist party line in favor of cooperation with the neoliberal West in the mid-1990s, although it has maintained de facto one-party rule.¹⁶ That relationship with neoliberalism has focused almost exclusively on enormous economic growth in one commodity: oil. Yet even though huge streams of wealth from oil have rushed into Angola since the nineties, the money has not traveled much further than MPLA pockets. Political scientists identify present-day MPLA Angola as a prime example of a neopatrimonial regime in which “the state and its resources [are] used from the start by the elites in power to achieve political and economic hegemony.”¹⁷ The oligarchy’s state security apparatus has even managed to consume a higher percentage of the budget than healthcare, education, and agriculture combined, helping to create a huge chasm between the country’s rich and its much larger, direly impoverished population.¹⁸

What makes this even more problematic for Cubans’ memory of the intervention is that Cuba’s one-time ally, President José Eduardo dos Santos, has been particularly adept at taking advantage of Angolan privatization and growth. As *Forbes* revealed in a 2013 exposé, kickbacks of holdings in Angola’s strategic industries that President dos Santos organized have paved the way for his 40-year-old daughter, Isabel dos Santos, to become Africa’s only female billionaire.¹⁹ The scheme has been especially convenient for the presidential family since it distances José Eduardo dos Santos from the wealth he systematically amasses, even though that wealth remains easily accessible. Dos Santos now heads a regime that Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index has ranked at 157 out of 176 countries.²⁰ Human Rights Watch estimates that tens of billions of dollars in oil money have disappeared from Angola’s central bank during the country’s oil boom.²¹

This modern-day MPLA has proven itself astonishingly indifferent to the enormous issues facing Angola’s broader populace, and its particularly inegalitarian involvement in the capitalist system raises important questions for Cuba. We are led to question how Havana rationalizes its relationship with Luanda, and specifically with José Eduardo dos Santos, especially in light of this reversal from previous solidarity with Cuban socialist ideology.

We can return to the work of Piero Gleijeses to get at least one Cuba-sympathetic historical perspective on dos Santos and the demise of Angola-Cuba cooperation. In the

¹⁶ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 143.

¹⁷ Nuno Vidal, “The Angolan Regime and the Move to Multiparty Politics,” in *Angola: The Weight of History*, eds. Nuno Vidal and Patrick Chabal, 124-174 (London: Hurst, 2007), 126.

¹⁸ Kerry A. Dolan, “Daddy’s Girl: How an African ‘Princess’ Banked \$3 Billion in a Country Living on \$2 a Day,” *Forbes.com*, *Forbes*, 14 April 2013, *n.p.*

¹⁹ Regarding the sources of Isabel dos Santos’ wealth, *Forbes* magazine reported, “As best as we can trace, every major Angolan investment held by dos Santos stems either from taking a chunk of a company that wants to do business in the country or from a stroke of the president’s pen that cut her into the action.” Dolan, *n.p.*

²⁰ Dolan, *n.p.*

²¹ Victoria Eastwood and David McKenzie. “The billion-dollar question: Where is Angola’s oil money?,” *CNN* (29 November 2012).

writings of Gleijeses, dos Santos's corruption certainly isn't ignored: In his history of Angolan-Cuban relations in the 1980s, Gleijeses writes, "Angola's problems [in the 1980s] were also due to the corruption and incompetence of [the dos Santos] administration and its indifference to the welfare of the people."²² Still, Gleijeses eases the impact of the revelations of dos Santos's corruption by couching these revelations less in dos Santos's personal greed and more in his weakness as the MPLA's leader. Gleijeses presents dos Santos's initial rise to power in 1979 in terms of his being a "compromise candidate, the lowest common denominator on whom all could agree" and "at best a *primus inter pares*."²³ Weak-willed and fickle, dos Santos is not so much the apex of the neopatrimonial spoils network as he is a cog in its vast machine. One might say this sense of a dos Santos stripped of agency is most evident when Gleijeses writes (rather ironically) of dos Santos's own musings about "the excessive centralization in the methods of socialist planning, the excessive bureaucratization in the conduct of the economy... and the rampant corruption" in Angola,²⁴ and about the susceptibility of Angolan officials to Westerners who "offer good hotels... perks, gifts, and... corrupt them."²⁵

Gleijeses also identifies Dos Santos's corruption as the lesser of two evils. Jonas Savimbi's larger-than-life hunger for power dominated UNITA's existence in a way dos Santos never rivaled within the MPLA, and as *The Economist* noted in his obituary, Savimbi "was not the sole cause of Angola's civil war, but he was probably the most important reason why it [lasted] so long."²⁶ Gleijeses notes when comparing the MPLA's corruption and authoritarian tendencies with the cruelty of Savimbi that "there was no moral equivalence."²⁷ Gleijeses approaches the outcome in dos Santos's Angola with tempered disappointment, but he approaches the theoretical outcome of Angola under Savimbi with horror.

Gleijeses's reluctance to write an outright excoriation of Dos Santos indicates that the MPLA's shift from an official socialist stance to an official alignment with neoliberalism was not necessarily straightforward. That does not, however, make it impossible to note certain trends. For example, it is enticing to think of the transition as an active, deliberate ideological rupture overseen by Dos Santos and other party leaders. If we examine the MPLA's origins in the sixties and seventies, we see that its initial base among the educated elite in Luanda was truly united by ideals of socialist revolution that were expected to transform the

²² Gleijeses, *Visions*, 225.

²³ Gleijeses, *Visions*, 114-115.

²⁴ Gleijeses, *Visions*, 373.

²⁵ Gleijeses, *Visions*, 105.

²⁶ *The Economist's* 2002 obituary for Jonas Savimbi is so dark as to be wry. The article notes, "Charming and multilingual, Mr. Savimbi told potential supporters whatever they wanted to hear. When seeking military aid from China, he claimed to want to build a Maoist state that would somehow accommodate the local culture. To his South African allies, he billed himself as a bulwark against communist imperialism. When wooing Ronald Reagan, he pretended to be a democrat and an avid fan of the free market ... His only sincere belief, however, was that he ought to be president of Angola." "Jonas Savimbi," *The Economist* (28 February 2002), *n.p.*

²⁷ Gleijeses, *Visions*, 513, 525.

country's undereducated and impoverished masses. The organization's first post-independence leader, Agostinho Neto, was particularly committed to viewing the MPLA's role through a socialist lens. The party also made early gestures toward a major socialist reform of agricultural production in the countryside.²⁸ This socialist rhetoric persisted in President José Eduardo dos Santos's oratory, as when he called upon MPLA members to defend the party's unwavering adherence to Marxism in a speech in 1985.²⁹

One can also collect decent amounts of evidence supporting the idea of an ideological rupture. Shortly after the speech in 1985, a few of the most left-leaning members of the MPLA, distrusted for their *mestiço* background, were demoted within party leadership as factions amenable to establishing ties with the United States began to gain prominence.³⁰ Then, in the early 1990s, bungled economic initiatives led to an exodus of competent middle-level administrators to the private sector, and an increasingly small cadre of government officials gained larger swathes of wealth as oil boomed.³¹ By that time, oil had become the primary driving force for Angolan aspirations for normal ties with the West, and oil-funded bureaucrats were more open to Western affiliation. Furthermore, the MPLA's de-emphasis of its Marxist-Leninist roots contributed to greater MPLA election success in 1992, providing incentive for it to permanently abandon those Marxist roots.³² One might say that the official rupture with Cuba happened when Angola failed to vote against the U.S. blockade of Cuba at the United Nations in 1995.³³

But as much as one can construct a linear, deliberate chain of events to precede the ultimate "rupture" of the MPLA with Cuba, such an understanding of the MPLA is likely to grant the party a firmer ideological basis and greater degree of control over the course of events than was actually the case during Angola's civil war. We begin to understand the complexity of the MPLA's transition – and Gleijeses' reluctance to explicitly condemn Dos Santos – when we approach the MPLA from the perspective of the "gatekeeper states" label that historians and social scientists apply to a number of post-independence African political entities, including MPLA Angola. "Gatekeeper states" refers to political entities with very little penetration and legitimacy in their own territories.³⁴ Instead, forces and entities outside of these African countries recognized their territoriality and thus established their legitimacy and formal sovereignty. As such, the gatekeeper state sits at a threshold (a "gate") between its physical territory (where its authority is limited) and the rest of the world (where its authority is recognized). Given their precarious existence at the "gate" between outward

²⁸ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 140-141.

²⁹ Victoria Brittain, *Death of Dignity: Angola's Civil War* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 25.

³⁰ Brittain, *Death of Dignity*, 25.

³¹ Brittain, *Death of Dignity*, 88.

³² Linda, Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola: 1840s to the Present* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 217.

³³ Brittain, *Death of Dignity*, 94.

³⁴ For example, many post-independence African states failed to effectively collect taxes or cultivate loyalty among their country's broader population.

recognition and limited internal development, gatekeeper states are incentivized to consolidate power by collecting and distributing resources at this gate itself – oil leaving Angola is precisely the resource the MPLA leveraged to fortify its control over the country.³⁵

The specific concept of “gatekeepers” stands less important as the main caution it conveys, namely, to avoid reimagining MPLA development as a linear process or deliberate “betrayal” of Cuban allies, and to avoid conceptualizing MPLA decision-making in the eighties and nineties on the basis of its much stronger grip on Angola today. The concept of the MPLA operating in a gatekeeper state setting would have been very relevant during Angola’s civil war period given the chaos caused by continued battles with UNITA rebels. Prior to any theoretical socialist revolution, the MPLA had to consolidate its legitimacy and power, all while fending off UNITA’s attacks. Given that many African revolutionary movements were more driven by exigencies of survival and less driven by revolutionary principles than the phrase “revolutionary movements” would indicate, it would not be surprising to find that the MPLA’s ideology was emphasized more to attract outside support than out of a deep commitment to certain ideological principles.³⁶

Ultimately, these dual interpretations of Angola-Cuba relations both have merit in explaining the evolution of the relationship between the two countries. Their implications, however, differ. The first interpretation, focusing on Angola’s ideological infidelity, gives Angolans (and especially José Eduardo dos Santos) most of the agency in eroding the relationship with Cuba. In contrast, the second interpretation involves Cuba’s judgment. It suggests that Cuba mischaracterized the motives of the MPLA, or at least decided to overlook the signs of pragmatism that Cubans had already encountered in other African revolutionary movements that purported to be socialist.³⁷ Combining the two interpretations, we can recognize that both Cuba and Angola were involved in creating the conditions for the eventual unraveling of their partnership.

³⁵ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 155-156.

³⁶ This interpretation could explain the development of corruption in the MPLA. In addressing the origins of Angola’s rampant corruption, most sources refer back to basic redistribution of privileges and benefits to MPLA members that existed even when the MPLA was aligned with Cuba and oil was not as large a factor in the party’s inner workings. For an organization with few resources, these privileges of access to government might have been the only resource available for use as a reward. Yet warfare’s draining effect on revenues provided an excuse for the formation of a more elitist patrimony network that spun out of control with the rise of Angolan oil. In this more cynical interpretation of affairs, the MPLA’s transition to neoliberalism might have simply represented the point at which elitist patrimony had become so lucrative (and Cuba so poor) that Cuban aid was no longer desirable. Vidal, “Angolan Regime,” 127-135.

³⁷ *Conversaciones oficiales sostenidas por el Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz... con Agostinho Neto*. 1977, MS, *Wilson Center Digital Archive*, Wilson Center, 17.

FIDEL CASTRO AND JOSÉ EDUARDO DOS SANTOS

Gleijeses's evaluation of José Eduardo dos Santos and a tempered sense of the MPLA's agency inform our understanding of the most crucial Cuban interaction with the Angolan president. Winding through Fidel Castro's interactions with Dos Santos over three decades, Fidel's frustration with the MPLA leader becomes eminently clear. Of most interest, then, is the way by which Castro chooses to address the growing rift between Cuba and Angola.

Fidel Castro's concern for the authenticity of revolution in the countries for which Cuban internationalists provided aid had long been made clear to the Angolans. This concern is especially evidenced by conversations with Agostinho Neto in the 1970s in which Castro expresses his distaste for the likes of the Somalian leader, Siad Barre, whose appeals to Cuba were perceived as thinly veiled attempts at gaining Cuba's support in territorial disputes.³⁸ At the same time, Castro expresses support for the "true revolutions" in Ethiopia, Yemen, Mozambique, and Angola.³⁹ Across conversations with African leaders, Fidel repeatedly emphasizes clarity as the key component to Cuban-African cooperation. So long as the Africans' authentic commitment to revolutionary principles was clear, they could count on the unwavering support of Cuban internationalists.

Given Castro's insistence on continual commitment to revolutionary ideals, the 1980s were tied to increased questioning of the commitment of the Angolan regime, and specifically of dos Santos, to Angolan-Cuban revolutionary cooperation. Gleijeses notes that personal exchanges between Castro and dos Santos were not without tension, particularly in 1984 after dos Santos initiated discussions with the U.S. and South Africa without consulting Cuba.⁴⁰ Cuba did not easily forget this affront: Castro issued a warning to dos Santos in 1988, demanding "that any negotiation or ceasefire with South Africa be previously analysed and agreed upon between Angola and Cuba, as is stipulated in our military agreements."⁴¹ By the mid-1980s, the dos Santos regime had reached a period of heightened corruption,⁴² and by 1987, Angola had initiated political and economic reforms moving away from a strictly socialist economy. The stage was set for the transition of Angola to a multiparty system and an increasingly kleptocratic state in the 1990s that would largely disregard ties with Cuba.

Thus, one could expect interactions between dos Santos and the Cuban Commander-in-Chief during the Angolan president's visit to Havana in December 1988 to

³⁸ *Conversaciones... con Agostinho Neto*, 17.

³⁹ *Conversaciones... con Agostinho Neto*, 19.

⁴⁰ Gleijeses, *Visions*, 238-239.

⁴¹ "que cualquier negociación o alto al fuego con Suráfrica sea previamente analizado y acordado entre Angola y Cuba, como está estipulado en nuestros acuerdos militares." *Fidel Castro to José Eduardo dos Santos*, 23 *January 1988*, 1988, *Wilson Center Digital Archive*, Wilson Center, 5.

⁴² Vidal, "Angolan Regime," 135.

be complicated by uncertainty regarding the future of Angolan-Cuban relations.⁴³ The visit came after the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale and just before the signing of the New York Accords on December 22, which would dictate the Cuban and South African withdrawal from Angola and Namibia. As such, the exchange also served as a platform for Castro's personal reflections on an age of Cuban internationalist intervention that was rapidly coming to a close.

Cuban transcriptions of the heads-of-state's conversation show that, after initial expressions of gratitude regarding Cuban involvement in Angola and after notifying Castro of his being entered into the "Orden Agostinho Neto" by Angolan lawmakers, José Eduardo dos Santos explained, "We're worried by the Cuban comrades' decision to remove civilian personnel once the armed forces leave, including in the principal urban centers."⁴⁴ The Angolan president's desire for the continued presence of Cuban civilian volunteers in Angola after the withdrawal of Cuban troops elicited a variety of responses from Castro, although many of these responses were common refrains of Cuban internationalism. Castro reminds dos Santos that the costs of intervention "are really high," and that "we're the ones who have the most difficult situation... We want you to understand that."⁴⁵ Additionally, Castro comments that Cuban involvement "in a primarily internal fight"⁴⁶ would be vulnerable to the accusations of Cuban "imperialism" Castro had been assiduously countering for years and which had been renewed by the Reagan administration.⁴⁷ Thereafter, Castro calls for

⁴³ The Wilson Center's online database of declassified documents on Cuba in Angola has four memoranda of conversations between Fidel Castro and José Eduardo dos Santos, in addition to nine letters written by the Fidel to the Cuban president. All documents date between 1983 and 1988. I have chosen to focus on the last document chronologically speaking (one of the four memoranda) from this group of 13 documents. This decision was based on my intention to examine the nature of Angolan-Cuban relations later in the war, when Angola's trajectory in the 1990s might have become clearer, and thus, more open to Cuban rebukes.

⁴⁴ "nos preocupa la decisión de los compañeros cubanos de retirar todo el personal civil una vez que salgan las fuerzas armadas, incluso de los principales centros urbanos." The Angolan president was not reticent in offering critiques in the meeting, including an expression of frustration with the fact the initial date set for his visit to Cuba had been changed due to unforeseen circumstances. *Conversaciones oficiales del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz... con José Eduardo dos Santos*, 1988, MS, *Wilson Center Digital Archive* Wilson Center, 5, 15.

⁴⁵ "son realmente altos," "los que tenemos la situación más difícil somos nosotros [...] Nosotros queremos que ustedes comprendan eso." *Conversaciones... dos Santos* 16, 28.

It's important to note that just five years earlier, Cuba had been renewing its program of entirely free aid for Angola. In that sense, the concern for costs was a new development. *Fidel Castro to José Eduardo dos Santos*, 20 September 1983, 1983, *Wilson Center Digital Archive*, Wilson Center, 10.

⁴⁶ "en una lucha propiamente interna" *Conversaciones... dos Santos*, 1-2.

⁴⁷ A good example of Castro's effort to fight the imperialist label is his 1976 speech, "Angola: African Girón." When Castro describes the events of 1975 and 1976 in Angola, he seems less intent on celebrating the MPLA's success than he is determined to clarify the circumstances of Cuban involvement in southern Africa. A certain defensive tone is perceptible when Castro dismisses U.S. President Ford's extreme comparisons of events in Angola "to what happened in Ethiopia in Mussolini's time" and "to Hitler's dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich. Later, Castro again seeks to distance Cuban international politics from the narrative of

broader international cooperation in the internationalist campaigns when he ruminates, “I think, really, that it’s necessary to look for others to do this work; we will help in everything as we are able: doctors, doctors are lacking. The Koreans have a lot of doctors, the Vietnamese, the Yugoslavs, even the Soviets.”⁵⁰ This call for international involvement is tempered, however, by recognition of Soviet reluctance to sponsor a robust internationalist agenda given the Soviets’ being “dogmatic” and “inflexible.”⁵¹ Castro combines all of these concerns with his reluctance to further jeopardize Cuban lives in Angola, stating, : “Now we need to bring back the remains of our dead comrades.”⁵²

All of these sentiments expressed by Castro relate to broader frustrations harbored by Cuban officials in relation to the internationalist initiatives, but they do not provide an explicit indication of distrust of a corrupt Angolan regime. Instead, as had been expressed many times prior, the Soviets, in spite of being seen as crucial to the missions given their provision of funding and weapons, were resented for their lack of full support for Cuba’s foreign policy. This criticism of tepid Soviet support also encompassed other socialist nations perceived as failing to pull their weight in advancing the socialist cause.

Other comments, however, betray underlying frustrations Castro held against the Angolan regime itself in 1988. Most importantly, Castro draws a clear line by emphasizing the economic, political, and human costs of Cuban involvement to indicate that the Angolans, after years of Cuban aid, are asking too much of Cuba. Having listened to dos Santos’s concerns and requests regarding the end of direct Cuban involvement, Castro also launches criticisms in the reverse direction with reference to the Angolans’ handling of the Civil War and peace process. In response to calls on the part of the Angolans for further arms, Castro lays out Cuba’s own greater need for arms to defend itself against the U.S. threat before critiquing the MPLA for “trying to take on more arms than they’re really able to use.”⁵³ Castro expresses doubts multiple times in the conversation regarding the MPLA’s efficiency in training troops, advising that “it’s necessary to work at a faster pace” and raising questions with skepticism as to whether territorial militias were being properly organized and whether recruitment was being executed effectively.⁵⁵ When Dos Santos announces that he wishes to launch a new offensive against UNITA, Castro systematically takes apart the

revolutionary imperialism critics sought to impose on the Cuban interventions. In doing so, he makes appeals to the countries that would be threatened by the alleged imperialism, stating, “No Latin American country, whatever its social system, will have anything to fear from the Armed Forces of Cuba,” and similarly declaring, “No country of black Africa has anything to fear from Cuban military personnel.” Fidel Castro, *Angola: African Girón* (La Habana [Havana]: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976), 14, 24.

⁵⁰ “Yo pienso, realmente, que hay que buscar otros que hagan el trabajo; nosotros ayudaremos en todo lo que podamos: médicos, hacen falta médicos. Los coreanos tienen muchos médicos, los vietnamitas, los yugoslavos, incluso los soviéticos”. *Conversaciones... dos Santos*, 27-28.

⁵¹ “dogmáticos,” “inflexibles.” *Conversaciones... dos Santos*, 69.

⁵² “Ahora tenemos que trasladar los restos de los compañeros muertos.” *Conversaciones... dos Santos*, 23.

⁵³ “tratar de asimilar más armas de las que realmente puedan utilizar.” *Conversaciones... dos Santos*, 28-29

⁵⁵ “hay que trabajar a un ritmo acelerado.” *Conversaciones... dos Santos*, 73-74.

plan, expressing overwhelming doubts that dos Santos' desire to continue waging war against UNITA forces that were already "militarily and politically defeated" would do anything but give UNITA political leverage on the international stage.⁵⁷

Fidel's criticisms of Angolan proposals in the 1988 conversation could be overlaid on Castro's subliminal frustration with a corrupt, unreliable MPLA (and by extension, an ineffective and unreliable dos Santos). But the fact of the matter is, Castro does not delve nearly as deep into a critique of ineffective Angolan leadership as would certainly have been possible. In fact, there is no outright criticism of Dos Santos's personal corruption, even though this conversation occurred at a time in Dos Santos's leadership when exploitation of state patronage by a coterie of elites was accelerating.⁵⁸ This reflects a broader trend whereby the available Wilson Center documents on exchanges between Castro and dos Santos seem to indicate that issues relating to Angola's unbridled neopatrimonialism hardly arose in conversation and letters between the two figures at all.⁵⁹ It was not until after Angola's new path had been made infinitely clear, when Angola failed to vote against the U.S. blockade of Cuba in 1995, that we have an account of Castro's ire. The scandal that ensued infuriated many Angolans who were connected to Cuba via civil war experiences, and Fidel Castro himself sent two Cuban generals to express his fury to President dos Santos.⁶⁰

Yet even in the 1995 United Nations voting incident, we notice that it was Fidel's generals, as opposed to Fidel himself, who ultimately conveyed some form of denunciation of Dos Santos. In general, it proves difficult to find a transcription of Castro directly speaking ill of Dos Santos's political conduct. Various theories could attempt to explain that: Passages might have been redacted by the Cuban government, or Cuba might have lacked full awareness of the scale of Dos Santos's neopatrimonial operations (though that seems unlikely considering the sheer scale of the pillaging). It is also possible that Castro based his response on internationalism's strict respect for other countries' sovereignty: Cuba was meant to defend Namibia and Angola's sovereignty against foreign aggressors, but it could not dictate how those sovereign states would be run. Gleijeses agrees with this perspective when he writes, "The Cuban troops did not stay in Angola for more than a decade, however,

⁵⁷ "militar y políticamente derrotado." *Conversaciones... dos Santos*, 43-46

⁵⁸ Vidal, "Angolan Regime," 127-135.

⁵⁹ Based on my investigations, I only encountered one instance where "indiscipline" in the MPLA was discussed. Comments on the subject came up alongside a brief reference on the part of dos Santos to the purging of members "que considerábamos pocos activos, pocos dinámicos." This same conversation also featured a brief note on the part of dos Santos that virtually no government program existed for Luanda's growing unemployed population, to which dos Santos offered the possible solution of moving the unemployed persons to other parts of the country. All of these comments were offered by dos Santos himself; Castro did not seem to openly draw connections with MPLA corruption in spite of those connections likely existing, even in wartime (refer to discussion of Angolan neopatrimonialism on page 6). *Memorandum of Conversation between Fidel Castro and José Eduardo dos Santos, 25 October 1985, 1985, Wilson Center Digital Archive*, Wilson Center, 5, 172.

⁶⁰ Brittain, *Death of Dignity*, 94.

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to keep dos Santos in power. They stayed to defend Angola from South Africa. They stayed, in other words, to hold the line against apartheid.”⁶¹ Regardless of the reasoning, there is a notable lack of outright statements against Dos Santos’s incompetence, his neopatrimonialism, or his ideological duplicity. But all of this could simply be due to the fact that the Cubans and Angolans were still (or had until recently been) cooperating militarily. In that case, one must move forward in time to confirm Castro’s response to the events in Angola under Dos Santos.

DISAPPEARING HISTORIES: FORGETTING ANGOLAN-CUBAN RELATIONS

One can shed further light on these questions by moving forward through time to examine Dos Santos’s and Castro’s parallel speeches in 2005 regarding the thirtieth anniversary of Angolan independence and Cuban involvement in Angola. In dos Santos’ Independence Day speech on November 11, the war of the 1970s is described as a “war of aggression and of internal armed conflict” in an “environment of great outside hostility,”⁶² though he does not explain the specific sides of the conflict, let alone their international benefactors. Then, the events of 1988 are framed in terms of the transition to a market system and multiparty politics, which allegedly opened the door in 1988 to “the New York Peace Accords with apartheid South Africa, under mediation from the United States.”⁶³ No reference is made to Cuba’s specific role in the events of the 1970s and 1980s. Instead, Angolan affairs enter a historical vacuum. As dos Santos explains without further qualification, “We ensured... the security of southwestern Africa and conditions for Namibian Independence, which had a positive and decisive impact on changes that occurred later in South Africa.”⁶⁴ Only at the speech’s end is Cuban involvement nebulously acknowledged (though Cuba’s critical, war-changing role in places like Luanda and Cuito Cuanavale is not fully addressed) when dos Santos proclaims, “On this memorable date, we must not forget to express a word to recognize and appreciate all of the countries... that

⁶¹ This respect for sovereignty would also fit with Cuba’s reluctance to create a “bondage of gratitude” with Angola reminiscent of the U.S.’s own expectation of gratefulness on the part of post-independence Cuba. Gleijeses, *Visions*, 525.

⁶² “guerra de agressão e de conflito armado interno” in “o ambiente de grande hostilidade externa.” José Eduardo dos Santos, “Discurso o PR por ocasião do 30º aniversário da independência nacional,” (Luanda: 11 November 2005) *Angonotícias*, n.p.

⁶³ “os Acordos de Paz de Nova Iorque com a África do Sul do ‘apartheid’, sob mediação dos Estados Unidos da América.” dos Santos, “Discurso,” n.p.

⁶⁴ “Garantimos [...] a segurança no Sudoeste de África e as condições para a Independência da Namíbia, que teve um impacto positivo e decisivo nas mudanças ocorridas mais tarde na própria África do Sul.” dos Santos, “Discurso,” n.p.

supported us... They're many in number, but I cannot forget to specifically cite Cuba, whose sons and daughters also shed their blood here in defense of our sovereignty.”⁶⁵

For his part, Fidel Castro undertook the task of criticizing this understatement of the Cuban role in Angola during his own speech held in December 2005 in observance of the 49th anniversary of the arrival of the *Granma* and of the 30th anniversary of the Cuban mission in Angola. After outlining Cuba's operations in Africa and touching upon Soviet hesitancy regarding Angola,⁶⁷ Castro begins to “set the record straight” by stating, “The history of imperial and neocolonial pillaging and plunder of Europe in Africa, with blatant support from the United States and NATO, like the heroic solidarity of Cuba with its kindred peoples, has not been sufficiently made known.”⁶⁸ Regarding the November 11 dos Santos speech, Castro reveals:

Upon the arrival of this 30th anniversary, the Yankee imperialists are carrying out an extraordinary effort to ensure that Cuba's name not appear in any commemorative events. On top of that, the U.S. is trying to rewrite history: Apparently Cuba had absolutely nothing to do with the independence of Angola, the independence of Namibia, and the defeat of apartheid. Cuba doesn't even exist, everything was the work of chance and the imagination of the people.⁶⁹

Castro goes on to explain how this “insult to the people of Angola, Namibia, and South Africa” and “gross injustice against Cuba, the only non-African country that fought

⁶⁵ “Nesta data memorável não podemos deixar de exprimir uma palavra de reconhecimento e apreço a todos os países [...] que nos apoiaram [...] Eles são muitos, mas não posso deixar de cita Cuba cujos filhos aqui também verteram o seu sangue para a defesa da nossa soberania.”

As a side-note, one of my favorite quotes from the speech indicating just how out of touch the Angolan president truly was with reality comes when dos Santos proclaims, “True peace should have a basis in justice and balanced distribution of national funds [*A paz verdadeira deve assentar na justiça e na repartição equilibrada do rendimento nacional*].” dos Santos, “Discurso,” *n.p.*

⁶⁷ Castro describes how “el gobierno soviético, por su parte, nos presionaba fuertemente solicitando nuestra rápida retirada, preocupado por las posibles reacciones yanquis,” although he further qualifies that “no obstante, siempre prevaleció entre militares cubanos y soviéticos un gran respeto y profundos sentimientos de solidaridad y comprensión.” Fidel Castro, “Discurso pronunciado por el Presidente de la República de Cuba Fidel Castro Ruz, en el acto conmemorativo por el aniversario 30 de la Misión Militar cubana en Angola y el aniversario 49 del desembarco del *Granma*, Día de las FAR, el 2 de diciembre de 2005,” (Havana: 2 December 2005), *n.p.*

⁶⁸ “La historia del pillaje y del saqueo imperialista y neocolonial de Europa en África, con pleno apoyo de Estados Unidos y la OTAN, así como la heroica solidaridad de Cuba con los pueblos hermanos, no han sido suficientemente conocidas.” Castro, “Discurso,” *n.p.*

⁶⁹ “Al cumplirse el 30 Aniversario, el imperialismo yanqui realiza un extraordinario esfuerzo para que el nombre de Cuba no aparezca siquiera en los eventos conmemorativos. Para colmo, pretende reescribir la historia: Cuba al parecer nunca tuvo absolutamente nada que ver con la independencia de Angola, la independencia de Namibia y la derrota [...] del apartheid; Cuba ni siquiera existe, todo fue obra de la casualidad y la imaginación de los pueblos.” Castro, “Discurso,” *n.p.*

and shed its blood for Africa and against the opprobrious regime of apartheid.”⁷⁰ is partially the result of Cuba’s reluctance to extol its own acts, “which it did with such a lack of self interest and with such solidary spirit.”⁷¹ Finally, the Cuban leader promises that that silence will be remedied by the opening of archives and greater discussion on Cuba’s African missions.

One specific aspect of this 2005 speech by Castro, or rather, one specific omission, calls for closer analysis. Castro never acknowledges the fact that it was José Eduardo dos Santos who gave the commemorative speech that largely erased Cuba from Angolan history. Later, when dos Santos came to Cuba in 2007 as part of a state visit, Cuban media only remarked generally on the “the excellent results of the recent visit” during which dos Santos allegedly “recalled how the Cubans sacrificed their lives in Angola and thanked Cuba because it’s always been at the side of that African nation.”⁷² when talking with a group of internationalist veterans. Dos Santos reportedly continued by stating, “The Cuban combatants contributed to underpinning the independence of Zimbabwe, attaining that of Namibia, erasing the odious apartheid regime in South Africa, and helping that country conquer peace.”⁷³ In the meantime, media outlets in the U.S. and elsewhere focused exclusively on the fact that Fidel Castro’s photo with José Eduardo dos Santos represented his first public appearance since undergoing intestinal surgery.⁷⁴ While “imperialismo yanqui” had been condemned for altering history in 2005, Dos Santos evades public denunciation for not only altering the Angolan historical narrative, but also doing so in spite of being intimately involved in the historical events that were so blatantly omitted. Despite his own noncommittal attitude in 2005 toward remembrance of Cuban involvement in Angola, Dos Santos was publicly welcomed with open arms in Cuba in 2007.

It’s possible that Fidel Castro’s lack of specificity regarding José Eduardo dos Santos’ impact on the historical record reflected a rejection of the “betrayal” narrative that oversimplifies the MPLA’s development. Castro might recognize the limitations of the MPLA, a gatekeeper entity that has only become better able to govern in recent years, in making decisions in anything but a pragmatic manner. But it must be more than that.

In certain senses, the lack of official Cuban acknowledgement of dos Santos’s drift away from true solidarity with Cuba represents a reverse erasure of history, though more

⁷⁰ “insulto a los pueblos de Angola, Namibia, y Sudáfrica,” “grosera injusticia contra Cuba, el único país no africano que combatió y derramó su sangre por África y contra el oprobioso régimen del apartheid.” Castro, “Discurso,” *n.p.*

⁷¹ “que hizo con tanto desinterés y espíritu solidario.” Castro, “Discurso,” *n.p.*

⁷² “excelentes resultados de la reciente visita,” “recordó que los cubanos sacrificaron su vida en Angola y agradeció a Cuba porque siempre ha estado al lado de esa nación Africana.” “Clausurada en Angola jornada mundial de solidaridad con los Cinco patriotas,” *Granma* (9 October 2007), *n.p.*

⁷³ “Los combatientes cubanos contribuyeron a apuntalar la independencia de Zimbabwe, lograr la de Namibia, borrar el odioso regimen del apartheid en Sudáfrica y ayudar a su país a conquistar la paz.” María Julia Mayoral and Arnaldo Musa, “Amistad forjada con sangre y sacrificio,” *Granma* (22 September 2007), *n.p.*

⁷⁴ “Castro standing and smiling in new photo,” *USA Today* (23 September 2008), *n.p.*

forgivable than the omission of Cuba's leading role as an international force in Angola. Frozen in time, dos Santos remains Cuba's MPLA ally in spite of years spent despoiling his own country of vast amounts of wealth, in spite of multiple decades of dysfunctional, corrupt leadership in Angola after the Cuban operations, and in spite of doubts as to whether dos Santos had ever been fully committed to the revolutionary cause in the first place. By "disappearing" much of dos Santos's personal history and much of Angola's history after 1991, Castro is able to maintain a rationalizing narrative of African internationalism as a fight for Angolan, Namibian, and South African racial equality and national sovereignty. At the same time, allies like dos Santos pragmatically select historical narratives based on their audience that sometimes "disappear" Cuban involvement altogether. While Castro's approach to remembering Cuban involvement in Angola aids in establishing greater coherence in the Cuban collective memory, it does not fully address the sentiments of disappointment and resentment that likely arose with the continual deterioration of Angola toward rampant neopatrimonialism.

Although Cuban intervention in Angola ended almost a quarter of a century in the past, and although the Angolan Civil War has also receded beyond a decade from the present, the conflicts and complications of affairs in Angola are perpetuated in historical disputes in the present day. Most of the rewriting of Angolan history has been undertaken by historians sympathetic to U.S. sensibilities who are reluctant to acknowledge Cuba's central role in southern African independence and in apartheid's eventual fall. Nevertheless, Cuba, and more specifically Fidel Castro, has also consistently adopted certain historical omissions with reference to the Angolan historical record. In particular, Cuba's relationship with José Eduardo dos Santos, which has historically been damaged by dos Santos's questionable dedication to Cuban revolutionary principles in spite of Cuba's massive aid, has been pragmatically simplified to better reflect the positive aspects of Cuban intervention in Angola. While this historical alteration is minor in comparison to assaults against Cuba's existence in African history, it carries tremendous implications for the official Cuban understanding of the success of Cuban missions in Cold War Africa.

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“Poster of President Agostinho Neto and Fidel Castro after Angolan Independence Celebration.”

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THE SPIRIT OF 1917

VICTOR SERGE, THE FRACTURING OF THE EUROPEAN LEFT, AND THE MEMORY OF REVOLUTION IN INTERWAR EUROPE

Victor Serge, writes Alexander Saeedy '15, “ensured his own destruction.” A revolutionary journalist active in the early years of the Comintern, Serge became disillusioned with the Stalinist course of the USSR and the international Communist movement he once helped promote. However, Serge never gave up on the principles of the Bolshevik Revolution, attempting to reclaim the “spirit of 1917” from his ideological opponents. In this essay, Saeedy places Serge’s rise and fall in the context of the fragmented world of interwar leftist thought. While the Russian Revolution is approaching a century old, debates over its legacy date back almost as long.

By Alexander Saeedy, TC '15
Written for “Russian Revolutions and Civil War, 1905 - 1921”
Professor Laura Engelstein
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INTRODUCTION

In 1919, Victor Serge left his prison cell and answered the call of revolution. Years earlier, Serge had served as a journalist and editor for leftist newspapers in Brussels and Paris, but in 1914 he was jailed for involvement with the anarchist Bonnot Gang, and in 1917 he was expelled from France. While agitating for anarchist revolts in Barcelona in 1917, Serge caught wind of Tsar Nicolas II's abdication. He returned to France in an attempt to join the action in Russia, but was arrested for violating his expulsion order. It was in prison that Serge, like many socialists, anarchists, and libertarians all across Europe, began to develop a strong enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution.

In January of 1919, when the French government arranged an exchange with the Bolshevik government of Russia, Serge and other radicals were swapped for anti-Bolshevik prisoners of war. From the moment of his arrival, he was a full-fledged revolutionary. He joined the Bolshevik Party in May 1919, and worked as a party official and international journalist promoting communism and workers' revolution abroad. Throughout the 1920s, Serge was an influential member of the Third International, a central Bolshevik organ whose goal was to promote the spread of international revolution, and he travelled on its behalf to Berlin and Vienna for the purpose of forming a revolutionary working-class movement in the West.

But by 1936, Victor Serge was no longer a revered and diehard Bolshevik of the revolutionary vanguard. To some degree, Serge never lost faith in the cause of revolutionary Marxism. But as Serge joined the Left Opposition in the 1920s, he began to openly criticize Stalinist policies and the direction of the Soviet Union's future. After the publication of "*La lutte des classes dans la révolution chinoise*" in 1928, the Soviet secret police arrested Serge, and in 1933, he was sent to a prison camp in Orenburg for three years. Serge managed to escape the Soviet Union in 1936, only months before the first round of Stalin's show trials. He returned with his family to Western Europe, but the Marxists of France, Spain, and even the United States did not recognize him. Whether it was his writing or his demeanor, Victor Serge in the late 1930s and 1940s was bleak and pessimistic. His correspondences with his closest friends from the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary period suggest a massive rift of ideas between old comrades. Not only had Serge become a bitter man, but his books and ideas had also come into direct conflict with revolutionary Marxism.

