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## Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the *Columbia Journal of History's* Winter 2022-23 issue. It is a culmination of countless hours of work done by our masthead and the authors of the papers published within.

The purpose of our journal is two-fold: to provide a platform to celebrate outstanding undergraduate historical scholarship and to provide opportunities for Columbia students interested in history to sharpen their academic skills. The creation of this issue embodies that mission.

To the first purpose, the five articles we selected for the winter 2022-23 issue represent stellar undergraduate writing. They tackle a range of fascinating topics from Sam Bisno's discussion of race and the Cuban independence movement to Nicholas Lasinsky's piece on the writings of enslaved African Muslims to Julia Milani's paper on sexual harassment and violence at Stanford in the 1930s. Several of our authors use innovative, interdisciplinary approaches like Madeline Liberman's exploration of architecture and colonialism in Dakar and Francesca Gibson's analysis of nocturnal hallucinations and early modern witch hunts. We are honored to be publishing this scholarship and are eager for our authors' work to reach a broader audience.

To the second purpose, we want to express immense gratitude to our masthead. Whether they are combing through obscure sources during our fact-checking process, offering insightful comments over three rounds of edits, or pouring over citations until not a comma is out of place, we are continuously impressed by the passion every member of the journal brings to the publication.

We are eager to share this hard work with you and hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,

Zoe Davidson and Matthew Tai  
*Editors in Chief*

## About the Authors

**SAM BISNO** is a junior at Princeton University studying history with concentrations in African American studies, Latin American studies, and humanistic studies. His interests include race and labor in the United States and Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His current research focuses on how railroads shaped racial politics in the U.S. South during the Reconstruction era. He hopes to pursue a doctorate in history. When he's not in the library or the archive, he's watching baseball.

**FRANCESCA GIBSON** is a junior in the Honors College at the College of Charleston majoring in history and psychology. She researched and wrote this article with the support of Grant SU 2022-04 from the College of Charleston Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities and the wonderful mentorship of Dr. Jason Coy. Her research interests lie in the history of medicine, gender, and perceptions of magic in early modern Europe. Outside of history, she also conducts research as an assistant for the Department of Psychology, which provides her with the tools needed to appropriately conduct interdisciplinary research. Francesca plans on applying to PhD programs in history with an emphasis on the history of medicine.

**NICHOLAS LASINSKY** is a senior studying history and English at Haverford College. His historical interests remain disparate, but broadly congregate around land conservation, the built environment, old age, mining infrastructure, and enslaved Muslims brought to the young nation. He is currently at work on two senior theses, one revolving around strands of paternalism in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, and the other investigating mourning and sentimentality in nineteenth-century obituary poetry. In the coming years, he hopes to complete a PhD in history, visit all fifty states, and continue to nurture his obsession with National Parks. He is particularly grateful for professor Bethel Saler's assistance with this article, and would like to dedicate it to his father—no matter our differences, dad, I will always be there for you.

**MADELINE LIBERMAN** is a senior at Barnard College majoring in urban studies and French and francophone studies. Her academic interests lie in urban ecology and environmental history. She began researching vertical segregation in French colonial history while completing the Leadership Alliance research program this past summer. During the fall semester, she continued this research for her senior thesis while studying abroad in France, Morocco, and Senegal. She hopes to work in urban environmental planning after receiving her degree.

**JULIA MILANI** is a senior at Stanford University, majoring in History with a concentration in American history and minoring in Iranian Studies and Dance. She is interested in gender and sexuality throughout American history, especially amongst youth and young adults. Her thesis explores dating, sexuality, and cultures of consent at Stanford University in the 1920s and 1930s, examining how the university attempted to circumscribe student life as well as how students created, lived, and maintained their identities and heterosocial relationships. Julia is also interested in Iranian history and culture, and is proud to share a heritage with all of the brave Iranian women currently fighting for their rights. After graduation, she plans on moving to New York to pursue musical theater and dance.

## Table of Contents

SAM BISNO • José Martí and the Racial Politics of Racelessness in the Cuban Independence Movement	1-15
FRANCESCA GIBSON • Inescapable Darkness: Hypnagogia and the Early Modern Experience of Bewitchment	16-46
NICHOLAS LASINSKY • That Path of Strange Characters; An Analysis of Literacy, Identity, and Faith in Enslaved African Muslims	47-65
MADELINE LIBERMAN • High and Mighty: Space, Power, and Vertical Segregation in Dakar	66-92
JULIA MILANI • Playing the Game at Your Own Risk: Dating, Sexuality, and Rape Culture at Stanford University in the 1930s	93-119

# JOSÉ MARTÍ AND THE RACIAL POLITICS OF RACELESSNESS IN THE CUBAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

*Sam Bisno*

## **Abstract**

This essay explores race relations in the Cuban independence movement, focusing on the ideas of Cuban nationalist and revolutionary José Martí. The essay revisits Martí's concept of a "raceless" Cuban nationality by scrutinizing his revolutionary texts and juxtaposing them with those of Rafael Serra y Montalvo, an Afro-Cuban contemporary. The essay demonstrates that Martí's progressive vision of Cuban society remained highly racialized. While this analysis alone is not sufficient to explain the persistent inequities faced by Afro-Cubans, it suggests the need for further re-evaluation of the premise of a "raceless national identity" in the historiography of Cuba.

## Introduction

Martí was uncompromising in his defense of black-white unity and equal rights for all. At a time when racist ideas were held by many who moved within the independence movement, Martí showed no hesitation in directly confronting the issue. . . . Martí envisioned a future republic where the interests of all harmonized, a society color-blind as far as justice was concerned.<sup>1</sup>

So wrote historian Philip Foner in his introduction to a 1977 English-language anthology of the works of José Martí, beloved author, publisher, and leader of the Cuban independence movement.<sup>2</sup> Penned more than 80 years after Martí met his bloody end in the Battle of Dos Ríos during the Cuban War of Independence in 1895, Foner’s characterization speaks to Martí’s enduring legacy as the founder of what leading Cuban historian Ada Ferrer has described as “one of the most powerful ideas in Cuban history—the conception (dominant to this day) of a raceless nationality.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Martí’s notion of a “color-blind” Cuba echoed in the Republic’s first constitution, instituted in 1902, which stated that “all Cubans are equal before the law,” and again in the race-blind rhetoric of Fidel Castro’s 26th of July Movement.<sup>4</sup>

Yet some Cubans continue to see stark racial inequalities. In 2013, Afro-Cuban writer Roberto Zurbano was dismissed from his editing position at the prominent literary house *Casa de las Américas* after he published an op-ed in the *New York Times* highlighting racial disparities on the island.<sup>5</sup> A central feature of Zurbano’s argument was that efforts to achieve true equality for Black Cubans are hampered by the myth of a raceless Cuba: “Racism in Cuba has been concealed and reinforced in part because it isn’t talked about. The government hasn’t allowed racial prejudice to be debated or confronted politically or culturally, often pretending instead as though it didn’t exist. . . . This made it almost

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Tony Wood for his help at every step along the way. Additional thanks to Fernando Acosta-Rodriguez for assistance locating sources.

<sup>2</sup> Philip S. Foner, introduction to *Our America: Writings on Latin America and the Struggle for Cuban Independence*, by José Martí, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 28–29.

<sup>3</sup> Foner, introduction to *Our America*, 58; Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality: Social Science, Citizenship, and Race in Cuba, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 3; Devyn Spence Benson, *Antiracism in Cuba: The Unfinished Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 52–70.

<sup>5</sup> Randal C. Archibold, “Editor Who Wrote of Racism in Cuba Loses His Post, Colleagues Say,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 2013.

impossible to point out the obvious: racism is alive and well.”<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to view Zurbano’s firing as anything other than an ironic confirmation of his critique. It is similarly difficult to ignore the tension at the heart of his article. If Cuba has truly transcended race, how can it be that, as Zurbano pointed out, Afro-Cubans still face education and employment discrimination, a wealth gap, and housing and infrastructural deficiencies—all of which have only been exacerbated in the years following the “Special Period” of economic collapse in the 1990s?

To better understand the inconsistency between the persistent inequities faced by many Afro-Cubans and the “ideal” of a Cuba without race, it is useful to return to that ideal’s formative moment. In the first half of this essay, careful probing of José Martí’s published works from the early and mid-1890s reveals that his concept of raceless nationality was in fact founded on outmoded racial ideas, and furthermore that it functioned mostly in a supporting role to his priority of national independence. Martí’s rhetoric of race is then compared to that of an Afro-Cuban friend and peer, Rafael Serra, whose writing exhibited fewer blind spots. Ultimately, Martí’s raceless nationality, while undeniably visionary and progressive, also served to reinforce racial injustice in Cuba by failing to directly confront the realities of deep-seated racist attitudes and practices in Cuban society.

### *Nuestra América to Mi Raza*

Martí’s most famous articulation of raceless nationalism appeared in “*Nuestra América*” (“Our America”), syndicated in 1891 while the author was in exile in New York.<sup>7</sup> Although its primary purpose was to advocate for Latin American political unity against encroachment by Europe and the United States, the essay ended with an early and striking example of Martí’s denial of race: “There can be no racial animosity, because there are no races. . . . The soul, equal and eternal, emanates from bodies of various shapes and colors.”<sup>8</sup> Here, then, is the crux of Martí’s philosophy: though human beings certainly do not all look alike, phenotypical variation does not translate to essential,

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<sup>6</sup> Roberto Zurbano, “For Blacks in Cuba, the Revolution Hasn’t Begun,” *The New York Times*, March 23, 2013. It is worth noting that Zurbano took issue with the *New York Times* translation of his piece. The English headline was “For Blacks in Cuba, the Revolution Hasn’t Begun”; Zurbano would have preferred “The Revolution is Not Yet Finished” (Archibold, “Editor Who Wrote”).

<sup>7</sup> Esther Allen, ed., *José Martí: Selected Writings*, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 288.

<sup>8</sup> José Martí, “Our America,” January 10, 1891, in *Our America: Writings on Latin America and the Struggle for Cuban Independence*, by José Martí, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 93–94. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are those published in the cited volume.

hierarchical differences between easily delineated racial categories. In this sense, “there are no races.”

This was a radical and profoundly compelling assertion, especially given the moment. By the time Martí published “Nuestra América,” he had been striving for Cuban independence for 25 years. When the first of the Cuban wars against Spain, known as the Ten Years’ War, broke out in 1868, Martí, then 15 years of age, quickly joined the fray. Within a year, he had founded his first political newspaper, *La Patria Libre* (The Free Homeland), and published several revolutionary treatises.<sup>9</sup> The Ten Years’ War languished after 1870, concluding in 1878 with the Pact of Zanjón, which afforded the rebels various political and economic concessions but did not grant independence nor the abolition of slavery.<sup>10</sup> As Ferrer elucidated in her work *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898*, the war effort was severely impeded by the failure of the Cuban combatants to overcome racial divisions. The insurgent movement was unable to penetrate the economically powerful western half of the island, which exploited enslaved labor for its massive sugar plantations more extensively than did the east, with its variegated agriculture.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, white Cubans, alarmed by widespread Afro-Cuban participation in the war and the ascendancy of Black and mulatto military leaders like Quintín Bandera and Antonio Maceo, were quick to advocate for peace or even desert; as Ferrer has written, “condemnation of the rebellion as destructive of Cuba’s best interests” was a common refrain.<sup>12</sup> White detractors were influenced by ongoing Spanish propaganda warning of a “race war.”<sup>13</sup> They were also wary that abrupt independence could lead to a Black-led polity in the mold of Haiti: the “white population, educated in the fear of black and slave rebellion, looked to Haiti and clung to Spain in fear.”<sup>14</sup> Many of these same dynamics characterized the *Guerra Chiquita* (Little War) of 1879–1880.<sup>15</sup>

Martí undoubtedly had this history in mind when he wrote “Nuestra América” in 1891, just five years after slavery was abolished on the island.<sup>16</sup> If racial animosity proved the undoing of Cuba’s first two attempts at independence, then the nonexistence of race might enable the unified front necessary to break from Spain. And yet “Nuestra

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<sup>9</sup> Ivan A Schulman, introduction to *Jose Marti Reader: Writings on the Americas*, ed. Deborah Shnookal and Mirta Muñiz (New York, NY: Ocean Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 60–63.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

América,” despite its radical call for raceless unity, nonetheless fell prey to racialized attitudes. Throughout the essay, Martí assumed a white identity for himself and his reader. In one particularly telling series of images, he distinguished a “we” who had inherited European and U.S. customs from indigenous and Black populations: “We were a masquerader in English breeches, Parisian vest, North American jacket, and Spanish cap. The Indian hovered near us in silence, and went off to the hills to baptize his children. The Negro was seen pouring out the songs of his heart at night, alone and unrecognized among the rivers and wild animals.”<sup>17</sup> Even if Martí’s implication was that long-standing racial stratifications had been overcome through the independence struggle, his linkage between “the Negro” and uncivilized “wild animals” is striking. It recalls the language employed by Spanish officials seeking to foment racial animus: according to Ferrer, “authorities consistently represented the rebels as black savages—as ‘wild animals’ who went barefoot and ‘naked or almost naked.’”<sup>18</sup> It seems unlikely that Martí would have intentionally parroted the racial stereotypes deployed by the very people whom he dedicated his life to removing from power, but this passage suggests the persistence of a Eurocentric, racialized worldview. The essay’s closing paragraph reprimanded readers who, swept up in the multiracial spirit, would vilify white racists, particularly those in the U.S.: “One must not attribute, through a provincial antipathy, a fatal and inborn wickedness to the continent’s fairskinned nation simply because it does not . . . favorably regard the excitable, dark-skinned people.”<sup>19</sup> Martí’s acceptance of some fundamental traits (here, excitability) among Black people, and his decision to stop short of indicting writ large those who cling to race, underscore the countervailing impulses of “Nuestra América.”

Perhaps no text better illustrates the contradictions and limitations inherent in Martí’s raceless nationality than “*Mi raza*” (“My Race”). As its title indicates, this essay was one of Martí’s most direct engagements with the issue of race. It was published in April 1893 in *Patria*, the official newspaper of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, which Martí founded a year earlier as a vehicle of the independence movement.<sup>20</sup> Martí began “*Mi raza*” by echoing the basic sentiment of “Nuestra América”: “Anything that divides

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<sup>17</sup> Martí, “Our America,” 91. While the focus of this paper is Martí’s conception of race as it pertains to white and Black Cubans, his treatment of indigeneity in “*Nuestra América*” is striking. Here he implies, ahistorically, a “mute,” possibly non-lingual indigenous Caribbean who eagerly accepts civilizing Christianity. Elsewhere in the essay, he describes an idealized, pan-American “mother that . . . wears an Indian apron” (289) and describes American “bodies” as “a motley of Indian and criollo” (291). For one exploration of the appropriation of indigenous mythology and imagery in Latin American nation building, see Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 78.

<sup>19</sup> Martí, “Our America,” 94.

<sup>20</sup> Allen, *José Martí*, 314; Foner, introduction to *Our America*, 17.

men from each other, that separates them, singles them out, or hems them in, is a sin against humanity.”<sup>21</sup> And yet here his equalizing language in fact undermined his antiracism. Throughout the piece, he positioned a hypothetical “black man who grows conceited about his color” opposite the “white man who is proud of being white,” castigating the two simultaneously.<sup>22</sup> Thus he reduced Cuba’s centuries-old reality of Black subjugation at the hands of white people into a matter of competing and equally problematic racial egoisms. While Martí’s “black racist,” or Black person who takes pride in his or her race, no doubt existed, such a person was hardly the cause of racial disunity on the island in the same way that the white racist was. In other words, Martí ran up against the boundaries of his rhetoric. Unwilling to reckon fully with the historical and ongoing effects of anti-Black racism, nor the unique responsibility of white people to change their ways, he settled for a hollow theoretical formulation. As the Cuban historian of race Alejandra Bronfman has written of “Mi raza,” “Martí’s race-transcendent ideology was nonetheless fraught with unresolved tensions between the need to overcome race and the admission of the impossibility of that goal.”<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere in the tract, Martí explicitly excused white racists, as he did in “Nuestra América”: “There are still those who believe in good faith that the black man is incapable of intelligence and feelings of the white man.”<sup>24</sup> It is doubtful that in a Cuba beyond race one would accept racism on “good faith.” Above all, then, what is clear from “Mi raza” is that Martí’s racelessness, supposedly already accomplished, remained purely conceptual even for the author himself.

Perhaps, then, Martí’s emphasis on a raceless nationality is better taken as an argumentative strategy aimed at assuaging the anxieties of an audience of white Cubans and Cuban expatriates. In this view, the exact mechanics of racelessness—and the extent to which that racelessness held up under scrutiny—were less important than its mere assertion. In a Cuba whose independence had been frustrated for decades by racial tensions, what mattered was the ideal, for as long as the revolutionaries believed in the ideal, the revolution could succeed. Such political aims would also explain Martí’s refusal to point the finger squarely at white racists. This reading aligns with that of literary critic Charles Hatfield, who has asserted that “Martí’s claim that ‘there are no races’ was at least as much a calculated political gesture, within the context of Cuba’s complex nineteenth-century struggle for national sovereignty, as it was a manifestation of Martí’s

<sup>21</sup> José Martí, “My Race,” April 16, 1893, in *José Martí: Selected Writings*, ed. Esther Allen, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 318.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 318–319.

<sup>23</sup> Bronfman, *Measures of Equality*, 187.

<sup>24</sup> Martí, “My Race,” 319.

putative commitment to universal humanity.”<sup>25</sup> Certainly, Martí’s ideas about race were intimately bound up with the exigencies of the independence struggle in “Mi raza.” He responded directly to the Spanish regime, set on “dividing Cuban blacks from Cuban whites,” by twice assuring his reader that the narrative of “race war” was unfounded.<sup>26</sup> On the first of these occasions, Martí explicitly subordinated racial identities to national ones, writing, “in Cuba, there is no fear whatsoever of a race war. ‘Man’ means more than white, more than mulatto, more than Negro. ‘Cuban’ means more than white, more than mulatto, more than Negro. On the battlefields, the souls of whites and blacks who died for Cuba have risen together through the air.”<sup>27</sup> This was a common refrain in Martí’s writings as the onset of the decisive War of Independence (1895–1898) neared: in an article published in *Patria* in January of 1894, for example, Martí proclaimed that “Spain is deceiving itself. The Cuban Negro does not aspire to true freedom. . . . To the independence of man in the independence of the country, to the growth of human freedom in that independence—the Cuban Negro, we say, does not aspire to all these things as a Negro, but as a Cuban!”<sup>28</sup> Clearly, Martí’s raceless rhetoric cannot be divorced from his larger nationalist project: renouncing race was part and parcel of adopting a strong, unified Cuban identity.

## Rafael Serra y Montalvo

To recognize the fundamental tensions in Martí’s approach to race is not to suggest that Martí did not believe wholeheartedly in racial equality; his use of racelessness as a tool for fostering the independence movement did not preclude a genuine commitment to color-blind Cuba. Yet it is difficult to accept Foner’s characterization of Martí as utterly “uncompromising” in his antiracism. This is especially true when Martí is considered in relation to his Afro-Cuban contemporaries, whose commitment to true racial equality was more consistent and explicit.

No figure offers a more illuminating point of comparison than the prominent Black intellectual and organizer Rafael Serra y Montalvo. Serra’s beginnings were markedly different from Martí’s, but the two men walked similar paths en route to their leadership of the independence movement. Serra was born to formerly enslaved parents in Havana

<sup>25</sup> Charles Hatfield, “The Limits of ‘Nuestra América,’” *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 63, no. 2 (2010): 193.

<sup>26</sup> Martí, “My Race,” 320.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>28</sup> José Martí, “The Dish of Lentils,” January 5, 1894, in *Our America: Writings on Latin America and the Struggle for Cuban Independence*, by José Martí, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 319.

in 1858, five years after Martí, the son of Spanish émigrés, was born in the same city. In 1879, Serra founded the *Sociedad La Armonía* (Harmony Society) in Matanzas.<sup>29</sup> The Sociedad, one of many such *sociedades de color* (societies of color) to emerge following the Ten Years' War and Guerra Chiquita, arranged mutual aid services for its predominantly Black members as well as education for their children; it also disseminated a regular newspaper.<sup>30</sup> This marked the beginning of Serra's career in organizing and publishing. In 1880, facing persecution from colonial authorities, Serra fled to the U.S and eventually found his way to New York, where he became fast friends with other members of the transnational independence community, chief among them Martí. The two collaborated on many projects while in the U.S., most famously through an organization called *La Liga* (The League). La Liga served a similar purpose to the Sociedad, providing social and educational opportunities as well as financial support to its working-class, mostly Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican membership.<sup>31</sup> In a March 1892 *Patria* article simply entitled "Rafael Serra," Martí extolled Serra as "heroic."<sup>32</sup> In 1895, Serra responded in kind with an essay called "José Martí," which eulogized "the glorious Martí . . . that extraordinary man so original, brave, and opportune."<sup>33</sup> In fact, Serra's best-remembered venture was the newspaper he founded in 1896, *La Doctrina de Martí* (The Doctrine of Martí), which, as Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof put it in his book *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean*, aimed to "defend the sacred teachings of Martí."<sup>34</sup> Serra filled the front page of the paper's first issue with an essay entitled "*Nuestra labor*" ("Our Labor"), in which he declared that "we come from the school of Martí" and outlined a continued adherence to the independence cause: "We must direct our efforts for the triumph of the Independence of the country, and so that the rights of the people are real and not vague fiction: THIS IS OUR JOB."<sup>35</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising given the close attachment of these two men that, despite Serra's roots and lifelong advocacy for the interests of people of color, most of his writing did not acknowledge the distinct experience of Afro-Cubans. Instead, Serra

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<sup>29</sup> Raúl C. Galván, "Rafael Serra y Montalvo: The Man and His Work," *Caribe: Revista de Cultura y Literatura* 15, no. 2 (2012): 68–69.

<sup>30</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 129.

<sup>31</sup> Galván, "Rafael Serra," 70–72.

<sup>32</sup> José Martí, "Rafael Serra," March 26, 1892, in *Our America: Writings on Latin America and the Struggle for Cuban Independence*, by José Martí, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 310.

<sup>33</sup> Rafael Serra, "José Martí," June 1895, in *Ensayos Políticos*, vol. 2 (New York: P.J. Diaz, 1896), 194. Translation mine, as is the case with all of Serra's entries in the *Ensayos Políticos*.

<sup>34</sup> Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean, 1850-1902* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 226.

<sup>35</sup> Rafael Serra, "Nuestra labor," *La Doctrina de Martí*, July 25, 1896.

adopted Martí's program of a unified movement. In an essay entitled "*A todos*" ("To All"), published in the second volume of his *Ensayos Políticos* (Political Essays) in 1896, he entreated "all, without excluding anyone, and with the title of brothers, and encouraged by the purest desire, by the most ardent and cordial feeling . . . all Cubans" to "come practice the doctrine of Martí."<sup>36</sup> At times, Serra's subordination of racial difference to the ideal of raceless nationality was stark. In a speech delivered at a gathering of the Revolutionary Party, reproduced in the same book, Serra explained that he was "pleased how by the spontaneous persuasion of communal will, unity is realized; and how equality, in every way possible, unfolds and fertilizes among us. Well, Cubans and Puerto Ricans, whites and blacks, artisans and those who are not, the rich and the poor, we come together today in La Liga."<sup>37</sup> Serra's pluralistic depiction of La Liga belied the organization's abiding focus on the unique needs of the Black working class.

Perhaps Serra's diminishment of the true goals of La Liga reveals his wariness of disrupting the larger independence movement's momentum with too militant and too divisive an antiracism. The preface to the *Ensayos Políticos* includes a letter written to Serra by Manuel Barranco, a powerful New York cigar maker.<sup>38</sup> In it, Barranco commended Serra on his writing, which had "a style so natural that it comes out of [your] soul like the perfume of the calyx of the flower."<sup>39</sup> He further expressed a sense of allyship and an understanding of the arbitrariness of racial hierarchies, albeit in terms that made clear his internalized racism: "Why was the white race the one that received and spread the blessed light of science, the one that guided the chariot of Progress? . . . It could have happened that the civilizing race was the yellow or black race, and the white race would have occupied a lower position on the scale of humanity."<sup>40</sup> And yet Barranco also stressed the value of patience, promising Serra that racial justice would come, just not immediately:

Social equality . . . will not be the work of days, perhaps not years; but in the end it will happen. If today's generation does not see it, no matter. . . . My dear Serra, sow you and the good ones like you, everywhere and at all times, seeds of virtue and instruction. Be servants, be apostles, be martyrs

<sup>36</sup> Rafael Serra, "A todos," in *Ensayos Políticos*, vol. 2 (New York: P.J. Diaz, 1896), 123, 125.

<sup>37</sup> Rafael Serra, "Frases nobles," in *Ensayos Políticos*, vol. 2 (New York: P.J. Diaz, 1896), 75.

<sup>38</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations*, 159.

<sup>39</sup> Manuel F. Barranco to Rafael Serra, in *Ensayos Políticos*, by Rafael Serra, vol. 2 (New York: P.J. Diaz, 1896), 20.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 21–22.

of such a grandiose idea and plant the tree, so that if you do not reap the fruit, you will carry to your grave the halo of the benefactors of humanity.<sup>41</sup>

Barranco’s didactic, paternalistic tone and his emphasis on forbearance provide a clue about the atmosphere of the New York exile community: it is possible that Serra did not wish to alienate white supporters of the independence effort who were just coming around to the possibility of a raceless, egalitarian future. As Hoffnung-Garskof wrote, “Serra . . . worked with Martí to reassure wealthier white Cubans—many of whom worried that a revolution might unleash a black rebellion on the island—that black Cubans were ready to forgive the sins of slavery and ‘forget their color.’”<sup>42</sup>

Still, tactful though he may have been, Serra was not silent on the question of racial division in Cuba and the effort needed to overcome it. In the rare moments when Serra strayed from the color-blind party line—the moments when he explicitly invoked race, however fleetingly—subtle differences between Serra’s and Martí’s respective paradigms emerged. While he was happy to prioritize independence for all Cubans over racial uplift, at least in his public-facing texts, Serra time and time again asserted the importance of Black stakeholders in the movement against those who would question it. Take Serra’s conflict in 1896 and 1897 with the so-called Study Group, a cadre of New York notables convened to draft a Cuban constitution.<sup>43</sup> According to Hoffnung-Garskof, “North American journalists noted approvingly that the [Study Group] desired Cuba ‘to be wholly a white man’s republic, and while not wishing to deny their colored fellow workers a part in the victory that is to be achieved they do not intend that there shall be negro domination of the island.’”<sup>44</sup> Serra viewed the group’s formation as an affront to the mission of the Revolutionary Party and authored a series of articles in *La Doctrina* lampooning their racist vision, referring to them as “a note played out of tune, an exclusive note in the concert that has been wisely prepared for the resolution of the Cuban problem.”<sup>45</sup>

In an earlier example, in 1893, the New York newspaper *El Porvenir* (The Future)—run by Enrique Trujillo, an opponent of the Revolutionary Party—published an article dissenting from the hardline stance of the separatists and advocating instead for

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>43</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations*, 244–245.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Cuban autonomy under Spain.<sup>46</sup> Part of the piece seems to have criticized Black independence activists in particular.<sup>47</sup> Serra penned a response in a different publication, *El Radical* (The Radical).<sup>48</sup> As expected, Serra took issue with the autonomy solution, writing that “we independents do not have to accept anything that is compatible with Spanish domination.”<sup>49</sup> But he also endeavored to defend the Afro-Cuban revolutionary contingent, explaining that anything short of full freedom from oppression would not satisfy those who “were enervated, bled, disabled by everyone who wasn’t them.”<sup>50</sup> This attention to the longstanding oppression of Black Cubans departed from Martí’s attempt in “Mi raza” to dilute the historical reality of white racism in Cuba by focusing equally on the “black racist.” While Serra was careful to credit “the generous whites, those illustrious ones, those who fought to make our homeland,” he reminded the authors of the *Porvenir* piece that Black people, too, had been instrumental to the ongoing political upheaval on the island, for those “generous whites . . . found arms and love in the existence of blacks.”<sup>51</sup> Serra, then, understood the importance of projecting a racially unified movement, and elided racial tensions between white and Black radicals in the service of that end, but only so much. These episodes demonstrate a limit to Serra’s willingness to appease white Cuban nationalists by staying quiet on the issue of race.

The notion of the “generous white,” in fact, provides a clarifying lens through which to view the differences between Serra and Martí. Serra, while never disparaging the meaningful contributions of white Cubans to the project of independence, refused to tolerate anything but equal standing for white and Black revolutionaries. On the other hand, not only did Martí lace his raceless rhetoric with racialized thinking and minimize white Cubans’ culpability, but he at times perpetuated the narrative that Afro-Cubans ought to be grateful to their white peers—even their former owners—for liberating them from slavery and Spanish despotism. For example, in the 1894 *Patria* piece in which Martí stated that “the Cuban Negro, we say, does not aspire to [prosperity and independence] as a Negro, but as a Cuban,” he wrote that “the revolution was a mother, a saint, she who knocked the whip out of the slaveowner’s hand, thrust the Cuban Negro into life, rescued the Cuban Negro from ignominious existence and took him into her

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<sup>46</sup> Nicolás Kanellos, “Hispanic American Intellectuals Publishing in the Nineteenth-Century United States: From Political Tracts in Support of Independence to Commercial Publishing Ventures,” *Hispania* 88, no. 4 (2005): 690; Rafael Serra, “Gracias,” 1893, in *Ensayos Políticos*, vol. 2 (New York: P.J. Diaz, 1896), 168–169.

<sup>47</sup> Serra, “Gracias,” 171. Unfortunately, the *Porvenir* article itself is unavailable, so this inference is based on Serra’s response.

