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The articles in this Spring’s journal cover an amazing span of time from the Middle Ages until the present day, and topics as diverse as Medieval Jews and Chernobyl literature. As usual, we have included the two prize-winning History CIV papers, this year written by Erica Perez and Rebecca Saenger.

This undertaking would not have been possible without the generous assistance of the Carl F. Brand Fund which has supported HERODOTUS for many years or the aid given by a few dedicated Stanford faculty and staff. We would like to thank Carolyn Chapeli-Lougee, Joseph Corn, Andrew Jenks, and Siovaeh Walker. Additionally, we wish to thank Eugene Park for providing technical support.

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—HERODOTUS Editorial Staff ’99
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WHORES, HOMOSEXUALS AND THE LAW:  
THE QUEST FOR THE PRESERVATION OF GENDER HIERARCHY IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY VENICE

MONICA DIGGS MANGE

In 1460, the Rialto Brothel Ordinance banned all prostitutes in Venice to an island. In 1480, a decree of the Council of Ten condemned the new hairstyle adopted by Venetian women because they looked like men. In 1509, the diarist Girolamo Priuli attributed the catastrophic defeat of the Venetian armies at Arnaudello as punishment for the failure of the civic authorities to put down the luxurious behavior of Venetian men who were “not youths [but] women.” Although these three Venetian documents deal with dissimilar aspects of prostitution and sodomy, they all suggest that secular authorities were preoccupied with maintaining specific male/female identities. As a result, this essay suggests a new reason why civic officials would go to such measures to create sex laws. It argues that secular authorities controlled sodomy and prostitution because these acts threatened to undermine the established gender hierarchy which legitimized the patriarchal Venetian government. Upon examining prostitution and sodomy it becomes apparent how they could indeed threaten a gender hierarchy which perpetuated male power by relegating the female to a passive and submissive role. Prostitution was threatening because it “masculinized” women allowing them to appropriate themselves of certain characteristics that were reserved only for males including independence, aggressiveness and financial freedom. Sodomy, on the other hand, “feminized” men because it put the passive partner in the sexual role ascribed to a woman. The large quantity of legislation dealing with prostitution and sodomy represents secular authorities’ attempt to maintain the female/male roles that validated the male-dominated oligarchical Venetian state. In order to substantiate this argument, I will not only account for the historical shift that resulted in the exacerbation of sex laws, but refute other explanations for an increasing preoccupation with sodomy and prostitution. Next, I will demonstrate that Venetian legislation dealing with prostitution and sodomy does indeed show a preoccupation with maintaining the gender hierarchy. Finally, I will argue that the way
the legislation translated into practice verifies that the maintenance of preestablished male-female identities was consequential to the state.

Before one can truly understand how the civic authorities were able to maintain gender roles through the legal control of prostitution and sodomy, it is important to see how and when the legal jurisdiction of sex crimes went from the hands of the ecclesiastical to the municipal authorities, and to examine its consequences. Sex was first introduced to the Italian legal system in the form of Christian values that Roman emperors legitimized and incorporated into law and politics. Sex laws in the Roman Empire were directed mostly towards marital as opposed to extramarital relations, due to the fact that concubines and homosexuality were an integral part of the Roman way of life. With the fall of the Roman empire, and the wave of Germanic invasions, changes in society and economy transformed the traditional household structure of antiquity. The disappearance of large-scale slavery and the emergence of peasant agriculture led to the development of the monogamous nuclear family as a basic social unit in the early middle ages. A profound consequence of this social change was the "gradual adoption of Christian ideals of sexual conduct among rich and poor alike." As a result, after 1000 A.D. the Church achieved new levels of spiritual and intellectual leadership resulting in the observance of stricter standards of sexual conduct both outside and inside marriage and the subsequent formation of canon law.