1917 and the early years of Soviet Russia never left Serge's mind. When he remembered the Revolution's beginnings as a party member in the 1920s, impassioned Marxism shone within him. Yet in Serge's last stories of 1917-1921, the picture of revolution had taken a different shape. Where he once equated Marxist ideals with the schematics of Bolshevik revolution, he later argued that the revolutionary party had unknowingly created the instruments of its own destruction—the Cheka, the bureaucracy, and the dependency on military power. Serge's respect for Lenin and the Marxist principles of Bolshevism never

faltered, but he believed that the revolution and its consequent civil war planted seeds of authoritarianism that grew into an oppressive Bolshevik regime.

Yet Serge did not recant his belief in the first principles of Marxist revolution, socialist political structures, and absolute freedom. In his re-remembering of the Revolution, Serge did not condemn Marxism to irrelevancy. The blame for a failed Revolution fell on the actors: the Bolshevik party, even though the ideas that animated Bolshevism were still alive and meaningful. Rather than see the years of 1917-1921 as total failure, he remembered what was truly dynamic about this time. He would, in the end, reconsider and reject some the finer points of the Bolshevik program. But 1917 remained a step in the right direction for humanity, and through the power of revolutionary energy, Serge pointed to a next possible stage of the European Left as he retold its watershed rise to power in 1917. .

VICTOR SERGE: THE YOUNG BOLSHEVIK

Serge wrote in his essay “L’esprit révolutionnaire russe” that “the revolutionary spirit lives in all men.” In January 1919, Victor Serge was still publishing as “Le Rétif,” a name he adopted while a writer for anarchist newspapers in Paris. While the essay was published in *Le Libéraire* in January, February, and March 1919, Serge had already left to join the Bolsheviks in Petrograd. The energy that swept him to revolution animates the essay. He wrote that “whether he is a worker, a petit-bourgeois or a noble, the revolutionary begins...through encountering clandestine groups. He is interested in spreading propaganda to the people.” The revolutionary is a creator, destroyer, and artist. He is a world-citizen, traversing all of Europe and the world to free the oppressed from their chains. The “théoriciens” command the will of revolution, but “the crowd of propagandists and militants” are its real heroes, Serge wrote. The energy of “this anonymous crowd defies all belief.”

Peter Sedgwick, a translator of Serge’s work from the 1960s and 1970s, refused to take Serge at face value. In “The Unhappy Elitist: Victor Serge’s Early Bolshevism,” Sedgwick doubted Serge’s idealistic populism. Whether as an anarchist, Communist, or Bolshevik dissident, Serge always identified the inherent problems of revolution. Too often it encouraged violence, blind authoritarianism, and disrespect for basic freedoms. Yet before aligning Serge with “unmistakable sympathies with the outraged Russian masses in the bureaucratic epoch of War Communism,”¹ Sedgwick recalled the ideas behind Serge’s early Bolshevism. He claimed that Serge had no qualms with a Bolshevik monopoly of power. Even in the early 1930s, Serge did not blame the *structure* of a party-controlled state for the USSR’s descent into authoritarianism. Upon his arrival in Petrograd, Serge seemed to renounce any anti-statism inherited from his anarchism. According to Sedgwick, “Victor

¹ Peter Sedgwick, “The Unhappy Elitist: Victor Serge’s Early Bolshevism,” *History Workshop* 17 (1984): 211.

Serge's political standpoint was more authoritarian, autocratic even, than that argued by the regime's orthodox defenders in the Leninist line."²

This is certainly contestable. Bold as its claims were, Sedgwick's essay drew from a limited number of sources. But it brought a perspective to Serge that is often forgotten. Sedgwick suggested that Serge gravitated towards a theme "traditionally alien to Marxist thought: that of the *elite*, or psychologically privileged minority which was entitled through its possession of superior energy."³ Whether this view was really "alien" to Marxist thought is again, contestable. But Serge placed sincere belief in the ideas behind revolution. Therefore, the elite that maintained these ideas and translated them into political practice played a central role. Even his ties to anarcho-syndicalism, Sedgwick wrote, did not imply that Serge supported total freedom. French syndicalist literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which Serge almost certainly would have read, "is replete with elitist legitimations of the violent action of conscious minorities, undertaken irrespective of the wishes of the deluded majority of workers."⁴

We can identify these themes in Serge's own writing. *L'an I de la révolution russe* is something of an anomaly in the chronology of Serge's political dissent. He began to critique European Communism and the USSR in the mid-1920s, but the book, published in 1930, was sympathetic to the continued progress of the USSR. However, it seems motivated by Serge's continued respect for Lenin and the ideology of revolution.

Observe Serge's tone as he discusses the relationship of the masses to the Bolshevik party. "The masses have a million faces," he wrote. "They are dominated by diverse and contradictory class interests" and their confused energy cannot be harnessed "to true consciousness—without which productive action is impossible—without organization."⁵ This was the real genius of revolution in Russia: the Bolshevik party. Through its organizational power, the party shaped the faceless energy of the agitated masses into a political platform that had purpose and achievable goals. And Serge was quite clear: without the Bolshevik party, there could have been no *pouvoir aux masses*. "[The party leaders'] personality is only as great as the measure in which [the party] represents the masses," he wrote. And as it enveloped the masses' political energy, the party expressed "the sentiment of all men and a potential (*virutalité*), which is a necessity for the proletariat: terrible impersonality!"⁶

But let us reconsider Sedgwick's skepticism. Serge identifies a set of humanist values in the Russian Revolution, intimately linked to the "*génie d'un Lénine*." "The necessary means to security or proletarian victory could not be conceived"⁷ without the direction of Lenin and an organized party. The history of revolution in Western Europe was the perfect

² Sedgwick, "The Unhappy Elitist," 152.

³ Sedgwick, "The Unhappy Elitist," 152.

⁴ Sedgwick, "The Unhappy Elitist," 153.

⁵ Victor Serge, *L'an I de la révolution russe* (Paris: Librairie du Travail, 1930), 46.

⁶ Serge, *L'an I*, 53.

⁷ Serge, *L'an I*, 53.

counterexample. Power floated in a democratic vacuum in Germany and France. Workers sought revolution, but their instruments of political expression—parliamentary political parties—remained committed to and entrenched in the traditions of bourgeois statehood. As was the case in Germany, a commitment to parliamentarianism eclipsed the Left’s power to enact change. Revolution only had potential when a revolutionary party embraced the energy of the masses and directed it against established authority. This was the genius of Lenin, and this was the beauty of revolution in Russia.

But could the revolutionary spirit live on? The USSR overcame anarchy and developed into a functional and powerful state. Production levels in the USSR rose, revolution abroad failed, and the Stalinist bureaucracy came to life. And in the interwar period, the revolutionary spirit of 1917 that brought the Left to power would endure a great set of challenges as it sought greater power. These challenges would divide old allies on the Left and leave the legacy and meaning of the Russian Revolution in doubt.

SERGE IN THE INTERWAR YEARS

Serge began to critique the Soviet Union in the 1920s. In his early writing on behalf of the party, Serge claimed that workers’ revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat were inseparable from the ambitions of Bolshevik politics. But in the 1920s, Serge considered key aspects of Marxist revolution—of *le pouvoir aux masses*, a clear link between state power and workers’ power, and international communism—as separate from the history and development of the Russian Revolution. His earliest critiques came at a time when Left Oppositionists were still a faction of the Bolshevik Party. During his first five years working for the party, Serge and other Bolshevik officials poured over the archives of the Okhrana, the secret police of Imperial Russia. Their work was developed into a book published in 1926 by the Librairie du Travail in Paris, titled *Les Couloirs d’une Sûreté Générale* and authored by Serge. It was more than an overview of Okhrana surveillance, however; the second half prescribed revolutionary tactics against an oppressive police force. The legacy of a heavily policed state, it suggested, had survived in the Soviet Union.

Serge wrote that “the Okhrana did not know how to prevent the fall of the autocracy. But the Cheka [the Soviet secret police] was a powerful contributor that stopped the collapse of power in the Soviets.”⁸ Serge knew that the Cheka was necessary in the fight against counterrevolution. In a world of conspirators, “repression has utility insofar as it completes useful tasks for society and politics.”⁹

Yet he sensed that a violently assertive state could not serve a flourishing and free communist state. He wrote that “police provocation is foremost the arm—or the evil—of

⁸ Victor Serge, *Les Couloirs d’une Sûreté Générale in Mémoires d’un Révolutionnaire et autres écrits politiques, 1908-1947*, edited by Jean Rièrre and Jil Silberstein (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont S.A., 2001), 286.

⁹ Serge, *Les Couloirs*, 287.

regimes in decomposition.”¹⁰ Though he never stated that the Stalinist Cheka was a provocative police force, Serge suggested that any form of repression “is *ultimately* powerless when it goes against historical development.”¹¹ This type of reflection, that the Soviet Union had given birth to institutions that acted against the proper course of Marxist history, was regularly repeated during Serge’s career as a Left Oppositionist. In a serialized article for the French Marxist journal *Clarté*, Serge turned a critical eye on the Comintern in the developing revolution in China. He not only lamented “the lack of intellectual initiative in the revolutionary press,”¹² but that “the Third International [needed] activity, initiative, and intelligence.”¹³ How had the proud revolutionary spirit lost its way? Not only had the Cheka turned a revolutionary and liberated state into a strict authoritarian tyranny—even the Comintern, which Serge was instrumental in creating, had lost the initiative needed to develop revolution into an international phenomenon.

The founding principles of revolution were crumbling in the Soviet Union. Change was therefore a necessity. Again in his 1928 essay “La lutte des classes dans la révolution chinoise,” Serge rethought the Bolshevik hegemony over political action and political theory, two powers that were ironclad properties of the party in “L’esprit révolutionnaire russe.” In lieu of a definitive Russian stratagem for revolution, Serge welcomed “mistakes, errors, even deviations, [which] are inevitable...[as the] party of action, party of progress, we only have ignorance, passivity, inaction, and routine to fear.”¹⁴ Serge remained committed to the earliest stages of the revolution. But the older methods had given way to an unrecognizable and undesirable state of political life. What was needed was a new direction and a new method of experimentation for the Left.

Serge was a political journalist for most of his life. But as he aged, he used fiction as a medium for critique and historical exposition. His critical attitude would climax in the late 1930s and the 1940s with the publication of *S’il est minuit dans le siècle* in 1939 and *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*, published a year after Serge’s death in 1947. But the expressive capabilities of Serge’s fiction began in Serge’s 1931 novel, *Naissance de notre force*. At its beginning, the nameless narrator agitates for anarchist rebellion in Barcelona. As the insurgency crumbles, the narrator is swept away by revolutionary fervor and takes a train from France all the way to Petrograd. As in Serge’s life, so too in his fiction.

Upon his arrival in Petrograd, the narrator finds suitable lodgings in the abandoned residence of a Counselor of the Russian Empire. There is not enough coal or wood to sustain a fire, but a fire mysteriously burns in the hearth. As the narrator and his housemates gather around the heat, an old man cries out: “the laws are burning!” Serge explains: “the friendly

¹⁰ Serge, *Les Coulisses*, 286.

¹¹ Serge, *Les Coulisses*, 288.

¹² Victor Serge, “La lutte des classes dans la révolution chinoise” in *La révolution chinoise, 1927-1929* (Paris: Éditions Savelli, 1977), 51.

¹³ Serge, “La lutte,” 52.

¹⁴ Serge, “La lutte,” 52.

warmth in front of which the young woman was stretching out her hands was coming from the flames which were devouring Tome XXVII of the *Collections of the Laws of the Empire*.¹⁵

Naissance de notre force's plot hinges around failed attempts to seize power and take control of legal authority. The scene in Petrograd at first suggests the opposite. The Left had taken power, and revolution retained vitality and force. But as the tomes of laws burned, the "flames revealed these words forming a chapter heading: *Concerning Landed Property...* and, farther down, 'the rights of collateral heirs.'¹⁶ Peter Sedgwick wrote that even in the depths of his Bolshevik fervor, Serge believed that "the revolution [was] itself the repository of an internally-generated evil...a struggle within the revolution against the revolution's own darker nature is therefore an early necessity—although posed incoherently—in Serge's Bolshevik concerns."¹⁷ Even as the Left seized power, Serge foresaw its future struggles. How would it constitute a real system of law for its citizens, and how would it organize into a sustainable system of economy and production?

The messages, like all of Serge's later writings on the moral justifications for revolution, have a tinge of ambiguity. As suggested by Richard Greeman, a translator of Serge's fiction, the image of the burning tomes summarizes Serge's portrayal of revolution in *Naissance de notre force*, "where the masses are portrayed as moving towards revolution less on the base of ideology than as an instinctive response to the pressure of the present, and where the progressive radicalization of the Russian Revolution is seen in terms of the need to survive when there is no turning back."¹⁸ Revolution was quickly losing its familiar face. Serge was realizing that 1917 was not only a triumph of Leftist ideals. It was a leap into an uncertain future.

POLITICS IN INTERWAR FRANCE

We've already witnessed a reorientation in Serge's ideas. Revolution had become problematic, and the revolutionary state was susceptible to extreme error and authoritarianism. To understand how Serge's words changed, we must situate them in the context in which they were published: Western Europe, and in particular, France. In the first decades of the twentieth century, French laborers were politically represented by the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO). In 1920, the party splintered on the question of revolution. The minority dissenters remained in the SFIO, but the majority left the party and created the Parti communiste français (PCF) and subsequently joined the Third International. The numbers have always been disputed—but "if one accepts the view of the

¹⁵ Richard Greeman, "'The laws are burning' – Literary and Revolutionary Realism in Victor Serge," *Yale French Studies* 39 (1967): 147.

¹⁶ Greeman, "Literary and Revolutionary Realism," 147.

¹⁷ Sedgwick, "The Unhappy Elitist," 154.

¹⁸ Greeman, "Literary and Revolutionary Realism," 152-53.

police experts, a mere 9000 members remained with the SFIO, the rest of the 180,000 represented at Tours having joined with the Communists.”¹⁹ For Léon Blum, the pivotal figure in French Socialist history during the quarter century between 1920 and 1945,²⁰ Bolshevism’s denial of democracy and political freedom were antithetical to his own reading of Marx, where socialism and democracy were indispensably connected.

But World War I and the Russian Revolution had mobilized pro-Soviet sentiment across the European labor movement. In *Marxism in Modern France*, George Lichtheim wrote that interwar Socialists and Communists were weighted down by a need to “explain their respective attitudes in terms of two issues which had come to the forefront in 1917-19: proletarian internationalism, and the quite unrelated question of whether the Soviet regime could be described as a proletarian dictatorship.”²¹ Those who remained with the SFIO stayed true to older traditions of republican patriotism synthesized with progressive labor reform—odd bedfellows, as those who flirted with fascism and later Vichy would suggest.²²

The PCF had its own battles. After a formal alliance with the Third International, “the fundamental problem...remained that of aligning the party’s strategy upon the defense of the USSR, a criterion which from 1924 onward had become the prime touchstone of Communist loyalty.”²³ SFIO leaders like Léon Blum insisted upon the need for a specifically French workers movement. But how would the PCF square its own policies with those of Stalin’s USSR? . Would they join the apparently successful projects of Third International and the USSR and openly embrace the call for “international revolution” mitigated through a tightly centralized Comintern?. Or would they stay true to authentically French republicanism and the virtues of gradual Marxist reform at the national level?

In the larger context of the twentieth century, French politics tended towards the latter. By the 1960s, most French communists rejected the prospects of international revolution, since “not only could revolution in Europe no longer be justified (or even identified) retrospectively; it could not plausibly be inferred in anticipation from the contemporary capitalist boom and a quiescent proletariat.”²⁴

But in the years between World War I and the 1960s, they believed quite the opposite. They voiced a strident hope in the developing Soviet Union, even as it strayed from the first principles of Marxist Revolution. The correspondence of Jules Humbert-Droz with the Third International frames the PCF’s initial difficulties in defining its relationship with the Soviet Union. Humbert-Droz founded the Swiss Communist Party in 1918 and served as a European emissary to France and Switzerland for the Comintern. In a letter to the Presidium of the Communist International, Humbert-Droz wrote that Ludovic-Oscar

¹⁹ Tony Judt, *Marxism and the French Left* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1986), 125.

²⁰ George Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 39.

²¹ Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, 37.

²² Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, 43.

²³ Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, 57.

²⁴ Judt, *French Left*, 191.

Frossard, the PCF's general secretary, felt that his work with the Comintern seemed "useless if the Executive had already imagined and decided everything."²⁵ But according to Humbert-Droz, Frossard was too autonomous. His first role as party leader was to ensure that the PCF "joined with true communist parties [and] to define [the PCF's] conduct."²⁶ Even in 1922, "the general state of the party [was] far from optimistic."²⁷ On the right, members sympathetic to the SFIO sought reintegration with the socialists. On the left, party members demanded the expulsion of those who could not fully commit to the Third International. Moreover, the failure of the PCF to achieve significant electoral gains convinced Humbert-Droz that "confusion and incomprehension [were] now greater than ever."²⁸ How could the PCF ever hope to unite and present a united front that could gain power?

The answer was a strict Bolshevization of the party. On January 1st, 1923, Frossard was expelled from the party, along with other centrists and vocal Trotskyites. In a sense, Humbert-Droz wrote, "the expulsion of Frossard and a number of his friends have finally allowed us to clear the abscess of those who constituted...militants that were penetrated by the spirit and traditions of Jaurès' socialism."²⁹ A coming together into one platform of workers' revolution seemed at hand. As German communists fell into complete disarray, French communists seemed on the cusp of what their European counterparts had failed to do. George Lichtheim wrote that "the basic problem of all European Communist parties—how to wed the myth of the October Revolution to the traditions of the European labor movement—came nearer a solution in France than elsewhere."³⁰ The PCF's successful purge in 1922 suggested new hope in the cause of European revolution.

But the wedding of Russian ideas to a long-developed French labor movement was too incongruous. Humbert-Droz suggested that this was a "daunting mission."³¹ How could the PCF successfully differentiate which aspects of revolution came from Russia, and which arose from party doctrine? He wrote, "We have had great troubles to introduce innovations in the name of Bolshevism, innovations which have not always been supported by Bolsheviks and have difficulties adapting to French conditions."³² This plagued the party for the remainder of the interwar period—of remaining true to the commands of the Communist International while empowering a national political movement. Lichtheim claimed that the PCF took increasing measures to ensure "its unflinching readiness to execute major turnabouts whenever the interest of the USSR appeared to demand it."³³ But it had entered

²⁵ Annie Kriegel and Pierre Nora, eds., *L'œil de Moscou à Paris: Jules Humbert-Droz, ancien secrétaire de l'Internationale communiste*. (Paris: Collection Archives Julliard, 1964), 60.

²⁶ Kriegel and Nora, *L'œil de Moscou*, 70.

²⁷ Kriegel and Nora, *L'œil de Moscou*, 61.

²⁸ Kriegel and Nora, *L'œil de Moscou*, 62.

²⁹ Kriegel and Nora, *L'œil de Moscou*, 202.

³⁰ Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, 53.

³¹ Kriegel and Nora, *L'œil de Moscou*, 202.

³² Kriegel and Nora, *L'œil de Moscou*, 202.

³³ Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, 57.

into a pure contradiction. It defended a rationalist pathos of freedom while simultaneously obliging itself to defend an oppressive Stalinist outlook of hegemony over thought.

Serge saw this as a grim step backwards. Once filled with a spirit of freedom and *le pouvoir aux masses*, European politics had adopted a political intelligence “taken over by barbaric totalitarianisms, one fascist, the other Stalinist.”³⁴ From a political perspective, the relationship between French Communists and the Soviet Union was never fixed or consistent. But a majority of the PCF’s members, especially in the 1930s, stayed dedicated to the Soviet Union as the ultimate arbiter of Marxist and revolutionary ideals. And when Serge’s texts in the 1930s began to criticize the policies of Stalinist Russia, Serge became a Menshevik and Thermadorian in the eyes of his French colleagues and Communist sympathizers.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE LEFT

When Trotsky was arrested and exiled from Leningrad by Stalin in 1928, Serge was also arrested, imprisoned for six weeks, and subsequently expelled from the Communist Party. Serge was arrested again in 1933, but this time he was deported to Orenburg with other Left Oppositionists. In the meantime, Serge's friends and colleagues in Paris began to campaign for his release. He was allowed to return to Moscow in 1936 and quickly fled to Paris with his family. As Serge returned, he was still in contact with Trotsky. Trotsky imagined the creation of a Fourth International, creating a world party for workers who “were repulsed by Stalinism and disgusted by the parliamentary reformism of the social democrats.”³⁵

Serge was the ideal candidate to lead the European section of the Fourth International. But by 1937, Serge cut himself off from the Fourth International, and soon after, Trotsky. He viewed the rigid class demands of the Trotskyists, who “demanded a position of no class collaboration,”³⁶ as divisive and isolationist. With the twin crises of fascism and Stalinism, the vanguard of Lenin’s left needed to rebuild a coalition, not continue the factionalism that had endlessly divided the Left through the interwar period. Serge’s break with the Fourth International marked the end of his intimate affiliation with Trotsky and the Left Opposition. His alienation from western European revolutionaries and Leftists would only grow throughout the rest of his life. .

Through the 1930s, Serge wrote a number of texts that openly criticized the USSR. But none shocked Serge’s sympathizers as much as *S’il est minuit dans le siècle*. Published in 1939, it signaled the beginning of Serge’s permanent estrangement from Communists and Left sympathizers in the West. Serge’s correspondences from the time of its publication suggest how unhappy his Leftist comrades were. For many in Europe, the combination of

³⁴ Susan Weissman, *Victor Serge* (New York: Verso, 2001), 239.

³⁵ Weissman, *Victor Serge*, 229.

³⁶ Weissman, *Victor Serge*, 233

distance and successful propagandizing through the Comintern had led to “hysterical levels of uncritical adulation.”³⁷ Admittedly, many ex-revolutionaries and European Leftists were critical of the USSR, particularly as news of the Moscow show trials reached Western Europe. But just as many found nihilism to be useless.

Julián Gorkin, a leader of the Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) in Spain, had been a sympathizer of Trotsky’s and aided Serge in his emigration to Mexico at the beginning of World War II. Yet when he wrote to Serge in 1939 about *S’il est minuit dans le siècle*, Gorkin was severe. “I read the book. Would you like my opinion? Here it is...it is a horrifying book.”³⁸ From a literary perspective, the novel’s grim atmosphere was a fair choice. But Gorkin reminded Serge that even “if the truth is that way, and the artist is dedicated above all to truth,” Serge must remember that “you are not only an artist. You are a militant. And I am addressing a militant.” Perhaps from an artistic point of view, Serge had successfully given an account of how life felt under Stalin. But as a political activist, what was he endorsing beyond despair and hopelessness? Gorkin follows: “What conclusions can one pull from your book? What perspectives are given from it? ... Does there exist one ray of hope and optimism?”³⁹

Serge continued to lose friends throughout the 1940s. His books were alienating his closest friends, and his political journalism was giving him a reputation as a reformist. . His estrangement from Dwight Macdonald serves as a poignant example. Macdonald was an American editor who had become a radical during the Great Depression while writing for the newly founded *Fortune* magazine. As Macdonald left *Fortune* to become an editor for *Partisan Review* in 1939, he discovered Serge and facilitated his publication in America. As World War II began in Europe, he wrote to Serge that “in these tragic times, I often think of you...you can be sure that you still have many friends (unknown to you) and admirers in this country.”⁴⁰ Macdonald unsuccessfully attempted to intercede on Serge’s behalf to obtain an American visa in 1940, and he provided Serge financial support until his departure from Marseilles to Mexico.

This friendship quickly came to an end. In 1945, Serge had come to a bitter disagreement with two comrades from the POUM, Julián Gorkin and Jean Malaquais. A letter sent by Malaquais on October 14th, 1944 recapitulated their quarrel. Malaquais concluded that Serge’s willingness to criticize Stalinist methods suggested that he now placed “his hopes in the Tories and the English liberals.”⁴¹ Malaquais insists that his conviction is right, even if Serge attempted so vehemently to deny it. “You are not with them

³⁷ Judt, *French Left*, 187.

³⁸ Julián Gorkin to Victor Serge, 12 December 1939, Box 1, Folder 36, Victor Serge Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

³⁹ Gorkin (1939).

⁴⁰ Weissman, *Victor Serge*, 245.

⁴¹ Jean Malaquais to Victor Serge, 14 October 1944, Box 1, Folder 51, Victor Serge Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

in the formal sense of the term,” Malaquais writes, “but I believe that you have become a reformist through law, like so many of the illustrious dead.”⁴²

Macdonald caught wind of the dispute. In a letter to Serge on March 30th, 1945, he included an excerpt from a letter that he had sent to Gorkin and Malaquais. In the attached letter, Macdonald wrote, “I should be more hopeful than [Serge] of some revolutionary good to come out of the present European situation, and in any case, less preoccupied with fighting Stalinism.”⁴³ Serge’s “tendency...to accept allies from any quarter in the fight against Communism”⁴⁴ isolated him from those who still *believed* in the vitality of the Left. By 1945, Serge was expelled from the camp of revolutionaries. He was “writing for the desk drawer.” Few publications in Europe or North America were willing to publish his articles. His pessimism and anti-Stalinism placed him outside of the scope of Leftist activism. Macdonald, Gorkin, and the Left were moving on.

CONCLUSION

As Nazi forces stormed into France, Gorkin fled to Mexico with Serge. By 1940, the POUM had collapsed as Franco’s forces took control of Spain. Four years later, both his and Serge’s revolutionary work in Mexico proved fruitless and ineffective. In 1944, Gorkin wrote to Serge, “I do not want to begin yet another vain venture. I participated in the founding of the SYL, and this movement is no more than a phantom (no statues or organization, no meetings or intellectual work for months).”⁴⁵ The list of failed organizations in Europe and Mexico grows as the letter continues.

A crucial question arises: was Serge’s dark outlook a personal problem, or was it emblematic of a greater current in Left politics, one where divisions within the left and the rise of a militant and forceful right had stymied the Left’s brief ascent into international power?

The energy of 1917 spread across the European continent as the Bolshevik party seized power, and its success mobilized the rise of a vocal Left into European politics with Victor Serge was one of its earliest spokesmen. He linked the legacy of the Russian Revolution to preexisting socialist movements in Europe. But as the Stalinist USSR exercised its decisive authority over dissent within the party, Serge and others witnessed the twilight of a Leninist and revolutionary Left.

Serge ensured his own destruction. His and others’ mission to spread the good news of revolution was successful. By and large, Leftists in Western Europe had allied with the

⁴² Malaquais.

⁴³ Dwight Macdonald to Victor Serge, 30 March 1945, Box 1, Folder 48, Victor Serge Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

⁴⁴ Macdonald.

⁴⁵ Julián Gorkin to Victor Serge, 17 April 1944, Box 1, Folder 36, Victor Serge Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

cause of the Soviet Union. But when Serge fractured from the Soviet Union, and later Trotsky, he lost his grounds of political legitimacy. Perceived nihilism and tendencies toward coalition building implied that Serge had betrayed the spirit of 1917.

Serge's essay *Thirty Years After The Russian Revolution*, one of his last essays to be published in his lifetime, reminds us what kept him dedicated to the Left: 1917. Within the thirty years since revolution, Serge witnessed the brief rise and rapid descent of the European Left. "What remains of the unforgettable enthusiasm of 1917?"⁴⁶ he asked. Most of the revolutionary vanguard was dead; Stalin had erased their role in the history of the USSR; mistakes had been made. Serge noted the errors in "the lenient treatment of generals,"⁴⁷ the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion, and the goals of European revolution.⁴⁸

But Serge reminded the reader: proclaiming the "bankruptcy of Bolshevism" was a seemingly easy way of avoiding "the problems which are now gripping the world and which will not release their grip for some time to come."⁴⁹ The rise of Hitler convinced Serge that the German Revolution had good cause to succeed. The ideas that motivated revolution could have saved Europe from its greatest menace. They were a stand for "the social transformation of Europe and the world by the rise to consciousness of the working masses," and revolutionary Marxists "believed they were working so that man could finally control his own destiny."⁵⁰ Its alternative, moreover, remained a reality—of "barbarism and war, war and barbarism, a two-headed monster."⁵¹

The question, therefore, remained open. Mistakes were made in 1917 and the following decades. But the spirit of revolution transcended its own history. The symbolism of 1917 was Serge's bedrock of support when Stalin and his sympathizers pushed against Serge, and it was his moral weathervane as he judged the history of Europe in the decades following the revolution. And the world was already moving on. Serge wrote that "proletarian revolution is no longer to mind our goal; the revolution we mean to serve can only be socialist, in the humanist sense of the word...centralization, discipline, controlled ideology can now arouse only justified mistrust."⁵²

Serge insisted that the Left needed to turn back to the legacy of 1917. It had been the catalyst of something huge, magnificent. "Few were so devoted to the cause of mankind,"⁵³ Serge wrote of the revolutionary vanguard. The calamities of totalitarianism had passed. Western Europe was then accepting nationalization and social planning, where "a sense of social justice [and] newly found freedom could combine naturally to place the economy at

⁴⁶ Victor Serge, "Thirty Years After the Russian Revolution" in *The Ideas of Victor Serge*, trans. by Hugh O'Donnell, edited by Susan Weissman (Glasgow, UK: Critique Books, 1997), 239.

⁴⁷ Serge, "Thirty Years," 246.

⁴⁸ Serge, "Thirty Years," 249.

⁴⁹ Serge, "Thirty Years," 239.

⁵⁰ Serge, "Thirty Years," 250.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Serge, "Thirty Years," 256.

⁵³ Serge, "Thirty Years," 251.

the service of the community.” Was this the next answer, to transform preexisting political structures into pro-socialist governments? It had little to do with the old revolutionary program. By then, the reality of 1917 was gone—but for Serge, its symbolic and amorphous meaning was projecting European socialism into the future. “All is not lost,” he writes in the closing sentence of *Trente Ans*, “since [the revolution’s] rational and strongly motivated hope remains.”⁵⁴

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TITLE IMAGE

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⁵⁴ Serge, “Thirty Years,” 258.



LESSONS FROM TOBE

A WORK OF BLACK CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN CONTEXT

Tobe: A Six Year Old Farmer was described by its publisher, the University of North Carolina Press, as a “social experiment and...gesture toward interracial good feeling.” One of the first depictions of rural African-American life not utterly shot through with racist stereotypes, this children’s book was an attempt to inculcate a more positive view of race relations, as seen in the picture on the cover of this issue. Yet, as Joshua Mandell ’16 discusses, *Tobe* remained deeply intertwined with the system of racial segregation in the early twentieth century South, leaving unchallenged the core realities of oppression and deprivation suffered by black farmers. Mandell analyses both the book’s content and its reception, exploring the place it found in a South still firmly segregated.

By Joshua Mandell, SM ’16
Written for “The Politics and Culture of the American Color Line”
Professor Matthew Jacobson
Faculty Advisor: Glenda Gilmore
Edited by Emily Yankowitz and Olivia Pollak

In 1939, the University of North Carolina Press published *Tobe: A Six Year Old Farmer*, a storybook by Stella Gentry Sharpe, a white schoolteacher, about an African American boy from a tenant farming family in Goshen, North Carolina. At that time, and for decades afterwards, children's books featuring black characters were rare, and most that did exist were bristling with racial stereotypes.¹ *Tobe*, however, was conceived to fill this literary gap – a financial risk taken by the UNC Press to support what photographer Charles Anderson Farrell (whose images illustrate Sharpe's narrative) described as a “social experiment and...gesture toward interracial good feeling.”² The combination of Sharpe's thoughtful storytelling and Farrell's appealing photographs made the *Tobe* “experiment” a success: the book sold 21,000 copies in its first six years of publication, and the UNC Press printed another 15,000 in 1945.³ Well received by black and white schoolteachers, *Tobe* even precipitated a small increase in the number of books with characters that black children could relate to.⁴

The University of North Carolina was a Southern center of liberal ideology, led by prominent men who believed that racial segregation was harmful to the region. *Tobe* was one of multiple projects undertaken by the UNC Press in the 1930s and '40s to improve race relations.⁵ Its portrayal of an African-American family was remarkably progressive for its time and place. But it should not be interpreted as a forceful plea for racial equality. The book's idealization of sharecropping assured that it would not disrupt the Southern social order.⁶ The book's publication also resulted in a racially charged dispute between the UNC Press and the family depicted in *Tobe*'s photographs. Nevertheless, parents, teachers and children appreciated the Press' good intentions and saw *Tobe* as a valuable contribution to black children's literature.

Stella Gentry Sharpe, a former schoolteacher who lived near Chapel Hill, wrote *Tobe* after a black child from on a neighboring farm asked her why all of his storybooks were about white children.⁷ Sharpe later told the UNC Press that she observed Tobe and his siblings as they worked and played “almost every day” over the two or three year period in

¹ Martin, Michelle. *Brown Gold: Milestones of African-American Children's Picture Books, 1845-2002*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

² Farrell, C. Letter to David Jones. 25 June 1941. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³ Cowles, Peter. Letter to Charles Farrell. 12 September 1945. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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⁵ Gilmore, Glenda. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co., 2008. 378-380.

⁶ Abel, Joanne. “Persistence and Sacrifice: Durham County's African American Community & Durham's Jeanes Teachers Build Community and Schools, 1900-1930.” 2009. 33-34. Masters Thesis, Duke University. Web. *Durham County Library*. Accessed 1 May 2014.

⁷ Farrell, C. “*Tobe* background information.” 1940. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

LESSONS FROM TOBE

which she wrote the book. She recalled that when he first saw the book, Tobe remarked: ‘I didn’t know it was going to be a pretty book like this.’” He had thought she would present him “a notebook of some sort... just for him and his brothers to look at,” not a published book that would be read by children all over the country.⁸

Tobe is unusually long for a children’s picture book, but full-page prints of Farrell’s photographs make up half of its 121 pages. The book consists of 55 short and self-contained stories aimed at beginning readers. Eighteen of them discuss agricultural tasks on Tobe’s farm, including harvesting and processing crops, gardening, foraging, and sharpening farm tools. Seventeen focus on animals, from livestock to pets and wild critters like snakes and possums. The remaining stories describe Tobe’s everyday life with his family; celebrations of Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas; and fun times with friends (as well as troubles with a bully). Many of these stories are purely entertaining, without any detectable progressive agenda.

While Sharpe’s manuscript drew the immediate interest of the UNC Press and its director, W. T. Couch, the book’s release was delayed for three years due to a lack of illustrations.⁹ In 1938, Couch asked Charles Farrell, the first professional photographer for the *Greensboro Daily News*,¹⁰ to take pictures for the book. If illustrated with photographs, Couch believed, it would have “qualities of originality which may give it some considerable success” as a supplementary reader for use in black and white schools.¹¹

Farrell’s first task was to find children to photograph: the neighboring children that had inspired Sharpe’s manuscript were now too old to match the characters in the story. On the dust jacket of the first edition, the UNC Press cheerfully retold the story of his quest: “Farrell, experienced though he is, had not fully realized what he was up against. [Sharpe] had given Tobe an unusual family to say the least: father, mother, twin brothers age 5, twin brothers age 9, an older brother, a flock of older sisters, all produced in the shortest time humanly possible.” According to Farrell, he found the perfect “Tobe” walking beside the highway in the black community of Goshen, near Greensboro. The boy’s “sturdy back, bright eyes, plump cheeks and white teeth” matched Farrell’s perception of what Tobe should look like. After securing the approval and the participation of the boy’s parents, Farrell cobbled together the rest of the storybook household by having children from another

⁸ Sharpe, Stella Gentry. “...adjustment to a new situation...” 1940. Accessed 8 November 2014. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers. #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁹ Sharpe, Stella Gentry. “...adjustment to a new situation...” 1940. Accessed 8 November 2014. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers. #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁰ Cullom, Patrick. "Charles Anderson Farrell Photographic Collection." (n.d.): n. pag. North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives. UNC University Libraries. Web.

¹¹ Couch, W. T. Letter to Charles Farrell. 25 April 1938. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Goshen family play the roles of Tobe's siblings.¹² "The entire community... entered the project as if it were a pageant," the Press explained.¹³

Tobe was released soon after Farrell finished his work in the spring of 1939. Tobe narrates all of book's stories except the first, in which Sharpe comments on a picture of the title character and his brothers (Figure 1). Five small black children are seated on a large cart; the oldest stands in front of them, still small enough that the top of the wheel nearly reaches his shoulder. Their cotton shirts are clean and in good condition. All of the children are smiling warmly, except for one of the youngest. Sharpe does not reveal which child is Tobe at first, and invites the reader to guess. "Tobe is not a big boy. He has no twin. Can you find him?"¹⁴ On the next page, Tobe is pictured alone, sitting on a bench in his overalls, bathed in bright sunlight (Figure 2). "I am Tobe," he says. "My real name is Clay Junior. I am six years old. I go to school. We have fun on our farm. I will tell you about it."¹⁵ He introduces his seven siblings and parents, telling readers that all of his siblings are old enough to go to school while pointing out his parents do *not* go to school—they are too old for it.¹⁶ Tobe's repetition of these facts highlights his family's commitment to education. The first photograph of the parents shows them sitting in their living room with flower-print wallpaper (Figure 3). The mother is wearing a floral dress, smiling slightly as she focuses on her sewing. The father wears a formal shirt, jacket and tie, and focuses intently on his newspaper. It is hard to imagine a more respectable portrait.

Tobe goes to great lengths to portray African Americans as responsible people. Tobe and his siblings take care of many pets on their farm, and even the youngest displays compassion for these animals. In one story, Tobe describes how his twin brothers William and Rufus tend to a flock of orphaned chicks. In the accompanying photograph, the two boys form a temporary pen for the birds with their outstretched legs, and Rufus cups one of the chicks in his hands. "Every day they let the chicks play in the sun," Tobe explains. "At night, they put them in a warm box."¹⁷

The book conveys similar messages of accountability by showing readers how dutifully Tobe's community maintains its school and church. Tobe says that he and his fellow students "keep [the school] nice and clean." The accompanying photograph depicts well-dressed black children gathered around an attractive school building with brick walls and large windows. Some of the children stoop down to pluck weeds from the front lawn.¹⁸ In the next two-page spread, "Our Church," Tobe assures readers that "We take good care of

¹² "Tobe: Tracking down the storybook family." *The UNC Press Blog*. 25 October 2012. Accessed 4 May 2014.