<sup>48</sup> Serra, “Gracias,” 172.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

arms. . . . *Made by slaveowners*, the revolution declared slaves free” (emphasis mine).<sup>52</sup> Martí framed the lead-up to the War of Independence—the Ten Years’ War, the Guerra Chiquita, and the eventual abolition of slavery—as somehow separate from Cuba’s Black population. In doing so, he stripped Afro-Cubans of the contributions they made to their own emancipation and to the freedom of their country, suggesting that the personified, implicitly white revolution “rescued” the indolent, uncouth “Negro.” Here, then, is a critical tension between Serra’s and Martí’s bodies of work: while both authors accepted the premise of racelessness and set their sights on the ultimate goal of independence above all forms of division, they conceived differently of the agency and respect that should be afforded to people of color, at least in the realm of historical remembrance.

Interestingly, perhaps the strongest evidence of this fundamental divergence rests not in the two authors’ attitudes toward their home country, but rather in their views on nearby Haiti. Serra embraced the Haitian Revolution as a forebear of the Cuban one: in another *Ensayos Políticos* entry, he listed historical figures who inspired the revolutionary movement, ranging from the prophet Muhammad to Gustavus Vassa to Abraham Lincoln.<sup>53</sup> Included among these “heroes” was Toussaint L’Ouverture. Serra noted proudly that “the noble, the generous Toussaint, the first among blacks and the liberator of Haiti, was a slave.”<sup>54</sup> Martí, meanwhile, worked to distance his imagined Cuban republic from its eastern neighbor. In March of 1894, he wrote in *Patria* that “this Haitian land is as unusual as it is remarkable, and so different from Cuba in origins and constitution that only crass ignorance could find a reason for comparing the two.” He continued: “There is an essential difference between the terrible and magnificent insurrection of the Haitian slaves, who have but recently left the African jungle . . . and the Cuban island where Negroes and white men in almost equal numbers are building a country for whose freedom they have been fighting together for so long against a common tyrant.”<sup>55</sup> Besides rehearsing highly racialized tropes that further undermined the plausibility of any claim to a raceless nationality, Martí here confirmed his wariness of Black militancy and indeed of a “Black” Cuba. No doubt sensitive to planters’ anxieties that revolution might lead to “another Haiti,” Martí exposed his own fear that a Cuba where “there are no races” might mean the empowerment of people with dark skin at the expense of those with light skin.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Martí, “The Dish,” 316.

<sup>53</sup> Rafael Serra, “Nadie lo sabe,” in *Ensayos Políticos*, vol. 2 (New York: P.J. Diaz, 1896), 98–100.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 97, 100.

<sup>55</sup> José Martí, “The Cubans of Jamaica and the Revolutionaries of Haiti,” March 31, 1894, in *Our America: Writings on Latin America and the Struggle for Cuban Independence*, by José Martí, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 321.

<sup>56</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 2.

## Conclusion

In his letters to “*mi amigo Serra*” (my friend Serra), Martí consistently referred to La Liga as “your society.”<sup>57</sup> This is strange considering that the organization, though it was dedicated to aiding Black expatriates, was by all accounts founded and run as a joint effort between the two; indeed, some historians have even given Martí the bulk of the credit for its inception.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps this seemingly trivial phrase—“your society”—in fact illuminates the core difference between the two men. While both Serra and Martí thought about race in extremely progressive terms for their time, the former, surely due in no small part to his own experience growing up as a Black person in a racially divided Cuba, proved unwilling to sacrifice Afro-Cuban visibility or fully subsume Afro-Cuban interests to the nationalist cause. Martí, despite his lofty aspirations, was unable to escape entirely the rigid racial understandings that had gripped the island for centuries. It is important to note, of course, that Martí’s raceless nationalism was far from impotent: as Ferrer wrote, “when noncombatants (or potential combatants) looked at the invading insurgent army [as it broke through to the west in 1896], they measured that army and its members against longstanding colonial claims about racial warfare, as well as newer nationalist claims about the impossibility of such warfare.”<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, enough westerners decided to embrace—or at least stomach—a race-blind Cuba, and Martí’s (and Serra’s) decades-long struggle for independence prevailed: by 1898, Cuba had achieved freedom from Spain.<sup>60</sup> Yet while the leaders of the new Cuban state maintained the promise of racial equality promoted by the father of their nation, they systematically removed Black revolutionaries from positions of power in the years following the war, partially to appease Cuba’s new de facto ruler, the U.S.<sup>61</sup> And while Afro-Cubans are by most measures better off in the twenty-first century than they were at the end of the nineteenth, Cuba remains highly racialized: Zurbano’s writings and experiences alone testify to that. It is, of course, difficult to determine how much of Cuba’s latter-day racial inequities can be traced back to the racial conceptions of the independence era. But as Serra exemplifies, there was room for a more radical—indeed, “uncompromising”—antiracism than the one Martí espoused.

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<sup>57</sup> José Martí to Rafael Serra, in *Ensayos Políticos*, by Rafael Serra, vol. 2 (New York: P.J. Diaz, 1896), 61.

<sup>58</sup> Galván, “Rafael Serra,” 72.

<sup>59</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 147.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 178–182.

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# INESCAPABLE DARKNESS: HYPNAGOGIA AND THE EARLY MODERN EXPERIENCE OF BEWITCHMENT

*Francesca Gibson*

## **Abstract**

In an attempt to rationalize the witch-hunts, the public and historians alike have adopted anachronistic approaches, suggesting that the accusers were simply driven by misogyny, ignorance, and even hallucinogenic mold. Current historiography acknowledges the idea that witchcraft could have real-world implications, but there has been minimal research into the role of psychological processes in the experience of bewitchment. Despite a growing body of scholarship on the reality of witchcraft and the prevalence of nocturnal incidents mentioned in primary sources, the role of nocturnal hallucinations (hypnagogia) in the witch-hunts has received little attention. Focusing on England from 1563-1640, this paper advocates for interdisciplinary approaches to history, arguing hypnagogia played an instrumental role in fueling the witch-hunts, exacerbating fears of bewitchment and corroborating witchcraft beliefs.



Goya y Lucientes, Francisco de, *Witches' Flight*, 1798, Oil on canvas. Madrid, Museo del Prado.

## Introduction

For two days, the widow Webbe watched her daughter Susan languish in a state of distress and pain until, eventually, her eyes became glassy, and her tiny limbs grew cold and stiff. Within a short time, the good wife Webbe had lost her child, leaving her without both a daughter and a husband—leaving her fully alone. Her heart heavy with loss and mind spinning with images of her daughter's lifeless form, she allowed her eyes to flutter shut, granting her passage into the world of sleep where she might experience

some reprieve from her misfortunes.<sup>1</sup> However, she soon found that her torments were not over.

The hazy morning light soon prompted the good wife Webbe to blink the sleep away and, as her groggy mind began to sharpen, her pulse spiked. Before her very eyes, a menacing black creature akin to a dog scuttled out of her door. Yet, she knew it was more than a dog—it was too unsettling, too *wrong* to be a dog. She could only describe it as “a thyng,” for she knew it was not of this world.<sup>2</sup> Upon seeing the thyng, her thoughts circled back to the final cries of her dying daughter that had urged “awaie with the Witche, awaie with the Witche.”<sup>3</sup> The good wife Webbe’s uncontrollable screams and sobs filled the air as realization struck; the Devil had paid her a visit.

Though the Webbes’ misfortunes read like a modern horror novel, they actually stem from the alleged events described in the 1579 English witchcraft pamphlet, *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, which documents the evidence, testimonies, and convictions of three witches in Essex.<sup>4</sup> Widow Webbe’s testimony describes how her daughter died after the accused witch, Ellein Smithe, struck her daughter in the face. Her daughter repeatedly accused Smithe of being a witch before she passed away, which already provided evidence to Webbe that Smithe had bewitched her daughter. Then, when she had a personal encounter with one of the witch’s spirits, her suspicions were corroborated. Beyond Webbe’s personal convictions, the sighting of the dog-like creature also served as legal evidence against Ellein Smithe, contributing to Smithe’s execution. Though, to modern eyes, the Webbe’s encounter with the “thyng” may be glossed over as superstitious nonsense or a paranoid delusion, doing so disregards a crucial component of the early modern witch-hunts and trials. Surviving primary sources pertaining to the English witch-hunts from 1563-1641, namely witchcraft pamphlets, demonstrate that sleep-related incidents like the good wife Webbe’s were not uncommon, and directly served as evidence in English witch prosecutions. Recent psychological and medical studies on parasomnias, defined as “sleep disorders characterized by undesirable

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<sup>1</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes, Practized By Three VVitches Arraigned at Chelmifforde in Essex, At the Laste Assises There Holden, Whiche Were Executed in Aprill. 1579: Set Forthe to Discover the Ambushementes of Sathan, Whereby He Would Surprise Us Lulled in Securitie, and Hardened with Contempte of Gods Vengeance Threatened for Our Offences*, pamphlet, 1579, Digital Witchcraft Collection, Cornell University Library Digital Collections, 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

behaviors with hallucinatory-like experiences as a clinical feature,” can shed light on such nocturnal incidents.<sup>5</sup>

Sleep disorders and, at minimum, unpleasant sleep experiences are often seen in modern people. Experiencing spine-tingling nightmares or even episodes of sleep paralysis, sleepwalking, or sleep terrors is not uncommon in the modern era, and such occurrences also frequently plagued early modern individuals. Yet, historians have failed to recognize and explore the role of sleep-related incidents in the experience of bewitchment and the establishment of the reality of witchcraft, though these experiences provide crucial insight into the beliefs behind and causes of the witch-hunts. In this paper, I will demonstrate that sleep-related hallucinations played an instrumental role in fueling the early modern English witch-hunts by exacerbating the fear of bewitchment and corroborating witchcraft beliefs. Additionally, I will shed further light on the experience of bewitchment by providing a modern frame of reference for the real-world impacts of witchcraft and witchcraft beliefs in England from 1563-1640. My findings are based on close analysis of early modern witchcraft pamphlets, religious texts, and medical treatises, examined through the lens of modern scholarship in the fields of history and psychology. They will also involve an extensive examination of historical scholarship on early modern sleep, the reality of witchcraft, and emotion as well as modern psychological and biological studies pertaining to parasomnias.

## Scholarly Debate: The English Witch-Hunts

The historiography on the causes of the early modern English witch-hunts has explored many different facets of the complex phenomenon of witchcraft. Speaking of this wide variety of perspectives, historian Katherine Hodgkins writes, “Witchcraft is a subject which puts the traditional conceptual frameworks of historiography under pressure, making disciplinary boundaries more permeable.”<sup>6</sup> Despite this diversity of

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<sup>5</sup> Flavie Waters et al., “What Is the Link Between Hallucinations, Dreams, and Hypnagogic–Hypnopompic Experiences?” *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 42, no. 5 (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, “Gender, Mind, and Body: Feminism and Psychoanalysis,” *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, ed. J. Barry, O. Davies, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 182-202.

approaches, scholarship on the English witch-hunts has been dominated by three main approaches: rationalism, relativism, and realism.<sup>7</sup>

The first recognized approach—rationalism—was most common in the early twentieth century, though it still appears in contemporary, non-academic discussions. Rationalism assumes an anachronistic viewpoint that considers witchcraft and witchcraft beliefs to be products of hyper-religiosity, superstition, or even stupidity.<sup>8</sup> In approaches utilizing rationalism, the witch-hunts are viewed in a way that conforms to modern beliefs about magic and witchcraft, so they typically do not use a lens of historical empathy. The rationalist approach has less relevance to current explorations of the witch-hunts in scholarly circles, but it is still important to address due to its prevalence in lay understandings of witchcraft. Dismissing the idea that, for early modern people, witchcraft actually existed obscures many of the forces that drove the English witch-hunts such as genuine fear and even destruction.

Relativism, which includes the socioeconomic model or “charity-refused model” pioneered by Keith Thomas and Alan MacFarlane in the 1970s, was accepted as the standard model of English witchcraft for decades.<sup>9</sup> Thomas and MacFarlane argued that English witchcraft differed from continental European witchcraft because pressures for witch prosecutions in England were bottom-up due to tensions among villagers.<sup>10</sup> Tensions were often, according to Thomas and MacFarlane, over disagreements pertaining to charity, incomplete payments, or other everyday issues in early modern England.<sup>11</sup> By focusing on village pressures, MacFarlane and Thomas also argued that the concept of *maleficium*, which historian Brian Levack defines as harmful magic conducted with “extraordinary, mysterious, occult, preternatural, or supernatural power,” was more important to the development of witchcraft beliefs in England than the elite concern over diabolism—Devil worship to gain powers of witchcraft and favors—prominent in continental Europe.<sup>12</sup> In early modern Europe, villagers were

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<sup>7</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, “The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft,” *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008): 1069–88.

<sup>8</sup> Gaskill, “The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft.”

<sup>9</sup> Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, 10; Malcolm Gaskill, “Witchcraft Trials in England,” *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian Levack, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, (London: Routledge, 2019), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, 9–10.

<sup>11</sup> Alan MacFarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 4; 7; Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, 10.

typically more concerned with the threat of *maleficent* actions because they posed active, everyday threats to village property and life, while the elite were focused on the diabolic nature of witchcraft due to its religious and philosophical implications.<sup>13</sup> Specifically in England, pressures were largely bottom-up due to the illegality of judicial torture, which made the dissemination of concerns over diabolism among the elite less prevalent; confessions concerning diabolism were frequently derived from torture, which would spread among the elite, creating and corroborating ideas about diabolism within witchcraft.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, villagers in England viewed witchcraft as more immediately threatening than the elite, making English witchcraft more *maleficent* in nature. Through these bottom-up tensions, the socioeconomic model posited that accusations of witchcraft in England were used to explain everyday village misfortune after tense exchanges where the wealthy would deny charity to the poor.<sup>15</sup> However, the socio-economic model proposed by Thomas and MacFarlane has faced criticism for its rigid structure, which does not allow for variation in the demographics of the accused—not all accused witches were low-income, elderly women. Despite these shortcomings, it was crucial to the field since it provided a firm foundation for exploring the English witch-hunts on their own terms and crucially distanced historical studies from the rationalist model.<sup>16</sup>

In recent decades, scholars have begun to focus on the “reality” of witchcraft, seeking to understand early modern witchcraft beliefs on their own terms. The words “witchcraft” and “bewitchment” typically conjure up images of fantasy novels, horror movies, or political allegories, warping popular understandings of the early modern European witch-hunts through rationalism. This view assumes that witchcraft has had no influence beyond harmless superstitions, metaphors, and stories when, in reality, witchcraft could directly and indirectly result in harm such as injury and even death. In contemporary depictions, witches and witchcraft have been involved in narratives regarding McCarthyism, the Me Too movement, feminism, and sexual empowerment, which all generally focus on the idea of baseless prosecution and hatred towards a specific person or group. So, it is not surprising when considering the prevalence of such analogies that, when asked about the causes of early modern witch-hunts, most believe that the early modern witch-hunts stemmed from a hatred of women or religious

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<sup>13</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Gaskill, “The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft.”

intolerance. Though these ideas have some legitimacy, popular views of the witch-hunts do not involve the concept that people were indeed practicing or experiencing *maleficia*—harmful witchcraft.<sup>17</sup> Unlike modern skepticism, though, recent historical scholarship on the “reality of witchcraft” has acknowledged that magical practices did occur and could have real-world impacts, which is understood as the realism approach.<sup>18</sup>

Archeological and anthropological findings have offered substantial evidence to support the idea that magic has been legitimately practiced in a variety of cultures and time periods, including early modern Europe.<sup>19</sup> Real practices of *beneficent*—helpful, good magic—included charms to ward off evil and herbal remedies, which would often be accompanied by incantations or prayers.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, some individuals genuinely practiced *maleficia*, which could involve physical attacks, such as assault or poison, as well as occult injury, which the historian Edward Bever says entailed “harms inflicted without any physical medium of attack being specified.”<sup>21</sup> The prosecution of Ellein Smithe for witchcraft, the trial in which the good wife Webbe testified, exemplifies an instance where *maleficium* involved physical assault; according to *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, Ellein Smithe gave Sarah Webbe, the good wife Webbe’s four-year-old child, “...a blowe on the face...” that ultimately killed the young child.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, however, physical means of attack, such as poison and assault, was not the only vehicle for *maleficent* acts—occult injury was also identified in witch trials. The 1618 pamphlet, *The Wonderful Discoverie of the VVitchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower*, demonstrates an instance where *maleficium* was allegedly inflicted without a physical attack as Margaret Flower was said to have, “...many times cursed them all that were the cause of this discontentment...” so that they were, “...many times subiect to sicknesse and extra|ordinary conuulsions...” due to her words.<sup>23</sup> In both cases, the accused were

<sup>17</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, xvii; Gaskill, “The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft.”

<sup>19</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, “The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft,” *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008): 1087; Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 12-13; Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, 154.

<sup>20</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45.

<sup>23</sup> *The Wonderful Discoverie of the VVitchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower, Daughters of Ioan Flower Neere Beuer Castle: Executed at Lincolne, March 11, 1618, Who Were Specially Arraigned and Condemned Before Sir Henry Hobart, and Sir Edward Bromley, Judges of Assise, for Confessing Themselves Actors in the Destruction of Henry L. Rosse, with their Damnable Practises Against Others the Children of the Right Honourable Francis Earle of Rutland. Together with the Seuerall Examinations and Confessions of Anne Baker, Ioan Willimot, and Ellen Greene, witches in Leicestershire*, (London: G. Eld, 1619; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

convicted of and executed for the crime of witchcraft, exhibiting the different faces of *maleficia* that were utilized or, more often, *believed* to be utilized.<sup>24</sup>

In general, a modern audience dismisses the existence of magic such as witchcraft; however, while there is no evidence for the existence of magic in a traditional sense, witchcraft could shape the physiological and psychological experiences of those on the receiving end of magical acts. Historians like Bever and Robin Briggs have begun to research the experience of bewitchment, demonstrating how people could actually “suffer the effects of the witch’s power” during occult attacks, suggesting that the fear of witchcraft had a basis in reality.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, Edward Bever has explored the physiological aspects of bewitchment in relation to stress or occult poisonings as well as the psychological impacts of stress caused by witchcraft beliefs.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to recognize that, though there is evidence that some people in early modern Europe did practice *maleficia*, the majority of the alleged witches likely did not.<sup>27</sup> However, genuine acts of *maleficia* were not necessary to experience bewitchment. Simply *believing* that a person had used harmful magic would have also generated significant fear and stress that could have caused adverse physiological changes or weakened the immune system, implying that “curses, threats, and other expressions of ill-will have genuine power against the suggestible.”<sup>28</sup> In England, the alleged victims of witchcraft usually attributed witchcraft to elderly women with financial dependence on the community.<sup>29</sup> These common characteristics constructed an image of the typical witch, creating a narrative that was reflected in reported experiences of hypnagogia. However, negative interactions with both rumored witches and non-stereotypical figures had the potential to cause stress, which is known to weaken the immune system and cause physical symptoms of illness. Individuals would then define any arising symptoms as the result of bewitchment, effectively granting *maleficia* real capabilities and consequences.<sup>30</sup> Interpretations of witchcraft were more likely, though, if the accused met the stereotypical descriptions of a witch because negative interactions would have

<sup>24</sup> Edward Bever, “Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community,” *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 4 (2002), 955-88.

<sup>25</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, 185; Robin Briggs, “The Experience of Bewitchment,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London: Routledge, 2002), 57.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Briggs, “The Experience of Bewitchment,” 58.

<sup>29</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 128-47.

<sup>30</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, 20.

invoked more stress. Additionally, if a person became ill for unrelated reasons within close temporal proximity to a negative interaction, then those symptoms could also be interpreted as the result of witchcraft. However, because accused witches should be presumed innocent to avoid victim-blaming, according to Bever, research concerning the reality of the early modern European witch-hunts should aim to provide “new insights into why the fear that fueled them existed and what their consequences were,” rather than attempting to assign guilty verdicts or justify the persecution of thousands of people.<sup>31</sup> Research into the reality of the witch-hunts gives historians—and the contemporary public—a better understanding of why the witch-hunts occurred. It also encourages empathy for the early modern people whose lives have been reduced to fictionalized tropes in contemporary popular culture.

Despite the prevalence of parasomnias, clinically disruptive sleep disorders, in the witch trials, their role in the early modern experience of bewitchment has received little attention in historical circles. A few scholars have addressed the role of sleep disorders in fostering witchcraft suspicions, including Owen Davies in 2003, Janine Rivière in 2013, and Margaret Dudley and Julian Goodare in 2013. These works explore the role of sleep disorders in the experience of bewitchment but fail to engage with the latest scientific research on parasomnias. Some even draw on outmoded Freudian-based psychoanalytic theories with an emphasis on sexual repression or guilt.<sup>32</sup> They also focus almost exclusively on sleep paralysis, a sensation of paralysis that occurs while a person is conscious and transitioning from being asleep to being awake or vice versa, and do not consider the implications of other common parasomnias. While these contributions have set the stage for exploring the psychological facets of the experience of bewitchment, by focusing solely on sleep paralysis, they miss an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the experience of bewitchment and the role of nighttime experiences in fueling the witch-hunts, which this work seeks to remedy.

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<sup>31</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, xix; Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Owen Davies, “The Nightmare Experience, Sleep Paralysis, and Witchcraft Accusations,” *Folklore* 114, no. 2 (2003): 181. *Gale In Context: Biography*; Janine Rivière, “Demons of Desire or Symptoms of Disease?” in *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions the Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. Ann Marie Plane et al., (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 49-71; Margaret Dudley and Julian Goodares, “Outside In or Inside Out: Sleep Paralysis and Scottish Witchcraft,” in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*, ed. Julian Goodares (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 121-139.

## Understanding Early Modern Sleep

O Lord, as thou hast appointed the Night to refresh our bodies, I humbly pray thee, to defend me (as well sleeping as waking) from the snares of the Devil...Thou knowest, O Lord, that of myself I have no strength waking, much less when I sleep: I humbly therefore pray thee, to defend my Soul, Body, Goods, (and all things which thou hast bestowed upon me) this Night, from all evil and damage; and so dispose of me, that I be not troubled with any terrors.<sup>33</sup>

This prayer from early modern England provides a window into the premodern experience of sleep and the night—an experience marked by vulnerability, discomfort, and uncertainty that are crucial for understanding the early modern perception of parasomnias.<sup>34</sup> During the early modern period, most bedtime and nighttime prayers, “...appealed directly for divine protection from nocturnal harm, including ‘sudden Death, Fears, and Affrightments...’”, demonstrating that many of the anxieties surrounding sleep in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were associated with Christian concepts such as the Devil and sin, which were symbols also inherently related to the early modern understanding of witchcraft.<sup>35</sup> Religion, specifically Christianity, provided an interpretive framework for understanding dreams and sleep disorders after waking, and it also served as a source of material that could be experienced within dreams and nocturnal occurrences themselves. The link between nighttime and religion meant that frightening or disturbing incidents such as nightmares were viewed as punishment from God for sins, or were seen as the tangible encroachment of diabolical evils into the world.<sup>36</sup> Sleep-related experiences could also directly incorporate specific aspects of witchcraft beliefs into dreams and other nocturnal occurrences; in other words, nightmares and other sleep disorders were not simply interpreted in a way that made sense in a cultural context, but this cultural context could

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<sup>33</sup> Lancelot Andrewes, *Holy devotions, with directions to pray also a brief exposition upon [brace] the Lords prayer, the creed, the Ten commandments, the 7 penitential psalms, the 7 psalms of thanksgiving: together with a letanie* (London: Printed for A. Seile, 1663; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

<sup>34</sup> Sasha Handley, “Faithful Slumber,” in *Sleep in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 69–71; A. Roger Ekirch, “Sleep We Have Lost: Pre-Industrial Slumber in the British Isles,” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 2 (2001), 353.

<sup>35</sup> Ekirch, “Sleep We Have Lost: Pre-Industrial Slumber in the British Isles,” 357.

<sup>36</sup> Handley, “Faithful Slumber,” 72.

also form the content of these night time experiences. Thus, people afraid of a suspected witch or her demonic familiars, agents of the Devil and witches seen in English witchcraft, were liable to perceive these feared enemies during nocturnal experiences.<sup>37</sup>

Sleep had the ability to affirm and even expand upon people's notions about worldly and religious dangers, granting terrors a path to becoming real. In a world without artificial lighting besides candles, the darkness would have felt expansive, giving life to dangerous animals, people, and the beckoning shadows of the Devil. One 1613 witchcraft pamphlet directly relates the early modern fear of the night to the Devil, providing insight into people's emotional associations with darkness with the words:

He that doth euill, hateth light, so these Impes that liue in the gunshot of diuellish assaults, goe about to darken and disgrace the light of such as are toward, and vertuous, and make the night the instrument to contriue their wicked purposes.<sup>38</sup>

Sleep also made people feel particularly vulnerable to these evils because, during a state of rest, a person usually has little or no control over their surroundings, intensifying the anxiety that surrounded bedtime. Many people adopted rituals like prayers, specific sleep habits, and even magical incantations to protect them from the looming darkness.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, sometimes these sleep rituals actually intensified anxiety, with people being wary of oversleeping for fear of falling into the sin of slothfulness and questioning even positive dreams for fear that they were tricks of the Devil.<sup>40</sup>

Examining the sleep habits of early modern Europeans helps explain why some parasomnia episodes may have occurred and, more importantly, how those episodes contributed to the experience of bewitchment and subsequent prosecution of the accused. In the early modern era, people slept in a biphasic sleep pattern, which meant

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<sup>37</sup> Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, 63.

<sup>38</sup> *Witches apprehended, examined and executed, for notable villanies by them committed both by land and water With a strange and most true triall how to know whether a woman be a witch or not* (London: William Stansby, 1613; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

<sup>39</sup> Ekirch, "Sleep We Have Lost: Pre-Industrial Slumber in the British Isles," 357; Handley, "Faithful Slumber," 86-90.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Bradwell, *Physick for the sicknesse, commonly called the plague With all the particular signes and symptoms, whereof the most are too ignorant. Collected, out of the choicest authors, and confirmed with good experience; for the benefit and preservation of all, both rich and poore. By Stephen Bradwell, of London physician* (London: Benjamin Fisher, 1636; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership); John Cotta, *The triall of vvitch-craft shewing the true and right methode of the discouery: with a confutation of erroneous wayes. By John Cotta, Doctor in Physicke* (London: John Legat, 1624; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

that they had two distinct segments of sleep at night and, after the “first sleep,” would stay awake for an hour or two before going back to bed for a “second sleep.”<sup>41</sup> According to historian Roger Ekirch, people would use that space between first and second sleep to engage in a variety of activities including chores, sex, and prayer.<sup>42</sup> They would also discuss the dreams that they had experienced during sleep, or that had even bled into their waking moments in the form of realistic hallucinations. Ekirch notes this as significant because, “Not only were these visions unusually vivid, but their images would have intruded far less on conscious thought had sleepers not stirred until dawn.”<sup>43</sup> The specific sleep pattern that early modern people experienced encouraged people to ruminate over visions and experiences that may have otherwise been entirely forgotten by morning. Research on this waking moment has also found higher levels of prolactin, a hormone that is known for inducing an, “altered state of consciousness not unlike meditation,” which suggests that this period of time between first and second sleep involved a unique mental state between the conscious and unconscious mind.<sup>44</sup> Biphasic sleep also created a unique atmosphere between these two segments where the world of sleep and waking merged, where darkness shrouded all surroundings, where nightly torments could feel all too real.

Sleep deprivation was also common in early modern Europe, further contributing to the development of parasomnias.<sup>45</sup> Ekirch hypothesizes that, for early modern Europeans, the first and second sleep segments were roughly three hours each, which, when combined, is lower than the length of sleep recommended for adults by modern physicians.<sup>46</sup> In England, shorter sleep cycles were encouraged, likely contributing to sleep deprivation, because excessive sleep was interpreted through the lens of Christianity as slothful and, thus, sinful. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century physicians emphasized the dangers of excessive sleep, with one even warning that it could make people more prone to the plague. He wrote that, “*Sleepe* eyther immoderate or unseasonable, hindereth digestion, and causes crudities...Let your *sleepe* therefore be seasonable, and not superfluous” and “let five or sixe hours suffice for *sleepe*,”

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<sup>41</sup> Ekirch, “Sleep We Have Lost: Pre-Industrial Slumber in the British Isles,” 344.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>46</sup> A. Roger Ekirch, “The Modernization of Western Sleep or, Does Insomnia Have a History?” *Past & Present* 226, no. 226 (2015): 161; Jean-Philippe Chaput, “Sleep Duration and Health in Adults: An Overview of Systematic Reviews,” *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* 45, no. 10 (2020): 218–231.

demonstrating the early modern belief that shorter sleep cycles were conducive to better health and should be encouraged.<sup>47</sup> Christianity shaped sleep by providing an interpretive framework and source material for nocturnal experiences, but it also encouraged sleep deprivation due to its intersection with medical beliefs. Furthermore, the physical environments in which people slept were not conducive to restful sleep, as people frequently shared beds, some even sharing living spaces with animals, and were encouraged to sleep with access to a cool breeze.<sup>48</sup> Sleep was already short, and, given early modern living conditions, it was also frequently disrupted. This combination of early modern living conditions and medical beliefs no doubt resulted in sleep deprivation for most early modern Europeans, thus creating optimal conditions for the occurrence of parasomnias.<sup>49</sup>

## Hypnagogic and Hypnopompic Hallucinations

Historical research concerning the witch-hunts has focused on sleep paralysis, but little research has been conducted on hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations (HHEs), generalized also as hypnagogia, which are hallucinations that occur during the wake-to-sleep transition or the sleep-to-wake transition.<sup>50</sup> In historical research on the witch-hunts, hypnagogia are often simply considered as a component of sleep paralysis, not as their own phenomena that has implications in the experience of bewitchment. The experience of the good wife Webbe exemplifies the need to isolate the role of hypnagogia in the experience of bewitchment. As described, the morning after her child's death, the good wife Webbe saw a dog-like creature in her bedroom, which

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<sup>47</sup> Bradwell, *Physick for the sicknesse, commonly called the plague With all the particular signes and symptoms, whereof the most are too ignorant. Collected, out of the choycest authors, and confirmed with good experience; for the benefit and preservation of all, both rich and poore. By Stephen Bradwell, of London physician.*

<sup>48</sup> Ekirch, "Sleep We Have Lost: Pre-Industrial Slumber in the British Isles," 361; Sasha Handley, "Sleeping at Home," in *Sleep in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 119.

