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Yuxin (Vivian) Wen

*on A Comparative Study of Judy
Chicago, Mary Kelly and Cindy
Sherman*

Connor Muller

*on Memory of the Peterloo
Massacre among the
English Working Class*

Daniel Brennan

*on How Spain's Generals Lost Her
Empire and Cuban Independence*

Zachary Clary

*on Smoking Gun President Ches-
ter Arthur's Transformation that
Reformed America*

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ABOUT THE REVIEW

Founded in 1991, the *Penn History Review* is a journal for undergraduate historical research. Published twice a year through the Department of History, the journal is a non-profit publication produced by and primarily for undergraduates. The editorial board of the *Review* is dedicated to publishing the most original and scholarly research submitted for our consideration. For more information about submissions, please contact us at phrsubmissions@gmail.com.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On behalf of the entire editorial board, I am honored to present the newest issue of the Penn History Review. Since 1991, the Penn History Review has been dedicated to promoting the study of history amongst undergraduate students. Since its founding, PHR has published exceptional historical scholarship written by students at the University of Pennsylvania as well as schools across the United States. Our Spring 2020 edition exemplifies the diversity of study within our field. It includes articles that explore dynamic topics such as the redefining of femininity through the abject moment, President Arthur's transformation of American politics, English working-class perceptions of the Peterloo Massacre, and the struggle between Spain and Cuba over the issue of independence. These pieces embody the core values of our publication: curiosity, critical thinking, a dedication to research, and most importantly a passion for history. Our entire editorial team deeply enjoyed working with the authors and editing these papers. We hope that you will find them thought-provoking and enjoy reading them as much as we did.

Our first piece, "Reclaiming the Feminine Identity through the Abject: A Comparative Study of Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly and Cindy Sherman," is authored by Yuxin (Vivian) Wen. She opens her piece by defining the abject as art that is usually improper and unclean. Wen claims that women appropriate the image of abjection as a means of reclaiming their identity in the field of art as well as in society as a whole. The author analyzes this concept through the lens of three artists: Chicago, Kelly, and Sherman. She argues that, through art, women can reassert their voice and reclaim their image which she believes has been hijacked by the patriarchy.

In the next article "'No Pity – I Claim Only Justice': Radical Memory of the Peterloo Massacre among the

English Working Class, 1819-1848,” Connor Muller analyzes the written and visual representations of the Peterloo Massacre. The author claims that invoking the massacre’s memory was more than a strategic tactic for reformers to help rally support for their cause. He argues that its significant impact on the working-class psyche helped give rise to chartism.

In the third paper, “The Butcher and the Arson: How Spain’s Generals Lost Her Empire and Destroyed Her Crown Jewel,” Daniel Brennan examines the Cuban Independence Movement. This article, which is a excerpt of a longer thesis, recounts the story of “the near-victory of Spanish colonial forces over Cuba’s Liberation Army in the waning months of 1897 and the disastrous policy of Reconcentration in which hundreds of thousands of Cubans were evacuated from the island’s rural interior.” Brennan discusses the impact of disease, military defeat, and agriculture on Cuba’s fight for independence against Spain.

Our final piece, “A Smoking Gun and a Woman’s Touch: President Chester Arthur’s Transformation that Reformed American Politics in the Late Nineteenth Century”, comes from Zachary Clary of the College of William and Mary. The author begins by providing an overview of Arthur’s life and says that he spent most of his career “righting the corrupt, political wrongs that had allowed him to achieve the nation’s highest office in the first place.” Clary analyzes his time as an attorney and dedication to racial equality long before his time in the White House. The author closely analyzes the letters of Julia Sand to President Arthur. He argues that while there is no way to conclusively prove that Chester Auther supported the political reforms Sand suggested as a result of her letters, the fact that the president kept the letters until his death indicates that they were of some significance to him. He claims that “while Charles Guiteau and Julia Sand influenced Chester Arthur individually, the political outcomes would have been different had they not both been participants in the narrative.”

Additionally, this issue includes a sample of abstracts submitted by seniors at Penn who undertook the challenge of researching and writing honor theses for the History Department. In doing so, the PHR hopes to promote additional research and scholarship in the field of history by offering its readership a preview of this fascinating variety of topics. Congratulations to all of the senior honors students who achieved this impressive accomplishment. We encourage other history students to also embark on this incredibly rewarding endeavour.


The editorial board would also like to thank a number of people without whom this edition of the PHR would not have been possible. Our publication only exists thanks to the generous support of the Penn History Department who continues to support and fund us each year. In particular, we are extremely grateful to Dr. Siyen Fei, the Undergraduate Chair of the department, and Dr. Yvonne Fabella, the Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies. They have both offered invaluable guidance and encouragement throughout the editing and publishing processes. The dedication they have for both their students and field of study is an inspiration. In addition, we would like to thank the faculty members at Penn and other universities who promoted our publication, as well as all of the students who submitted papers for consideration. This edition would not exist without your support. Thank you as well to our contributing authors, who worked patiently and diligently to refine their articles for publication.

Finally, I would like to thank our editors for their exceptionally hard work on this issue of the Penn History Review. I would especially like to recognize the contributions of our graduating seniors, Helen Catherine Darby, Jake Fallek, Noah Kest, Hannah Nasser, Alia Schechter, and Ishaan Tugnait. Their passion for history and dedication over the years have continued to make the PHR a platform for remarkable scholarship. It has been a truly enjoyable experience to work with each of them throughout my time on the board. We will

miss having them in our editorial family but are confident that they will go on to do great things. In particular, I would like to thank Helen Catherine Darby, our Editor-in-Chief emeritus. I have had the honor of working with her on two distinct publications as well as having her as a classmate. She is brilliant, hard-working, and kind. Columbia Law is incredibly lucky to have her. Helen Catherine, thank you for the constant guidance, support, and dedication to everything you do. It has been an honor to work with you. PHR will eternally be a stronger publication because it had you as a leader. At the same time, I would like to recognize three new editors we were especially fortunate to have added to the board this semester, Zarina Iman and Chinaza Okonkwo, who have already made a positive impact on our journal.

This has not been a traditional semester. COVID-19 has impacted everyone across the globe and PHR is no exception. Thank you so much to the Penn History Department for providing us the additional funding to allow us to publish our review remotely, thank you to our authors who have been so understanding about changed deadlines and schedules, and most of all thank you to our editors who have made coming to meetings and editing the articles a priority despite different time-zones and virtual learning. Your dedication and passion is an inspiration.

Congratulations again to all of the authors and editors who participated in this edition of the Penn History Review!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Colagrossi', with a stylized, sweeping flourish underneath.

Lorenza Colagrossi
Editor-in-Chief

RECLAIMING THE FEMININE IDENTITY THROUGH THE ABJECT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JUDY CHICAGO, MARY KELLY, AND CINDY SHERMAN

Yuxin (Vivian) Wen

Introduction

In 1993, students in the Independent Study Program of Whitney Museum of American Art in New York staged “Abject Art” as the theme of their annual exhibition.¹ The abject, usually referring to the improper and unclean, is a term theorized by the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in her work, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). It signifies a power relationship in which the abject is the Other, being cast out to preserve the order of an established system and the intact identities of the members within the system. Titled “Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art,” the show gestured towards the affinity between this sense of the abject and the feminine in the first section of its display titled “The Maternal Body.” The display featured female artists including Mary Kelly (born 1941) and Cindy Sherman (born 1954) and male artists including Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1968) and Willem de Kooning (1926 – 1997) who relentlessly focused on the female body as their artistic subject matter. The display evoked how the feminine is often seen as the abject and the oppressed in patriarchal culture, and how women artists may appropriate the image of abjection to reclaim their identity in the space of art and society.

There is no movement titled “The Abject Movement.” However, “The Feminist Movement” has been formalized

by historians who have retrospectively traced a lineage among women theorists, writers, and artists working within the gendered disciplines of philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, art, and history of art. Whilst many women artists still deny the “Feminist” label conferred on them, the concept of the abject provides a conceptual link in mapping the shifts in the practices of these women artists, who assume various degrees of affinity for feminism and who work within or outside the codified gallery space. This dissertation focuses on the artworks of three living American women artists – Judy Chicago (born 1939), Mary Kelly, and Cindy Sherman – who are all prolific and versatile in their own way while collectively demonstrating a range of approaches towards the language of feminism and the use of the abject.

Epitomized by the installation *The Menstruation Room* and the performance piece *Cock Cunt Play*, Judy Chicago’s *Womanhouse* (1972) seized the image of the abject and created an immersive setting that simulated the visceral reality experienced by women. Constructed a decade before Kristeva’s writing, *Womanhouse* did not seek to respond to the theory of abjection, but it drew on the symbolism of the tabooed female body with a consciousness-raising agenda. Preoccupied with a radically diverging aesthetic, Mary Kelly’s early work, *Post-Partum Document* (1973 – 1979) employed the controlled image of her son’s dirty nappies in a series of rather aseptic, conceptual prints which hang on the white walls of the contemporary art gallery; as we shall see, she addressed and nuanced Lacanian psychoanalytic theory of woman as lack, as Kristeva also did, thus revealing an interesting parallel between a woman artist’s conceptual practices and a feminist philosopher’s theories. Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document* aestheticized the abject to criticize both the institutionalized gallery space and the male-dominant field of Conceptual art. Finally, Cindy Sherman obsessively

appropriates popular images of feminine roles perpetuated by mass media, relies on an effective shocking method to engage the viewer, and thereby invites him/her to criticize the clichéd depiction of the idealized image of women. Most notably, her *Untitled Film Stills* of the 1990s exhibited a magnified grotesqueness using mannequins, bodily fluids, and the explicitly abject, as a way not only of reclaiming the tabooed, abject body but also of criticizing those art movements – especially Surrealism, as we shall discuss later – which she viewed as misogynistic in their portrayal of woman. A feminist perspective allows us to witness a range of approaches adopted by these women artists from the 1970s to the 1990s who seized and symbolized, aestheticized and contained, or radically accentuated the abject to reclaim the feminine body and identity.

Methodology and Literature Review: Feminism and the Abject

In a 2018 interview with *Frieze*, a London-based magazine on contemporary art, Mary Kelly asserts that “The biggest hurdle we had to overcome was psychological: the belief that there never had been, and never could be, great women artists.”² The interview evokes the seminal essay written by Linda Nochlin in 1971, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”³ Nochlin traced the perennial struggles experienced by women artists in asserting their collective and individual voices. She called for a paradigm shift through critiquing the inherently gendered definition of “greatness,” the singular Romantic conception of “genius,” and the various circumstances – education, familial expectations – that confine women’s practices.⁴ She asserted, “It was *institutionally* made impossible for women to achieve artistic excellence.”⁵ Nochlin addressed

“The Question of the Nude,” which was to be picked up by different generations of women artists. Once denied access to nude models and relegated to the subject matters of male painters, women artists have reclaimed the female body – in various degrees of nudity – in paintings, installations, performances and other media.⁶ Nochlin also underscored the “intellectual distortions” of “the unstated domination of white male subjectivity,” casting the binary divide between the subject and the object into the center of gender struggles and power dynamics.⁷ Later, Julia Kristeva alluded to the “abject” as the threat to the “subject” to be cast out. Feminist film critic Laura Mulvey coined the phrase “male gaze” to explain masculine, heterosexual perspectives that objectify the female for the sexual pleasure of the male viewer.⁸ About ten years later, Mary Ann Doane further complicated the “woman’s gaze” by emphasizing how women are constantly negotiating between their own feminine viewpoints and the male viewpoints they are conditioned to adopt from their dominant counterparts.⁹ Kelly’s words thus remind us of the trajectory of feminist theories that have helped establish an intellectual basis that influenced many women artists practicing from the 1970s on. These key thinkers formed the backdrop for the battles that women continue to fight.

In the “Preface” to *Art and Feminism* (2001), Helena Reckitt traces the feminist lineage among women artists across the early 1970s, then the mid-1970s and 1980s, and, finally, the 1990s, which witnessed both revived interests in the 1970s and new ideas and practices.¹⁰ She discusses the contradictions and continuities between the “essentialism” that governed the early 1970s and the unified concern over the “strategies of appropriation” in the 1980s.¹¹ She further clarifies the complex relationships between feminist theories and women artists – exemplified by Julia Kristeva among many – in stating that “feminist theorists have variously

influenced, inspired and infuriated women artists.”¹² As the title of her book announces, Reckitt sets out to explore the tensions and affinities between “art and feminism” rather than to claim the capitalized “Feminist art.”¹³ While Reckitt acknowledges that a number of prominent women artists have explicitly rejected the “Feminist” label in their writings or interviews, she asserts a stance that employs the feminist perspectives and frameworks to interpret the works of women artists throughout the decades, as many are not necessarily “non-feminist” even if not articulated as “feminist.”¹⁴ Her assertion provides a seminal framework for my analysis of women artists who are not overtly “feminist” in this dissertation.

Reckitt also warns the reader to beware of the reasons why certain female artists may distance themselves from “feminism” in words although their works demonstrate strong influences from feminist arguments.¹⁵ This viewpoint is especially critical in analyzing the works of Mary Kelly, who is constantly negotiating her multiple identities as a Conceptual artist and a woman artist, and her identities as an artist and a mother – the notion of feminism in her artwork should not overshadow its many other intricate elements. In contrast, Judy Chicago maintains the urgency to vocalize the feminist manifesto and prioritize the feminist agenda in her art, as we shall see in her memoir, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (1982). Mary Kelly and Judy Chicago, who are simultaneously visual artists and prolific writers, provide a multitude of materials that allow us to juxtapose the artists’ intentions and the waves of receptions towards their works, and to re-interpret how the trope of abjection functions in the shifts in women’s art that draw different degrees of affinities to the term “feminism.” It is also important to note that Cindy Sherman, who started practicing art slightly later than Judy Chicago and Mary

Kelly, usually lets her photography work speak “on her behalf” and writes much less extensively about it.

In *Powers of Horror* (1982), Julia Kristeva explains abjection as anything that disturbs “identity, system, order,” rather than an inherent lack of health or hygiene.¹⁶ Kristeva also acknowledges the ambiguous, porous, paradoxical nature of the abject because it is the Other that allows us to recognize and sustain the self by presenting a visible threat to the self; she states “the abject does not cease challenging its master.”¹⁷ Thus, in an established, patriarchal social order, while the female bodily functions and matters are often abjected, they could be leveraged upon by women artists to dismantle the borders of gender roles and destabilize traditional gender identities. The list of the abject made by Kristeva (defilement, waste, milk, menstrual blood) offers tools and motifs that women artists can employ to mobilize power and challenge patriarchy.¹⁸ In a way, the literally unclean – with its effective power – is used to challenge the construction of the clean. At the same time, given the fact that institutions like public museums and galleries are highly codified and typically dispel anything visually impure or distasteful, abject art presents a way to immediately threaten institutionalized space. Abject art practiced by women artists could thus lead to intensified tensions between what is “art” and what is not, providing ample opportunities to advance feminist agendas. While Judy Chicago’s *Womanhouse* was situated outside museums, Mary Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document* proved to be an effective intervention in gallery space and Conceptual art. Kelly’s inclusion of her son’s faecal stains in her prints was muted but nevertheless jarring within the bare walls of “the White Cube,” the modern gallery space that Brian O’Doherty described as “untouched by time and its vicissitudes.”¹⁹ The abject is perhaps too real for the apparently insulated gallery space, shattering

the illusion of grand narratives told by those in positions of power. It brings us face to face with the neglected half of history and reality. This dissertation analyzes the artworks through the lens of writings by these three women artists themselves and re-interprets their roles within feminist art history under the unifying theme of the reclamation of the abject. Each section begins with the contextualization of each artist and extends into a detailed analysis of one or two specific projects demonstrative of the abject.

Judy Chicago, *Womanhouse* (1972) and “Cunt Art”:
Seizing the Abject

“But what we have to do is we have to seize our own cunt.” –
Judy Chicago, 1972²⁰

Judy Chicago, born in Chicago in 1939, is a first-generation feminist artist, writer, and educator who now occupies an iconic status among feminist artists.²¹ Well-versed both in words and art, she started learning drawing at the Art Institute of Chicago at the age of three, as she notes in her memoir, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (1982).²² The memoir documents her early admiration for her father, a well-educated man, and her frustration over the inhibitions faced by female art students during her undergraduate years at University of California, Los Angeles. The female sexual organs that she was forbidden to portray in her art then were to become constant motifs in many of her works including *Womanhouse* (1972) and *Through the Flower*, the painting that bears the same title as her memoir, which became part of the series, *Great Ladies* (1973), and, most canonically, *The Dinner Party* (1973-1979). Her fascination with the image of the “cunt” as a symbol for the quintessential female experience evokes the notion of abjection and can be seen as the focal tool for her to exercise agency over the definition of feminine roles.