¹³ Sharpe, Stella Gentry. *Tobe*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1939. 1st ed. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

¹⁴ Sharpe, Stella Gentry. *Tobe*. Silver Spring: Beckham House Publishers, 1993. Reprint of 1939 ed.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-12.

¹⁷ Sharpe, Stella Gentry. *Tobe*. Silver Spring: Beckham House Publishers, 1993. Reprint of 1939 ed., 20-21.

¹⁸ Sharpe, Stella Gentry. *Tobe*. Silver Spring: Beckham House Publishers, 1993. Reprint of 1939 ed., 16-17.

it.” The church in the photograph is a plain but well-kept brick building. Tobe’s entire family is shown walking through the door in their Sunday best.¹⁹ With these scenes, Sharpe clearly aimed to convince readers that African Americans took responsibility for the welfare of others and their community institutions – challenging the racist belief that they could not even take care of themselves.

Tobe also challenged stereotypes of African Americans as lazy and undisciplined. The young protagonist and his siblings are entrusted with important work on their farm. In addition to caring for livestock, they harvest tobacco, cotton, wheat, and sugar cane. It is difficult labor for small children; in one story, Tobe describes the effect that a long morning of picking cotton has on a six-year-old: “I began to get hungry. My arms began to hurt.” Later that day, he asks his mother, “Why does Daddy plant cotton? I do not like to pick it.” His mother explains that the proceeds from their cotton harvest help pay for the clothes that the children wear to school. When this significance is explained, Tobe shows great maturity by returning to the task with newfound purpose. “I did not know that,” he tells his mother. “I will pick the cotton.”²⁰ Tobe’s household depends on the contributions of the children to acquire basic necessities. The hard labor with which he is entrusted sets him apart, in a positive way, from many middle and upper class white children who read the book. Young readers who read about a black boy charged with difficult, grown-up responsibilities may have viewed black children with new respect.

Farrell’s correspondence indicates that the book was indeed popular with white children. A Winston-Salem bookstore owner told Farrell that *Tobe* “has quite interest for little white children as well,” and noted that it was also being sold at a local teacher’s college.²¹ On a more personal level, one of Farrell’s friends wrote that the book was the favorite Christmas gift of her four-year-old son, who had “a passion for colored folks.”²²

Tobe’s portrayal of an African American family contrasted starkly with contemporary children’s books. In 1942, two new picture books based on the popular 19th-century song “Ten Little Niggers” were published in New York and London. They adopted less offensive titles but generally preserved the racist caricatures and cruel storyline that characterized the song and similar books.²³ In each of the 1942 editions, ten black children kill themselves off in demeaning ways. In Emery I. Gondor’s *Ten Little Colored Boys*, some of their fates include falling off a roof, getting stung by bees, eating too much chicken, and playing with a loaded gun. At the end, the only surviving boy gets married and fathers ten more children. Gondor made all ten of the boys look exactly alike in his illustrations; they are wide-eyed, cartoonish

¹⁹ Ibid., 18-19.

²⁰ Sharpe, Stella Gentry. *Tobe*. Silver Spring: Beckham House Publishers, 1993. Reprint of 1939 ed., 58-59.

²¹ Watkins, W.H. Letter to Charles Farrell. January 2, 1940. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²² Howell, Virginia. Letter to Charles Farrell. January 10, 1940. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²³ Martin (2004), 21-48.

figures, but less offensive than the inhuman minstrel illustrations of earlier books.²⁴ Englishman Walter Trier's *10 Little Negroes* opts for this manner of depicting the characters. The cover of the book shows the ten boys with ape-like grins and tar-black skin seated at the dinner table with their parents. The father is tall and skinny, with a large straw hat and striped pants. The mother resembles an obese and misshapen doll, smiling stupidly, her gaze unfocused.²⁵

It is difficult to comprehend that Trier's illustration was produced after Charles Farrell's photograph of Tobe's dignified parents, yet the contrast between the two images sheds light on the motives behind *Tobe's* creation. Sharpe and the UNC Press believed that children's books filled with racial slurs and insulting stories and pictures were seriously damaging both to black children's self-perception, and to white children's view of blacks. There was a great need for books that portrayed African American families in a positive and realistic way. Two years after *Tobe* was published, Farrell described it as an effort by the UNC Press "to provide colored children for the first time with a book about themselves of which they could be proud."²⁶

Some of *Tobe's* final stories aimed to portray African Americans as intelligent and proactive people, using Tobe's mother as an example. When Tobe and his brothers pick tomatoes for canning, she quickly calculates how many quarts can be made from their first cartload, and tells them exactly how many cans of tomatoes and other foods they will need to make it through the winter.²⁷ Her skill with numbers, and the foresight to can food, display intelligence that many children's book authors withheld from black characters. In another story, Tobe's mother makes her son Alvis, or "Big Boy," empty the contents of his bulging pockets onto the table. She reprimands him when she finds a rabbit's foot that he had carried with him for good luck. "There's no such thing as luck," she says as she confiscates the talisman.²⁸

The closing story, "What Brings Good Luck?" ends the book by elaborating on this lesson. After a relative tells Tobe to hang horseshoes in apple trees to increase their fruit production, their mother refutes this advice. "The horse-shoes did not make the apples grow. Work made them grow. You will have to dig around our trees and spray them." Tobe follows her advice, and happily notes that "now we have many apples."²⁹ While this story acknowledges the abundant superstition in rural life, Tobe's mother looks past these beliefs

²⁴ Martin (2004), 43.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

²⁶ Farrell, C. Letter to Priscilla Garner. 25 June 1941.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

²⁸ Farrell, C. Letter to Priscilla Garner. 25 June 1941., 116-117.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

and encourages her children to work hard and make their own luck. She defies stereotypes of African Americans as superstitious and lazy.³⁰

Although books aimed at improving the self-esteem of black children were rare, *Tobe* was far from the first. One early example was *Hazel*, published in 1913 by the NAACP-affiliated Crisis Publishing Company. Like *Tobe*, it was written by a white woman. She explained that "...colored children in the United States might also like to have their intimate books telling of happenings that were like their own."³¹ The book tells the story of a pretty and intelligent black girl from Boston who spends a winter with her grandmother in Alabama. In the South she encounters racial prejudice for the first time, but her grandmother teaches her to not let it hurt her pride. The author, Mary White Ovington, expressed her belief that young white readers "...will feel an awakened sympathy for the dark-faced girls and boys whose world is outside their own."³²

Ovington was a radical children's author for her time, but her work is still influenced by a colorist worldview that favored African-Americans with lighter skin tones.³³ Illustrations of *Hazel* show her with fair skin, straight hair and Anglicized facial features. In the story, she displays restraint and refinement that her darker-skinned playmate from Alabama lacks.³⁴ *Hazel* was a groundbreaking book for its time, but it still failed to give a fair and accurate visual representation of black children.

This is where *Tobe* achieved perhaps its greatest success, thanks to Farrell's photography. It celebrated what blackness *truly* looked like, free from the biases that might have influenced hand-drawn illustrations. However, staged photographs can manipulate the truth as effectively as drawings — and *Tobe* was at times criticized for its sunny representation of Southern black life. A review in *American Child*, the official magazine of the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), claimed that its photographs "prettified" the daily life of *Tobe's* family, an accusation that Farrell firmly denied. "I know fairly intimately how kids like those pictured in *Tobe* really live," he wrote in a letter to the NCLC. Citing his own childhood experiences, including being "born into the arms of a Negro mammy," he maintained that black farm children in North Carolina were not overworked, and even enjoyed their time in the fields.³⁵

³⁰ Katz and Braley's landmark 1933 study on racial stereotyping found that 84% of Princeton undergraduates surveyed described African-Americans as superstitious. Other common descriptors included "lazy," "happy-go-lucky," and "ignorant." (Madon *et al.*, 2012).

³¹ Ovington, Mary White. *Hazel*. New York: Crisis Publishing Company, 1913. Web. *Google Books*. Accessed 18 April 2014. "Preface."

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Harris, Violet J. "African American Children's Literature: The First One Hundred Years." *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Autumn, 1990). 546. Web. *JSTOR*. Accessed 14 April 2014.

³⁴ Harris, Violet J. "African American Children's Literature: The First One Hundred Years." *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Autumn, 1990). 546. Web. *JSTOR*. Accessed 14 April 2014.

³⁵ Harris, Violet J. "African American Children's Literature: The First One Hundred Years." *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Autumn, 1990). 546. Web. *JSTOR*. Accessed 14 April 2014

The reviewer also doubted the quality of education that the children received, due to the amount of farm work that was required of them. Farrell tried to respond to these concerns and defend North Carolina's segregated school system. He made it known that the school he photographed for *Tobe* was the one the children actually attended. He stressed the fact that black and white children both received eight months of schooling per year. Farrell conceded that the teaching in the black schools might be inferior, but assured the NCLC that "Carolina Negro teachers...are well trained: and I feel that both teachers and students display an earnestness of effort often missing among the whites."³⁶

Farrell interpreted the *American Child* review as a critique of segregation. Gertrude Zimand, the Associate General Secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, promptly responded to Farrell's letter to clarify that the magazine's comments were not directed at the situation of blacks alone. The review was not meant to point out disparities between black and white schools, but to show the extent that farm labor interfered with the education of children in rural America – both white and black. "This is not confined to the South by any means," she wrote.³⁷ This exchange shows the limits of Farrell's progressivism; despite his concern for the welfare of African Americans, he was quick to defend the segregated status quo from the slightest of threats.

To better understand the artistic and societal influences that shaped *Tobe* and its reception, it is necessary to look beyond children's literature. Even though the UNC Press made no attempt to present *Tobe* as a work of non-fiction, it is in many ways reminiscent of the famous documentary projects of the Great Depression. During the Depression, corporate media, government-sponsored agencies, and independent photographers all documented the hardships faced by black and white tenant farmers throughout the South and Plains. Book-length compilations of these photographs, accompanied by heavy-handed captions, were popular during the 1930s.³⁸ *You Have Seen Their Faces*, a 1937 book that featured the photographs of Margaret Bourke-White and commentary by Erskine Caldwell, was a landmark in this field of publishing. Bourke-White's photographs of haggard men and women and sick children crammed into crumbling cabins aim to pull at every heartstring.³⁹

The few images that have anything in common with photographs in *Tobe* convey opposite messages. In one story from *Tobe*, the title character introduces his uncle's dog, Boss (Figure 4). In the photograph, he puts part of his weight on one knee and the rest on Boss's back as he wraps the dog in a loving embrace. The dog looks happy as it stands in the sunlight. In the accompanying story, Tobe praises Boss's kind nature and snake-hunting prowess. The affection that Tobe shows for the dog in the photograph is mutual: "He does

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Zimand, Gertrude. Letter to Charles Farrell. 8 April 1940. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁸ Stott, William. *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

³⁹ Ibid., 221-224.

not like to leave us,” Tobe explains.⁴⁰ Bourke-White also included a photograph of a boy and his dog, but her presentation of these subjects is different in almost every way (Figure 5). Instead of shooting outside, she photographed the young black boy inside his impoverished home. An empty doorway between rooms frames her subjects; it seems as if they are trapped within its sharp corners. The image is dominated by the harsh blacks and whites of old newspapers serving as makeshift wallpaper. Both the boy and dog face the camera with a mournful gaze. “Blackie ain’t good for nothing, he’s just an old hound dog,” the caption reads.⁴¹ The boy’s disgust, and the dark, claustrophobic scene that surrounds him, fit with the despair that pervades *You Have Seen Their Faces*. Even the “happy” pictures of children, of which there are few, are accompanied by ironic captions. When a white boy plowing a cotton field proudly says that his father keeps him out of school to work, the underlying message is that he is being cheated of an education.⁴² The concerns of the NCLC make more sense in light of Bourke-White and Erskine’s bestselling book.

Have You Seen Their Faces received widespread critical acclaim, but white Southerners took issue with its maudlin emotions and questionable authenticity.⁴³ Bourke-White and Erskine disclose in an introductory note that the captions came entirely from their own imaginations, not the mouths of their subjects: “[The captions] do not pretend to reproduce the actual sentiments of these people.”⁴⁴ Bourke-White’s book compelled H. C. Nixon, a professor at Tulane University, to create a more accurate representation of tenant farming life. In 1938, a year before *Tobe*’s release, the UNC Press published his documentary book, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*, which included more than 150 pictures taken by Farm Security Administration photographers like Dorothea Lange and Arthur Rothstein. He declared his opposition to Bourke-White’s beliefs even before his preface. Beneath a photograph of a white tenant farming family smiling from a mule-drawn cart, a caption asserts, “It is false to assume that sharecroppers and share tenants are humanly hopeless.”⁴⁵ Later in the book, an assortment of photographs of well clothed and determined-looking sharecroppers are presented next to Nixon’s challenge to the reader and Bourke-White: “Have you seen their faces?”⁴⁶ In Nixon’s view, the average sharecropper is not as beaten down and helpless as outsiders might think.⁴⁷ Under a full-page photograph of four smiling black boys playing in a muddy river, the author argues that there are “health-giving elements

⁴⁰ Sharpe (1993), 38-39.

⁴¹ Caldwell, Erskine and Bourke-White, Margaret. *You Have Seen Their Faces*. Arno Press, 1975. Reprint of 1937 ed. Published by The Viking Press. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. (No page numbers).

⁴² Stott (1973), 221.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 221-224.

⁴⁴ Erskine and Bourke-White (1975).

⁴⁵ Erskine and Bourke-White (1975).

⁴⁶ Erskine and Bourke-White (1975), 59-60.

⁴⁷ Stott (1973), 224.

in Southern rural life which even ignorance and poverty cannot nullify.”⁴⁸ *Tobe* supports this claim from beginning to end. *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*’ image of the boys at the river could easily have been swapped for one of *Tobe*’s photographs, which shows the title character and his brothers wading in a creek.⁴⁹ These books show children enjoying simple pleasures of a childhood, not unlike the halcyon Southern summers that Mark Twain remembered fondly in *Tom Sawyer*.

Nixon did not ignore the destitution that the South was currently facing. He declared that the South was at “national bottom on all statistical comparisons of wealth, production and culture.”⁵⁰ Nixon’s call for agricultural reform in the South reflected the University of North Carolina’s institutional goals under president Frank Porter Graham. Graham, who served as president from 1930-1949, was a leading figure in the new bureaucracy of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal. He was the chairman of multiple economic advisory councils concerned with Southern poverty.⁵¹ He also headed the Southern Conference on Human Welfare, a liberal non-governmental organization that worked to bring New Deal reforms to the South.⁵² In 1938, Roosevelt famously stated that the South was “the nation’s No. 1 economic problem.” He believed that ending sharecropping and tenancy was necessary in order to remedy this.⁵³

Research by UNC sociologist Howard Odom showed that sharecropping reduced the effects of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933.⁵⁴ It is not surprising that UNC Press, with Graham on its board, chose to publish Nixon’s argument against sharecropping, with a title that evoked the famous freedmen’s demand for property after the Civil War. But the book does not try to evoke sympathy with depressing images of poverty. *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* and *Tobe* were attempts to convince the public that most tenant farmers were not in overwhelming misery. Sharpe reassured the UNC Press that the members of *Tobe*’s family “do not have a hard life, and they always have enough of everything to live healthy normal country lives.”⁵⁵ Even though it takes place solely in North Carolina, *Tobe* was meant to prove that Sharpe’s claims were applicable to the entire rural South. In 1938, Farrell asked Alice Paine, the art director of the UNC Press, if the story about cotton could be dropped

⁴⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁹ Sharpe (1993), 40-41.

⁵⁰ Nixon, H. C. *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*. New York: Van Rees Press. Copyright UNC Press, 1938. 1st ed. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. 15.

⁵¹ Gilmore, 232.

⁵² Woodham, Rebecca. “Southern Conference for Human Welfare.” 2008. *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. Web. 16 November 2014.

⁵³ Woodham, Rebecca. “Southern Conference for Human Welfare.” 2008. *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. Web. 16 November 2014, 233.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 231.

⁵⁵ Sharpe, S. “...adjustment to a new situation...” 1940.

⁵⁶ Paine, Alice. Letter to Charles Farrell. 1 November 1938. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

from *Tobe* since it wasn't grown on any Goshen farms. He wanted to replace it with a story about tobacco, North Carolina's premier cash crop. Paine told him that the UNC Press would try to incorporate tobacco, but could not replace the cotton-picking story: "The cotton story... is so firmly associated, in the minds of the country at large, with the South, that I believe its omission might be noticed," she said.⁵⁶ Her letter reveals the Press' intent to have *Tobe* introduce the rural South to a national audience. *Tobe* and *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* are both efforts by the UNC Press to demonstrate that Southern sharecroppers were striving optimistically towards their independence.

Tobe, unlike the other documentary books, was created to address a problem of race relations. *Have You Seen Their Faces?* is concerned with universal poverty in the South, and takes no stance on any racial issue. *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* tries to downplay the unequal status of African-Americans. On one page, Nixon asks the reader to compare the house of black landowners with that of a white sharecropping family; the former is nicely painted and decorated with healthy potted plants, while the latter is a rough, unpainted shack.⁵⁷ At one point African-Americans are referred to as "good human material for organization and cooperation."⁵⁸ Clearly the author does not try to change the Southern perception of African-Americans as "material" to "people." *Tobe* encouraged white children to respect their black peers as human beings. But it did not question the practice of racial segregation or challenge the existing social order in any way. The *Brown vs. Board* decision was still fifteen years away, and *Tobe* unquestionably falls in line with the "separate but equal" dogma that governed every aspect of Southern life. Whites are absent from the story and photographs, except for a brief visit from "Santa Claus" and a distant figure on a threshing machine. Black people go to school, but don't aspire to leave the farm. Even in segregated North Carolina, *Tobe* does not seem to have generated much backlash.⁵⁹

Ironically, *Tobe's* success eventually led to a dispute between the UNC Press and one of the families featured in Farrell's photographs. The Press neither paid the families directly for their participation nor allotted them a portion of the book's royalties. In 1941, Arthur Garner, who "played the role" of *Tobe's* father in the Farrell's photographs, consulted a law firm to try to win a settlement from the Press.⁶⁰ Farrell's anger at this development is preserved in his letters to the Press and to Garner's wife, Priscilla. "Of course the negroes gave complete and cheerful cooperation," he told Couch, the director of the Press. "No question of compensation was even mentioned...As a matter of fact, however, they have probably received a larger net compensation than any of us, as I showered them with food

⁵⁶ Nixon (1938), 14.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Filene, Benjamin. Telephone interview. 2014.

⁶⁰ Mauzé, Charles W. Letter to Charles Farrell. 3 June 1941. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

and clothes and toys and paid the expenses of one of the girls at Bennett College for a semester,” he lamented.⁶¹

Farrell’s reaction is typical of a paternalistic mindset that prevailed among even the most racially progressive southerners in the pre-Civil Rights era. In *Blood Done Sign My Name*, Timothy B. Tyson compares the paternalism that characterized race relations in twentieth-century North Carolina to a “dance” in which well-off white people were required to be charitable towards blacks, as long as they followed their part of the routine. The black person’s steps consisted of “...coming to the back door, hat in hand; accepting whatever largesse was offered; furnishing excessive expressions of gratitude; and at least pretending to accept their subordinate position in the social hierarchy.”⁶²

In Farrell’s eyes, Arthur Garner violated this protocol with the threatened lawsuit. He asked the president of Bennett College to reprimand “Tobe’s father” for his “unintelligent and unsocial” attitude.⁶³ He also asked Priscilla Garner to convince her husband to stop the proceedings. In the letter, he expresses shock and dismay and argues that being portrayed so positively in the book should be payment enough for her family. “...You have donated the services of your family to a project in which Negroes were treated as decent, human normal beings for the first time,” he wrote. Farrell continues to scold Mrs. Garner for not being content with simply being part of this important project. He then condemns her for not displaying the unquestioning gratitude that the dance of paternalism demanded. “You should be ashamed that now you are trying to injure the people who were unselfishly trying to improve the lot of your people,” he wrote.⁶⁴ Farrell’s designation of blacks as a separate people makes it difficult to believe that he wanted *Tobe* to promote any sort of racial unity. Soon after Farrell’s letter to Mrs. Garner, the UNC Press quickly reached some sort of agreement with her family.⁶⁵ Whether or not the family had agreed to participate for free, Farrell’s response to their legal action reveals the paternalism underlying *Tobe*’s mission. Farrell saw the book as a generous gift to the downtrodden black race, not as a way to help them achieve the respect that they were entitled to.

Seventy-five years after *Tobe*’s release, it is easy to find fault with Farrell’s attitude and the UNC Press’ failure to promote true racial equality. But in the 1930s, when slavery was still in living memory, and lynching still continued in the South, the book was seen as a powerful statement of support for African Americans. Superintendents and schoolteachers praised the book, and a review in *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* deemed it “...without

⁶¹ Farrell, C. Letter to Priscilla Garner. 25 June 1941.

⁶² Tyson, Timothy B. *Blood Done Sign My Name*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2004. 24.

⁶³ Farrell, C. Letter to David Jones. 25 June 1941.

⁶⁴ Farrell, C. Letter to Priscilla Garner. 25 June 1941.

⁶⁵ Couch, W. T. Letter to Charles Farrell. 10 July 1941. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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reservation the finest juvenile book on Negro America yet to come off the press.”⁶⁶ Henry Louis Smith, a president emeritus of Washington and Lee University, told Farrell that *Tobe* would “...certainly lighten amazingly the load of inferiority complex which bears down on every Negro boy and girl and must make their lives miserable in many cases.”⁶⁷ Farrell saved a letter of thanks from a man whom he had given a copy of the book, who signed his letter as “Will Lindsay, colored.” Farrell annotated the letter and identified Lindsay as “an elderly Negro musician who visits many schools.” In the handwritten letter, Lindsay praises *Tobe* as “a most beautiful interpretation of one race to the other race. It will bring about a kindlier feeling and a better understanding between the colored and white people of this nation, especially those who live remote from one another.” He told Farrell that he “...wouldn’t accept any price for the [copy] you gave me. I only wish I had plenty of money. I would give away at my own expenses one thousand of them.”⁶⁸ *Tobe* clearly meant a great deal to this man, who had experienced the hatred faced by African Americans in the postwar South for many decades. While it is difficult to gauge the black community’s reaction to *Tobe* from Farrell’s selected sample of testimonies, those responses that do exist, as well as the book’s strong sales, suggest that it found an audience on both sides of the color line. And it can only have helped to bridge the divide between black and white Americans with its vivid depiction of the joy and innocence of childhood that transcends race.

⁶⁶ Cowles, Peter. Letter Charles Farrell. 21 June 1939. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶⁷ Smith, Henry Louis. Letter to Charles Farrell. 2 June 1939. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶⁸ Lindsay, Will. Letter to Charles Farrell. 15 June 1939. The Charles Anderson Farrell Papers #4452, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Figure 1. See page 80



Figure 2. "Tobe," in the Charles Anderson Farrell Photographic Collection (P0024), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved 28 April 2014.

Photo courtesy of: North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library



Figure 3. “Mother and Daddy ,” in the Charles Anderson Farrell Photographic Collection (Poo24), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved 28 April 2014.

Photo courtesy of: North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library



Figure 4. “Boss, a dog playmate,” in the Charles Anderson Farrell Photographic Collection (P0024), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved 28 April 2014.

Photo courtesy of: North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Library



Figure 5. Margaret Bourke-White: *You Have Seen Their Faces*: Little boy and hound dog, 1936. Gelatin silver print copyright Time Inc. Retrieved on 28 April 2014 from: <http://monroegallery.blogspot.com/2010/10/berenice-abbott-margaret-bourke-white.html>.

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Very little is known about Stella Gentry Sharpe and her process of writing *Tobe* (Filene, 2014). The letters and other archival material cited in this essay are from the Charles Anderson Farrell Papers, housed at the Southern Historical Collection of the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. They can be viewed and downloaded at: http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/f/Farrell,Charles_Anderson.html.

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Photo courtesy of: North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library

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CONSTRUCTION REPORT *on the World's Largest Housing Cooperative*



LENGTHENED SHADOW ROCHDALE VILLAGE, RACIAL INTEGRATION, AND ROBERT MOSES THE CREATOR

Robert Caro's *The Power Broker* crystallized Robert Moses as New York City's despotic "Master Builder," the implacable foe of Communism, racial integration, and the democratic process. Seth Kolker '15 reveals a story ignored by Caro and other scholars of urban history: Rochdale Village. The integrated Rochdale Village, then the largest cooperative housing project in history, was the product of an unlikely partnership between Moses and Abraham Kazan, the left-wing "father of cooperative housing." Kolker places Rochdale Village in the context of Moses' fraught relationship with integration, as well as the broader history of cooperative housing. The essay traces how Rochdale shaped housing policy in American cities and forces a reconsideration of one of the twentieth century's most polarizing figures.

By Seth Kolker, JE '15
Written for "Robert Moses' New York"
Professor David Huyssen
Faculty Advisor: Alan Plattus
Edited by Andrew Tran and Scott Remer

THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE

The hope of the future, both in clearing slums and in providing shelter outside of high rental speculative building, lies in middle-income housing. There are many types of such housing and a number of laws and forms of aid, grant, subvention. By far the most promising type is cooperative housing.

-Robert Moses, October 4, 1956, to the UHF at Carnegie Hall

Robert Moses was hardly telling his audience anything it didn't already know (or agree with) when he advocated for cooperative housing at Carnegie Hall before a meeting of the United Housing Foundation (UHF).² Founded in 1951, the UHF had already completed or initiated dozens of other cooperative housing projects in New York City.³ Admittedly, though, what Moses was proposing that night was on a somewhat grander scale: 4,600 units of cooperative housing, costing \$52 million to build and renting at \$21 per room per month, on the site of the old Jamaica Race Track in Queens.⁴ Seven years later, that project opened as Rochdale Village, the world's single largest housing cooperative and one of New York City's most significant attempts at racial integration. Moses may have been preaching to the choir at Carnegie Hall, but he needed that choir to sing if he was going to make his dream a reality.

One man in the audience that night would play a pivotal role. Abraham Kazan, president of the UHF, partnered with Robert Moses to make Rochdale a reality. In many ways, the two men were unlikely allies. They were born just three years apart (Moses in 1888, Kazan in 1891), and both to Jewish families, but the similarities stopped there. Moses was born in New Haven and then educated at Yale, Oxford, and Columbia.⁵ Kazan grew up in what is now Ukraine; top schools were off-limits to Russian Jews at the time, and for the rest of his life, he would be a mostly self-educated man. While Moses was writing his dissertation on civil service reform at Oxford, Kazan was moving with his family to Carmel, New Jersey – a cooperative Jewish agricultural settlement known for attracting radical socialists, communists, and anarchists.⁶ And as New York's "master builder" was making his first forays into public administration as an idealistic reformer, Kazan began working in a garment factory and subsequently moved between jobs at various cooperatives and unions.

¹ Robert Moses, "The Role of Housing Cooperatives in Urban Redevelopments - RM's Speech at United Housing Foundation Meeting," Speech (Carnegie Hall, October 4, 1956), Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

² Ibid.

³ Peter R Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village: Robert Moses, 6,000 Families, and New York City's Great Experiment in Integrated Housing*, 2010.

⁴ Moses, "The Role of Housing Cooperatives in Urban Redevelopments - RM's Speech at United Housing Foundation Meeting."

⁵ Robert A Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).

⁶ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 23.

Eventually, he made his way to the top of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) and became interested in cooperative housing as a practical alternative to capitalism, breaking ground on the first Amalgamated Houses in 1926. Thirty years and dozens of projects later, Kazan had founded the UHF and made his name as the “father” of cooperative housing in America.⁷

The pairing of a conservative builder with a liberal co-op advocate was even stranger given the location of Moses’s speech. Andrew Carnegie, steel tycoon and author of the *Gospel of Wealth*, must hardly have imagined that his theater would be used for meetings on cooperative housing when he had it built in 1891. Carnegie Hall stayed in the family until 1925, when it passed to a real estate developer. It was eventually purchased by the city of New York for \$5 million in 1960. Even as late as 1956, the question of whether or not the Hall would ultimately be a public or private space was still unresolved. From its very beginning, the Hall had an open-door policy for African-Americans. A black singer named Sissirietta Jones sang there in 1892 during the hall’s first season; Booker T. Washington spoke a total of fifteen times at Carnegie Hall.⁸ On one of those occasions, January 17, 1908, Washington remarked, “The interests of both races are bound together by a tie that we could not tear asunder if we would.”⁹ How fitting, then, that Moses would choose this site to propose New York’s largest cooperative housing community – and an attempt to bind together the interests of white and black New York.

Robert Caro never even mentioned Rochdale Village in his Pulitzer Prize-winning, 1,200-page epic biography of Robert Moses. In 2010, Peter Eisenstadt wrote a book titled *Rochdale Village* that aimed to explain how Moses came to be an advocate for an integrated, cooperative New York, claiming that he used this development to show the city once and for all that he was on the right side of history when it came to race.¹⁰ But this paper argues that was not Moses’s primary intent. Instead, he hoped that Rochdale’s legacy would be to empower Kazan to continue building where he had left off. He misjudged history, failing to anticipate the extent to which larger trajectories of racial integration and cooperative housing would shape and be shaped by his work. The actual legacy of Moses’s involvement in Rochdale Village was to accelerate the class-based segregation of black New Yorkers and weaken the ideological intensity of the American cooperative movement, uniting these two historical trajectories in a way that would permanently change the nature of cooperative housing in New York City.

⁷ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*.

⁸ Richard, Walsh, Michael Schickel, *Carnegie Hall: The First Hundred Years* (New York: Abrams, 1987).

⁹ “GOV. HUGHES SPEAKS AT TUSKEGEE MEETING: Tells Carnegie Hall Audience the Negro Is Entitled to His Chance Here. COL. WATTERSON SPEAKS Booker T. Washington’s Plea for the Negro -- No Negroes In the Orchestra Chairs.,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1908.

¹⁰ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*.

HONEST, TOUGH BUILDERS

He seems...to have an engagement with some higher power. [...] While the critics shouted, the walls rose to a music only Abe Kazan could hear. [...] Give this man the tools and he will continue his prophetic work.

-Robert Moses, 1965, at a testimonial dinner for Abraham Kazan¹¹

Robert Moses was not necessarily aiming to transform race relations and ideologies when he set out to build Rochdale. He must have understood that this project would leave a legacy – but he may well have believed that legacy would be carried on by Abraham Kazan. When Rochdale opened for business in 1963, Moses’s power in New York City was on the decline: he had already lost ten of his twelve jobs in city and state government.¹² And even though Caro’s book closely tracked the strategies Moses employed to cling to power (the section titled “The Loss of Power” is over 200 pages long), it said little about what Moses did to extend his influence beyond the expiration of his official posts.¹³ The story of Moses, Kazan, and Rochdale reveals that one strategy Moses devised was to equip a man he greatly respected with the tools necessary to continue building where he had left off.

Moses and Kazan’s first interaction, though, was not a particularly auspicious encounter. In 1945, Kazan had proposed a massive development on the Lower East Side of Manhattan; Moses quickly denied his application to build it.¹⁴ But five years later, once Title I was in effect, Kazan tried again, and the two men ended up partnering on a project on the Lower East Side after all. Kazan’s effectiveness on that project impressed Moses, and in short order the two collaborated on eight other Title I cooperative projects.¹⁵ By 1956, Moses was referring to Kazan as “Mr. Co-op,” proclaiming that “he has no equal.”¹⁶ Moses described Kazan as the man who, “[personified] the entire Cooperative housing movement,” always emphasizing his individual role and scarcely recognizing the larger movement for collective action of which Kazan was a part.¹⁷

And so the two men partnered to build Rochdale. Moses proposed his idea at Carnegie Hall in 1956, the UHF agreed to build it, and Moses agreed to work behind the

¹¹ Robert Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at a Testimonial Dinner to Abraham E. Kazan,” Speech (Cooperative Village Auditorium, 570 Grand Street, New York City, October 24, 1965), Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

¹² Caro, *The Power Broker*, 1078.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 961–1162.

¹⁴ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁶ Moses, “The Role of Housing Cooperatives in Urban Redevelopments - RM’s Speech at United Housing Foundation Meeting.”

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

scenes to purchase the land where the Jamaica Race Track once stood.¹⁸ But Moses struggled to track down financing for the development. He eventually set up a face-to-face meeting between Nelson Rockefeller and Kazan – where the latter emphasized that only he could guarantee \$21-per-month rentals – and then the funds came through.¹⁹ Moses pushed their proposal through the Board of Estimate, and construction began in 1960.²⁰ By 1963, tenants starting moving into Rochdale Village, about 80 percent of them white and 20 percent black.²¹

Three years later, Moses began donating a collection of speeches, pamphlets, and other documents from his career to Yale University. This process continued until 1970. The archive includes the text of Moses's 1956 speech, his toast at a testimonial dinner for Kazan nine years later, and various other public statements that Moses made about Kazan and co-ops. These materials paint a picture of how Moses wanted his relationship with Kazan to be remembered, revealing the extent to which Moses liked – at times, seemed to worship – a man he hoped would continue building once Moses was no longer in power.

Caro described Moses as a man who liked to “get things done,” and when it came to housing, what Moses wanted to “get done” was to clear slums and relocate slum dwellers to new homes.²² “All slums must go!” he declared in his 1956 book *Working for the People*, a cheer he would repeat across columns and speeches in later years.²³ Moses believed that if slum clearance was the end, then pragmatic public officials were the means. “It is my thesis that slums must be wholly eradicated,” he wrote in a 1967 *Newsday* column. “We need honest, tough builders” to accomplish that task.²⁴ In various statements, Moses described the characteristics of his ideal public servant and listed the reasons why Kazan fit that description. First, he stated, one must build, not just criticize – and Abe Kazan was a man with a proven track record of building.²⁵ Second, those who build must possess the fortitude to withstand scorn from those who do not, and, according to Moses, Kazan was a man “enured [*sic*] to criticism.”²⁶ Third, Moses said, “We need practical idealists” – men with the capacity for vision but the pragmatism to not let that vision distract from concrete

¹⁸ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 57.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁰ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 65.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

²² Caro, *The Power Broker*.

²³ Robert Moses, *Working for the People; Promise and Performance in Public Service*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 1956), 112; Robert Moses, “Some Problems of Urban Planning: The Alice M. Holden Lecture,” Speech (Smith College, North Hamilton, Mass., March 13, 1957); Robert Moses, “Slums Must Go - Part I (Robert Moses From the Bridge Series),” *Newsday*, April 26, 1967, Robert Moses Papers, Yale University; Robert Moses, “Slums Must Go - Part II (Robert Moses From the Bridge Series),” *Newsday*, September 2, 1967, Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

²⁴ Moses, “Slums Must Go - Part I (Robert Moses From the Bridge Series).”

²⁵ Moses, *Working for the People; Promise and Performance in Public Service*, 112.

²⁶ Robert Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at the Groundbreaking for Rochdale Village,” Speech (Jamaica, Queens, New York City, April 29, 1961), Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

objectives.²⁷ And Kazan was “the best, the least pretentious and the most encouraging of all our builders,”²⁸ a man whose capacity to erect large volumes of housing stock overshadowed any “pretentious” theories that might have motivated his cooperative approach. Thus, in Moses’s 1956 speech at Carnegie Hall, when he lauded the UHF for building the new housing units that slum clearance would necessitate, he attributed the entirety of that organization’s success to one man. “Emerson said that an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man,” he mused. To Moses, the UHF was the lengthened shadow of Abraham Kazan.

Throughout their partnership, the language that Moses used to describe Kazan often went far beyond standard professional praise. At times, he spoke of “Mr. Co-op” as though he were some sort of prophet. In that same 1956 speech at Carnegie Hall, Moses said, “We make no claim to being major prophets, but even these have from Biblical times often been without honor in their own country,” or in other words, the public may not have recognized it yet, but given time these men would rival the Bible’s prophets in reputation.²⁹ Over the following decade, Moses’s rhetoric underwent a shift from “we” to “he”: rather than equating both Kazan *and himself* with divinity, he invoked that language for Kazan alone. Moses was most explicit about this when he toasted Kazan at a testimonial dinner in 1966, referring to his colleague’s “prophetic work.”³⁰ But he employed the same rhetoric on more occasions than merely testimonial events. At the groundbreaking of Co-Op City, for example, Moses declared, “If there are pillars of fire by night shining through the gloom and columns of smoke by day to lead us out of the wilderness of ancient rookeries and point the way to a promised land,” then “men like Kazan” would lead the way.³¹

Moses linked this rhetoric of divinity to a suggestion: let Kazan do more. “Give this man the tools,” Moses suggested at Kazan’s testimonial dinner, “and he will continue his prophetic work.”³² On another occasion, he said, “Give him the tools and *he will finish the job.*”³³ In neither of these two instances was Moses actually referring to any particular project. Rather, he was recommending that Kazan be equipped with the tools necessary to remain a prominent force in New York City’s housing future, indeed the very same tools that had brought him to power: money (through connections to funders, as when Moses arranged the meeting with Rockefeller), legislation (Title I, Mitchell-Lama, and other laws described below), and the public will (through the various public laudations described above). Moses

²⁷ Moses, *Working for the People; Promise and Performance in Public Service*, 109.

²⁸ Robert Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses, Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, at the Groundbreaking of Co-Op City,” Speech, May 14, 1966, Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

²⁹ Moses, “The Role of Housing Cooperatives in Urban Redevelopments - RM’s Speech at United Housing Foundation Meeting.”

³⁰ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at a Testimonial Dinner to Abraham E. Kazan.”

³¹ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses, Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, at the Groundbreaking of Co-Op City.”

³² Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at a Testimonial Dinner to Abraham E. Kazan.”

³³ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at the Groundbreaking for Rochdale Village.” Emphasis added.

was helping equip another master builder with the tools that he had used years before to transform the physical landscape of New York – he was enabling Kazan to finish *his* job.

The tools helped. They made Rochdale possible, which served as a stepping-stone towards Co-Op City, a 15,372-unit housing cooperative the UHF opened in 1973.³⁴ Kazan had left a significant mark on New York. However, he died in 1971 – before Co-Op City opened, and before he could complete any other projects. Kazan, therefore, would not be the one to carry forward the legacy of Robert Moses. Instead, that legacy would weave its way into the larger, more complex historical trajectories of racial integration and cooperative housing in New York City.

SECULAR JEWISH COMMUNIST GARMENT WORKERS' (AND OTHER) COOPERATIVES

First principle. Membership in a cooperative society should be voluntary and available without artificial restriction or any social, political, racial, or religious discrimination, to all persons who can make use of its services and are willing to accept the responsibilities of membership.

-The “Rochdale Principles” for cooperatives, 1844³⁵

Rochdale Village is conspicuously absent from most analyses of New York’s housing history.³⁶ In part this is due to the fact that, although Rochdale was the largest cooperative housing development ever built, it was quickly overshadowed by the construction of an even bigger one: Co-Op City. But the broader story of cooperatives’ role in urban history has also been neglected. It received no significant mention in Caro’s 1,200-page volume or in either of Moses’s other two biographies. Even Joel Schwartz made only passing reference to cooperatives in a book that claimed to lay bare the Moses approach to urban planning, never treating cooperatives as analytically distinct from any other type of housing.³⁷ In fact, the only two authors to have published comprehensive histories of the cooperative housing movement in America both chose to title their works “hidden histories” – explicitly

³⁴ Ross Whitsett, “Urban Mass: A Look at Co-Op City,” *The Cooperator*, n.d., December 2006 edition, <http://cooperator.com/articles/1354/1/Urban-Mass/Page1.html>.

³⁵ Milton Conover, “The Rochdale Principles in American Co-Operative Associations,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 1959): 111–22, doi:10.2307/444195.

³⁶ Caro, *The Power Broker*; Joel Schwartz, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1993).

³⁷ Caro, *The Power Broker*; Long Island Studies Conference, Robert Moses and the Planned Environment, *Robert Moses: Single-Minded Genius*, ed. Joann P. Krieg, Long Island Studies (Interlake, N.Y: Heart of the Lakes Pub, 1989); Cleveland Rodgers, *Robert Moses, Builder for Democracy*, 1st ed. (New York: Holt, 1952); Schwartz, *The New York Approach*.

recognizing that this story has gone untold.³⁸ Neither Rochdale Village nor New York’s cooperative housing movement, though, can be understood without examining the other’s history, for the former marked a new era in the physical scale and ideological intensity of the latter.

It is a complex and fascinating tale that past authors have overlooked. There is broad agreement that the cooperative movement began in Rochdale, England in 1844 when a handful of workers founded the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers.³⁹ The term “cooperative” (co-op) refers to any collectively owned and managed organization or business, whether a worker-run factory, a tenant-owned apartment building, or any similarly structured organization – but cooperatives have often adopted regulations that specify the values on which they operate. The twenty-eight weavers who founded the Society, for example, created a set of “Rochdale Principles” which have served as a guiding rubric for cooperatives ever since. These principles mandated various departures from capitalist norms: they banned profit, speculation, and the extension of credit to patrons. They adhered strictly to a “one person, one vote” standard and declared institutional equality between men and women. And they set the standard for a century of co-ops.⁴⁰ That the UHF’s housing complex eventually bore the same name as the original Rochdale Pioneers is thus of no small significance.

It is unclear how the cooperative movement made its way to the United States. John Curl argues that, during the 1830s, the National Trades Union founded eighteen “production cooperatives” with a similar organizational structure to Rochdale’s, whereas Andrew Dolkart claims the first American cooperative store opened in 1845 in Boston.⁴¹ Either way, the movement flourished during the early twentieth century as Finnish, Lithuanian, and Bohemian immigrants familiar with the more developed European cooperative movement brought their expertise to America. By 1925, 700,000 Americans were members of cooperatives, conducting \$300 million of business each year.⁴² Then, paradoxically, the Great Depression caused many workers’ cooperatives to go out of business while inspiring the

³⁸ John Curl and Ishmael Reed, *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America*, Second Edition (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012); Allan Heskin and Jacqueline Leavitt, *The Hidden History of Housing Cooperatives* (Davis, CA: The Regents of the University of California, 1995).

³⁹ Brett Fairbairn, *The Meaning Of Rochdale: The Rochdale Pioneers And The Co-Operative Principles*, Occasional Paper (University of Saskatchewan, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, 1994), <http://ideas.repec.org/p/ags/uscoop/31778.html>.

⁴⁰ Conover, “The Rochdale Principles in American Co-Operative Associations.”

⁴¹ Curl and Reed, *For All the People*; Andrew S. Dolkart, “Homes For People; Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City 1916-1929,” *Cooperative Housing Journal of the National Association of Housing Cooperatives*, 1993, 13–22.

⁴² Dolkart, “Homes For People; Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City 1916-1929.”

founding of new ones as means for collective resilience.⁴³ By the end of WWII, the movement's future was uncertain.

Housing cooperatives were merely one branch of this larger movement, and one located almost exclusively within New York City.⁴⁴ Sixteen Finnish families living near what is now Sunset Park in Brooklyn banded together in 1916 to establish America's first non-profit housing cooperative, a jointly owned apartment building in a largely homogenous neighborhood known as "Finntown."⁴⁵ Within a decade, workers' organizations had discovered the housing cooperative as well. The Bronx became a popular location for garment workers to found cooperative housing organizations, drawn by the cheap land and new subway lines connecting the Bronx to Manhattan's garment district.⁴⁶ A 1926 Housing Companies Law provided the first long-term financing for cooperative housing, prompting Abraham Kazan to enter the field with his Amalgamated Houses, which became the largest workers' cooperative in the Bronx when it opened that same year.⁴⁷

New Deal policies, however, deemphasized cooperatives. The 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act was more preoccupied with generating construction jobs than with reforming social relations, and thus it contained no provisions that would favor the cooperative movement.⁴⁸ Indeed, New York built so little new housing stock during the 1930s and 1940s that the city entered a housing crisis – but then a series of legislative changes arrived. Section 213 of the Federal Housing Act authorized cities like New York to exercise eminent domain and grant reduced rates to land purchases for cooperatives. The 1955 Mitchell-Lama Act assisted with the funding for these new developments and reduced red tape, leading to the establishment of tens of thousands of middle-income housing cooperatives.⁴⁹ Finally, the 1956 Housing Act allowed investors (like the UHF) to secure land and build projects, then sell them to local cooperative corporations, making large-scale developments like Rochdale possible for the first time.⁵⁰ By the early 1960s, while Rochdale was still under construction, New York City had some 24,000 units of cooperative housing.⁵¹

The early housing cooperative movement held onto the idealism of the Rochdale Principles. These co-ops were often among New York's most radical locales. Take, for example, the United Worker Houses (UWH). A group of secular Jewish Communist

⁴³ Curl and Reed, *For All the People*.

⁴⁴ Dolkart, "Homes For People; Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City 1916-1929."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Donald G. Sullivan, *Cooperative Housing and Community Development; a Comparative Evaluation of Three Housing Projects in East Harlem*, Praeger Special Studies in U.S. Economic and Social Development (New York: Praeger, 1971).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; Dolkart, "Homes For People; Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City 1916-1929."

⁵⁰ Sullivan, *Cooperative Housing and Community Development; a Comparative Evaluation of Three Housing Projects in East Harlem*.

⁵¹ Dolkart, "Homes For People; Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City 1916-1929."

garment workers opened this housing cooperative in stages between 1925 and 1929 in the Bronx. Advertised as “the first proletarian camp for workers,” it aimed to be a space for ethnic solidarity and political awakening. In addition to a nursery (so that families could work during the day while raising children) and its own gymnasium, the Houses also had *shuls* that supplemented students’ public schooling with classes in Yiddish and politics. And for adults, there was an entire library dedicated to radical literature.⁵² Many other housing cooperatives of that time period also shared the grassroots approach, racial awareness, and collective ethos of the UWH.⁵³

In historical analysis, the question of what constitutes a “cooperative” has often come under dispute. In a 1993 essay titled “Homes For People: Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City, 1916-1929,” Andrew Dolkart identified the contested category of the “true” or “real” cooperative, as opposed to organizations that called themselves cooperatives but lacked a certain *ideological bite*.⁵⁴ The question of whether housing cooperatives were “real” ones was particularly controversial. For example, in 1971, Andrew Sullivan argued that cooperative housing was credible precisely because it came from a lineage of leftist workers’ cooperatives that had been successful in the past – while in 2010, John Curl and Jack Reed decided to not even discuss cooperative housing (save a few mentions in general statistics) in their book, *For All the People*, deciding that it was less ideologically rigorous than the movement for *communal* living and therefore did not fit their definition of a proper “cooperative.”⁵⁵

Regardless of the definition, though, Robert Moses seemed an unlikely participant in a movement that attracted the likes of UWH’s secular Jewish communists. The Moses depicted in Robert Caro’s biography was a conservative, a man whose hatred for Communism was surpassed only by his distaste for democratic decision-making processes; a builder committed to functionality, not ideology. He wouldn’t necessarily feel at home in a utopian, leftist movement. That isn’t to say that Moses would have necessarily been opposed to cooperatives, either: he believed public housing marked a step on the path to communism, and cooperatives were at the very least an alternative to government provision of housing stock.⁵⁶ Moses was not alone in this belief. For example, a minister named E. J. Helms had been speaking publicly as early as 1937 about how the cooperative movement could supplant communist ideology entirely.⁵⁷ Thus even as Kazan and his colleagues were imagining cooperatives as an alternative to capitalism, it would have been reasonable for Moses to think of them as an alternative to communism instead.

⁵² Dolkart, “Homes For People; Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City 1916-1929.”

⁵³ Heskin and Leavitt, *The Hidden History of Housing Cooperatives*.

⁵⁴ Dolkart, “Homes For People; Non-Profit Cooperatives in New York City 1916-1929.”

⁵⁵ Sullivan, *Cooperative Housing and Community Development; a Comparative Evaluation of Three Housing Projects in East Harlem*; Curl and Reed, *For All the People*.

⁵⁶ Moses, *Working for the People; Promise and Performance in Public Service*, 106.

⁵⁷ “COOPERATIVE GAINS SEEN: Movement Will Supplant Nazism, Communism, Minister Says,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1937.

LENGTHENED SHADOW

Robert Moses told his side of the cooperative story in the archival documentation he donated to Yale. Remarkably – though Moses held his first public post as early as 1911 – the vast majority of the materials in the archive came from after 1952, four decades into his career.⁵⁸ Therefore, the record’s window is so brief that it does not contain any of the musings of Moses’s youth; it reveals neither change nor contradiction in his thinking on cooperatives. Indeed, the earliest mention of cooperatives in the entire collection is in his 1956 speech proposing Rochdale – by which time his mind seemed to be made up.

Moses’s clearest statements on the value of cooperatives came during the late 1960s. Their value, he argued, was in facilitating slum clearance. At the groundbreaking of Co-Op City in 1966, he said, “The hope of slum clearance is in the cooperatives, as the hope of democracy is in local initiative and home rule.”⁵⁹ One year later, in a speech to the National Commission on Urban Problems, Moses was clear: slum clearance would necessitate tremendous amounts of money to relocate displaced persons, and cooperative housing was simply the cheapest and most efficient way to accomplish that task.⁶⁰

Moses deemed cooperatives efficient primarily because of the man who would build them. At Rochdale’s groundbreaking he proclaimed:

My congratulations to [various officials] and, since there is always one dedicated individual who overshadows such achievements, to Abraham Kazan, the undisputed champion of cooperative housing.⁶¹

As opposed to the language of communalism in the original Rochdale Principles, Moses used his speech to highlight the “one dedicated individual” he deemed responsible for the movement’s success. And instead of setting a tone of cooperation and equality, he employed competitive and adversarial language by referring to Kazan as a “champion.” Moses saw in cooperatives not a movement, but a man.

Cooperatives’ advocates, on the other hand, believed they stood for much more than men piling bricks on mortar. Joel Sullivan decided to write his book on Harlem cooperatives, for example, in order to provide a more rigorous and systematic analysis of co-ops’ capacity to build strong communities, transform tenants into engaged democratic citizens, and improve social relations.⁶² Strong communities, the first of those three items was

⁵⁸ Caro, *The Power Broker*, 63.

⁵⁹ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses, Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, at the Groundbreaking of Co-Op City.”

⁶⁰ Robert Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at a Public Hearing of the National Commission on Urban Problems,” Speech (The Community Church, 40 East 35th Street, New York City, September 8, 1967), Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

⁶¹ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at the Groundbreaking for Rochdale Village.”

⁶² Sullivan, *Cooperative Housing and Community Development; a Comparative Evaluation of Three Housing Projects in East Harlem*.

conspicuously absent from all of the statements on cooperatives that Moses chose to include in the Yale archive. The second, democratic citizens, was perhaps the most antithetical to Moses's rather authoritarian style of urban planning. In a full-page exclusive story he wrote on Rochdale Village for the *Long Island Press*, Moses devoted only three short paragraphs to the actual development; he filled the remainder of the article with an appeal for "decisive" urban planning, articulating the importance of not "caving" to every single citizen's "last whim."⁶³ "Democratic citizens" were Robert Moses's adversaries, not his goal. And he took years to appreciate the contribution of co-ops to "social relations," as the following section of this paper explains. Moses never directly attacked the ideology of the cooperative movement, but neither did he ever defend it. In so doing he rendered the ideological components of housing cooperatives less visible and less relevant.

To Moses, co-ops were above all else a way to "get things done." He had a much simpler understanding of what it took to be a co-op resident than the secular Jewish communist garment workers and their peers. Moses gave one speech to the UHF in 1956 that most explicitly addressed the question, 'why co-ops?' That speech, "The Role of Housing Cooperatives in Urban Redevelopments," had the same narrative arc as all the other relevant documents in the Yale archive: New York needed to relocate slum dwellers, governments did not have the funds to put them all into public housing, and so cooperatives were the obvious answer. As was typical, Moses devoted most of his speech to talking about the difficulties of being a public servant and critiquing how it was "almost impossible" for a public official to win a libel suit. The only time in the speech that Moses actually made any analytic distinction between cooperatives and other types of housing was when he mentioned, "We count on people to cooperate, to bury their petty differences" so that they might "keep the big objectives always in mind and help us clear away the towering obstacles in our path."⁶⁴ Moses could only understand the value of cooperation as a means to "getting things done."

Moses may or may not have intended to take the ideological "bite" out of the cooperative movement. Even if that was his desire, then he never actively positioned himself in opposition to that ideology. But through his actions, Robert Moses created an alternative to traditional cooperatives: he de-emphasized ideology and organized a housing cooperative from the top-down for the very first time. In so doing he helped launch a new era of massive, mainstream co-ops. Rochdale set the stage for Co-Op City and other large developments to take root in New York, projects that emphasized scale more than radicalism.⁶⁵ By the time the government of New York City hit a financial crisis in the 1970s, developments like Rochdale and Co-op City were proven examples of how cooperative housing could work not just for radical ethnic groups, but for the non-ideological middle and upper classes as well. To

⁶³ Robert Moses, "Rochdale: Master Planner Moses Views a Master Housing Plan," *Long Island Press*, December 1, 1963, Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

⁶⁴ Moses, "The Role of Housing Cooperatives in Urban Redevelopments - RM's Speech at United Housing Foundation Meeting."

⁶⁵ Whitsett, "Urban Mass: A Look at Co-Op City."

recover financially, New York sold off large swaths of public housing, which buyers then converted into high-end cooperatives.⁶⁶ The Rochdale Principles were but a distant memory.

THE ALGEBRA OF RACIAL INTEGRATION

Residential segregation is the institutional apparatus that supports other racially discriminatory processes and binds them together into a coherent and uniquely effective system of racial subordination.

*-Douglass Massey and Nancy Denton, 1993, in American Apartheid*⁶⁷

Cooperative housing represented one of the historical trajectories that both set the stage for, and absorbed the impact of, Rochdale Village. Another was racial integration in New York. Americans were more likely to live in integrated neighborhoods during the nineteenth century than they are in the twenty-first, and a long history of federal and local policy decisions has helped produce this troubling statistic.⁶⁸ In 1870, 80 percent of African-Americans lived in the rural South; by 1970, the same proportion was living in cities, about half of them in the North.⁶⁹ During the so-called “Great Migration,” blacks moving to northern cities often settled in low-income neighborhoods. But according to a landmark 1993 analysis of segregation in the United States called *American Apartheid*, federal policy was largely responsible for turning those economic slums into racial ghettos. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), founded in 1934, managed to double the percentage of Americans who owned their own homes from 1930 to 1960 – but the FHA discriminated racially, making it almost impossible for black families to access the agency’s flagship housing loans.⁷⁰ The 1937 Housing Act then supplied \$500 million for slum clearance, but since those individuals “cleared” from slums were not always guaranteed resettlement, even more black families found themselves with nowhere to go but into increasingly poor and segregated neighborhoods.⁷¹ And although the 1944 GI Bill (which made housing loans available to veterans returning from WWI) did not contain discriminatory provisions, FHA regulations barred black families from using GI loans to buy homes in white neighborhoods.⁷² By mid-century, New York was an increasingly segregated city.

⁶⁶ William M. Rohe, “Converting Public Housing to Cooperatives: The Experience of Three Developments,” *Housing Policy Debate* 6, no. 2 (1995): 439–79.

⁶⁷ Douglas S Massey and Nancy A Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁶⁸ Jeannine Bell, *Hate Thy Neighbor: Move-in Violence and the Persistence of Racial Segregation in American Housing* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 11.

⁶⁹ Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 18.

⁷⁰ Bell, *Hate Thy Neighbor*, 23.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Segregation occurred differently in New York's suburbs than in the inner city. During the 1930s and 1940s, many private developers in New York adopted "racial covenants" that barred non-white members from moving in – a policy challenged in the landmark 1948 Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer*. In *Shelley*, the Court upheld private developers' rights to establish these covenants, but it also ruled that for the government to actually enforce such a covenant would violate the 14th Amendment.⁷³ Enforcement was rare, though, and so during the postwar housing boom, rapidly growing suburbs continued to adopt these covenants. For example, Long Island's Levittown had 82,000 homes in 1960, and not one black resident lived in any of them. The effects of this segregated approach were long lasting: even fifty years later, in 2010, only 0.91% of Levittown was black.⁷⁴ Comparatively, within the inner city, scholars have argued that *violence* was the primary tool that whites used to keep black families out. Between 1890 and 1940, African Americans were forcibly expelled from 235 counties in the United States.⁷⁵ Some who attempted to move in to white neighborhoods were met with "move-in violence"; many more were discouraged from ever trying.⁷⁶ Thomas Sugrue, writing in 1996, argued that this segregation in housing compounded an "urban crisis" that left poor blacks in "persistently isolated urban ghettos," a process that only worsened when well-to-do families, black and white alike, fled to the suburbs.⁷⁷ The effect of these processes was that by 1960, the middle-class neighborhood surrounding the Jamaica Race Track was starting to become a poor black ghetto.⁷⁸

People did in fact organize to resist these trends. Some of this organization was localized, as with a series of co-ops founded in Harlem for black self-reliance.⁷⁹ And some was national: as the Civil Rights Movement strengthened in the South during the 1960's, it inspired increased demands for racial justice in the North as well.⁸⁰ Thus Rochdale's construction occurred at a pivotal moment. In April 1968, Congress would pass the Fair Housing Act, making racially-based segregation illegal – and causing many Americans to declare the problem solved.⁸¹ (The Act's passage came one week after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. as a memorial to the civil rights icon who had marched in Chicago

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁴ Bell, *Hate Thy Neighbor*, 33–35.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁷ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 12,

<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=K3m64HT2kXsC&oi=fnd&pg=PP2&dq=origins+of+urban+crisis&ots=WZ-BR5sgsP&sig=OUM9xi3nf2oWCf5AxAarBF6xMog>.

⁷⁸ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 51.

⁷⁹ Sullivan, *Cooperative Housing and Community Development; a Comparative Evaluation of Three Housing Projects in East Harlem*.

⁸⁰ Tom Wicker, *Tragic Failure: Racial Integration in America*, 1st ed (New York: Morrow, 1996), 86.

⁸¹ Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 4.

for housing justice.)⁸² However, the law had no enforcement powers; segregation continued to worsen in subsequent decades, even as public debate on the issue dissipated.⁸³ Rochdale's construction happened during the brief window of civil rights activism that came before the post-1968 stillness.

Protests came to Rochdale on July 23, 1963. The UHF had been using union labor, and at that time white workers had control over union hiring policy; very few black construction workers were working on the site. Protesters therefore demanded that the unions adopt a 25 percent quota for blacks, and they marched on Rochdale's construction site to make their demands.⁸⁴ It was indeed ironic that segregated hands would build a housing complex intended to be one of New York's greatest experiments in racial integration. The protesters ultimately lost. Both Moses and Kazan stayed silent on the issue – they felt their hands were tied, since without union support, construction on this scale would be extraordinarily difficult.⁸⁵ One way to interpret Moses's silence would be to claim it was merely further evidence of his racist attitudes: Robert Caro, for example, portrayed Moses as a racist because he built only one playground in all of Harlem, attempted to deter blacks from swimming in public pools by making the water cold, and minimized access to public transit for minorities in New York. But when it came to specific housing developments, Moses's track record revealed a more open mind. In *Working for the People*, he responded to criticism of Stuyvesant Town's segregation by claiming he never had any role in setting that policy, and that indeed the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company should probably reform it to “keep with the times.”⁸⁶ Even earlier, in 1947, Moses had written a letter to anxious funders reassuring them that, “Certainly some respectable colored families won't hurt” the character of a small integrated development he had approved on the Lower East Side.⁸⁷

Backing a racially integrated development the sheer size of Rochdale would be something new for Moses, though. Peter Eisenstadt argued in his 2010 history of Rochdale that to Moses, “Rochdale Village would be his vindication, proof that he was not indifferent or insensitive to the plight of racial minorities.” Yet the only concrete evidence that Eisenstadt offered to support this claim was a quotation from Moses's speech at the groundbreaking of Co-op City in 1966: “Rochdale in a quiet way has achieved remarkable success in integration and in happy relations among tenants.”⁸⁸ Moses certainly did utter those words – but only those. The quotation came sandwiched between one paragraph praising Kazan's work in general, and another musing on the future of New York; the rest of

⁸² Bell, *Hate Thy Neighbor*, 51.

⁸³ Wicker, *Tragic Failure*, 130.

⁸⁴ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 87.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁸⁶ Moses, *Working for the People; Promise and Performance in Public Service*, 114.

⁸⁷ Schwartz, *The New York Approach*, 126.

⁸⁸ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 81.

the speech was devoid of any mention of race.⁸⁹ If Moses intended to “vindicate” himself by drawing the public’s attention to this project, then his only significant attempt to do so was in passing.

The archive that Moses curated and donated to Yale tells a slightly different story than Eisenstadt’s. Although the archive’s brief time span may have created a false sense of coherence in Moses’s attitude towards *cooperatives*, the period between 1952 and 1970 was enough time for his rhetoric on the racial implications of slum clearance to evolve. During the 1950s, his public statements flatly denied the intersectionality of housing policy and race. Moses’s only mention of racial integration in the 1956 speech at Carnegie Hall was to critique other racially integrated developments whose “mixed populations” had been “fused and integrated overnight by fiat.”⁹⁰ His book *Working for the People*, published in the same year, talked extensively about “slum clearance,” but never about its racial implications.⁹¹ In that book, he wrote, “You cannot legislate tolerance.”⁹² Even as late as 1966, Moses was still espousing the same notion that social relations ought not be the subject of master planning – in a *Newsday* article published on March 12 of that year, for example, he wrote, “Present here [in the issue of slum clearance] is only the simple basic arithmetic of physical rebuilding, not the algebra of racial integration.”⁹³ The 1950s Moses was by no means an active integrationist.

During the 1960s, though, he began to occasionally mention race in the context of housing. At a 1967 public hearing of the National Commission on Urban Problems, he alluded to race (admittedly, in a problematic fashion) by distinguishing between old tenements that “former waves of immigrants” (namely, white ones) used as “temporary stopping places on their way onward and upward,” as opposed to the “new tenants with less ambition” (black ones) who were content to remain in crime-ridden slums for generations.⁹⁴ And in a less problematic instance, he touted Rochdale’s integration at the groundbreaking of Co-op City (as Eisenstadt recognized). By the end of his life, Moses had begun to talk about the intersection of housing and race in New York – but even his own archive fails to demonstrate that he had, from the outset, any intent to associate his legacy with racial integration at Rochdale. Rather, he decided to appropriate that legacy once it already appeared to be a success.

To some extent, since Moses had put his name on Rochdale, he was already affiliated with the development’s policy of racial integration. Perhaps Moses expected that relationship

⁸⁹ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses, Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, at the Groundbreaking of Co-Op City.”

⁹⁰ Moses, “The Role of Housing Cooperatives in Urban Redevelopments - RM’s Speech at United Housing Foundation Meeting.”

⁹¹ Moses, *Working for the People; Promise and Performance in Public Service*, 105.

⁹² Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 75.

⁹³ Robert Moses, “Slum Clearance (Robert Moses From the Bridge Series),” *Newsday*, March 12, 1966, Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

⁹⁴ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at a Public Hearing of the National Commission on Urban Problems.”

to speak for itself. For example, he also included in the Yale archive a thirty-page promotional pamphlet from the UHF titled “Rochdale Village: A New Concept in Community Living.” This pamphlet was much more explicit about its role in integration. “One of the most significant facts about Rochdale Village,” it said, “is that it is an integrated community.” The pamphlet also aligned itself explicitly with the history of the cooperative movement and the Rochdale Principles, which the UHF had revised slightly to include “[o]pen membership with no restriction as to race, creed, or color.” That same pamphlet also thanked Moses profusely for his role in making Rochdale a reality. To some extent, then, it did speak for itself.⁹⁵

However, the pamphlet also contained a very brief, odd story about Moses’s relationship with the UHF: the UHF had advocated for a monthly carrying charge per room of \$21, compared to Moses’s recommendation of \$25. According to the UHF, their leadership had to confront Moses multiple times before eventually winning the argument and settling on \$21.⁹⁶ A higher rental rate would have made Rochdale’s apartments less accessible to black families, and this small piece of evidence suggests Moses did not welcome racial integration with open arms. And, interestingly, in 1970 Moses published another book titled *Public Works: A Dangerous Trade*, devoting an entire chapter to Rochdale Village. In it, Moses directly quoted multiple paragraphs from the UHF brochure – right until it mentioned the \$25 dispute, which Moses replaced with an ellipsis.⁹⁷ Here again are the two Robert Moseses: the first, who during the 1950s was hesitant to throw his weight behind racial integration at Rochdale, and the second, who after the 1960s was more than happy to take credit for it.

During the 1970s, white families moved out of Rochdale in the same process of white flight that Sugrue documented in 1996. To those who had viewed the residential development as a beacon of racial integration, the experiment was over and the noble attempt had failed.⁹⁸ Today, the community is almost exclusively black and middle-class: its fifteen-member board of directors, for example, is entirely black, and according to Peter Eisenstadt, a certain animosity has emerged between middle-class residents in Rochdale and poorer black families who live nearby.⁹⁹ Rochdale therefore serves as a unique case study in urban racial theory. On one hand, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton identified a troubling trend in *American Apartheid*: because of residential segregation, upwardly mobile African-Americans have been the only racial group in urban America unable to “escape the poor” by moving out of low-income neighborhoods once they achieved middle-class status.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, Tom Wicker argued in *Tragic Failure* that middle-class black families *have*

⁹⁵ United Housing Foundation, “Rochdale Village: A New Concept in Community Living,” Pamphlet, n.d., Robert Moses Papers, Yale University.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Robert Moses, *Public Works: A Dangerous Trade* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 466.

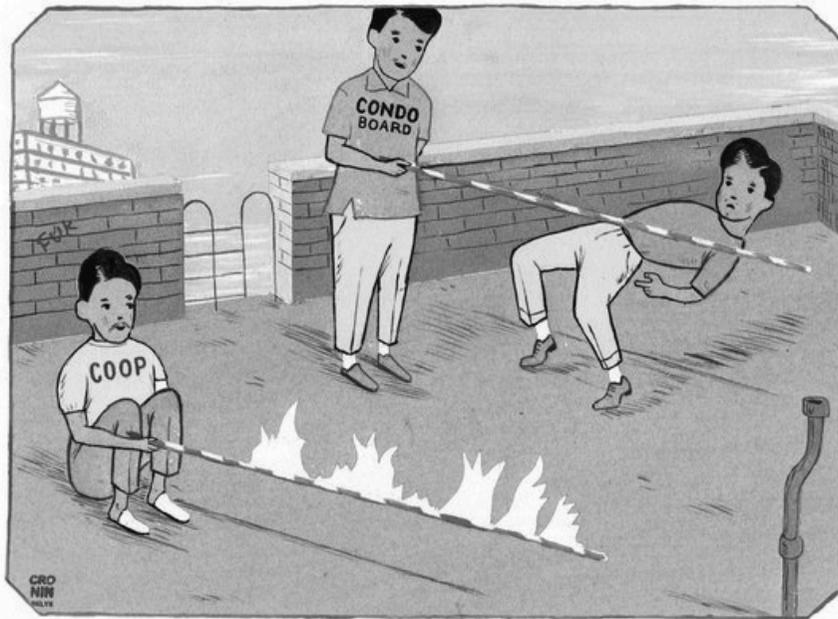
⁹⁸ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁰⁰ Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 9.

moved out of ghettos, thereby socially isolating poor black families and deepening structural barriers to upward mobility.¹⁰¹ Remarkably, Rochdale speaks to both of these contradictory theories. The housing cooperative stands out as an exception to Massey and Denton's theory; it has become a stronghold for black, middle-class New Yorkers, one of the few places for black families to “escape” in a city that otherwise offers little respite. Rochdale has also played a role in generating the mechanism that Wicker theorized – exacerbating class-based segregation within black New York while reproducing racial segregation and letting the Rochdale's first principle fall to the wayside.

LENGTHENED SHADOW



-The New York Times, 2012, “Choosing Between a Co-Op and a Condo”¹⁰²

Robert Moses created a legacy by building Rochdale – not by passing the torch to Abraham Kazan as he might have liked, but rather by intervening in two complex, interconnected historical trajectories that were already taking place in New York: racial integration and the movement for cooperative housing. Two co-op anecdotes speak to the changes that legacy has wrought. First, in 1960, the New York City Housing Authority announced that it would transfer ownership of 1,635 apartment units in East Harlem to the Franklin Plaza Housing Company under the Mitchell-Lama law. Twelve community leaders

¹⁰¹ Wicker, *Tragic Failure*, 156.

¹⁰² Susan Stellin, “Getting Started – Choosing Between a Co-Op and a Condo,” *The New York Times*, October 5, 2012, sec. Real Estate, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/07/realestate/getting-started-choosing-between-a-co-op-and-a-condo.html>.

– many of them black or Puerto Rican – had each pledged \$5,000 of seed money to launch a housing cooperative. Over the next five years, tenants moved in; the majority of them were black, some of them Puerto Rican, and a few of them white.¹⁰³ As a racially sensitive, grassroots-led cooperative explicitly focused on building “community solidarity,” Franklin Plaza was fairly typical of cooperatives at the time.¹⁰⁴

More than fifty years later, another cooperative exchanged hands, this one in Manhattan. Yale and Harvard-educated media mogul Steve Gottlieb sold his penthouse at 55 Central Park West, a housing cooperative famous for its portrayal in the 1984 film *Ghostbusters*, to billionaire hedge fund manager Marc Lasry for \$33 million in 2014.¹⁰⁵ Gottlieb had defeated other interested buyers, including TV personality Diane Sawyer, when he won the sale of the unit from its previous tenant, Calvin Klein. In the story he wrote covering the sale, *New York Times* reporter Robin Finn mentioned only once that 55 Central Park West was actually a co-op – he wrote that Klein had gotten into trouble with the co-op board for installing a hot tub on the roof without permission.¹⁰⁶

Both of these stories are about housing cooperatives changing hands in New York City. But the stories are more different than they are alike. One is of a grassroots movement, the other a corporatized exchange; one self-consciously engages with the question of race in one of America’s greatest cities, while the other ignores that question altogether; and one tells a tale of social reform, whereas the other discloses the gossip of billionaires and their playthings. Ever since Robert Moses and Abraham Kazan built the world’s largest cooperative, the significance of that word has never been the same. Although cooperatives once represented zones of solidarity and racial awareness (whether as integrated societies or as more homogenous communities of solidarity), Rochdale marked a turning point after which interest in purposeful integration dissolved, and cooperative housing lost its “bite.”

Just weeks before sealing the deal on Rochdale, Moses lost his position at the head of the Slum Clearance Committee of New York City, replaced by the Housing and Redevelopment Board.¹⁰⁷ This was the last major housing initiative in which he would play a significant role, and he rightly called it his “swan song as a houser.”¹⁰⁸ Abraham Kazan passed away just eight years after completing Rochdale, never “finishing the job” as the

¹⁰³ Sullivan, *Cooperative Housing and Community Development; a Comparative Evaluation of Three Housing Projects in East Harlem*, 46–51.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰⁵ “Billionaire Hedge Fund Manager Marc Lasry Bought A \$33 Million Penthouse In The ‘Ghostbusters’ Building,” *Business Insider*, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/lasry-55-central-park-west-2014-2>.

¹⁰⁶ Robin Finn, “Exclusive: 55 Central Park West – Coveted by Many, Lived In by Few,” *The New York Times*, October 19, 2012, sec. Real Estate, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/21/realestate/exclusive-55-central-park-west-coveted-by-many-lived-in-by-few.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at the Groundbreaking for Rochdale Village.”

master builder may have hoped.¹⁰⁹ This project left a mark on history, but not through the works of any one great, prophetic man. Rather, Rochdale's legacy is woven into the much more complex, winding, often odd trajectories of cooperatives and race in New York City. Moses may have been correct when he said an institution is the "lengthened shadow" of one man – but history is not.

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¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

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<http://rochdalevillageturns50.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/blackwhitephotoofbuildingplanscan-120813-0003-2.jpg>.



THE STRANGER, OR THE BOY FROM BELCOURT THE EDUCATION AND FORMATIVE YEARS OF ALBERT CAMUS (1913 - 1960)

The *Yale Historical Review* is proud to present the senior essay of former Managing Editor Andrew Giambrone '14. Undertaking extensive archival research at the Centre Albert Camus in Aix-en-Provence, France, Giambrone focused on Camus's early years to fill a considerable gap in our understanding of this influential thinker. The essay examines Camus's family life in French-controlled Algeria and his education, from his primary schooling through the Lyceé Bugeaud and into his years at the University of Algiers. Throughout, Giambrone connects these early influences to the masterful works of fiction and criticism they helped to shape.

By Andrew Giambrone, PC '14
Senior Essay for the French Major
Senior Essay Advisor: Alice Kaplan
Edited by Spencer Weinreich

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Steven Philippe André (d. 2001), who taught me what it means to be French, got me to taste *foie gras* for the first time, and introduced me – by reading aloud with all the tenderness of an uncle – to *Le Petit Prince*. *Merci, merci, merci.*

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“We admire writers first for their books. But as time goes on, we cannot remember reading them without also revisiting the world as we then knew it and recalling the inchoate longings that they awoke in us. We are attached to a writer not just because he ushered us into a world that continues to haunt us, but because he has made us who we are. Camus, like Dostoyevsky, like Borges, is for me one of those elemental writers. Their metaphysical prose ushers the reader into a mysterious landscape that we long to understand; to see it take on meaning is to know that literature has – like life – limitless possibilities. If you read these authors when you’re young, and in a reasonably hopeful frame of mind, you will want to write books as well.”

–Orhan Pamuk¹

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¹ Pamuk, Orhan. Forward to *Exile and the Kingdom*. trans. by Maureen Freely. Camus, Albert. *Exile and the*

INTRODUCTION

“The memory of these years has also kept me from ever feeling satisfied in the exercise of my craft...As far as I’m concerned, I don’t think I’ve ever found delight in re-reading a finished page. I will even admit, ready to be taken at my word, that the success of some of my books has always surprised me...Naturally, a writer has some joys he lives for and that do satisfy him fully. But for me, these come at the moment of conception, at the instant when the subject reveals itself, when the articulation of the work sketches itself out before the suddenly heightened awareness, at those delicious moments when imagination and intelligence are fused. These moments disappear as soon as they are born. What is left is the execution, that is to say, a long period of hard work.”²

“A man’s work is nothing but this slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his heart first opened.”³

What remains to be said about Albert Camus (1913-1960)? More than one hundred years after his birth and more than fifty years after his death, the French-Algerian writer, philosopher, playwright, and journalist has been analyzed *ad absurdum* by critics and scholars from almost every possible angle. Indeed, the breadth and depth of Camus’s oeuvre, not to mention its universal and particular appeal, invites such inquiry; within his work, one finds lucid and lyrical prose, personal and political essays, and philosophical and polemical tracts.

Each reader has a different point of entry for Camus – some read *The Stranger* for the first time in a high school French class, others *The Rebel* in a college philosophy course – but few start with the story of the author’s life.⁴ This seems odd, given Camus’s renown as an intellectual rock star of the 20th century. It’s also a bit of shame because so much of Camus’s life informed his works, whether fictional, essayistic, theatrical, or autobiographical. As Adam Gopnik has written, “We recall [Camus] not just as a fine writer but as an exemplary man, a kind of secular saint, the spirit of his time, as well as the last French writer whom most Americans know something about.”⁵

² Camus, Albert. *Preface to The Wrong Side and The Right Side. Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 10-11

³ *ibid.* p. 17

⁴ Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. trans. by Matthew Ward. New York: Knopf, 1988. Print.; *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*. trans. by Anthony Bower. New York: Knopf, 1992. Print.