<sup>49</sup> Ambra Stefani and Birgit Högl, "Nightmare Disorder and Isolated Sleep Paralysis," *Neurotherapeutics* 18, no. 1 (2020): 100–106; Dan Denis, "Relationships Between Sleep Paralysis and Sleep Quality: Current Insights," *Nature and Science of Sleep* 10 (2018); Dan Denis, Christopher C. French, and Alice M. Gregory, "A Systematic Review of Variables Associated with Sleep Paralysis," *Sleep Medicine Reviews* 38 (2017): 141–57; Dan Denis and Giulia L. Poerio, "Terror and Bliss? Commonalities and Distinctions between Sleep Paralysis, Lucid Dreaming, and Their Associations with Waking Life Experiences," *Journal of Sleep Research* 26, no. 1 (2017): 38–47; Brian A. Sharpless and Karl Doghramji, *Sleep Paralysis: Historical, Psychological, and Medical Perspectives* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2015): 200.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

caused her to become “distraught out of her wittes.”<sup>51</sup> The description alludes to a physical and likely verbal response to her sighting, making it inappropriate to relate her testimony to sleep paralysis due to her lack of paralysis. However, based on her emotional reaction, clear recollection, and conviction in the reality of her vision, the good wife Webbe’s experience aligns with the characteristics of hypnagogia.<sup>52</sup> Because her nocturnal visitation does not meet the criteria for sleep paralysis, in previous historical examinations of the role of sleep disorders in the experience of bewitchment and the witch-hunts, Webbe’s account was not applicable; by examining hypnagogia as an isolated phenomena, Webbe’s testimony becomes relevant for understanding the impact of sleep disorders on the English witch-hunts. Otherwise, her vision could be written off as psychosis, grief, or even a vengeful lie.<sup>53</sup>

The good wife Webbe’s experience illustrates how hypnagogia could be shaped by or explained with cultural concepts of *maleficia* in early modern England. She described a “thyng like to a blacke Dogge,” demonstrating that, though the vision is ambiguous enough to be described as a “thyng,” she rationalized it to align with early modern English symbols.<sup>54</sup> Prior to 1640, familiars were described as adopting the form of animals such as dogs, cats, and toads, or as “imps.”<sup>55</sup> By interpreting the creature as dog-like, she demonstrated how witchcraft beliefs granted cultural relevance to hypnagogia, making them feel terrifyingly real at an individual level and, thus, corroborating and expanding upon the fears of witchcraft that drove the witch-hunts.

Additionally, hypnagogia could be used as evidence of bewitchment in legal testimonies because they incorporate cultural schemas and appear to be legitimate occurrences. Webbe’s vision was used as evidence against a suspected witch, Ellein Smithe, who was found guilty of witchcraft and executed at Chelmsforde in 1579.<sup>56</sup> Though there were other pieces of evidence presented at the trial according to the pamphlet *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, the indictment notes that Ellein Smithe was

<sup>51</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45.

<sup>52</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45; Waters et al., “What Is the Link Between Hallucinations, Dreams, and Hypnagogic–Hypnopompic Experiences?”; Armando D’Agostino and Ivan Limosani, “Hypnagogic Hallucinations and Sleep Paralysis,” in *Narcolepsy* (NY, New York: Springer New York, 2010), 87–97.

<sup>53</sup> Maurice Ohayon, “Prevalence of Hallucinations and Their Pathological Associations in the General Population,” *Psychiatry Research* 97, no. 2 (2000): 153–64; Waters et al., “What Is the Link Between Hallucinations, Dreams, and Hypnagogic–Hypnopompic Experiences?”. Some samples of the general population have estimated the prevalence of HHEs to be up to 70%, which further contributes to the logic of using hypnagogia as a way to understand historical perspectives.

<sup>54</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45.

<sup>55</sup> Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 63.

<sup>56</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45.

ultimately convicted for the murder of Susan Webbe, the good wife Webbe's daughter.<sup>57</sup> Without the good wife Webbe's testimony, in which hypnagogia played a critical role, Ellein Smithe's prosecution would have been unsuccessful. Perhaps, if this occurrence was isolated, it would not seem notable. However, the good wife Webbe's testimony is representative of a larger pattern concerning the presence of hypnagogia in the early modern English experience of bewitchment as depicted in pamphlets and trial testimonies from 1563-1641—a pattern that historians have almost entirely neglected. In testimonies visible in sources such as witchcraft pamphlets prior to the English Civil War, hypnagogia played a significant role in the experience of bewitchment, contributing to the fear of witchcraft, the prosecution of alleged witches, and the construction of witchcraft beliefs.

How did hypnagogia in early modern England become so entangled in the experience of bewitchment, though? Post-sleep interpretation, as demonstrated by the good wife Webbe, certainly could and did play a role; however, while Webbe's vision was qualified with the word "thyng" to demonstrate its general ambiguity, other hypnagogia between 1563 and 1641 were more realistic and identifiable within a partial-sleep state.<sup>58</sup> Modern psychological research explains why early modern individuals could see, hear, or feel detailed sensations pertaining overtly to bewitchment by largely agreeing that hypnagogia involve the mistranslation of real-world stimuli with applied cultural and individual constructs.<sup>59</sup> For example, a study in 2005 found that some Cambodian refugees who experienced sleep paralysis had intruder hallucinations with recognizable Khmer Rouge uniforms, providing evidence for the presence of semantic associations in

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<sup>57</sup> Marianne Hester, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 173.

<sup>58</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Baland Jalal, "The Neuropharmacology of Sleep Paralysis Hallucinations: Serotonin 2A Activation and a Novel Therapeutic Drug," *Psychopharmacology* 235, no. 11 (2018): 3083-91; Baland Jalal and Vilayanur S. Ramachandran, "Sleep Paralysis, 'The Ghostly Bedroom Intruder' and Out-of-Body Experiences: The Role of Mirror Neurons," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 11 (2017): 92; Waters et al., "What Is the Link Between Hallucinations, Dreams, and Hypnagogic-Hypnopompic Experiences?". A commonly accepted theory for why hypnagogia occurs is that remnants of REM sleep may bleed into reality upon waking or falling asleep. With visual hallucinations, serotonin intended to activate a person's waking consciousness causes oversaturation during the in-between state, which over-activates the receptors that give personal meaning to meaningless stimuli in a process like that of psychedelic hallucinations or psychosis. These receptors would primarily affect the visual cortex and amygdala, which are involved in seeing and responding to threats, respectively.

episodes of sleep paralysis.<sup>60</sup> In that situation, it is reasonable to assume that the presence of an unknown intruder would become even more upsetting when it is incorporated with the frightening—even traumatic—symbols of an oppressor who has posed real-world danger to the person experiencing the episode. For a person in early modern England where beliefs in and practices of *maleficia* could cause genuine harm, an episode of sleep paralysis with culture-specific and even individual-specific witchcraft imagery would be similarly terrifying. The hallucinations feel *real* because the mind is conscious and processing real stimuli—the stimuli are just being routed through a filter that sprinkles in fear and personal meaning.<sup>61</sup> In a society steeped in fears of witchcraft, shadows in the corner of a dark room may transform into the figure of the woman who argued with you earlier that day, and the dust swirling in a strong draught might begin to grow hair and a tail as it slinks closer and closer. Such experiences occurred in the case of a peddler named John Law, whose story was included in a trial testimony in 1612. The pamphlet, *Discovery of Witches: The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*, describes how, after getting into bed at an ale house, “...he saw a great Black-Dogge stand by him, with very fearfull fire eyes, great teeth, and a terrible countenance, looking him in the face; whereat he was very sore afraid.”<sup>62</sup> Then, the testimony related how the suspected witch came into his chamber and stared at him before leaving, demonstrating how pre-existing notions of witchcraft, including familiars, and personal experiences could inform visions and their interpretations. Furthermore, John Law’s account demonstrates how terrifying such events were, granting insight into how hypnagogia could intensify the fear of witchcraft on an individual level and, in turn, how that individual fear could be translated into a greater atmosphere of anxiety concerning witchcraft with the dissemination of individual experiences of bewitchment.

Similarly to sleep paralysis, hypnagogia can present in multiple ways, so it is important to recognize how their different forms may appear in the experience of bewitchment; hypnagogia can be visual, auditory, somatic, or any combination of the three.<sup>63</sup> Visual hypnagogia commonly appear in English witchcraft pamphlets as

<sup>60</sup> Sharpless and Doghramji, *Sleep Paralysis: Historical, Psychological, and Medical Perspectives*, 118; Devon Hinton et al., “Sleep Paralysis Among Cambodian Refugees: Association with PTSD Diagnosis and Severity,” *Depression and Anxiety* 22, no. 2 (2005): 47-51; Todd Girard, “The Seahorse, the Almond, and the Night-Mare: Elaborative Encoding During Sleep-Paralysis Hallucinations?” *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 36, no. 6 (2013): 618-19.

<sup>61</sup> Todd Girard, “The Seahorse, the Almond, and the Night-Mare: Elaborative Encoding During Sleep-Paralysis Hallucinations?” *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 36, no. 6 (2013): 618-19.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Potts, *Discovery of Witches: The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (Manchester: Charles Simms and Co., 1613).

<sup>63</sup> Waters et al., “What Is the Link Between Hallucinations, Dreams, and Hypnagogic-Hypnopompic Experiences?”

evidence of bewitchment. These visual hypnagogia can be extremely complex, appearing as animals or even people, which could have been easily interpreted as evidence for witchcraft because of their realism and reflection of accepted witchcraft beliefs.<sup>64</sup> However, visual hypnagogia can also involve more simple images like “geometric patterns, shapes, and light flashes.”<sup>65</sup> Both complex and simple visual hypnagogia can be seen in the pamphlets and autobiographical accounts.<sup>66</sup> In *A Brief Treatise*, for example, Richard Galis’s autobiographical 1579 account of his experiences with bewitchment, he wrote, “...about twelue a clock in the night a shodowe of a huge and mightie black Cat, appeered in my Chamber, which y<sup>e</sup> more as shee approched neer my bed side: so much the more began my here to stand vpright, my hart to faint.”<sup>67</sup> He then said that he could only break free and call for help after his fear had mounted considerably, demonstrating that the experience had caused considerable distress. Interestingly, Galis mentioned that, after the cat’s visitation, he thought about how his brother had been bewitched and then immediately interpreted his own experience as the work of *maleficia*. In doing so, Galis’s account demonstrates the way that cultural concepts, personal experiences, and individual beliefs could have shaped the perception of parasomnias and, subsequently, the experience of bewitchment.<sup>68</sup> Considering the modern psychology of hypnagogia, it is not surprising that detailed, nighttime sightings of a reputed witch or demonic familiars—as seen in the case of Galis—would be interpreted as bewitchment. Even without the presence of sleep paralysis, complex visions could still result in fear and even physiological effects of stress, suggesting that complex visual hypnagogia played a role in individual experiences and the overall atmosphere of fear that fueled the witch hunts.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.; Cheyne, Rueffer, and Newby-Clark, “Hypnagogic and Hypnopompic Hallucinations during Sleep Paralysis: Neurobiological and Cultural Construction of the Night-Mare,” 319-37; Girard “The Seahorse, the Almond, and the Night-Mare: Elaborative Encoding During Sleep-Paralysis Hallucinations?” 618-19.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45; Thomas Potts, *Discovery of Witches: The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (Manchester: Charles Simms and Co., 1613; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership); *Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed, for Notable Villanies by Them Committed Both by Land and Water: With a Strange and Most True Triall How to Know Whether a Woman Be a Witch or Not*, (London: Printed for Edward Marchant, 1613; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership); Richard Galis, *A Brief Treatise Containing the Most Strange and Horrible Cruelty of Elizabeth Stile Alias Rockingham and Her Confederates, Executed at Abingdon, upon R. Galis* (London: J. Allde, 1579; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

<sup>67</sup> Galis, *A Brief Treatise Containing the Most Strange and Horrible Cruelty of Elizabeth Stile*.

<sup>68</sup> Sharpless and Doghramji, *Sleep Paralysis: Historical, Psychological, and Medical Perspectives*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> D’Agostino and Limosani, “Hypnagogic Hallucinations and Sleep Paralysis,” 87-97.

Fascinatingly, even more benign images, like lights and geometric patterns, were used as evidence for bewitchment, implying that hypnagogia themselves became a recognizable facet of the experience of bewitchment. The testimony of William Somers in a pamphlet from 1600 contains a less complex hypnagogic hallucination that was still accepted as legal evidence for bewitchment. William Somers was allegedly threatened by an old woman after he refused to give her goods, saying: "...it had been as good for him to have given it to her."<sup>70</sup> Following the incident with the old woman, who would have aligned with the stereotypical traits of early modern English witches, William Somers experienced what modern psychologists would likely identify as an hypnagogic hallucination.<sup>71</sup> The pamphlet writes that, "In the night he saw a strange light in the chamber where he lay, which cast him into a great fear, and thus he continued frightened for a time."<sup>72</sup> Though he simply saw a light, not a demonic creature or witch, his experience was important enough to include in the pamphlet and is still viewed as proof that the woman had bewitched him. Its inclusion suggests that hypnagogia were common enough in the experience of bewitchment that their symptoms, including seemingly waking visions and fear, were indicative of *maleficia* even without cultural symbolism.

The implications of all visual hypnagogia having the potential to be labeled as bewitchment, not just a small portion of complex hypnagogia or hallucinations with sleep paralysis, are startling. Because a benign hypnagogic hallucination could be used as evidence of witchcraft in a public pamphlet, it is not unreasonable to argue that, when early modern people had hypnagogia involving negative emotions, they would have likely interpreted them as having a relationship to the Devil and, thus, as engaging in witchcraft. Even visions with positive emotions were feared and could be attributed to the Devil, demonstrated by the writings of John Cotta in 1624 that criticized allegedly God-given visions, "That by the likely counterfeit of the true visions, dreams and revelations of God, the Devil hath ever usually practiced to be taken and esteemed as

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<sup>70</sup> John Darrell, *A True Narration of the Strange and Greuous Vexation by the Devil, of 7 Persons in Lancashire, and VWilliam Somers of Nottingham Wherein the Doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniakes out of the Word of God is Particularly Applied vnto Somers, and the Rest of the Persons Controuerted: Togeather with the Vse We are to Make of These Workes of God.* By Iohn Darrell, Minister of the Word of God, (England: Imprinted by the English Secret Press, 1600; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

<sup>71</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 128-146.

<sup>72</sup> Darrell, *A True Narration of the Strange and Greuous Vexation by the Devil, of 7 Persons in Lancashire, and VWilliam Somers of Nottingham Wherein the Doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniakes out of the Word of God is Particularly Applied vnto Somers, and the Rest of the Persons Controuerted: Togeather with the Vse We are to Make of These Workes of God.* By Iohn Darrell, Minister of the Word of God.

God: the allowance whereof by men is high blasphemy against God, and ignorant occult adoration of Devils.”<sup>73</sup> It is possible that, due to religious fears of the Devil, both positive and negative hypnagogia could heighten anxieties about the Devil’s influence.

Therefore, based on early modern perceptions of hypnagogic hallucinations, HHEs could have had a significant impact on witchcraft prosecutions or accusations and, at the minimum, could have greatly contributed to a general fear of witchcraft.

Symptoms of auditory hypnagogia are also notable in early modern descriptions of bewitchment, further suggesting the importance of hypnagogia in corroborating witchcraft fears and fueling the witch-hunts.<sup>74</sup> Some descriptions from early modern England involved more vague sounds or non-verbal hallucinations, such as “hurring and buzzing” in Richard Galis’s account or “a foul yelling like unto a great number of cats: but what they were, this Examinee cannot tell” in the pamphlet *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*.<sup>75</sup> Though these auditory hallucinations are not well-defined sounds and could have been interpreted in many ways, both of the accounts relate the sounds to witchcraft concepts, specifically familiars.<sup>76</sup> In doing so, these accounts support the idea that cultural labels could have been applied to non-specific auditory hypnagogia and, in turn, corroborated English witchcraft beliefs.

Auditory hypnagogia can also be considered verbal, involving a voice or voices with varying levels of clarity.<sup>77</sup> Clinical studies have suggested that negative auditory experiences may have been more prevalent for early modern people. Another study of Cambodian refugees from 2021 notes that their verbal auditory hallucinations “seem to be driven by fear and guilt/shame” and involve threats, which may be due in part to negative life experiences and negative self-imagery.<sup>78</sup> It is widely accepted that early modern people had significant life stressors such as high mortality rates from diseases and food insecurity that would have contributed to or caused negative life experiences and an atmosphere of anxiety.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, due to the importance of religion in early

<sup>73</sup> Cotta, *The triall of vwitch-craft shewing the true and right methode of the discouery: with a confutation of erroneous wayes*. By John Cotta, Doctor in Physicke.

<sup>74</sup> Waters et al., “What Is the Link Between Hallucinations, Dreams, and Hypnagogic–Hypnopompic Experiences?” Auditory hypnagogia comprise up to 34% of HHEs.

<sup>75</sup> Galis, *A brief treatise containing the most strange and horrible cruelty of Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham and her confederates, executed at Abingdon, upon R. Galis*; Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*; Jan Dirk Blom, “Auditory Hallucinations,” *Handbook of Clinical Neurology* 129 (2015): 433–55.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.; Potts, *The Discovery of Witches: The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*.

<sup>77</sup> Blom, “Auditory Hallucinations,” 433–55.

<sup>78</sup> Devon Hinton, “Auditory Hallucination Among Traumatized Cambodian Refugees: PTSD Association and Biocultural Shaping,” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 45, no. 4 (2021): 727–50.

<sup>79</sup> Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 103, 163.

modern England and related preoccupation with living a life worthy of Heaven, people commonly focused on combating their own sins and flaws, which arguably involved negative self-imagery and feelings of shame.<sup>80</sup> By relating modern psychological studies to early modern contexts, it is possible to infer that verbal hypnagogia would have elicited negative emotions like fear in early modern England. Edward Fairfax's account from 1621 describes a nighttime experience where his young daughter believed that the perceived witch did "threaten to kill her."<sup>81</sup> The alleged witch was known to the person experiencing the assault, which was also accompanied by visual and somatic hallucinations, demonstrating how auditory hallucinations could reinforce others to paint an incredibly realistic encounter.<sup>82</sup> In the account, the girl was found "weeping, praying, and crying out that the woman killed her with a knife," clearly showing how terrifying the incident had been and demonstrating the power that hypnagogia wielded over emotions. Such negative emotional reactions to hypnagogia, when combined with cultural notions of bewitchment, further contributed to the role of parasomnias in exacerbating the fear of witchcraft and fueling witch-hunts.

Like visual and auditory hypnagogia, somatic hypnagogia also played a significant role in the experience of bewitchment when isolated from sleep paralysis.<sup>83</sup> As shown in the work of Fairfax where his daughter was threatened and assaulted with a knife at night, somatic hypnagogia can also inspire intense fear.<sup>84</sup> In cases of somatic HHEs without sleep paralysis, the victim can call out for help, making their emotions easier to infer because they are often described to be crying out or screaming, indicating terror. In one case told in 1582, a young boy named John Sellers experienced "a blacke thing like his sister, that took him by the leg...he cried out, saying, father, father, come help me

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<sup>80</sup> Kari Konkola, *Psychology of Emotions as Theology: The Meaning and Control of Sin in Early Modern English Religion*, (The University of Wisconsin - Madison ProQuest Dissertations Publishing: 1994).

<sup>81</sup> Edward Fairfax, *A Discourse of Witchcraft: As it was Acted in the Family of Mr. Edward Fairfax of Fuystone in the County of York in the Year 1621: From the Original Copy Written with His Own Hand*, (London: Philobiblon Society, 1858), 221.

<sup>82</sup> Blom, "Auditory Hallucinations," 433-55. Verbal HHEs typically include voices of people known to the person experiencing the hallucination, not strangers, and the voices are more likely to directly address the person than not.

<sup>83</sup> Waters et al., "What Is the Link Between Hallucinations, Dreams, and Hypnagogic-Hypnopompic Experiences?" Somatic hypnagogia make up 25%-44% of HHEs.

<sup>84</sup> Fairfax, *A Discourse of Witchcraft: As it was Acted in the Family of Mr. Edward Fairfax of Fuystone in the County of York in the Year 1621: From the Original Copy Written with His Own Hand*, 221.

and defend mee, for there is a blacke thing that hath me by the leg...”<sup>85</sup> Clearly, John Sellers was in a semi-awake state and was overcome by enough fear that he called for his father to come save him from what he perceived as a genuine, physical threat. Additionally, because the victim cried for help when experiencing a hallucination, the witnesses may have been disconcerted at the sight of a person crying out and asking people to remove the witch smothering them, unable to personally see the person plaguing them. While modern cultural beliefs would see the person as “crazy,” early modern cultural beliefs labeled the experience as possession or bewitchment. That very scenario occurred in an English pamphlet from 1612, as “Master Lister in his great extremitie, to complain he saw her, and requested them that were by him to lay hold on her. After he cried out she lay heavy upon him, even at the time of his death.”<sup>86</sup> Being a witness to someone experiencing hypnagogic hallucinations, especially in a situation followed by death, would be horrifying even without believing in the supernatural. However, in a culture where witchcraft beliefs were commonplace and rooted in reality, bearing witness to a situation like Master Lister’s supported pre-existing fear of bewitchment and belief in the power of the Devil.<sup>87</sup>

Even when descriptions of bewitchment were fictional or possibly fabricated, they still provide support for the importance of hypnagogia in partially creating the early modern English concept of bewitchment and fueling the witch-hunts. There is no question that nighttime and sleep-related issues were frequently depicted in trial testimonies and witchcraft pamphlets in early modern England and that such portrayals helped shape prosecutions and emotional connotations of witchcraft. If some instances were falsely depicted, their details were specific enough to be related to parasomnias such as hypnagogic hallucinations for a reason—people genuinely did experience parasomnias and interpret them as experiences of bewitchment, making their symptoms recognizable as witchcraft to the public and court system. Therefore, fictional depictions of bewitchment that include parasomnias actually provided further evidence to suggest that symptoms of parasomnias became a recognizable facet of the experience of bewitchment and a physical corroboration of witchcraft fears. In George Gifford’s *A*

<sup>85</sup> W. W., *A True and Iust Recorde, of the Information, Examination and Confession of All the Witches, Taken at S. Ofes in the Countie of Essex Whereof Some were Executed, and Other Some Entreated According to the Determination of Lawe. Wherein All Men May See What a Pestilent People Witches Are, and How Vnworthy to Lyue-in a Christian Commonwealth. Written Orderly, As the Cases Were Tryed by Euidence*, by W. W. (London: At the Three Cranes in the Vinetree by Thomas Dawson, 1582; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

<sup>86</sup> Potts, *Discovery of Witches: The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*.

<sup>87</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, 185.

*Dialogue*, published in 1593, he actually provides a skeptical perspective on witchcraft and argues against common judicial practices and cultural beliefs concerning witchcraft—in doing so, he clearly displays the widespread witchcraft beliefs and practices of early modern England, but he also demonstrates that early modern people were not oblivious to the deceiving potential of perception.<sup>88</sup> Gifford wrote about a man's experience, "...the next night, I saw the ugliest sight that ever I saw: I awaked suddenly out of my sleep, and there was me thought a great face, as big as they used to set up in the sign of the Saracens-head, looked full in my face. I was scarce mine own man two days after."<sup>89</sup> He then questioned the use of evidence based solely on a person's believed experience, saying that people may be deceived by their perceptions and kill innocent people.<sup>90</sup> Gifford's inclusion of this critique shows that evidence involving parasomnias were recognizable and influential aspects of the witch-hunts—recognizable and influential enough that skeptics could criticize them—and that, though early modern people did not have the psychological definitions that modern people use today, some skeptics recognized the harm in using individual perceptions as legal evidence.

## Conclusion

Examining the role of HHEs in the experience of bewitchment provides a glimpse into some of the ways in which parasomnias contributed to the early modern witch-hunts. HHEs significantly contributed to the witch-hunts by intensifying the fear of bewitchment, corroborating witchcraft beliefs, and providing evidence of bewitchment in witch trials. Assuming that the prevalence of parasomnias in early modern populations was analogous to that of modern populations, parasomnias would have been experienced by a majority of early modern people — contributing to a general atmosphere of anxiety concerning bewitchment, witches, and the Devil. However, based on identified risk factors for sleep paralysis and HHEs, early modern people were likely

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<sup>88</sup> Scott McGinnis, "'Subtiltie' Exposed: Pastoral Perspectives on Witch Belief in the Thought of George Gifford," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 33, no. 3 (2002), 665-686.

<sup>89</sup> George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes: In Which is Laide Open How Craftely the Diuell Deceiueth Not Onely the Witches but Many Other and so Leadeth Them Awrie into Many Great Erroures. By George Giffard Minister of Gods word in Maldon*, (London: Printed by Iohn Windet, 1593; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

more susceptible to parasomnias, suggesting that parasomnias played a greater role in the witch-hunts than previously acknowledged by historians.<sup>91</sup>

The sleep habits and fears of early modern people created an optimal atmosphere for parasomnias, exacerbating the fear of witchcraft. For sleep paralysis, the idea that most early modern Europeans followed a biphasic sleep schedule and experienced sleep deprivation aligns closely with its identified risk factors. Disrupted sleep, sleep quality, and insomnia have all been linked to the experience of sleep paralysis. Early modern Europeans also faced higher mortality rates, religious anxieties, sickness, starvation, poor healthcare, and a multitude of other stressors. These stressors—specifically the death of a family member, anxiety, and general stress—have all been related to the experience of sleep paralysis episodes.<sup>92</sup>

Like sleep paralysis, risk factors for hypnagogic hallucinations were abundant in early modern Europe and would have resulted in a higher prevalence rate in the general population. A modern psychological study of monks and nuns found that biphasic sleep resulted in more frequent hypnagogic hallucinations, and they even experienced conversations in their dreams.<sup>93</sup> Sleep quality was also a predictor in a modern psychological study, which also aligns with the idea that early modern sleep habits increased the prevalence of parasomnias and, in doing so, heightened their influence over the witch-hunts.<sup>94</sup> More interestingly, paranormal beliefs are an independent predictor of intruder hallucination intensity, which involves both HHEs and sleep paralysis, and suggests that having a strong belief in witchcraft would intensify the parasomnia episode.<sup>95</sup> Modern psychological findings make it likely that hypnagogia and sleep paralysis were more prevalent and more intense in the early modern population, further underscoring the influence of parasomnias in the early modern witch-hunts.

While parasomnias directly exacerbated the fear of witchcraft and the intensity of the witch-hunts, additional research should be conducted on how they indirectly influenced

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<sup>91</sup> Esther Olunu et al., “Sleep Paralysis, a Medical Condition with a Diverse Cultural Interpretation,” *International Journal of Applied and Basic Medical Research* 8, no. 4 (2018): 137-42. Sleep paralysis prevalence rates are noted to vary from culture to culture.

<sup>92</sup> Denis, “Relationships Between Sleep Paralysis and Sleep Quality: Current Insights”; Denis and Poerio, “Terror and Bliss? Commonalities and Distinctions between Sleep Paralysis, Lucid Dreaming, and Their Associations with Waking Life Experiences,” 38-47.

<sup>93</sup> Isabelle Arnulf, Agnes Brio, and Jean-Louis Golmard, “Ring the Bell for Matins: Circadian Adaptation to Split Sleep by Cloistered Monks and Nuns,” *Chronobiology International* 28, no. 10 (2011): 930-41.

<sup>94</sup> Denis and Poerio, “Terror and Bliss? Commonalities and Distinctions between Sleep Paralysis, Lucid Dreaming, and Their Associations with Waking Life Experiences,” 38-47.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

facets of bewitchment such as physical ailments and death, further intensifying the real-world impact of these parasomnias. Modern psychological studies have found that, for individuals suffering from sleep paralysis, HHEs, or other parasomnias, stress and sleep deprivation are common outcomes.<sup>96</sup> Sleep deprivation and stress are both associated with adverse physiological changes and weakened immune systems, which would have appeared as bewitchment to early modern Europeans, especially when physiological distress followed a parasomnia episode.<sup>97</sup> Parasomnias may have even indirectly contributed to death, influencing both psychogenic death and sudden unexplained nocturnal death syndrome (SUNDS). Psychogenic death, also unfortunately known as “give-up-itis,” is a phenomenon that occurs when a person experiences a traumatic event and then loses the will to live, dying soon after.<sup>98</sup> The person usually “gives up” when they see no escape from their situation or are resigned to their fate.<sup>99</sup> In trial documents and witchcraft pamphlets such as the 1579 pamphlet *A Detection of Damnable Driftes* and the 1593 pamphlet *The Most Strange and Admirable Discoverie of the Three Witches of Warboys*, victims are often described as “languishing” before their death, which is sometimes preceded by parasomnias.<sup>100</sup> It is possible that the parasomnias caused the individual and the individual’s family to believe that death was inevitable after bewitchment, resulting in languishing and death, which is visible in several English witchcraft pamphlets.<sup>101</sup> SUNDS involves sudden death during sleep, which has been associated with sleep paralysis because sleep paralysis and stress have been linked to SUNDS.<sup>102</sup> Speaking of early modern bewitchment, one historian has noted that “while victims of witchcraft in Europe in the sixteenth century could certainly ‘go into a decline,’ they could also with equal frequency be ‘struck dead.’”<sup>103</sup> So, it is also possible that sleep paralysis could influence sudden death during the early modern period, too,

<sup>96</sup> Alexander Leung et al., “Sleep Terrors: An Updated Review,” *Current Pediatric Reviews* 16, no. 3 (2020): 176-82; Michael Schredl and Anja Goeritz, “Nightmare Frequency and Nightmare Distress: Socio-Demographic and Personality Factors,” *Sleep Science* 12, no. 3 (2019): 178-84.