With the expansion of urban cities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, official authorities saw the sins of homosexuality and prostitution as objects of more concern. Church and secular authorities alike saw the growth of towns as threatening the original social order due to the great amount of liberty city-dwellers had in relation to their rural counterparts. In addition, they believed that the freedom one could attain in the cities attracted social deviants of all kinds to urban centers. The authorities of Venice were no exception. They too believed that prostitution and rampant homosexuality were the social products of urban expansion and rallied for its regulation. Venetian ecclesiastical authorities passed canon laws to expel all prostitutes in 1266 and again in 1314, along with Bologna in 1259 and Modena in 1327 but to no avail. As urban structures continued to grow and Venice became more prosperous, the state's power to prosecute and punish crime expanded as well. Then in 1348, the Black Plague hit Italy, killing off a significant portion of the population. Secular authorities' overall disillusionment with the ecclesiastical judicial system grew substantially when it was discovered that "there was no decrease in the total number of sex crimes during the plague years, even though more than one-third of the city's inhabitants perished in the epidemic." Ecclesiastical authorities' inability to con-

trol sexual deviance during the Black Plague provided the final impetus for the displacement of canon law and culminated in the secularization of the Venetian judiciary system in the fourteenth century.

The shift of judicial responsibility from the church to the state marked a drastic change in how the secular authorities dealt with sodomy and prostitution. With the emergence of the civically sanctioned brothels on the island of Rialto, prostitution went from a marginalized activity to a state regulated phenomenon. Sodomy, on the other hand, became criminalized even further as its definition expanded and the legal consequences of the act became more serious. Historians have attempted to account for the state's increasing preoccupation with sex in this period in different ways. Ruggiero for instance, has argued that Venice's increasing preoccupation with sodomy was due to the growth of a homosexual subculture that threatened to undermine the "basic organization units of society-family, male-female bonding, reproduction..." Ruggiero's reasoning, however, is not convincing. As Rocke has pointed out, although there were indeed "known rendezvous areas and networks of individuals with common sexual tasks or practices, it is far from certain that these were the only or even the main contexts in which homosexual interactions occurred." In addition to Rocke's argument, it can also be argued that the rise in sodomy prosecutions can be more convincingly explained through concrete changes occurring in the Venetian judicial system at the time than through conjectures about a widespread gay network.

Brundage on the other hand, has looked at structural features to make the claim that the social and demographic dislocation that resulted from the Black Plague epidemics caused secular authorities to become increasingly preoccupied with the repopulation of the city. As a result, brothels were opened and sodomy strictly prohibited in order to prevent homosexual relationships that would discourage normal heterosexual reproduction. Indeed, the Black Plague did result in demographic catastrophes which nourished fear of nonprocreative sex. Although Brundage has correctly highlighted an important causal factor for why sodomy and prostitution became more heavily regulated, he emphasizes the purely practical reasons why sex crimes would be condemned while disregarding the symbolism behind the acts themselves.

A more convincing reason why authorities sought to control and further criminalize prostitution and sodomy at this time period can be attributed to the passing of sex laws from the ecclesiastical to the secular sphere. By virtue of their new state jurisdiction, secular authorities made sex laws more readily preserve and reflect the patriarchal government of Venice. Indeed, the very foundation of the Venetian social order rested on an elite male-dominated oligarchical system run by the Senate
and the doge (mayor). Even the Venetian Republic itself was conceived in masculine terms. By the fourteenth century, Venice was known as the "Repubbliche Mare," the most powerful and belligerent state of Italy. In this context, it is easy to see why prostitution and sodomy in a liberalized urban setting would provide a potential threat to this male-dominated hierarchical system.