⁵ Gopnik, Adam. “Facing History: Why We Love Camus.” *The New Yorker*. April 9, 2012, p. 70-76. Print. p. 70

With several authoritative biographies already published (among them Olivier Todd's *Camus: A Life*, Robert Zaretsky's *Camus: Elements of a Life*, and Stephen Eric Bronner's *Camus: Portrait of A Moralist*),⁶ Camus has become something of a household name – if not everywhere, then certainly within France, Algeria, and the American academy. More than his body of work, then, Camus, in the decades following his death, has achieved the status of a symbol, a myth, and even a brand.

Still, the author's early years defy easy examination. Much has been written about Camus's upbringing in Algeria and his subsequent nostalgia for his home country, but what composed the magical mix of natural talent and environment that made Camus a prolific writer, Nobel Prize winner, and *intellectuel engagé*? What personal, social, and educational experiences influenced Camus during the first twenty-five years of his life (1913-1938), producing the renowned humanist we know today? In brief, how did the poor and fatherless Jacques Cormery of *The First Man* – Camus's portrayed self – become Albert Camus, “citizen of the world”?^{7 8}

Answering such questions will help modern readers appreciate and understand Camus's work in the context of his cultural milieu. A recurring theme of contemporary scholarship has been how greatly Camus cared for the concerns of others both in his writings and his personal engagements. I would like to trace the origins of those altruistic concerns as part of Camus's larger moral and social education by focusing on his home life, schooling, work, play, poverty, politics, and personality. To that end, I have mined Camus's autobiographical works and school records for information about what he was reading, thinking, and experiencing while growing up.⁹ The resulting portrait reveals a human being who excelled academically but struggled personally, in terms of his identity, health (both physical and mental), professional endeavors, and relationships with others.

It was precisely this adversity, however, which pushed Camus to overcome his immediate circumstances and develop his voice as a writer and thinker. My hypothesis is that Camus shifted from a personal philosophy of solitude to a communitarian ethic of solidarity

⁶ Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. Print.; Todd, Olivier. *Camus: Une Vie*. Paris, Gallimard, 1996. Print.; Zaretsky, Robert. *Albert Camus: Elements of A Life*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010. Print.

⁷ I borrow this phrase from an exhibition that was on display when I visited the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence, France for a research trip in December 2013. Called “*Camus: Citoyen du monde*,” the extended exhibit followed Camus's life from birth until death – offering an immersion in the author's work through manuscripts, first editions, and photographs – to commemorate what would have been Camus's one-hundredth birthday. The display was the perfect example of how Camus scholarship is being brought into the 21st century; organized along a trail dotted with textual and digital media, the “themed path” of the exhibit showcased 150 quotes from Camus on projected screens, which evoked the landscapes of his home country, Algeria, his contributions to philosophy, and the lucid prose of his essays, novels, and journalism.

⁸ Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print.

⁹ Original copies of these materials are available at the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence. Much of my analysis derives from a close reading of *The First Man*, given that it was the last text Camus wrote before he died in 1960 and is undeniably his most autobiographical.

the more he studied morality, confronted his mortal limits, and worked in team settings. In this way, I hope to demonstrate how the young, impressionable Camus learned equally from academic and lived experiences; and that for Camus, as a burgeoning intellectual, the two were inextricably related.

The ancient philosopher Cicero once said, “We are not born for ourselves alone; our country, our friends, have a share in us.”¹⁰ What Cicero neglected to mention was the wider world: For him and other Roman statesmen, national identity superseded common humanity. Camus, however, living in a world ravaged by revolution and war, had a more inclusive view of our intellectual, social, and moral obligations towards others. His life and works show us why.

“L'ÉCOLE MATERNELLE”: FAMILY EDUCATION (1913-1918)

“He is beginning to feel a lot of things...He feels sorry for mother; is this the same as loving her? She has never hugged or kissed him, for she wouldn't know how. He stands a long time watching her. Feeling separate from her, he becomes conscious of her suffering. She does not hear him, for she is deaf...Vaguely aware of this, the child thinks the surge of feeling in him is love for his mother. And it must be, because after all she is his mother.”¹¹

“People are now planting bombs in the tramways of Algiers. My mother might be on one of those tramways. If that is justice, then I prefer my mother.”¹²

“Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know. I got a telegram from the home: ‘Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours.’ That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday.”¹³

Albert Camus grew up in Belcourt, a working-class quarter in east Algiers, located on the border of the Arab quarter, Marabout.¹⁴ He lived with his mother, Catherine Hélène Sintès, maternal grandmother, Madame Sintès, uncles, Etienne and Joseph, and older

¹⁰ *De Officiis*. “Non nobis solum nati sumus ortusque nostri patrem vindicat, partem amici.”

¹¹ Camus, Albert. *Between Yes and No in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 33-34

¹² Camus, Albert. As stated at a 1957 Stockholm press conference and translated by Arthur Goldhammer in the appendix to *Algerian Chronicles* (2013). The quote was misreported in *Le Monde* as “I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice,” which then became, among popular myth, “Between justice and my mother, I choose my mother.” The original French reads: « En ce moment on lance des bombes dans les tramways d'Alger. Ma mère peut se trouver dans un de ces tramways. Si c'est cela la justice, je préfère ma mère. »

¹³ Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. trans. by Matthew Ward. New York: Knopf, 1988. Print. p. 3

¹⁴ Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. trans. by Benjamin Ivry. New York: Knopf, 1997. Print. p. 8

brother, Lucien. His father, also Lucien, had perished during World War I – of wounds from the Battle of the Marne – in October 1914.¹⁵ This meant that Camus, born on November 7, 1913, had only lived with his father for eight months. A paternal specter would haunt the author for the rest of his life. Even the first section of *Le Premier homme*, Camus’s semi-fictional autobiography, is titled “Search for the Father”:¹⁶

Surely, too many had died [in the war], but, as to his father, Jacques [Camus’s portrayed self] could not muster a filial devotion he did not feel. For all these years he had been living in France, he had promised himself to do what his mother, who stayed in Algeria, what she [*sic*] for such a long time had been asking him to do: visit the grave of his father that she herself had never seen. He thought this visit made no sense, first of all for himself, who had never known his father, who knew next to nothing of what he had been, and who loathed conventional gestures and behavior; and then for his mother, who never spoke of the dead man and could picture nothing of what he was going to see... Suddenly he was struck by an idea that shook his very being. [His father] was forty years old [when he died]. The man buried under that slab, who had been his father, was younger than he.¹⁷

A descendant of the first generation of Frenchmen to settle in Algeria, Lucien Camus (1885-1913) worked as a cellarman on a vineyard in Mondovi, just to the east of Algiers.¹⁸ ¹⁹ Lucien, too, was an orphan at the age of one, though, unlike his sons, an orphan of both parents. He married Camus’s mother, Catherine, in November 1910, just three months before Lucien Jr. was born. The father was one of 25,000 Frenchmen from Algeria who served in the French army during World War I; he was also one of fifty casualties from Mondovi.²⁰

As literary critic Jean Sarocchi has pointed out, Camus’s identity was ensconced in questions about Lucien and the effects of the latter’s absence on his upbringing.²¹ In turn, these became the central issues that Camus, writing decades later, would try to work out in *Le Premier homme*. “At the same time as the father, all the childhood of the son resurges, as

¹⁵ The battle, which lasted from September 5 to 12, resulted in an Allied victory against the German army. It ended the month-long German offensive that had opened the war and reached the outskirts of Paris. Camus’s father was one of the roughly 80,000 French and British soldiers who perished during or after the battle. Dupuy, R. Ernest and Trevor N. Dupuy. *The Encyclopedia of Military History*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Print. p. 938

¹⁶ Camus, Albert. *Le Premier homme*. ed. by Catherine Camus. Paris: Gallimard, 1994. Print. Throughout my essay, I rely heavily on *The First Man* as a source of both literature and biography. While this approach helps one see how Camus expressed himself in writing, I acknowledge that it also presents epistemological problems inherent to fictional memoirs.

¹⁷ *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 24-5.

¹⁸ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 3

¹⁹ With Camus’s lineage going back to Bordeaux, some might think this an apt occupation.

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 6

²¹ Sarocchi, Jean. *Le Dernier Camus, ou, Le Premier homme*. Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1995. Print.

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well as the figures who surrounded or instructed him, in particular those who compensated for the deceased father: grandmother, uncle, school teacher,” Sarocchi writes. “To know who the father is, in order to know who I am, leads to a deep thicket of questions about ancestors. What does it mean to be a Frenchman in Algeria? How could such an establishment have come about?”²² For Camus, then, paternity was directly tied to education and national identity; lacking one, he would have to compensate with the others.

France had invaded Algeria in 1830 – more than eighty years before Camus’s birth – as part of an attempt by the Bourbon king Charles X to boost his popularity at home.²³ From 1848 until independence in 1962, Algeria was administered as three (then four) *départements* of France.²⁴ While native Muslims comprised the overwhelming majority of the population of French North Africa, most were denied citizenship and designated as indigenous “French subjects” or “nationals.”²⁵ There were also hundreds of thousands of Europeans who lived in Algeria during this time, known later as *pieds-noirs* – literally, “black-feet.”²⁶ As of the last French census in Algeria, taken on June 1, 1960 – just two years before official independence – more than one million non-Muslim civilians inhabited the territory, or about ten percent of the total population.²⁷

So what were so many Europeans, including Camus’s family, doing in Algeria? Many were involved in France’s colonial project, holding large plots of Algerian land or serving as administrators of the French government. Others were not so elite. Settlers who fell into this latter camp worked as farmers, factory men, and longshoremen. An intermediary class of doctors, teachers, and merchants also took root. According to J.A.S. Grenville, fewer than thirty percent of these French settlers ever visited mainland France.²⁸ Still, many considered themselves French because they were raised under a French system of government, attended

²² *ibid.* p. 21. Translation is mine.

²³ “Algeria.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2014. Web. Feb. 05 2014. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>>.

²⁴ The *départements* were created in 1791 as a replacement for Ancien Régime provinces. The new administrative structure was designed to strengthen national unity. Thus, *départements* were governed by elected general councils, which managed social welfare allowances, junior high school buildings, local roads, and municipal infrastructure. The *départements* of Algeria included Alger, Oran, Constantine, and later Bône. *ibid.*

²⁵ Carroll, David. *Albert Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Print. p. 1

²⁶ The actual origins of the term *piéd-noir* are unknown. Specifically, it refers to citizens of European descent who “returned” to mainland France as soon as Algeria gained independence in 1962. But one must note that many of these citizens were not “returning” to France because they had lived in Algeria for their entire lives. “piéd-noir”. *Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition.* Oxford, United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1989. p. 799; Naylor, Phillip Chiviges. *France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization and Transformation.* University Press of Florida, 2000. p. 9-23

²⁷ Cook, Bernard A. *Europe since 1945: An Encyclopedia.* New York: Garland, 2001. p. 398.

²⁸ Grenville, J. A. S. *A History of the World from the 20th to the 21st Century.* Routledge, 2005. pp. 520–30.

French schools, and, perhaps most important, held French citizenship and could vote in elections.²⁹

Camus seems to have mistakenly believed that his father's side descended from Alsace, on the border between France and Germany.³⁰ Supposedly, the Camuses had left Alsace in 1871 after the French were defeated in the Franco-Prussian War rather than continue to live in the region under German rule. This family legend made the Camuses' *raison d'être* in Algeria appear patriotic and republican as opposed to colonial; for they would have preferred a French *département* on the other side of the Mediterranean to a territory occupied by the Prussians.³¹ In reality, one of Camus's grandfathers had come from Bordeaux, and one of his great-grandfathers was from the Ardèche in south central France.³² But other than knowing that they were *français de souche* – “of French strain” – Camus had few details about his ancestors. He recounts such familial ignorance in *Le Premier homme* when comparing Jacques's genealogy with that of Didier, a puritanical classmate from his *lycée*:

With Didier, Jacques understood what it was to be a middle-class French family. His friend had a family home in France where he went on vacations; he was forever talking or writing to Jacques about it, that house with an attic full of old trunks, where they saved the family's letters, souvenirs, photos. He knew the history of his grandparents and great grandparents, and this long history, vivid in his imagination, also provided him with examples and precepts for everyday behavior. ‘My grandfather would say...Papa thinks that...’ and in that way he would justify his sternness, his imperious purity. When he spoke of France, he would say ‘our country’ and he accepted in advance the sacrifices that country might demand (‘your father died for our country,’ he would say to Jacques...), whereas this notion of country had no meaning to Jacques, who knew that he was French, and that this entailed a certain number of duties, but for whom France was an abstraction that people called upon and that sometimes laid claim to you, a bit like that God he had heard about outside his home, who evidently was the sovereign dispenser of good things and bad, who could not be influenced, but who on the other hand could do anything with the people's destiny.³³

For the young Camus, familial ignorance breeds ethical, national, and religious unease; morality, France, and God are “abstractions” that purportedly impose certain obligations, but whose foundations remain obscure. Jacques cannot have the same

²⁹ This was not the case for Algeria's Berber and Arab populations, which became one of the main reasons for Algeria's eventual revolt. *supra* Naylor, Phillip Chiviges. *France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization and Transformation*.

³⁰ *supra* Carroll, David. *Albert Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice*. p. 2

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 4

³³ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 208-9

imagination or notion of roots which offer his friend Didier a ready-made guide for action precisely because he, Albert, lacks an anchored sense of identity. As a result, Camus will have to figure out things for himself, including who he is and what he has to do with his life. Such pressure creates feelings of alienation, anxiety, and apathy in the young Camus, with the author explaining in *Le Premier homme* that he “felt [himself] to be of another species, with no past, no family home, no attic full of letters and photos, theoretical citizens of a nebulous nation where snow covered the roofs while [he himself] grew up under an eternal and savage sun, equipped with a most elementary morality.”³⁴

That “nebulous nation” was metropolitan France, a country Camus never visited until he was well into his twenties.³⁵ In Algeria, the Camuses were decidedly poor. Lucien had earned ten to twenty francs a day as a cellarman, while Catherine, a cleaning woman for private homes and businesses, would have been lucky to earn that much in a week. After Lucien died, the French Pension Ministry supplemented Catherine’s income with 1,400 francs per year because of her status as a war widow; as war orphans, Albert and his brother Lucien Jr. received free medical treatment.³⁶

Poverty was one of Camus’s first teachers. The tiny, three-bedroom apartment he and his relatives inhabited at 93 Rue de Lyon, Belcourt was no three-star hotel – it lacked electricity and running water, and bathroom facilities on the landing were shared with two other households.³⁷ A barber, a wine seller, and a milliner occupied the first floor of the house. Meanwhile, the main room of the Camus-Sintès’s apartment was sparsely furnished, containing only a table, a desk, a sideboard, and a covered mattress on the floor. This was where uncle Etienne – partially mute like his sister Catherine – slept at night. A second uncle, Joseph, also lived in the apartment until 1920. Albert and Lucien Jr. shared a room with their mother and a bed with each other, a night table positioned between the two cots. Only grandmother Sintès had her own room, though that was to be expected given her status as head of household, and her stubborn personality.³⁸ She more than anyone else

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 209

³⁵ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 27

³⁶ *ibid.* p. 7

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 8

³⁸ “Erect in her long black robe of a prophetess, uniformed and stubborn, [Jacques’s grandmother] had never known resignation...Raised by her parents from Mahon on a small farm in the Sahel, she was very young when she married...She [had] nine children, of whom two died in infancy, another was saved only at the price of being handicapped, and the last was born deaf and mute. She raised her brood on that somber little farm while doing her share of their hard common labor; she sat at the end of the table with a long stick at hand that spared her any superfluous speech, the guilty one being immediately hit over the head. She held sway, demanding respect for herself and her husband, whom the children had to address in the polite form of speech, according to Spanish practice. Her husband would not long enjoy this respect: He died prematurely, worn out by sun and labor, and perhaps by his marriage, without Jacques ever being able to discover what disease he had died of. Left alone, the grandmother disposed of the little farm and went to live in Algiers with her younger children, the others having been sent out to work as soon as they were old enough to be apprenticed.” *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 83-4

dominated Camus's childhood, and his feelings towards her were ambivalent at best. In *L'Envers et l'endroit* — a collection of essays Camus composed in 1935 and 1936 — the narrator of a semi-autobiographical piece called *Irony* notes that “the old woman thought that love is something you can demand.³⁹ The knowledge that she herself had been a good mother gave her a kind of rigidity and intolerance...[But] to her grandsons, who were at the age of absolute judgments, she was nothing but a fraud.”⁴⁰ This harsh declaration comes just a page before the narrator describes his grandmother's death from cancer, after years of painful vomiting caused by liver complaints.⁴¹ Still, what is most shocking is the narrator's shameless and seemingly callous reaction to his grandmother's tragic end: “And if he asked himself whether he felt any sorrow, he could find none at all.⁴² Only on the day of the funeral, because of the general outburst of tears, did he weep, but he was afraid of being insincere and telling lies in the presence of death.”⁴³

Through his relationship with his grandmother, Camus learned the complexities and contradictions of the human individual. He presents a fuller and more sympathetic portrait of her in *Le Premier homme*, particularly in an episode where Jacques accompanies his grandmother to see a silent film. The scene is filled with as much poignancy as dread, for the young Albert must read the film's subtitles aloud while feeling acutely ashamed of his filial performance:

As his grandmother was illiterate, it was Jacques's job to read these texts to her. Despite her age, his grandmother was not at all hard of hearing. But first he had to make himself heard over the sound of the piano and that of the audience, whose vocal responses were plentiful. Furthermore, though the texts were extremely simple, his grandmother was not very familiar with some words and others were completely unknown to her. Jacques, for his part, did not want to disturb their neighbors and was especially anxious not to tell the entire hall that his grandmother did not know how to read (sometimes she herself would be embarrassed enough to say, raising her voice, at the beginning of the show: “You'll have to read to me, I forgot my glasses”), so he would not read the text as loudly as he might have. The result was that the grandmother only half understood, and would insist that he read it again and louder. Jacques would try to raise his voice, the shushes would plunge him into a vile shame, he stammered, the grandmother scolded him, and soon another text appeared, all the

³⁹ *L'Envers et l'endroit* is usually translated as “The Wrong Side and the Right Side,” but has also been called “Betwixt and Between,” which preserves the alliteration and assonance of the title. Camus, Albert. *L'Envers et l'endroit*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999. Print

⁴⁰ Camus, Albert. *Irony* in *The Wrong Side and the Right Side. Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. p. 27

⁴¹ “I do everything here,” the grandmother had said at intervals, underscoring the family's dependence on her. “I don't know what would become of you without me.” *ibid.* p. 28

⁴² Here, one might recall Meursault's lack of feeling at his mother's funeral in *The Stranger*. He is later castigated for this emotional dearth at the trial over the nameless Arab's murder.

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 29

more mysterious to the poor old woman because she had not understood the preceding one.⁴⁴

Things go from bad to worse with more complicated films, when Jacques, “caught between his grandmother’s demands and the ever-angrier reprimands of their neighbors,” stops serving as an interpreter altogether.⁴⁵ During one such screening, the grandmother leaves the theater in anger, upset by Jacques’s self-imposed silence. In turn, Jacques walks out crying and becomes “distressed at the thought that he had spoiled one of the poor woman’s rare pleasures and that it had been paid for out of their meager funds.”⁴⁶ This episode illustrates that poverty not only imposed physical exigencies on Camus but also exerted familial and social pressures on him as well. Indeed, the young author struggled with questions of identity from his earliest days, not least because of the tensions that manifested themselves between his impoverished past and his bright future. Was he primarily a grandson or a teacher? A silent observer or an active translator? One can imagine that Camus must have felt lost at various points along the way, pulled between the opposite poles of precocious child and nostalgic adult. Above all, however, he was simply embarrassed by his intelligence.

Labor was the other side of the coin for the Sintès-Camuses, since every member of the household worked to help put food on the table. Catherine was a housekeeper, Etienne a cooper, and Joseph a railroad worker.⁴⁷ “All three earned paltry wages that, combined, had to support a family of five,” Camus would write in *Le Premier homme*.⁴⁸ Madame Sintès created the family structure and lorded over its coffers; she also set the tone of the otherwise laconic home Camus grew up in. Her system of values would explain why later, when Camus was offered the opportunity to attend *lycée* on scholarship, his grandmother was hesitant to let him study instead of work. “Intelligent or not, we should put him in an apprenticeship next year,” she tells Catherine when the subject of Camus’s schooling comes up. “You know very well we have no money. He’ll bring home his pay.”⁴⁹

They all worked with their hands, including Lucien Jr., the older of the two brothers. At fourteen-years-old, Lucien was hired as a messenger at the Ricôme wine company with a starting salary of eighty francs per month.⁵⁰ Albert was the better student. Indeed, it was he who would ascend the ranks of the French educational system and transform his family’s working-class experience into art — laboring not with his hands but with his mind. In the 1958 preface to *L’Envers et l’endroit*, the author writes that the “source” of his art lies in the “world of poverty and sunlight [he] lived in for so long, whose memory still saves [him]

⁴⁴ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by Philip Thody. p. 96

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 96-7

⁴⁷ A cooper makes wooden staved vessels, such as casks, barrels, and buckets.

⁴⁸ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 85

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 160

⁵⁰ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 10

from two opposing dangers that threaten every artist, resentment and self-satisfaction.”⁵¹ Camus found hope in the darkness and dust of his upbringing, stating, “Poverty was never a misfortune for me: It was radiant with light...I lived on almost nothing, but also in a kind of rapture.”⁵² Strangely, poverty was a form of sustenance for him.

It would be easy to dismiss Camus’s elevated language here as a kind of rhetorical slumming by a much older, richer, and wiser man than the disadvantaged boy he once was; his paean of poverty might also reveal a certain nostalgia for the Algeria of his youth. But such a view would belittle Camus’s sincere and life-long struggle with his identity – between his Algerian homeland and his French destination, and, ultimately, between his impoverished roots and his successful career. Moreover, Camus was keenly aware that his family was not among the poorest of the poor in Algeria. These were the politically and economically disenfranchised members of the Algerian working-class, and the people of Kabylia, a mountainous region near the Mediterranean, whose harsh living conditions Camus would report in *Algerian Chronicles*.⁵³ As V.C. Letemendia has written, “Camus approached the understanding of poverty [as] both an internal and an external witness...He acknowledged that education, financial security, and fame had distanced him from the poor, and did not consider that his own experience gave him the authority to speak for other poor people.”⁵⁴

Such tension is apparent in a key passage of *Le Premier homme*, where Camus alludes to Proust’s *A La Recherche du temps perdu* (“In Search of Lost Time” or “Remembrance of Things Past”) to discuss poverty’s effects upon its victims. One of those victims was Camus’s mother, Catherine:

She said yes, maybe it was no; she had to reach back in time through a clouded memory, nothing was certain. To begin with, poor people’s memory is less nourished than that of the rich; it has fewer landmarks in space because they seldom leave the place where they live, and fewer reference points in time throughout lives that are gray and featureless. Of course there is the memory of the heart that they say is the surest kind, but the heart wears out with sorrow and labor, it forgets sooner under the weight of fatigue. *Remembrance of things past is just for the rich*. For the poor it only marks the faint traces on the path to death. And besides, in order to bear up well one must not remember too much, but rather stick close to the passing day, hour by hour, as his mother did, somewhat by necessity no doubt, since that childhood illness...had left her deaf and speaking with difficulty, then prevented her

⁵¹ *supra* Camus, Albert. *Lyrical and Critical Essays*. trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. p. 6

⁵² *ibid.* p. 6-7

⁵³ Camus, Albert. *Algerian Chronicles*. ed. by Alice Kaplan, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2013. Print.

⁵⁴ Letemendia, V.C. “Poverty in the Writings of Albert Camus.” *Polity*, Spring 1997. Palgrave Macmillan Journals. p. 441-460, 441. February 14, 2014. Accessed online via JSTOR at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3235315>>.

from learning what is taught to even the most wretched, so her mute resignation was forced on her, but it was also the only way she had found to face up to her life, and what else could she have done, who in her place could have found another way?⁵⁵

Camus's link between his mother's illness and the psychological implications of poverty illustrates the deleterious effect that being poor – an economic status created and reinforced by societal structures – can have on an individual's mental life. The passage aptly evinces Camus's personal sentiments of pity for his ignorant mother as well as a sharp critique of class hierarchy, in which the author uses a cornerstone of French literature (Proust) to make a subversive point.⁵⁶ The combination of these emotional and intellectual registers is classic Camus. One feels sorry for his deaf mother and perhaps even angry about the way poverty stratifies society into classes, but also somewhat powerless. For what could Catherine (or any individual for that matter) have done to change the natural and social forces that robbed her of conversation and knowledge?

However one reacts to such a passage, it is clear that the power of Camus's words lies in his ability to articulate a reality that his mother and the poor could not express themselves. The linguistic and intellectual progress Camus made over the course of his life is truly remarkable given that his home in Belcourt was a space of limited vocabulary. "For Camus's family, language often had an element of strangeness," a pamphlet from a recent exhibit at the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence states.⁵⁷ "Written words to be deciphered, complex terms and the richness of the language dazzled the child who was eager to learn in school, but they also separated him from his environment." Semantic signs were at once liberating and alienating for the young Camus; the former because they unlocked new ways of thinking, the latter because they took the boy's mind further away from home, the more and more he learned.

If the family's tiny apartment restricted Camus's intellectual development in any way, then Belcourt itself exposed the author to a *mélange* of people and cultures that he would carry with him for the rest of his life. Indeed, Camus's formative social milieu comprised a melting pot, with lower-class French coming into contact with Arabs, Jews, Italians, Spanish, and Corsicans, among others.⁵⁸ Belcourt was thus a microcosm for much of Europe, in which Camus observed group differences. The author would learn to navigate some of those differences as his education progressed, using his experience of his hometown as a foundation.

⁵⁵ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 80-1. Italics added.

⁵⁶ Namely, that only the rich have the time and energy to remember things fondly, while the poor must trudge through their work just to make ends meet. The irony is that *Le Premier homme* is precisely Camus's own version of *A La Recherche du temps perdu*; indeed, the near Oedipal love he shows towards his mother has deep echoes in Marcel's *drame du coucher*. One wonders whether Camus, writing this book after numerous best-sellers and international fame, would consider himself among the rich he seems to critique here.

⁵⁷ Albert Camus, *Citoyen du Monde*, 2013. p. 8. Pamphlet edited by Yacine Aït Kaci, Sophie Doudet, Marcelle Mahasela, Pierre-Louis Rey, Agnès Spiquel, and Maurice Weyembergh.

⁵⁸ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 9

While there was a clear divide between French and Arab in colonial Algeria, one can imagine Camus interacting with Arab merchants in the souk or playing soccer with Arab youths on the stifling streets of Belcourt. Whether Camus had close Arab friends while growing up remains largely unknown; accordingly, postcolonial critics might argue that his tendency to include nameless “Arab” figures in his fiction would indicate he didn’t.⁵⁹ In any event, Belcourt must have offered the young Camus a reprieve, however temporary, from the ennui of living in a sparsely furnished and quiet apartment.⁶⁰ “Poor and free rather than rich and enslaved,” the adult Camus would write in his notebooks, reflecting on his childhood. “Of course, men want to be both rich and free, and this is what leads them at times to be poor and enslaved.”⁶¹

School would expand Camus’s horizons even further, allowing him to experience an intellectual freedom he had not yet encountered. It was the first major step he took from his physically and linguistically impoverished home into the world of books and ideas.

L’ÉCOLE PRIMAIRE (1918-1923)

“If, this evening, the image of a certain childhood comes back to me, how can I keep from welcoming the lesson of love and poverty it offers? Since this hour is like a pause between yes and no, I leave hope or disgust with life for another time. Yes, only to capture the transparency and simplicity of paradises lost – in an image.”⁶²

“But all I want to emphasize is that poverty does not necessarily involve envy. Even later, when a serious illness temporarily deprived me of the natural vigor that always transfigured everything for me, in spite of the invisible infirmities and new weaknesses this illness brought, I may have known fear and discouragement, but never bitterness...My human passions, like my literary ones, have never been directed against others. The people I have loved have always been better and greater than me. Poverty as I knew it taught me not resentment but a certain fidelity and

⁵⁹ For example, the Arab whom Meursault kills in *The Stranger*, or the Arab prisoner whom Daru, a French school teacher, feeds and clothes in *L’Hôte*, a 1957 short story by Camus included in *Exile and the Kingdom*. (While *L’Hôte* is often translated as “The Guest,” the title is ambiguous because it can also mean “The Host.”) Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. trans. by Matthew Ward. New York: Knopf, 1988. Print. ; “The Guest” in *Exile and the Kingdom*. trans. by Carol Cosman. New York: Knopf, 2006. Print. p. 67-86

⁶⁰ “Je m’ennuie ! Je m’ennuie ! “ Jacques calls out at home in *Le Premier homme*. p. 51

⁶¹ Camus, Albert. *Notebooks: 1935-1951*. trans. by Philip Thody and Justin O’Brien. New York: Marlowe & Co., 1998. Print.

⁶² Camus, Albert. *Between Yes and No in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 37

silent tenacity. If I have ever forgotten them, either I or my faults are to blame, not the world I was born into."⁶³

Like other children his age, Camus was required by the French state to attend primary school (*l'école primaire*). According to *la mission civilisatrice*, or "civilisatory mission" – a cultural policy of French colonial expansion – education formed an essential component of the republican principles of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*.⁶⁴ For how could a young man expect to behave as a responsible French citizen if he had not learned the language, history, and culture of France?

A brief review of the French educational system will help orient our reader to the academic journey on which the young Albert Camus was about to embark just after World War I. In contrast to the United States both then and now, France had a highly centralized scholastic structure. It consisted of three main parts: *l'enseignement primaire* (primary education), *l'enseignement secondaire* (secondary education), and *l'enseignement supérieur* (higher education). Within the first level were *l'école maternelle* (nursery school) and *l'école primaire* (primary school); within the second, *le collège* (junior high school) and *le lycée* (high school). Higher education included the degrees of *licence, maîtrise, and doctorat* (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral, respectively). With the exception of certain inter-jurisdictional programs due to globalization, this hierarchy remains largely unchanged today.

The modern system of French education has its roots in the Revolution (1789-1799).⁶⁵ In 1793, the National Convention (1792-1795) established a Committee of Public Instruction (*Comité de l'instruction*), which aimed to restructure education in France from its ecclesiastical (namely, Catholic) past. After the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) had ended, the state soon declared the instruction of teachers to be a national priority. Indeed, the *Ecole normale supérieure* (the Paris Normal School, known today as ENS) was created in 1794 with the goal of training the Republic's new body of teachers; its curriculum emphasized "republican morality and the public and private virtues, as well as the techniques of teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, practical geometry, French history and grammar."⁶⁶ Instruction at ENS was guided by books that were published and prescribed by the National Convention, evincing the centralized nature of French education from its earliest days.

⁶³ Camus, Albert. *Preface to The Wrong Side and The Right Side in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 9-10

⁶⁴ Burrows, Matthew. "'Mission Civilisatrice': French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914." *The Historical Journal*, Mar. 1986. Cambridge University Press. p. 109-135. Accessed online via JSTOR at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2639258>>.

⁶⁵ "The Revolution, Napoleon, and Education." <http://www.napoleon-series.org>. The International Napoleonic Society, 1995. Web. Jan. 24, 2014. <http://www.napoleon-series.org/ins/markham/c_education_m.html>.

⁶⁶ Bernard, H.C. *Education and the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969. via <<http://www.napoleon-series.org>>.

Reason, civic duty, and a taxonomy of knowledge – these were Enlightenment principles at work in the restructuring of the French educational system. It is essential to note that each of these elements was united by a shared and increasingly standardized language. Revolutionary France was rife not only with political but also linguistic differences; if the Republic was to be unified by common mores and values, a common language would have to be adopted in the nation’s schools.⁶⁷ The idea was that modernized French would be the means through which schools paved the way for domestic stability. Certainly, such a policy had implications for French nationalism in the aftermath of various wars with England, Spain, and Prussia. It also had implications for the rise of French colonialism, which Camus, as a European living in 20th century Algeria, experienced firsthand.

The policy was not without its problems. While the National Convention had added *scolarité* to *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* on the banner of the Republic, both qualified teachers and students in France were in short supply by the end of the 18th century.⁶⁸ Moreover, school curricula were far from standardized; to speak of “required courses” during this period of French history would be anachronistic. It goes without saying that Paris and France’s provinces diverged significantly.

Napoleon Bonaparte introduced vast reforms. In 1802, the French emperor established the *lycée* as the principle institution of secondary education, with the intention of preparing French youth for careers in government. These schools taught French, Latin, and Ancient Greek; in fact, an 1808 law mandated that *lycées* were to instruct students in “ancient languages, history, rhetoric, logic and the elements of mathematical and physical sciences.”⁶⁹ Napoleon believed these were all subjects that would form the base of education for the future leaders of France and its colonies.

Culturally, the Napoleonic *lycée* resembled a militaristic boarding school more than the *lycées* of today. Merit was its guiding principle, and patriotism was a virtue. Scholarships were provided to sons of the military and government, as well as to the best pupils from French secondary schools. Camus belonged to this latter group. Although he was a *pupille de la nation* – a ward of the state, on account of his father’s death in World War I – the young author would become a beneficiary of state-provided scholarships because of his intellectual prowess. He progressed through the French educational system not because of his social rank but rather precisely in spite of it.

Decades after Napoleon first established the *lycée*, a series of laws championed by Minister of Public Instruction Jules Ferry, in the wake of France’s 1871 defeat at the hands of the Prussians, rendered French public schools free, mandatory, and secular.^{70 71} The concept

⁶⁷ *supra* “The Revolution, Napoleon, and Education”

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *supra* Bernard, H.C. *Education and the French Revolution*

⁷⁰ Harrigan, Patrick J. “Church, State, and Education in France From the Falloux to the Ferry Laws: A Reassessment.” *Canadian Journal of History*, April 2001. p. 51-83

of *laïcité* (“secularism”) soon became the *sine qua non* of the entire educational system – a standard that has persisted through Camus’s era to this day. As the French Ministry of National Education declares:

Laïcité in regards to religious affairs has been at the foundation of French [education] since the end of the 19th century. The respect of students’ and their parents’ beliefs implies: the absence of religious instruction in school programs; the *laïcité* of personnel; and the prohibition of proselytism. *Laïcité* guarantees the liberty of conscience to all, [offering] students the conditions to forge their own identity, to exercise their free will, and to learn what is required of citizenship. It assures students access to a common and shared culture.⁷²

This was Albert Camus’s educational world. Or, at least this was the story the French Republic wanted to tell about education. But their story did not acknowledge the colonial experience, where equality of conditions was already far from universal. In 1830, France had invaded Camus’s home country of Algeria and proceeded to subjugate it over the next seventeen years. Colonization included efforts to consolidate power over the education of Algerian youth, as part of a larger policy of assimilation, which Clignet and Foster aptly define as “the elimination of parochial cultures and the creation of men who are peers and culturally undifferentiated.”⁷³ Thus, a major goal of colonialism was political and cultural uniformity. These were values that the Revolution of 1789 had promoted within France itself. “The stress on direct rule by the French [in Algeria] echoed their preoccupation with the problem of ensuring the unqualified dominance of the central government,” Clignet and Foster write. “[Such education] seeks the dissemination of ‘modern’ modes of thought and common patterns of behavior.”⁷⁴ Education was the bread and butter of the “*mission civilisatrice*” (“civilisatory mission”) by the French state to spread ‘civilization’ – that is, Western, republican values – to the ‘backwards’ people of its colonies.⁷⁵

Although the development of French colonial schools was strongly correlated with the level of political and economic growth of local areas, instruction in the French language from the earliest years of schooling was uniform across colonies.⁷⁶ This pedagogic practice

⁷¹ Fearing that religious orders such as the Jesuits would indoctrinate citizens with parochial and partisan ideals, French Republicans insisted that the state needed to control the educational system in order to achieve economic, military, and national progress. Religious instruction in all schools was forbidden, and funds were appropriated from religious institutions such as the Catholic Church to build more state schools. *ibid.*

⁷² “Repères, histoire et patrimoine : Les grands principes du système éducatif.” <http://www.education.gouv.fr>. Ministère de l’éducation nationale (française), 1995. Web. Jan. 24, 2014. <<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid162/les-grands-principes.html>>.

⁷³ Clignet, Remi P. and Philip J. Foster. “French and British Colonial Education in Africa.” *Comparative Education Review*, October 1964, p. 191-198. Accessed online via JSTOR at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1186438>>.

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 192-193

⁷⁵ *supra* Burrows, Mathew. “*Mission Civilisatrice*: French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914.”

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

reflected both the nationalistic values of the Republic ('Every person living under the French state should speak proper French') and logistical concerns about communicating effectively with the colonized. It comes as little surprise, therefore, that colonial schools used metropolitan educational materials and followed roughly the same structure as their continental counterparts – a detail Camus notes when discussing his primary school in *Le Premier homme*.⁷⁷

Historian Alf Andrew Heggoy has a less favorable interpretation of such practices, writing in a critical essay in the 1970s that “the imposition of French educational norms and the denial to the Algerian of his legitimate cultural identity through controls of language, curriculum, and methods of instruction revealed the colonialist policy in its most destructive aspect.”⁷⁸ Heggoy goes so far as to call colonial education in Algeria a kind of “secondary invasion” by French colonizers.⁷⁹ Furthermore, he claims that French educational efforts directed at Algeria “had a negligible effect until after the turn of the century” – exactly when Camus (1913-1960) was born.⁸⁰

Camus almost certainly crossed paths with students of different faiths and ethnicities in school. In 1917, about forty years after the Jules Ferry laws had been instituted in the metropole, the French decreed that primary education was to be universal and compulsory for all Muslim boys, including those in Algeria. While Camus was not Muslim, of course, he was coming of age in a country where education was increasingly valued as Algerian migrant workers and soldiers returned home from France, equipped with a newfound exposure to European culture. As Heggoy explains:

The birth of twentieth-century Algerian nationalism can be traced directly to the population movement between Algeria and continental France that began during World War I. The changed perceptions inevitably affected Algerian attitudes towards French education. Whereas before 1914 Algerians were at least reluctant and generally refused to send their children to colonial schools, they now began to demand educational opportunities for their sons. Schools were, obviously, no longer the threat to fiercely defended local culture they had seem to be throughout the nineteenth century, but a means to achieve a better life.⁸¹

But while colonialism surely had destructive impacts on the colonized – the full extent of which would not be realized until the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962)⁸²

⁷⁷ “The texts were always those used in France.” Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. David Hapgood. New York: Knopf, 1995. Print. p. 144

⁷⁸ Heggoy, Alf Andrew. “Education in French Algeria: An Essay on Cultural Conflict.” *Comparative Education Review*, June 1973. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 180-197. Accessed online via JSTOR at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1186812>>.