<sup>97</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, 20.

<sup>98</sup> John Leach, “‘Give-Up-Itis’ Revisited: Neuropathology of *Extremis*,” *Medical Hypotheses* 120 (2018): 14-21.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, 45; *The Most Strange and Admirable Discoverie of the Three Witches of Warboys Arraigned, Conuicted and Executed at the Last Assises at Huntington, for the Bewitching of the Fiue Daughters of Robert Throckmorton Esquire, and Diuers other Persons, with Sundrie Diuelish and Grieuous Torments: And Also for the Betwitching to Death of the Lady Crumwell, the Like Hath Not Bene Heard of in This Age.* (London: Printed for Thomas Man and Iohn Winnington, 1593), 81-82.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Ann Cox, “Sleep Paralysis and Folklore,” *JRSM Open* 6, no. 7 (2015).

<sup>103</sup> Roger Byard, “Death and Sorcery,” *Forensic Science, Medicine, and Pathology* 14 (2016): 1-3.

even if parasomnias may not be directly responsible. Regardless, by sowing the seeds of stress and fear of bewitchment, parasomnias helped grant *maleficia* real capabilities and consequences, which merits more in-depth research.

Through indirect and direct influences, parasomnias encouraged the witch-hunts by stoking and validating the fear of witchcraft on an individual and cultural level. The role of parasomnias has received little attention from historians, even though parasomnias were a notable facet of bewitchment and were, in part, responsible for the witch-hunts that prosecuted countless innocent people. As put by Owen Davies, “it was the innocent who suffered the consequences, both as victims of the nightmare and victims of those who experienced it.”<sup>104</sup> Understanding how early modern people experienced, interpreted, and reacted to parasomnias in the context of the witch-hunts provides better insight into the occurrence and persistence of the witch hunts over multiple centuries. Delving into the impact of parasomnias on the witch-hunts underscores and encourages more research into the importance of human emotion, cultural perceptions, and psychological experiences in shaping history.

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# THAT PATH OF STRANGE CHARACTERS; AN ANALYSIS OF LITERACY, IDENTITY, AND FAITH IN ENSLAVED AFRICAN MUSLIMS

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## **Abstract**

This essay aims to investigate the role of Arabic literacy in the lives of enslaved Muslims brought to America in the Early Republic. The piece also analyzes white responses to this unexpected literacy, examining their mystified, extrapolatory, and often inaccurate musings on literate enslaved Muslims. Through original research on white publications and writings conceived in bondage, this paper attempts to cut through the mythos draped over these enslaved people, examine their place in the historical record, and mark the role that different literacies played in the preservation of their identities.

Near the end of his autobiography, penned in Arabic around 1831, the enslaved African Muslim Omar ibn Said proudly declared, “I am Omar, I love to read the book, the Great Qur’an.”<sup>1</sup> It is one of the few accounts of an enslaved Muslim noting their love of literacy, a remarkable line in a remarkable document. For Omar, a proclamation of love for the Qur’an was tied to his understanding of himself and his faith, an invocation of identity situated next to a holy literacy—as though that affiliation with the great book was essential for his self-conception. Omar’s quote embodies the spirit of deep faith and personal identification intrinsic to how enslaved Muslims practiced literacy in North America, far from their native land. Intimately connected to the culture and religion of the Islamic peoples of West Africa, writing acted as a channel of connection to these Muslims’ homeland, a link to their strongest convictions, and a key tool for navigating the challenges of a new environment. For those Euro-Americans who encountered enslaved Muslims, literacy also acted as a pathway to Islam and a distinct culture—but in their eyes, the twisted shapes of Arabic script suggested contradictions that challenged their most basic racial and religious assumptions. Confronted with enslaved people who could write in Arabic, Euro-Americans discovered Islam in an unexpected place, through those people who united black skin with Muhammad’s words, in a revelation that mixed the foreign and the familiar.

This analysis aims to trace the role of literacy as a pathway to enslaved Muslims’ identities and beliefs, and to paint a picture of how master and enslaved each in turn understood those values. Three individuals of the Futa Tooro people present different stories of enslavement: Job Ben Solomon, the son of an *imam* sold in colonial Maryland in 1730; Bilali Mohammed, the head driver of a plantation in Georgia in the early nineteenth century; and Omar ibn Said, an enslaved Muslim who lived in Fayetteville, North Carolina between 1807 and 1864. These three individuals had different experiences of bondage in America across a wide timeframe, but each preserved a degree of their Islamic and African identity through the practice of writing. Across the decades, striking similarities mark their stories. Each man interacted with Euro-Americans and presented whites with an exotic glimpse of the East, inspiring study or conversation, universalism or proselytization, depending on the context of the encounter. Like all Africans who survived the horror of the Middle Passage, these enslaved Muslims brought the spirit of their homeland with them—but in their Arabic writings, we have the opportunity to read original works from their hand, an exceptionally rare opportunity. Written in a language native to their guiding principles, such documents offer a greater understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> Omar ibn Said and Ala Alryyes, *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 73.

Islam, bondage, and the tensions between the East, West, and African worlds in the early modern period.

The vast majority of those Muslims who would be enslaved lived in the Senegambia region, between the Senegal river to the North and the Gambia river to the South. Islam was well established as a prominent religion of the region by the time European enslavers began carting off their chattel in the sixteenth century. The faith was spread by traveling merchants and scholars in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, moving South from the Berber Coast across the Sahara; individual communities often converted slowly and peacefully.<sup>2</sup> Though Islam was by no means the only religion of West Africa, it was a strong contender for the most powerful, with Muslim rulers often providing substantial protection to converts in the shifting conflicts of the region.<sup>3</sup>

The ability to read and write played a powerful role in the lives of West African Muslims. As a people of the book, “Literacy in Arabic is of primary importance in Islam because believers rely on the Koran not only to understand the religion but also to guide them in their daily life, to provide them with the right prayers for different circumstances, and to instruct them on legal matters and proper social behavior.”<sup>4</sup> This literacy was a distinction for the Muslims of West Africa; as the only transnationally recognized alphabet of the region, Muslims took their education seriously, devoting years to memorizing and studying the best practices of a holy life. Since the Qur’an formed the basis of the faith, literacy was considered essential for a deep, full life as a practicing Muslim; indeed, the relationship between literacy and Islam was unbreakable. Muslims practiced the faith by following the guidance of the holy book, which was the ultimate source of nearly all of their knowledge of writing; to write as a West African Muslim in the sixteenth century was to partake in a religious act, to exercise devotion. The copying of texts by hand was particularly important to the faith. As scholar of the sixteenth century traveler Yuhanna al-Asad notes:

The account of how the Qur’an had been received by the Prophet from Allah and ultimately recorded, the weight assigned to a trustworthy chain of sources for reports of the sayings and acts of the Prophet (hadith)—these traditions encouraged strong loyalty to and controversy about the authenticity of a text...the

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<sup>2</sup> Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 7.

damage done by the spread of a faulty printed edition of a religious text would be much greater than that by a single text made by an aberrant scribe.<sup>5</sup>

The spirituality of West African Muslims obviously consisted of more than reading and writing holy texts. But for those captured and taken to the Americas, the ability to write in Arabic served as a crucial connection to the communities of spirituality they were forced to abandon. The ability to write was, in some sense, the medium of their faith, a defining characteristic of most African Muslims which could not be forcibly taken from them.

If literacy was the medium of faith for many enslaved Muslims, then faith itself was one of their deepest sources of identity in crisis. Islamic peoples comprised a small minority of those sold to the Americas, because Muslims were often the ones selling other Africans. Forbidden from selling their fellow Muslims into bondage, “For obvious reasons, among West African Muslims, color and slavery did not have any linkage; the only criterion that determined who should or could be enslaved was, in accordance with Islamic principles, based on religion.”<sup>6</sup> Leveraging their role as travelers and merchants, many African Muslims traded those who followed Animist religions to Europeans; often acting as links in a long chain stretching from the conflicts of the interior to the ports on coastal rivers. Mohammed Bilali’s status as an overseer on Sapelo Island in Georgia hints that he may have had experience handling other enslaved people, and suggests that he may have participated in this extensive trade network. At times, however, Muslims fell prey to their own business. Indeed, this was how Job Ben Solomon was captured, according to Thomas Bluett’s account of his life: “In February, 1730 Job’s Father hearing of an *English* ship at *Gambia* River, sent him, with two Servants to attend him, to sell two Negroes and to buy Paper, and some other Necessities...”<sup>7</sup> Those Muslims captured and sold into slavery were anomalies, casualties of the front lines of war, trade, and travel.

The Qur’an shaped the contours of these Africans’ lives. It commanded courage in battle, and many scholars doubled as soldiers in the numerous conflicts of Senegambia, acting as warriors of the faith who were willing to give their lives in defense of their beliefs. Since one common way for Muslims to be sold as slaves was through war with other peoples, “*marabouts*, teachers, *talib* (students, novices), *imam* (prayer leaders)...*qadi* (judge), and *hufaz* (memories of the Koran)...were numerous among the

<sup>5</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 123.

<sup>6</sup> Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Bluett, “Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, Son of Solomon,” in *Five Classic Muslim Slave Narratives* ed. Muhammad A. al-Ahari (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006), 44.

captives from Senegambia and Guinea who were sent to America.”<sup>8</sup> It is possible that Omar ibn Said was one such warrior of the faith, captured while fighting the “big army,” which came to his country and “killed many people.”<sup>9</sup> These details illuminate the lives of Muslims captured into slavery, and they are key to understanding their bondage in North America. Although there were Islamic rulers who “...because they ruled over a diverse population, had to make concessions to traditional practices [of enslaving all enemies] in order to maintain political stability,” inter-Islamic battles still inspired intense loyalty in the opposing branches of Islam—including those sects which allowed for the enslavement of fellow African Muslims.<sup>10</sup> Whether captured by other African peoples or the occasional fellow Muslim, many who were taken to North America were learned scholars with deep wells of Islamic faith, and were willing to die for their beliefs. Such faith must have been a strong piece of their personal identities, and a distinction between them and their enemies; it is unsurprising, then, that nurturing a fulfilling faith would prove to be one of the most universal goals of those Muslims enslaved in foreign lands.

Yet upon arriving in North America, their piety proved contradictory to European assumptions about race and religion. Just one example is the layered account of the life of the African Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, otherwise known by his anglicized name, Job Ben Solomon. Written by the Maryland lawyer Thomas Bluett, *Memoirs of the Life of Job* offers an opportunity to study the thoughts of a British colonist confronted with a literate Muslim, and the chance to peel back his impressions to understand Job himself. Born a member of the Futa Tooro people, Job was enslaved in 1730, brought to America, and sold to a cruel master in Maryland. After escaping, the young African was caught wandering and was imprisoned in Kent County. Bluett’s account of his first meeting with Job is enlightening: “When I...had heard of Job, I went with several Gentlemen to the Goaler’s House, being a Tavern, and desired to see him...Upon our Talking and making Signs to him, he wrote a Line or two before us, and when he read it, pronounced the words *Allah* and *Muhammad*; by which, and his refusing a Glass of Wine we offered him, we perceived he was a *Mahometan*.”<sup>11</sup> The initial point of recognition for Bluett and his companions was that Job was able to write in Arabic. It is literacy that caught their eye, and suggested that Job “...was no common Slave.”<sup>12</sup> Though we will never know what Job wrote on the floor of his cell, the presence of the words “Allah” and “Mohammed”

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<sup>8</sup> Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Said, *The Life*, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Bluett, “Some Memoirs,” 46.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

suggests that it was some sort of religious invocation, greeting, or plea. When confronted with a tongue he did not know, imprisoned and accosted by strangers in a strange land, Job reached for his religion and the words to write it, attempting to communicate his identity and comfort himself in the solace of prayer.

The fact that Job wrote in Arabic undoubtedly influenced Bluett's response; had the imprisoned man scrawled the words "God" and "Jesus" on the floor, Bluett may have wondered who had taught Job to read—but his curiosity would have likely stopped there. The presence of Arabic, however, presented something genuinely bizarre, provoking Bluett's curiosity "...of what country he was, or how he got thither."<sup>13</sup> Bluett's writing makes it clear he believed that in Africa, "the better sort of people...apply themselves to Study and Reading," while the "poorer sort of People...perform the whole by mere Dint of Strength."<sup>14</sup> In this way, Bluett equates literacy with character—and gives those who read higher marks. Though Muslims were often demonized by Christians as heretics, they were certainly not seen as savages, particularly in the early modern period. Job's understanding of Islam and Arabic denoted him as a person of the book—a member of a religion in conflict with Christianity, but not unrelated to it, an Abrahamic, monotheistic faith, seen to be superior to the slovenly savage races Christians believed they had justifiably enslaved. Bluett would have been familiar with the immense power of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the rampant piracy of the Berber Coast. This Eastern posturing created an atmosphere of "...fear of Islam as a rival religious revelation of Christianity and fear, too, of Muslim military expansion in Europe itself," which inflamed Europe with a wary awareness of Islam as a force to be reckoned with.<sup>15</sup> Though most European Christians counted Islam as an enemy, there existed a certain respect for its exotic might, and a familiarity with its success as an impetus for military and political power. This respect likely influenced Bluett's description of Job's race, and his impulse to portray the Muslim as distinct from the usual African. Job's appearance differed from European conceptions of Muslims as light-skinned Arabs; perhaps this played into Bluett's later description of Job as having "Hair long, black, and curled, being very different from that of the Negroes commonly brought from *Africa*."<sup>16</sup> Whether Bluett even considers Job to be truly dark-skinned at all is ambiguous; his statement that Job was captured while trying "to sell two Negroes and to buy Paper" at

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<sup>13</sup> Bluett, "Some Memoirs," 46.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Colley, "Britain and Islam, 1600-1800," *The Yale Review* 88, no. 4 (October 2000): 4.

<sup>16</sup> Bluett, "Some Memoirs," 57.

the very least seems to mark a difference between Job and his goods, a distinction between the smooth-haired Muslim master and his “negroe” chattel.<sup>17</sup>

Though we know Job Ben Solomon was literate, only a few of his letters survive today. Thus, we must be content to observe him through Bluett’s eyes, cloudy though they may have been to the complete reality of his experience. We do have, however, a visual depiction of Job, which contains hints to how he viewed himself: his 1733 portrait by William Hoare.<sup>18</sup> After Bluett took an interest in Job’s fortunes and secured his freedom, he accompanied Job on a tour of England, where he awaited a return to Africa; during this time, he was persuaded to sit for a portrait. Hoare was a painter of some stature in his day, known for his pastel work and ability to render stately portraits of clients as notable as Robert Walpole and William Pitt. The context of Job’s portrait matters, and Bluett gives an account of its creation: “Job’s aversion to pictures of all Sorts, was exceeding great; insomuch, that it was with great Difficulty that he could be brought to sit for his own...He at last consented to have it drawn; which was done by Mr. *Hoare*. When the Face was finished, Mr. *Hoare* ask’d what Dress would be most proper to draw him in.”<sup>19</sup> The result of this conversation was a stately portrait, painted as if Job was a member of the English aristocracy, wearing a white robe and turban, with a Qur’an around his neck.

Job’s choice of dress is a chance to observe how he wished to be remembered. The presence of the Qur’an around his neck suggests that he considered the holy book to be an essential part of his identity, a piece of himself as intrinsic as the robes of his native Futa Tooro. Here again is the inseparable link between literacy and Job’s identity, his deep connection to religion and the words which contained it proudly on display. We know that Job “...could say the whole *Alcoran* by heart, and while he was...in *England*, he wrote three Copies of it without the Assistance of any other Copy, and without so much as looking to one of those three when he wrote the others.”<sup>20</sup> Clearly Job had a deep command of language in regard to religious matters—but notably, Bluett fails to mention any instance of Job producing an original work. We do know that he wrote letters back to England, but as Allan Austin notes, “Letters from Job that have been discovered...have not been impressive; that is, none of those extant reveals a facility beyond basic Arabic.”<sup>21</sup> The literacy of enslaved Muslims was complex and sometimes

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<sup>17</sup> Bluett, “Some Memoirs,” 44.

<sup>18</sup> William Hoare, *Job Ben Solomon*, portrait, 1733. National Portrait Gallery, London.

<sup>19</sup> Bluett, “Some Memoirs,” 59.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>21</sup> Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 57.

limited. Many literate Muslims were limited to writing memorized religious texts, and were often captured at young ages before they were able to finish their education; perhaps Job was one such scholar, stunted before his creative prime.

For the English, even limited literacy was undoubtedly invaluable, an indication that this particular enslaved person was “the better sort of person” from Africa, who could speak an exotic language, and serve as a living case study of the East. As Linda Colley notes, “It is no coincidence at all that as awareness of North African corsairing increased in Britain, so did interest in Arabic and Islam...in the 1640s, Parliament introduced a levy on trade to finance Barbary captives’ ransoms—and the Koran was first translated into English.”<sup>22</sup> In 1734, George Sale published his popular translation of the Koran—perhaps with the help of Job, who “...translated Arabic for Sir Hans Sloane...and others, probably including George Sale...Job sent greetings to someone his English secretary called “Mista Sail” in a letter written from the Gambia in 1736.”<sup>23</sup> Though this is the extent of the paper trail between Sale and Job, it is quite possible that the Muslim believer provided guidance and information for Sale’s translation, which was published the same year that Job left England. Job’s literacy and its connection to his spirituality made him more than a curiosity for Bluett and other Westerners; he was, indeed, a *useful* curiosity, his ability to write Arabic letters in the dirt of a cell or translate the Qur’an acting as a marker of something special. In their eyes, he represented the better sort of person from Africa, who had the potential to aid Euro-Americans in their growing fascination with the East through his words, no matter how rote they may have been.

Job’s story did not end when he left England; no enslaved Muslim’s life can be easily compressed into those years spent in captivity. Through the writings of Francis Moore, a member of the British Royal African Company, we know that Job was well received upon his return: “I spoke to one of the *Blacks* which we usually employ...who knew the High Priest his Father, and *Job* himself, and express’d great joy at seeing him in safety returned from Slavery, he being the only Man (except one) that was ever known to come back to this Country, after having been once carried a Slave out of it by White Men.”<sup>24</sup> Job’s life carried on after his return; he “bought a Woman-Slave and two horses” with some of the presents given to him in England, and “the Company...presented him with several Reams” of writing paper, “a very useful commodity amongst them.”<sup>25</sup> After experiencing slavery himself, Job did not seem to feel any aversion towards perpetuating

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<sup>22</sup> Colley, “Britain and Islam,” 7.

<sup>23</sup> Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Moore, *Travels Into the Inland Parts of Africa: Containing a Description of the Several Nations for the Space of Six Hundred Miles Up the River Gambia* (United Kingdom: Henry, 1738), 98.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

the slavery of other (presumably non-Muslim) Africans. Additionally, his gift of paper indicates a continued need for the resource; Job, it seems, intended to contribute to continued literate study of the Qur'an through the gifts of the English. These passages are useful for conceptualizing Job Ben Solomon as the complex human being that he was: a literate man, who may have had only a limited ability to memorize and copy texts; an African and a Muslim; enslaved and enslaver. Such perceptions of Job were also shaped through the eyes of the Euro-Americans who interacted with him, who used his literacy as a tool for their own scholarship, an indication of an exotic subject, and a gateway to their conception of him as a learned, Arab Muslim.

Not all enslaved Muslims had the fortune to meet sympathetic white benefactors with the resources to reverse the Middle Passage. Some, like Bilali Mohammed, were forced to recreate a community of faith themselves, relying on words not to impress distinguished scholars but to preserve a way of life. Bilali lived on a plantation on Sapelo Island, Georgia in the first half of the nineteenth century, but additional details on his life are scarce. Without a white chronicler, we are forced to reconstruct Bilali's time in America from secondhand sources, family lore, and a single inscrutable manuscript written in piecemeal Arabic. "All that is known about Bilali's pre-American life may be found in a short comment by his friend Salih Bilali, as recorded by Couper [his master]: that he was from Timbo [in modern day Guinea], and that Couper thought in the late 1830s that Bilali was 'extremely old and feeble.'"<sup>26</sup> The first recorded mention of Bilali, written by the Southerner Zephaniah Kingsley, details "...two instances, to the southward, where gangs of negroes were prevented from deserting to the enemy by drivers, or influential negroes, whose integrity to their masters, and influence over the slaves prevented it: and what is still more remarkable, in both instances the influential negroes were Africans, and professors of the Mahomedan religion."<sup>27</sup> Kingsley's anecdote describes Bilali's success at preventing a mass slave desertion to the British during the War of 1812, lauding those "professors of the Mahomedan religion" as exemplary enslaved people, worthy of distinction for their loyalty. The last known mention of Bilali is from an islander, Georgia Conrad, who remarked in her memoirs that in the 1850s, "On Sapelo Island, near Darien, I used to know a family of Negroes who worshipped Mahomet. They were all tall and well-formed, with good features...the head of the tribe was a very old man called Bi-la-li. He always wore a cap that resembled a Turkish fez. These negroes held

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<sup>26</sup> Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories*, 90.

<sup>27</sup> Zephaniah Kingsley, *A Treatise on the Patriarchal, or Co-operative System of Society as it Exists in Some Governments and Colonies in America, and in the United States, Under the Name of Slavery, with its Necessity and Advantages*, 2nd ed. (N.p., 1829), 13.

themselves aloof from the others as if they were conscious of their own superiority.”<sup>28</sup> Bilali died in 1859, and years after his death, his story turned mythic. Through a combination of local tales and oral storytelling, his identity was warped into a persona, a caricature of his most memorable qualities. Joel Chandler Harris, a southern children’s author, glorified the character Aaron, the “son of Ben Ali,” in one of his children’s tales designed to repurpose the stories of enslaved Africans: “Now Aaron was the most remarkable slave in all the country round...Another remarkable feature was his hair, which, instead of being coarse and kinky, was fine, thick, wavy, glossy, and as black as jet,”<sup>29</sup>—a description reminiscent of Job’s hair, which was similarly highlighted as a distinctive feature.

These tales of Bilali and his progeny by whites hold Bilali’s fealty and dignity in high regard, a strange contradiction. In one sense, we confront with Bilali the same problems Bluett generates in his clouded retelling of Job’s story; whites presented with an unusual brand of an enslaved person, a Muslim literate in Arabic who defied expectations, were forced to recategorize their racial hierarchies, and allow for a superiority of those African Muslims associated with the fascinating and threatening East. Though Americans did not experience the same level of Barbary piracy as Britain, there were attacks carried out on American vessels, and knowledge of the Orient was present in the young nation. Even more importantly, Southerners had a vested interest in maintaining a careful hierarchy of slavery. As Austin notes, “Georgia Sea Island historians like to write positively about ‘Mahometans’ or Arab-Africans, whom they preferred to think of as Mulattoes rather than full Africans. These slaves were a substantial presence because slave buyers preferred people from Senegambia...where the people supposedly carried themselves with more dignity than elsewhere on the continent...”<sup>30</sup> If Bilali himself sold slaves in Africa, it would have been natural for Couper to bestow the title of overseer onto him. Such an action would have had a double benefit for Couper, allowing him to take advantage of one enslaved person’s ability to manage the others, and righting the perceived racial incongruity of an Arab-African into an ordered hierarchy: white master, Muslim overseer, enslaved African.

In return for his loyalty to Couper, Bilali was allowed a large amount of autonomy on Sapelo Island, and sources suggest that he used his favored status to foster a community of believers. Conrad’s testimony, if accurate, suggests that Bilali led a “tribe” on the island, an entire “family of negroes who worshipped Mahomet.” There is further

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<sup>28</sup> Georgia Bryan Conrad, “Reminiscences of a Southern Woman,” *The Southern Workman* 30, no. 1 (January 1901): 252.

<sup>29</sup> Joel Chandler Harris, *The Story of Aaron (so Named): The Son of Ben Ali; Told by His Friends and Acquaintances* (United Kingdom: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories*, 88.

evidence for this community of believers in a series of oral interviews conducted on Sapelo Island in the 1930s. Katie Brown, a great granddaughter of Bilali, remembered that, “His wife [was] Phoebe. He hab plenty daughtuhs, Magret, Bentoo, Chaalut, Medina, Yaruba, Fatima, an Hestuh. Magret an uh daughtuh Cotto use tuh say dat Belali an he wife Pheobe pray on duh bead. Dey wuz bery puhticluh bout duh time dey pray on duh bead...Belali he pull bead an he say ‘Belambi, Hakabara, Mahamadu.’”<sup>31</sup> This final phrase is a compression of “God is one, great” and “Mohammed is his prophet,” and suggests that Bilali managed to foster a generational community of Muslims on Sapelo Island, even as he was removed from his native country. Undoubtedly, Bilali would have been an imperfect teacher; although Islamic Africans had an impressive capacity for memory, it would have been impossible for Bilali to recreate every aspect of the rich community of scholars and merchants in his native Timbo. Once Bilali died, his community of prayer and belief likely diminished, and by the time Brown was interviewed, Islam’s presence on Sapelo Island had faded into memory. Nonetheless, Bilali’s ability to foster a community of faith—passing on Islamic names such as “Medina” and “Fatima,” and a level of cultural heritage—is incredibly impressive.

Only within the context of Bilali’s community can we hope to understand his single Arabic manuscript and the role that literacy played in his ability to foster a daily life grounded in the memories of a distant faith. Unlike Job’s letters, Bilali’s manuscript has resisted a clear translation. How the document survived is not entirely clear; it seems as though the children’s writer Francis Goulding befriended Bilali before his death, and the enslaved Muslim gave him the manuscript. Donated by the author’s son to the Georgia State Library, the document lingered untranslated for decades, until the linguist Joseph Greenburg first attempted to decipher pieces of it in 1937. Bilali’s document is not an easy source to read, presenting challenges of translation and preservation; its Arabic is smudged, winding, and grammatically imprecise. A later translator, B. G. Martin, explains that the document is fragile, and that “the ink has seeped through from one side to the other on almost every page, which makes deciphering difficult....enough of it remains to read several passages in the text, yet hardly enough to read them continuously or in any coherent fashion.”<sup>32</sup> In regards to the grammar, Greenburg notes, “...on cursory examination, several common religious formulae were recognizable, despite misspellings which took the form of substituting similarly pronounced

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<sup>31</sup> Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook*, 295.

<sup>32</sup> B. G. Martin, “Sapelo Island’s Arabic Document: The ‘Bilali Diary’ in Context,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (1994): 594.

consonants for the correct one.”<sup>33</sup> The reasons for Bilali’s weak writing skills are impossible to know for certain. Perhaps, after decades away from his native community, removed from the centers of scholarship in his home, Bilali’s literacy degraded. In a foreign land, with very few Arabic speakers, maintaining literacy would have required time and writing materials; it seems unlikely that Bilali, while enslaved, would have had ample access to either. Austin does mention “...traditional stories that describe Bilali as being buried with his Qur’an and prayer rug,” and the tantalizing possibility that he was still reading from the holy book in servitude—but there is no written evidence to support such tales.<sup>34</sup> It is also highly possible that Bilali was captured before he could finish his formal education, his learning stunted and then assaulted in a strange land.

Without additional details of Bilali’s life before Sapelo Island, it is impossible to answer such questions with certainty; what we do know is that at some point, Muhammad Bilali found the time to pen a single document, which he cherished enough to entrust to a white friend near the end of his life. Bilali’s subject matter holds fast to religion, frequently repeating calls to prayer and glorifications of God: “Over and over, perhaps seven times in the following five folia, he wrote: ‘O God, I bear witness that there is no god but God.’”<sup>35</sup> In another segment, Bilali offers a step by step guide to ritual washing: “1 And his right hand wipes off the right foot up to the ankle / 2 And his left hand wipes off / 3 The left foot up to the ankle / 4 And he puts both hands / 5 In the water container.”<sup>36</sup> Within these fragments of translation, Bilali’s words suggest a deep connection to faith. Torn from his homeland, Bilali was forced to begin again on Sapelo Island, and this document suggests a commitment to the habits of a life lived in devotion. Ritual washing; repeated adorations of God; a guide for proper prayer—these were the building blocks of the community of believers Katie Brown would recall decades later, the seeds of the “family of negroes who worshipped Mahomet” that Conrad met. Bilali’s relationship with literacy was founded on its fundamental connection with religion for West African Muslims, and its capacity to act as a guide for the daily life of the faithful. It seems likely that Bilali was operating with fragmentary tools, both in his literacy and his ability to reconstruct his native community of belief—yet he persisted, fashioning a document and a faith which, though incomplete, maintained the fundamental values of Islam even in hostile territory. Literacy played a role in this preservation, through its place as an activity of the faithful—for by writing it down, Bilali’s supplications, fervent

<sup>33</sup> Joseph H. Grenburg, “The Decipherment of the ‘Ben-Ali Diary,’” *The Journal of Negro History* 25, no. 3 (July 1940): 372.