Chicago's "cunt" art represents a form of liberation both for the female body and the erotic self. As Alyce Mahon argues, by exposing the obscenity of the "cunt" label constructed by the male-dominant society, the woman artist seeks to remake the feminine identity.²³ While she changed her own name from Judith Sylvia Cohen to Judy Chicago as a tactic to assert control over her own role, she initiated a movement that seizes the image of "cunt" as the symbolic strategy to redefine the collective womanly experience.²⁴

Judy Chicago directed the all-woman art program at Fresno State College at the height of the 1970s Women's Movement. The documentary titled *Judy Chicago & California Girls* (1971, directed by Judith Dancoff) records the interactions between Chicago and her students, with highlights including clips of the performance piece, *Cock Cunt Play*.²⁵ Wearing short hair and a unisex utility vest, Chicago insistently articulates the pressing need for women to "seize" and take control of the image of "cunt" – the abject, the othered – and to redefine it in our own terms:²⁶

"What is cunt? We have definitions of ourselves by men. Cunt is passive. Cunt is receptacle. Cunt is vessel. Cunt is give her, give her all rewards and blessing: mother. Cunt is is is... Cunt is evil, demonic, will swallow you up, blow up. Those are all projections. Fantasy projections. But what we have to do is we have to seize our own cunt. [Chicago demonstrating seizing.] We have to found it in our hand and proceed to announce what it is. Announce that it is real, that it is alive, that it is aggressive, that is our going. That it looks like this, that it needs this, that it has this kind of dimension. And what does that mean? That means really take control of our identity as women. And our cunts are symbolic of our identity as women." (Judy Chicago & California Girls, my transcription)

The equivalence that Chicago draws between the central core imagery of "cunt" and "our identity as women"

is unapologetic and lends itself to heavy criticisms of “essentialism.”²⁷ She decides that the societal definition of women is entirely “inoperable,” and the way out is to shatter it by forcefully writing our own definition.²⁸ Orchestrated by Chicago, and leading a group of women students, the ceremony of rewriting women’s immediate experience in 1972 took place in *Womanhouse* (Fig. 1), an immersive domestic setting which echoed the metaphor that the female vagina is a house, while distancing the experimental art piece from the conventional gallery space.

Womanhouse (1972)

Womanhouse was a collaborative project created by twenty-one students in the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts. The project was directed by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro (1923 – 2015) – an established American-Canadian woman painter known for her hard-edged works such as *Big OX* (1967) and *Beauty of Summer* (1973–74).²⁹ Schapiro was much less vocal than Chicago about the project and this dissertation draws on Chicago’s writing for its focus on Chicago’s “cunt art.” Retrospectively, *Womanhouse* – with its domestic theme – may be seen as a precursor to Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*.

Built in a run-down Hollywood home that imitated a functional house, *Womanhouse* consisted of private, domestic rooms that were immediately familiar to the women audiences: *The Dining Room* (Fig. 2), *The Nurturant Kitchen* (Fig. 3), *The Menstruation Bathroom* (Fig. 4), to name a few. The Dining Room might be an example of a visually appealing feast that was sensual, delightful and palatable, with saturated colors decorating the dishes clustered over the round table immersed in the golden light. In comparison, *The Nurturant Kitchen* and *The Menstruation Bathroom* evoked

the abject with the image of breasts and menstrual blood, as if “seized” by Chicago and her students to be forcefully installed into the space, multiplied, intensified, making the private public. For example, in *The Nurturant Kitchen* (Fig. 3), fried eggs on the walls morphed into pendulous breasts in a disturbing manner, hovering over the ordinary, innocuous domestic objects such as frying pans on the wall, cooking ingredients in the cupboard, and cutlery lined up in a wide up drawer. In *The Menstruation Bathroom*, the commercial products of new sanitary napkins, and boxes of tablets of pain killers were piled up on top of the shelf, while a white bin below the shelf was stuffed with used napkins and tampons stained with blood, further dramatized by a singular, dirty tampon on the floor. What was usually hidden behind the bathroom door became directly in view in its visceral representation.

Performance art, often staged in first wave feminism, was incorporated into *Womanhouse* – particularly in *The Living Room* – to enhance the immersive experience. *Cock and Cunt Play* (written by Judy Chicago with Faith Wilding, Fig.5) was a pertinent example employing the abject, mocking and taking control of the pejorative language of “the cunt.” Two women in nondescript, tight black bodysuits were each attached with external, dildo-like sexual organs to represent their sexes. “You have a cunt. A cunt means you wash dishes.” The short-haired woman with the plastic phallus – the husband – commanded the long-haired woman – the wife – in a pretentious mellow voice. Their conversation parodied the everyday domestic scene where the man always leaves all the household duties to the wife, while verbally spotlighting the centrality of “cunt” imagery. The husband started to clumsily hit the wife with his oversized “penis,” inviting laughter among the female audiences and highlighting the absurdity of women’s subjugated roles

through the abject. Most importantly, both the husband and wife were played by women, underscoring the fact that this caricature of domestic violence aimed to represent the female perspective. Performance art thus contributed to the overarching theme of *Womanhouse*.

Through the Flower documents the initial responses from both women audiences and mixed audiences when *Womanhouse* first opened to the public. While the responses from purely women audiences were overwhelmingly positive, the responses from the mixed group were punctuated by “inappropriate silence, embarrassed laughter or muffled applause.” Echoing Mary Ann Doane’s conception of the dual gaze experienced by women, Chicago recalled in her memoir that the very presence of men started to make the women “see the pieces through the eyes of men and couldn’t respond directly.”³⁰ Retrospectively, Judy Chicago’s use of the abject to represent the essential female experience was a difficult and important step at that time, and was fundamental to the first-wave feminism. “Growth takes place by starting where we really are and moving on,” Judy Chicago claimed in her memoir.³¹ She repeatedly emphasized that the agenda behind *Womanhouse* was to render women’s culture visible, and to eventually turn vulnerability into power by exposing the reality of women’s lives.

Behind the imagery of the grotesque, innumerable images of the fried eggs morphing into pendulous breasts in *The Nurturant Kitchen* (Fig 3) was the emotional sharing among two women students at the time, as one talked about the experience of nourishing the family through cooking, and the other, nursing babies; the group thus decided to combine the imagery to collectively evoke and reveal the unacknowledged service women devote in the household and their frustrations.³² According to Chicago, in *Cock and Cunt Play* (Fig.5), the construction of the plot and script also

demonstrated a process of collaborative reflection, where the performance art, like “skits,” grew out of experiences rather than artificial creation.³³ Hence, the symbols and techniques employed in Womanhouse attested to the first-hand realities perceived by women and served to make the private public.

As Judy Chicago claimed in her memoir, Womanhouse “provided a context for a work that both in technique and in content revealed the female experience.”³⁴ The action verb, “reveal” speaks of the strong consciousness-raising motive of the art project, both for the women who collaboratively participated in creating the house and for those who, as audiences, were confronted with their own experiences that were represented and mirrored in Womanhouse. Retrospectively, both the installations and performance art pieces that employed the abject demonstrate a sensibility and a vision of feminist art that is relevant today and anticipate the many themes in feminist art such as the tensions between the private and the public, the representation of the body and the abject.

Mary Kelly, Post-Partum Document (1973 – 1979) and
Conceptual Art: Aestheticizing the Abject

“[...] the difficulty of representing lack, of accepting castration, of not having the phallus, of not being the Phallic Mother” – Mary Kelly, 1983³⁵

Mary Kelly was born in Iowa in 1941, attended Saint Martin’s School of Art in London, and made her debut in The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London in 1976 with the large-scale installation, *Post-Partum Document*. The transatlantic dimension of her career has divided some critics and yet it offers an interesting insight into the shared and different experiences of women artists on both European

and American shores. For the critic Janet Wolff, Mary Kelly's affinity with London and the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain is crucial to any reading of her work: "Kelly is an American artist, whose formative years were spent in London," as she argues in the Introduction to *Mary Kelly: Projects, 1973-2010*, the catalogue published to coincide with the 2011 exhibition under the same title in The Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester.³⁶ Kelly's internationalism aside, a further aspect of her art that is crucial to our appreciation of *PPD*'s intentions is her engagement with psychoanalytic theory and the abject to probe deeper into the social and cultural formations of gender identity and gender relations. Arguably this aspect of her work is universal.

While Chicago's *Womanhouse* (1972) – located in a physical house – sought to signify the collective female reality of domesticity through a largely collaborative project among a group of women students, *Kelly's Post-Partum Document* (1973 – 1979) functioned mainly as a self-documentation of the mother-child relationship, which systematically employed intimate, domestic objects, and the abject body to conjure up a more conceptual discourse on femininity and female roles in the conventional gallery space. Formalized by Sol LeWitt in his essay, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967), Conceptual art is employed by artists to destabilize the underlying ideological structures behind the creation, distribution and the display of art, where "the idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product."³⁷ In a 1982 conversation between Mary Kelly and Paul Smith, the artist articulated her aim to challenge the institution in the work: "It [*PPD*] was conceived [...] to parody the whole iconography of the museum 'display'."³⁸ In this way, Mary Kelly positions herself foremost as a Conceptual artist, who focuses on issues relating to femininity. Unlike self-pronounced "feminist"

artists including Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly prefers the concept of “feminist interventions in art practice” over “feminist art.”³⁹ However, as with Chicago, her use of the abject is central to her intervention on both art and its display.

In contrast to Chicago’s *Womanhouse*, which embodied the collective, biological female body in a self-explanatory manner, Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document* investigated the psychoanalytic dimension of feminine desire through the maternal body and situated the feminine discourse within the personal experience of raising her infant son. The title of the work immediately evoked a non-gendered, analytical, distancing effect, announcing a strong agency over language and critical theory. The exhibition space, ICA, also sought to speak not only to the female – potentially feminist audience – but to a mixed audience specifically interested in contemporary art. With its earlier sections (*Documentation* I, II, III, IV) first exhibited in ICA 1976, the entire project was completed in 1979 as a six-year exploration of the mother-child relationship marked by six sections (Fig. 6). From “Analyzed faecal stains and feeding charts” (*Documentation* I, 1974, Fig. 7) to “Analyzed markings and diary-perspective” (*Documentation* III, 1976), to “Pre-writing alphabet, exerque and diary” (*Documentation* VI, 1978), the art form was “series-based” and “system-based,” demonstrative of a notable trend of Conceptual art concerning real time.⁴⁰ Punctuated and mediated by the artist’s capitalized questions regarding the maternal role – “WHY DON’T I UNDERSTAND?” “WHY IS HE/SHE [THE CHILD] LIKE THAT?” “WHAT DO YOU WANT?” – the artwork explored the insecurities of the mother, the psychological reasons why the woman accepts her social role as a mother, and becomes dependent on her child, and eventually, questioned the construction of the maternal role.

Viewed from a distance, the installation, enclosed in

the apparently insulated white cube space evoked a clinical, monochrome and asexual atmosphere in its serialized and regular form (Fig. 7), which controlled the representation of the abject, most notably, the faecal stains of Kelly's son in *Documentation I* (Fig. 8). The abject presented in PPD was an abstraction removed from the son's actual excrement through the artistic processing of imprint; it thus presented a more detached form compared with the visceral representation of the blood-stained tampon in *Womanhouse*. Systematizing and sanitizing the abject allowed Kelly not only to mediate the visual representation through analytical language, but also to critique the established definition of the Conceptual art, which often excludes domestic, feminine themes such as motherhood. The indexical trace of the son's body was intricately linked to the maternal body and underpinned the central discussions on maternal desire and anxiety. Evoking the Freudian "penis envy" experienced by women – where young girls feel anxiety upon realization that they do not have a penis – Kelly saw the child as the symbolic, imagined phallus of the mother, and by extension, the loss of the child symbolizes castration.⁴¹ The "Footnotes to the PPD" were preoccupied with the maternal insecurities involved in "weaning": "*Experimentum Mentis I: Weaning from the Breast*" (the physical separation of the child); "*Experimentum Mentis II: Weaning from the Holophrase*" (the child's acquisition of language that alienates the mother); "*Experimentum Mentis III: Weaning from the Dyad*" (the intervention of the father that destabilizes the mother-child dyad in establishing the Oedipal triad).⁴² The mother-artist's almost obsessive documentation of the child's faecal stains thus was in itself an exploration of the source of maternal anxiety. A series of twenty-seven liners of her son's used cloth nappies were boxed, each accompanied by standardized annotations that detailed the amount of feeding intake at

different times of the day (Fig. 8). The record of the leaking body – the maternal – represented in the abject form, might be seen as a visual juxtaposition against the record of the intake and gain – the paternal – represented in the intellectualized form below. A clean, neat chart summarizing the growth of the child in relation to the food consumption was presented as a preface to the twenty-seven day-to-day records (Fig.9).

The leaking body – embodied by the child excrement here, just like milk and menstrual blood – is usually associated with the feminine body, if not the maternal body. In “Footnotes to the PPD,” Kelly repeatedly drew on Lacanian theory of psychosexual development, where the child’s acquisition of language and toilet training represent the movement into the Symbolic Order of the patriarchal, yet is constantly threatened by the abject and the maternal, with the danger of falling back into the Real, the disordered state.⁴³ Kelly’s Conceptual attempt at including the abject and re-inscribing borders around the abject – both literally and figuratively – might be seen as an empowering move that takes control over both the feminine abject and the masculine intellect. Nevertheless, it also bordered on the danger of succumbing to male-dominant language and rendering the content inaccessible in its highly coded theoretical approach.

When *PPD* first appeared in 1976, it provoked the general audience and the Conceptual art world. The mass media reports were dominated with headlines decrying “dirty nappies”, and the mainstream art goers at the ICA saw Kelly’s motherhood subject matter as unfit for the high culture.⁴⁴ Yet, just like the female audiences who identified with the theme of *Womanhouse* despite certain initial unease, feminist critics, including, Lucy R. Lippard felt “touched” in her initial reaction towards *PPD*, without having to “know” about the specificity of the psychoanalytic theories

behind the conception of the piece.⁴⁵ Retrospectively, Kathy Battista observes in her survey book, *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s* (2013), that “while the notion of classifying faeces may have seemed absurd to a contemporary and largely male art audience, for a new mother at that time this would have been *familiar territory*.”⁴⁶ In aestheticizing the abject and transposing the domestic theme into the white gallery space, *PPD* evoked the theme of the maternal body while giving voice to women to articulate their own desires.

Kelly explained her incorporation of Lacanian theory and the elimination of any direct portrayal of the female body as a “revisionist staging of the female subject.”⁴⁷ In her conversation with Amelia Jones, she explained that her controlled use of the abject image, mediated by language, “activated the contingency of her ‘femininity’” and offered “alternative ways of understanding the complexities of women’s experience.”⁴⁸ Jones contextualized that Kelly’s practice represented the women artists who actively responded to the “raw and confrontational” celebration of the “central core” nature of women by Chicago and Schapiro.⁴⁹ According to Kelly, the nuanced approach that interwoven images and texts was employed to further strengthen the point of view of women instead of men:⁵⁰

“Even, or especially, when I use something as eccentric as the Lacanian diagrams, they are first of all images, representations of the difficulty of the symbolic order for women; the difficulty of representing lack, of accepting castration, of not having the phallus, of not being the Phallic Mother.”

Hence, compared with Chicago’s act of seizing the abject and the “cunt,” Kelly’s approach of anesthetizing the abject and mediating it with language represents going one step further, probing into the psychoanalytic dimension

of maternal desire, and the non-biological construction of feminine role and identity. Arguably, by taking control over male-dominant language, Kelly intervenes the space of Conceptual art through a feminist approach and stages the mother as the subject of her own desire, who actively gazes back by first aligning with, then subverting the male gaze. The abject, though muted and controlled, remains a marker for the uncompromising feminine space. *PPD* was displayed in the first section – “The Maternal Body” – in the 1993 “Abject Art” exhibition at Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Stills (1980s – 1990s) and Popular Media: Affect through the Accentuated Abject

“I’m disgusted with how people get themselves to look beautiful; I’m much more fascinated with the other side.” – Cindy Sherman, 1986⁵¹

Born in 1954 in New Jersey, Cindy Sherman grew up in a suburban Huntington Beach, forty miles from Manhattan, loved dressing up from a young age, and belonged to “the first generation of Americans raised on television”.⁵² She initially studied painting but was soon drawn to photography, which was often used by Surrealists like Man Ray (1890 – 1976) and Hans Bellmer (1902 – 1975). Unlike Chicago and Kelly who might be said to verbalize a strong artistic persona through their interviews and writings, Sherman is more reclusive and usually hides her authorial position behind the masquerade that she employs to investigate the performative nature of gender. Her conception of the feminine is thus more fluid than the essentialism advocated by Chicago, and less concerned with the maternal, psychoanalytic dimension explored by Kelly. Her battlefield lies mainly outside the

gallery space, sponsored by commercial galleries and known brands such as Louis Vuitton.⁵³ Her photographs have been auctioned for as high as \$2.7 million, such as *Untitled #153* (Fig. 10, to be discussed below), sold in 2010.⁵⁴ Beginning her *Untitled Film Stills* series in the 1970s – the series now numbers more than three hundred images – Sherman accumulated a body of work that appropriates the mass pop culture and democratizes art.

Sherman has explored a diverse range of topics since the 1970s, from the appropriation of feminine roles depicted in B-movies and popular magazines to the unseemly panorama of vomit, body parts, and bodily fluids in 1990s, to the depiction of aging women framed in scenes that signify money and status in 2018. For the purpose of this dissertation, my focus is on her works from the late 1980s to 1990s, a period of works that relied on the shocking effect of the abject to challenge idealized imagery of women.

Untitled #153 (1989)

In *Untitled #153* (1989), lying still on the ground, surrounded by rotten mosses, the mudcaked female figure evokes horror, silence, and helplessness; her stiffened facial expression recalls rape victims that are often found in the “Missing Person” newspaper sections (Fig. 10). With her head slightly tilted to the camera, her body diagonally positioned and occupying the dominant proportion of the photograph, the figure overwhelms the audience with both of her familiarity and anonymity – accentuated by the nondescript title, “untitled” – it conjures into mind any female but the artist herself. Yet its very nature of being a posed photograph, an artistic conceit, reminds the audience of the layers of representation in the artwork. Beyond the reality of male rapists committing sexual violence to female victims, behind the camera, it is the female artist staging the

sexual violence committed by the male to the female. Hence, the shocking affect enabled by the abject seeks to make the audience pause and rethink male dominance – magnified in its most forceful form with rape – that continues to dominate the modern society.