⁷⁹ *ibid.* p. 183

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 185

⁸² Between 350,000 and 1.5 million people died during the eight years of the war, though the exact number of casualties depends on whom one asks and how one counts. In 1964, the National Liberation Front (FLN)

THE STRANGER, OR THE BOY FROM BELCOURT

– Algerians benefited from the French system of education, if somewhat unevenly. As Heggoy sensibly points out, both urban children and sons of the Algerian elite always had better opportunities to attend schools; moreover, the number of classrooms and trained teachers was insufficient until the situation in public education began to improve during the 1930s.⁸³ Nevertheless, as Fanny Colonna has written, “education *à la française* became the main leverage for social mobility [in Algeria].”⁸⁴

Camus was a beneficiary of this educational system. For all his genius, though, the young Albert could not have progressed through the ranks of French schooling without a critical mass of support and encouragement from his family and teachers. When he entered *l'école maternelle*, or nursery school, at the age of four – an experience which he claimed to have no memory of, except for “a dark stone lavatory” and his friend Pierre⁸⁵ – Camus was thrust into a world of books and lessons that his family’s impoverished apartment in Belcourt sorely lacked. Primary school was where Camus’s intellectual life began in earnest. It was only a ten-minute walk from his home.⁸⁶

Was the young Albert anxious? Excited? Overwhelmed at first? These are questions we may never answer with complete assurance since Camus’s earliest published works – a collection of critical and literary essays for the journal *Sud*, now included in his *Écrits de jeunesse*, or *Youthful Writings*⁸⁷ – only go back to his twenties. As Robert Zaretsky has noted, silence was the defining characteristic of Camus’s childhood and teenage years.⁸⁸ It has therefore been difficult for biographers to reconstruct the author’s early life, with most scholarship focusing on Camus’s literature, journalism, and politics. Few have delved deeply into his education and schooling.

Still, we can begin to approach the truth of Camus’s childhood by situating his life in its larger historical and cultural context, and by examining how Camus portrays his life

estimated that deaths from war-related causes figured more than 1 million, while French officials put the number below 500,000. Other French and Algerian sources later estimated the death toll to be around 700,000 or more. It is unclear to what extent these numbers accurately reflect civilian deaths as well as those which occurred in internal FLN purges and French army bombing raids. Additionally, the war uprooted more than 2 million Algerians, thousands of whom died of starvation, disease, or exposure after being forced to relocate to French camps or flee to the Algerian countryside. Whatever the true death toll, Algeria suffered far more casualties than France – by some estimates, more than fifty times. Horne, Alistair. *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 2006. Print.

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Colonna, Fanny. “Training the National Elites in Colonial Algeria 1920-1954.” *Historical Social Research*, 2008. Mannheim: GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. p. 285-295. Accessed online via JSTOR at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20762288>>.

⁸⁵ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. David Hapgood. p. 138

⁸⁶ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 10

⁸⁷ Camus, Albert and Paul Viallaneix, *Écrits de jeunesse*. 1935. Paris: Gallimard, 1973. Print. Typescripts of these materials are available to view at the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence, where I conducted a research trip in December 2013.

⁸⁸ Zaretsky, Robert. *Albert Camus: Elements of A Life*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010. Print.

experiences in his autobiographical works. The French educational system attempted to mold good citizens by emphasizing egalitarian, rational, and secular values that harkened back to both the Enlightenment and the Revolution. Through France's policy of assimilation, such a system extended to the colonies, including Camus's home of Algeria. Zaretsky depicts how the dissemination of Republican ideology played out on the ground. "The vanguard of this massive effort at civil pedagogy – in a sense, the missionaries of this new secular religion – were the primary school teachers," he writes. "Known as *instituteurs*, they fanned out to the provinces to carry the gospel of the republic."⁸⁹ Thus, Camus's primary school on the rue Aumerat was "typical of the [French] Third Republic," where "classes in history, geography, and civics hammered into the students the idea of France as a maternal power."⁹⁰

Camus likely felt indebted to the French system of education and its egalitarian values, given the fond memories of primary school he recounts in *Le Premier homme* and related correspondences. The author repeatedly describes going to school as escape from the ennui and poverty of living at home, a place that is deprived of both material goods and language itself. As a writer, words were Camus's weapons, but he did not learn to wield many of them until he ventured into the world:

In fact, what had struck [Jacques] when he had discovered other homes, whether that of a friend from *lycée* or later on that of a more fortunate world, was the number of vases, plates, statues and tables that crowded their rooms. At his home, one said, "the vase that's on the fireplace," the pot, the bowls, while the few objects one couldn't find didn't have names. At his uncle's, on the other hand, one admired the fiery Vosges sandstone, and one ate using fine pottery.⁹¹ He had always grown up in a poverty as naked as death, among things named with common nouns; at his uncle's, he discovered the proper names of things.⁹²

School thus represented an opportunity for the young Camus to imagine and explore a wider universe than the one he came home to each day. It was the space where he could finally learn all that his mother – who, though loving, was illiterate and partially mute – never could teach him; for she "could not even have any idea of history or geography, knowing only that she lived on land near the sea; that France was on the other side of this sea which she too had never crossed, France being an obscure place lost in the indistinct night."⁹³ At school, France became real for Camus, in the sense that he learned, through language and ideas, what it meant.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 10

⁹⁰ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 10

⁹¹ This was Camus's middle-class uncle, Gustave Acault, who took him in after he contracted tuberculosis at the age of seventeen. See the chapter entitled "*La Maladie*" for further discussion of Acault's role in Camus's personal and intellectual development. p. 54

⁹² *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood, p. 60

⁹³ *ibid.* p. 67, with minor changes made to translation.

⁹⁴ Here, it is apt to mention that the sixth chapter of *Le Premier homme* begins with a grammatical error made by Jacques's mother, illustrating the degree of linguistic difference for Camus between school and home: "*Ah !*

But school was not without personal struggle for Camus. The French-Algerian child from the poor district of Belcourt had to navigate between two worlds: “one of material poverty, which clung to the spare and tattered possessions [of his family], the other of spiritual wealth, found in the waves breaking in the distance and star-strewn sky sweeping over his head.”⁹⁵ ⁹⁶ This kind of double consciousness (to borrow from W.E.B. Du Bois) between scarcity and fullness, silence and clamor, defined much of Camus’s early life.⁹⁷ School taught Camus to ponder his identity and to think in binaries because it was the first time he had to venture beyond the four walls of his home. “Only school gave Jacques and [his friend] Pierre these joys,” Camus writes. “And no doubt what they so passionately loved in school was that they were not at home, where want and ignorance made life harder and more bleak, as if closed in on itself; poverty is a fortress without drawbridges.”⁹⁸

Louis Germain was one of the gatekeepers to this wider world. As the ten-year-old Camus’s primary *instituteur*, Germain also played the role of a father-figure to an otherwise fatherless child. (Germain too, was a soldier during World War I, except that he survived.) Camus says as much in a chapter entitled “School” (“*L’école*”) in *Le Premier homme*, where Jacques Cormery is to Albert Camus as Monsieur Bernard is to Louis Germain:

This man had not known his father, but he had often spoken to [Jacques] of him in a rather mythological way, and, in any case, at a critical moment, he had known how to replace this father. That is why Jacques had never forgotten him, as if, having never really felt the absence of a father he had not known, he had recognized nonetheless unconsciously, first as a child, then all throughout his life, the only fatherly gesture, both thoughtful and decisive, which had intervened in his childhood life. For Monsieur Bernard [Louis Germain], his final *instituteur* in primary school, had thrown in all his weight, at a given moment, to shape the destiny of this child whom he was responsible for, and whom he had changed indeed.⁹⁹

To Germain, Camus was not like other students;¹⁰⁰ he both excelled in class and was able to win the affection of his comrades. Meanwhile, Camus thought Germain projected a

lui fit sa mère, je suis contente quand tu es là. “She never used a subjunctive,” the author remarks in an annotation to the manuscript. (p. 91) We might say for Camus, then, that home was the realm of the concrete and real (the past), while school represented the possible and abstract (the future).

⁹⁵ *supra* Zaretsky, Robert. *Albert Camus: Elements of a Life*. p. 11

⁹⁶ To Zaretsky’s description of “the spiritual” we might add the symbolic and abstract; that is, the linguistic, historical, mathematic, and scientific concepts Camus learned in school.

⁹⁷ In *The Souls of Black Folk*, a collection of essays on race published in 1903, African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois defined double consciousness as “a peculiar sensation...this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in an amused contempt and pity.” Although Du Bois’s term applied specifically to the psychological challenge of reconciling an African heritage with a European upbringing and education, it resonates strongly with the French-Algerian Camus’s experience of poverty and social mobility achieved via education.

⁹⁸ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood, p. 145

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p. 136, with minor changes made to translation

¹⁰⁰ If he had been, then Camus’s name might be lost to history.

commanding presence that was simultaneously endearing, for he depicts the latter as “solid, elegantly dressed, his strong, regular face crowned with hair that was a little sparse but smooth, smelling of cologne, [and] watching with both good humor and severity.”¹⁰¹ “Good humor and severity” – how better to humanize the disciplinary nature of a man who represented the French system of education?

This human side at the heart of Germain’s teaching only enlivened Camus’s budding intellectual fervor. “With M. Bernard,” Camus writes, “[our] class was constantly interesting for the simple reason that he passionately loved his job.”¹⁰² Germain’s pedagogic method, which “consisted of strict control on behavior while at the same time making his teaching lively and entertaining” was as important as his measured tone.¹⁰³ “He always knew the right moment to bring from his treasure chest the mineral collection, the herbarium, the mounted butterflies and insects, the maps or...[sic] to revive his pupils’ flagging interest,” the author recalls. “He was the only person in the school to have obtained a magic lantern, and twice a month he would do projections on some subject in natural history or geography.”¹⁰⁴ ¹⁰⁵ Camus seems so caught up in reminiscing about his *instituteur* that he even slips and uses Germain’s real name when describing the ultimate impact the latter’s teaching had on him and his peers: “In M. Germain’s class, they felt for the first time that they existed and that they were the objects of the highest regard: They were judged worthy to discover the world.”¹⁰⁶

Discover the world Camus did, for it was in Germain’s class that Albert expanded his intellectual and imaginative horizons. This comes across most vividly when Camus discusses the dream-like wonder he felt at reading about a concept as foreign to him as snow, in stories that were “as exotic as could possibly be” and “part of the powerful poetry of school.”¹⁰⁷ Camus never took this exposure for granted since it allowed him to escape from the “fortress of poverty” which had limited his opportunities since birth. His “drawbridge” out was made not of bricks but of books.

Camus would eventually credit Germain with his ascent through academic and social ranks. In fact, Germain persuaded Camus’s family to let the young Albert take an examination that would award him an academic scholarship for *lycée*, and thus prepare him for the world beyond Belcourt. With Germain’s tutoring, Camus succeeded; had he not, the author would have probably undertaken an apprenticeship at the bidding of his

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p. 137

¹⁰² *ibid.* p. 143

¹⁰³ *ibid.* p. 146

¹⁰⁴ The “magic lantern” was an early type of image projector developed in the 17th century.

¹⁰⁵ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 144

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.* p. 146

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.* p. 144-145

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grandmother, who thought the boy's time would be better spent earning a fixed (albeit small) salary, like his brother, Lucien.¹⁰⁸

The watershed moment for Camus came when he passed the *lycée* entrance exam and realized he had irrevocably changed the course of his life. But such scholastic achievement produced as much anxiety within the young Albert as it did excitement. "Instead of the joy of success, a child's immense anguish wrung his heart, as if he knew in advance that this success had just uprooted him from the warm and innocent world of the poor," Camus writes. "To be hurtled into a strange world, one no longer his, where he could not believe the teachers were more learned than the one whose heart was all-knowing, and from now on he would have to learn, to understand without help, and become a man without the aid of the one man who had rescued him; would have to grow up and bring himself up alone, and it would be at the highest cost."¹⁰⁹ For Camus, both the payoff and price of education was independence; the very stakes of his success were his past and his future.

In a letter Camus wrote to his beloved teacher after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957, at the age of forty-four, the author humbly thanked M. Germain for his indispensable aid:

I have just been given far too great an honor, one I neither sought nor solicited. But when I heard the news, my first thought, after my mother, was of you. Without you, without the affectionate hand you extended to the small poor child that I was, without your teaching, and your example, none of this would have happened. I don't make too much of this sort of honor. But at least it gives me an opportunity to tell you what you have been and still are for me, and to assure you that your efforts, your work, and the generous heart you put into it still live in one of your little schoolboys [*petits écoliers*] who, despite the years, has never stopped being your grateful pupil [*reconnaissant élève*]. I embrace you with all my heart.¹¹⁰

Germain was a father for Camus, and if not the greatest intellectual influence on the young author (Jean Grenier and Nietzsche might rank higher, but more on them later), then he was certainly his earliest. In a word, Germain opened doors that "his little Camus" would not have been able to open by himself.¹¹¹ He symbolized the best — that is to say, the most human — of what the French educational system could offer the Republic's children.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* p. 160

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 176

¹¹⁰ Camus, Albert. *Letter of November 19, 1957*. Included at the end of *Le Premier homme*. ed. by Catherine Camus. Paris: Gallimard, 1994. Print. p. 371-372. Translation is mine.

¹¹¹ Germain, Louis. *Letter of April 30, 1959*. Included at the end of Camus, Albert. *Le Premier homme*. ed. by Catherine Camus. Paris: Gallimard, 1994. Print. p. 373

LE LYCÉE (1923-1930)

“There is not a single one of these sixty-nine kilometers of highway that is not filled for me with memories and sensations. A violent childhood, adolescent daydreams to the hum of the bus’s engines, mornings, the freshness of young girls, beaches, young muscles always tensed, the slight anguish that the evening brings to a sixteen-year-old heart, the desire to live, glory, and always the same sky, for months on end, with its inexhaustible strength and light, a sky insatiable, one by one devouring victims lying crucified upon the beach at the funeral hour of noon.”^{112 113}

Despite all he had learned under the guidance of Louis Germain and throughout primary school, it would take some time for Camus to become the intellectual and humanist we remember today. The gradual development of Camus’s ethical impulses was something of which the author, reflecting on the early years of his life in *Le Premier homme*, was eminently aware:

No one had actually taught the child what was right and wrong. Some things were forbidden and any infraction was severely punished. Others were not. Only his teachers would sometimes talk about morality, when the curriculum left them the time, but there again the prohibitions were more explicit than the reasons for them. All that Jacques had been able to experience concerning morality was daily life in a working-class family where it was evident no one had ever thought there was any other way than the hardest kind of labor to acquire the money necessary for their survival. But that was a lesson in courage, not morals.¹¹⁴

Camus’s original values were based in the demands and rhythms of working-class life, where the relevant means were money and the ultimate end was survival. Although hard work constituted an *a priori* virtue within his family, the reasoning behind larger ethical questions remained deeply unclear to the young Albert. Even in Louis Germain’s classroom, Camus’s moral lessons were limited to those regarding religious tolerance and abstract evils. While the teacher would never speak against religion or matters of belief, according to

¹¹² Camus, Albert. *Return to Tipasa in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 166

¹¹³ “Camus was a ‘solar’ thinker,” a pamphlet from a recent exhibit at the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence explains, under “Thought on Midday” (“*Pensée de midi*”). “According to him, we should think of ‘midday’ in terms of its tension with ‘midnight,’ just as in human life ‘yes’ is in constant tension with ‘no,’ consent is inseparable from revolt, and Mediterranean philosophy finds its counterpart in German philosophy. When the opposite poles balance each other out, humankind can avoid the excesses and pitfalls of nihilism.” *Albert Camus, Citoyen du Monde*, 2013. p. 8. Pamphlet edited by Yacine Aït Kaci, Sophie Doudet, Marcelle Mahasela, Pierre-Louis Rey, Agnès Siquel, and Maurice Weyembergh.

¹¹⁴ Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 101-2

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Camus, “he would condemn with all the more vigor those evils over which there could be no argument – theft, betrayal, rudeness, dirtiness.”¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, such issues seem uninteresting to narrator of *Le Premier homme* precisely because they do not require an active moral imagination to be resolved. On the contrary, they represent the multitude of formulaic maxims one learns during youth – ‘it is wrong to steal,’ ‘it is bad to be rude,’ ‘accepting others is a virtue’ – which may serve as reliable guides for action but ultimately omit gray areas and obscure deeper truths. Indeed, these home and classroom lessons helped socialize Camus to the values of his cultural milieu more than they got him thinking seriously about how one ought to live, both individually and as a member of the human community.¹¹⁶ One might say they were necessary but not sufficient for Camus’s intellectual and ethical growth.

How, then, did Camus go from the games of his youth described in *Le Premier homme* to the bigger philosophical problems embodied in his essays and fiction, where the stakes were not bragging rights on the soccer field but the very meaning of life itself?¹¹⁷ When and why, in other words, did the poor boy from Belcourt become Albert Camus the intellectual and moralist?

One cannot fully answer these questions without first addressing the academic and social education Camus received in what we would call high school. The *Lycée Bugeaud* was an all-boys high school built in the 1860s in the predominantly European Bab el-Oued quarter of Algiers.¹¹⁸ After receiving a scholarship to enroll, thanks to the support of Louis Germain, Camus commuted by trolley to *Bugeaud* every morning before the sun had risen, waking up at five-thirty a.m. in order to arrive by seven.¹¹⁹ His status as a scholarship kid entitled him to breakfast at seven-fifteen, and classes started at eight or nine. The

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 147

¹¹⁶ That would come later; for now, Albert had to focus on being a student and fulfilling the hopes of success his family and teachers, including M. Germain, had placed in him.

¹¹⁷ The philosophical issues Camus would confront head-on as a writer were of an entirely different degree. A famous sentence from the *Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus’s 1942 essay on the Absurd, provides a fine example: “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest – whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories – comes afterward. These are games; one must first answer.” Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. trans. by Justine O’Brien. 1995. Reprint. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print. p. 3

¹¹⁸ Messud, Claire. “Camus & Algeria: The Moral Question.” *The New York Review of Books*. November 7, 2013. *nybooks.com*. Web. Accessed Dec. 21, 2013.

<<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/nov/07/camus-and-algeria-moral-question/>>.

¹¹⁹ Another famous ‘alumnus’ of the *Lycée Bugeaud* was the French-Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). On the first day of classes in 1942, however, Derrida was expelled by French administrators implementing anti-Semitic quotas under the Vichy government. He secretly skipped school for a year rather than attend a Jewish *lycée* formed by teachers and students, and also took part in numerous soccer competitions with the dream of becoming a professional player. Peeters, Benoît. *Derrida: A Biography*. Polity, 2012. p. 12-13; Bennington, Geoffrey. *Jacques Derrida*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.

coursework, as in other republican *lycées* of the era, included Latin, French literature, geography, science, and mathematics. Naturally, Camus excelled at French; he found Latin boring and he barely passed in math.¹²⁰

As Olivier Todd has noted, *lycée* was the first place where Camus encountered children from privileged families on a regular basis. “Before, everyone was like me and poverty seemed to be the very air of this world,” Camus stated. “In *lycée*, I learned about comparison.”¹²¹ This unsettling shift in cultural milieu was something Camus would also describe in *Le Premier homme*. There, the narrator describes the world of difference between Belcourt and Bab el-Oued, including the difficulty of that transition for him and Pierre, a childhood friend who had also received a scholarship for *lycée*:

Pierre and he realized very soon that they were on their own. M. Bernard himself...could tell them nothing about this *lycée* he did not know. At home, ignorance was still more complete. For Jacques’s family, Latin, for example, was a word that had absolutely no meaning... Neither the images, nor things written, nor word of mouth, nor the veneration of culture acquired in everyday conversation had reached them. In this home where there were no newspapers, nor, until Jacques brought them in, any books, no radio either, where there were only objects of immediate utility...a home they rarely left and then only to meet other members of the same ignorant family – what Jacques brought home from the *lycée* could not be assimilated, and the silence grew between him and his family. At the *lycée* itself, he could not speak of his family; he sensed their peculiarity without being able to articulate it, even if he could have overcome the insuperable reticence that sealed his lips on the subject.¹²²

More than a mere change of environment, Camus’s entry into high school represented a paradigm shift in language, literacy, and quotidian conversation. *Le lycée* was, for the young Camus and his family, truly unfamiliar territory; Belcourt was home but it was also parochial, unexposed to certain historical and cultural truths about the wider world. While Camus’s judgment of his family as “ignorant” may seem harsh to modern readers, it is important to keep in mind that he was writing decades later from the position of a man (a Nobel Prize winner, no less) who had been irrevocably changed by his education and experiences. As Camus knew only too well, such intellectual development had its costs, not least among them feeling increasingly alienated from his own mother. In *Le Premier homme*, the author describes the difficulty with which he had to identify his mother’s profession on school documents, explaining that he didn’t know whether to call her a “homemaker” (“*une ménagère*”) or a “domestic worker” (“*une domestique*”). When Jacques (the young Camus)

¹²⁰ Todd, Olivier. *Camus, A Life*. trans. by Benjamin Ivry. New York: Knopf, 1997. Print. p. 13-14

¹²¹ *ibid.* p. 14. In the French version of Todd’s biography – *Camus, Une Vie* (1996) – the statement reads: “*Auparavant, tout le monde était comme moi, et la pauvreté me paraissait l’air même de ce monde. Au lycée, je connus la comparaison.*”

¹²² *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 202-3

starts to write the latter, he stops, “and all at once he [feels] shame...the shame of having been ashamed.”¹²³

Silence and shame are recurring themes in Camus’s work, especially in regards to his family. We have already seen how the young Albert felt burning embarrassment at having to read aloud the subtitles of films to his illiterate grandmother in public;¹²⁴ this episode at *le lycée* shows how Camus also felt *mal dans sa peau* (“uneasy in his skin”) when it came to labeling his family’s social situation. For Camus, assimilating to French middle- or upper-class culture implied a loss of his home idiom and simultaneously redoubled the extant silence between himself and his mother, Catherine. Partially mute, she could barely speak. Now, she and her son had even less in common to speak about.¹²⁵

But education introduced more than just problems of language for Camus; it also introduced problems of identity. If he wasn’t sure how to identify his parents, how could he ever identify himself? “A child is nothing by himself,” Camus writes in *Le Premier homme*. “It is his parents who represent him. It is through them that he defines himself, that he is defined in the eyes of the world. He feels it is through them that he is truly judged—judged, that is, without right of appeal.”¹²⁶ Camus’s familial shame emerged from this judgment. He knew he belonged in the tiny three-bedroom apartment in Belcourt, yet he also knew he was different from the others living there.

Such personal isolation is palpable in a scene at the family’s dinner table from *Le Premier homme*, where Camus recalls being asked if he “had received good grades” in school but nothing else.¹²⁷ After the meal is over, he begins to read *Les Pardaillan*, a popular historical novel, until his grandmother tells him to help his mother clean the table.¹²⁸ The book lets Camus escape from his mundane home life into a world “of duels and courage,” where his mind can roam free.

Thanks to his classes, teachers, and books, Camus saw the world in ways that his closest relatives did not. But he had to keep that vision to himself. It would take years of schooling and the broader development of his intellectual instincts through reading, writing, mentorship, and teamwork for the young author to discover who he was to become; indeed,

¹²³ *ibid.* p. 203-4

¹²⁴ See chapter entitled “Ecole Maternelle,” p. 13-14

¹²⁵ The silence between Camus and his late father had been infinite almost since his birth.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* p. 204

¹²⁷ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*, trans. by David Hapgood. p. 227-8

¹²⁸ *Les Pardaillan* was written by Michel Zévaco (1860-1918), a French journalist, publisher, and anarchist, whose story spanned the reigns of Henry II and Louis XIII in the 16th and 17th centuries. It contained the entire period of the French Wars of Religion, and featured as its hero Pardaillan, a generous and seductive knight-errant. These kinds of novels surely furnished the young Camus’s growing imagination with a sweeping sense of history, power, and morality. As he writes in *Le Premier homme*, “The taste for heroism and panache was certainly strong in [Jacques and Pierre], judging by their incredible consumption of cloak-and-dagger novels, and by how easily they added the characters of *Pardaillan* to their everyday lives. Indeed, their favorite writer was Michel Zévaco.” *ibid.* p. 244-5

it would take until almost the end of his life for Camus to be able to articulate where he had originally come from.

This is not to say that Camus did not experiment with autobiographical writing before composing *Le Premier homme* in the 1950s. Published in 1937, *L'Envers et l'endroit* represents one of Camus's first attempts to transform his personal experiences of school and home into the written word.¹²⁹ The collection of six essays shows a more abstract, less polished expression of the same themes Camus would depict in his memoirs: among them, poverty, family, identity, self-awareness, and social mobility. Camus himself admitted the shortcomings of the work in his 1958 preface:

I reject nothing of what these writings express, but their form has always seemed clumsy to me...How can I explain this except by admitting that these inadequacies concern and reveal the subject closest to my heart...I confess that for me this little book has considerable value as testimony...At twenty-two [years-old], unless one is a genius, one scarcely knows how to write...Since these pages were written I have grown older and have lived through many things. *I have learned to recognize my limits and nearly all my weaknesses...*I've learned at least that other people do exist, and that selfishness, although it cannot be denied, must try to be clear-sighted...Here are my people, my teachers, my ancestry, here is what, through them, links me with everyone...*Someday, when a balance is established between what I am and what I say, perhaps then I shall be able to construct the work I dream of...*It is better to wait until we are skillful enough to give [the secrets closest to our hearts] a form that does not stifle their voice.¹³⁰

That work Camus dreamed of writing was *Le Premier homme*, which we might consider a reflection on class differences and social mobility as much as a heartfelt recollection of the author's earliest days. A *pupille de la nation* ("war orphan") from Belcourt, Camus felt "disoriented by the young metropolitans [students from mainland France] whom the vagaries of their fathers' careers had brought to Algiers."¹³¹ These were precisely the children from privileged families Camus had first contact with in high school. Unlike them, Albert worked a number of odd jobs during school vacations, including one stint in an ironmonger's shop (eight hours a day at 150 francs per month) and another in a maritime broker's office, where he performed clerical work and translated lists of provisions from English into French.¹³² These experiences taught Camus what, for many, it means to work for a living – to come home tired after a long day of repetitive labor and to realize, in the twilight hours, that one has to do it all over again the following day. As he writes in *Le*

¹²⁹ Camus, Albert. *L'Envers et l'endroit*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999. Print.; Camus, Albert. *The Wrong Side and the Right Side in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 5-61

¹³⁰ *ibid.* Preface, p. 5-6, 13-15. Italics added.

¹³¹ *ibid.* p. 206-7, with minor changes made to translation

¹³² *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus, A Life*. p. 15

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Premier homme, “Jacques was not unwilling to work, though for him nothing could take the place of the sea or the games of Kouba¹³³...Although he had lived until then in poverty, it was in the office that Jacques discovered the mundane, and he wept for the light he had lost.”¹³⁴

Camus was alienated from his labor, no doubt, but he was also alienated from the simpler days of his youth. Could the Albert who used to play on the beach with his friends and eat French fries – “giv[ing] his comrades one fry apiece, [who then] would reverently savor the single tidbit, hot and smelling of strong oil, that he permitted them” – have imagined being stuck in an office all day with little reprieve?¹³⁵ By this point in Camus’s life, the child was beginning to become an adult, and work was starting to supplant play.

With maturity came an acute awareness of the class differences that permeated Camus’s experience of *Le Lycée Bugeaud*. Peers like “Georges Didier,” who claimed that he wanted to enter the priesthood and whose father was “a very devout Catholic,” struck Camus as exotic specimen of the French middle-class.¹³⁶ Lacking both father and faith himself, Camus found Didier “smitten with the absolute and utterly loyal to his passions...but also different and capable of a charming tenderness. The child of the family, of tradition, and of religion had the allure for Jacques of some tanned adventurers who return from the tropics guarding a strange and incomprehensible secret.”¹³⁷

Upon entering high school, Camus learned what that secret entailed – namely, being a “normal” French family with strong values and beliefs. He saw clearly that his own family situation set him apart and put him at a socio-economic disadvantage. Through his peers, however, Camus also came to know what it meant to have a rigid system of morals. Didier’s were black and white, as “good and evil [were] defined for him as was his present and future destiny.”¹³⁸ The author’s own thoughts on morality would be far more complex. Although Todd reports that Camus “wanted to write ever since he was age seven,” it is hard to imagine that even the adolescent Albert had a sense of where his “future destiny” would lead him. His immediate concern was doing well in school and striving to overcome the poor conditions of his youth through the gift of his intellect. At this point in Camus’s life, professional writing was at best a far off dream; he wouldn’t fully develop an artistic voice or a philosophical system until after university.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that the teenage Camus was not a keen observer of people, or that he wasn’t storing up images, characters, and memories for later use. Camus immediately follows his description of Georges Didier with that of Pierre, his best friend from Belcourt, who had also received a scholarship to *Bugeaud*. The contrast between the

¹³³ Kouba is a suburb located on an elevated plot of land just southeast of Algiers.

¹³⁴ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 265-8

¹³⁵ *ibid.* p. 50

¹³⁶ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 207

¹³⁷ *ibid.* p. 209-10

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

two illustrates the class differences Camus felt during high school, presenting the young author with something of a cultural crossroads:

While Jacques might have been intoxicated with the foreign potions of bourgeois tradition, he remained devoted to the one who was most like him, and that was Pierre. Every morning, Jacques would [visit Pierre's apartment]...Pierre's mother would open the door that led directly to the sparsely furnished dining room...One [of the bedrooms] was Pierre's, which he shared with his mother, the other was his two uncles', rough railroad men who smiled a lot and said a little...Then they would go down the stairs to the street in silence and walk unsmiling to the trolley stop. But other times they would chase each other, laughing, or while running they would pass one of the satchels back and forth like a rugby ball.¹³⁹

In the narrative of *Le Premier homme*, Pierre serves as a foil to Didier but also as a double of Jacques. Jacques and Pierre share similar living circumstances (tight quarters, extended families, less than ideal hygienic conditions), and their mutual commute each day brings them even closer together. Raised in the dust of poverty and elevated out of it by their intellect, they had a bond, formed on the streets of Belcourt, that someone like Didier could never understand.

As much as he was social, the adolescent Camus seems to have spent a considerable amount of time reading and reflecting in solitude. He loved to visit the public library on Thursdays with Pierre, “devour[ing] any books that came to hand, consum[ing] them with the same appetite he felt for living, playing, or dreaming. [For] reading enabled him to escape into a world of innocence where wealth and poverty were equally interesting because both were utterly unreal.”¹⁴⁰ That sense of unreality would later drive Camus to write fiction, a medium in which he could explore philosophical and moral questions without having to abide strictly by the facts, as in journalism.

Nonetheless, poverty kept Camus's escapism through literature in check. As the author writes in *Le Premier homme*, “[Jacques and Pierre] could hardly find any other sort of books [than popular fiction] at the time, for the reason that few people read in that neighborhood and all they could buy for themselves—and only rarely at that—were the cheap volumes lying around in the bookstores.”¹⁴¹ Camus had some access to the world of literature, but it was significantly limited by his material circumstances. This explains why the library formed, for the young Albert, both a physical and metaphorical midway point between school and home:-

Halfway between the street where Jacques lived and the heights where the more refined districts began...Jacques and Pierre experienced their deepest emotions. The frontier between these two universes (one dusty and treeless, where all the space was devoted to its residents and the stone that sheltered them, the other where flowers and

¹³⁹ *ibid.* p. 210-1

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 244

¹⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 245

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trees applied this world's true luxury) was described by a rather wide boulevard with superb plane trees planted along its two sidewalks. Villas stretched along one bank of this frontier and low-cost buildings along the other. The public library was built on that border.¹⁴²

The tension between the “two universes” that Camus observed in Algiers reveals his bifurcated sense of identity. On the one hand, the “dusty and treeless” streets of Belcourt symbolize his humble origins; on the other, the luxurious residences of “the more refined districts” represent the heights to which his literary career would ultimately take him.¹⁴³ Straddling the frontier that separated these worlds, the library was the neutral space where the adolescent Camus felt most free. But it was not so much the books he read, as it was the aura of the library, which helped make Camus an avid bibliophile and imaginative thinker. Upon entering the space, “a strange and powerful emotion” would take Camus away from “the cramped life of the neighborhood” and open him to “a whole universe of images and memories that never yielded to the reality of daily life.”¹⁴⁴

Feelings, dreams, and atmosphere were as important to Camus as intellect and reality; indeed, he would utilize them all as the source of his best writing. But what exactly was the “strange and powerful emotion” that the narrator of *Le Premier homme* says so greatly nurtured Jacques's imagination? From the description of the “multiplying horizons and expanses” of the public library and the excitement with which Camus and his friend would read by streetlight, it seems this emotion was a kind of hope – hope that life is full of possibilities and more capacious than “the reality of [one's] daily life.”¹⁴⁵ It was in the library and on the streets of Belcourt, then, that Camus cultivated the *joie de vivre* for which he would later be remembered. Books and being outside made him happy.

In addition to reading, soccer played a large part in the young Camus's growing love of life. In *Le Premier homme*, he describes how physical prowess in sports rivaled intelligence in class as a distinguishing factor among his peers at *Le Lycée Bugeaud*. “In these two sorts of competitions, [Jacques and Pierre] were far from being last,” Camus writes ever so humbly. “The solid instruction they had received in the neighborhood school had given

¹⁴² *ibid.* p. 246

¹⁴³ Although Camus never owned a house in Algeria, he eventually bought a residence in Lourmarin, France using the prize money he had won for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957. This *résidence secondaire* allowed Camus to retreat from the stresses of *Tout-Paris* and to reestablish his connection with nature. It was in Lourmarin that the author would be buried after his tragic death in a car crash on January 4, 1960. As Alain Vircondelet poetically explains in *Albert Camus, fils d'Alger*, “To recuperate, to find oneself again, this Provence, experienced as an emotional substitute, is endowed with the same attributes as the original land: sun, sea, ocher earth, powerful scents of aromatic herbs, and an ubiquitous blue that hems the hillsides, the mountains, and the crest of waves. In addition to a home and refuge, Camus finally found a place to rest after his death.” Vircondelet, Alain. *Albert Camus, fils d'Alger*. Paris: Fayard, 2010. Print. p. 15. Translation is mine.

¹⁴⁴ *supra* Albert, Camus. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 247-8

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

them an advantage that, from the first year, put them in the top group of the class...As for sports, it was above all soccer, and from the first recesses Jacques found what would be his passion for so many years.”¹⁴⁶

Although poverty may have limited Camus’s access to books as a child, it could not prevent the pursuit of his passion; in order to play soccer, all he needed was a ball, a field, and a few friends. Athleticism comprised an exciting way for Camus to connect with the physical and immediate. He loved soccer so much that he even used to skip having a mid-afternoon snack so that he would have more time to play during his hour-long recess. Unlike his socio-economic background, soccer provided Camus a level playing field on which he could excel and win admiration, as well as an escape from the social pressures of home and school. “Running madly, dribbling the ball between his feet, dodging first a tree and then an opponent, [Jacques] felt himself king of the field and king of the world,” Camus writes in *Le Premier homme*. “When the drum sounded the end of recess and the beginning of study hall, he really fell from the sky, stopped short on the cement, panting and sweating, furious that the hours were so short; then bit by bit he returned to the present.”¹⁴⁷

Camus’s nimble prose here reflects the rush of endorphins that must have pulsed through his adolescent body while playing soccer. The euphoric state to which the sport transported him parallels the joyful emotion of hope which the author felt while reading in the public library. Both the soccer field and the library were thus spaces where Camus could enrich his physical and mental life all while experiencing something bordering on the spiritual. The key difference was that soccer was a much more social affair, in which community and teamwork were essential to success. For it was during games of soccer that Camus learned how to coordinate with others — a skill he would exercise years later not only in the theater, as founder of *Le Théâtre de l’Equipe* (Team’s Theater), but also in the newsroom, as director of the Resistance journal, *Combat*.^{148 149}

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 223. “*Passion*” in Hapgood’s translation changed from “love” to “passion.”

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 224-5

¹⁴⁸ Camus worked as an actor, director, and playwright for *Le Théâtre de l’Equipe* (formerly known as *Le Théâtre du Travail*) from 1935 until 1939. The troupe had an intellectual and Marxist bent, reflecting a variety of literary tastes. Its manifesto read: “*Le Théâtre de l’Equipe* will demand from workers truth and simplicity, fierceness in its emotions and ferocity in action. In this way, it will turn towards the eras in which love of life mixed with despair of life: ancient Greece (Aristophanes, Aeschylus), Elizabethan England (Forster, Marlowe, Shakespeare), Spain (Fernando de Rojas, Caldéron, Cervantes), America (Faulkner, Caldwell), our contemporary literature (Claudel, Malraux). Yet, the greatest liberty will reign in the conception of *mises en scènes* and the emotions of all, of all time, in always youthful forms; it is to be at once the face of life and the ideal of good theater. To serve this ideal and to make this face loved at the same time is the goal of *Le Théâtre de l’Equipe*.” Lejean, Laurence. “Camus et le théâtre”. webcamus.free.fr. Oct. 15, 1996. Accessed April 2, 2014. <<http://webcamus.free.fr/biographie/theatre.html>>.