<sup>34</sup> Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories*, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Martin, “Sapelo Island’s Arabic Document,” 598.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

and broken, could be fully articulated: “O God, make me one of Your evident supporters, make me one of the Pure; make me Your Servant.”<sup>37</sup>

The most prolific enslaved Muslim author was Omar ibn Said, who was captured at thirty-seven and owned by James Owen in North Carolina. He would remain enslaved from 1819 until his death in 1864. Omar, like Job, was from Senegambia; in his autobiography, the *Life*, he writes, “...my birthplace is Fut Tur, between the two rivers.”<sup>38</sup> It is unclear how the young African was enslaved, though it is possible that he was a warrior of the faith who defended his land against the “big army” that “killed many people.”<sup>39</sup> After being sold “into the hand of a Christian man,” Omar was transported across the Middle Passage and delivered into the hands of “a weak, small, evil man called Johnson...who did not fear Allah at all.”<sup>40</sup> Omar fled from Johnson and was imprisoned for his escape near Fayetteville, North Carolina. Much like Job, accounts of the “discovery” of Omar’s literacy note that he attracted attention by writing on the walls of his cell; one contemporary newspaper reported that “...finding some coals in the ashes, he filled the walls of his room with piteous petitions to be released, all written in the Arabic language. The strange characters, so elegantly and correctly written by a runaway slave, soon attracted attention, and many of the citizens of the town visited the jail to see him.”<sup>41</sup> As historian Sylvia Diouf notes, “Omar had no way of knowing that in nineteenth-century Fayetteville, North Carolina, nobody could read Arabic; as a literate man, his first reflex was to express himself through writing.”<sup>42</sup> Like Job, Omar’s impulse to use his literacy while imprisoned attracted the attention of a benevolent white man, James Owen. 86 years later, Owen’s patronage of Omar preserved the dynamic of enslaved and enslaver, in contrast to the friendship and intellectual camaraderie which blossomed between Bluett and Job. While Job was set free, Omar died enslaved.<sup>43</sup> The similarities and differences between the stories of the two Muslims emphasize the importance of remembering the vast timeline of slavery; by 1819, America was no longer the peripheral British colony Job encountered. In the context of full independence and a growing debate over the morality and practicality of slavery, Omar’s life in America

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<sup>37</sup> Martin, “Sapelo Island’s Arabic Document,” 599.

<sup>38</sup> Said, *The Life*, 61.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>42</sup> Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 134.

<sup>43</sup> While Omar was offered the chance to return to Africa, the chance was conditional upon his commitment to returning as a Christian missionary. Jonathan Curiel, “The Life of Omar ibn Said,” *Saudi Aramco World* 61, no. 2 (March/April 2010): 34.

witnessed the explosion of those tensions into full-blown succession and civil war, even if he never lived to see emancipation.

Like Bilali and Job, Omar's status as a literate Muslim forced Euro-Americans to reassess their conceptions of race and bondage, and bend them to adapt to the presence of Arab scholarship in African peoples. As one prominent Orientalist of the time noted, "The Foulahs [Omar's people] are *not* negroes...All travellers concur in representing them as a distinct race, in moral as in physical traits...Let not the humanizing influence of the Koran, upon the fetishes, greegrees, and human sacrifices of pagan, homicidal Africa, be depreciated."<sup>44</sup> Omar's status as a person of the book and his skill with a language considered to have a "humanizing influence" created a minor paradox for the American vision of patriarchal, benevolent dominance over uneducated African savages. Like Bilali, a mythic, deracinating legend sprung up around this peculiar man in newspapers, memoirs, and twentieth-century histories, codified by the prejudices of the South and the need to reorder the contradictions of a Muslim in bondage.<sup>45</sup> "With some variations over time, this legend represents Umar as a well-educated Arabian prince who somehow found himself in Africa...The hero of this legend was in no way African. He had straight hair, a light complexion, and the 'features and form of an Apollo Belvidere.'"<sup>46</sup> In this way, Omar's ability to write in Arabic was a gateway to his identification as someone educated, spiritual, and decidedly unsavage. His "strange characters" were a striking marker of an Islamic otherness, a foreign flavor distinct from those differences Americans usually ascribed to the character of enslaved Africans.

With this context in mind, we can begin to understand Omar through his own words. He produced a variety of written documents, ranging from short prayers to longer letters and religious declarations. Unlike the sparse legends and anecdotes we possess for Bilali, Omar's life is more fully fleshed out, both because whites regularly interacted with him, taking an interest in his background, and because we have his own words to guide us. Indeed, he penned an autobiography, *The Life of Omar ibn Said, Written by Himself*. From the time of Omar's own life, much ink has been spilled over the meaning of this work, which was originally sent to a fellow enslaved Muslim, and later lost in 1925. Only in 1995 did the writing resurface, giving scholars a fresh opportunity to study the document's layered Arabic. Though it is a legible manuscript, Omar's *Life* was still plagued by the challenges of preserving literacy in America. The autobiography opens with an apologia, with Omar confessing, "I cannot write my life for I have forgotten

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<sup>44</sup> Alryyes, *The Life*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories*, 130.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

much of my talk [language] as well as the talk of the Arabs. Also, I know little grammar and little vocabulary. O my brothers, I ask you in the name of Allah, not to blame me for my eye is weak and so is my body.”<sup>47</sup> Preceding his autobiography, Omar includes a chapter from the Qur’an, praising Allah as “...the Mighty, the Forgiving One.”<sup>48</sup> Like so many aspects of his life, it is difficult to untangle his religious beliefs, even with the help of his own words. Omar’s owner and white visitors wholeheartedly believed in his full conversion to Christianity, though they seem to have exaggerated his love of his situation. One visitor went so far as to claim that he wrote, “God has been good to us in bringing us to this country and placing us in the hands of Christians...God bless the American land! God bless the white people!”<sup>49</sup> Omar’s own words recounting the “great harm” which brought him to America contradict the idea that he was unabashedly grateful for his bondage.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the *Life* does hint at a man immersed in multiple faiths. The writing opens with a chapter of the Qur’an—and also contains the “Our Father”; Omar prays, “May God bless our lord Mohammad,” while also writing that “...grace and truth were [given] by Jesus the Messiah.”<sup>51</sup> It is tempting to conclude that Omar must have selected between Christianity and Islam, making a conscious choice to adopt one and renounce the other. But his faith was more complex than a simple black and white choice; Jesus was a prophet of Islam, a holy figure. Though Omar recognizes Jesus as a Messiah, he also mentions Moses and Mohammed with equal reverence. It is easy to see Omar’s conversion as performative, a mask designed to please his white masters. But the *Life* was written in Arabic, a language few whites could read. Christianity as a whole was recognized by Omar, but never explicitly embraced; indeed, it often acted as a marker for whites, those acting against him. The young African is sold “into the hand of a Christian man,” and “in a Christian language.”<sup>52</sup> While imprisoned, he describes his jailers as men “whose language was Christian,” and notes at the end of the *Life*, “I have been residing in the Christian country for twenty four years.”<sup>53</sup> Yet for all of his discussion of Christianity, Omar never once describes himself as a Christian.

As Genovese notes, “From the moment the Africans lost the social basis of their religious community life, their religion itself had to disintegrate as a coherent system of belief. From the moment they arrived in America and began to toil as slaves, they could

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<sup>47</sup> Said, *The Life*, 61.

<sup>48</sup> Said, *The Life*, 51.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

not help absorbing the religion of the master class.”<sup>54</sup> Omar did not have the benefit of Bilali’s isolated life on a sea island with a family of believers. He never married, never started a family. Instead, he was a singular object of study, a minor curiosity of antebellum America, and surrounded by immense pressure to convert. Omar’s belief in both the validity of the Qur’an and Jesus as the Messiah were not mutually exclusive—especially for an enslaved person flung far from his native region and asked to ascribe more power and glory to a Messiah that he already knew. It is entirely possible that Omar converted partially while retaining the foundations of his Islamic faith. Literacy, spirituality, and identity were deeply intertwined in any act of writing West African Muslims chose to undertake; the Qur’an was the basis of their education, the impetus and object of literacy, and it defined the bulk of their vocabulary and subject matter. To write was to pray, to seek a greater connection with the teachings of Mohammed. Asked to chronicle his life, Omar reached for the tools he had been given in his education—memorized chapters of the Qur’an, Arabic prayers, and frequent references to religion—and used them to construct his story. It is tempting to ascribe any number of labels to Omar’s writing—slave narrative, confession, religious text—but it is all of these and none of them. The *Life* is, ultimately, one man’s best attempt to chronicle his existence with those intellectual tools he possessed. Omar’s own words outline the purpose of the document: “You asked me to write my life.”<sup>55</sup> He did so, with the literacy he retained acting as a pathway to the greatest expression of self-identity he could muster.

There are two levels to every story of enslaved Muslims in America: the actual men of Futa Tooro, with their real, complex lives and abilities—and the mythos which has cloaked their stories. For those Euro-Americans who knew of enslaved Muslims, the written word created a contradiction, a humanizing expression of the self which forced a recognition that some Africans fit the mold of European personhood. The historical legacies of Job Ben Solomon, Mohammed Bilali, and Omar ibn Said are products of those forces which acted upon them, a “...mix of sentimentality, ethnic wonderment, negrophobia, Christian presumptions, and carelessness.”<sup>56</sup> Any study of their lives must parse through these layers, and confront the challenge of separating the men from their caricatures—and a key pathway to such an understanding is literacy. The written word of enslaved Muslims was immutably tied to their identities and spirituality; for those people, ripped from their homelands and communities of faith, literacy was a link to

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<sup>54</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: the World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 184.

<sup>55</sup> Said, *The Life*, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories*, 132.

their deepest values. For Job Ben Solomon, writing holy words in the dirt of his cell initiated the beginning of his journey home, and the proud Qur'an of his portrait hints at a literate and faithful identity. For Bilali Mohammed, literacy and the spirituality it guided helped him to foster a community of believers on Sapelo Island and complete a fragmentary reconstruction of the words, habits, and culture he had left behind. And for Omar ibn Said, literacy provided the tools for constructing an autobiography grounded in a melded faith, letters serving as the enduring medium of his self-expression. The written word was a guide, an opportunity for them in their times to express community, belief, and identity, and an opportunity in ours to glimpse those values. Past the layers of myth lie the men themselves, their words a pathway through the mix; any scholar who wishes to understand these enslaved spirits must travel down the "strange characters" of their Arabic, to glimpse within those tangled letters the invocation of a self, an identity guarded through the Middle Passage, and fostered even in the darkest trials of bondage.

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# HIGH AND MIGHTY: SPACE, POWER, AND VERTICAL SEGREGATION IN DAKAR

*Madeline Liberman*

## **Abstract**

European residential floors and neighborhoods rose progressively higher above Indigenous residential spaces in French colonial Dakar, Senegal. It is well known that colonial Dakar was deeply segregated, but segregation by elevation has not been studied across multiple scales of urban residential life. In this paper, I use the case study of Dakar to examine why vertical segregation occurred at the building and neighborhood levels. Studying these scales throughout Dakar's history highlights vertical segregation's expansion and increased reach from the 19th to the 20th centuries. Using a combination of archival documents, newspaper articles, and historical maps, I argue that three aspects of power were represented at both the building and neighborhood levels, related to health, symbolic domination, and surveillance and control. I also propose, unlike previous literature, that the aesthetics of the view played a role in larger-scale vertical segregation as a form of symbolic power. Later and broader applications of vertical segregation might seem to represent changing ideas of colonial power and new health theories, but many of the same earlier ideologies were at play, showing the continuity of French colonial urban theories.

## Introduction

“Since becoming capital of French West Africa,” colonial military doctor Charles Jojot wrote buoyantly in 1907, “Dakar aspires to the highest destinies.”<sup>1</sup> Crucially, the Senegalese capital’s “highest destinies” were not metaphorical. In the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries, French colonial urban development projects centered on a plateau that rose about 20–30 meters above the rest of the city on the southern tip of Dakar’s peninsula. Simply called the “Plateau,” the largely European neighborhood exemplified an oft-repeated theme of vertical segregation in French colonial urban planning.

Vertical segregation is typically defined as micro-segregation within individual buildings, wherein specific groups are confined to particular building floors.<sup>2</sup> Here, I use the concept in a broader sense to encompass both building-level segregation and segregation across landscapes by larger altitudinal differences. Across the Second French Empire, which lasted from approximately 1830 to 1960, Europeans and Africans lived in separate neighborhoods at different elevations. I call this *topographical segregation*, a landscape scale of vertical segregation whereby elevational changes are utilized to build segregated enclaves. For example, in Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo, the French settled on the city’s plateau, while Congolese people were forcibly removed to low-lying, swampy areas.<sup>3</sup> In Abidjan in Côte d’Ivoire, as well, it was the French who lived in the city’s higher plateau.<sup>4</sup> Beyond the topographical segregation of cities, vertical segregation also occurred on a larger and smaller scale. In some colonial cities, including in Dakar, military barracks were divided by floor. Zooming out, segregated neighborhoods or towns were also established in the mountains and hillsides of many French colonies.<sup>5</sup> However, this did not always involve the French living at higher elevations than African people, as was the case in Dakar.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore important to

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Jojot, *Dakar : essai de géographie médicale et d’ethnographie* (Montdidier, 1907), 29; translation mine. All translations included in this paper are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Maloutas and Nikos Karadimitriou, “Vertical Cities: Urban Micro-Segregation, Housing Markets and Social Reproduction” in *Vertical Cities: Micro-Segregation, Social Mix and Urban Housing Markets* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022): 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ambe J. Njoh, “Colonial Philosophies, Urban Space, and Racial Segregation in British and French Colonial Africa,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 4 (March 2008): 586.

<sup>4</sup> Ambe J. Njoh, “Urban Planning as a Tool of Power and Social Control in Colonial Africa,” *Planning Perspectives* 24, no. 3 (2009): 304.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers: Hydrotherapy, Climatology, and French Colonial Spas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Njoh (2008) notes that in many North African cities, the Indigenous people already lived on hillsides, so the colonial population settled in the coastal area with its easy port access.

explore the motivations for vertical segregation in the context of Dakar and French West Africa, which reveal particularities of the colonial urban logic in this region.

Using these different aspects of power, I explore vertical segregation at multiple scales through the case study of Dakar, Senegal, which was officially colonized by France in 1857 (fig. 1). The choice of Dakar is partially practical, as it allows for access to larger amounts of historical data than other cities in French West Africa (FWA). As FWA's capital after 1902, Dakar was a major focus of urban development and has a rich colonial archive. The city also exemplifies multiple scales of vertical segregation, which make it a useful subject of analysis. At the smallest scale, scholars have observed buildings in Dakar that were segregated by floor.<sup>7</sup> On a broader scale, the "Plateau" neighborhood was once home to a segregated European enclave whose name relates directly to its placement on higher ground, as in Brazzaville and Abidjan.<sup>8</sup> In this paper, I argue that building-level and topographical segregation had many of the same power-driven motivations for the French in Dakar. Each scale of segregation has slightly different outcomes, but four key forms of power remain: health, material, symbolic, and aesthetic.<sup>9</sup> Studying these scales across Dakar's history, from individual buildings to entire neighborhoods, highlights vertical segregation's expansion from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Liora Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar: The Morphogenesis of an African Regional Capital* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 62; Alain Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes Coloniales Du Sénégal: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar* (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 128.

<sup>8</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 90.

<sup>9</sup> My distinction between symbolic and material power was clarified in personal correspondence with Sinclair DuMont of Cornell University.

<sup>10</sup> The framing and implications of these spatial scales are inspired by Mayhew and Withers in the introduction to *Geographies of Knowledge: Science, Scale, and Spatiality in the Nineteenth Century* (2020).

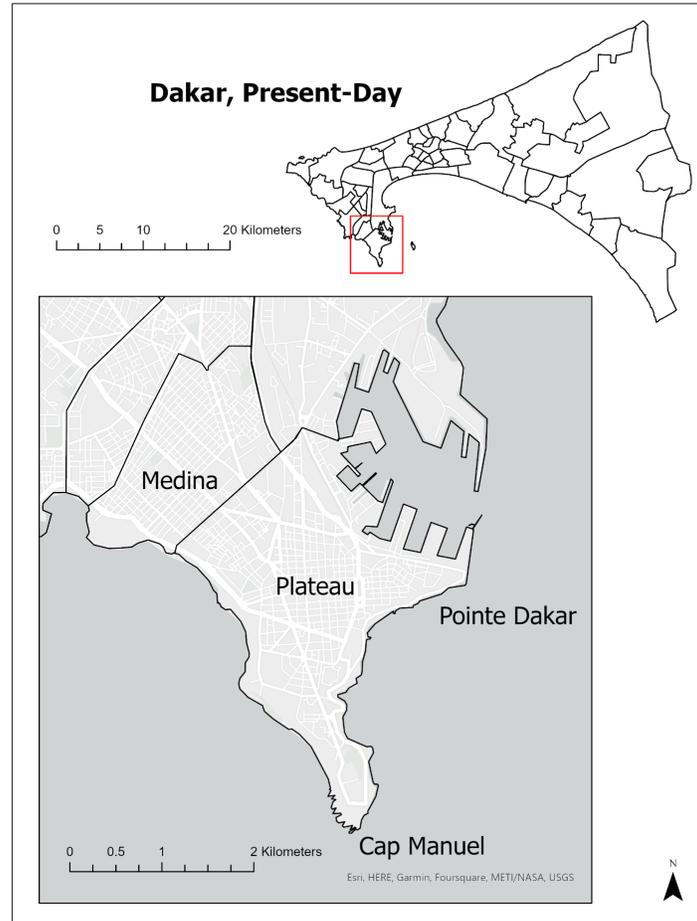


Fig. 1. Map of the Dakar region. Map by the author.

## Historiography

Many scholars who discuss colonial vertical segregation attribute it to European beliefs that higher-elevation locales would help them avoid falling ill from tropical diseases.<sup>11</sup> Beyond public health motivations, scholars such as Ambe Njoh mention that segregating French colonial cities by elevation provided the French with the power to control urban space and surveil Indigenous people.<sup>12</sup> However, none of this literature adequately analyzes vertical segregation on its own, nor does it consider vertical segregation's motivations and impacts at multiple scales of urban life.

<sup>11</sup> Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers*, 18; Carl H. Nightingale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 126.

<sup>12</sup> Njoh, "Urban Planning"; Alain Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes Coloniales Du Sénégal: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar* (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 312.

Indeed, there is little existing literature dedicated to the phenomenon of vertical segregation, especially topographical segregation across neighborhoods. Most studies that use the term “vertical segregation” refer to microsegregation, or segregation within buildings. In their recent book *Vertical Cities*, Thomas Maloutas and Nikos Karadimitriou explain that vertical microsegregation began in classical Rome and later in modern Paris, where lower-income groups had to live on the less convenient upper floors of buildings.<sup>13</sup> This pattern reversed after the invention of elevators and with the increasing interest in aesthetic views. Scholars have also studied vertical hierarchy in post-World War II Athens, observing class and ethnic segregation within apartment buildings.<sup>14</sup> Vertical segregation on a neighborhood scale is even less studied, but Jeff Ueland and Barney Warf’s 2006 article, “Racialized Topographies,” is a rare example that considers the elevation and racial composition of cities in the U.S. South.<sup>15</sup> The authors use Geographic Information Science to analyze the topography of cities, finding that lower elevation is significantly associated with a higher Black population in 51 cities in the American South.<sup>16</sup> Redlining, racial zoning, and restrictive covenants all prevented Black residents from accessing higher-valued properties at high elevations, much like how the French colonial administration deliberately excluded Africans from Dakar’s elevated lands.

Beyond Ueland and Warf’s research, there is a lack of expansive research on topographical segregation. However, several histories of climate, colonialism, and segregation briefly mention this phenomenon and propose some of its causes. Carl Nightingale argues that colonial urban segregation reached a peak in the early 1900s, as disease epidemics (especially the bubonic plague) swept colonial cities.<sup>17</sup> The epidemics sparked a frenzy of forced removals of African people to lower-lying and other unfavorable areas of cities, as both the African people and the space they inhabited were associated with disease. Martin Mahony and Georgina Endfield also discuss the effects of European health theories on colonial cities. The authors mention that Europeans feared that tropical climates would harm their population’s health and morality, leading the colonizers to build hill stations elevated above the tropical temperatures<sup>18</sup>. Often located

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<sup>13</sup> Maloutas and Karadimitriou, “Vertical Cities,” 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jeff Ueland and Barney Warf, “Racialized Topographies: Altitude and Race in Southern Cities,” *Geographical Review* 96, no. 1 (2006): 50.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>17</sup> Nightingale, *Segregation*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Mahony and Georgina Endfield, “Climate and Colonialism,” *WIREs Climate Change* 9, no. 2 (2018): 3..

outside the colonial city, hill stations were colonial outposts in mountainous areas that acted as resort towns and separated the colonizers from the supposedly disease-ridden and unsanitary African city. While this literature mainly draws examples from the British empire, Eric Jennings' *Curing the Colonizers* focuses uniquely on French hill stations.<sup>19</sup> As these outposts were often some distance from major colonial cities, they do not allow for analysis of intra-urban segregation. However, hill stations are important for understanding colonial health-based segregation, as they display the same racialized public health fears that led to the creation of topographically-segregated neighborhoods in cities.

Beyond public health-motivated segregation, Ambe Njoh analyzes how segregating French colonial cities by elevation gave the French spatial power over African people. He argues that altitude was one mechanism for dominating and controlling Africans in colonial cities. Njoh emphasizes that building European quarters at higher elevations in the city was a symbolic mechanism for displaying colonial power and superiority; however, he also argues that the high altitude had the practical function of allowing the colonial administration to easily surveil the native residents.<sup>20</sup> Njoh describes various colonial cities that utilized this spatial and topographical segregation, including Abidjan and Brazzaville. He attributes the vertical segregation to surveillance and domination rather than to concerns for public health. For example, the French often built European neighborhoods on topographically-elevated "plateaus," but the naming of a plateau neighborhood also conveyed the symbolic power of elevation over the African city. This is exemplified by Njoh's description of the "Plateau" neighborhood in Niger, which lacked a physically elevated plateau. The name served rather to symbolically emphasize the superiority of the Europeans.<sup>21</sup>

From this literature on French colonial urban planning and elevation-based segregation, two main themes emerge. First, the French were concerned with protecting their population from illness and disease, which they believed to be caused by the climate of warm and low-lying areas. The French empire also sought to psychologically dominate and surveil Africans by building elevated structures and neighborhoods. Rather than trying to choose between these motivations, I view them both as ways of exercising power in built space that played a role in Dakar. In my research, I aim to shed

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<sup>19</sup> Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Njoh, "Urban Planning," 312.

<sup>21</sup> Ambe Njoh, "The Role and Goals of the State in Urban Development in Niger," *Habitat International* 30, no. 3 (2006): 548.

light on the overlapping ideologies of health, power, and resistance in topographical segregation that previous literature does not cover.

Here, I use Kim Dovey's framework of "power to" and "power over" in built space in order to create a more complete picture of the purposes of vertical segregation. "Power to" represents personal empowerment, or the freedom to make choices and to pursue one's goals and desires. In the context of vertical segregation, "power to" is represented in the Europeans' construction of elevated neighborhoods to suit their desires for a healthy environment.<sup>22</sup> "Power over," on the other hand, results from one person's empowerment removing that of another, therefore creating a relationship of control or domination. Within "power over," I further distinguish between material power, such as in the surveillance of Africans from high-elevation neighborhoods; and symbolic power, such as in the architecture that displays European superiority. While these forms of power are not mutually exclusive, Dovey's distinction is productive in thinking through the motivations for vertical segregation in a colonial context. With this framework, rather than attempting to distinguish generally between public health and power as goals of vertical segregation, we can consider public health as a constructed and weaponized political concept within colonial urban planning, while also acknowledging non-health related aspects of power.

First, I review the relevant literature on elevation-based segregation. I then consider building-level segregation using Alain Sinou's 1993 text *Comptoirs et Villes Coloniales Du Sénégal*, which provides a detailed history of Dakar's development through the heavy use of Senegal's National Archives. The nineteenth-century segregated buildings that Sinou references demonstrate colonial health theories and military expressions of power that would linger on more implicitly in the topographical segregation of the twentieth century. In the following section, I discuss topographical segregation in Dakar from its early beginnings during the initial colonization to the drastic elevational disparities of the twentieth century. This section relies on Jacques Charpy's 1957 collection of reproduced archival sources, *La Fondation de Dakar, 1845-1857-1869*. It also utilizes several twentieth century medical reports, which provide insight into the health-based justifications of topographical segregation. While this scale of vertical segregation might appear to follow an entirely different logic from segregated buildings, both express the same intentions reformulated in different ways. This common logic reveals the larger theories of health, power, and racial hierarchy in French colonial urbanism.

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<sup>22</sup> Kim Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form* (London: Routledge, 2008), 11.

## Part 1: “Encaserné” [“Encaserned”]: Building-Level Segregation

Building-level segregation, or the separation of races among building floors, appeared in early Dakar’s military lodgings, as well as in other Senegalese cities. In these buildings, Europeans lodged on higher floors, while African troops lived on the ground floor.<sup>33</sup> Military officials often justified this separation with a desire for the health of French troops, whom officials valued more highly (literally) than African troops.<sup>34</sup> This segregation also provided the French military with a way of exerting symbolic power, by demonstrating their elevated status and material discipline, and by monitoring the untrustworthy African troops. Health and power overlapped to create conditions of environmental hazard for those troops on the ground floors of buildings.

The lodging of military troops in Dakar was determined in part by theories of health and disease. In France’s second colonial empire, many of the colonies lay closer to the equator. Tropical illnesses swept through populations of unexposed Europeans in the colonies, creating deep fears of warm and tropical climates.<sup>35</sup> Scholars and medical officials across Europe had theorized since the seventeenth century that diseases were caused by “miasma,” or bad air and water characterized by heat, rotting vegetation, and “emanations” from soil found in swamps and tropical zones.<sup>36</sup> Miasma theory was still prevalent in the 19th century, when Dakar’s first military fortifications were built. In a text prepared for French health inspectors in 1850 on diseases in Algeria, for example, doctor Auguste Haspel wrote that “When taking up miasmas, putrid heterogeneous elements, the air is likely to acquire deleterious qualities.”<sup>37</sup> To avoid the negative health effects of this “deleterious” air, it was crucial for the French to exploit higher-elevation “microclimates” in warmer colonies; they sought out altitude for cooler temperatures, lower humidity, and better air quality.

Miasma theory was complemented by climatic determinism. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Europeans believed that climates defined people’s physical and mental characteristics.<sup>38</sup> This notion of climatic determinism made it all the

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<sup>33</sup> David Nelson, “Defining the Urban: The Construction of French-Dominated Colonial Dakar, 1857-1940,” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 33, no. 2 (2007): 229.

<sup>34</sup> Birame Ndoeye Sarr, “L’implantation des bases militaires à Dakar : relations entre militaires et populations autochtones, 1900-1945,” thesis, (Université Cheikh Anta Diop, 2001), 35.

<sup>35</sup> Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers*, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Nightingale, *A Global History*, 88.

<sup>37</sup> Auguste Haspel, *Maladies de l’Algérie* (Toulon: Imprimerie Veuve Baume, 1850), 40.

<sup>38</sup> Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers*, 9.

more important for the French to remain in higher-elevation environments that were more similar to the metropole, as health officials were skeptical that the population could ever truly adjust to other climates. But this theory also impacted how the colonial powers treated African people and considered their health. For example, in the nineteenth century, British colonial officials believed that Europeans required more air than Africans in tropical climates.<sup>29</sup> African and European people supposedly had different physiologies because of the different climates in which they were raised. The French would use this belief to justify the housing of African troops in poor conditions in early Dakar.

Early French colonial military architecture in Senegal, as elsewhere in the empire, consisted of *casernes*, or multi-story barracks (fig. 2). These barracks were made of stone in Dakar, despite how difficult it was to build this type of French metropolitan architecture in Senegal's tropical climate.<sup>30</sup> Multi-story barracks, however, were necessary for the French military officials to feel that their troops were safe from diseases caused by stagnant, stale, and bad-smelling air.<sup>31</sup> For example, in a complaint about overcrowded barracks in 1857, the Commander of the Post of Dakar wrote that "the air there circulates with difficulty and does not renew itself enough. The surgeon predicts that at the time of the [rainy] seasons this [lack of] movement will inevitably cause illnesses for the men."<sup>32</sup> In order to prevent such sources of illness, French troops were housed on the upper floors of the barracks, which had better air flow. Meanwhile, the ground floors of buildings were poorly ventilated and therefore considered unhealthy.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, they typically contained stores and service rooms, but not living quarters—at least, not for Europeans. French regulations prohibited colonial military officials from housing French soldiers on the *casernes'* ground floors, but African troops could be and were forced to stay there.<sup>34</sup>

The building-level vertical segregation prioritized European over African health, a common theme in Dakar's history and in French colonial planning. While French troops were fewer in number and more valuable, colonial officials viewed African soldiers as inferior and replaceable. As argued by Birame Ndoye Sarr in his thesis, "it was in the attribution of benefits that the discrimination of the military regime emerged most,

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<sup>29</sup> Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London: Routledge, 1976), 111.

<sup>30</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 60–62.

<sup>31</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 127, 244–245.

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar, 1845-1857-1869* (Paris: Larose, 1958), 166.

<sup>33</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 127.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 128, 247.

benefiting of course the [French military] who reserved a preferential treatment [...] in comparison with their African counterparts, [who were] confined to a distinct and inferior stage.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the African troops could sleep on the “unhealthy” ground level.