For Cindy Sherman, photography offers a specific site to experiment with the abject as a strategy to undermine misogyny. Cindy Sherman: Retrospective (1997) documents a handwritten note (undated) where Sherman articulated her exasperation about the seemingly “misogynistic” assumptions behind Surrealist art through the “beautification” of women:⁵⁵

“I was thinking how the Surrealists were very much into de Sade + thus misogynistic which rather intrigued me, I guess because the main thing that bothered me with their work was in the beautification of the women used, not how they were used (Not to mention, however, how these men themselves seemed rather piggish the way girlfriends, wives, etc. seem to have been treated, passed around, used as models, while these women were, often, artists themselves + much younger.)

“Anyway, I had wanted to explore a violent, misogynistic direction, à la Sade + the boys; instead everything seems too “loaded” about sex/violence. I guess that the successful Surrealistic play here would be to diffuse the ugly-reality of misogyny by twisting the reality-surreal! – Voilà –”

Although it remains curious which Surrealist works Sherman specifically had in mind here, her personal notes revealed her intention to appropriate the “the ugly-reality of misogyny.” Sherman’s works rely on a mechanism that may be called “uglification” as a revolt against male artists – exemplified by those Surrealists mentioned above, who enjoyed the writings of Surrealist philosophers like Marquis de Sade (1740 – 1814). Sherman’s fascination with the abject and the ugly is unapologetic and central to her aesthetics: “I’m disgusted with how people get themselves to look beautiful; I’m much more

fascinated with the other side.”⁵⁶ In subverting what is usually portrayed as beautiful, Sherman’s use of the abject undermines the ideals of beauty and its underlying misogyny. In another handwritten note dated in the 1990s, Cindy Sherman reflected on her self-distancing stance and proceeded to experiment with mannequins instead of her own performative body:⁵⁷

“Even, or especially, when I use something as eccentric as the Lacanian diagrams, they are first of all images, representations of the difficulty of the symbolic order for women; the difficulty of representing lack, of accepting castration, of not having the phallus, of not being the Phallic Mother.”

Untitled #261 (1992)

In *Untitled #261* (1992), a once beautiful and perfect mannequin is dismembered, her waist shortened to emphasize the two female sexual organs: the upright breast and wide-open “cunt” – as Judy Chicago might call it – free of any public hair (Fig. 11). Yet Sherman further intensifies the abject “seized” directly by Judy Chicago. With the legs of the mannequin being cut off, her arms are twisted into an unnatural position, supporting a broken neck and a hollow-looking face. This work recalls the rape victim again, underscoring the violence of dismemberment. Yet, unlike *Untitled #153*, *Untitled #261* involves a further step of defamiliarization, as the fabricated nature of the mannequin removes the female victim from a realistic rape scene; the process of defamiliarization generates the effects of both absurdity and fear. The thick red folds below the mannequin almost evokes flowing menstrual blood, further accentuating the sense of horror. *Untitled #261* was included in the 1993 “Abject Art” exhibition at Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.⁵⁸

In the article titled “The Phobic Object: Abjection

in Contemporary Art” published in the catalogue accompanying the 1993 exhibition, Simon Taylor discusses Sherman’s “monstrous representations of the feminine” in the 1990s as an appropriation of horror films and the sub-genre of pornographic “meat” films, as well as the 1930s doll assemblages by Hans Bellmer; Taylor’s argument echoes Sherman’s own words on her skepticism towards male Surrealists.⁵⁹ “The Phobic Object,” as the title of the article suggests, illustrates the mechanism of the shocking effect that Sherman employs: using the abject to invoke an intensified sensation of fear toward the foreign. An example from Bellmer’s *The Doll* series (1934) may be juxtaposed against *Untitled #261* (1992) to illuminate Sherman’s approach (Fig. 12).

In a black-and-white print, Bellmer’s photograph of the utterly fragmented girl mannequin’s body is disquieting in its own way. The figure is decapitated, her displaced eyeball gazing in wide horror, while a tousled wig sits at the juncture between knee, head, and hip. Her hairless labia, resting next to a splayed thigh, remains inviting; the facial expression of the girl evokes a dreamy mixture of pleasure and pain. The striped background perhaps alludes to a young girl’s bedsheet. Working under the context of the oppressive Nazi regime in Germany, Bellmer employed photography as a specific kind of political defiance.⁶⁰ Yet arguably, his work was not without sadistic and fetishistic implications – incarnating the corruption of innocence that De Sade’s writings portrayed – which might have provoked feminist artists like Sherman. Bellmer’s girl mannequin retained a curvy and sensuous form, especially in the area of the narrowed waist and slightly protruding belly, which might constitute what Sherman referred to as the “beautification.” In comparison, Sherman’s stiffened mannequin lacked prominent feminine features except the breasts and female genital (Fig. 11). While Bellmer dismembered the mannequin body and displaced the limbs, Sherman went one step further by re-instituting the dismembered pieces, using artifices to emphasize

a sense of violence, the posed nature of photography. Hence, Sherman employs and accentuates the abject in a representational medium that doubles back on its own representational nature – photography – to shatter the illusion of the beautification of the female body and thereby critique misogyny. Through the shocking effect of horror and phobia, Sherman accentuates the abject that Chicago seized in *Womanhouse* and Kelly muted in *Post-Partum Document*.

Conclusion

Judy Chicago seizes the abject; Mary Kelly aestheticizes the abject; Cindy Sherman accentuates the abject. All of these three women artists use the abject as a strategy to reclaim the feminine body and identity that have been relentlessly constructed, fantasized, fetishized and appropriated in male-dominant society, art and culture. Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject provides a framework to interpret the constant motif recurring in the works of women artists since the early 1970s and allows us to see continuity throughout various generations of the feminists. While anthologies published in the late 1990s and early 2000s like *Art and Feminism* (2001) reflected a resurgent interest in the women artists working in the 1970s and gestured toward a less divisive approach to the study of feminism in art, catalogues accompanying later exhibitions such as *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007) further traced the affinity between different groups of practicing women artists with the greater benefit of hindsight: it emphasized "global" feminism, performance art as a prominent feminist medium, and race, which must be taken into account as an intersectional factor in the analysis of the construction of gender roles.⁶¹ Writing the dissertation one decade after the "WACK!" exhibition, I have witnessed further attempts in recent exhibition spaces that acknowledge this long feminist battle while tracing its progress.

In Spring 2018, a new installment called *Women House* arrived at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. to pay tribute to the 1972 *Womanhouse*. The new *Women House* focuses on showcasing a younger generation of feminist art practice and only features two of the twenty-three original artists from the first *Womanhouse* – Chicago and Schapiro; nonetheless, the title of the contemporary exhibition gestures toward the pioneering status of *Womanhouse* and acknowledges the many feminist art themes that have emerged out of its experimental space, including the abject.⁶² The agenda of the National Museum of Women in the Arts is unequivocal – it is a guaranteed feminist space that celebrates and promotes self-pronounced “Feminist” artists like Judy Chicago. The “About” page of the official website announces: “NMWA is the *only major museum* in the world *solely dedicated* to championing women through the arts.”⁶³ On the other hand, the different sections of Mary Kelly’s Post-Partum Document have been purchased by art galleries throughout the world with different focuses, continuing to assert a feminine space within the realm of contemporary art. For example, *Documentation I and II* are now collected in Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada, *Documentation III* in Tate Modern, United Kingdom and *Documentation V* in Australian National Gallery.⁶⁴ Cindy Sherman, whose photographs fetched as high as \$3.89 million at Christie’s, will have a major retrospective exhibition opening in June 2019 in the National Portrait Gallery in London, making its grand appearance in a national gallery space.⁶⁵ In this instance, Sherman’s works are primarily promoted as an exploration of the tensions between façade and identity, while the feminist undertone is hushed.⁶⁶ Art markets, institutions and media continue to shape how women artists are represented and received; a retrospective feminist perspective helps illuminate the continuities across the different avenues, even when a “feminist” agenda is not

explicitly advertised.

This dissertation traces the lineage across the works of Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly and Cindy Sherman through the theme of the abject as a strategy to reclaim the feminine body and identity. The aim of this retrospective study is not to minimize these women artists' diversity or versatility, but to delineate the many possibilities of women artists' success in re-asserting women's voice. Their battles ensured that we could eventually flip the question posed by Linda Nochlin in 1971: How could women artists *redefine* their roles, and redefine "great art?" A back glance at the 1970s reminds us not to take any present-day progress for granted, and instead, to keep hold of the legacy and keep moving forward.

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“NO PITY – I CLAIM ONLY JUSTICE”: RADICAL
MEMORY OF THE PETERLOO MASSACRE
AMONG THE
ENGLISH WORKING CLASS, 1819-1848
Conor Muller

On Monday, August 16, 1819, tens of thousands of working men, women and children gathered at St. Peter's Fields in Manchester to demand parliamentary reform, universal male suffrage and equal representation. Protests and demands for such a program had been common throughout the period of hardship, poverty and high unemployment in England that followed demobilization at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Meetings with attendances in the thousands or even the tens of thousands were called at Spa Fields in London in 1816 and in Manchester in 1817 amid talk of attempts to overthrow the government and imprison or even kill the king, even among the organizers of the meetings.¹ In all cases the authorities had sought to disperse the crowds, and indeed no meaningful revolutionary action actually took place. At Manchester in August 1819, however, the military attacked the crowd with unprecedented violence. While radical speakers stood addressing the 40,000-60,000 attendees from the platform, the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry cavalry rode into the crowd on horseback, trampling and sabering eighteen to death and seriously injuring nearly 700, including many women and children.² The organizers and speakers were swiftly arrested. Then, fearing a French-style revolution, Britain's Tory government began to repress the movement for parliamentary reform through its Six Acts, which together increased taxes on newspapers to put them beyond the reach of the masses, regulated the content of newspapers and other publications,

sped up trials of those accused of seditious crimes and effectively banned most radical meetings. The massacre was quickly given the name Peterloo, a portmanteau of its location, St. Peter's Fields, and the Battle of Waterloo, out of which Britain had emerged victorious over Napoleon just four years earlier, such was the potency of the mental imagery of the massacre that stuck in the minds of attendees and those who later heard or read about what had happened. During the following three decades, Peterloo would be placed at the center of the mythology of the British movement for parliamentary reform. Recollections of the massacre in the following decades would be especially prominent among Chartists, members of a radical working-class movement named for its People's Charter which emerged in 1837 and remained active throughout the 1840s. The charter was a document signed by millions of people which demanded universal male suffrage, equal parliamentary districts, payment of Members of Parliament and other democratic reforms, echoing the demands of the Peterloo marchers from 1819.

While Chartism drew on a rich collective memory of Peterloo right from its beginnings in the mid-1830s, the foundations for this memory were laid much earlier by radicals in the immediate aftermath of the massacre in 1819 and 1820. They wasted no time in actively channeling popular outrage at the massacre into a powerful political challenge to authority, appealing to the widespread sense of injustice at the hands of a despotic state that violated its subjects' sacred rights with impunity. In his plea to the judge in his trial for unlawful and seditious assembly in 1820, Samuel Bamford, one of the speakers at Peterloo and a popular reformer who had led the delegation from the Lancashire town of Middleton to the rally, wrote:³

“I am a reformer . . . I shall always use my utmost endeavors to promote parliamentary reform by peaceful means, but although I am not an enemy to the principle, I am not going to sacrifice every feeling. I am not a friend to blood but after what has taken place at Manchester, I can hardly confine my expressions . . . I want only justice – no pity – I claim only justice.”

Bamford did not go on to become a Chartist, but his plea warned the authorities that Peterloo could have a radicalizing effect on working people, just like it had had on him. His determination to avenge the massacre would be reflected over the following decades by radicals, reformers and Chartists organizing their huge campaign of meetings, petitions, rallies, marches and strikes. While both Chartism and the Peterloo Massacre itself have been the subject of a great deal of scholarship, this paper explores specifically the ways in which Peterloo was memorialized, mythologized and manipulated by the working-class reformers, including Chartists, to buttress their justifications for their political program and to rally support to their cause, as well as to remember the dead. The Manchester historian Terry Wyke argued indisputably that memory of Peterloo “waxed and waned” over time, while labor historian Joseph Cozens has concluded convincingly that periods during which memory of Peterloo was exhibited frequently coincided with periods of increased class conflict in Britain.⁴ This paper builds on these findings and argues further that memory of Peterloo and its uses to Chartism did not just result from class tensions but helped to facilitate them too. Increased understanding of class antagonism between working people and the state and the exploitative classes that they faced gave this memory a historically significant, causal role in later radical activity, not just a backdrop that mirrored it. Peterloo became a powerful, totemic element of a new collective memory, playing a major role in what the leading radical historian E. P. Thompson called the ‘making’ of English work-

ers into an active class, as opposed to a passive category of people, through common experience and antagonism toward oppressors.⁵ To the factory laborers of northern England and beyond, Peterloo felt like an unforgettable, unforgivable crime committed against them by 'Old Corruption,' a loose group which included a corrupt clique of Tory aristocrats in government and, increasingly, the upper-class economic exploiters of ordinary people.

Reaction to Peterloo and early memory, 1819-1820

Invoking the memory of Peterloo was not just a tactic for reformers to rally support to their cause decades after the event. The trials of Samuel Bamford, Henry Hunt and the other arrestees from Peterloo at the York Assizes in 1820 were one of the first instances of reformers weaponizing notions of martyrdom and unjust politically motivated persecution for radical political ends, a pattern that would continue from the aftermath of the massacre through the following decades and into the Chartist movement. The Peterloo Massacre channeled the energy from a mass movement for political reform into a crusade for justice for both the victims and those accused of political crimes, according to Robert Poole: "Each trial was a stage upon which to broadcast publicly the violent conduct of the magistrates and the troops . . . and so to vindicate the cause of reform."⁶ Reformers seized these opportunities. Hunt contended in his defense that the authorities had intended all along to inflict casualties upon the attendees of the meeting using their "newly sharpened sabers" (in preparation for a premeditated attack) without attempting to disperse them peacefully first.⁷ Denouncing his accusers as liars, Hunt claimed that they were "perfectly aware that no riot-act was read; and when the contrary was asserted, it was a false and scandalous report to prejudice the public mind."⁸ In this single denunciation of the Manchester magistrates, the cavalry

and the court in which they were being tried, Hunt accused the state of premediated murder, flagrant violation of long-established laws and rights and of perjury. Radical criticism of the government was therefore quite conservative, taking a legalistic tone that cited violations of existing rights rather than an idealistic one that might have attacked the authorities as a backward, repressive obstacle to an imagined egalitarian society for the future. Having indicted the state and its agents in this language of criminality, reformers juxtaposed these crimes with the innocence of those who had been killed. For example, Hunt examined the Reverend Robert Hindmarsh as a witness who, while present, did not take place in the rally at St. Peter's Fields. “I considered,” said Hindmarsh, “that I was perfectly secure under the protection of the laws, while the people remained in a state of tranquillity [sic]; therefore, thought I might remain upon the ground with safety. I saw nothing upon the ground which altered this impression. I everywhere heard congratulations on the peaceable complexion and character of the meeting, and everyone hoped it would terminate quietly.”⁹ The non-combative characterization of the victims and the expectation among attendees that the rally would conclude peacefully made its violent and forcible conclusion by the cavalry seem all the more appalling and illegal.

Hunt, Bamford and most of their associates did end up being found guilty of “assembling with unlawful banners an unlawful assembly, for the purpose of moving and inciting the liege subjects of our Sovereign Lord the King to contempt and hatred of the Government and Constitution of the realm.”¹⁰ However, the trial was still a “disaster” for the authorities, according to Poole, not least because the defendants were convicted on only one count out of seven.¹¹ Indeed, even that verdict was not returned clearly as the judge extrapolated from the jury's ambiguous findings to find the defendants guilty.¹² Furthermore, as Joseph Cozens has noted,

Hunt made great political capital out of his post-conviction imprisonment at Ilchester jail and used the time to live up to his nickname as the great ‘Orator,’ churning out vast amounts of literature addressed directly to his many followers that portrayed the victims of Peterloo as political martyrs.¹³ He did use his platform to embellish his own role at the center of the rally, calling his own incarceration “a deadly blow . . . aimed at your rights and liberties,” but Hunt’s writing was certainly rousing in its attack on the injustice of the massacre.¹⁴ He begins the first volume of his memoirs with an account a meeting of tens of thousands, assembled “in the most peaceable and orderly manner” being ‘assailed’ by the yeomanry “without the slightest provocation or resistance on the part of the people.”¹⁵ Addressing readers as his “brave, patient and persecuted friends,” he asserts that his account is a “strict relation of facts.”¹⁶ This dense passage, published mere months after Peterloo, again juxtaposed legitimate, peaceful reformers and the barbaric, criminal yeomanry authorized to do the bidding of the authorities. It also supports Cozens’ finding that Hunt was among the earliest to confer the politicized status of martyrs upon the victims since Hunt linked their deaths to the political platform they supported.¹⁷ Their deaths were not accidental or unpreventable, according to Hunt, they were part of the state’s deliberate and harsh resistance to their modest demands.¹⁸



An 1819 print of the Peterloo Massacre by George Cruikshank titled *The Massacre of Peterloo or Britons Strike Home*. The cavalry carries bloodied sabers and a portly soldier instructs his men “Down with ‘em! Chop ‘em down my brave boys . . . remember the more you kill the less poor rates you’ll have to pay, so go at it, Lads, show your courage & your Loyalty [to the King].” This linking of violence with ‘loyalty’ to the authorities and miserly ratepayers who would sooner see workers die than bear the cost of alleviating their suffering was typical of how many people understood the massacre.