Prostitution, for instance, was a threat to the established gender hierarchy because it resulted in the rise of independent women who were able to appropriate themselves of certain privileges reserved only for males. Implicit in this argument is the notion that although prostitution could and did work to preserve the patriarchal order because it promoted male sexual virility and female subordinance to men, it could similarly destroy it. Indeed, small-scale brothels and free street walking, gave women greater control over their trade and provided the opportunity for them to become entrepreneurs, selling their bodies as a commodity. As prostitution became a competitive market, prostitutes transformed themselves into more aggressive solicitors. Indeed, Venetian laws and public pronouncements at the time did complain about a "growing trend of some prostitutes to hawk their services in masculine garb and with a masculine manner."9 In addition, urban prostitutes were increasingly exposed to and interacted with various men's circles as they sold their bodies in taverns and bars. Prostitution thus posed a serious threat to the established social order because it was a profession that threatened to undermine gender roles that were the basis for a male-dominated society. Furthermore, prostitution weakened the nuclear family that replicated the patriarchal state structure because unlike married women, prostitutes could be in charge of their profession and futures. The secularization of sex crimes in Venice provided the opportunity for state authorities to eliminate this threat through civic brothels, which created a confined space where the state could assert its power over prostitution.

Sodomy, like prostitution, became further criminalized in this period because it too threatened to undermine the gender roles that were the foundation of the social order as well. It is important to note that similar to prostitution, sodomy itself could be used and had been used in the past to reinforce features of masculine and feminine behavior and identity when placed in the appropriate social and cultural contexts.10 However, it could similarly destroy established gender roles because like prostitution that "masculinized" women, sodomy "feminized" men. Indeed, "to be sodomized signified assuming temporarily the subordinate status of a woman, subject to the domination and power of men in a sexually and socially hierarchical society."11 Moreover, sodomy like prostitution, threatened to undermine the nuclear family by discourag-

ing normal heterosexual relationships that would perpetuate the patriarchal system. It is therefore not surprising that the secular authorities experienced a heightened sense of urgency in regards to controlling sodomy when they took over the Venetian judicial system.

Nowhere is it more apparent than in Venetian legislation itself that secular authorities controlled prostitution and sodomy in order to maintain the gender relations that perpetuated the Venetian patriarchal order. The "Rialto Brothel Ordinance," imposed by the Heads of the Sestieri in 1460, marked the beginning of new brothel regulation in Venice. This legislation is an important piece to begin with because it indicates how civic authorities chose to prevent prostitutes from becoming more "masculinized" and independent. From the very start, one sees that the ordinance was a legal decision made by a patriarchal institution intended to bring "sinful women" under the control of men. After all, it was the "noble and wise Lords and Heads of the Sestieri" who decided that the island of Rialto would be the designated area for prostitutes where they would reside in the houses of the "noble" Priamo Malipiero.12 Indeed through this legislation, the Heads of the Sestieri instructed Dom Priamo not only to build a sufficient number of vaults or booths for the prostitutes but to keep the houses in good repair at his own expense. From this passage it is evident that civic authorities orchestrated the Rialto Brothel Doctrine in such a way that made the prostitutes dependent on the brothel owner, replicating the dependency of a wife on a husband in order to fortify the accepted gender roles.

In addition to creating a dependent relationship between prostitutes and their brothel owner, authorities enhanced the prostitute's full submission to the patriarchal state by limiting her mobility to the Rialto Island. As a result the Rialto Brothel Ordinance went on to declare that "no sinful or other woman may have herself touched or have carnal knowledge of any man in the daytime in any inn, tavern or bath-house, on the pain of ten lashes and a fine of 5 lire for each offense."13 This ordinance hence not only limited the amount of customers a prostitute would have in a day but determined when she could work, severely disrupting the liberty prostitutes had before. Moreover, prostitutes were not allowed to leave the island of Rialto "without the permission of the Heads of the Sistieri, save on Saturday mornings; [and when they do] they must not wrap themselves in cloaks but display the usual sign, on pain of 10 lire and ten lashes for each offense, for which they shall also forfeit their cloak."14 By controlling their entry and exit from the island and making the prostitutes wear a yellow scarf around their necks, the Heads of the Sistieri were able to assert their power over prostitutes both physically and symbolically, further destroying their freedom.
Finally, secular authorities completed the full control of the prostitutes’ lives by regulating their financial endeavors. The Rialto Brothel Ordinance declared that “no keeper of inn, tavern or bath-house, or any other person, may have, hold or receive any sinful women as a pledge, nor may he give, supply, lend or pay anything on her behalf to any person [upon the security of] the said sinful woman or whore...” Similarly, a sumptuary law decreed by the Senate in 1543 declared that “no whore living in Venice may dress in, or wear on any part of her person, gold, silver or silk...so that gold and silver and the use of jewels of any kind shall be forbidden to them, whether at home or outside, and even outside this city.” Prohibiting prostitutes from borrowing money and preventing them from wearing anything that would indicate any kind of individual wealth apart from marriage represented the state’s final attempt to take away the prostitutes’ independence. Indeed, prostitutes who at one time played the same role as the head of the household in regards to financial matters were now relegated to the role of a dependent of the state where “the proceeds of prostitution were placed in a chest which the authorities emptied at the start of each month, paying the salaries of the brothel staff and giving the prostitutes their share.”