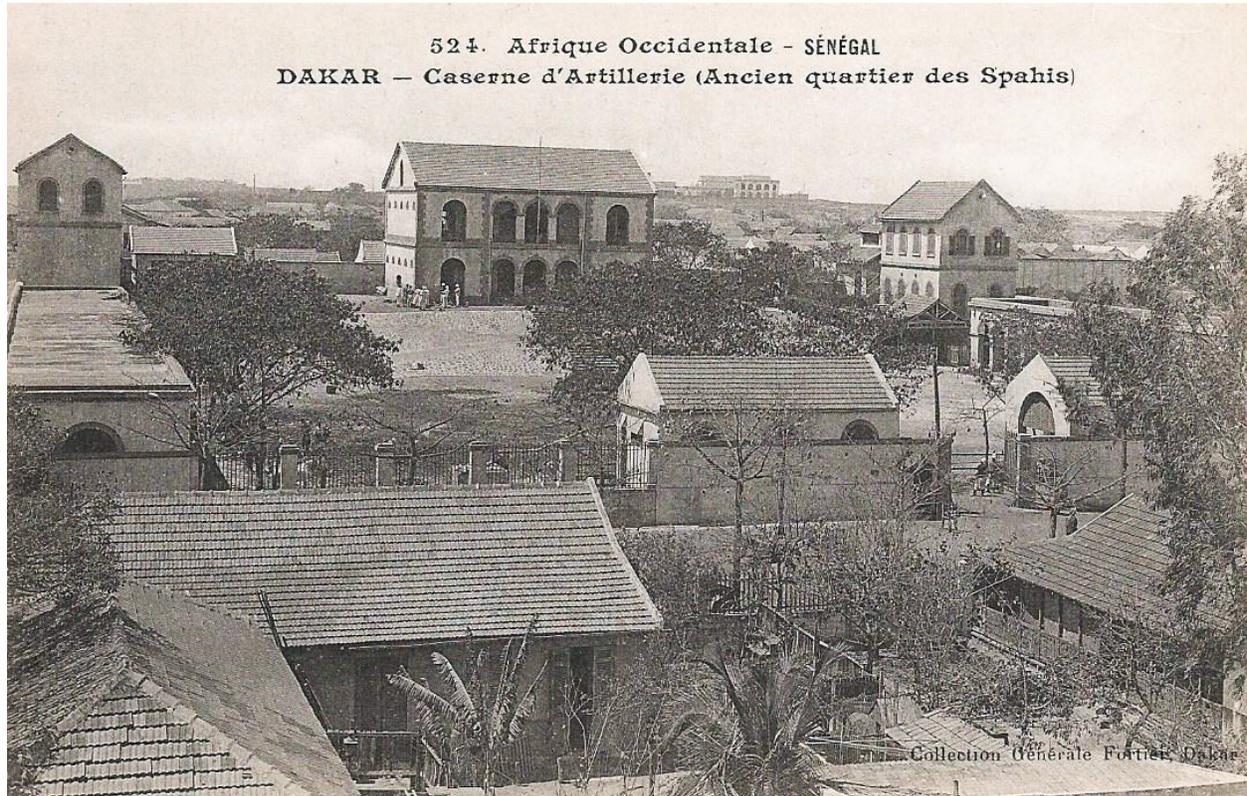


Fig. 2. A caserne in Dakar. The original caption notes that this was once the residence of “Spahis,” or African volunteer troops. François-Edmond Fortier, *Caserne d'Artillerie (Ancien quartier des Spahis)*.

Ironically, the poor air flow on the *casernes*' lower floors was due to the way that the French constructed buildings in the earlier colonial period. Architecture *en dur*, or with permanent materials, was preferred because it was similar to metropolitan architecture and represented French wealth and power.<sup>36</sup> But multi-story brick or stone buildings were unsuited to the local environment. The roofs of the first casernes in Saint-Louis disintegrated in the intense sun and rain, and water flooded the lower floors and rotted the wood.<sup>37</sup> The ground floors of brick houses were poorly-ventilated “furnaces.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, many of the colonial architectural and planning choices associated with vertical segregation, in Dakar and elsewhere, had quite poor results for the French citizens who

<sup>35</sup> Sarr, “L’implantation des bases,” 35.

<sup>36</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 157.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

had to live in them. This durable, European-style architecture was appealing to the military and colonial administration because it seemed to be healthful within French understandings of hygiene, even if those ideas did not correspond with reality. Nevertheless, even if French architecture was uncomfortable for all residents, the building-level segregation would have affected the African troops the most.

In addition to appearing healthier for the French troops, segregating *casernes* allowed military officials to symbolically dominate and physically surveil African soldiers. In the European military tradition, physical elevation corresponded to hierarchical superiority.<sup>39</sup> Vertical segregation was also already common in Paris apartment buildings, with different floors representing different class statuses. David Nelson argues that the French applied this concept of class-stratified buildings to early residences in Dakar.<sup>40</sup> In a more material expression of power, lodging African soldiers on the barracks' lower floors allowed military leaders to exert a greater level of control and discipline than could be achieved when the African troops had lived in private buildings within the city.<sup>41</sup> The French felt that this level of surveillance was necessary for the Senegalese, whom they considered uncivilized.<sup>42</sup> They were also concerned about Africans who were enslaved by mixed-race residents of Senegal and freed after the 1848 abolition of slavery in France and its colonies.<sup>43</sup> The Council of the District of Gorée stated in 1846 that "it is necessary that the Blacks, after their emancipation, place the benefit of their freedom elsewhere than in idleness."<sup>44</sup> African troops were thus housed in the same barracks as Europeans in order to better surveil them and expose them to the "civilizing" influence of the French.<sup>45</sup> Finally, it is possible that the environment of the ground floor of buildings may have been used as a weapon of domination to physically weaken African troops. The French used this tactic in vertically-segregated European houses holding enslaved people on Gorée Island beginning in the 18th century, such as the infamous *Maison des Esclaves*. Compared to the well-aerated upper floors where slave-holders lived, the ground floor of this building was kept humid and dank. According to museum signage and guides, certain cells were kept especially humid, and enslaved people who rebelled against their captors could be placed in these cells in order to physically and mentally

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<sup>39</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 127.

<sup>40</sup> Nelson, 229.

<sup>41</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 119.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Vandervort, "Senegal in 1848," *Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions*, Ohio University, 25 Oct. 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Charpy, *La Fondation*, 18.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

weaken them. To some extent, this strategy might have been borrowed in the *casernes*, allowing the French to emphasize their military hierarchy and dominance.

Vertical segregation of military *casernes* integrated French desires for their troops' health, displays of symbolic power, and disciplining of African people. In prioritizing the "healthful" accommodations of their troops, the French created an explicit hierarchy that determined bodies deserving protection, using their power over military buildings to exclude Africans from the supposedly healthier upper floors. This exclusion was complemented by military officials' long-standing desires to monitor and discipline African people, in addition to the symbolic hierarchy of height in the military. While such small-scale vertical segregation did little to actually protect the troops from disease, it left Africans in leaking, flooding, and uncomfortable living spaces, which the French could not have failed to notice. The French kept careful records of illness in their troops, but no accurate records were kept of maladies among Africans, who could be (and were) quickly replaced.<sup>46</sup> In the vertically segregated military architecture, health, hierarchy, and surveillance combined to create an environmentally-hazardous living space for Africans.

By the 1870s, the military shifted away from multi-story *casernes* and towards housing soldiers in lower-cost barracks. Desperately short of space for military lodgings, the French turned to architecture that was fast and cheap to build.<sup>47</sup> In Dakar, where the troops were largely Senegalese, the French military no longer thought it necessary to build multi-story, permanent *casernes*, the "superior," and supposedly more sanitary form of architecture. With British colonial practices as an important influence, the French began to build single-story, portable wood or metal barracks instead for the African soldiers.<sup>48</sup> Cheap barracks were also built for all but the highest-ranking European troops. However, barracks for French soldiers were two stories, with the French again sleeping on the upper floor for its better air quality and the ground floor reserved for stores and service rooms.<sup>49</sup> By the 1880s, mixed-race, vertically segregated military lodgings faded out of existence, but the multi-story European barracks still overlooked lower African ones in a display of French health standards and superiority.

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<sup>46</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 256.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

## Part 2: The “Highest Destinies:” Topographical Segregation

From the earliest moments of Dakar’s official colonization in the mid-nineteenth century, the French housed troops in vertically segregated buildings. They also set their sights on the peninsula’s elevated terrain for military and, later on, residential architecture. While topographical segregation exemplified the same forms of power found in segregated buildings, it created a much more significant vertical distance between Africans and Europeans. But this also necessitated increased horizontal distance across the peninsula, allowing the French to gaze across and down onto African spaces. This idea of the *view* offers a new aesthetic aspect of power, in combination with health, symbolic, and material power. The view appears in documents from the nineteenth century, when the French enacted topographical segregation in individual forts and monuments. This earlier context helps to explain the 1914 bubonic plague epidemic and the subsequent topographical segregation on Dakar’s Plateau.

Similarly to vertically segregated buildings, the French chose to build on high-elevation terrain for purposes of military strategy in early Dakar. In 1857, the French military and administrative officials settled alongside the pre-existing informal settlement at a northern point of the peninsula called Pointe Dakar (see fig. 1). This was not the highest elevation on the peninsula, but it was still part of the main plateau and rose well above inland areas further north. For military engineers, elevated fortifications were necessary to defend against rival European powers. As the French sought to transform Dakar into a profitable commercial hub, the city needed to be well-protected from other empires’ possible attacks.<sup>50</sup> In order to fortify the peninsula, French military engineer Louis Faidherbe proposed building an elevated fort at the abandoned house of a deceased groundnut merchant and French expatriate, Jaubert.<sup>51</sup>

The hilltop fort defended the French from external threats, but it also secured their possessions from the Indigenous people of the Dakar region. The French feared that the Lebu could endanger Dakar’s railroad, which was built to transport groundnuts and other profitable natural resources to other parts of the colony. The French government’s intervention in the groundnut trade resulted in the Senegalese profiting less, and the French feared that they might attack the trains and plunder the contents. In 1856, the minister of the navy and colonies fretted, “Could one count on the complete security of the material of the track and the merchandise from the Indigenous populations?”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Charpy, *La Fondation*, 125–126.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

Indigenous people had in fact frequently plundered French ships in pirate attacks.<sup>53</sup> Elevated French settlements and forts allowed the French to survey their prized assets and the Indigenous villages surrounding them.

Beyond the commercial tensions, other sources of hostility between the French and Indigenous people led the French to symbolically assert their authority through elevation. Before Dakar's official colonization, the French were disturbed by the informal town growing there, composed of French settlers from nearby Gorée Island. These expatriates yielded to the Lebu people's authority, which officials found to be unacceptable. One official wrote, "It was regrettable to see forming in Dakar an all-French town placed under the authority of Black chiefs of the peninsula. [...] All these tribes that we have suffered demonstrate how little dominance we have acquired over the Indigenous populations."<sup>54</sup>

The elevated fort was therefore instrumental in symbolizing French authority over the Indigenous villages through its commanding location. An 1853 map of Dakar and its Indigenous villages shows that the fort was close to the village of the primary chief of Ndakaru (the Indigenous name for the Dakar region).<sup>55</sup> But on the ground, the advantage of elevation was clearly crucial in distinguishing the two sites, displaying French military power over an Indigenous authority. A sketch of the fort from 1865 displays its imposing hilltop in comparison to the small Indigenous huts (fig. 3). The fort "dominates [*domine*] the main village of the King of Dakar," wrote the Commander-in-Chief of the region, Auguste Léopold Prôtet.<sup>56</sup> The French word "*dominer*" means both "to dominate" and "to overlook," specifically tying the view from the fort to the symbolic domination of Indigenous space and people.<sup>57</sup> French officials often used this word to describe views from their elevated forts and settlements.<sup>58</sup> Views from elevated sites might be seen to symbolize the visual possession of an area, while also providing the material potential to view and surveil populations.

But in addition to material and symbolic power, military officials equally underscored the healthfulness of the new elevated buildings and forts at Pointe Dakar. Prôtet wrote of the new fort in 1857, "This property [had been] placed on an elevation that made its position as advantageous for the health of its inhabitants as for its current destiny [...] of

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<sup>53</sup> Charpy, *La Fondation*, 20.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>57</sup> Larousse, Éditions, "Définitions : dominer, se dominer," accessed June 29, 2022.

<sup>58</sup> Charpy, *La Fondation*, 91, 123; Jojot, *Dakar*, 6.

a fort.”<sup>59</sup> Prôtet gave health and military usefulness equal weight. The early plans for Dakar also placed military barracks and hospitals on the most elevated parts of the Plateau for their healthfulness.<sup>60</sup> These sites exemplified the power of the French to choose what they considered to be the healthiest locations for their settlements.

Placing the vertically-segregated *casernes* on the Plateau reveals the complex interplay between the scales of vertical segregation and French theories of health. In the top-down planning of cities, the French prioritized protecting the health of their troops and high-ranking officers, which explained why they placed the *casernes* on elevated ground. Although African troops in the *casernes* would theoretically have benefited from the elevation as well, the French always received the extra altitude and aeration of the upper floors. Combined with building-level vertical segregation, early topographical segregation provided a comforting feeling of health, safety, and superiority for the French in an unfamiliar environment.

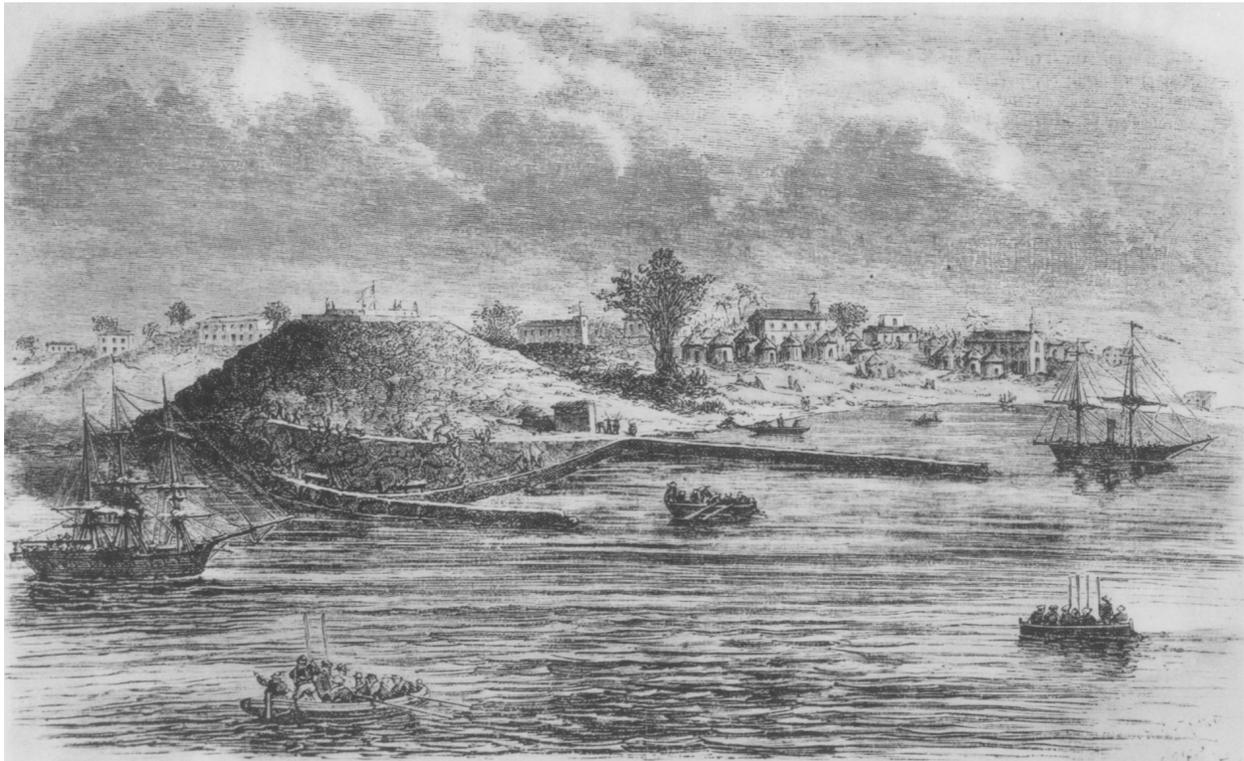


Fig. 3. View of Dakar, sketched by Félix André in 1865. Note the hilltop fort on the left and the lower Indigenous huts on the right. In Jacques Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar, 1845-1857-1869* (Paris: Larose, 1958), 448.

While the topography of the peninsula was key in establishing military and health advantages for the French early on, Dakar’s Plateau was not fully segregated on a large

<sup>59</sup> Charpy, *La Fondation*, 123.

<sup>60</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 232.

scale in the nineteenth century. The Plateau was indeed envisioned as a European residential space. The French settled on this land as soon as they arrived, and they quickly forced the relocation of some of its Indigenous villages. As early as 1867, officials proposed completely restricting the African people from the area.<sup>61</sup> But until 1914, only a limited number were actually excluded.<sup>62</sup> Many Indigenous people, mainly the Lebu, resisted French attempts at segregation and remained on Pointe Dakar by the early twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> Those who remained were the few elite Africans who attained the status of *évolués* [evolved] within Dakar after 1887, when the city became one of the Four Communes of Senegal (Dakar, Rufisque, Gorée, and Saint-Louis).<sup>64</sup> Due to their long-term relationship and close ties with France, these four cities were given a special status. Their citizens technically had some of the same rights as the French—but only if they accepted French education and cooperated with the colonial project. The *évolués* who accepted were legally French and could not easily be removed from the Plateau.<sup>65</sup> But at the beginning of the new century, the French attempted to more strictly segregate Dakar and remove the remaining Africans, using public health rhetoric. The resulting topographical segregation would bring French Dakar closer to the “highest destinies” that the colonial power envisioned for it, firmly rejecting the rights of non-Europeans to those lofty heights.<sup>66</sup>

A key moment in the topographical segregation of Dakar was the 1914 bubonic plague outbreak, as it resulted in the most drastic residential segregation in the city’s history. Between 1894 and 1914, the third major wave of bubonic plague swept the globe, finally landing in Dakar. In nine months, approximately 14 percent of the city’s population died—the vast majority of them African.<sup>67</sup> Eventually, the French would use the guise of public health to force the African people further from the city center in their plague responses.

When the first plague cases were reported in the spring of 1914, the French subjected the African population and their dwellings to severe hygienic restrictions.<sup>68</sup> Non-Europeans were indeed the primary victims of the plague, as they had often been

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<sup>61</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 233.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>63</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 101.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>65</sup> David Nelson, “Defining the Urban: The Construction of French-Dominated Colonial Dakar, 1857-1940,” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 33, no. 2 (2007): 247.

<sup>66</sup> Jojot, *Dakar*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 105 ; Myron Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002), 119.

<sup>68</sup> Raymond Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar, Senegal, 1914,” *Africa* 41, no. 2 (1971): 144.

forced into overcrowded conditions with little access to basic services such as sewers and waste management.<sup>69</sup> However, the plague restrictions were put in place to protect the French plateau as opposed to African people's health.<sup>70</sup> The colonial administration burned all African huts on the Plateau, sanitized the permanent residences of African people, and sent the sick to quarantine camps.<sup>71</sup> The French also attempted to build a *cordon sanitaire*, a kind of enforced quarantine line, around some African neighborhoods. Police restricted the inhabitants' movement in and out of the quarantined neighborhoods, foreshadowing the residential segregation to come.

The new regulations often reconciled old miasmatic and climatic explanations of disease in Dakar which were adapted in the twentieth century. As late as the 1940s, the French still treated illnesses with visits to cool and elevated hill stations in their colonies.<sup>72</sup> This extended to the bubonic plague as well. A French medical text published in 1909 referred to the third wave of the plague as the "climatic bubon," arguing that it was an entirely different disease from the medieval Black Death that depended on warm and tropical climates.<sup>73</sup> In 1914 Dakar, the French still did not fully understand that the bubonic plague was spread by rats and fleas, and leading doctors blamed "unsanitary" African dwellings that were constructed with non-permanent materials like straw.<sup>74</sup> Attacks on this so-called insalubrious African architecture had been made since the beginning of Dakar's settlement; Faidherbe, the early military engineer and governor, had led a "battle of the *paillote*" against these straw huts.<sup>75</sup> It had long been feared that "putrid emanations" from African villages would endanger the French, which was why they were so careful to place their new settlements upwind from and at higher elevations than the African neighborhoods.<sup>76</sup>

As the 1914 plague unfolded, these traditional theories of miasma and climatology influenced the quarantine and segregation measures, producing topographical segregation across Dakar. The French quarantine camp was located at the southern tip of Cape Manuel, the highest point on the peninsula.<sup>77</sup> In sharp contrast, the French established a new *ville indigène*, which they later called the Medina, in a low-lying

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<sup>69</sup> Echenberg, *Black Death*, 119.

<sup>70</sup> Echenberg, *Black Death*, 60.

<sup>71</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 105–107.

<sup>72</sup> Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers*, 38.

<sup>73</sup> Henri Salanoue-Ipin, *Traité de pathologie exotique, clinique et thérapeutique*, vol. 7 (Paris: J.-B. Baillière et fils, 1919), 262.

<sup>74</sup> Echenberg, *Black Death*, 92, 99.

<sup>75</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 281.

<sup>76</sup> Charpy, *La Fondation*, 115, 167.

<sup>77</sup> Echenberg, *Black Death*, 185.

northwestern location when Indigenous people resisted the early draconian health measures. Originally proposed as another temporary quarantine camp, the Medina became home to some 8,000 Indigenous people by the end of the 1920s.<sup>78</sup> Indigenous people whose homes were burned and who could not or did not want to rebuild with permanent materials were offered new land plots in the Medina, far from the European city on the Plateau.<sup>79</sup>

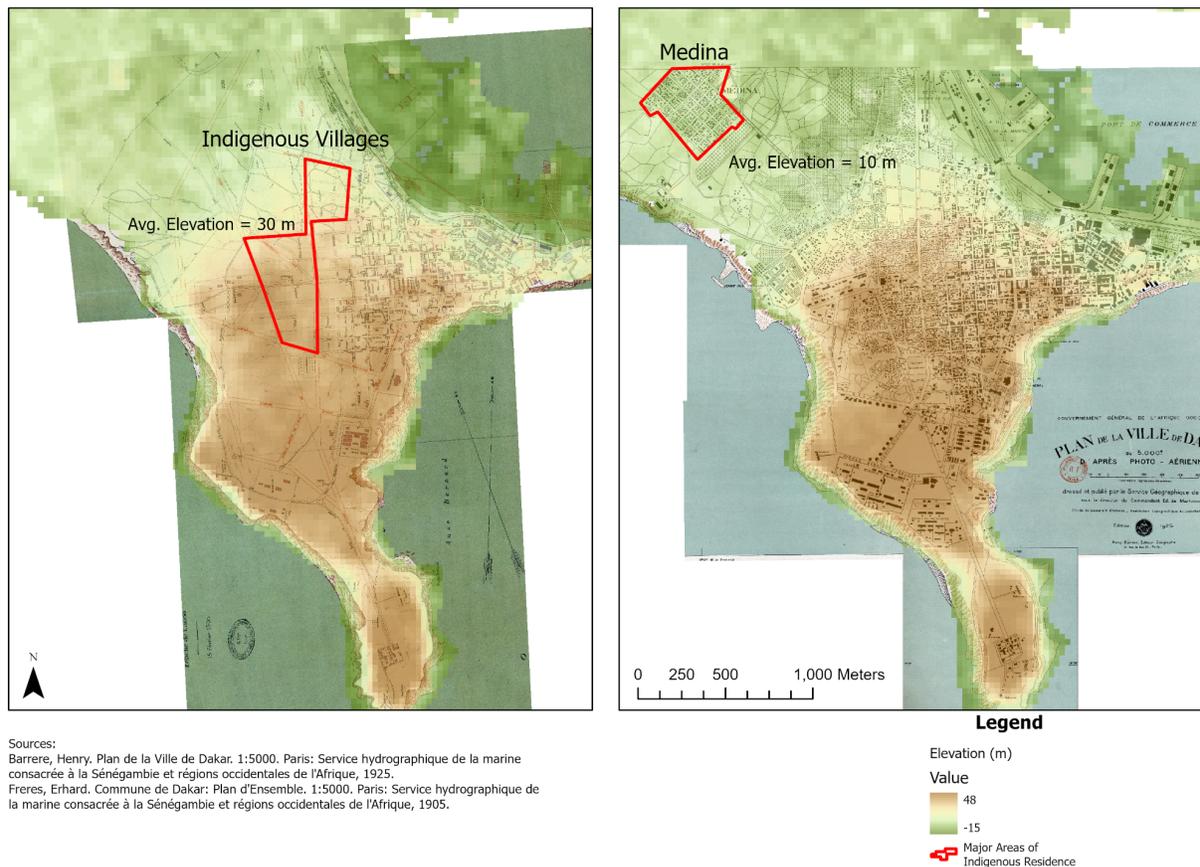


Fig. 4. African residential areas (based on historical maps) and elevation in Dakar. In 1925 (right) the new Medina (the northwest region outlined in red) was at a much lower elevation than the previous African villages in 1905 (left) or the main French Plateau. Map by author.

The low land of the Medina was environmentally hazardous; in fact, the Medina would have held all of the features of miasma that the French feared for their own habitations. The site was about 10 meters above sea level on average, compared to the

<sup>78</sup> Betts, "The Establishment," 145, 148.

<sup>79</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 105–107.

30-35 meters of elevation on the Plateau (fig. 4). Because of this, the land was prone to flooding during the rainy season, which caused illness among those who lived there.<sup>80</sup> A 1918 French report even proposed that the best solution was to move the Medina to higher ground, or at least to drain and stabilize the soil. But none of these measures were taken, nor were any basic amenities provided in the first few years of the Medina's establishment. An official wrote in 1919, "It is notorious that, given the rudimentary state of the village of Medina, the native is not happy there."<sup>81</sup> Blaise Diagne, Dakar's first Senegalese representative in the French parliament, wrote in August 1914, "They have distanced the natives from the city, installing them in an area with neither electricity nor water, without sewers or latrines."<sup>82</sup> The Lebu themselves had long avoided the area of the Medina because they considered it unhealthy, and they referred to it not as "Medina" but as "Tilène, the region frequented by jackals."<sup>83</sup> Whether or not the French intentionally chose a low-lying and environmentally hazardous zone for the Medina, they certainly did not take care to plan or develop the environment as they did for the European Plateau.

The creation of the Medina was also suspected to be an excuse for expropriating desirable land on the Plateau. In a 1918 letter, the Governor General of French West Africa wrote that "It is most desirable to hasten the exodus to the Medina in order to free lands in Dakar for the purpose of erecting buildings to house Europeans."<sup>84</sup> The letter reveals the administration's willingness to displace Dakar's non-European residents in order to obtain attractive land for the French. In fact, the Lebu were deeply suspicious that this was the intention of the French, and they vehemently protested the displacement.<sup>85</sup> Many of the Lebu succeeded in remaining on the Plateau amid the French colonial town, although other Indigenous tribes were largely removed to the Medina.<sup>86</sup>

It is possible that the French intentionally displaced African people to the lower-lying Medina to obtain their desirable Plateau land, under the guise of public health. A contemporary example shows more explicitly how this kind of topographical segregation was carried out in French West Africa. In 1914, the same year that the plague struck Dakar, colonial health officials proposed a vast sanitation effort in Aboisso, Côte

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<sup>80</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 107.

<sup>81</sup> Betts, "The Establishment," 148.

<sup>82</sup> Echenberg, *Black Death*, 76.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>84</sup> Betts, "The Establishment," 149.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

d'Ivoire, in order to improve Europeans' health there. French military doctor Couvy argued that diseases and health issues among the French colonial population were due to "excessive temperature with elevated humidity and lack of ventilation [as well as the] presence of stagnant water."<sup>87</sup> Couvy's solution proposed moving the entire French neighborhood to Aboisso's plateau, from which the French would "only descend for several hours each week."<sup>88</sup> This, Couvy argued, "will assure a perfect healthfulness."<sup>89</sup> As in Dakar, the Aboisso proposal necessitated strict topographical segregation between French and African people. According to Couvy, the "proximity of Indigenous people" was another cause of the town's insalubrity.<sup>90</sup> Segregation was therefore part of the solution: in the older Indigenous area, he suggested that the French "prohibit housing less than 50 meters from the banks of the drained marshes."<sup>91</sup> While the African people were not necessarily displaced in Aboisso, they were confined to the lower-lying marshland, as in Dakar. Couvy continued: "This project would have in addition the considerable advantage of placing the European city uphill from the Indigenous city," an advantage of healthful higher ground and distance from the African people.<sup>92</sup> This example represents a general trend of French colonial concerns for finding and preserving exclusively-European plateaus, justified by public health.

Besides health and hygiene, reasons to place Dakar's Medina in a lower-lying area also included surveillance and symbolic authority. The 1914 epidemic coincided with the outbreak of World War I, when the French relied heavily on Indigenous soldiers, or *tirailleurs sénégalais*. The segregated Medina, which the European neighborhood overlooked, allowed the French to better circumscribe and monitor the Indigenous people, as deserters often hid in the older and less rigidly planned Indigenous areas.<sup>93</sup> Liora Bigon argues that the Medina's orthogonally planned streets allowed for easier control.<sup>94</sup> The low-lying location would have also allowed the French to observe the Indigenous population, as argued by Ambe Njoh.<sup>95</sup> In addition to the possibilities for

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<sup>87</sup> Couvy, "Travaux d'Assainissement de quelques centres importants de la Côte d'Ivoire", *Annales d'hygiène et de médecine coloniales* 17 (1914).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 100-101.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 111-112.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 275, 280.

<sup>94</sup> Liora Bigon, "From Metropolitan to Colonial Planning: Dakar between Garden City and Cité-Jardin," in *Garden cities and colonial planning: transnationality and urban ideas in Africa and Palestine*, ed. Liora Bigon and Yossi Katz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 56.

<sup>95</sup> Njoh, "Urban Planning," 302-303.

surveillance, historians have also noted the powerful symbolism that was conveyed through the plateau's height in comparison to the lower Indigenous city. According to Sinou, the placement of the European neighborhood on the Plateau was a continuation of the Greek and Roman practice of locating sacred and higher-status buildings and monuments on hills—the Acropolis being one example.<sup>96</sup> Njoh similarly argues that the topography separated colonizer from colonized, representing the unequal distribution of power and wealth.<sup>97</sup> This crucial display of power is notable in the previously-mentioned language surrounding views from high-elevation buildings across Dakar's history, which “overlooked” and “dominated” the landscape.