The foundations for a lasting collective memory of Peterloo were laid during the months immediately following the massacre. The trials of those arrested gave the reformers a platform from which they could defiantly accuse the authorities in person of acting illegally, and their convictions constituted further evidence of wrongful persecution. The reformers on trial for their role in organizing the rally at St. Peter’s Fields began to translate a reactive and emotional public response to the massacre in its immediate aftermath into a movement for justice, both for the dead and for the cause of reform. Published literature reflected intense fury

at the authorities about the massacre. The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, husband of Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*, issued a rousing call to action in his famous poem *The Mask of Anarchy*: "Rise like Lions after slumber, In unvanquishable number . . . Ye are many - they are few."¹⁹ Even Shelley, however, was not as successful as the informal radical press at conjuring up feelings of rage across England. Popular literature that mirrored fury at the bloodshed was churned out rapidly in the aftermath of the massacre, months before the trials of Hunt, Bamford and the other organizers began at York. This literature articulated sheer rage and vengefulness at what had happened rather than pursuing political ends or on conferring the status of political martyrdom upon the victims. One fascinating broadside ballad published at the end of 1819 recounts the attendees of a lawful meeting being "slain" by "Our enemies so cruel regardless of our woes . . . Look forward with this hope that every murderer in this land may swing upon a rope . . . soon Reform shall spread around."²⁰ Amid this tense atmosphere, people took matters into their own hands, demonstrating that the rhetoric of the radical press influenced (or at the very least mirrored) public feeling. In late 1819, tens of thousands marched in solidarity with the 'Manchester sufferers' across the North at Newcastle and Leeds, even collecting donations for a relief fund.²¹ Almost one month to the day after the massacre, Manchester theatre-goers chanted 'Peterloo!' at military officers in the audience, denounced them as murderers and flung missiles at them when they demanded that the band play *God Save the King*, then a loyalist song and now the British national anthem.²² Five months later in February 1820, the authorities arrested and then executed a group of radicals plotting to assassinate the entire British cabinet and the Prime Minister Lord Liverpool. They had been encouraged and then set up by a police spy, but the willingness of the Cato Street conspirators, as they were known, to follow through with the plot shows the

strength of feeling in the radical movement in the months after Peterloo. Some historians like E. P. Thompson have argued that England was close to revolution at the end of 1819 while others like Malcolm Chase have disputed this.²³ What is clear, however, is that Peterloo was a key grievance driving those who participated in the wave of political action in 1819 and 1820, whether or not they seriously threatened to push Britain into revolution. In sum, the reaction to Peterloo and its endorsement by the authorities was immediate. The trials of Hunt, Bamford and others gave leading radicals an additional platform from which to direct this existing public reaction and nurture it further into a perception of the dead as political martyrs.

“The decade of the silent revolution”

Along with the intensity of radical political agitation, such public exhibitions of memory of Peterloo died down in late 1820. The Six Acts, passed in response to the agitation after Peterloo to ban meetings and tax newspapers, seemed to catch up with radicals. With improving economic conditions from 1820 - the price of wheat fell to half its 1819 price by January 1822 - there was less anger for radicals to appeal to.²⁴ Physical expressions of memory of Peterloo became rarer, but not until the end of 1820. During the intervening summer, Oldham crowds taunted soldiers that their new uniforms would be their last and the Yorkshire yeomanry complained of daily insults in the streets.²⁵ When two members of the Manchester yeomanry were assaulted they requested a lenient sentence for their assailant, fearing further reputational damage to their regiment.²⁶ The first anniversary of Peterloo was also commemorated across Lancashire: a procession marched to St. Peter's Fields, more than 3,000 met at Royton and ceremonies were held at working towns like Ashton-Under-Lyne.²⁷ However, this agitation died down as the year ended,

and the attitude of the authorities was summed up by a December letter from Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary who presided over Peterloo, to the Viceroy of India: “The prospect [of keeping the peace in England] . . . is improving; and I have no doubt the storm will be weathered,” despite “numberless points of difficulty.”²⁸

While it is true that the decade was comparatively calmer, scholars should remember that, as E. P. Thompson noted, these years saw a struggle for freedom of the press and trade unions; it was “the decade of the silent insurrection,” as another historian put it.²⁹ Thompson argues that, having experienced both the Industrial Revolution and the defeat of popular radicalism in 1819 and 1820, working people became conscious of their class interests and the antagonisms they faced, even if English politics seemed to be calmer for most of this period.³⁰ Nevertheless, there were some exhibitions of memory of Peterloo before the Chartist movement erupted from 1837. 60,000 were reported to have marched into Manchester with Hunt around Peterloo’s anniversary during the Reform Crisis in 1830.³¹ Recollections of Peterloo were comparatively and surprisingly uncommon at this point, and the first Chartist agitation was still some years away. The massacre was not therefore forgotten. Instead, many people came to understand a struggle between the laboring masses and ‘Old Corruption,’ a conflict that came to a head at Peterloo, even if these people did not take matters into their own hands during periods of relative calm as often as they had done in 1819 and 1820. It was to these growing understandings of class politics that the Chartist movement of the 1830s appealed. Memory of Peterloo lay dormant in many ways during the 1820s. Its memory was not commonly expressed in public, but the massacre was certainly not consigned to history, as the events of the 1830s would show.

The Chartist ascendancy, 1838-1848

To Chartists, Peterloo represented the ultimate physical manifestation of the class conflict that dominated the social and economic relations of nineteenth-century Britain. They attempted to consolidate the raw experience of class conflict into a better, if not perfect, understanding of class and antagonistic social relations, restoring Peterloo's status as an iconic, formative event that workers should commemorate, politicize and, most importantly, actively avenge and act upon rather than simply remember. Robert Hall's study of Ashton-Under-Lyne, a mill town near Manchester, has shown the ways in which Chartists developed and publicly formulated a new history of 'the people' through a diverse array of exhibited history.³² They placed Peterloo at the front and center of this new history, he argues, reinforcing the tendency of workers to see the massacre through the lens of class conflict.³³ Disseminating radical publications widely was one way in which Chartists appealed to both class antagonism and to dormant but still powerful memories of Peterloo. After the tax placed on newspapers by the Six Acts were reduced from four-pence to just a penny in 1836, radical Chartist newspapers like the *Northern Star* entered circulation.³⁴ Many unstamped and therefore tax-exempt and low-cost publications, which by law could not publish news and instead offered radical opinions, were circulated widely and offered rousing polemics which denounced the “genteel idlers who flutter and fatten on the toil of the toilers,” and cited acts of state violence like Peterloo as evidence that the entire state and the British elite would resist even peaceful attempts by workers to improve their own lives.³⁵ Print culture was only one way in which Chartists preached their history of martyrdom and struggle. Although roughly two-thirds of men were literate by 1840, millions were still beyond the reach of Chartist ideas, especially as the literacy rate was naturally lower among working men than among the population at large.³⁶ Oral culture was

therefore at least as important as literature. An 1840 broad-side ballad printed in Preston, a Lancashire town roughly thirty miles from Manchester with a large Chartist presence, called on Britons to be “firm and unite . . . While cowards-despots, long may keep in view and silent contemplate, the deeds on Peterloo.”³⁷ As Hall argues, singing political songs that called workers to action, either indoors at lectures or dinners or outdoors at mass-platform gatherings, was typical of the way in which Chartists used accessible, oral and public forms of history to encourage awareness of a history of the working class as embattled masses standing in opposition to exploitative classes, upholding and memorializing events including and in particular Peterloo.³⁸ The repeated appearance of recollections of the massacre in Chartist histories shows that it played a key role in appealing on the grounds of common history, interests and enemies to the millions of working people who participated in the Chartist movement in some form whether through political action like meetings, petitions, rallies, strikes or recreational or educational events like dinners or lectures.³⁹



The large Chartist meeting at Kennington Common in London, 1848. The meeting took a similar platform format to the Peterloo meeting of 1819.

It is true that, while Chartists saw Peterloo as a crime committed by an oppressive class against an oppressed class, they never really clarified who comprised either class beyond this simple distinction.⁴⁰ Chartists explained the actions of the cavalry at Peterloo as arising from its role as the servile puppet of the oppressive classes, carrying out the will of ‘Old Corruption’ with brute force. Gareth Stedman Jones has rightly called this approach “totalizing” as it takes into account violent episodes like Peterloo but not liberalizing reforms that alleviated poverty or sickness.⁴¹ There was indeed virtually no discussion of ruling or middle classes in a socio-economic sense, only a rudimentary understanding of a ‘them’ standing in opposition to an ‘us,’ so precisely who the real criminal was at Peterloo was never really articulated with any real clarity. Many attacked ‘Old Corruption,’ ‘despots’ or ‘idlers’ for ills like poverty or repressive state violence against reform movements like that of Peterloo, but these terms stayed vague and could be weaponized against anyone from Members of Parliament to local magistrates, from factory owners to landowners and from Whigs to Tories. Chartism can therefore be criticized for having a political program but only a far more rudimentary social one. Still, this ambiguity does not mean that Chartist understandings of class were without meaning. In the case of Peterloo, a narrative of a criminal act committed by them against us was emotionally powerful enough to appeal to workers resentful of their own material situation and the treatment of their contemporaries at the hands of the Manchester yeomanry. It did not have to be socio-economically or intellectually coherent to arouse strong feelings and appeal to class consciousness. Cozens’ conclusion that Peterloo was most powerfully recalled at moments of class conflict such as the rise of the Chartist movement af-

ter 1837 therefore makes a great deal of sense.⁴² Understanding its power to arouse class antagonism among workers, Chartists injected fresh energy into the memory of Peterloo through raw and emotional if ill-defined appeals to class antagonism. These were incorporated into rituals, oral and written culture and political agitation in order for Chartists to position themselves as the heirs of the Peterloo martyrs to whom working people felt attached by their common victimhood, common history and common socio-economic position.

Conclusion

There were indeed periods between 1819 and 1848 when memory of Peterloo was demonstrated less commonly, but there were also periods when such demonstrations were very common and took on politicized characteristics, especially through the perception of the victims as martyrs. These characteristics gave memory of Peterloo a causal role in the contentious or even revolutionary political atmosphere of 1819-20 and in the revitalization of radical movements in the 1830s. Exhibitions of memory were often public and either physical or oral, but written culture did play an important role in influencing and reflecting these exhibitions while also keeping the massacre fresh in the memory. Furthermore, the formative effect of both the Peterloo Massacre itself and the popular understanding of it on the working-class psyche made its memory indelible, even during politically calmer periods. Memory of Peterloo could be called upon at particular times by different groups, as it was in isolated instances like anniversaries during the 1820s and during the ascendancy of Chartism. What did unite popular memory of Peterloo across the period was its class aspect. It had a sharply polarizing effect on British society, as working people increasingly understood themselves as standing in opposition to some kind of

ruling, exploitative class, if not a clearly delimited and explicable ruling class, and the state it used to support its own interests through oppression and coercion at the expense of the laboring masses. There was little understanding of anything in between these two extremes, but as far as Peterloo was concerned there did not need to be. The ability of memory of the massacre to arouse political and emotional responses from working people arose from an uncomplicated antagonism toward an upper class of people which workers believed to have violently attacked people just like them at Peterloo. Working people felt that they, and any attempt by them to stand up for themselves, were held in the utmost contempt by both the government and the corrupt, exploitative classes of people it represented and in whose name it acted with such violence. Peterloo was compelling evidence of unjust oppression experienced by ordinary people on a daily basis. It was also a formative experience in the molding of the nineteenth-century working class and the political program large sections of it would champion. It could not be swiftly forgotten, and it was certainly not forgiven.

Notes

¹ Robert Poole, "French revolution or peasants' revolt? Petitioners and rebels in England from the Blanketeers to the Chartists," *Labour History Review* 74, no. 1 (2009), 6; *Ibid.*, 17.

² The true number of attendees is the subject of debate. For an examination of the different estimates, see Robert Poole, *Peterloo: The English Uprising* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 360; *Ibid.*, 374-375.

³ National Archives, "Samuel Bamford," accessed January 9, 2020, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/protest-democracy-1818-1820/samuel-bamford/>.

⁴ Terry Wyke, "Remembering the Manchester Massacre," *Manchester Region History Review* 23 (2012), 131; Joseph Cozens, "The Making of the Peterloo Martyrs, 1819 to the Present," in *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: From Peterloo to the Present*, ed. Keith Laybourn and Quentin Outram (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 33.

⁵ From the title of E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966).

⁶ Robert Poole, "What Don't We Know About Peterloo?," *Manchester Region History Review* 23 (2012), 17; *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷ Anon., *The Trial of Henry Hunt, Esq., [et al.] for an Alledged [sic] Conspiracy to Overturn the Government, &c* (London: T. Dolby, 1820), 160.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 308.

¹¹ Poole, *Peterloo: The English Uprising*, 385.

¹² Anon., *The Trial of Henry Hunt*, 308.

¹³ Cozens, "The Making of the Peterloo Martyrs," 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Henry Hunt, *The Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq. Written by Himself in his Majesty's Jail at Ilchester*, vol. 1 (London: T Dolby, 1820), iii-iv.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, v.

¹⁷ Cozens, "The Making of the Peterloo Martyrs," 37.

¹⁸ George Cruikshank, "The Massacre of Peterloo or Britons Strike Home" (1819), Wikimedia Commons, accessed April 3, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peterloo_Massacre.png.

¹⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Mask of Anarchy" (1819), available at British Library, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/poetryperformance/shelley/poem3/shelley3.html>.

²⁰ Anon., "The Meeting at Peterloo" (1819), Johnson Ballads, University of Oxford Bodleian Library, Harding B 25 (1238) V17536.

²¹ Cozens, "Peterloo Martyrs," 34.

²² *Morning Chronicle*, September 21, 1819, 2.

²³ Thompson, *The Making*, 673; Malcolm Chase, *1820: Disorder and Stability in the United Kingdom* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 1.

²⁴ In January 1819 wheat was above 80 s. per quarter-ton, whereas three years later it stood below 46 s. per quarter-ton. For more information see Élie Halévy, *The Liberal Awakening, 1815-1830*, trans. E. I. Watkin (1923; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1961), 107-110.

²⁵ Chase, *1820*, 170.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Liverpool Mercury*, August 25, 1820, 62.

²⁸ Lord Sidmouth to Warren Hastings, Viceroy of India, in *The Life and Correspondence of the Right Honourable Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth*, vol. III, ed. George Pellew (London: John Murray, 1847), 339.

²⁹ Thompson, *The Making*, 711; Gwyn A. Williams, *Rowland Detrosier: A Working-Class Infidel* (York: St. Anthony's Press, 1965), 4.

³⁰ Thompson, *The Making*, 711.

³¹ *Morning Post*, August 23, 1830, 4. 60,000 seems an inflated figure, but it is safe to assume that the true figure was in the tens of thousands.

³² Robert G. Hall, "Creating a People's History: Political Identity and History in Chartism, 1832-1848," in Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson and Stephen Roberts, *The Chartist Legacy* (Woodbridge: Merlin Press, 1999), 234.

³³ Hall, "Creating a People's History," 243.

³⁴ *Hansard*, House of Lords debate, vol. 138, May 24, 1855, col. 954.

³⁵ *Chartist Circular*, October 31, 1840.

³⁶ W. B. Stephens, "Literacy in England, Scotland and Wales, 1500-1900," *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1990), 555.

³⁷ Anon., "Peterloo" (Preston: Harkness, 1840), Johnson Ballads, University of Oxford Bodleian Library, Harding B 16 (203b) V17535.

³⁸ Hall, "Creating a People's History," 233-234.

³⁹ William Edward Kilburn, “View of the Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common” (1848), Wikimedia Commons, accessed April 3, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chartist_meeting_on_Kennington_Common_by_William_Edward_Kilburn_1848_-_restoration1.jpg.

⁴⁰ Hall, “Creating a People’s History,” 233.

⁴¹ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History 1832–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 177.

⁴² Cozens, “Peterloo Martyrs,” 33.

THE BUTCHER AND THE ARSON: HOW SPAIN'S GENERALS LOST HER EMPIRE AND DESTROYED HER CROWN JEWEL

Daniel Brennan

Over five centuries Cuba's freedom has been serially denied, usurped, and stifled by Imperial Spain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Beset in turn by imperial control, neocolonial paternalism, and a demeaning communist patronage inimical to freedom, the Cuban people have long struggled to attain an independent nation and cohesive national identity. The dedicated student of Cuban history may tragically, but with good reason, conclude that the story of Cuba's relationship to the world is a series of abortive attempts to achieve dignified self-determination.

The following article is excerpted from a longer work and recounts one climactic episode in that story: the near-victory of Spanish colonial forces over Cuba's Liberation Army in the waning months of 1897 and the disastrous policy of Reconcentration in which hundreds of thousands of Cubans were evacuated from the island's rural interior. The longer work provided a cursory history of the origins of the Cuban independence movement, while also tracing the history of Cuba's agricultural and economic development. After outlining Cuba's distinct regional characteristics and their strategic implications, I introduced Weyler and Gómez as figures uniquely suited to command the scorched-earth strategies each eventually pursued. I then explored the immediate context of Reconcentration: the tenures of Governors General Emilio Calleja and Martinez Campos, chronic lawlessness and banditry in the Cuban countryside, failures of reform in Madrid, and the unbalanced relationship between the insurgency's

military and political leadership. This discussion underscores the earlier findings that Weyler and Gómez were each committed to strategies of economic attrition but shows how Weyler's political support was tenuous compared to that of Gómez.

This article examines government issued orders as well as Weyler's own personal correspondence to explain the mechanics of Reconcentration and why it was poorly suited to the war in Cuba. It concludes that even though Reconcentration was able to deliver considerable tactical and operational victories for Weyler, the humanitarian cost of these victories—and the international condemnation they drew—ultimately served to weaken Spain's position in Cuba. The article ends as Weyler is relieved of command following the assassination of Prime Minister Cánovas and before the sinking of the USS Maine—the two events which provide the proximate causes for the Spanish-American War and Spain's eventual expulsion from Cuba.