¹⁴⁹ Camus joined *Combat* during World War II and remained its editor-in-chief until 1947, when it became a commercial paper. *Combat* was anti-Fascist, and its writers — including Jean-Paul Sartre, André Malraux, and Raymond Aron — denounced the Nazi Regime. Camus, Albert. *Camus at Combat: Writing 1944-1947*. ed by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi. trans. by Arthur Goldhammer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Print.

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At the same time, the teenage Camus was an incredibly self-reliant student who displayed gifts in the humanities. This was natural, given how much he read both in and outside of class. For Camus, books were to food as reading was to eating – one nourished his mind, the other his body; one fueled his writing, the other his athleticism. Camus makes this analogy explicitly in *Le Premier homme*, describing books as meals and their effect upon him as a kind of drunkenness or ecstasy:

The way the book was printed would give the reader advance notice of the pleasure he would derive from it. [Pierre and Jacques] did not like the books set in large type with wide margins, such as pleased readers of more refined tastes, but rather pages set in small type stretching across tightly justified lines, filled to the brim with words and sentences, like those enormous rustic dishes you can eat at length and heartily without ever emptying them, and are all that can satisfy some gigantic appetites. They had no use for subtleties; they knew nothing and wanted to know everything. It mattered little if the book was poorly written and crudely printed, as long as the writing was clear and it was full of violent activity; those books alone would feed their dreams, and on that they could go into a heavy sleep.¹⁵⁰

Again, we see how class influenced Camus's intellectual development around the question of taste; the poor boy from Belcourt preferred robust, 'comfort-reading' to more delicate or refined forays into literature. On the path to becoming a *bon vivant*, Camus cultivated his own literary *savoir-faire*, in which what mattered most was his burning desire to imagine and to know. Books brought him transcendence, in the way that wine brings oenophiles pleasure. "Each book had its own smell according to the paper on which it was printed, always delicate and discreet, but so distinct that with his eyes closed [Jacques] could have told a book in the Nelson series from one of the contemporary editions [of] Faquelle," Camus writes in *Le Premier homme*. "And each of those odors, even before he had begun reading, would transport Jacques to another world full of promises already kept that was beginning even now to obscure the room where he was, to blot out the neighborhood itself and its noises, the city, and the whole world."¹⁵¹ It is as if Camus, intoxicated by the pleasure of books, were distinguishing between a Bordeaux and a Beaujolais from only their bouquets.

Literature allowed Camus to transcend poverty. Reflecting on his adolescent readings, Camus walks us through his progression from the material and textual to the

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 248

¹⁵¹ Camus continues by blurring the line between fact and fiction: "Jacques, for the third time, set the table." "Finally he would set the table, his expression empty and without color, as if drunk on his reading, and he would return to his book as if he had never put it down. 'Jacques, eat,' and finally he would eat food that, heavy as it was, seemed less real and less solid than what he found in the books; then he cleared the table and went back to his book... 'Jacques, go to bed'... Jacques got to his feet, prepared his satchel for the next day's classes, not letting go of his book, which he held in his armpit, and then, like a drunkard, he fell into a heavy sleep, after slipping the book under his bolster." *ibid.* p. 249-50

intellectual and spiritual like a patient describing an out-of-body experience. The metaphor he has been using to portray his love of books — food and drink — serves to reverse the traditional binaries between real and imagined, fact and fiction, and life and dream; indeed, the latter terms of these pairings seem to have held more sway over the teenage Camus than his immediate material surroundings.

But for all Camus says in *Le Premier homme* about not caring whether the books he read in high school implied “more refined tastes,” authors like Proust, Balzac, and Gide occupied a special place in his heart.¹⁵² ¹⁵³ According to Olivier Todd, some of Camus’s classmates considered him “cold, sarcastic, and distant,” and thought his sartorial choices — often “a gray flannel suit, a small, round felt hat, a wide, deep-blue scarf with white polka-dots, white socks, and polished shoes” — made him seem pretentious.¹⁵⁴ “This formal attire was different from the that of his other classmates, who were disheveled, usually wearing depressing gray shirts and rope belts,” Todd writes.¹⁵⁵ “Camus walked around with a briefcase of art magazines and unheard-of books, quoted the Russian philosopher Leon Chestov as well as Proust, and made fun of other famous writes, like Stendhal, who he felt worked a sort of ‘terrorism’ on French writers.”¹⁵⁶ Albert, it seems, may have been more of a pedantic aspirant during his high school years than a humble bookworm.

A 1991 interview with André Belamich (1914-2006), one of Camus’s best friends from *Le Lycée Bugeaud*, complicates our attempts to characterize how the author struck his peers. In “*J’ai connu Camus en khâgne*,” Belamich reports that Camus had the reputation of being cultured yet distant, seeming “a little isolated” from many of his classmates.¹⁵⁷ “It was difficult, at least in the early stages, to be friendly with him,” Belamich states. “[...]Of

¹⁵² “For Camus, Proust represented the typical artist, where ‘everything is said, and there’s no need to go back to the same subjects again.” *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 22

¹⁵³ “[Camus] took many notes and reread his favorite authors like André Gide. ‘I was enraged by the mediocrity of my thoughts, while considering the deep feeling I have for Gide,’ [Camus said.] ‘My liking for Gide doubles when I read his *Journal*. Isn’t he human though? I continue to prefer him to every other writer.’” *ibid*.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*. p. 19

¹⁵⁵ Todd does not mention the possibility that Camus’s formal attire could have been the impoverished author’s only ‘nice’ clothes he had to wear to school. Perhaps the gray flannel suit was the sole suit in his closet; and perhaps Camus was compensating for his family’s material dearth by trying to appear consistently well dressed.

¹⁵⁶ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 19

¹⁵⁷ *Khâgne* informally refers to the *classe préparatoire aux grandes écoles* (*CPGE*) that one must take at the end of *lycée* in order to become ready for study at a French university. Its purpose is to prepare undergraduate students for the competitive entrance exam to the three *Ecoles normales supérieures* (ENS) as well as certain schools that specialize in business or political science. Specifically, *khâgne* designates the literary and humanity *CPGE*, otherwise known as *première supérieure*. The coursework is intensive, as students take classes in literature, history, philosophy, and languages. The word *khâgne* itself derives from the French adjective *cagneux*, which means “knock-kneed.” During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the adjective was used to pejoratively describe academics, since they were thought of as often crouching over their books in an awkward position. But soon, humanities students themselves adopted the term as a form of self-parody, changing *khâgne*’s spelling to make it look like a Greek loan word. “*khâgne*” on Larousse.fr, Editions Larousse 2009.

course, there was a whole bouquet of girls around him. His language, his way of speaking, all this was not pedantic, but perfectly mastered.”¹⁵⁸ A real ladies’ man, Camus had a way with words and gave off an irresistible charm. He found ways to be both social and solitary, sensual and sophisticated, but he was always composed.

However one likes to imagine Camus walking the hallways of *Bugeaud*, it is clear that his avid reading composed the soil out of which his later intellectual endeavors would grow. We have already seen a direct reference to Proust in *Le Premier homme* as an example of Camus critiquing class hierarchies by appropriating a work *par excellence* of French literature.¹⁵⁹ Yet even in high school, Camus drew upon various facets of the Western tradition to bolster his written assignments. In one composition, “The Novel as Literary Genre,” he compared Russian novels with Gide’s *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* to argue for a “polyphony of the novel” – a literary theory coined by Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin.^{160 161} In another essay on “Tragedy and Comedy,” Camus cited the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), in what seemed to be a pastiche or mimesis of that author’s style more than a traditional argument for a high school composition.¹⁶² “Greek tragedy was born from the need to escape a life that was too painful,” Camus wrote. “The Greeks did not try to make life more agreeable, they annihilated it with tragedy and dreams. The only purpose of tragedy, like comedy, was to bring forgetfulness.”¹⁶³ Both Nietzsche and Greek thought would largely influence Camus’s adult writings, including his thesis for the University of Algiers on Christianity and Hellenism as well as his 1942 collection of philosophical essays, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.¹⁶⁴ They would also help make his writing lucid and lyrical, elevating his prose to new heights.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁸ Belamich, André. “*J’ai connu Camus en khâgne*.” Interview conducted by Todd, Olivier, Dec. 1991 and published in *Albert Camus*. Paris: Editions de L’Herne, 2013. ed. by Crosier, Raymond. Print. p. 48

¹⁵⁹ “Remembrance of things past is just for the rich. For the poor it only marks the faint traces on the path to death.” *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 80-1. See chapter entitled “Ecole Maternelle,” p. 16-17

¹⁶⁰ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus, A Life*. p. 19

¹⁶¹ In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929), Bakhtin defines polyphony as a diversity of perspectives in narrative. Using the *Brothers Karamozov* (1880) as a case study, he argues that each character in Dostoevsky’s work represents a voice speaking for an individual self. As for Camus, one can see evidence of polyphony in *The Plague* and even *The Stranger*.

¹⁶² *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus, A Life*. p. 19

¹⁶³ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁴ Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. trans. by Justine O’Brien. 1955. Reprint. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print.; *Métaphysique chrétienne et néoplatonisme*. Typescript of Camus’s thesis for the University of Algiers. CMS2.Ap2-04.07

¹⁶⁵ The following passage from the *Myth of Sisyphus* is typical of Camus’s homages to Nietzsche: “And if it is true, as Nietzsche claims, that a philosopher, to deserve our respect, must preach by example, you can appreciate the importance of that reply, for it will precede the definitive act.” (p. 3) Others include: “The absurd joy *par excellence* is creation. ‘Art and nothing but art,’ said Nietzsche; ‘we have art in order not to die of the truth.’” (p. 93) “If [God] does not exist, everything depends on us. For [Dostoevsky’s] Kirilov [in *The Possessed*], as for Nietzsche, to kill God is to become oneself...Of course, like Nietzsche, the most famous of

With all this reading, it comes as little surprise that Camus received several awards for his academic work in high school.¹⁶⁶ In *Le Premier homme*, he describes an end-of-year academic ceremony at which he was given first prize in French composition, second prize in philosophy, and a third prize in history. But it was not so much the honor of the awards themselves as it was his family's presence at *le lycée* – a rare occasion indeed – that stuck out so vividly in Camus's mind:

And as for his mother and grandmother, they never came to the *lycée*, except once a year, when awards were given. On that day, they would enter by the monumental door, in a crowd of dressed-up parents and students. The grandmother put on the black dress and scarf she wore for major outings; Catherine Cormery wore a hat adorned with brown net and black waxen grapes, a brown summer dress, and the only pair of shoes with heels that she owned...Jacques sniffed the lotion on his mother, which she had applied for the occasion, the grandmother walking erect and proud, scolding her daughter when she complained about her feet...while Jacques persisted in showing them stores and shopkeepers that had come to have such an important place in his life. At the *lycée*, the monumental door was open, potted plants adorned the monumental stairs from top to bottom...the Cormerys naturally being far ahead of time, as the poor always are, for they have few social obligations and pleasures, and are afraid of not being punctual for those few.^{167 168}

We have already seen earlier in his memoir that Camus had an acute understanding of the psychology of the poor. Here, he communicates that understanding in the most personal terms possible, by explaining his family's attempts to conform to what they perceive as societal norms. For the Sintès-Camusés, special occasions like school ceremonies required dressing up and arriving ahead of time precisely because they did not want to appear out of place. Still, Camus's emphasis on the "monumental doors and stairs" of *le lycée*, in addition to the pomp and circumstance of the gathering, suggests that his mute mother and illiterate grandmother likely felt out of place. Everything related to school was new for them, whereas "the teachers in their square caps and long gowns trimmed in colors that differed according

God's assassins, [Kirilov] ends in madness. But this is a risk worth running." (p. 106, 109) Camus looked to Nietzsche as an intellectual authority and perhaps even as an inspirational muse. We might say this comprised his own kind of 'anxiety of influence.'

¹⁶⁶ What is surprising is that Camus makes few if any direct references to Gide, Nietzsche, and Proust in *Le Premier homme*, since he would have been reading those authors at this point in his life. Was the older Camus (*i.e.*, the narrator) trying to conceal his "more refined" tastes? Was he trying to make himself seem more down to earth as an adolescent? Or did he simply not want literary allusions and theory to get in the way of experience?

¹⁶⁷ "a. and those whom fate has poorly endowed cannot help thinking that they are responsible, and they feel they must not add to this culpability by any small failings..."

¹⁶⁸ *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 251-2

to their discipline” had probably participated in such ceremonies many times before.¹⁶⁹ High school – like the “stores and shopkeepers” on the commute between Belcourt and *Bugeaud* – “had come to have such an important place in [Camus’s] life.” The poignant irony of this scene emerges from the fact that Camus’s family could never fully understand the symbolic meaning of the school’s rituals and signs. These included the singing of the “*Marseillaise*” and speeches made by officials about France and education. “The grandmother could hear, but she did not understand very much,” Camus writes. “When [she] spoke to her neighbors during the awards ceremony, he felt himself meanly blushing...he was squirming.”¹⁷⁰

What the adolescent author feared most was being perceived as an Other. It was enough that he came from a poor neighborhood and did not have a father as his friends did; now, he had to watch uncomfortably as his mother and grandmother attended an important event in his academic life without seizing its meaning. For everyone else in the room, the spectacle was the ceremony itself – a time of celebration and pride; for Camus, it was witnessing his grandmother pretend to know what was going on – a source of physical discomfort and personal shame.¹⁷¹

Despite Camus’s self-consciousness about his family’s ignorance, his mother and grandmother display a heartwarming amount of pride over his academic accomplishments. When Camus goes to receive his awards, consisting of certificates and book prizes, his grandmother “flush[es] with excitement” and his mother “gaz[es] at him with a sort of astonished joy.”¹⁷² At home, the grandmother even has Camus dog-ear the pages of the award list where his name appears, so she can show it later to their neighbors and relatives. “You did good work,” Camus’s mother tells him with pride.¹⁷³ His family may not have known what that “good work” entailed, but they certainly recognized that their Albert had a gift.

LA MALADIE

*“At the hospital. The tubercular patient who is told by the doctor that he has five days to live. He anticipates and cuts his throat with a razor. Obviously, he can’t wait five days...One of the male nurses tells the journalists: ‘Don’t mention it in your papers. He’s suffered enough already.’”*¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 253

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 253-4

¹⁷¹ Still, Camus notes that his mother and grandmother were not the only members of the audience who did not fully understand what was being said at the ceremony. When a young teacher, “newly arrived that year from France,” delivers a formal address “stuff[ed] with cultural allusions and humanist subtleties,” the speech becomes “utterly intelligible to [the] Algerian audience.” (p. 254) Thus, Camus illustrates how the education gap within the French colonial system kept ignorant not only his own family but also many of their peers.

¹⁷² *supra* Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. p. 255

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Camus, Albert. *Notebooks 1935-1951*. trans. by Philip Thody. New York: Marlow & Co., 1998. Print. p. 107

Some gifts, however, need to be nourished with others' help before they can blossom into their full potential. If Louis Germain was Camus's gatekeeper to the wider world, then Jean Grenier (1898-1971) was the Virgil to Camus's Dante, guiding him through *le lycée* and beyond. Camus first encountered Grenier as his high school philosophy teacher, whom André Belamich, one of Camus's classmates, later recalled as "incontestably the most interesting instructor" he knew¹⁷⁵:

It was with Grenier that Camus used to speak, almost above our heads...[Grenier] was extraordinarily original. He used to read us texts by Plato and he would explain them by classifying the arguments: on one column he put "*oui*" and on the other column "*non*"; it was something of a parody. One day, he even indulged in imitating Ludmilla Pitoeff [a French comedian of Russian origin] in regards to one of Plato's texts. It was a lot [to handle]. [*C'était fort.*] [Grenier had] A very great originality, finesse, sensibility, [and] ultimately, culture.¹⁷⁶

What initially attracted Camus to Grenier was the unique combination of the latter's intellectual fervor and pedagogical methods. In his high school philosophy class, Grenier opened Camus's eyes to metaphysics and deeper questions about the meaning of life. But it was not until Camus fell ill with tuberculosis in 1930 that his relationship with Grenier began in earnest. Indeed, Camus had only spent one month in Grenier's class before ending up in the hospital.¹⁷⁷

If it is true that we only begin to see the value in something when we risk losing it, then Camus's near-fatal illness at the age of seventeen likely increased his interest in matters of life and death. Up to this point, the young Albert had mostly concerned himself with social mobility and navigating the small, distinct worlds of school and home. Now, his debilitating illness – whose symptoms included "running a fever, having coughing fits, and spitting blood...after taking a bath, or a walk, or if the weather was too hot"¹⁷⁸ – caused him to confront his mortality face to face. Tuberculosis was a turning point for Camus, where the adolescent began to become a man, the individual a communitarian, and the reader a writer. In this way, we might consider the author's experience of illness as a kind of school in itself. For the first time, Camus found himself wrestling with the question of how one should live.

¹⁷⁵ *supra* Belamich, André. "*J'ai connu Camus en khâgne.*" p. 48. See chapter entitled "*Le Lycée*" for an explanation of *khâgne* and its role in the French educational system. p. 47-48

¹⁷⁶ One wonders whether Grenier's manner of categorizing Plato's arguments into "yes" and "no" inspired Camus's 1937 essay, "*Entre oui et non*," which is part of *L'Envers et L'Endroit*.

¹⁷⁷ Grenier, Jean. "*Souvenirs d'Albert Camus.*" Excerpts from *Albert Camus, Souvenirs*, Paris: Gallimard, 1968. Published in *Albert Camus*. Paris: Editions de L'Herne, 2013. ed. by Crosier, Raymond. Print. p. 43

¹⁷⁸ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 17

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His education would eventually help him answer an even more fundamental question: If we are born to suffer and die, why should one live at all?¹⁷⁹

Noticing Camus's absence from his class, Jean Grenier visited his convalescent student at home, shortly after Camus had been discharged from the hospital. The visit was awkward for both. A native of Brittany who had passed his *agrégation* to teach philosophy in 1922, Grenier was as out of place in the working-class quarter of Belcourt as Camus was in an upper-class high school.¹⁸⁰ "He was at the extreme opposite of the *lycée's* quarter and I wasn't familiar with it," Grenier recalled in 1967.¹⁸¹ "[After visiting him,] it occurred to me that I was playing the part of a prosecutor charged with telling a man condemned to death that his appeal had been rejected... There was an energy in his case, an energy which was yet only able to manifest itself by an internal tension and a retreat of being." Grenier perceived both pride and humility within the ill Camus – dual sentiments that would come to define the author's life as he became increasingly renown. As an adolescent, however, Camus's silence revealed a fierce resistance towards his physical and social condition rather than a surrender. Such "energy" is remarkable given that tuberculosis often amounted to a death sentence within the poor areas of Algeria during the time Camus was growing up.¹⁸² His two passions – soccer and school – now defunct, Camus made the most of his circumstances and began to reflect more seriously on the meaning of life. He did not go down without a fight.

Not surprisingly, Camus's form of reflection involved a copious amount of reading. He soon moved in with his uncle and aunt, Gustave and Antoinette Acault, who offered to provide Camus his own room, so as to avoid the risk of infecting his brother, Lucien, at home.¹⁸³ Uncle Gustave was a butcher of middle-class stock, and would feed Camus hearty meals of red meat as a purported treatment for tuberculosis. He was also something of an eccentric – he dressed like a dandy, identified as an anarchist, and owned the complete works of Balzac, Hugo, Zola, and even Joyce.

For the first time, Camus had an extensive personal library from which to direct his own literary education; for the first time, he was living in a home with a supportive father figure, who regarded him as a conversational and intellectual equal. "The childless Acaults treated Albert as their son, taking him to the seaside, and imagining for him a career as a high-school teacher," Olivier Todd writes. "Gustave also secretly hoped that one day Albert might take over the butcher shop, earn a good living, and still have time to write."¹⁸⁴ At least

¹⁷⁹ See *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. by Justine O'Brien. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print.

¹⁸⁰ In France, the *agrégation* is a competitive exam for some positions in the public school system. The exam generally consists in a written part, where most candidates are eliminated, and an oral part, where candidates must demonstrate their ability to prepare and give lessons on topics within their discipline. Grenier, too, was a gifted student.

¹⁸¹ *supra* Grenier, Jean. "Souvenirs d'Albert Camus." p. 43. Translation is mine.

¹⁸² *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 17

¹⁸³ *ibid.* p. 18

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

two of Gustave's hopes for Camus were ultimately fulfilled. But at the ripe age of seventeen, that would still take some time.¹⁸⁵

Camus would carry his experience of near-fatal illness for the rest of his life, with frequent relapses occurring along the way. His notebooks – written between 1935 and 1951 – are filled with profound statements about death, tragedy, and the fragility of human existence.¹⁸⁶ “It is death which gives gambling and heroism their true meaning,” Camus wrote in March 1936, when he was only twenty-three-years-old.¹⁸⁷ Then, en route to Paris in August 1937, Camus solemnly recalled his struggle with tuberculosis while thinking about the modernist short story author, Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923).¹⁸⁸ She too had contracted the disease, twenty years earlier in 1917, and subsequently died of a pulmonary hemorrhage in January 1923, at the age of thirty-four.¹⁸⁹ Mansfield's fate resonated strongly with the twenty-something Camus, for he was facing internal and external challenges, both as an individual and as a member of human society:

On the way to Paris: this fever beating in my temples. The strange and sudden withdrawal from the world and from men. The struggle with one's body. Sitting in the wind, emptied and hollowed out inside, I spent all my time thinking of K. Mansfield, about that long, painful and tender story of a struggle against illness. What awaits me in the Alps is, together with loneliness and the idea that I'll be there to look after myself, the *awareness of my illness*.¹⁹⁰

Jean Grenier, it seems, was onto something when he visited Camus at home and sensed “an internal tension and a retreat of being” within his student.¹⁹¹ Having endured the complications of tuberculosis for several years by the time he was writing his notebooks, Camus was still struggling to come to terms with his own physical and psychological limitations. Feelings of emptiness and loneliness were common; indeed, they caused Camus

¹⁸⁵ Here, one wonders whether Camus's change of environment, in addition to his illness, composed a difficult transition. Was he comfortable suddenly having an intimate father figure to talk to, when he had never met his own father? Did he miss his mother, grandmother, brother, and other uncles, despite the silence that reigned over their apartment in Belcourt? The author does not speak on this subject.

¹⁸⁶ Camus, Albert. *Notebooks, 1935-1951*. trans. by Philip Thody. New York: Marlow & Company. Print.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.* p. 16

¹⁸⁸ “Katherine Mansfield: 1888-1923 – A Biography.” *KatharineMansfield.com*. The Katherine Mansfield Birthplace Society, 2005. Web. Mar. 9, 2014. <<http://www.katherinemansfield.com/mansfield/>>.

¹⁸⁹ The parallels between Camus and Mansfield do not end with tuberculosis; she was also raised in a colonized country (New Zealand), was disillusioned by the repression of the native people there (the Maori), and finally moved to the seat of a colonial power (London). Like Camus, Mansfield's writing is remembered for her lucid prose and her characters' engagement with the physical world.

¹⁹⁰ *supra* Camus, Albert. *Notebooks, 1935-1951*. p. 44. Italics in original.

¹⁹¹ *supra* Grenier, Jean. “*Souvenirs d'Albert Camus*.” p. 43

to ponder the existential underpinnings of selfhood and suffering, which would later serve as the fuel for his fiction and essays.¹⁹²

The experience of illness gave Camus the vocabulary to articulate a certain self-awareness, which allowed him to see himself and others more clearly. “It is to the most spiritual souls, assuming them to be the most courageous, that it is given to live out the most painful tragedies,” Camus recorded in August 1938, quoting Nietzsche. “But it is for this reason that they honor life, because it is to them that it shows its greatest hostility.”¹⁹³ For Camus, suffering and tragedy were associated with honor and courage, not because they gave life meaning in themselves but rather because they presented man an opportunity to revolt against his mortal limits. What mattered most in Camus’s burgeoning philosophical system, then, was an individual’s reaction to his Absurd condition – that one defines oneself through one’s acts and mindset, despite life’s tragedies and tragic end.¹⁹⁴

A May 1935 entry in Camus’s notebooks, where he cites his high school philosophy teacher, Jean Grenier, reveals the importance Camus attached to self-awareness achieved through adversity and suffering: “Grenier: We always have too low an opinion of ourselves. But in poverty, illness, or loneliness, we become aware of our eternity. ‘We need to be forced into our very last bastions.’...That’s exactly it, neither more nor less.”¹⁹⁵

As Camus’s repeated references to him show, Jean Grenier greatly influenced the ill and impressionable Camus.^{196 197} With his tuberculosis in remission, Camus returned to *Le*

¹⁹² *Death in the Soul*, an account of Camus’s travels to Prague and Italy in 1936, beautifully captures the recurrent solitude and anxiety Camus felt as a young man: “Around me were a million human beings who had been alive all this time whose existence had never concerned me. They were alive. I was thousands of kilometers from home. I could not understand their language. They walked quickly, all of them. And as they overtook and passed me, they cut themselves off from me. I felt lost...I started to feel anxious...Something in my rapid pace already seemed like flight...I feel uneasy, hollow, and empty...I was afraid of being sick, then and there, in the midst of all those people ready to laugh; still more afraid of being alone in my hotel room, without money or enthusiasm, reduced to myself and my miserable thoughts. Even today, I still wonder with embarrassment how the weary, cowardly creature I then became could have emerged from me...At that moment I had gone as far as I could. I had no more country, city, hotel room, or name. Madness or victory, humiliation or inspiration – was I about to *know*, or to be destroyed?...I find it hard to separate my love of light and life from my secret attachment to the experience of despair that I have tried to describe. It will be clear already that I don’t want to bring myself to choose between them.” Camus, Albert. *Death in the Soul in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 40-51. Italics in original.

¹⁹³ *ibid.* p. 96.

¹⁹⁴ Though of course Camus had not yet developed his ideas on “the Absurd” when he first contracted tuberculosis, defining the term here can help us see its roots in Camus’s confrontation with mortality. As he writes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: “Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world.” *supra* *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 28

¹⁹⁵ *supra* Camus, Albert. *Notebooks, 1935-1951*. p. 5

¹⁹⁶ Years later, Grenier played down his influence over the young Camus, claiming that he had done no more for him than other students. Scholars attribute this seeming indifference to Grenier’s jealousy of his star pupil, especially as Camus became increasingly renown in the literary world. “Grenier’s relationship with Camus is

Lycée Bugeaud in October 1931 and absorbed Grenier's views not only on philosophers like Plato, Nietzsche, and Bergson but also on European civilization itself, which Grenier saw as decadent.¹⁹⁸ Grenier encouraged Camus to continue studying philosophy at the university level and to write for publication as he discovered his own voice and ideas. The teacher's 1933 novel, *Les Iles*, a collection of experimental fragments concerning human loneliness, sensuality, and natural beauty, only strengthened his student's filial attachment to him.¹⁹⁹ "[Grenier] puts his whole self in [the book] and I feel the admiration and love he inspires in me growing," Camus noted after reading *Les Iles*:

He assumes the greatest possible humanity by trying to keep his distance from it. The unity of his book is the constant presence of death. This makes it clear why the very sight of G., though not changing anything about the way I am, makes me graver, more deeply concerned about the gravity of life...Will I ever know how much I owe him?...I must learn to train my sensitivity and yet not hide it under coldness and irony. I place too much emphasis on my contradictions, and become obsessed by my natural weakness...Damned pride."²⁰⁰

Through Grenier, Camus witnessed how a writer's identity and personal experience can be entirely wrapped up in his or her works, complicating the line between author and text. It was in reading *Les Iles* that Camus saw the literary expression of many themes he would later treat himself: humanity, death, the absurdity of existence, obligations toward others, and self-knowledge. As tuberculosis did, Grenier taught Camus what it meant to face one's limits. Camus would soon push those limits at the University of Algiers, where Grenier followed him as a newly hired professor of philosophy and where Camus met his first wife, Simon Hié.

often misunderstood," writes Patrick McCarthy in his 1982 biography, *Camus*. "If he had cared more for Grenier, he might have publicized his gratitude less, for it mortified Grenier, who saw himself robbed of his own originality and reduced to an appendage of Camus. The post-war Camus-Grenier relationship was full of concealed hypocrisies which lay beyond the master-pupil effusions and by the end Camus was thoroughly sick of him." McCarthy, Patrick. *Camus*. New York: Random, 1982. Print. p. 32. As quoted in Bronner's *Camus: Portrait of a Moralistic*, p. 6

¹⁹⁷ "What did he learn from me? He grew up in the presence of a man who was charged with teaching him, among many others, but who only communicated his dreams to him involuntarily...Such was my case and nothing was less deliberate than this influence that I could have had...What attached me to the young ones who were entrusted to me was that I could teach them about themselves, more so than that which I was charged with teaching them." *supra* Grenier, Jean. "*Souvenirs d'Albert Camus*." p. 44. Here, one wonders whether Grenier was being falsely modest out of jealousy, resentment, or bitterness towards Camus.

¹⁹⁸ Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Camus: Portrait of a Moralistic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. Print. p. 6

¹⁹⁹ Grenier, Jean. *Les Iles*. Paris: Gallimard, 1977. Print.

²⁰⁰ Camus, Albert. *Youthful Writings*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1976. Print. p. 178

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*“It is certainly a great folly, and one that is almost always punished, to go back to the places of one’s youth, to want to relive at forty the things one loved or greatly enjoyed at twenty. But I was aware of this folly.”*²⁰¹

*“Once you have had the chance to love intensely, your life is spent in search of the same light and the same ardor. To give up beauty and the sensual happiness that comes with it and devote oneself exclusively to unhappiness requires a nobility I lack. But, after all, nothing is true that compels us to make it exclusive. Isolated beauty ends in grimaces, solitary justice in oppression. Anyone who seeks to serve the one to the exclusion of the other serves no one, not even himself, and in the end is doubly the servant of injustice. A day comes when, because we have been inflexible, nothing amazes us anymore, everything is known, and our life is spent in starting again. It is a time of exile, dry lives, dead souls. To come back to life, we need grace, a homeland, or to forget ourselves.”*²⁰²

Deepened by his experience of an illness that strengthened his intellectual prowess and conscientiousness, Camus began writing in earnest between high school and university. His forays included both fiction and criticism for the journals *Sud* and *Alger Etudiant*, where he was able to address emotional and intellectual challenges beyond those he faced at school and at home.²⁰³ In the December 1931 issue of *Sud*, for example, Camus published an autobiographical story called “The Last Day of a Stillborn Man,” in which the narrator expresses sexual desire and personal anguish:

I am eighteen years old, and I can hardly remember my gentle, well-behaved, and sickly childhood...I had well-established principles: God, the immortal soul, living for others, and despising carnal pleasures....I haven’t got anything anymore, I don’t believe I anything, and it’s impossible to live like this, having killed morality inside me. I have no more purpose, no more reason to live, and I will die.²⁰⁴

Camus’s years in university present a complicated portrait of academic engagement, ethical development, personal growth, and romantic struggle. Together, these forces shaped the humanist and intellectual we remember today; for, by the end of his time at the University of Algiers, Camus had under his belt the major philosophical works of the Western tradition, as well as a command over language that he could not have attained solely

²⁰¹ Camus, Albert. *Return to Tipasa in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 163

²⁰² *ibid.* p. 165

²⁰³ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 26

²⁰⁴ *ibid.* p. 20-1

in his family's laconic apartment. He also achieved a better understanding of the issues he was passionate about and his own identity.

Before arriving at university, however, Camus needed to complete *khâgne*, the preparatory class for further secondary education within the French scholastic system, in 1932.²⁰⁵ During this time, he became closer with Jean Grenier, who lent him books such as Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* and André de Richaud's *La Douleur*.²⁰⁶ The latter, published in 1930, dealt with themes that had defined Camus's life hitherto: poverty, beauty, and maternal love.²⁰⁷ Such works of fiction based on their authors' real-life experiences formed the literary inspiration for Camus's own semi-autobiographical works, *Le Premier homme* and *L'Envers et l'endroit*. But Camus had to live before he could write – to experience the wider world before he could “put his obsessions in order.”²⁰⁸

As an adolescent, Camus occasionally experienced an inner darkness that left him depressed. The older he grew, the more he learned to balance this hopelessness with his sincere *joie de vivre*. In the last essay of *L'Envers et l'endroit*, Camus boldly states, “There is no love of life without despair of life.”²⁰⁹ For Camus, the two were opposite sides of the same coin. No wonder one of his most memorable quotes comes from *Return to Tipasa*, a lyrical essay composed in 1953 that deals with themes of homecoming, joy, and despair. “Here, once more, I found an ancient beauty, a young sky, and measured my good fortune as I realized at last that in the worst years of our madness the memory of this sky had never left me,” he writes. “It was this that had saved me from despair... In the depths of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.”²¹⁰

Part of that inner power was Camus's capacity for intellectual thought and originality. Even before he turned twenty, the author had written four critical essays in *Sud*, reflecting his diverse interests in poetry, philosophy, and music.²¹¹ ²¹² One was a literary

²⁰⁵ “Sa vie”. Etudes-camusiennes.fr. Société des études camusiennes. April 3, 2014. <<http://www.etudes-camusiennes.fr/wordpress/category/camus/savie/>>. *Khâgne* is also known formally as *première supérieure*. See note on *khâgne* in chapter “*Le Lycée*,” p. 47-48

²⁰⁶ “Camus admired Proust's ‘combining sweeping power with minute detail.’ For Camus, Proust represented the typical artist, and in Proust, ‘everything is said, and there's no need to go back to the same subjects again.” Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 22

²⁰⁷ *ibid.* p. 20. *La Douleur* involves a widow, Thérèse Delombre, who has lost her husband during World War I and finds herself in the south of France with her ten-year-old son. It is a story of love and desire, as Thérèse must care for her son while experiencing “the pains of passion.” de Richaud, André. *La Douleur*. Paris: Grasset, 1988. Print.

²⁰⁸ “*Ecrire, c'est mettre en ordre ses obsessions.*” Grenier, Jean. “*Souvenirs d'Albert Camus.*” p. 43

²⁰⁹ Camus, Albert. *Love of Life in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 56

²¹⁰ Camus, Albert. *Return to Tipasa in Lyrical and Critical Essays*. ed. by Philip Thody, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. New York: Knopf, 1968. Print. p. 169

²¹¹ Original typescripts of these essays are available to view at the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence, France, where my research led me in December 2013.

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review of the French Symbolist poet, Paul Verlaine (1844-1894), whom Camus considered a master of “the soul and the heart.”²¹³ ²¹⁴ Comparing Verlaine to Baudelaire, Camus argued that the former had “the freshness of a child, a delicious naïveté, and a touching spontaneity” as well as “a knowledge of evil,” having “suffered in his sick body [and] in his pained heart.”²¹⁵ Camus felt a kinship with Verlaine not just because of his illness but also his melancholy spirit.²¹⁶ “If I love him it is not because he created a new poetry, from a naive, subtle, and fugitive inspiration, filled with nuances and tenderness,” Camus remarked. “It is not because his verses are already music; it is above all because he put his whole troubled and ingenious soul into them. I cannot stop myself from loving him in his defaults, in this all too human weakness that, of a delicate and late poet, made a man like us, with his fears and revolts.”²¹⁷ It is as if Camus were speaking about himself in retrospect. He, too, had his idols.

In a second essay for *Sud*, Camus treated the popular poet Jehan Rictus (1867-1933), who had experienced an unhappy childhood and had grown up in poverty.²¹⁸ Here, Camus’s life story also resonated with his subject: “He spoke the language of the Poor Man, not the academic blabbering of certain modern authors, but one which served to say a little about eternal human suffering to the disenfranchised, a language of aristocratic vulgarity where grief makes surprising discoveries surge forth.”²¹⁹ For Rictus and Camus alike, the way out of poverty required *rêve* and *révolte*; the way out of suffering, hope and love. Camus’s collection of essays, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and his novel, *The Plague*, would reflect these themes, though in prose rather than poetry. One could say that in the early 1930s, the author was gathering content to use but had not yet figured out the form.

²¹² Although Camus wrote these essays while he was in *classe préparatoire* (1932), I have included my discussion of them under “*L’Université*” for ease of reading and to highlight the fact that the author was transitioning from a reader in high school to a writer in college.

²¹³ Camus, Albert. *Un Nouveau Verlaine*. Algiers: Sud, March 1932. Print. p. 38.

²¹⁴ Perhaps a phrase such as this is why Olivier Todd calls Camus’s essay on Verlaine “a banal analysis.” *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 21

²¹⁵ *supra* Camus, Albert. *Un Nouveau Verlaine*. p. 39

²¹⁶ After rocky affairs with the French poet, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), and a student, Lucien Létynois, Verlaine fell into drug addiction, alcoholism, and poverty. He lived in slums and public hospitals, drinking absinth in Parisian cafés, until he died at the age of fifty-two in January 1896. “Paul Verlaine”. *Poets.org*. 1997. Web. Accessed April 7, 2014. <<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/255>>.

²¹⁷ One of Verlaine’s most tender and famous poems goes as follows: *Il pleure dans mon coeur / Comme il pleut sur la ville. / Quelle est cette lueur / Qui pénètre mon coeur ? / O bruit doux de la pluie / Par terre et sur les toits ! / Pour un coeur qui s’ennui / O le chant de la pluie !* Verlaine, Paul. “*Il pleure dans mon coeur*.” *poesie.webnet.fr*. April 11, 2014.

<http://poesie.webnet.fr/lesgrandsclassiques/poemes/paul_verlaine/il_pleure_dans_mon_coeur.html>.

²¹⁸ Rictus is best known for his collection of poems, *Soliloques du Pauvre*, which depicts the struggles of the Parisian poor.

²¹⁹ Camus, Albert. *Jehan Rictus*. Algiers: Sud, May 1932. n.p.