In connection with the symbolic power held at high elevations, topographical segregation would have created a form of aesthetic power in its views of Indigenous space from the Plateau. While this can be connected to the earlier views from forts, views from the Plateau would have noticeably improved the aesthetics of daily life for non-military residents as well. French tourists and colonial administrators poured into Dakar after the city was awarded the title of capital of French West Africa in 1902, and urban planners focused heavily on developing the Plateau to be an attractive European-style neighborhood for them. Bigon writes that the Plateau “was meant not only to impress the Africans,” which might have been accomplished by the imposing display of elevation mentioned above, but also “to ‘pacify’ critics at home, especially those who denounced the enterprise, by emphasizing the visual aspects of colonialism.”<sup>98</sup> Views from the Plateau would have been one such “visual aspect” of colonialism, as they allowed the French to distance and romanticize the Indigenous city and the colonial project. The elite metropolitan lifestyle was associated with “pleasure, aesthetics and leisure time activities” such as photography and landscape drawing that correspond to attractive views.<sup>99</sup> New or temporary residents of Dakar also sent postcards to the metropole with pleasing views of the city; these views make up the majority of the colonial postcards in Senegal's National Archives.<sup>100</sup> The postcards, combined with a general emphasis on aesthetics in the colonial Plateau lifestyle, demonstrate that aesthetic views appealed to French colonial officials and tourists (fig. 5).

Several French authors noted the appeal of views from the Plateau in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The French doctor Jojot wrote of the view from

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<sup>96</sup> Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes*, 300.

<sup>97</sup> Njoh, “Urban Planning,” 312.

<sup>98</sup> Bigon, “Metropolitan,” 56.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>100</sup> David Prochaska, “Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal,” *African Arts* 24, no. 4 (1991): 44.

the Governor's palace that "the panorama [...] does not lack in beauty."<sup>101</sup> In an indirect reference to the view's appeal, traveler Marcel Monnier emphasized that Dakar's topography allowed elites to avoid looking closely at or engaging with the Indigenous city. Reflecting on the topography as he sailed away, Monnier wrote, "A fold of terrain masks the horrors [of Black Dakar] from the residents of the white city."<sup>102</sup> While allowing a broader, sweeping vantage point of Dakar from a surveillance perspective, the Plateau's views might also have been desirable for the many Europeans who thought of Indigenous communities as squalid and wished not to see them up close. This benefit would only have been available at the topographic scale, not within the earlier segregated buildings.



Fig. 5. "Une Vue du Plateau [A View from the Plateau]," from Geneanet.

In the years following the 1914 plague outbreak, historical maps show that European development spread more widely over the Plateau, taking advantage of its combined advantages.<sup>103</sup> Meanwhile, the French attempted to deny this elevated space and its real and imagined benefits from the Indigenous people of Dakar, who suffered on the outskirts of the city in the Medina. The displacement of African people would allow the

<sup>101</sup> Jojot, *Dakar*, 6.

<sup>102</sup> Marcel Monnier, *France Noire (Côte d'Ivoire et Soudan)* (Paris: Plon, 1894), 22.

<sup>103</sup> Henry Barrière, *Plan de la Ville de Dakar* [ca. 1:5,000] (Paris: Service Géographique de l'A.O.F., 1925).

French to build their imposing Plateau city, which had been so significant throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the sources available remain silent on the health benefits of the Plateau during the plague outbreak, the nineteenth century context and examples from other colonies of French West Africa suggest that miasma and climatic theories likely influenced the desires of the French to overtake the entire Plateau. The movement of Africans to the Medina provided the French with the concrete power of surveillance as well. The Plateau's imposing elevation symbolized the power and resources that the French seemed to hold over African people, once again much like the earlier elevated forts and segregated buildings. But unlike segregated buildings, topographical segregation also allowed French tourists and expatriates to view African communities in a way that fit their idealized aesthetic of a European-style city amid the dangers and uncertainties of Africa, blurring the aspects that they found unattractive. Today, much of the French architecture on the Plateau remains, and residents of Dakar refer to the Plateau as "the city," symbolically validating the power and status of the Plateau in comparison to the marginalized Medina and other non-European neighborhoods.

## Conclusion

Through vertical segregation of entire hillsides and plateaus, as well as just a few meters of vertical separation within buildings, the French created a strict racial hierarchy in Dakar. Much of the same logic appeared at both scales, revealing the importance of healthfulness, surveillance and discipline, and symbolic power across all levels of French colonial urban planning. First, vertical segregation distinguished between bodies that were worthy of good health and protection from disease. In individual buildings and across the terrain of the peninsula, French health theories led to the Indigenous people being forced into lower spaces, creating conditions that were at best uncomfortable and at worst incredibly dangerous. Throughout Dakar's history, both low-elevation spaces and Indigenous communities were seen as filthy and dangerous for the health of the French, who associated them with miasma. This culminated in the responses to the 1914 bubonic plague, which can be seen in part as a way of preserving the Plateau as a secure, miasma-free elevated space. Whether or not the administration intended for low-elevation dwelling conditions to be hazardous for Indigenous people, it failed to improve them at both the building and topographical scales. This was a stark contrast to the administration and military's internal obsession with the health of high-elevation localities for the French people.

In both building-level and topographical segregation, the French exerted material and symbolic power over Indigenous people by surveilling them and demonstrating French superiority with imposing height. The French military played a prominent role in Dakar's history and planning, which meant that military buildings needed to be high up in order to provide strategic vantage points. But the early military and later residential and administrative buildings on the Plateau also symbolized that the French colonizers and institutions had the advantage over Indigenous people. Within some of those buildings, the French made Indigenous troops sleep on lower floors to allow for both close surveillance and elitist symbolism, creating something of a microcosm of topographical segregation.

In another non-material sense of power, topographical segregation of Dakar's Plateau beautified the landscape for the elites who lived there. The aesthetically pleasing view transformed what seemed to be a dirty and disease-ridden city into an idyllic, picturesque panorama. This backdrop for the clean and healthful Plateau might have helped the French to distance themselves from the dangerous and uncomfortable foreignness of Dakar.

As Dakar developed in the twentieth century, its vertical segregation broadened through increasingly drastic French strategies. Subtler forms of verticality, such as building-level segregation, were replaced by entire elevated neighborhoods that would have been more visible to all city-dwellers. By the 1920s and 30s, French tourists, administrative officials, and their families poured into Dakar. They wanted to see a "model" French imperial city, and less and less of the distant Indigenous city below the Plateau.<sup>104</sup> Dakar's elevated architecture continued to send a message of French superiority, and the Plateau maintained superior access to services, resources, and institutions through the twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> Despite the many blunders and inconsistencies in the establishment of vertical segregation, French urbanism remained (and remains) 'high and mighty' in theory, if not always in practice.

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<sup>104</sup> Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar*, 81.

<sup>105</sup> Lat Soucabé Mbow, "Entre Plateau et Médina : un programme d'aménagement urbain à Dakar. L'expérience du réaménagement de l'îlot Petersen à Dakar," *Les Cahiers d'outre-Mer* 52, no. 205 (1999): 75–92.

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# PLAYING THE GAME AT YOUR OWN RISK: DATING, SEXUALITY, AND RAPE CULTURE AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY IN THE 1930S

*Julia Milani*

## **Abstract**

While conversations about dating, sexuality, and rape culture in college have skyrocketed in recent years, young adults have been dating in the modern sense since the early twentieth century. By using Stanford students of the 1930s as a case study, this article demonstrates the existence of and relationships between the rating and dating culture, open sexuality, and rape culture beyond what scholars have previously explored. Stanford students thoroughly participated in the rating and dating system and its requirements as previously defined by scholar Willard Waller. Additionally, they were sexually active and open about their behavior; however, male sexuality was assumed while female sexuality was presented as part of a dialogue between a woman's own experience and how others perceived her. Further, men perpetuated rape culture by assuming female consent, promoting disregard for female protests or rejections, and normalizing violence against women in their student publications, which frequently relied on humor and satire. While there is conspicuous lack of records or accounts of rape at Stanford, student diaries, administrative documents, and campus publications ask us to look critically at our research on histories of sexual violence.

“If a diplomat says yes, he means perhaps; if he says perhaps, he means no; if he says no he's no diplomat. If a lady says no, she means perhaps; if she says perhaps, she means yes; but if she says yes, she's no lady. -Jester”  
 – *The Stanford Chaparral*, December 1932<sup>1</sup>

January 2015 was a big month for college campuses, Stanford University's in particular; student athlete Brock Turner's assault of Chanel Miller at Stanford became a national news item early in 2015, and the documentary *The Hunting Ground* about rape and rape culture at colleges and subsequent administrative failure to protect their students premiered that same month.<sup>2</sup> Discussions of sexual assault skyrocketed across the United States as worried parents dropped their children off for freshman year that fall. Despite the recent spike in awareness of sexual assault and rape culture, college students and other young people have discussed these phenomena for decades.<sup>3</sup>

When historians discuss rape culture in the United States, they usually begin in the 1970s, when the term was first coined.<sup>4</sup> Elements of rape culture, however, are apparent going back to the 1920s and 1930s, when modern dating first emerged. This time period saw the expansion of casual dating between young men and women, departing from traditional Victorian standards of courtship.<sup>5</sup> As opposed to courting, which required men to call upon women in their homes and interact only under often-female supervision, dating brought heterosocialization, or interaction between men and women, into the public sphere traditionally dominated by men.<sup>6</sup> Historians have investigated the topics of dating, gender roles, and sex in a variety of decades going as far back as the 1920s by looking at broader trends as well as case studies of specific

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<sup>1</sup> “What Can We Do?,” *Stanford Chaparral* (7925): [Box 9, Volume 34], Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California, (Dec. 1932). (Hereafter *Chaparral*, [Box, Volume], Special Collections, (Date).)

<sup>2</sup> Brooks Barnes, “An Unblinking Look at Sexual Assaults on Campus,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/26/movies/the-hunting-ground-a-film-about-rape-culture-at-colleges.html>; Victor Xu, “Brock Turner Sentenced to Six Months in County Jail, Three Years Probation,” *Stanford Daily*, June 2, 2016, <https://stanforddaily.com/2016/06/02/brock-turner-sentenced-to-six-months-in-county-jail-three-years-probation/>.

<sup>3</sup> Merril D. Smith, *Encyclopedia of Rape* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 175.

<sup>4</sup> Nickie D. Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines: Rape Culture in Popular Media* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 5-18.

<sup>5</sup> Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 1-12; John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 256-257.

<sup>6</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 3; D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 256-257.

schools and communities.<sup>7</sup> Scholars have also examined sexual aggression, both on college campuses and in relation to dating, as well as rape and its changing legal definitions in American society.<sup>8</sup> However, their periodization of rape culture, or the environment which normalizes sexual violence, does not extend back to the 1920s and 1930s, a defining era for modern dating.<sup>9</sup> This gap between the purported beginning of modern dating and purported development of rape culture must be reexamined as society moves to dismantle the institutions and norms that perpetuate rape culture.

To tackle this issue, this paper focuses on Stanford University as a case study to ask: What did heterosocial relationships look like at Stanford in the 1930s and how did these relationships reflect and express norms of gender and sexuality of the era? How, if at all, did consent factor into the dynamics of dating, and how were these beliefs or attitudes regarding consent taught and perpetuated within a community in a time before television and social media? In other words, was there a rape culture at Stanford in the 1930s? In asking these questions, this paper reexamines how far back rape culture extends in American history. Using Stanford University as a case study to analyze the experience of students during the 1930s, some of the first young adults to “date,” this paper aims to take previous research processes one step further by combining the tradition of analysis of sexual assault and rape culture today with historical analyses of heterosocial relationships, sex, and rape culture amongst young adults in the 1930s.

Through my research, I conclude that Stanford students of the 1930s dated under the framework of the “rating and dating” system described by sociologist Willard Waller in 1937.<sup>10</sup> In this system, common among college students at the time, dating and being popular were the end goals, not marriage. In order to achieve this popularity or “rate

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<sup>7</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 26–30, 34; Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 161–162; D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 257–263; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*, 2nd ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 279–294; Nicholas L. Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) 184–186; Willard Waller, “The Rating and Dating Complex,” *American Sociological Review* 2, no. 5 (1937): 729.

<sup>8</sup> Clifford Kirkpatrick and Eugene Kanin, “Male Sex Aggression on a University Campus,” *American Sociological Review* 22, no. 1 (1957): 52–58; Estelle B. Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Lisa Lindquist Dorr, “The Perils of the Back Seat: Date Rape, Race and Gender in 1950s America,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 1 (April 2008): 27–28; Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Waller, “The Rating and Dating Complex,” 729–734. Throughout this paper, I use female and woman interchangeably, as well as male and man. In doing so, I do not mean to equate sex and gender. Rather, I am using the terminology of the time. In the 1930s, sex was largely considered constitutive of gender. Ultimately, female and woman or male and man are meant to indicate a person who identifies as a woman or man, respectively. See Joanne Meyerowitz, “Christine Jorgenson and the Story of How Sex Changed,” in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, ed. Linda K. Kerber et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 617.

well,” women needed to be seen as desirable and busy with many dates. Men, on the other hand, needed to be able to pay for various expenses associated with these dates. Students’ emerging sexuality, or expressions of sexual desire, was intertwined with this system; Stanford students were sexually active with each other, were open about their sexual activity, and very much expected dating to involve expressions of sexuality through sexual activity.<sup>11</sup> While male sexuality was assumed, however, female sexuality was presented as part of a dialogue between a woman’s own experience and how others perceived her, which stripped women of agency. Women’s agency was further degraded by a rape culture, perpetuated by student publications, in which men assumed female consent, promoted disregard for female protests or rejections, and normalized violence against women. Further, the standards of the rating and dating system taught both genders to view lack of enthusiasm as a positive sign in pursuing their partner. Thus, while the new system of heterosocialization afforded new liberties to both genders, the unequal sexual power dynamic between male and female students stripped women of their right to consent and deprived them of ownership over their own sexuality.

In order to get a sense of dating culture and attitudes regarding consent at Stanford, I utilized three main types of sources: diaries and scrapbooks, administrative documents and correspondences, and student publications. The diaries and scrapbooks provide a glimpse into the dynamics of individual students’ extracurricular lives. Further, the private nature of diaries and scrapbooks give insight into how students documented and discussed taboo topics like sex. Administrative documents, such as records from the Dean of Women and Women’s Council, provide a broader view of student life. Student publications provide a similar overview, as well as insight into what students found funny at the time. As historian Vic Gatrell has shown, humor publications “can take us to the heart of a generation’s shifting attitudes, sensibilities, and anxieties.”<sup>12</sup> Satire in particular provides critical insight: it exaggerates societal norms to point out the absurdities of human society.<sup>13</sup> Thus, by unpacking what students thought was appropriate to laugh at or worth exaggerating, we can gain a greater understanding of the beliefs and practices of Stanford students at large in the 1930s.

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout this paper, sexual activity refers to not just heterosexual, penetrative sex; the term is much more expansive to include a range of activities, including petting, necking, and other behaviors which students themselves deemed sexual.

<sup>12</sup> Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Emmett Stinson, “Satire,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, August 28, 2019.

## Setting the Scene: Historical Context and Literature Review

Dating in the 1930s served not to find a spouse, but as an end in and of itself.<sup>14</sup> Famously coined the “rating and dating complex” by Willard Waller in 1937, the dating system in the interwar years was an intentionally public, competitive, and consumptive game.<sup>15</sup> Waller created this term out of research that he conducted at “College X” (Pennsylvania State) in 1937 in which he examined the heterosocial practices of its mostly middle-class students.<sup>16</sup> He concluded that young men and women developed their popularity, or “rating,” by demonstrating how desirable they were; men needed to have money and a car as well as be connected to the right social circles, while women needed to be beautiful, fun, and seen going out with a variety of well-rated men. These expectations created a constant sense of competition, as men vied for dates with popular and oft-booked women.<sup>17</sup> The quality and cost of the dates also qualified a man’s rating; even during the Great Depression, men were expected to take their dates out to dinners, movies, or dances and to pay the bill in full, in accordance with their duty as societal breadwinners.<sup>18</sup> This form of courting differed greatly from that of the nineteenth century, which relied heavily on formality and family involvement.<sup>19</sup> While some scholars have called into question some of Waller’s methods and conclusions regarding dating systems of the 1930s, his work is still a mainstay in the field.<sup>20</sup>

Young people, especially middle- and upper-class women, also became more sexually active during this period. “Petting” and “necking” with casual partners was common and, to an extent, expected.<sup>21</sup> While pre-marital sex was not common or condoned, it still

<sup>14</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 26-30.

<sup>15</sup> Waller, “The Rating and Dating Complex.”

<sup>16</sup> Michael Gordon, “Was Waller Ever Right? The Rating and Dating Complex Reconsidered,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 43, no. 1 (1981): 67; Waller, “The Rating and Dating Complex,” 729.

<sup>17</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 26-30, 34; Waller, “The Rating and Dating Complex,” 729-734.

<sup>18</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 34, 58, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 3-4. It is important to note that dating looked different for lower socio-economic classes; while youth culture as a whole became more consumeristic from the 1920s onward, the impact of this change on dating differed between social classes. Because this paper focuses on Stanford students, who hailed from middle- and upper-class families, I am only focusing on their systems of heterosocialization. See D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 258-259.

<sup>20</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 26-28; Gordon, “Was Waller Ever Right?,” 67-76; William M. Smith, “Rating and Dating: A Re-Study,” *Marriage and Family Living* 14, no. 4 (1952): 312-17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 240-241. While, as with most slang, there were no set definitions for “petting” and “necking,” a 1950s marriage text states that necking is “stimulation from the neck up, and the main areas of sexual stimulations remain covered by clothing. The neck, lips, and ears are utilized extensively as sexual objects.” Petting, on the other hand, is everything but sex. See Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 80.

occurred.<sup>22</sup> Although women were supposedly more liberated in their ability to express their sexuality during this period, they were still constrained by certain restrictions and expectations. Firstly, women were supposed to set the limits on sexual activity and reject the advances of men, who were encouraged to push them as far as possible.<sup>23</sup> Thus, how far a couple went was the woman's responsibility. Women needed to toe the line when petting or necking with partners; in order to maintain their popularity under the rating and dating system, they could not go "too far" and become known as an "easy lay," or not go far enough and be seen as a "flat tire."<sup>24</sup> Secondly, because men paid for the dates, they sometimes expected sexual favors from their date in return, making women theoretically "indebted" to their male dates.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, fraternity life, which flourished across the country at this time, promoted an aggressive and hypersexual masculinity in which sexual conquest of women was highly valued.<sup>26</sup> Thus, college women were surrounded by a culture that prioritized men's sexual gratification over their ability to consent or provide affirmative and continued approval without pressure.

This type of culture, one in which sexual violence against women is normalized, has come to be understood by scholars and popular media as "rape culture."<sup>27</sup> Originally discussed by various scholars in the 1970s, rape culture acknowledges that behaviors ranging from catcalling to unwanted sexual contact stem from social processes that assume men should be sexually aggressive and women should be passive.<sup>28</sup> None of these beliefs are inherent, but instead passed down and reinforced through cultural norms and media.<sup>29</sup> Rape culture does not necessarily describe a society in which rape is obvious or rampant. Rather, rape culture describes a community in which rape and other forms of sexual aggression are normalized.

Looking at Stanford during the 1930s, we find a very different university than what we find today. The student population throughout the 1930s hovered between 3,000 and

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<sup>22</sup> D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 257-263; Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 220. It is important to note that middle- and upper-class women were expected to stay virgins until marriage, but men were not: instead, they were encouraged to have sex with women of lower classes. When middle- and upper-class women did have premarital sex, it was usually with someone they loved, anticipated getting married to, or were engaged to.

<sup>23</sup> D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 262-263; William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1930s*, American Popular Culture through History (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 27.

<sup>24</sup> Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 219.

<sup>25</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 24, 81.

<sup>26</sup> Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 185-186, 216, 225; Nicholas L. Syrett, "'We Are Not So Easily to Be Overcome': Fraternities on the American College Campus," in *Rethinking Campus Life: New Perspectives on the History of College Students in the United States*, ed. Christine A. Ogren and Marc A. VanOverbeke (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 50.

<sup>27</sup> Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-13.

<sup>29</sup> T. Walter Herbert, *Sexual Violence and American Manhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

3,500 students.<sup>30</sup> Of that, only 500 to 1,000 students were women.<sup>31</sup> The students themselves were overwhelmingly white and from middle to upper-class backgrounds.<sup>32</sup> Outside of their classes, they competed in intramural sports, acted in drama productions, spent time rowing around Lake Lagunita, and took trips into San Francisco, among many other things.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, Stanford students resembled typical college students of the time: they hailed from middle- and upper-class families, joined Greek organizations, played intramural sports, and went to dances and parties with their peers.<sup>34</sup>

In comparing Stanford undergraduates with the undergraduates in Waller's study of Pennsylvania State, we find strikingly similar demographics and lifestyles, which indicates that Waller's observations may also apply to Stanford. As explored in the following section, my research demonstrates that Stanford students did utilize the same system which Waller observed. While the systems of dating detailed in this paper are not novel observations, this paper moves a step further than Waller and other subsequent scholars by unpacking the relationship between this type of dating and its associated expectations of sexual relations between men and women. Thus, in the following sections, this paper will lay out how Stanford students dated, how they thought of their sexuality in relation to how they dated, and finally, how this conception of sexuality ultimately disempowered women and perpetuated a form of rape culture.

## How Stanford Students Played the Game: Rating and Dating at Stanford

The rating and dating system documented by other historians as common across the United States at this time also flourished at Stanford.<sup>35</sup> As explored above, it required dating numerous people and essentially competing to be seen as the wealthiest or busiest

<sup>30</sup> Pam O'Sullivan, ed., "Stanford Facts 2022," Stanford University, n.d.

<sup>31</sup> From 1903 until 1933, the university only permitted 500 women, across both undergraduate and graduate programs, to enroll; thus, as the population of the school grew between 1903 and 1933, the ratio of men to women grew sharply. Facing economic hardships during the Depression, the university lifted this rule in 1933, and the ratio of men to women stayed at 3:2 until 1973. See Sam Scott, "Why Jane Stanford Limited Women's Enrollment to 500," *Stanford Magazine*, October 3, 2018, <https://medium.com/stanford-magazine/why-jane-stanford-limited-womens-enrollment-to-500-85355b8aa731>.

<sup>32</sup> Bob Cohn, "Who Gets In?," *Stanford Magazine*, October 1996, <https://stanfordmag.org/contents/who-gets-in>; R. M., "This Topsyturvy World," *Stanford Daily*, October 24, 1933, vol. 84, no. 15, Stanford Daily Archives.

<sup>33</sup> "Student Life: Decade by Decade - 1930s," Stanford Stories From the Archives - Spotlight at Stanford, August 18, 2016, <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/stanford-stories/feature/1930s>.

<sup>34</sup> Michael S. Hevel and Heidi A. Jaeckle, "Trends in the Historiography of American College Student Life: Populations, Organizations, and Behaviors," in *Rethinking Campus Life: New Perspectives on the History of College Students in the United States*, ed. Christine A. Ogren and Marc A. VanOverbeke (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 186-194.

<sup>35</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 26-30, 34, 58, 63; Waller, "The Rating and Dating Complex," 729-734.

of their peers. Evidence of the nuances of “rating and dating” as well as the importance of “rating well” on Stanford’s campus can be found in both student writings and administrative documents.

Elinor Bramhall, a student in the 1930-1931 academic year, describes the rating and dating culture in her diary on multiple occasions. In her October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1930 entry, she describes a man she met at a reception: “Met a southerner with the fastest line I ever heard. He monopolized too long.”<sup>36</sup> In this instance, not only does she recall his line, but also that he spoke with her for too long. By forcing her to spend too much time with him, this southerner prevented Elinor from potentially talking to other male students, a necessary activity for one hoping to plan as many dates as possible and thus, rate well. In her December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1930 entry, Elinor wrote about another personal experience with a potential date: “We had a jolly-up tonight and I danced with Ray Sanders most of the time. He wanted to date me, but I told him I was awfully busy this week.”<sup>37</sup> Although Elinor again has somewhat tepid feelings about her suitor, she still presents herself as difficult to get ahold of in order to seem a worthy date. The final instance of significance comes from her entry on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1931. Elinor spends the vast majority of her entry documenting her excitement that her friend Katherine is “going with someone other than Al. She is so pretty and cute and full of pep, she ought to rate someone worthwhile. All she needs is a little polish to go over in a big way.”<sup>38</sup> Elinor perfectly describes the dynamics of the rating and dating system: she focuses on Katherine’s potential popularity, or her ability to “go over,” and the importance of “rating” or dating someone who is “worthwhile,” or can help her achieve that popularity. Such diary entries support the presence of the rating and dating system on Stanford campus.

The culture represented by Elinor’s writings also appears in the two most popular student publications of the era, the *Stanford Daily* and the *Chaparral*. The *Stanford Daily* (henceforth referred to as the *Daily*) was the student newspaper, and the *Chaparral* (henceforth referred to as the *Chappie*) was a student humor magazine. Both published or republished many articles or sections devoted to rating and dating. The *Chappie* tackled this topic in November 1930 in their recurring “Fables of the Farm” section. They describe a phone conversation between a freshman and a potential date:

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<sup>36</sup> Elinor Bramhall, “Diary Entry on Oct. 13, 1930,” Elinor Eugenia Bramhall Diaries (SCo461), Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., (Feb. 28, 1931). (Hereafter known as Elinor Bramhall Diaries, Special Collections.) A line is a slang term for a boy’s flirtatious and funny self-introduction. See, Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 344.

<sup>37</sup> Elinor Bramhall, “Diary Entry on Dec. 2, 1930,” Elinor Bramhall Diaries, Special Collections. A jolly-up is an informal dance. See, Jonathon Green, “Jolly-Up,” in *Green’s Dictionary of Slang*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers, 2010), 1129.

<sup>38</sup> Bramhall, “Diary Entry on Mar. 25, 1931,” Elinor Bramhall Diaries, Special Collections.

“Whatcha doin’ Saturday night?”

“Godda date.”

“Whatcha doin’ Saturday after that?”

“Godda date.”

“Anna nex’ Saturday?”

“Godda date.”

“Good Gawd, Woman! Doncha ever take a bath?”<sup>39</sup>

This long back and forth in the *Chappie* regarding a woman’s unavailability and a freshman’s irritation with it likely exaggerate how booked dating women on campus were. While most women were probably not this busy, we can conclude that because the *Chappie* felt the need to poke fun at this phenomenon, female Stanford students were relatively spoken for on most nights. Despite this freshman’s frustration with the rating and dating system, the *Chappie* also printed sections that validated the system. For example, in the May 1935 edition, the magazine included a section entitled “How to Fall in Love with A Stanford Woman” that reinforced the idea that busy and sought-after women are more desirable than other women:

Then you phone and ask for a date. If she accepts, you'd better crawl out, because she's certain to be a failure. If she is dated up for several weeks in advance, don't give up. That means you may have hold of something that is worth while [sic]. Keep trying!<sup>40</sup>

Again, this satirical article is an exaggeration of the reality, but it still reveals the beliefs of many students at the time. Ultimately, these articles are just two examples of how the *Chappie* speaks about rating and dating, a system which was evidently alive and thriving throughout the decade.

The issue of rating and dating often appeared in student opinion sections of the *Daily*. On May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1930, a Stanford man utilizing the pseudonym “A Campus Queener” expressed his frustrations with the rating and dating system. In his list of grievances, he includes the unavailability of women as well as how social standing is strengthened by

<sup>39</sup> “Fables of the Farm,” *Chaparral*, November 1930, Box 9, Volume 32, Special Collections.

<sup>40</sup> “How to Fall in Love with a Stanford Woman,” May 1935, *Chaparral*, Box 10, Volume 36, Special Collections.

this unavailability.<sup>41</sup> This individual's frustrations with the dating system reveal exactly how rating and dating at Stanford revolved around the dichotomy of exclusivity and availability, which was intentionally expressed through very public dating practices. Ultimately, articles and jokes published in both the *Daily* and the *Chappie* highlight the relevance of the rating and dating system at Stanford during this time through either explicit or humorous discussions of rating and dating.

The ubiquity of rating and dating can similarly be found within administrative documents. From 1911 to the 1960s, Stanford utilized a Women's Council to handle honor code violations and other regulation violations within the female student population.<sup>42</sup> The Women's Council most frequently addressed breaches of curfew in the women's dorms and residences. In their reports from each quarter during the 30s, they listed each person's offense and the subsequent warning or punishment; the most common punishment was loss of a date night, or even loss of multiple date nights.<sup>43</sup> Some of these nights were Saturdays and Sundays, but many students lost the privilege of a Tuesday or Thursday "date night" as well.<sup>44</sup> Such punishments reveal how dates, on any day of the week, were important to female students: if they were not so valuable, they would not be taken away. These administrative documents corroborate the relevance of the rating and dating system displayed in both personal and public student writings.

Beyond women's availability and desirability amongst their peers, the culture of conspicuous consumption that was cultivated during the Roaring '20s was also essential to dating at this time, despite the onset of the Great Depression; on top of needing to be

<sup>41</sup> A Campus Queener, "Queening and Lockouts," *Stanford Daily*, May 21, 1930, Vol. 77, No. 64, Stanford Daily Archives. Queening was slang for flirting and pursuing women. A queener was a man who dated. See, Scott, "Why Jane Stanford Limited Women's Enrollment to 500."

<sup>42</sup> Derry Kimball, "Council's Social Duties Explained," *Stanford Daily*, November 11, 1946, Vol. 110, No. 35, Stanford Daily Archives; "Student Responsibility Has Played Central Role in Development of Honor Code at Stanford," *Stanford Daily*, January 25, 1977, Vol. 170, No. 66, Stanford Daily Archives.