Weyler did not mince words when he assumed command in February of 1896: the “valor, energy, and patriotism” of the loyalists had delivered Cuba in 1878 and it he was adamant that it would do so again.¹ He would command the war against this new insurgency with the same brutality and vehemence with which he, as a young man, had fought the old—never mind that last time Cuba had been left in smoldering ruins. Weyler correctly understood that lack of support for independence among central and western Cubans during the Ten Years War had hamstrung the insurgency. Regional differences in racial composition, economic organization, and proximity to Spanish-dominated cities had effectively divided the island into east and west, turning what might have been a swift and unifying revolution into a long and protracted civil war. In the decades since the Ten Years War José Martí's rhetoric had bolstered the intellectual and emotional case for Cuban independence but western Cubans continued to fear the consequences that independence would spell for Cuba's economic and racial order. For all of the work Martí had done in

the interwar years writing in support of a free and democratic Cuba, his egalitarian racial vision for Cuba's future mattered little to the wealthy white factions of the colony's west who stood to lose the most from economic and racial rebalancing.

Máximo Gómez understood this self-interested line of thinking and devised a strategy to win over Western support—or to at least deprive Spain of such support—by attacking the planter property which formed the basis of plantation society. In the early months of their campaign Gómez and Maceo drove westward torching sugarcane fields and destroying refineries. Gómez's theory of victory was simple but brutal: if Spain valued Cuba as a colony because of the value it produced for the metropole, then independence would come once that which produced value for Spain had been destroyed. This approach had the benefit of removing race relations from the center of the revolutionary project—something which had hobbled Manuel de Céspedes—and allowed the focus of insurrectionist efforts to directly target the source of Spain's economic and political strength on the island: Cuba's planter elite.

Gómez had thus taken on a strategy of 19th century economic warfare. "Blessed is the torch" he wrote in 1897, extolling the virtues of the insurrection's most efficacious weapon.² The damages were staggering. By August, 1897 Spanish officials found that in Santa Clara alone over 400 hundred farms had been burned by insurgents at a cost of nearly half a million pesos in farm property and crop value.³ Gómez's scorched earth campaign was so effective at destroying the west's agricultural base because of how impossible it was to defend against. Late in the season, when the sugar stalks' leafy husks were at their driest, all that was needed to set a field ablaze was a few torches lighting up the corner of a given field. Therefore, even Weyler's reinforced army could do little to protect all of the Cuban sugar latifundia against Gómez's dedicated irregulars.

Sugar burning was not a wholly new phenomenon in the Cuban countryside. In 1869 once the initial energy of his revo-

lutionary moment had dissipated Cespedes had sanctified the burning of sugarcane and the destruction of sugar.⁴ However, Cespedes' forces never made it far enough east to harm any of the island's major sugar producing regions. Similarly, in the years between the two wars organized gangs of bandits ran extortion schemes in which plantation owners were obliged to pay for 'protection' from would-be arsonists, but, like Cespedes, these bandits could not operate freely in the island's west and so they inflicted limited damage.⁵ The decision to rely on field burning in 1895 would thus seem like a predictable and not wholly unmanageable threat to Spanish rule. However, as the paucity of Spanish troops garrisoned on the island at the war's outbreak suggests, in 1895 Spanish rule was not what it once was, and a uniquely devastating set of circumstances allowed Gómez to wreak unprecedented havoc on Cuba's colonial economy.

The first and most obvious was the sheer scale of the forces now at the insurgency's disposal, and the degree to which the insurgency had penetrated into Cuba's fertile western regions prior to Spanish mobilization under Weyler. Unlike other commodity crops like wheat or rice—which are both shelf-stable once harvested—sugar requires extensive processing after harvest to deliver a durable, market-ready product. Therefore, once sugarcane is harvested, planters must race to bring their sugar to a mill lest it ferment and spoil the cane's chances of becoming sugar. Burning a sugar field alone was not sufficient to destroy its commercial value—in fact burning a sugar field is one way to prepare it for harvest. However, by removing the stalk's protective husk burning sugarcane begins the process of fermentation which invariably leads to its spoilage. If sugarcane is not harvested and milled within eight to ten days of being burnt it will not yield sugar.⁶ However, as long as plantation owners could rely on their workers to complete the harvest and authorities could be trusted to provide public safety so the crop can get to market a burnt field need not spell ruin. As a consequence, the small-scale hit and run arsons carried out

by insurgent guerilla forces during the Ten Years War made no discernable impact on the production of sugar—and by extension Cuba's value as a colonial dominion. In fact Cuban sugar output rose in 1870, the year after Cespedes had called upon his disorganized guerillas to burn the island's cane fields.⁷

Gómez energetically pursued the direct assault on Spanish sugar which Cespedes had only reluctantly sanctioned. Moreover, whereas Cespedes' revolution had waited seven years to stumble across the Juraco-Maron trocha to strike at the pro-Spanish west, Gómez ordered his two-column invasion of the west within six months of arriving in Cuba. Once Gómez and Maceo rode out of the east they avoided pitched battles with Spanish regulars and instead directed their forces' energy towards the destruction of plantation land, sugar mills, and whatever other infrastructure was of value to the Spanish colonial apparatus. By seizing the initiative and taking advantage of Campos' ineptitude Gómez had thrown the weight of an organized military force behind the brutal tactics of bandits. During the Ten Years War only small disorganized insurgent parties managed to cross the Juraco-Moron trocha and could only harry the fringes of Cuba's sugar regions. Small in number and limited in reach they could neither destroy enough fields nor sow enough disorder to prevent the salvaging of burnt crops by responsive planters largely protected by Spanish authorities. However, by 1895 the calculus had shifted squarely in the insurgent's favor. Not only were Gómez and Maceo moving deeper into the west and with more men, but they faced little in the way of organized opposition.

Thus, the second and most consequential feature of the new insurgent campaign had nothing to do with Gómez's military acumen or Martí's oratorical genius, but rather with Spanish imperial decline. Cuba's rural regions had grown so lawless in the interwar period that by 1895 it was difficult for leaders in Havana to know if the increasing unrest in the east was revolution or just more banditry. Gómez had not anticipat-

ed this confusion but his expediency in assembling his forces and moving decisively into the west capitalized on it nevertheless. Time had been the enemy of the insurgents during the Ten Years War, but Gómez's early successes allowed him to sow disorder and destruction far into the west, forcing the government in Havana onto its back foot. On January 22nd 1896, five days after Campos had been recalled by Canovas and less than three weeks before Weyler would assume command, Maceo's column marched unopposed into Mantua -- a small township at the westernmost end of Pinar del Rio.⁸ It had taken Maceo's invasion column of 1500 men just under one hundred days to travel half the length of Cuba—a distance of nearly 400 miles.

Maceo's average pace of four miles a day was slow, but speed is not necessary when one's objective is steady and comprehensive destruction. Once Gómez and Maceo had defeated and out maneuvered Spanish forces at the battle of Mal Tiempo on the 15th of December 1895, the insurgent commanders were able to progress westward unimpeded.⁹ Since the key to insurgent victory, Gómez had reasoned, lay in showing the island's powerful planter class that the Spanish could not protect their economic interests, the invasion of the west did not aim to capture cities or to achieve a decisive military victory.¹⁰ As commander of the lead invasion column Maceo's mission was to destroy everything which the planters had hoped Spain would protect and avoid the costly distractions of taking cities or holding territory. Maceo's column meandered westward through the provinces of Santa Clara, Matanzas, Havana, and Pinar del Rio burning through vast tracts of open farmland while merely singeing the edges of the well defended cities and towns. Meanwhile, by razing the foundation of Cuban economic life the insurgents were simultaneously precipitating an unemployment crisis which swelled their own ranks. Hundreds of peasants, now unable to farm their employer's burnt fields, joined the invasion column as it swept westward.¹¹ The tendency, shared by contemporaneous Span-

ish loyalists and subsequent Cuban historians, to conflate the approximately 1500 soldiers Maceo had led into the west with the hundreds (if not thousands) of Cuban peasants who would eventually join him is understandable.¹² The volunteers who joined Maceo west of the trocha were poorly disciplined and deserted often, and even though an estimated 40,000 would serve in the Liberation Army, at no point would Maceo or Gómez have more than a few thousand under their command.¹³ Thus the western invasion of 1895-1896 began as a well thought out military campaign executed by commanders with a strategic vision for how to unseat Spanish rule, but slowly devolved into something resembling highly organized banditry. And while the invasion succeeded in completing the first cross-island military campaign in Cuban history as 1895 drew to a close it soon became apparent that centuries of Spanish colonialism would not be undone by one spoiled sugar harvest.

The new Spanish strategy under Weyler, while rooted in an economic calculus similar to Gómez's, depended on the inertia of Spanish rule and the willingness of the metropole to think with its heart and not with its brain. As Campos had noted in his letters to Canovas and his cabinet, the strategy of Reconcentration which he believed might deliver victory for Spain would come at an intolerable cost. While his appeals to Christian principles suggest his motivation was humanitarian, it is equally true that any policy of forced population resettlement would be incredibly costly, in terms of both blood and treasure, to the Spanish government. The financial burden of Reconcentration would arise not only from the cost of the troops required to implement and enforce such a scheme, but from the revenues lost from depopulating the regions most important to Cuba's agricultural production. However, for Spanish conservatives such as Weyler and Cánovas, the rationale for fighting over Cuba was not at all about the money but rather imperial pride. So, motivated by a desire to maintain the remnants of Spanish Empire, Wey-

ler set about implementing the Reconcentration strategy.

On the 16th of February, less than a week into his command in Havana, Weyler issued his first Reconcentration orders for the eastern provinces of Santiago de Cuba and Puerto Principe, as well as the district of Sancti-Spiritus.¹⁴ The inclusion of Sancti-Spiritus—which lies on the easternmost edge of the province of Santa Clara fifty miles west of the Jucaro-Moron trocha—was a notable public admission of a Spanish defeat. Detailed in his order were directions that all Cubans “relocate themselves nearby division, brigade, column, or other army command post, and to gather in their town squares within eight days of the orders’ publication with their identification papers.”¹⁵ Once relocated to the cities Cubans were not to travel back into the countryside without the express permission of their local military or civil authority.¹⁶ These provisions, which would become the standard for Weyler’s subsequent orders, also entitled field commanders to make use of the resources left behind in the countryside by evacuated peasants and thus laid the foundation for more serious seizures in the future.¹⁷

Along with his Reconcentration order Weyler published a slew of additional wartime restrictions on the press and civil society. This second order criminalized a wide range of seditious activity from tampering with Spanish army rations to sending subversive messages via messenger pigeon and made civilians who violated its terms subject to the code of military justice—a move which made it easier for army units in the field to summarily execute suspected insurgents.¹⁸ Given that news of Weyler’s arrival had signaled a more aggressive commitment to the Spanish war effort many Cubans might have anticipated these new measures. However, for the thousands of rural families who lived in Cuba’s far east away from telegraph lines or serviceable roads, one can only imagine that the first time they heard of Reconcentration was when Spanish soldiers came to their homes to enforce it.

In some respects, Weyler’s order had only formal-

ized a process which had already begun as a consequence of Gómez's scorched earth strategy. While many peasant farmers had joined the insurgency's invasion columns many more were left displaced and dispossessed. Unable to earn a living in a countryside which Gómez had decided would produce nothing of value, rural Cubans had already begun to flood the island's urban centers. The depopulation of the countryside by both Weyler and Gómez led to steep drops in Cuba's agricultural output. Drops in Cuban sugar and tobacco output was a serious blow to planters and the Spanish tax authority but was ultimately survivable. What was not survivable were the cuts to food production. It is a curious and consequential fact of Cuban history that despite rice being the center of the Cuban diet for centuries, Cuba has almost always relied on imports to meet domestic demand.¹⁹ Thus, rural depopulation coupled with restrictions placed by both sides on the sale of foods between Spanish and insurgent held areas sent regions already vulnerable to food insecurity into full-fledged famine. Livestock, invaluable as a durable and transportable source of calories, thus became a valuable military asset. By May, 1896 Spanish authorities in Santa Clara had begun tracking the transport of cows, horses, and pigs and imposing stiff fines on farmers found to be herding without direct permission from military, as opposed to civilian, authorities.²⁰

This squeeze on resources was exactly what Weyler had envisioned when he began Reconcentrating each Cuban province in succession. In a private, handwritten, order circulated to his military subordinates Weyler insisted that his officers, "dedicate their primary attention to the destruction of households in areas frequented by the enemy or in places where the owners do not present themselves with valid identification."²¹ He went on, instructing that wherever Spanish units were marching they were to ensure that they left behind no livestock or crops which the insurgents could utilize. "In summary" he concluded, "what I expect [from my forces] is that they help

to take from the various provinces as quickly as possible all of the resources which the enemy can make use of, so that they might find themselves insufficiently protected and obliged, for lack of access to food, to be beaten or to surrender.”²² This letter, written on the 8th of January 1897, highlighted what had become an important shift in Weyler’s strategy. In addition to Reconcentrating the island’s peasants Weyler had spent much of his first year chasing down Gómez’s and Maceo’s armies. So, while the objective of defeating the insurgent’s in battle was never far from Weyler’s mind, this letter shows that Weyler also understood the economic forces at play in this war. Indeed, just as Gómez and Maceo had calculated that their route to victory lay in starving Spain of sugar, Weyler had settled upon the similar path of starving Cuba into submission.

However, during this time there appeared a new challenge which Weyler had not appreciated, nor one which his previous service in Cuba prepared him for: pandemic. The deliberate starving of vast portions of the population and the forcible relocation of the same into hastily constructed bohios on the outskirts of major cities soon led to a truly horrendous public health crisis. The inevitable human suffering these arrangements invited remained with one Spanish soldier decades later,²³

One afternoon, accompanied by other office workers, I wanted to see the real conditions of that appalling agglomeration of people all crammed together. And the shock and pity and indignation its horrendous scenes aroused in me was so intense that even now, sixty-two years later, my Christian soul still throbs with painful vibrations triggered by the same principled protests of moral indignation. That piling up of human beings was a scene out of Dante. Beaten down, weeping, half-naked, and sick for the most part; some were dying, others lacking the most essential things for survival.



Figure 1: An aerial photograph of a reconstituted town, presumably taken from a guard tower or similar structure. 24
The caption reads, "The town of Dimas or San Pedro de Maurias, in formation, during the time of Reconcentration." Cuban National Archives.



Figure 2: Cuban peasants pose for a photograph with their livestock in a reconstituted town. Cuban National Archives. 25

While the insurgent press-machine worked hard to deliver photographs of starved women and children to American newspapers, few photos of the Cuban Reconcentration settlements exist today. However, two photographs from archives in Havana provide modern historians with an important glimpse into life as a reconcentrado. In reconcentrated towns, humble bohios made of palm fronds and wooden planks seem to have been the predominant form of shelter. Notably absent are signs of any public above ground water infrastructure such as a canal or water tower. In an era when indoor plumbing was a luxury even in wealthy nations, the lack of such infrastructure can reasonably be understood to imply an absence of any system of public water supply or drainage.²⁶ A second photo which lacked any identifying notes or description, simply captured a ground-level view of a group of reconcentrados. Accompanying the reconcentrados are two large cows, pointing to another hidden horror of Reconcentration: the untold thousands of animals that must have accompanied the reconcentrados into the camps. Small farmers, uprooted and forced to leave their farms, would have brought with them their most valuable transportable assets, livestock.

While these animals were incredibly valuable as stores of food in regions which had ceased producing food for Spaniards and Cubans alike, the concentrating of so many animals in such close proximity created health hazards which only exacerbated the already unfolding crisis.²⁷ The best evidence for this comes in the form of direct orders Weyler issued to loyalist civil authorities via pro-Spanish newspapers. In December of 1896 Weyler declared that he had “observed with disgust the insufficient maintenance of fortified towns,”²⁸ which he noted had caused “a considerable number of sicknesses among civilian population as well as among the soldiers who guard and pass through the town.” His order went on to, among other things, penalize the public discarding of animal carcasses within residential areas, and to prohibit bathing upstream from

where drinking water is drawn. Even more telling is an order which was issued just over two weeks before Weyler's by the Mayor of Havana Antonio Quesada banning the bathing of horses and mules in the city's freshwater streams.²⁹ The uncleanliness of such practices is readily apparent, even before one considers the roughly 50 pounds of urine and manure a single horse produces daily.³⁰ These orders—troubling because they reveal what basic acts of sanitation were not being done—also reveal the difficulties the Spanish were facing as a ruling regime responsible for ensuring the public welfare. That the most senior Spanish official on the island, and the Mayor of the island's largest city were forced to involve themselves in order to remedy basic public health issues, speaks to the ineptitude of the Spanish law and authority at the most local level.

Hungry and immunocompromised farmers living in close proximity with their draft animals soon fell ill from dysentery and similar gastro-intestinal illnesses.³¹ The transmission of typhus also surged in the reconcentrados where close quarters and Weyler's restrictions on the sale of fresh clothing worked in tandem to aid the spread of the lice-born malady.³² However, it was the inability to counter the spread of yellow fever—known as 'the black vomit' to Spanish soldiers for the dark bloody mucus produced by terminal patients—which might be considered the most deadly consequence of Weyler's Reconcentration policy.³³ By the time Weyler assumed command in Havana the Cuban physician Dr. Carlos Finlay had known for almost fifteen years that the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito was likely responsible for the transmission of the yellow fever.³⁴ In experiments which he began in 1881 Dr. Finlay had successfully used the *aegypti* mosquito to infect willing Jesuit priests with the yellow fever virus which had demonstrated that mosquitoes, and not the bloody excretions of patients, were the primary vectors of transmission.³⁵ However Dr. Finlay's findings were not widely published in 1896 and he did not offer his services to the Spanish government. Instead, once

hostilities between Spain and the United States had erupted in 1898, he would go on share his findings with Major Walter Reed of the U.S. Army Medical Corps.³⁶ Consequently, both the reconcentrados and Spanish in garrison suffered grievous losses to a disease they could neither cure nor comprehend.