Camus à *vingt ans*, as Macha Séry has titled her 2011 book, was a jack-of-all-trades, trying his hand at critiquing literature as much as philosophy and music.²²⁰ He saw many relationships between these domains, writing in a June 1932 essay on harmony that Schopenhauer's (1788-1860) and Nietzsche's (1844-1900) theories on aesthetics can greatly inform one's understanding and appreciation of music.²²¹ Meanwhile, in an article on Henri Bergson (1859-1941), Camus expressed disappointment at the philosopher's ideas about intuition, which Bergson had privileged above reason in his 1929 *Matière et mémoire* and his earlier book, *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion*:

It was ultimately a treatise on instinctive philosophy. There's nothing more seductive than this idea: To throw aside intelligence as dangerous, to base an entire system on immediate knowledge and raw sensations: It was, indeed, to do away with all the philosophy of our century...[Bergson's] philosophy would only meet opposition among philosophers themselves. But the great literary and cultivated masses had welcomed it...It could have played the role of the religion of the century...This philosophy appeared to me the most beautiful of all, for it was one of those rare ones along with that of Nietzsche which rejected Reason...Instead of this one has analysis to prove the dangers of analysis, intelligence to teach one to defy intelligence, fabulation to create an idea of fabulation, and everywhere similar oppositions. In truth, Bergson finds in himself a perpetual contradiction. How can such an intelligent being fancy himself the enemy of intelligence? There is something in his work that deceives us, even further, that irritates us.²²²

Although he had not yet begun his studies at the University of Algiers when he wrote this essay, Camus was already a sharp critic, highlighting internal contradictions he saw in Bergson's philosophy. Here, one sees at work the influence of Jean Grenier, who taught Camus to question received or popular ways of thinking. One also sees some of Camus's intellectual arrogance at play, which others, including Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), would

²²⁰ Séry, Macha. *Albert Camus à 20 ans: Premiers combats*. Vauvert: Au Diable Vauvert, 2011. Print.

²²¹ Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were great admirers of the German composer, Richard Wagner (1813-1883), who is primarily known for his operas such as *The Ring of the Nibelung*, or *Ring Cycle*. For Schopenhauer, music was the highest form of art because it was a direct expression of will and therefore a temporary relief from the suffering inherent to willing. In turn, Wagner read Schopenhauer readily and even recommended the latter's works to his friends. Nietzsche had a more complicated relationship with the composer, starting off as a close friend and ending up as a distant acquaintance. In Nietzsche's last year of lucidity (1888-1889) before succumbing to mental illness (possibly due to the effects of syphilis), he wrote a polemic simply titled "*Nietzsche contra Wagner*." While the essay was not published until 1895, in it Nietzsche attacked Wagner's views on art and religion, as well as Wagner's late-in-life decision to convert to Christianity. Wicks, Robert, "Arthur Schopenhauer" and "Friedrich Nietzsche". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011, Spring 2013), ed. by Edward N. Zalta.

<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/schopenhauer/>> and

<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/nietzsche/>>.

²²² Camus, Albert. *La Philosophie du siècle*. Algiers: Sud, June 1932. n.p. Translation is mine.

eventually criticize him for in regards to his denser philosophical works.²²³ Still a young man filled with pugilistic energy, Camus must have enjoyed participating in polemics as a way of proving to himself and others that he was capable of doing philosophy. The last paragraph of his essay on Bergson clues us into his confident (and somewhat haughty) self-view, as well as Camus's high hopes for his own future:

The great age of the one who remains despite an entire admirable philosophy [*i.e.*, Bergson] does not give us much hope to see him achieve that which we desire so much. But perhaps another will come, younger, more hardened. He will declare himself the inheritor of Bergson. He will make of all Bergsonism something beneficial and thus will proceed to immediate recognition. So perhaps we will have this philosophy-religion, this gospel of the century [*i.e.*, Bergsonism] while waiting for the contemporary genius who now wanders painfully. In truth, is that asking for too much?²²⁴

Camus's intelligence propelled him to the University of Algiers, which had been established in 1909 under the French colonial administration.²²⁵ The university had four specialized schools: law, letters, medicine, and sciences. Camus entered the school of letters in 1933, in order to pursue a *license* – the French equivalent of a bachelor's degree – in philosophy, which he received in 1935. His notes from various courses reveal a supremely organized student whose studies exposed him to 'big questions' about the nature good and evil, the role of religion in human history, and the existence of a divine being.²²⁶ "God is not forced to create, he creates by reason," Camus recorded in a blue spiral notebook he used for a course on the history of religion. "He does not create just anything, and he cannot change."²²⁷ ²²⁸ Meanwhile, the syllabus for a survey course on morality which Camus took

²²³ Camus and Sartre had an intellectual falling-out in the summer of 1952, when the two finally split over their views on Communism. Camus had published *The Rebel* ("*L'Homme révolté*") the year before, and Sartre, as editor of *Les Temps modernes*, assigned Francis Jeanson a harsh review of the book that critiqued its anti-Marxist stance. Camus was deeply offended by the piece and sent an angry letter to the editor, which was reprinted alongside Sartre's own counter-response. See Aronson, Ronald. *Camus and Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel that Ended It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.

²²⁴ *supra* Camus, Albert. *La Philosophie du siècle*. Translation is mine.

²²⁵ "Historical Survey." http://www.univ-alger.dz/univ_ang/. University of Algiers. Web. Mar. 11, 2014. <http://www.univ-alger.dz/univ_ang/index.php/historical-survey>.

²²⁶ Camus's notebooks from the University of Algiers are available to view at the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence, France, where I conducted a research trip in December 2013. While his handwriting was often illegible, one could discern Camus's sharp organizational skills from his highly systematic way of taking notes.

²²⁷ Camus, Albert. *Dossier Jean Grenier*. Original notebook for a course Camus took on creation at the University of Algiers. CMS2.At3-01.01.

²²⁸ Although Camus considered himself either an atheist or agnostic, religion played a major role in his studies and thought. "The absurd is sin without God... There is but one moral code that the absurd man can accept, the one that is not separated from God: the one that is dictated. But it so happens that [the absurd man] lives outside God." Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. trans. by Justine O'Brien. 1955. PDF accessed online at

shows he was reading (or at least was supposed to be reading) the ancient Greeks and Romans (Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Epicureans), the fathers of the Catholic Church (Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas), and the post-Enlightenment philosophers of the modern era (Bentham, Mill, Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Bergson, and Durkheim.) Camus was truly a student of the liberal arts. He absorbed the Western intellectual tradition like a sponge.

Still, it would be wrong to assume from such a dossier that Camus was completely absorbed in the world of abstract ideas while enrolled in university. On the cusp of his twenties, the young author had a lot going on in his life that pushed him to his academic, social, and psychological limits. In 1932, Camus moved out of his uncle Gustave's apartment since Gustave would not let him return home with girls he had met on the bustling streets of Algiers.²²⁹ One of those girls was Simone Hié, a bohemian actress and cynic, who would soon become Camus's first wife.

In the Acault household, Hié was the straw that broke the camel's back. After meeting Camus, she left her fiancé and one of Albert's best friends, Max-Pol Fouchet, who was a leader of the Federation of Young Socialists in Algeria.²³⁰ This appalled the Acaults, not least because they knew that Hié, the daughter of a female ophthalmologist, had been addicted to morphine since the age of fourteen. When she could no longer steal prescriptions from her own mother, Hié began to get them from other doctors, using her sexual allure and conversational charm as tools.²³¹

Camus became an accessory to Hié's addiction. Now living with his older brother Lucien, who took him in after his falling out with uncle Gustave, the love-struck Camus would obtain boxes of diluted morphine from his friend Louis Bénisti's brother, a pharmacist in Bab el-Oued.^{232 233} The idea was to gradually wean Simone off the drug by giving it to her in controlled amounts. It backfired — Hié continued to shoot up at the University of Algiers, where she took classes, and even at the home of a professor, Jacques Heurgon.²³⁴ In this way,

<<http://sharepoint.mvla.net/teachers/HectorP/SoPol/Documents/The%20Stranger/Camus%20Myth%20of%20Sisyphus%20and%20other%20readings.pdf>>. p. 28, 44. See Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Camus: Portrait of a Moralistic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. Print. p. 10-14

²²⁹ At this time, Algiers had 170,000 white residents and only 55,000 'natives.' "What other city offers as many riches all year long, the sea, sun, hot sand, geraniums, and...olive and eucalyptus trees?" Camus wrote to his friend Claude de Fréminville in October 1932. "We can be happy here...I could never live anywhere but Algiers, although I will travel because I want to know the world, but I'm sure that anywhere else, I'd always feel in exile." *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus, A Life*. p. 23

²³⁰ *supra* Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Camus: Portrait of a Moralistic*. p. 8

²³¹ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 25

²³² Lucien was working as a sales representative and accountant, earning 1,800 francs a month. This was enough to pay the rent, but he was also saving up to get married to a young seamstress and gave money to his mother as well. *ibid.*

²³³ *ibid.*

²³⁴ *ibid.*

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Camus's relationship with Hié taught him the depths of love, the limits of trust, and how the two can often conflict.

Camus struggled too. He was jealous that Hié turned men's heads on the street, even as she appeared in a trance-like state from the morphine. Cut off from the Acaults' support and without employment, Camus was also facing financial difficulties. His scholarship money had run out, and he had failed to land a quasi-literary job as a secretary at a publishing house.²³⁵ Perhaps what was most painful for the author, however, was that he barely had the time or energy to write. He knew he was good enough to get published in journals like *Sud* and *Alger Etudiant*, but he felt increasingly tied down by his commitments and the exigencies of adult life. "When we're twenty, we think we have rights, but I am more and more convinced that we only have duties," Camus wrote to his friend Claude de Fréminville towards the end of 1933:

I am so weary and broken...I feel myself getting old, at twenty...I know very well that I am suffering, and living fully. I know that the sublime cannot do without the tragic, although the contrary is sometimes true, when tragedy squeezes us too tightly and prevents us from weeping. [I am going through] days of bitterness and unbelief.

²³⁶

The external necessities of Camus's day-to-day life were draining him from the inside. Just twenty-years-old, he had developed an acute sense of the tragic and the mundane from his real-life experiences, and had learned to express those sentiments through language from years of reading literature and philosophy. Thus, Camus's confrontation with life's demands (poverty, relationships, and mortality, among others) comprised the personal basis for the absurdist and communitarian philosophies of his adulthood – absurdist, at first, because he saw no inherent meaning in suffering but only in individual revolt; and subsequently communitarian because that very same revolt required recognizing the universality of the human condition.²³⁷

Life taught Camus what tragedy was; Nietzsche and others taught him how to process and articulate his experience of it. Camus continued to read such authors at the University of Algiers, where he and Simone took philosophy courses together. He supported them by using the wages he had earned from tutoring high school students and the funds Hié's mother had given them.²³⁸

²³⁵ *ibid.*

²³⁶ *ibid.*

²³⁷ For the best expression of Camus's "absurdist" philosophy, see *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) or *The Stranger* (1942); to get an idea of the communitarian values at the heart of his humanism, one must read *The Plague* (1947). It is helpful to consider the historical context in which these works were produced – the first two at the height of the second World War, the other in the years immediately following the war's end.

²³⁸ *supra* Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist*. p. 8

As it happened, Jean Grenier – Camus’s mentor during high school – was the newly hired teaching assistant to René Poirier, a philosopher of science, in whose class Camus was enrolled.²³⁹ Camus and Grenier grew closer at the university, though the pair kept a respectful distance, addressing each other with the formal “vous.” They shared thoughts on Grenier’s book, *Les Iles*, discussed André Malraux’s (1901-1976) *La Condition humaine* (1933), which Camus admired greatly, and read Plato’s dialogues aloud for dramatic effect.²⁴⁰ Between his studies and his interactions with Grenier, Camus was amassing material to use for his own writing – above all, the themes of beauty, nature, death, revolt, and heroism. He just needed to develop the expression.

Despite the difficulties of their relationship, Camus and Hié were married on June 16, 1934, much to the chagrin of their family and friends. The one exception was Hié’s mother, who thought the strapping Camus would be a good influence on her drug-addicted daughter.²⁴¹ But there had already been red flags. Before they were engaged, Albert and Simone had not sworn fidelity to one another, in case they became tired of each other and wanted to seek happiness elsewhere. Additionally, Camus had told his friend Louis Bénisti that marriage was an “unnatural” institution, which limited individual freedom – a tenant of his personal philosophy.²⁴²

Camus’s precise motives for marrying Hié are unknown but the disastrous results of their union are clear.²⁴³ For a time, things went well; the couple moved into a small house Hié’s mother rented for them (which cost 450 francs a month), traveled together in a car the Acaults lent them (a Citroën), and kept attending classes at the university.²⁴⁴ But Simone was still taking drugs and needed to be cared for. When friends visited Camus, they noticed Simone looking dazed and confused, sometimes walking around their house half-naked. Things got so bad that, in 1935, Hié was hospitalized; Camus lamented, “I’m too alone here, and so I often go to Belcourt where I can find myself again.”²⁴⁵ Returning home had a restorative effect on Camus – an effect he would attempt to replicate through the written word both in *L’Envers et l’endroit* and *Le Premier homme*.

²³⁹ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus, A Life*. p. 27

²⁴⁰ Malraux was a good friend of Grenier, but the latter kept him away from his colleagues and students, including Camus. *La Condition humaine* involves a failed Communist revolt in Shanghai in 1927 and portrays existentialist themes. It won the Prix Goncourt the year it was published. Malraux, André. *La Condition humaine*. Paris: Gallimard, 1972. Print.

²⁴¹ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 28

²⁴² *ibid*.

²⁴³ Perhaps Camus, having courted multiple women by this point, wanted romantic stability; perhaps he needed continued financial support from Hié’s mother; and perhaps he really loved Simone, despite her flaws. Of course, these possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

²⁴⁴ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 30

²⁴⁵ *ibid*. p. 40

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Camus and Hié had intermittent breakups until they separated for good in 1936, owing to a letter Camus discovered, while on vacation in Salzburg, that was addressed to Simone from a doctor in Algiers.²⁴⁶ This man was both Hié's morphine supplier and lover. Camus reacted badly, writing in a letter to his friends Marguerite Dobrenn and Jeanne-Paul Sicard that his life "had been completely changed" by "one of the most painful blows" he could have experienced.²⁴⁷ "I don't like confiding in people, but I simply want to inform you friends of the fact that as soon as I return to Algeria, I will live *completely* alone," Camus wrote. "Never speak to me about it."^{248 249}

From his relationship with Hié, Camus learned not only heartbreak but also how to compartmentalize his life into public and private boxes. Although he alienated some of his friends and family during his years with Simone, the young author was able to take on a busy schedule and advance himself academically, literarily, politically, and socially. On January 1, 1936, he wrote to his friend Claude de Fréminville about his ambitious plans for the year:

My year looks likely to be busy – (1) The Party, Newspaper, Marxist School, and Speech. (2) The possible creation of a worker's theater, and I thought you might write a play. (3) Essays that I want to write – Europe facing North Africa, about André Malraux – the metaphysics of Marxism – something about the experience of Death, and its 'social value' in a culture and civilization. (4) To finish my diploma – on Neoplatonism and Christianity. (5) A work about poor neighborhoods, etc., etc. I'm a little frightened, but what the hell, if I don't do it all this year, it will be another year, and if not, at least I'll use my strength. I want to use up all my youth.²⁵⁰

Remarkably, Camus had just suffered a relapse of tuberculosis the year before, with the disease entering his other lung in the summer of 1935. Despite – or perhaps because of – his illness, Camus pushed himself to his limits by pursuing multiple projects; in the same letter to Fréminville, he had written, "Basically, at the very bottom of life, which seduces us all, there is only absurdity, and more absurdity...And maybe that's what gives us our joy for living, because the only thing that can defeat absurdity is lucidity."²⁵¹ Camus had not yet worked out his philosophical system, as he would a decade later in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and other essays, but he was already beginning to occupy himself with the things he believed give life meaning: action, creation, and revolt. His letter to Fréminville not only reveals that

²⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 47-8

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Though separated, Albert and Simone did not divorce until 1940, when Camus decided to marry Francine Faure, a mathematician from a middle-class family in Oran. Still, Camus had lingering affections for Simone, and would send her money when she asked for it. Hié died a decade after Camus, in 1970. Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Camus: Portrait of a Moralizer*. p. 9

²⁴⁹ After their separation, Camus moved in with his brother Lucien and Hié her mother.

²⁵⁰ Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 41

²⁵¹ *ibid.*

he was a long-term (perhaps obsessive) planner, but also that he had diverse interests and intense energy. Indeed, he was in the thick of living his life.

Outside of classes at the University of Algiers, Camus became involved with Fréminville's literary magazine, both by contributing an article on his idol, André Malraux, and by assisting with the magazine's editorial structure.²⁵² He was also reading world literature, including Franz Kafka's (1883-1924) *The Trial* (1925) and William Faulkner's (1897-1962) *Sanctuary* (1931). In addition to Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* and Richaud's *La Douleur*, these books influenced Camus's literary aspirations, as he was then working on a novel to be called *Le Quartier pauvre*.²⁵³ Although the novel was never published, Camus later incorporated elements of it into *L'Envers et l'endroit* and *Le Premier homme*. He was finally starting to articulate the major themes of his life – among them, poverty, family, and Algeria – in an artistic form.

Still, Camus's interests did not stop at literature, for he soon got caught up in the politics of the Interwar Years, joining the Algerian Communist Party in 1935. Fréminville had officially identified as a communist the year before, and Camus had disapproved of his friend's decision.

"Don't tie yourself to a youthful 'credo,'" he told Claude, expressing his disdain of abstract ideals. "I have a deep-seated attitude against religion, and for me, communism is nothing if not a religion...To belong would mean to force myself to hide other beliefs...I can't help it if everything pushes me towards silence and my own life, and away from whatever is social."²⁵⁴

Jean Grenier would help change that. On Sundays, the professor used to invite his students and friends to his home, where he casually discussed communist ideals and policies.²⁵⁵ "If you're doing philosophy, politics is necessary," he told them. Years later, in a 1968 testimony, Grenier admitted that he had explicitly counseled Camus to join the revolutionary movement:

Why and how did Albert Camus adhere to the communist party? It's a question that comes up and that many people ask, even though [his] oeuvre is not directly concerned with this adherence which lasted for a very short time...I therefore advised Albert Camus to join the Party...On Albert Camus's end, could there have been very serious objections to this choice? I didn't think so. He did not adhere to a faith all while having respect for the faith. The history of ideas had not oriented him towards one doctrine more than another, although a letter from him goes to show that the encounter between Hellenism and Christianity was a subject of meditation for him...Remaining aloof, he was rather in search of a first truth from which he would extract a way of living and thinking. For the moment, he very quickly sensed

²⁵² *ibid.* p. 29

²⁵³ *ibid.* p. 31

²⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 29

²⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 37

the humiliation of the condition to which he was reduced, the granting of scholarships and the obtaining of small jobs only being palliatives of chronic shortage. He felt secure in an unfamiliar environment of bourgeois men and full of brotherly warmth, of which he gives a good idea in his short story, *Les Muets*.²⁵⁶ He was hurt by the inequality of circumstances between Europeans and indigenous people. In brief, he was ready to pursue a career whose advantages and risks would not put him in disaccord with his convictions; on the contrary, where he could give it his all and take the risks without which life would not have been conceivable for him. Everything thus seemed to contribute to legitimizing this choice.²⁵⁷

If Grenier is to be believed, Camus viewed politics as an act of philosophical engagement, through which individuals could combat social inequalities, whether those resulted from capitalism, fascism, imperialism, or colonialism. “The first truth” Camus was seeking, then, was an absolute moral premise based on the equality of every human being. Communism would be the means to achieving that end – a new humanism for the 20th century – as well as one that resonated with his impoverished upbringing. Camus was merely concerned that political principles would come before reason, and that innocents could be hurt in the name of abstract ideals.²⁵⁸ “With a due sense of proportion, one can see the same problem [with communism] as Christianity,” Camus wrote in a March 1936 notebook entry. “Should the believer load himself down with the contradictions in the Gospels and the excesses of the Church? Does believing in Christianity involve accepting Noah’s ark and defending the Inquisition? Or the tribunal which condemned Galileo?... If I try extreme forms of action, in so far as they reach absurdity and uselessness – then I reject Communism.”²⁵⁹

Whatever his true beliefs, Camus’s stint with communism was short-lived; he was kicked out the party in 1937 because he insisted on supporting Arab civil and social rights – an initiative led by the newly formed Algerian Popular Party (APP) – instead of prioritizing the global fight against fascism.²⁶⁰ This got him into trouble with the leaders of the Algerian Communist Party, who denounced Camus as a Trotskyite and revoked his membership card.

²⁵⁶ Published in 1957, *Les Muets* (“The Silent Ones”) involves a group of workers at a cooper’s shop who have recently returned to work after a failed strike. When the owner’s daughter falls ill, the workers do not offer any help or condolence, acting in solidarity with each other and in opposition to their owner.

²⁵⁷ Grenier, Jean. “*Souvenirs d’Albert Camus*.” Excerpts from *Albert Camus, Souvenirs*, Paris: Gallimard, 1968. Published in *Albert Camus*. Paris: Editions de L’Herne, 2013. ed. by Crosier, Raymond. Print. p. 44. Translation is mine.

²⁵⁸ Perhaps Camus’s thinking was influenced by the French Revolution and its bloody results.

²⁵⁹ Camus, Albert. *Notebooks: 1935-1951*. trans. by Philip Thody. New York: Marlowe & Co., 1998. Print. p. 16

²⁶⁰ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 61-2. See Todd’s chapter, “The ‘Political Agitator,’” for a thorough account of interwar politics in Algeria.

All throughout his adult life, Camus was wary of ideologies that reduced the world to absolute truths. But what of “the encounter between Hellenism and Christianity” that Grenier characterized as “a subject of meditation” for the young author? Why was this particular aspect of “the history of ideas” such an important moment in Camus’s intellectual development?

In fact, Camus wrote his thesis for the University of Algiers on this topic, under the title, “Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism: Plotinus and Saint Augustine,” in order to receive his *diplôme d’études supérieures* – roughly the equivalent of a Master’s degree.²⁶¹ At about one hundred pages long, Camus’s thesis resembles a dissertation or short book, divided into well-organized chapters that are supplemented by notes. The goal of his project was to reconcile Greek thought (Hellenism) with Christianity, explaining how Plotinus and Saint Augustine contributed to the resolution of the two systems. Camus knew his topic was difficult, “considering the complexity of the historical material that occupied [him].”²⁶² He even admitted on the first page of his thesis that “it is always arbitrary to speak of a Greek spirit in opposition to a Christian one.”

Albert was neither Greek nor Christian, so why did he choose to write about those identities for his final academic paper? One likely answer is that Camus considered himself a Mediterranean man, and as such wanted to understand the religious and cultural forces that had shaped his corner of the globe. Both Plotinus and Augustine lived in North Africa; the former was a Neoplatonist who believed that the world of ideas was the real world, while the latter was a father of the Catholic Church who emphasized God’s grace as salvation from mankind’s original sin.²⁶³ The story of Saint Augustine in particular – a man brought to grace after years of carnal pleasures and self-deception – must have resonated strongly with the sensual Camus, who read the entirety of Augustine’s *Confessions* to prepare for his thesis.²⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Camus thought Plotinus “showed an artist’s point of view...and transported an artist’s extreme emotion about the physical world into the world of understanding....[by] describ[ing] intelligence in a sensual way.”^{265 266} It is as if Camus were

²⁶¹ A typescript of Camus’s thesis is available to view at the Centre Camus in Aix-en-Provence, France, where I conducted a research trip in December 2013. The *diplôme d’études supérieures* is an intermediate degree between the *license* awarded after university study and the advanced degree of *doctorat*.

²⁶² *ibid.*

²⁶³ The doctrine of original sin has to do with the fall of man that supposedly stemmed from Adam’s rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden, as recorded in the first book of the Bible, *Genesis*. Saint Augustine (354-430) claimed that original sin is transmitted by concupiscence, or the “hurtful desire” to turn away from God and pursue worldly things. Thus, mankind lost a significant amount of its initial free will after the fall, and human nature was debased to a state of depravity. Mendelson, Michael. “Saint Augustine”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/augustine/>>.

²⁶⁴ “God, make me chaste, but not yet,” Augustine is believed to have said. *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*.

p. 44

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*

discussing his own writerly aspirations, hidden beneath the stilted prose of French academic philosophy. As Stephen Eric Bronner has noted, “[Augustine’s *Confessions*] was probably the first self-conscious autobiography, and in its pages Camus saw the possibility of personal experience becoming a constant point of reference for literary and philosophical undertaking.”²⁶⁷

In writing his thesis, Camus learned how one’s personal interests and experiences could reach the level of the universal through language. But it would still take him years to arrive at the crisp and lucid prose one sees in his lyrical essays and *The First Man*. Indeed, the turgid style of “Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism” resembles those of *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*.²⁶⁸ “Our task and our plan are sketched out as follows,” Camus states in the introduction to his thesis. “To trace in Neoplatonism the effort of Greek philosophy to give a specifically Hellenic solution to the problem of the era; to trace the Christian effort to adapt its dogma to its primitive religious life, until the moment when...Christianity blossoms into this second revelation that was Augustinian thought.”²⁶⁹ “Subject of meditation for him” or not, Camus’s essay is positively dense.²⁷⁰

And yet, one notices in Camus’s thesis some of the same phrases and ideas he would use later in his autobiographical essays and notebooks. Discussing Greek thought, Camus writes: “Hellenism implies that man can suffice for himself and that he carries within himself an explanation for the Universe and Destiny. His temples are built according to his measure. In a certain sense, the Greeks accepted a light-hearted and aesthetic justification for existence. The shape of their hills or the running of a young man on a beach delivered the whole secret of the world to them. Their gospel said: Our Realm is of this world.”²⁷¹ The

²⁶⁶ Plotinus (205-270) is generally regarded as the founder of Neoplatonism, a term invented by 19th century historians and applied to Plotinus’s metaphysical ideas about the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. Gerson, Lloyd. “Plotinus.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/plotinus/>>.

²⁶⁷ *supra* Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist*. p. 12

²⁶⁸ Of course, these are philosophical works, and so their dense styles can be attributed to the seriousness of their subjects. Still, the beauty of Camus’s essays and fiction is that the author found a way to be philosophical without seeming affected, abstruse, or pretentious.

²⁶⁹ Camus, Albert. *Métaphysique chrétienne et néoplatonisme*. Typescript of Camus’s undergraduate thesis at the University of Algiers. CMS2.Ap2-04.07. The original French reads: « *Notre tâche et notre plan se trouvent alors tracés. Suivre dans le Néoplatonisme l’effort de la philosophie grecque pour donner au problème de l’époque une solution spécifiquement hellène ; tracer le travail chrétien pour adapter sa dogmatique à sa vie religieuse primitive, jusqu’au moment où rencontrant dans le néoplatonisme des cadres métaphysiques déjà moulés sur une pensée religieuses, le Christianisme s’épanouit dans cette seconde révélation que fut la pensée augustiniennne.* » Translation is mine.

²⁷⁰ *supra* Grenier, Jean. “*Souvenirs d’Albert Camus.*” p. 44

²⁷¹ *ibid.* The original French reads: « *L’hellénisme implique que l’homme peut se suffire et qu’il porte en lui de quoi expliquer l’Univers et le Destin. Ses temples sont construits à sa mesure. En un certain sens les Grecs acceptaient une justification sportive et esthétique de l’existence. Le dessin de leurs collines ou la course d’un jeune homme sur une plage leur délivrait tout le secret du monde. Leur évangile disait : notre Royaume est de ce monde.* »

author's gospel said the same.²⁷² As a sensualist, Camus often used the image of a man on a beach to express his Mediterranean sensibility and realist style.²⁷³ Moreover, Camus founded his entire philosophy on the notion that humankind inhabits an indifferent universe, and so individuals must justify their existence independently of a divine being. His humanism emerged from the Greeks; his gospel was without God.

Camus submitted his thesis on May 8, 1936, after what one can imagine were many late nights and early mornings filled with coffee. He took two weeks vacation to recuperate before he received his diploma in philosophy on May 25, earning a respectable (though not exceptional) grade of twenty-eight out of forty on his final assignment.²⁷⁴ His notebook entries from those intermediary weeks reveal a man who had a childlike appreciation for life but was a child no more:

A long walk. Hills with sea in the background. And the delicate sun...Heavy, syrupy flowers with violet-colored petals. Also the return home, gentleness and friendship of women. Grave and smiling faces of young women. Smiles, jokes, and plans. One goes back into the game. And without believing in them, everyone smiles at appearances and pretends to accept them. No false notes. *I am linked to the world by everything I do, to men with all the gratitude I feel.* From the hilltop, we could see the mists left by the recent rains being pressed down and brought back to life by the sun.. Even as I came down through the woods, diving down into the cotton wool, I sensed the sun above me and saw the trees appearing one by one in this miraculous daylight. Trust and friendship, sun and white houses, scarcely grasped shades of meaning— *oh, my untouched moments of happiness are already drifting away and offering no more help in the gloom of the evening than a young woman's smile or the understanding glance of shared friendship. If time seems to pass so quickly, this is because there are no landmarks...The years of our youth are so long because they are so full, the years of our old age so short because each stage is already marked out.*²⁷⁵

CONCLUSION: "A STRANGER TO HIMSELF" AND A MAN FOR US ALL

"An intellectual is someone whose mind watches itself. I like this, because I am happy to be both halves, the watcher and the watched. 'Can they be brought together?' This

²⁷² "I am happy in this world for my kingdom is of this world." Camus, Albert. *Notebooks: 1935-1951*. trans. by Philip Thody. New York: Marlowe & Co., 1998. Print. p. 9

²⁷³ See Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. trans. by Matthew Ward. New York: Knopf, 1988. Print.; *The Plague*. trans. by Stuart Gilbert. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print.

²⁷⁴ *supra* Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. p. 45

²⁷⁵ *supra* Camus, Albert. *Notebooks: 1935-1951*. p. 17-8. Italics added.

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is a practical question. We must get down to it. 'I despise intelligence' really means: 'I cannot bear my doubts.' I prefer to keep my eyes open."²⁷⁶

*"I do not know what I could wish for rather than this continued presence of self with self. What I want now is not happiness but awareness. One thinks one has to cut oneself off from the world, but it is enough to see an olive tree upright in the golden dust, or beaches glistening in the morning sun, to feel this separation melt away. Thus with me. I became aware of the possibilities for which I am responsible. Every minute of life carries with it its miraculous value, and its face of eternal youth."*²⁷⁷

*"I am happy in this world for my kingdom is of this world."*²⁷⁸

We know a lot about Camus and his education — the facts of his life, the members of his family, the circumstances of his upbringing, his schools, teachers, readings, writings, ambitions, anxieties, hopes, fears, highs, and lows. But by no means did Camus stop learning when he received his diploma at twenty-five-years-old; this is just an arbitrary end point that neatly divides the author's life in half, and that has allowed us to examine a manageable portion of his biography while gesturing ahead to some of the works many of his readers are familiar with.

Consider, for example, Camus's journalism from the late 1930s, which exposed the unjust living conditions of the indigenous poor in Algeria.²⁷⁹ Camus knew the demographics and geography of his home country well, but by the time he returned to report there in June 1939, Algeria had changed.²⁸⁰ As a European, he had rarely traveled to the mountain ranges of Kabylia, where the poor "[ate] thistle, depend[ed] on capricious handouts, or die[d] of exhaustion in the snow on the way home from food distribution center[s]."²⁸¹ Still, Camus saw journalism not only as a career that would allow him to tell stories and improve his writing, but also as a means of sharpening his mind. During his twenties, he had told his friend Claude de Fréminville, "I'm thinking about journalism as a way to continue my studies...I feel a sort of happiness in believing that I have infinite possibilities."²⁸² Journalism was thus a path that allowed Camus to keep learning about the wider world to which his

²⁷⁶ Camus, Albert. *Notebooks: 1935-1951*. trans. by Philip Thody. New York: Marlowe & Co., 1998. Print. p. 28

²⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 10

²⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 9

²⁷⁹ Camus, Albert. *Algerian Chronicles*. ed. by Alice Kaplan, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2013. Print.

²⁸⁰ *ibid.* See Alice Kaplan's "New Perspectives on Camus's Algerian Chronicles." p. 4. The changes to Algeria after World War II mainly have to do with political and social realities on the ground. Algeria was only a few years away from independence (1962).

²⁸¹ *ibid.* See Arthur Goldhammer's "Translator's Note." p. x

²⁸² Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. trans. by Benjamin Ivry. New York: Knopf, 1997. Print. p. 25

teachers and favorite authors had opened his eyes.²⁸³ It was also a way for him to *gagner sa vie* – “make a living” – doing what he loved: writing.²⁸⁴

Camus’s fictional and philosophical works show us what it means to be human. As a writer, Camus knew the power and limits of words, using them across different genres to express both feeling and thought. The common point between his various works is the lucidity of his prose and the idea that nothing is absolute or fixed – that “meaning is where you make it, and life is absurd.”²⁸⁵ Instead of falling into nihilism, however, Camus sees an opportunity for individuals, faced with their human limits, to achieve self-awareness and community. “To keep going to the end means not only resisting but also relaxing,” Camus wrote in an August 1937 entry in his notebooks. “I need to be aware of myself, in so far as this is also an awareness of something that goes beyond me as an individual. I sometimes need to write things which I cannot completely control but which therefore prove that what is in me is stronger than I am.”²⁸⁶

We might consider Camus’s autobiographical works – foremost, *Le Premier homme* and *L’Envers et l’endroit* – as acts of self-interpretation, in which Camus attempted to discern the meaning of his life by putting his experiences into words. Summoning his memories of family, poverty, school, play, work, and friendship, Camus tells a tender story of the forces that transformed him into an intellectual and a writer. Nonetheless, there is a sense in *Le Premier homme* that language, as an imperfect medium, cannot fully express truth or reality. In the last chapter of the book, titled, “A Stranger to Himself,” Camus writes:

[Jacques], like a solitary and ever-shining blade of a sword, was destined to be shattered with a single blow and forever, an unalloyed passion for life confronting utter death; today he felt life, youth, people slipping away from him, without being able to hold on to any of them, left with the blind hope that this obscure force that for so many years had raised him above the daily routine, nourished him unstintingly, and had been equal to the most difficult circumstances—that, as it had with endless generosity given him reason to live, it would also give him reason to grow old and die without rebellion.²⁸⁷

²⁸³ André Malraux, Camus’s literary idol during the early 1930s, emphasized the close connections between journalism, literature, and politics: “I think there few novelists in our time who have not seen journalism collected into books and realized the new novelistic form they represent, and quickly become discouraged...[Journalism] continues the strongest traditions of the French novel, from Balzac to Zola, with the entrance of a character into a world which he reveals to us, as he discovers it himself.” Todd, Olivier. *Camus: A Life*. trans. by Benjamin Ivry. New York: Knopf, 1997. Print. p. 42

²⁸⁴ “*Ecrire, c’est mettre en ordre ses obsessions.*” Grenier, Jean. “*Souvenirs d’Albert Camus.*” p. 43

²⁸⁵ Gopnik, Adam. “Facing History: Why We Love Camus.” *The New Yorker*. April 9, 2012, p. 70-76. Print. p.

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²⁸⁶ *supra* Camus, Albert. *Notebooks, 1935-1951*. p. 44

²⁸⁷ Camus, Albert. *The First Man*. trans. by David Hapgood. New York: Knopf, 1995. Print. p. 284

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When Camus passed away on January 4, 1960, in a tragic car accident on the way to Paris, the world lost a man who had been a beacon of hope and moral voice during times of great conflict. He never got the chance to grow old and die, with or without rebellion. He merely disappeared.

This, then, is the legacy Camus has left us, one hundred years after his birth and fifty years after his death: The power of human beings to articulate their experience of the world through language, and the resiliency of the human spirit to overcome adversity and suffering. For Camus, education meant self-knowledge mediated by the vicissitudes of life, and implied an ability to connect with others in a deep way. No wonder he filled his time on this earth in team settings: on the soccer field playing *football*, in the theater directing plays, and in the newsroom editing articles.

It would be wrong, therefore, to romanticize Camus as a brooding and solitary figure, who only cared about acquiring knowledge, exposing the truth, and making profound statements about life. Indeed, this is what many black-and-white photographs of Camus, such as Henri Cartier-Bresson's (1908-2004) iconic portrait of him from the 1940s — strong features, slicked back hair, seductive eyes, cigarette in mouth, and trench coat collar raised²⁸⁸ — might lead one to believe.²⁸⁹ Camus was a man of this world like any other. He was attentive and cerebral, to be sure, but he was also cheerful, playful, and sporty. He struggled and succeeded, excelled and fell behind, but through it all he felt and lived. Most important, he never forgot where he came from.

We tend to remember Camus as a writer, moralist, and something of a tortured soul, so what I hope to have offered here is a portrait of Camus as a reader, student, and son. Just think of him playing soccer on the streets of Belcourt or in the schoolyard after class had been let out; of him devouring books in the public library with his best friend, Pierre; of him taking the trolley home under the hot Algerian sun to have dinner with his older brother, domineering grandmother, eccentric uncles, and silent mother. “My joy is endless,” Camus wrote in his notebooks in March 1936, at the age of twenty-three. “*Dolorem exprimit quia movit amorem.*”²⁹⁰

One must imagine Camus happy.

²⁸⁸ Here, I am again indebted to Adam Gopnik's April 2012 *New Yorker* article, “Facing History: Why We Love Camus,” for his discussion of Camus's physical traits and image.

²⁸⁹ Henri Cartier-Bresson was a French photographer considered by many to be the father of photojournalism. Known for his candid photos and street photography, Cartier-Bresson captured striking images of many famous people, including Simone de Beauvoir, Samuel Beckett, Leonard Bernstein, André Breton, Truman Capote, Coco Chanel, Marcel Duchamp, William Faulkner, Gandhi, Langston Hughes, Henri Matisse, François Mauriac, Arthur Miller, Richard Nixon, Pablo Picasso, Ezra Pound, Jean Renoir, and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others.

²⁹⁰ Latin for, “He felt pain because he experienced love.”

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