<sup>43</sup> "Report of Women's Council for Autumn Quarter," Women's Council Papers, Ray Lyman Wilbur, President of Stanford University, Papers, 1914-1951 (SC064A) [Box 120, Folder 5], Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif. (Hereafter Women's Council Papers [Box, Folder], Special Collections.); "Report of Women's Council For Autumn Quarter 1931," Women's Council Papers [Box 135, Folder 13], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council, Autumn Quarter 1932," Women's Council Papers [Box 145, Folder 4], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council for Autumn Quarter 1936," Women's Council Papers [Box 190, Folder 12], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council for Spring Quarter," Women's Council Papers [Box 120, Folder 5], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council for Spring Quarter 1931," Women's Council Papers [Box 135, Folder 13], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council for Spring Quarter 1932," Women's Council Papers [Box 127, Folder 14], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council Spring Quarter 1933," Women's Council Papers [Box 145, Folder 4], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council Spring Quarter 1937," [Box 190, Folder 12], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council for Winter Quarter," Women's Council Papers [Box 120, Folder 5], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council Winter Quarter 1932," Women's Council Papers [Box 145, Folder 4], Special Collections; "Report of Women's Council for Winter Quarter 1935-1936," Women's Council Papers [Box 177, Folder 12], Special Collections.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

seen out, they needed to be seen spending money or engaging in expensive activities.<sup>45</sup> Student keepsakes and publications highlight the prevalence of this aspect of dating on Stanford campus. Another Stanford student, Helen Holwerda (nee. Vernier), kept a scrapbook documenting her first year at Stanford, from 1929 to 1930. Within this scrapbook, she kept many mementos from her various social outings and dates, like dance cards from dances, menus from dinners out, and clippings of movie advertisements.<sup>46</sup> Helen went out sixty-nine times with a variety of men during the academic year, either to dances or on dates, which averages to over 2.3 dates a week. For all sixty-nine dates, the night revolved around an activity that required money: dinner out, tickets to the dance and a corsage for the woman, or tickets to the movies.<sup>47</sup> The frequency of her dates and the variety of men with whom she went out speak to the rating and dating culture of the time, while the expenses associated with each of these dates speaks to the consumptive culture that accompanied rating and dating.

Although Helen was a student at the end of the 20s and beginning of the 30s, and her experience might have been a holdover from the more affluent Roaring '20s, student publications from the 1930s reflect similar trends that demonstrate how important consumption was to dating, even during the Depression. In fact, the *Daily* and the *Chappie* wrote about the expense of dating in both serious and humorous manners throughout the whole decade. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1930, the *Daily* published a Letter to the Editor from "Party of Six" calling Stanford women the "most conceited, high-hat, unappreciative, gold-diggers known to men" because they would only deign to "honor [their] escort with [their] presence for a few hours — that is if he has the prerequisites of an expensive car and lots of money."<sup>48</sup> Despite the fact that this letter likely came from a place of anger, the authors touch on essential aspects of rating and dating: money and a car. Four years later, in the November 1934 edition of the *Chappie*, they reprinted a joke from the *Penn Punch Bowl*, the University of Pennsylvania's humor magazine, that pokes fun at the importance of money in attracting female dates: "Boy, oh boy! That was some blonde you had with you last night. Where did you get her?" 'Dunno. I just opened my billfold and there she was."<sup>49</sup> Here, the implication is that the man's affluence is entirely

<sup>45</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 59.

<sup>46</sup> Dance cards were small books that women kept around their wrist at dances. Men would approach a woman, ask for a dance, and write their name down in one of the spots available. These were often handed out at the dance. See Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2006), 315.

<sup>47</sup> Helen Vernier Holwerda, Helen Vernier Holwerda Scrapbooks, 1929-1935 (SC0714), Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California (Hereafter known as Helen Holwerda Scrapbooks, Special Collections.)

<sup>48</sup> Party of Six, "A Low Queening Rate," *Stanford Daily*, May 20, 1930, Vol. 77, No. 63, sec. Campus Opinion, Stanford Daily Archives.

<sup>49</sup> *Penn Punch Bowl*, *Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 35], Special Collections, (Nov. 1934).

responsible for attracting the girl he went on a date with the previous night. Finally, on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1938, the *Daily* published their own satire deriding a Stanford woman for focusing on money when evaluating dating prospects:

She is young and beautiful and popular and lives in Lagunita.

She has been having a nice stack of dates, so many that someone the other day told her she was cutting her own throat by having so many dates. She was told, by this very practical person, that some guys were worth going with and some guys weren't worth going with. Maybe one of the good ones would take her sometime, and maybe he would want to take her out again—and find her dated up far in advance by guys not worth going out with.

Maybe that had happened already.

The Farm female listened and was convinced. She went up to her room and made a list of all the people who had taken her out in the last few months. After their names she put, as closely as she could figure the amount of money each one had spent on her.

And decided to date exclusively the one she found had spent the most money on her.<sup>50</sup>

This satirical story clearly paints this “beautiful and popular” young woman as obsessed with money, specifically the money her dates seem to have based on how much they spent on her. While this story exaggerates reality, it still demonstrates how crucial money was to the narrative of dating even during the Great Depression. Published pieces like these as well as private keepsakes like Helen's reinforce the financial aspect of rating and dating. Ultimately, consumption as part of heterosocialization created some tension between men and women, even though it was essential to the framework of dating.

## Making Explicit the Explicit: Practices and Expectations of Student Sexuality

Stanford students strayed further from the Victorian courting system by being openly sexually active; moreover, Stanford men, much like their peers during this decade, expected Stanford women to be sexually active. Private student writings illustrate the actual sexual practices that Stanford students engaged in and their attitudes towards

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<sup>50</sup> Doug Jaques, “Stanford Is Marriage Market,” *Stanford Daily*, December 1, 1938, Vol. 94, No. 47, sec. Lightly... And Politely, Stanford Daily Archives. Lagunita Court was a women's dormitory complex.

such practices. Even administrative documents addressed the sexual activity of students at the time. Additionally, as national media frequently highlighted sociological studies about teen culture in theory and in practice, students at Stanford participated in their own studies focusing on students' sexual experience.<sup>51</sup> These studies, however, were focused solely on women's sexuality; male students were already assumed to be sexually active. In fact, this assumption was so common that even the university president subscribed to it. The *Chappie* hinged on similar assumptions; the magazine printed jokes that assumed male sexuality and subverted the trope that women did not desire sexual relations. These discussions of women's sexuality reveal that not only were men assumed to be sexually active, but also that others' opinions of women's sexuality or desirability were considered just as important as women's own experiences. Ultimately, discussions of sexuality from this time illustrate that students engaged in and talked about sex, and also that women were held to a separate standard in that their sexuality, or lack thereof, qualified them for public judgment.

Both Elinor Bramhall and Ruth Aynesworth, another Stanford student, made note of or kept evidence of their sexuality in their diary and scrapbook, respectively. Ruth's scrapbook for her 1934-1935 academic year included a variety of documents and paraphernalia ranging from laundry receipts to programs from football games to notes she received. One letter that she kept is of particular note with regards to her sexuality. The note is undated and unsigned, but says: "The cosiest [sic] nooks for confidences are in be-curtained beau parlors and under mattresses. Think it over."<sup>52</sup> Ruth's unnamed gentleman suitor assumed that Ruth would potentially be willing to become intimate in some way or another, perhaps necking or petting. While this note only implies behavior, it is significant that Ruth kept the note in her scrapbook. Elinor wrote more explicitly in her diary of past sexual experiences. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1931, Elinor recorded some of her answers to the "purity test" that she took at her sorority after dinner: "... we all took the purity test - I'm not so good as I thought - I only got fifty % [sic]. Mrs. Wilder asked what the best and worst questions were. I said have you ever smoked and have you ever gone the limit [sic]? She was shocked - wanted to know what my mother would think of me talking about such things?"<sup>53</sup> In this case, "gone the limit" refers to having intercourse.<sup>54</sup> Based on the sentence structure and Mrs. Wilder's reaction, we can assume

<sup>51</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 80-81.

<sup>52</sup> Ruth Aynesworth, "Cosiest Nooks Letter," Ruth Aynesworth Scrapbook, 1934-1935 (SC0691), Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California. (Hereafter known as Ruth Aynesworth Scrapbook, Special Collections.)

<sup>53</sup> Bramhall, "Diary Entry from Mar. 5, 1931," Elinor Bramhall Diaries, Special Collections. Although I am unable to confirm this, I believe Mrs. Wilder is the house mother for Tri Delt.

<sup>54</sup> Jonathon Green, "Go..." in *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, Vol.2 (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers, 2010), 441.

that Elinor meant that the worst question, or the question to which she answered “yes,” was that she had “gone the limit” with a date before. Multiple aspects of this diary entry reveal how sexually active students were. Firstly, such a question would not be included in a purity test if people did not think others had done it. Secondly, Elinor freely admits that she has engaged in this type of behavior, even to Mrs. Wilder. Thus, her entry illuminates not only her own sexual past, but the expectations of her peers. These two keepsakes, Ruth’s love note and Elinor’s diary, help us understand that female students were sexually active and assumed their peers were as well.

Confidential administrative documents from the Dean of Women’s archival folders reveal that even Stanford administrators were aware that students were sexually active at this time. In January 1934, Dean Yost sent another letter to President Wilbur hoping to preemptively stop male students from taking women back to their rooms: “While you were gone, we had a very unpleasant time in Toyon Hall at a senior ball with students’ taking women to their rooms.... the situation is a serious one and needs to be handled before the Toyon formal....”<sup>55</sup> While it is never explicitly stated, Dean Yost is concerned about students engaging in sexual activity in the privacy of their rooms. While her concern represents the generational divide at the time, the fact that administrators were aware of student sexuality and how it manifested indicates not only that students were sexually active, but also unafraid of demonstrating that sexuality.

While the letter from Dean Yost implies that students did not hide or attempt to hide their sexual encounters very well, the student body was perhaps even more forward in their publications, as they openly spoke about their and their peers’ sexuality. The entirely male-written *Chappie* opted to approach the subject of sexuality through humor. The *Daily*, on the other hand, featured the most explicit discussions of sexuality, as well as the viewpoints of female students. All of these publications, however, reflect that men were assumed to be sexually active, whereas women were not. Administrative documents relating to some of these published materials indicate that administrators, not just students, also subscribed to this belief.

Within the *Daily*, one of the first articles of the decade to discuss how students thought about their sexuality and its relationship to rating and dating was published in January 1930. Entitled “‘500’ Reveal How Rough May Reach First Base,” this article utilizes baseball metaphors (beyond the typical base designation) in order to describe

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<sup>55</sup> Mary Yost, “Letter to President Wilbur About Toyon Formal,” Dean of Women Papers, Ray Lyman Wilbur, President of Stanford University, Papers, 1914-1951 (SCo64A) [Box 148, Folder 5], Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California. (Hereafter Dean of Women’s Papers [Box, Folder], Special Collections.) Toyon Hall was a men’s dormitory that housed upperclassmen.

how Stanford women evaluate “how far” to go with a date.<sup>56</sup> Although couched in metaphor, the article is relatively frank about the reality of students: they engage in various sexual behaviors with their dates. Importantly, such evaluations of “how far” to go are based on what type of date a man takes a woman on, not whether or not they have a long-term relationship. Discussions of sexuality became more scientific in March 1937, when Stanford students published in both the *Daily* and *Literary Digest* the results of a survey taken of Stanford students “concerning their attitudes towards sex and the sex problems facing modern youth.”<sup>57</sup> This article discusses students’ beliefs on necking, petting, and sex both in the abstract (“have you petted?” or “should you have sex before marriage?”) and in more contextualized situations (“would you kiss a man on your first date?”). Beyond the anecdotal data described in the article, the authors also provide the number of yes or no responses for each question, divided by gender:

Score, Women:

1. Do you neck?

Yes, 81—No, 7.

2. Do you kiss on first dates?

Yes, 43—No, 46.

3. Do you pet?

Yes, 24 —No, 63.

4. Do you think Stanford men “faster” than other college men?

Yes, 13—No, 71—Undecided, 4.

Score, Men:

1. Do you think less of a woman who permits first-date kissing?

Yes, 66 —No, 62—Undecided, 17.

2. Do most Stanford women kiss on first dates?

Yes, 42—No, 72—Undecided, 32.

3. Do most Stanford women permit ‘petting’?

Yes, 88—No, 43 —Undecided, 22.

4. Do you expect your bride to have saved sex experience for marriage?

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<sup>56</sup> “‘500’ Reveal How Rough May Reach First Base,” *Stanford Daily*, January 20, 1931, Vol. 78, No. 59, Stanford Daily Archives. A rough is a man who does not adhere to social conventions of both dress and disposition. They are often antagonistic towards dating; thus the article purports to teach even unattractive and uninterested men how to be intimate with a woman.

<sup>57</sup> “In the Spring Young – Uns’ Fancies Turn... But Not Too Sharply, Survey Shows,” *Stanford Daily*, March 5, 1937, Vol. 91, No. 24, Stanford Daily Archives.

Yes, 82—No, 65.

5. Do you expect to abstain from sex relations until marriage?

Yes, 44—No, 101.

6. Are Stanford women ‘faster’ than other college women?

Yes, 14—No, 98—Undecided, 43.

7. Are they ‘faster’ than women in general?

Yes, 14—No, 111 —Undecided, 24.<sup>58</sup>

This article, as well as the one from 1930, reveals three things: Stanford students were sexually active, assumed their peers to be as well, and were unafraid to discuss these topics openly.

Interestingly, this study seems to assume and accept men’s active sexuality while qualifying women’s experiences with the opinions of their male peers. The study only asked women about their experiences: “Do you neck? Do you pet?”<sup>59</sup> The men, on the other hand, were barely asked about their experiences. Instead, the questions asked about their viewpoints on their peers and potential future partners: “Do most Stanford women kiss on first dates? Do you expect your bride to have saved sex experience for marriage?”<sup>60</sup> Such uneven division of questions illuminates that Stanford students assumed that men were sexually active, and therefore there was no need to ask them about their experience; these same students, however, portrayed Stanford women’s sexuality as constituted not only by their own experience, but how others, particularly men, perceived them. Even the university president made these assumptions. In a letter to the two women who published the article, President Wilbur attacked them only for “presenting Stanford women to the public in this cheap and vulgar way.”<sup>61</sup> He paid no mind to how men were depicted in the article. Essentially, President Wilbur also took for granted that men were sexually active and did not see it as a “vulgar” portrayal in the case of male students. Through these assumptions, we can see how even though women were sexual and able to discuss their practices, their sexuality was constructed somewhat outside of their control.

While the survey published in the *Daily* assumed male students’ sexuality, the *Chappie* set up most of their sexual jokes to subvert the idea that women were less

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “In the Spring Young – Uns’ Fancies Turn... But Not Too Sharply, Survey Shows,” *Stanford Daily*, March 5, 1937, Vol. 91, No. 24, Stanford Daily Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Ray Wilbur, “Letter Regarding *Literary Digest* Article,” Dean of Women Papers [Box 190, Folder 12], Special Collections.

sexually active or desirous of sexual behavior. Because only men wrote for and edited the magazine, such jokes represent male assumptions about female sexuality. In the nineteenth century, middle- and upper- class women were supposed to embody purity and restraint, thus shunning open sexuality.<sup>62</sup> This expectation, which starkly contrasted with the new norm of women being more openly sexual, is what the *Chappie* writers made fun of in the publication. One such example comes from the January 1931 edition, in which two women state their opinions on necking: “Jane: ‘I think necking is positively repulsive.’/ Mary: ‘I don’t like it either.’/ Jane: ‘Shake, sister, we’re both liars.’ – *Georgia Tech Yellow Jacket*.”<sup>63</sup> The implication within this joke is that women, even if they say that they detest necking, actually enjoy it. The fact that the *Chappie* editors chose to republish this joke, and others like it, reveals that the joke resonates with them and their beliefs that women secretly desire sexual relations.

Many other jokes reprinted in the *Chappie* that spoke about women’s sexuality followed a particular sequence: a woman becomes distraught or resigned because her date, in an effort to be chivalrous, has not or will not kiss, pet, neck, or maybe even go further with her. The first joke comes from the November 1930 edition: “‘I always thought you were a gentleman,’ she wept as he let her out of his car in front of her house at 11 o’clock, ‘and now I know it.’ – *Minnesota Ski-U-Mah*.”<sup>64</sup> This vignette describes a woman leaving her date upset because her male suitor refused to potentially offend her by coming onto her. Two other vignettes originally printed in the *Alabama Rammer-Jammer* depict different situations with the same message as the *Ski-U-Mah* vignette.<sup>65</sup> These jokes paint women as quite desirous of sexual activity, even if they do not verbalize it. Another joke goes as far as to depict a scene in which a woman condemns necking, only to hope her date will come onto her anyways:

“Sweet Young Thing – ‘I think the way college men discuss necking is terrible.’  
 Soph (very anxious to please) – ‘So do I.’  
 S. Y. T- ‘It’s unhygienic.’  
 Soph – ‘It certainly is.’  
 S. Y. T.- ‘And vulgar.’  
 Soph- ‘Absolutely.’

<sup>62</sup> D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 56-57.

<sup>63</sup> *Georgia Tech Yellow Jacket, Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 32], Special Collections, (Jan. 1931). As previously mentioned, the *Chappie* reprinted jokes from other magazines across the country. This joke was originally printed in the *Georgia Tech Yellow Jacket*. All future quotes will include the attribution to the original publisher.

<sup>64</sup> *Minnesota Ski-U-Mah, Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 32], Special Collections, (Nov. 1930).

<sup>65</sup> *Alabama Rammer-Jammer, Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 32], Special Collections, (Oct. 1930); *Alabama Rammer-Jammer, Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 32], Special Collections, (Mar. 1931).

S. Y. T. – (after gazing at him expectantly for a few moments)- ‘Well, we might as well go in and dance.’ – *Growler*”<sup>66</sup>

This vignette satirizes the societal belief carried over from the Victorian era that women were supposed to maintain their virtue and look down upon sexual relations.<sup>67</sup> The “Sweet Young Thing” must feign disgust only to preserve her appearance, when in fact she would love for her date to kiss her. Because the *Chappie* reprinted these jokes and others like them, we can conclude that the depicted situations, although perhaps exaggerated, resonated with Stanford students. Further, by printing these jokes, the *Chappie* reinforced for men the idea that women desired sexual relations, regardless of what they did or did not say; in fact, they are told that women only say they do not like petting or necking to preserve their virtue.

## The Clear Risks: Rape Culture Demonstrated Through Student Publications

While the jokes analyzed in the above section illustrate a hesitant acceptance of female sexuality in the 1930s, they also speak to a harmful culture in which print media promoted the disregard of female consent, thereby stripping women of control and sexual agency. As part of the unavailability that women were meant to project, student publications printed articles that taught and perpetuated the belief that lack of enthusiasm from a potential partner was a desirable attribute which should signal persistence. In contrast to the definition of consent—affirmative and continued approval without pressure—such beliefs taught students to read lack of enthusiasm in sexual encounters as a positive sign, regardless of their partner’s protestations.<sup>68</sup> Men were taught to believe that their dates desired sexual activities, even if they did not express that or even protested such advances. They were encouraged to press their dates for sexual favors regardless of their consent. Women, on the other hand, were taught that their words or actions meant little to their dates. Finally, the magazine published jokes that normalized violence against women; although these jokes did not feature sexual violence, by portraying general violence against women in a comedic way, men and women alike learned that such behavior was acceptable. Such beliefs and behavior, a

<sup>66</sup> *Growler, Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 34], Special Collections, (Nov. 1934).

<sup>67</sup> Meyerowitz, “Christine Jorgenson and the Story of How Sex Changed,” 671.

<sup>68</sup> “What Consent Looks Like | RAINN,” Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.rainn.org/articles/what-is-consent>.

normalization of aggressive sexual conduct which constitutes a form of rape culture, were normalized through the avenue of print media.

Two of the aforementioned excerpts from student publications reveal that students were taught to see lack of enthusiasm on the part of their intended date as a contradictory sign of their interest; thus, student publications laid a framework which did not require enthusiasm, an integral part of consent, as necessary for sexual activity. In “How to Fall in Love with a Stanford Woman,” the potential suitor was warned that a woman who displays enthusiasm or interest in her suitor was not a worthy date: “If she accepts, you'd better crawl out, because she's certain to be a failure.”<sup>69</sup> In a similar way, the campus opinion piece published in the *Daily* in 1936 stated as fact that women were more interested in men who did not call them back:

All this quibbling about men and women . . . seems thoroughly useless.

It's a known fact that any male, with a choice between two attractive girls, will try to get the least available — regardless of expense. Why? Probably the same reason the girls want to go with the fellow who doesn't phone.

Be that as it may, the fact remains, the more dates a girl has, the more she gets, and vice versa. Too bad, but true.<sup>70</sup>

These two excerpts reveal that part of the display of unavailability, necessary within the rating and dating system, was a perceived lack of enthusiasm or even apathy towards a potential date. Both genders were expected to maintain a sense of ambivalence, which can perhaps be attributed to a further rejection of highly direct and intentional “calling” and courting of the Victorian era.<sup>71</sup> In the Victorian system, men had to make their intentions clear with women by actively visiting them on multiple occasions and interacting with her family, while women would only see a potential suitor if she truly desired to further a relationship; the system of courting, although taking place in a more private space, required participants to make a statement about their intentions.<sup>72</sup> In emphasizing indifference, modern dating appeared to have moved away from these practices. Regardless, these excerpts reveal that students, quite contradictorily, read lack of enthusiasm on the part of their date as a sign of interest. Such beliefs set the precedent for lack of enthusiasm in other aspects of dating, particularly sexual activity, to be misread and thus, lead students to cross their partners' boundaries.

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<sup>69</sup> “How to Fall in Love with a Stanford Woman,” *Chaparral*, [Box 10, Volume 36], Special Collections, (May, 1935).

<sup>70</sup> Upen Adam, “Their Own Medicine,” *Stanford Daily*, January 31, 1936, Vol. 88, No. 69, Stanford Daily Archives.

<sup>71</sup> Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 15-16.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

Further creating a rape culture, the *Chappie* printed many jokes that undermined women's ability to set boundaries. As previously discussed, women were expected to set the sexual boundaries with their partner.<sup>73</sup> In the event that a man overstepped this boundary and upset his date, it would be her fault, not his. Modern scholars call this cultural norm "victim-blaming."<sup>74</sup> However, even if women were supposed to set the boundaries, the culture perpetuated by the *Chappie* which implied that women did not truly mean "no" when they protested, prevented them from even doing so. Another joke from the January 1935 edition encapsulates this sentiment: "An intelligent girl is one who knows how to refuse a kiss without being deprived of it. -*Navy Log*."<sup>75</sup> This hypothetical woman is so smart because she is able to maintain her virtue and image while still getting the sexual gratification she supposedly desires. However, this joke implies that this woman's refusal should be disregarded. Another short poem from the December 1932 edition of the *Chappie* takes this sentiment one step further by seemingly disallowing women from ever saying no:

"If a diplomat says yes, he means perhaps; if he says per-  
haps, he means no; if he says no he's no diplomat.  
If a lady says no, she means perhaps; if she says perhaps,  
she means yes; but if she says yes, she's no lady. -Jester"  
– *The Stanford Chaparral*, December 1932<sup>76</sup>

This poem reinforces not only the idea that women are in charge of maintaining their virtue and setting the boundaries, but also that even if they say no, their partner will hear that as a signal to persist. Ultimately, these jokes tell men to be persistent in their sexual encounters and tell women that their consent is already determined for them. Even if a woman attempted to set a boundary, her partner might not respect it, assuming instead that she set the boundary to save her reputation and conceal her true desire for sexual relations. By regularly reprinting these types of jokes, the *Chappie* taught and reinforced for its readers that male aggression and assumptions of female consent were acceptable and wide-spread practices.

The *Chappie* also printed jokes that more explicitly normalized ignoring a date's consent or lack thereof, even going so far as to depict instances of assault. In February

<sup>73</sup> D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 262-263; Young and Young, *The 1930s*, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Claire R. Gravelin, Monica Biernat, and Matthew Baldwin, "The Impact of Power and Powerlessness on Blaming the Victim of Sexual Assault," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 98-115.

<sup>75</sup> *Navy Log*, *Chaparral*, [Box 10, Volume 36], Special Collections, (Jan. 1935).

<sup>76</sup> "What Can We Do?," *Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 34], Special Collections, (Dec. 1932).

1935, the *Chappie* printed a vignette describing a conversation between a pair who went out on a date: “He – I loved you more than you know!/ She – How dare you take advantage of me while I was drunk! -*Lord Jeff*.”<sup>77</sup> The man’s words have two possible meanings: he either loves her more than she can comprehend, or he had sexual relations with her that she cannot remember. The second option is how the woman interprets her date’s statement because she was drunk on their date, and therefore might not remember what happened. The fact that the woman assumes she was assaulted before she assumes her date is professing his love is meant to seem funny to the reader. Such a joke makes light of assault, normalizing it and diminishing its gravity. Another vignette takes this idea further, by actually depicting a man kissing a woman after she explicitly expressed that she would protest such an advance.<sup>78</sup> By joking about a man pushing further despite his date’s wishes, the *Chappie* further destigmatized such behavior, teaching men and women that men have the right to assert their desires regardless of their partner’s desires or lack thereof.

Outside of these scenes, the *Chappie* also printed one-liners that disempowered women. In 1934, they published: “Girls who resist/ Don’t know what they’ve missed. – *Rammer Jammer*.”<sup>79</sup> Such advice implies that women, even when they want to resist, should not do so because they do not actually know what is best for themselves. This message belittles women and further promotes behavior that disregards female opinions. Perhaps the most explicit instance validating sexual assault comes from the June 1931 edition: “Kissing a girl because she let’s [sic] you is like scratching a place that doesn’t itch. – *Annapolis Log*.”<sup>80</sup> By reprinting this joke that essentially states that it is unrewarding to kiss a consenting partner, the *Chappie* promotes this sentiment. Although all of these jokes are just that—jokes—they nonetheless destigmatized male sexual aggression and normalized ignoring female consent or lack thereof.

While there were no explicit depictions of sexual violence or rape within the *Chappie*, the magazine did print jokes that normalized violence against women in general. In multiple different editions, the *Chappie* reprinted a joke attributed to *Drexerd* that dismisses what modern scholars would classify as domestic abuse:

Local lady suing for divorce tells court her husband spanked her, pulled her ears and hair, slammed the door on her arm, and locked her in the closet. She says she doesn't know why he did these things./ We do. He was mad at her. – *Drexerd*<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Lord Jeff, *Chaparral*, [Box 10, Volume 36], Special Collections, (Feb. 1935).

<sup>78</sup> *Punch Bowl*, “A Scream,” *Chaparral*, [Box 10, Volume 36], Special Collections, (Dec. 1934).

<sup>79</sup> *Rammer-Jammer*, *Chaparral*, [Box 10, Volume 36], Special Collections, (Nov. 1934).

<sup>80</sup> *Annapolis Log*, *Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 32], Special Collections, (June 1931).

<sup>81</sup> *Drexerd*, *Chaparral*, [Box 9, Volume 33], Special Collections (1932).

This vignette illustrates that the *Chappie* contributed to a culture where violence against women was acceptable, even funny, especially in a domestic or romantic context. Thus, readers are taught that violence against women is normal. In endorsing aggressive masculinity, the *Chappie* laid the foundation on which aggressive masculinity could extend into aggressive sexuality.

All of these jokes found in various *Chappie* editions throughout the decade indicate that student culture promoted and reinforced male sexual aggression and disregard for female desires, or lack thereof. Print media is both a reflection of a culture as well as a constitutive aspect of it; the messages found in the *Chappie* cannot be disassociated from the environment in which it was created. Thus, these published jokes normalizing rape culture reflect and contributed to the environment in which Stanford students dated and petted.

## What the Archives Don't Say

Ultimately, Stanford students of the 1930s were not unique in their subscription to the rating and dating system. Stanford women needed to be seen going out often and with popular men in order to “rate well,” while their male counterparts were expected to flaunt their wealth by footing the bill for their dates. Wrapped up in the rating and dating system was a culture that accepted and even promoted more sexual promiscuity than the previous Victorian era; however, men had control over their sexuality while women had their sexuality constituted not only by their own experiences but by others’ opinions of their sexuality. Finally, the environment, produced in part by student publications and print media, in which students dated and interacted sexually was one that devalued female consent, even going so far as to promote total disregard for women’s consent or lack thereof. Thus, the rape culture perpetuated by media like the *Chappie* placed Stanford women in vulnerable situations even when they attempted to exert newfound liberties of the rating and dating system.

While this paper has investigated many different aspects of dating and rape culture at Stanford in the 1930s, much remains to be analyzed, particularly Greek life. Fraternity culture at this time emphasized aggressive sexuality as integral to masculinity. Participating male students would be immersed in this mentality, and women would thus be at risk of falling victim to the resulting behavior.<sup>82</sup> Stanford did have fraternities at this time; therefore, there is a possibility that fraternity messaging about masculinity contributed to the dating culture and rape culture on campus. Further research in this

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<sup>82</sup> Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 185-186, 216, 225; Syrett, ““We Are Not So Easily to Be Overcome,”” 50.

area would help scholars better understand the social scene and potentially provide greater evidence towards this argument.

While we can see manifestations of rape culture at Stanford through publications, there is a conspicuous lack of records or accounts of any such behavior. That being said, it is likely that Stanford women were assaulted but no records were ever made or preserved to document it. As demonstrated by decades of silence that protected people like Larry Nassar and Jerry Sandusky, people are afraid to come forward with their stories. Victims worry that they themselves might be blamed and ridiculed for the abuse that they suffered.<sup>83</sup> Further, even when people have come forward, academic institutions have swept cases of sexual abuse under the rug in order to save face. Had Brock Turner not been a Division 1 athlete, Stanford might have quietly and quickly handled his assault of Chanel Miller. The systems built by rape culture are designed to silence survivors and protect abusers, so although records of assault might be lost to time or, even worse, never made, we should not assume that it did not happen. By demonstrating that a form of rape culture was prevalent long before the emergence of the term “rape culture” in popular discourse, this paper hopes to counter this belief which silences survivors and perpetuates violence.

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<sup>83</sup> Heidi M. Zinzow and Martie Thompson, “Barriers to Reporting Sexual Victimization: Prevalence and Correlates among Undergraduate Women,” *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 20, no. 7 (October 1, 2011): 711-725; Marjorie R. Sable, et al., “Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assault for Women and Men: Perspectives of College Students,” *Journal of American College Health* 55, no. 3 (November 1, 2006): 157-162; Nicole Buonocore Porter, “Relationships and Retaliation in the #MeToo Era,” *Florida Law Review* 72 (2020): 797.

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