Indeed, the state even downplayed the notion of prostitution as a profession due to its masculine connotations. As a result, in Venetian legislation the civic fathers solely called prostitutes “sinful women” or “whores,” indicating their refusal to masculinize these women by referring to them according to their profession.

Like prostitution, legislation on sodomy prevented gender role reversals and the feminization of men that threatened to undermine the established gender hierarchy. The 1480 Decree of the Council of Ten condemning sexual dissimulation, like the Rialto Brothel Doctrine, proves that sodomic acts were vigorously controlled when they posed a threat to the established gender roles of the Venetian patriarchal order. In this particular decree for instance, civic authorities declared a specific hairstyle which Venetian women had recently taken to wearing “indecent in the sight of God and men, since by means of this coiffure women conceal their sex and strive to please men by pretending to be men, which is a form of sodomy.” Indeed, the civic authorities’ preoccupation with this hairstyle stemmed entirely from the fact that it symbolized the female appropriation of masculine characteristics. Interestingly enough, the Council of Ten not only condemned this hairstyle but reinstated what was visually expected of a woman in the dichotomized male-female world when they wrote that the mushroom hairstyle should be prohibited because it “hides the forehead; ... hair [should be] drawn and tied back behind the head, and the forehead and face to be made free of it, that they may be seen as women, just as God made them, and as was their custom before the present corrupted age.”

Another important aspect of this condemnation which supports the argument above is the difference in penalty that the Council of Ten believed married women and “whores” should receive for wearing this hairstyle. The decree ordained that “if any woman is seen wearing this indecent coiffure and hairstyle, her husband shall be compelled by the Heads of this Council to pay a fine of 100 ducats, which shall be given to the accuser, and both the husband and wife shall be immediately proclaimed upon the steps, as many times as may be necessary, as fearing neither God nor our own laws.” One can clearly see that the language of this legislation put the blame on the husband who was held responsible for his wife’s action and who took on the active role of paying the accuser and suffering the punishment alongside his wife. Similarly, if the woman was unmarried, the civic authorities passed the responsibility of her crime to the father or brother “or any other person in whose power she lies” indicating that the common perception of the female was that she was incapable of taking the blame for her own actions. However, if the woman wearing the mushroom hairstyle was a prostitute, the decree ordained that she shall “first be whipped and then have [her] whole head shaved...having been shorn, [she] shall be led to the steps and there proclaimed, and [her] accuser shall have 25 lire...and after being whipped, shorn and proclaimed [she] shall not be released from prison until [she has] paid over this money.”

The mild punishment for honorable women in comparison to the stern punishment of the prostitute was predicated on the fact that the hairstyle was more threatening on the latter because the officials already perceived the prostitute as posing a threat to the gender hierarchy by virtue of her profession. The married or honorable woman on the other hand, was firmly entrenched in the accepted male-female gender schemes because she was accountable to either a husband or other male parental relation.