The effect of disease on Spanish soldiers guarding Cuba's towns and cities is worth additional emphasis. The loss of tens of thousands of Cuban reconcentrados to illness was not inherently disastrous to a Governor General who had already committed himself to a policy of starving Cubans into submission.³⁷ The deaths of tens of thousands of Spanish soldiers and the incapacitation of thousands more posed a great risk to Weyler's strength as Reconcentration moved into effect. Reconcentration, which was a theoretically sound if inhumane strategy, thus struggled immensely under the weight of the conditions which it itself had created.

Weyler had conceived of Reconcentration as a strategy to deny the insurgency the material support of the populace, but he had not anticipated that the burden of relocating and guarding the island's civilians would nearly break the forces under his command. From the spring of 1895 to the summer of 1898 Spain sent over 200,000 soldiers to Cuba, of whom one fifth to one fourth perished from disease.³⁸ Poorly rationed and underequipped, as time wore on the Spanish Army in Cuba began to look more and more like the reconcentrados they were guarding. Spanish army hospitals located in the same diseased towns as the Cubans and their farm animals soon became focal points of disease themselves. Ignorance of the *aedes aegypti* mosquito's role in viral transmission meant that soldiers suffering from malaria or yellow fever were not separated from other patients, nor were precautions taken to reduce mosquito populations—such as draining nearby bodies standing water. A soldier who had been treated for dysentery in a Spanish hospital and discharged as healthy might have returned to his post only to succumb to yellow fever a few

days later, thereby exposing the rest of his unit to infection. It is important to stress that this was a problem particular to and endemic in the Spanish army as a consequence of Weyler's Reconcentration policy and Spanish army incompetence, and not simply a consequence of late 19th century tropical warfare. Neither the insurgent forces nor the American forces who fought in Cuba during the war experienced fatalities to disease at anywhere near the 20% to 25% the Spanish suffered. The insurgents only operated where they could, beyond the reach of Spanish authorities and therefore well away from the disease-ridden reconcentrados. Moreover, the insurgent strategy of sugarcane and plantation destruction necessarily meant that Maceo and Gómez's forces were constantly on the move and were never exposed to potentially infected populations for long periods of time. Finally, the insurgency was overwhelmingly made up of native-born Cubans and consisted of disproportionately more Afro-Cubans, whose populations have greater resistance to yellow fever and malaria.³⁹ However naturally occurring resistance to tropical disease was not a necessary condition for armies hoping to avoid massive loss of life. Thanks to a proactive command attentive to the risk of outbreak, the well-resourced and disciplined American forces in Cuba lost a mere 3% of their soldiers to disease.⁴⁰

Reconcentration thus not only precipitated a humanitarian crisis, but also left a festering self-inflicted wound on the Spanish Army. Weyler, however, seemed undisturbed. In his memoirs of the events of late 1896—the period in which he issued his orders pertaining to public health and sanitation—the issues of living conditions in the reconcentrados are conspicuously absent. Instead, Weyler was preoccupied with seeking out, trapping, and destroying Maceo's invasion column which had been wreaking havoc in Pinar del Rio since January of that year.⁴¹ Over the spring and summer of 1896 Weyler's engineers constructed a new defensive line which would bisect the island from North to South along the bor-

der of the provinces of Pinar del Rio and Havana. Spanning less than twenty miles from Mariel in the north and Majana in the south, this new trocha sealed off Pinar del Rio—and along with it Maceo and his army—from Havana and Gómez. Meanwhile, even as the heat and rain of Cuba's summer months left tens of thousands of Weyler's soldiers feverish and immobilized in garrison, Spanish forces had moved eastward from Havana pushing Gómez out of Havana and Santa Clara provinces all the way to Puerto Principe. In May of 1896 Gómez was forced back across the Juraco-Moron Trocha bringing the invasion of the west into its final stages.⁴² By the fall of 1896 Weyler had reconstituted the Juraco-Moron Trocha and built the new Mariel-Majana Trocha with the two most skilled insurgent commanders—and the armies they commanded—held back on either side. That Weyler had managed all this while large portions of his force were incapacitated due to illness underscores the weakness of the Liberation Army several months removed from its early successes. Years later Weyler recalled how he anticipated a reinvigoration of his troops once the cooler winter arrived in late 1896,⁴³

Once November came the rains had subsided substantially, but the heat pressed on, as did the sanitary conditions, if things have improved it has not been enough to prevent new cases of yellow fever, and we have not yet felt the northern winds which were to be our panacea, since a change in the atmospheric conditions could give a significant jolt to all operations in Pinar del Rio.

Eventually the winds came, and in early December Weyler's forces pinned down Maceo's trapped invasion column and killed the Bronze Titan himself, scattering his troops, and dealing the greatest blow to the insurgency yet.

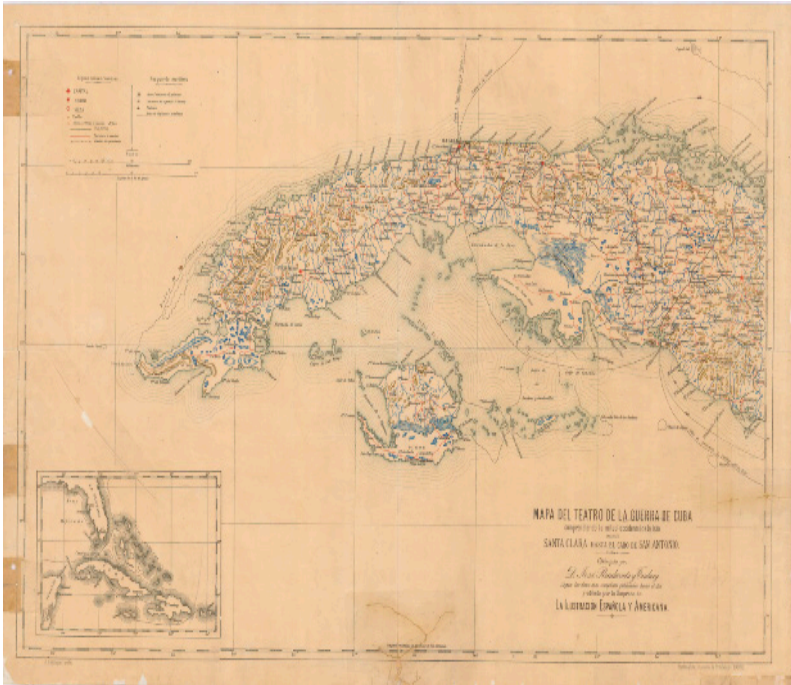


Figure 3: A Spanish military map depicting the province of Pinar del Río. Weyler's new trocha spanned the province's Eastern border with the province of Havana. Cuban National Archives.

With Maceo dead and his column disbanded, insurgency operations west of the Juraco-Moron trocha resembled the same low-grade agitation which had existed before the war. Gómez's army was confined to Puerto Principe and Santiago in the east and Weyler was slowly but surely positioning himself to regain control there as well. On New Year's Day 1897 Cuba looked much the same as it had 25 years before in 1872. The insurgency had demonstrated the weakness of Spain's colonial government by razing plantations from Santiago to Pinar del Río, but Gómez's strategy of total war rested on the somewhat paradoxical belief that Cubans from east to west would rally to the cause once he had destroyed their farms and liberated them of any material allegiance to Spain. Even if plantation Cubans

were not won over by banditry, by destroying everything of value to Spain in Cuba a scorched earth insurgency it was reasoned that Spain would eventually cut her losses and leave behind the ashes. Had Spain behaved rationally, Gómez's strategy might have worked, but even before the outbreak of war in 1895 it would have been unwise to bet big on Cuba, and Gómez might have fought differently had he seen why. The establishment of the first European sugar beet refineries in the early 19th century slowly began a countdown whose culmination would be the end of Spain's Cuban sugar monopoly. By 1890 beet sugar accounted for nearly half of world's supply, and even in Spain farmers were being encouraged to grow sugar beets—surely there could be no more prophetic sign of impending Cuban obsolescence than sacks of raw sugar branded with the words *Hecho en España*!⁴⁴ So why then would Spain bother to fight for Cuba, why pour tens of thousands of men and hundreds of millions of pesos into an island it had considered granting autonomy only three years prior?

There was no rational answer, only blinding nationalism and a lust for lost empire can explain Cánovas' obstinance and Weyler's fervor. Gómez's strategy had incorrectly assumed that his adversary would weigh the cost of war against the diminishing value of Cuba as a colony. In a letter Weyler wrote in late July 1896, he addressed the questions posed to him by Spain's foreign minister about what he expected would be necessary for the war effort. In a thirteen-page letter adorned with Weyler's flourished signature, the new Capitan General explained that a serious investment of money and men would be needed to bring the situation in Cuba back under control. "It is difficult to answer your questions precisely" he wrote, "but it is certain that in order to fund the exigencies of the current and planned campaigns the bank of this island will need (at a minimum) during this year to receive ninety-six million pesos, but that that could rise to one hundred and twelve million if an additional 40,000 men are sent."⁴⁵ In a

move which directly contradicted the insurgency's assumption that Spain's interests in Cuba lay with her plantations, in May of 1896 Weyler effectively requisitioned all of the grain west of Santa Clara by requiring that all farmers empty their silos and deliver the contents to the nearest Spanish garrison.⁴⁶ Four days later Weyler banned the export of tobacco.⁴⁷ These publicly issued orders should have raised concerns amongst the insurgents about the strategy of targeting Spain's export agriculture. Weyler evidently cared little about the economic justifications for future empire, as did his boss Prime Minister Cánovas who, as we have seen, was willing to wager untold lives and gold to hold onto the ever-faithful isle.

In 1897 with Gómez safely confined to the east, the most serious threat to continued Spanish rule in Cuba victory was not an organized insurgency, but an inability to see the war through. Conditions on the island were dire and a significant investment of Spanish treasure would be required to keep even the loyalists from starvation. In major Spanish controlled cities, the instability of war led to speculation in paper currency, bullion, and basic foodstuffs. As inflation skyrocketed authorities in Havana instituted a series of price controls on beef, rice, oil, soap, and more.⁴⁸ Weyler even issued an order mandating the usage of paper currency instead of gold in all transactions—except when paying debts to the Spanish government.⁴⁹ Since the insurgency had no way to prevent Spanish ships from resupplying Spanish held-areas with much needed rations, supplies, and soldiers there were little leaders like Gómez could do on their own to prevent the eventual recapturing of the insurgent-held east. American intervention against Spain was by no means certain in the Spring and Summer of 1897, and the possibility of a reconciliation and autonomy agreement with Madrid was even less likely so long as Cánovas and the conservatives remained in power. As Weyler's armies worked their way east, slowly and brutally reasserting Spanish rule, it seemed as if only an

act of God would save the insurgency from total destruction.

The author would like to thank the curatorial staff of the Cuban Nacional Archives for access to their photos and document collections. Their help and assistance in locating and digitally reproducing key primary-source documents proved invaluable to the completion of this work.

Notes

¹ Weyler to Cuba's Volunteers and Firefighters, 10 February 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

² Louis Pérez, *Lords of the Mountain: Social Banditry and Peasant Protest in Cuba, 1878-1918* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 42.

³ Records of Farms Burnt by Insurgents in Santa Clara Province, August 1897, AMM, CGC, caja 3383.

⁴ Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), 255-256.

⁵ Pérez, *Lords of the Mountain*, 30.

⁶ Thomas, *Cuba*, 256.

⁷ *Ibid.* 256.

⁸ Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba*, 150.

⁹ *Ibid.* 137.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 57-59.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 150.

¹² Pérez, *Lords of the Mountain*; Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba*, 92.

¹³ Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba*, 91-95.

¹⁴ Weyler's Reconcentration Order for the Provinces of Puerto Principe and Santiago de Cuba, 16 February 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Weyler's Order Outlining Seditious Acts, 16 February 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

¹⁹ Louis Pérez, *Rice in the time of sugar: the political economy of food in Cuba* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 19-23.

²⁰ Order Issuing Livestock Controls in Santa Clara, 13 May 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

²¹ Weyler to Operational Commanders in Cuba, 8 January 1897, AMM, CGC, exp. 5798.50.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Josep Conangla i Fontanilles, *Memoir of My Youth in Cuba: a Soldier in the Spanish Army during the Separatist War, 1895-1898*, ed. Roy

Joaquín, trans. D. J. Walker (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2017))

²⁴ Photo of a reconcentrated town, date unknown, ANC, Sección de Fotografía.

²⁵ Photo of a reconcentrados, date unknown, ANC, Sección de Fotografía..

²⁶ It is worth mentioning that even though this photograph appears to have been taken from an elevated platform raised well above the town, it is this author's opinion that this structure is unlikely to have been a water tower. Instead it is more likely that the photo was taken by a Spanish military block tower, buildings which according to architectural plans found in the General Military Archive in Madrid were commonly built around defensive positions.

²⁷ The repeated inclusion of rules pertaining to the sale, transport, and consumption of livestock in Spanish government orders points to the significance of livestock as a strategic resource over which Spanish authorities believed they could gain decisive control.

²⁸ Weyler's Order on Cleanliness, 1 December 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

²⁹ Havana Mayor's Prohibition on Bathing Livestock, 21 November 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

³⁰ Michael Westendorf, "Horses and Manure," Rutgers University: New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (Equine Science Center, February 16, 2004), https://esc.rutgers.edu/fact_sheet/horses-and-manure/

³¹ Tone, War and Genocide in Cuba, 192.

³² Weyler's Order on Supplies, 1 January 1897, AMM, CGC, caja 3383.

³³ Tone, War and Genocide in Cuba, 99.

³⁴ "Carlos Juan Finlay." In World of Health. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2006. Gale In Context: Biography (accessed February 8, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/apps/doc/K2191100123/BIC?u=upenn_main&sid=BIC&xid=230695e4.

³⁵ Tone, War and Genocide in Cuba, 99.

³⁶ "Carlos Juan Finlay." In World of Health. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2006. Gale In Context: Biography (accessed February 8, 2020). https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/apps/doc/K2191100123/BIC?u=upenn_main&sid=BIC&xid=230695e4.

³⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter the total number of Cubans who died under Reconcentration is subject to ongoing discussion and consid-

erable variation. However, given that both Tone and Thomas find that well over 40,000 Spanish Soldiers of a force of over 200,000 died from disease, it is plausible if not certain that tens of thousands of the 180,000 estimated Cuban deaths were due to disease.

³⁸ Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba*, 97; Thomas, *Cuba*, 414.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 94-95.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 97.

⁴¹ Valeriano Weyler, *Mi Mando en Cuba: Historia Militar y Política de la Última Guerra Separatista Durante Dicho Mando* (Madrid: Casa Editorial de Felipe González, 1910), 3:5-24.

⁴² Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba*, 94-95.

⁴³ Weyler, *Mi Mando en Cuba*, 3:5.

⁴⁴ Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba*, 26-27.

⁴⁵ Weyler to the Foreign Minister, 25 July 1896, AMM, CGC, exp. 5763.5.

⁴⁶ Weyler's Order on Corn, 14 May 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

⁴⁷ Weyler's Order Banning Tobacco, 16 May 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

⁴⁸ Orders Establishing Price Controls, 24 May 1898, AMM, CGC, caja 3383.

⁴⁹ Weyler's Order Mandating the Use of Paper Currency, 28 August 1896, AMM, CGC, caja 3382.

A SMOKING GUN AND A WOMAN'S
TOUCH: PRESIDENT CHESTER ARTHUR'S
TRANSFORMATION THAT REFORMED
AMERICAN POLITICS IN THE LATE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

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"I may be the President of the United States," affirmed Chester Arthur, the corpulent yet fashionable man with the striking mustachios, "but my private life is nobody's damned business."¹ The twenty-first president, Chester Alan Arthur, was a man with an intricate and often contradictory personality. He spent most of his career in the public eye, yet he detested the intermingling of personal affairs and political personas. Resolutely dedicated to separating the multiple facets of his life, Arthur burned most of his personal correspondence toward the end of his life. Not only was he an influential "Gentleman Boss" in Roscoe Conkling's corrupt "Stalwart Republican" political machine, he was also a pawn in Conkling's plot to dominate New York State politics through the patronage system of political appointments. Yet, once he rose to the Presidency, Arthur oversaw massive improvements to the American Civil Service selection process—the relatively unbiased system through which many United States governmental positions are now filled. As vice president for President James Garfield, he never wanted to be President of the United States, but he labored tirelessly when elevated to the office upon the death of Garfield. A lifelong beneficiary of the patronage system that dominated United States politics for the majority of the nineteenth century, Arthur curiously dedicated his presidency to righting the corrupt, political wrongs that had allowed

him to achieve the nation's highest office in the first place. How exactly did Arthur transform American politics in the late nineteenth century and why did he begin the process of dismantling a political system that he had spent three decades strengthening in his home state of New York? Although Chester Arthur's critical political decisions, at first glance, often seem uncharacteristic and disjointed, they are better understood when examined in conjunction with the life-altering events and realizations that bombarded Chester "Chet" Arthur during his tenure. Garnering a proper understanding of Arthur as a president involves mounting a thorough investigation into the personal life that he so diligently strived to hide from his political career. If we hope to fully understand the motivations that propelled Chester Arthur toward the important civil service reform that dynamically shaped nineteenth century politics, we will eventually find ourselves staring into the warm heart of a New York gentlewoman and down the cold barrel of a madman's gun. Although their contributions to the life of Chester Arthur are radically different, both Julia I. Sand, the gentlewoman and friend of Arthur, and Charles J. Guiteau, the misguided madman, became two of the most significant political characters in the presidency of Chester Arthur. By examining the often-neglected role that Guiteau and Sand played in shaping Arthur's personal beliefs and presidential tenure, we can learn more about how extraordinary circumstances and personal aspirations for political reform powerfully transformed American politics in the latter half of the Gilded Age.

We must first establish an understanding of what historians already know about President Arthur and what still needs to be discovered. Marked by unwavering dedication to both the Republican Party and the political machinery that controlled it, Chester Arthur's unexpected rise to power is an ideal example of Gilded Age political advancement via the spoils system; however, the era is often overlooked and

trivialized by some scholars of American political history. For example, Henry Adams, an American historian and descendent of both President John Adams and President John Quincy Adams, put forth an unenthusiastic description of the Gilded Age in his well-known, 1907 account *The Education of Henry Adams*: “**No period so thoroughly ordinary had been known in American politics since** Christopher Columbus first disturbed the balance of American society...The period was poor in purpose and barren in results.”² Largely devoid of the momentous social and political unrest of the US Civil War and the drastically increased globalization of World War I, the Gilded Age and its political leaders, such as Chester Arthur, are often underappreciated for the critical roles they played in shaping the future of American politics. In fact, Chester Arthur is one of the least studied individuals to have achieved the office of the Presidency. Historian Thomas C. Reeves, an expert on the presidency of Chester Arthur, even admits that Arthur is “the least well known and most elusive man ever to become chief executive.”³

Although the Gilded Age and the presidency of Chester Arthur are underappreciated periods of the American political saga, a number of works on the Gilded Age that were published predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s dealt with President Arthur's role in civil service reform. An expansive biography by Thomas C. Reeves, several studies by Ari Hoogenboom, and a portion of H. Wayne Morgan's bibliography have all contributed to how we understand this elusive president's critical role in reform; however, the vast majority of the scholarship on the topic focused primarily on the policy initiatives of the Arthur Administration and how these decisions altered the political future of the United States. Conversely, my project unpacks the key factors that underscored President Arthur's revolutionary political decisions. Drawing on nineteenth-century court records, newspaper articles, speeches, and correspondence, this article provides critical insight into the

life of the nation's twenty-first head of state. Because he is one of the least studied presidential personalities in one of the most underappreciated intervals in American political history, there is a great deal of untapped, historically-significant material concerning the political career of Chester Arthur, and this article sheds light on some of the most overlooked motivations in Arthur's life during his presidency.

A tragic occurrence in the history of the United States and a significant influence on the policies of President Arthur, the assassination of President James Garfield is one of the few events of the Gilded Age that was afforded considerable attention by American political historians during the second half of the twentieth century. The conclusions made in the 1960s and 1970s concerning the significance of Garfield's assassination in shaping the policy initiatives of Chester Arthur are still relatively unchallenged in today's scholarship. In Thomas Reeves's biography, he notes that Arthur "dared not give Roscoe Conkling a major seat in the Cabinet, for this would signal the haughty Stalwart's control of the administration and the intensification of political warfare."⁴ In another study, Justus D. Doenecke asserts that "Once he became president, Arthur ceased to act like a 'Gentleman Boss'" because he "did not want his office tarnished by partisan warfare."⁵ Both Reeves and Doenecke, amongst others, agree that Arthur did experience a significant political change once he rose to the Presidency, and both accounts affirm that it was political pragmatism and public opinion that brought about Arthur's ideological reformation on the issue of civil service reform. While Arthur's opinions were definitely influenced by the outcries of the American people in the wake of Garfield's assassination, the existing secondary accounts of Arthur's political transformation often overlook the personal effect that Garfield's murder had on Arthur and his policies. Therefore, by examining the contents of the remaining state papers and speeches of Chester Arthur, my study argues

that the assassination of James Garfield brought about a moral transformation in Chester Arthur, both politically and personally.⁶

While the brutal assassination of James Garfield and subsequent outcry of the populace definitely influenced Arthur's political reformation, there were other, more intimate factors that may have pushed Arthur to become a better man. Although he ordered that the vast majority of his personal correspondence be burned before his death in 1886, a number of Arthur's personal papers did survive within the Arthur family for decades. In 1958, Chester Arthur III, the president's grandson, sold a large number of these remaining papers to the Library of Congress (LOC), giving historians a much needed glimpse into the forces that motivated Arthur during his presidency. Amongst these newly acquired documents, there was a collection of twenty-three letters from a previously unknown New York gentlewoman named Julia Sand. Although Arthur's responses to Sand's letters, if they ever existed, were not included in the documents, the contents of the one-sided correspondence reveal a great deal about the nation's enigmatic twenty-first president. These letters have now been available to the public for over half a century, but their effect on President Arthur has been, for the most part, overlooked by historians of the Gilded Age. In a 1971 article on the Sand letters, Thomas Reeves explains how the correspondence had been interpreted by historians up to that point: "Ari Hoogenboom found them interesting and full of 'motherly fondness.' He also took them seriously" whereas "H. Wayne Morgan saw 'Julia Sands' [sic] as a 'mysterious lady friend' of the then widower President," and he "ignored Miss Sand's political commentaries, and noted only her willingness to scold the President."⁷ Although both Hoogenboom and Morgan make use of the previously unknown letters, none of these existing studies emphasize the effect the letters had on Chester Arthur, the individual. Admittedly, Reeves's abridgments of the existing narratives

concerning the Sand letters are somewhat outdated; however, with the exception of Reeves himself and a 2017 Chester Arthur biography written by Scott Greenberger, the letters have yet to be included as a major factor in any other notable academic publications. While both Reeves and Greenberger do provide excellent summations of the different Sand letters in the broader context of Arthur's presidency, I emphasize the ethical reawakening and subsequent political decisions, particularly concerning the issue of civil service reform, that arose within the heart of President Arthur as a result of Sand's emotional appeals.⁸

To fully encapsulate the people, events, and locations that morphed Chester Arthur into the man he eventually became, we cannot begin with Charles Guiteau and Julia Sand; we must first cast our gazes back to a New York City courtroom in the year 1860, when Chester Arthur was nothing more than an upcoming New York City lawyer. In the years leading up to the US Civil War, Arthur proved himself to be a gifted attorney, an upstanding citizen, and an ardent abolitionist. He was willing and able to protect and defend those most oppressed by the racial prejudices of the early nineteenth century, most notably in the case of *Lemmon vs. New York*. Migrating from Virginia to Texas, slaveholders Jonathan and Juliet Lemmon, alongside their eight enslaved people, traveled to New York, where they were to board a steamship destined for the Gulf of Mexico. However, the enslaved people, according to Justice Elijah Paine, Jr. of the New York Superior Court, were automatically free because they had been brought into the free state of New York. After several unsuccessful appeals, Justice Paine's ruling eventually reached the New York Court of Appeals, where a team that included the young Arthur successfully defended Paine's decision. As proclaimed by Chief Judge Hiram Denio of the New York Superior Court when passing down his ruling on the case of *Lemmon vs. New York*, "The meaning of the statute is as plain as though the Legislature had declared in

terms that if any person should introduce a slave into this State, in the course of a journey to or from it, or in passing through it, the slave shall be free.”⁹ Although Arthur was not exclusively responsible for the outcome of this juridical battle, he was an active participant in the effort to secure freedom for the enslaved people.¹⁰ By most accounts, the Chester Alan Arthur who made his living in New York City courtrooms was an idealistic Republican with a progressive sense of justice, morality, and honor.¹¹

Due to his abolitionist principles and dedication to ensuring racial equality, Arthur was an exemplary candidate to serve in the New York militia during the Civil War, which was an endeavor that introduced young Arthur to the world of patronage and politics. An avid proponent of the Republican Party and steadfast supporter of Abraham Lincoln's doctrines, Arthur quickly impressed the leaders of the New York State political machinery and rose steadily through the political ranks of both the New York State militia and the state government, primarily through the exploitation of the patronage system. Appointed to the position of Quartermaster General by the current governor, Edwin Morgan, Arthur easily mastered the administrative responsibilities of his position, which made him a valuable ally for Roscoe Conkling, an infamous force in New York politics and the boss of the “Stalwart” Republican machine – as it was called. A gifted delegator with a somewhat forgettable presence when compared to the ruggedly handsome Roscoe Conkling, Arthur, once ingratiated with Conkling, was often left in command of the Stalwart machine's day-to-day operations – which included registering and incentivizing voters, overseeing political programs, and reinforcing the machine's network within New York. This power allowed Arthur to, as one author put it, accomplish “more to mold the course of the Republican Party in this state than any other one man in the country.”¹² For a man that started his political career doling out trousers to the New York militia, Arthur had

successfully played the game of patronage politics and came out on top. In fact, President Ulysses S. Grant even appointed Arthur to the Collectorship for the Port of New York, a highly lucrative, patronage position that provided substantial economic compensation.¹³

Importantly, following the 1876 election of Rutherford B. Hayes, many of the nation's longstanding beliefs concerning patronage and machine politics began to change, and the system that Arthur knew so well began to crumble around him. A long-term beneficiary of the spoils system with an acquired affinity for opulence, Chester Arthur and his wife Nell enjoyed the monetary stability offered by his patronage positions. Wed in October of 1859 after a brief courtship, Arthur and Nell's union appeared to have been happy at first, but due to Arthur's time-consuming commitments to the Stalwart machine, this happiness seemed to fade. In an attempt to appease the two major influences in his life—the Stalwart machine and his wife—Arthur continually exploited these aforementioned patronage positions, a reality that angered President Hayes to such an extent that he removed Arthur from the Collectorship on July 11, 1878. Despite this obvious setback in his career, Arthur continued to dedicate the majority of his time to the Stalwart machine. As a result, Arthur was not present for his wife's sudden death on January 12, 1880, an oversight that he would regret for the remainder of his life. Perhaps escaping his personal troubles, Arthur still attended the Republican National Convention, where he was unexpectedly nominated for vice president as a number of Republicans hoped he would secure Stalwart support for James Garfield of Ohio, the dark horse nominee for president. Relatively unknown outside of New York, Arthur never imagined that he would be elevated to a position as stately as the Vice Presidency, and he was not at all prepared for the assassination of President Garfield on July 2, 1881, a day that would permanently alter his view on life and politics.¹⁴

"I am a Stalwart of Stalwarts," said aspiring civil servant, Charles J. Guiteau, just moments after brutally shooting President James Garfield in the back, and he coldly affirmed, "Arthur is President now." A lifelong Republican with an overinflated sense of self-worth, Guiteau assumed that his rather insignificant contribution to the successful election of James Garfield in 1880 would guarantee him a lucrative, patronage position, preferably the Paris consulship, which would allow him to represent the interests of the United States abroad. However, because Guiteau was also an irrational evangelist with a questionable past, Secretary of State James G. Blaine concluded that the hopeful civil servant was not qualified for any such appointed position. This was the understanding that Secretary Blaine bluntly emphasized when he exasperatedly told Guiteau, "Never bother me again about this Paris consulship so long as you live."¹⁵ Although President James Garfield was an exceedingly busy man who knew little to nothing about Charles Guiteau's frequent attempts to receive a federal appointment, the gunman assumed that Garfield, a relatively avid supporter of civil service reform, had personally blocked his appointment because of Guiteau's Stalwart leanings. As a result, the evangelist, who claimed to be sent by God, decided to assassinate President Garfield, assuming that Stalwart Vice President Chester Arthur would pardon him for his crimes and laude him as the hero who saved the patronage system. Unfortunately for Guiteau, Arthur was not willing to commit such an egregious transgression of moral boundaries, and the aspiring consul was hanged for murder on June 30, 1882. While Roscoe Conkling and other leaders within the "Stalwart" machine almost certainly did not support Charles Guiteau's decision to assassinate Garfield, the gunman vocally considered himself a proponent of that machine, a realization that undoubtedly rattled Garfield's replacement, Chester Alan Arthur.¹⁶

When Arthur ascended to the nation's highest office

following the unfortunate death of his predecessor, the country was in shock, the Republican Party was collapsing from the inside due to the chaos brought on by civil service reform, and the American populace hoped for a political change that was at odds with Arthur's Stalwart past. As a result, many assumed that Arthur would alter the vision espoused by the late President Garfield in favor of policies that would better suit his machine cronies. Surrogate Delano C. Calvin of New York County, New York, for example, said in a New-York Tribune interview that, "General Arthur's principal danger lies in his dispensation of patronage, and the possible feeling on his part of such an obligation toward ex-Senator Conkling as to make him a prominent member of his Cabinet," which would "be certain disaster to his [Arthur's] Administration."¹⁷ However, despite overwhelming pressure from the Stalwart machine to engage in patronage politics, these aforementioned prognoses of corruption and despair that dominated the days preceding Chester Arthur's presidency never came to fruition. In fact, when delivering his first national address as President of the United States on September 22, 1881, Arthur promised that "All the noble aspirations of my lamented predecessor which found expression in his life, the measures devised and suggested during his brief Administration to correct abuses... will be garnered in the hearts of the people; and it will be my [Arthur's] earnest endeavor...to see that the nation shall profit, by his [Garfield's] example."¹⁸ While the "Gentleman Boss" did continue to lavish his former Stalwart associates with banquets and gifts for the remainder of his life, Arthur curiously seemed to have left his affinity for patronage politics at the door to the White House. Although Arthur initially became successful by ingratiating himself with one of the most corrupt political machines in United States history, the abrupt murder of James Garfield over an issue as insignificant as a political appointment forced Arthur to contemplate the veracity of his longstanding, partisan beliefs. This resulted in

a significant alteration to Arthur's understanding of patronage positions and machine politics.¹⁹

On July 13, 1881, *Puck Magazine*, the nation's premier satirical publication on American political issues, released an edition that satirized the unacceptable governmental practices that ultimately caused James Garfield's assassination. On the cover of this editorial, Charles Guiteau proudly displays both his handgun and an ultimatum demanding either, "An office or your [Garfield's] life" (see Figure 1). The cartoon is captioned with both a phrase, "A Model Office-Seeker," and a quote from Charles Guiteau, "I am a Lawyer, a Theologian, and a Politician."²⁰ Clearly a scathing rebuke of the unnecessary, overly political processes that dominated the patronage system of the time, the magazine hyperbolically depicts the nation's dissatisfaction with the existing political system in the days immediately following the brutal assassination of the president. Originally an ardent supporter of machine politics and an active participant in the patronage system, Chester Arthur never planned to be the driving force that oversaw the first successful attempt at civil service reform; however, following the death of the popular, twentieth president, he realized that the American people would not support the current political system, whose corrupt doctrines actively contributed to the death of President Garfield. Therefore, despite knowing that his actions would anger his Stalwart allies, Arthur dedicated himself to repairing the broken system that was responsible for Garfield's death in an effort to protect the legacy of the late president, whose "exalted character...noble achievements...and patriotic life will be treasured forever as a sacred possession of the whole world."²¹ Covered in blood and shrouded in smoke, Charles J. Guiteau, an unstable evangelist, was partially responsible for ushering in an era of unprecedented political reform, though Chester Arthur, a former "Stalwart" lieutenant, would be the man to lead it.²²

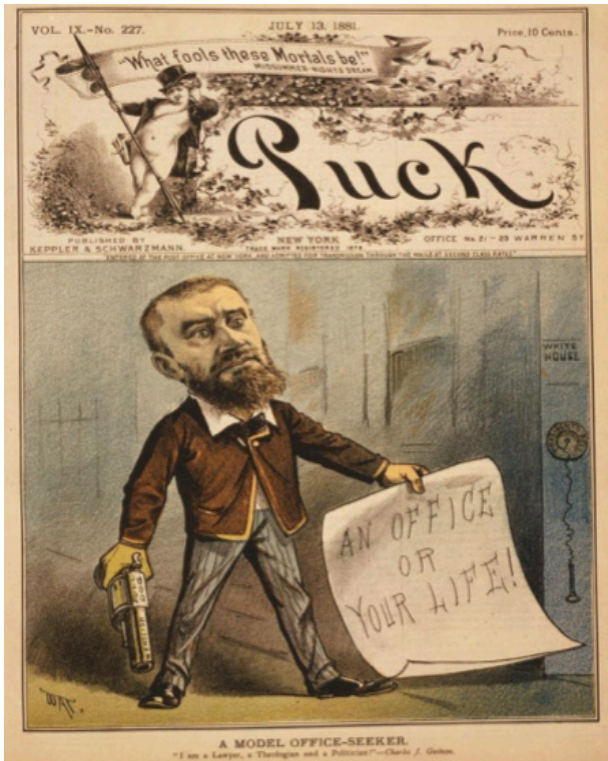


Figure 1: Puck Magazine cover on 13 July, 1881

Despite having participated in machine politics for nearly three decades, Arthur was willing to set aside his previous notions of acceptable political procedures in an effort to bring about civil service reform, going so far as to sign the revolutionary Pendleton Act into law. Originally proposed by Senator George H. Pendleton of Ohio, the act was the first major initiative by the federal government to move away from the outdated, corrupt patronage system, in which Chester Arthur began his career, in favor of a regulated, merit-based system. Under the Pendleton Act, a Civil Service Commission, composed of three members, was tasked with creating and administering a Civil Service examination, which

would determine an individual's capability to serve in certain government positions. Moreover, the act guaranteed that individuals could not be removed from office without proper cause, thus ensuring that newly elected executives were not able to fill the Civil Service with unqualified party members. Essentially, the act ensured that "No person in said [civil] service shall use his official authority or influence either to coerce the political action of any person or body or to interfere with any election."²³ Although Arthur had greatly benefited from the system that he agreed to undermine by signing the Pendleton Act, the "Gentleman Boss," deeply shaken by the circumstances surrounding the assassination of James Garfield, understood the necessity of reforming the Civil Service in order to strengthen the United States government. Thus, Arthur was willing to set aside a lifetime of machine politics in order to properly carry out his responsibilities as president.²⁴