Furthermore, the huge quantity of Venetian legislation on sodomy dealing explicitly with homosexual relationships indicates that secular authorities intended to prevent the “feminization” of males at all costs. In the fifteenth century the Council of Ten initiated a campaign to restrict the vice of sodomy with a plethora of new laws. The Ten prohibited sodomy on Venetian ships where it was said to be so prevalent that they thought “it [was] surprising that divine justice had not sunk them.” By the mid-fifteenth century, the Ten passed a regulation in 1467 “insisting that doctors, barbers and other healers report anal injuries to the authorities so as to eliminate the vice of sodomy from our city.” In addition, men were “prohibited to meet after dark in apothecary shops; schools of gymnastics, music, fencing and abacus;
certain dark areas; and even pastry shops." Indeed, the large quantity of legislation dealing with homosexuality indicates that the Council of Ten believed this crime to be the most threatening to the patriarchal order and the hegemony of the state. It is therefore no wonder that secular authorities closely scrutinized and prohibited any opportunity for the feminization of men by prohibiting even pastry shops to remain open after dark.

The blatant persistence of using church rhetoric to legitimize laws even after sex crimes had fully passed into secular jurisdiction requires explanation. After all, many scholars have argued that the use of church rhetoric is evidence that the rise in legislation on sodomy and prostitution at the time was because the secular authorities were genuinely concerned with sin and the Christian moral order. Indeed, if one reads over Venetian legislation of this time period, the huge quantity of religious moral rhetoric used is evidence to support this argument. In the Rialto Brothel Ordinance for instance, prostitutes are forbidden to live in any house, vault or room "or in any other place opposite the church of San Matteo di Royalty...out of reverence for God and the Virgin Mary..." Similarly, the Senate decree of 1543 claims that it is "seeking to please the everlasting God, [when it takes] steps to...curb the excessive expenditure of whores upon their own garments and upon the decoration of their houses." One sees that in legislation on sodomy the same kind of extensive religious language was used. The mushroom hairstyle is described as "indecent in the sight of God and men..." In addition, Ruggiero notes that civic authorities regularly evoked the Sodom and Gomorrah model as their justification for passing legislation on sodomy due to the fact that these Biblical towns "provided a concrete precedent for God's terrible judgment against such [homosexual] cultures." Although civic authorities heavily utilized church rhetoric in Venetian legislation, as Davidson suggests "we cannot simply assume that governments sought, unquestionably, to impose on their subjects the morality taught by the Roman Church." Indeed, the purpose of the secular authorities' use of church rhetoric was more complex than an undying loyalty or faith to ecclesiastical teachings.

As a result, church rhetoric was used not solely because secular authorities were preoccupied with the amount of sin committed in Venice, but because church rhetoric was compatible with the gender hierarchy the patriarchal Venetian society was attempting to preserve. The Church for instance had always argued that women were naturally more volatile and prone to sex. Secular authorities could thus readily employ this church rhetoric in order to justify why prostitution had to be civically controlled because they could argue that uncontrolled prostitution "set the danger of women being seduced into the life because of their natural frivolity and sensuality." Civic prostitution could thus be sanctioned by church rhetoric because "common beliefs about female lustiness...created a belief that law and morality required a higher standard of sexual restraint for women than for men." This conception not only bolstered the established gender hierarchy by legitimizing male superiority but it provided a justification for the control of prostitution. Christian moral could thus cloak the true purposes of the civically-run brothels in religious legitimacy.

Similarly, with sodomy one sees the same kind of compatibility between church rhetoric and law. Sodomy was considered an "unnatural act" by the Church who saw "nature and the natural [as] the norms that governed marital sex, which was held to be authorized primarily for the conception and nurturing of offspring and secondarily for the avoidance of fornication." The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which clearly delineated the tragic consequences of homosexuality was thus used to instill in pious Venetians a fear of committing such acts. Furthermore, the Church was the first to define the sexual relationship through male dominance by prescribing the "missionary position" as the proper form of intercourse, which required that the man and woman be "face to face with the man on top and the woman underneath." It is therefore no surprise that the secular authorities used the church's conceptions about sex to legitimize their own laws. By incorporating church rhetoric into legislation on sodomy, the state was able to designate any act that undermined the established gender hierarchy as "unnatural," expanding the definition of sodomy while retaining the language of the church to support it.