Like many influential men throughout history, Arthur was urged, compelled, and guided into action by the gentle yet firm words of a woman who resided behind the scenes. A bedridden yet well-educated New York gentlewoman, Julia Sand had never interacted with Chester Arthur before his ascension to the Presidency and did not have any personal stakes in the success of the Arthur Administration. Nevertheless, once Arthur became the nation's Chief Executive, Sand unexpectedly began writing to the president in hopes that he would not degrade himself or his home state of New York throughout his tenure. While historians know little about Sand, she was seemingly invested in seeing civil service reform, and she dictated how Arthur should act as president and what policies he should support during his term. She even ridiculed his character from time to time when she felt it would assist in her endeavor to reform the potential reformer. For example, in her first letter to President Arthur on August 27, 1881, Sand writes, "What if a few days hence the hand of the next unsatisfied ruffian should lay you low, & you should

drag through months of weary suffering in the White House, knowing that all over the land not a prayer was uttered in your behalf, not a tear shed, that the great American people was glad to be rid of you- would not worldly honors seem rather empty then?"²⁵ Despite having scorned Arthur in her first letter, Sand was dedicated to bringing about both moral and political reform within the United States and Chester Arthur, himself. Metaphorically styling herself the President's dwarf, an homage to the dwarves of European courts who were the only individuals willing to tell their monarchs the truth, Julia Sand spent the majority of Arthur's term in the shadows, all the while chipping away at his Stalwart exterior and revealing the kindhearted, decent man that resided underneath.²⁶

Although it is not known if Chester Arthur ever responded to any of the Sand letters, the fact that the letters are extant is evidence that they were likely significant to the president, a man who burned almost all of his personal correspondence. In fact, in a letter dated August 15, 1882, Sand scolded the president for never returning her correspondence: "Well, have you not free minutes to spare for me-when I have spared so many hours for you, in this long, sad, exciting year?"²⁷ Just four days after the August 15 letter, Julia Sand wrote another strongly worded letter to Arthur concerning his unwillingness to respond in which she asks, "Are you offended with me-really-seriously? Do the few harsh things that I have said to you, outweigh all else[?]"²⁸ Almost immediately after receiving these harsh letters, however, Chester Arthur visited Julia Sand in New York without first alerting her of his plans. Due to the unexpected nature of this meeting, Sand, who was likely both excited and distressed by Arthur's presence, spent the entirety of the conversation hiding behind a curtain and just out of the president's sight; thus, while Arthur and Sand did engage in lively discussion for nearly an hour, the president probably never actually saw Julia Sand.²⁹ Because Arthur visited Sand immediately following her harshest letters

to him, it is very likely that Arthur valued the letters he received and wanted her to continue sending them. During their lengthy discussion at her home, Arthur even alluded to at least one of the recommendations that Sand made within her previous letters regarding his policy initiatives. While it cannot be definitively proven that Chester Arthur supported civil service reform because of Julia Sand's letters, the willingness of Arthur, an undoubtedly busy man, to visit Sand in New York and keep her letters until the day he died strongly suggests that Julia Sand had a lasting effect on Arthur, the man, and the policies that he came to support.³⁰

In her first letter to the president in August 1881, Julia Sand espoused a vision for the future of the United States, and while her tone grew consistently warmer throughout the next few years, she was unwavering in her opinion that he would revolutionize the American political system. As she says in her first letter, "Do what is more difficult & more brave. Reform!...devote the remainder of ones [your] life to that only which is pure & exalted."³¹ Although Arthur's political record did not coincide with the beliefs that Julia Sand hoped he would come to adopt, she never hesitated in her assertion that Arthur would be the executive leader behind civil service reform within the United States. As she says, "If any man says, 'With Arthur for President, Civil Service Reform is doomed,' prove that Arthur can be its firmest champion."³² Simultaneously compassionate and reproachful, Julia Sand did everything in her power to push Chester Arthur toward the reform she knew was necessary for the revitalization of the American governmental system. By maintaining a reproachful tone throughout much of her first letter, Sand made it clear that Arthur's previous political decisions were reprehensible to much of the American populace; however, by her second letter, the gentlewoman had changed tactics entirely. Roughly one month after sending her first letter, in which she tells Chester Arthur that the American people would not mourn

him if he were to die in a way similar to James Garfield, Sand reached out again, explaining her motivations for writing: "I felt I owed you an apology for what I had written...My only excuse for this letter is the deep sympathy I feel for you in your sorrow."³³ By beginning her correspondence with a scathing rebuke immediately followed by an apology, Julia Sand ingratiated herself with Arthur, giving her the opportunity to remain in his good graces and bring about political reform from within. Although most of the letters sent by Julia Sand could be interpreted as relatively mundane and perhaps repetitive, she maintained the correspondence in hopes that President Arthur would remember the bedridden gentlewoman and the revolutionary doctrine she championed. Sand's letters became progressively more affectionate as the correspondence continued during Arthur's presidency. This strongly implies that Arthur's and Sand's relationship, although it began with a concerned citizen offering advice to a civil servant, quickly became more than political, at least in Sand's heart and mind.³⁴

Although Chester Arthur's opinion of Julia Sand is still a mystery, it is quite clear that, by the end of their correspondence in 1883, Julia Sand had become emotionally attached to the man she had been writing to. As she says in her final letter on September 15, 1883, "I would like you to come & talk to me. It is absurd I know-but I can't help it I like the sound of your voice...If you can remember a time when you were very unhappy & I tried to say things to comfort you & you did care for my sympathy, then do come."³⁵ Very different in tone from her first message, Julia Sand had clearly grown closer to Arthur by this time, and she probably did not want their relationship, whatever it was, to end. However, with the passage of the Pendleton Act in January of 1883, there were no longer pressing political issues on which Sand felt she needed to advise the president. Although the relationship between Chester Arthur, a recent widower, and Julia Sand began with unsolicited political advice and a scathing rebuke

of the gentleman's character, it had clearly blossomed into so much more for Julia Sand and perhaps Arthur. While it is not known why the relatively steady correspondence came to an abrupt end in September 1883, it is almost definite that the letters influenced President Arthur's decision-making process throughout most of his presidential term. By appealing to Chester Arthur's sense of decency and expressing a level of concern that Arthur had probably not known since the death of his wife, Julia Sand reminded Arthur of the gentle reformer he had been before getting involved in politics. Although bedridden and with "no political ties," Julia Sand was one of the most prominent, albeit unknown, influences in the life of President Chester Arthur, and through her correspondence with President Arthur, she potentially became one of the most important figures in the history of civil service reform and a major historical actor in the politics of the Gilded Age.³⁶

"Since I came here I have learned that Chester A. Arthur is one man and the President of the United States is another," said Arthur when denying a former Stalwart ally's request for a political favor at a formal state dinner.³⁷ Bookended by acts of selflessness and decency, Chester A. Arthur spent most of his career reinforcing the power of political machines within New York State; however, with one motion of his pen, Arthur reversed the political maneuverings that he had spent a lifetime strengthening. While Arthur must be given credit for the unexpected decision he made on behalf of the American people with the Pendleton Act, a madman and a gentlewoman were with the president throughout the entire process. Throughout the history of the United States, the vast majority of political decisions have often been attributed solely to the individual in charge when they were made; however, behind each of these studied individuals, there are casts of diverse, influential characters whose stories must also be explored in order to fully understand the historical narrative. After Charles J. Guiteau raised his hand and pulled his trigger, something

snapped in Chester Arthur, and perhaps for the first time in decades, he realized the hypocrisy of the political system he had helped to build. Moreover, Julia Sand, a previously unknown New York socialite, took up the task of helping Arthur come to terms with the emotions he experienced in the wake of Garfield's tragic death. While Charles Guiteau and Julia Sand influenced Chester Arthur individually, the political outcomes would have been different had they not both been participants in the narrative. Guiteau's act of unnecessary violence helped Arthur realize the need for political change, and Julia Sand's scathing rebukes and emotional support forced the president to remember the kind hearted, reform-minded abolitionist he had been before becoming involved in national politics. Chester Alan Arthur, the nation's twenty-first president, was not a malicious man, but he did spend most of his life entrenched in a broken political system. Nevertheless, following a series of rather incongruous events, he was able to see the error in his ways and implement groundbreaking political reform that transformed the politics of the Gilded Age at the expense of his own political career.

Notes

¹ Hugh Bradley, *Such Was Saratoga* (New York, NY: Doubleday Doran, 1940), 200, quoted in Thomas C. Reeves, "A Veritable Chesterfield," in *The Gentleman Boss* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 268-276.

² Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (1907), 285 and 236, <http://www.bookwolf.com/Wolf/pdf/HenryAdams-The%20Education%20Of.pdf>, quoted in Thomas C. Reeves, "The President's Dwarf: The Letters of Julia Sand to Chester A. Arthur," *New York History* 52, no. 1 (October 6, 2014): 73-83, <https://vdocuments.mx/the-presidents-dwarf-the-letters-of-julia-sand-to-chester-a-arthur.html>. Bold and Italics in original text.

³ Thomas C. Reeves, "The Search for the Chester Alan Arthur Papers," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 310-319, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4634741.pdf?ab_segments=0%252F12b_100k_with_tbsub%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3A16caa0bec768e04e8ce0eac4ac1e8a73.

⁴ Reeves, *The Gentleman Boss*, 252.

⁵ Justus D. Doenecke, *The Presidencies of James A. Garfield & Chester A. Arthur* (Lawrence, KA: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1981), 76.

⁶ Doenecke, *The Presidencies of James Garfield and Chester Arthur*, 75-104; Reeves, *The Gentleman Boss*, 238-267.

⁷ Reeves, "The President's Dwarf," 73-74.

⁸ Reeves, *The Gentleman Boss*, 244-250; Reeves, "The President's Dwarf;" Scott S. Greenberger, *The Unexpected President: The Life and Times of Chester A. Arthur* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, 2017), 161-173.

⁹ The New York Court of Appeals, *Report of the Lemon Slave Case: Containing Points and Arguments of Counsel on Both Sides, and Opinions of All the Judges* (New York, NY: Horace Greely & Co., 1860), 123.

¹⁰ The Lemmon trial was only one of several cases in which Chester Arthur protected the rights of those faced with racial oppression. For example, when he was only twenty-four years old, the future president successfully defended Elizabeth Jennings Graham, an African-American woman arrested for riding on a New York City streetcar, in the *Jennings v. Third Ave. Railroad* case. This ruling ensured that eventually all New York City public transit would no longer be segregated on the basis of race. For more on race during the Gilded Age, see C. Vann Woodward,

The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹¹ George F. Howe, *Chester A. Arthur: A Quarter-Century of Machine Politics* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934), 11-19; Reeves, *The Gentleman Boss*, 3-21.

¹² "In Time of War and Peace: Scraps of Unwritten Political History," *The New York Times*, January 1, 1880, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/93846468/pageviewPDF/D9395467B65B425APQ/1?accountid=15053>.

¹³ Howe, *Chester A. Arthur*, 20-92; Leon Stein, ed., *The Spoils System in New York: The Ordeal of Self-Government in America* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1974), 29-36; Reeves, *The Gentleman Boss*, 22-131.

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³² Ibid.

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SAMPLE OF SENIOR HONORS THESIS ABSTRACTS

Personal In The Political: The Usage of Political Postcards During the Dreyfus Affair

Rebecca Alifimoff

There is no shortage of academic work published on the subject of the Dreyfus Affair. Many of these studies focus on the large amount of documentation that accompanied the Affair, which was widely chronicled in newspapers, journals, posters, and cartoons throughout the duration of the Affair. Invented in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, picture postcards were massively popular at the time of the Dreyfus Affair and political Dreyfus postcards became part of the media culture surrounding the Affair. Though many studies that examine the visual culture of the Affair make note of the existence of Dreyfus related postcards, few works treat the postcards in-depth. Drawing on Dreyfus postcards from the archives of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme in Paris, the Centre Charles Péguy in Orléans, and the Lorraine Beitler Collection of the Dreyfus Affair at the Kislak Center for Rare Books and Special Collections, this thesis places the political postcards of the Dreyfus Affair within the historical context of the postcard medium. It also examines how postcards were used as mediums of political expression during the Affair. While Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards used postcards as part of a media campaign aimed at influencing public opinions, postcard users used the cards to communicate political opinions within their larger social circle. Political postcards allowed members of the general public to become active participants in the Dreyfus Affair.

The Butcher and the Arson: How Spain's Generals Lost her Empire and Destroyed her Crown Jewel

Daniel Brennan

This thesis examines the Cuban War of Independence which was fought from 1895 to 1898. In particular, it is an exploration of the various strategies which the Spanish authorities implemented in response to the insurgent threat, culminating with the orders by Governor General Valeriano Weyler mandating the relocation of Cuban civilians to the island's Spanish- held cities and towns. This so called 'Reconcentration' sparked a humanitarian crisis which resulted in the deaths of well over 150,000 Cuban civilians and drew widespread international condemnation of Spain's vicious counterinsurgency campaign. Through examination of archival correspondence, government records, and original cartography this thesis arrives at a conclusion hinted at but not expressly argued by existing historiography. It finds that despite its operational and tactical successes, Reconcentration failed to deliver an ultimate victory because it was a strategy ill-suited to the shifting political sands in Madrid and oblivious to evolving moral sentiments abroad.

Snipping a Trouser Button: How Britain Gave Away Heligoland

Ryan Delgaudio

Condemning his successor, Leo von Caprivi, for signing a terrible diplomatic deal, former German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1890 quipped that the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty had given Britain a new suit, Germany's various East African kingdoms, in exchange for a trouser button, an island in the North Sea measuring less than one square mile in area. Its Frisian population and geostrategic position at the mouths of five major European rivers made Heligoland an object of German affection in a nationalizing moment. As thousands of German tourists flocked to Britain's smallest colony every summer, the British colonial government struggled to maintain its position as the colony's legal system, finances, and communication apparatuses

became inextricably linked to the German Empire. After repeatedly rejecting earlier diplomatic overtures by the German government to acquire the island, Lord Salisbury seized the moment of Bismarck's dismissal and the ensuing administrative turmoil in Berlin to expand British imperial power. The Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty represents the height of the tenuous Anglo-German bilateral relationship, which culminated in the First World War.

The Reception and Reaction to the French Revolution of 1848 in America

John Keblish

In the middle of the nineteenth century the entirety of Europe was engulfed by a revolutionary wave. Spearheaded by the people of France in the year 1848, historic monarchies across the continent toppled at the hands of popular protests. While some revolutionaries at the time cited Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto as their source of inspiration, many French protesters used rhetoric from the American revolution to justify their revolt. While the Revolutions of 1848 are an amazing event to understand European politics, economics, and social structure, this thesis focuses mainly on the American perspective of this unique event. Following the Revolutionary War and early republic-building stages of the United States, American history seems to lag until the Civil War. My thesis helps bring new light to a brief moment in this untapped history: America's reaction, publicly and politically, to the French Revolution of 1848. Through diligent primary source synthesis, this thesis argues that the events of the French Revolution of 1848 were used to promote specific agendas, namely abolition and anti-abolition, both in Congressional debates as well as public newspapers.

"A Modern and Distinctively Scottish Portrait": Scottish Modern Art and National Identity in the Interwar Period

Brooke Krancer

Although the Scottish Renaissance in the early 20th century is largely considered a literary movement, visual artists significantly contributed to it as well. In so doing, they aimed to legitimize Scotland as an intellectual force in Europe separate from the broader British tradition. They thus made important contributions to the burgeoning Scottish nationalist movement—largely based on a newfound perception of a Scottish rather than British national identity. My thesis examines the ways in which modern art in Scotland in the interwar period contributed to the formation of a modern Scottish national identity that was instrumental to the rise of Scottish nationalism during the era. Specifically, I explore two different ways in which Scottish artists practicing in the period attempted to forge a unique artistic identity: contribution to the growing Scottish arts at home and engagement with the broader international modern art movement abroad. Four artists who were active in the interwar period underscore the importance of visual artists in the Scottish Renaissance through both their contributions to the movement at home and their international artistic influences and practice—J.D. Fergusson (1874-1961), William Johnstone (1897–1981), William McCance (1894–1970), and Edward Baird (1904-1949). Identifying politically as Scottish nationalists, they showcase the link between the Scottish modern art movement and the building of a Scottish national identity, or Scottish cultural nationalism, during the period that saw the rise of Scottish nationalism as a political force.

Mothers, Wives and Voters: A Transition to Difference-Oriented Feminist Rhetoric in Mexico, 1938-1953

Alia Schechter

The women's suffrage movement in Mexico lasted almost four decades (1917-1953) and was regularly forced to change

political messaging to adapt to the changing political and social currents. In the years after Lázaro Cárdenas' presidency, the language used to justify women's political enfranchisement shifted from an equality-centric argument to one that highlighted the differences between men and women. This thesis seeks to examine the factors that led to such a significant discursive shift in the women's suffrage movement and how these factors affected the movement's achievements. My first chapter analyzes how contradictions in the post-Revolutionary state created political pressure for women's organizations to work within the government bureaucracy and, as a result, adopt rhetoric that was less subversive. My second chapter addresses how women's organizing changed over the course of the 1940s, which provided evidence for speeches and campaigns of how women were able to use their "maternal" skills for social good. Lastly, I argue that this language made its way into the political mainstream – both for male and female political figures – because of Amalia Castillo Ledón and her tireless efforts both in Mexico and in international feminist circles.