Although asserting that secular authorities created Venetian sex laws with the intent of preserving the patriarchal society firmly establishes the purposes behind the legislation, this does not determine whether the preservation of gender hierarchy was truly consequential to the state or not. In order to judge to what extent the maintenance of the male-female identities was of true importance to secular authorities, one must examine how this legislation translated into practice. The column of the diarist Girolamo Priuli is a good place to start. According to Priuli who wrote in 1509, the vice of sodomy was practiced so openly in Venice without shame that "it had become so habitual that it was more highly regarded than having to do with one's own wife." Priuli recounted that despite the large number of decrees, laws and ordinances for the punishment of sodomy, they were "neither respected nor enforced, and that was because the persons responsible for their execution were themselves involved in these offenses and had no heart to carry out the punishment, for they feared that the same penalty might fall upon themselves or their own children." Zorzi supports the
leniency of the civic authorities in response to sodomy when he adds the
in Venice “men convicted of the offense were usually punished by gal-
ley service or a prison sentence, rather than by death as required by
laws,” and from “time to time, exemplary punishments would be hand-
exted out for particularly blatant or public offenders.”37 Similarly, with
regard to prostitution, Richards notes that the entire Rialto, not just the
designated Castello was a “stamping ground” for prostitutes with
“authorities continually having to give way and recognize the fact.”38

The notion that civic officials allowed prostitution and sodomy to
run rampant in Venice right under their own noses is refuted however,
by the extensive studies Ruggiero has done on prosecutions of this pe-
riod. First, he notes that there are records of officials punishing prostitutes
who did not abide by civic regulations. In addition, Ruggiero points to
the fact that from 1448-1469 there was a dramatic rise in the prosecu-
tion of sodomy when the Council of Ten took over the Signori di Notte’s
position. Indeed in the period of twenty years, the Council of Ten con-
victed one hundred and ten people for sodomy in comparison to the
eleven convictions of their predecessors in the same amount of time.39

However, Ruggiero himself notes that certain kinds of sodomy, such as
anal intercourse with prostitutes and married woman, were more half-
heartedly prosecuted and to an extent even tolerated. What this suggests
is not a complete tolerance of prostitution and sodomy as some histori-
ans would like to believe, nor a vast nondiscriminatory prosecution of all
sex crimes. For this reason, Rocke’s interpretation of prosecution pat-
terns for sodomy in Florence provides the key to understanding why
Venetian secular authorities punished prostitution and sodomy in a dis-
criminate fashion.

According to Rocke’s theory, secular authorities did not pursue
sodomy consistently or rigorously in Florence as long as the act did not
violate the code of sexual and social comportment that kept the notion
of “masculinity” intact. In fact, Rocke argues that homosexuality was
actually condoned as a necessary phase of sexual tutelage in the early
life of the male in accordance with Roman tradition. Sodomy was thus
tolerated by the state when the older man engaged in sexual activity
with a youth as the active partner. However Florentine authorities swift-
ly punished role reversals due to the fact that the “sexual passivity of
mature men...jeopardized and vilified the virile identity of all local men.”40
Indeed, upon examining when secular officials prosecuted
prostitution and sodomy in Venice, one can make a similar argument.
Records indicate for instance, that “a major concern of legislators by the
1540s was not the common prostitute but the prosperous courtesan.”41

Although prostitutes within the Rialto area, as Richards notices, were
not frequently punished, more prosperous prostitutes were fined regu-
larly. This form of discriminatory prosecution is apparent in the year
of 1599, when officials fined various prostitutes for riding through the city
in coaches and wearing expensive clothing.42 The reason that civic
authorities fined and punished courtesans more consistently than the
common prostitute becomes clear in the wake of Rocke’s argument.
While the spread of prostitution on the island of Rialto still kept prosti-
utes within the confines of state conceived boundaries posing little
threat to the gender hierarchy, the luxurious clothes and lifestyle of the
single, independent, wealthy and potentially learned courtesan discred-
ited the male-female roles that were the foundation of the patriarchal
state.

In addition, if one is to examine Venetian authorities’ punishment
of sodomy, the same trend of discriminatory prosecution seen in pro-
stitution is prevalent here as well. Not only was anal intercourse with
women as previously mentioned persecuted much less, but “even when
violence was involved, there was considerable hesitancy about being as
strict with heterosexual acts labeled sodomy as with similar homosexu-
al acts” in reference to rape and child molestation involving anal inter-
course.43 Subsequently, in Venice the active homosexual partner paid
with his life for “feminizing” their lover regardless of the lover’s age.
Active sodomites were most commonly decapitated between the pillars
of justice and burnt in an effort to redeem their souls, a punishment that
seemed to “hark back consciously to the burning of sodom and Gomor-
rah.”44 In addition, there were cases in Venice where civic officials
severely punished the passive partner as well. In 1474, for instance, the
Council of Ten condemned Simeone, a passive sodomite, to have his
nose cut off to instill fear in passive homosexuals who were aware that
their penalties would be less severe than those of their active partners.
As Ruggiero notes, the state punished the boy like they would punish a
woman because he was caught in this compromising role. As a result,
the state gave Simeone the typical mutilation for a woman which was
the cutting off her nose due the the fact that “while a man was valued
for his work and thus demeaned by the loss of hands or eyes, a woman
was valued for her beauty and thus debased by the loss of her nose.”45

What the stern punishment of homosexual sodomy in relationship to the
tolerance of heterosexual forms of sodomy indicate is that the state
criminalized homosexuality more severely because it threatened the
gender roles of the established patriarchal order. Like the misbehaving
prostitutes on the Rialto island, the state could tolerate heterosexual
sodomy because it kept the preestablished gender roles intact. Howev-
er, the state could not disregard homosexual sodomy due to the fact that
it threatened to undermine the very foundation the patriarchal state was
established on by transforming men into women.
Overall, it becomes apparent through the examination of the history, legislation and practice of prostitution and sodomy in Venice, that the state was indeed preoccupied with maintaining the preconceived gender norms that the patriarchal government was founded on. As a result, once the legal jurisdiction of prostitution and sodomy passed from the hands of the ecclesiastical to the secular authorities, laws on prostitution and sodomy could more readily reflect the elite male-dominated oligarchical system of the Venetian Senate and Doge. Consequently, secular authorities contained the “masculinization” of women and the “feminization” of men by confining and criminalizing prostitution and sodomy respectively through a plethora of new legislation. Although the blatant persistence of church rhetoric used in this legislation could indicate that civic authorities were preoccupied with the moral condition of Venice, the compatibility of church teachings with the established gender hierarchy should not go unnoticed. Indeed, the Church was the first institution to lay the foundation for male dominance in the sexual sphere by promoting the missionary style intercourse and by claiming that women were morally inferior to men requiring higher standards of sexual restraint. Upon examining how legislation on prostitution and sodomy translated into practice, one sees that the secular authorities were indeed concerned with preserving the gender hierarchy indicating that the maintenance of male/female identities was truly consequential to the state. One can thus conclude in the wake of Rocke’s argument that the rich courtesan and the homosexual were most fervently persecuted by Venetian authorities because they threatened the gender hierarchy more than prostitution confined to Rialto or heterosexual sodomy that kept the gender norms intact.

The notion that state was less preoccupied with the moral purity of Venice and more concerned with how male/female roles played out in everyday life is significant. By examining Venetian sex legislation through this lens, one is able to move beyond the more traditional and obvious explanations for why prostitution and sodomy would preoccupy the state to see how the established gender hierarchy was used to legitimize the patriarchal order. History, legislation, practice support the notion that prostitution and sodomy could truly discredit the established gender roles up which that the state was founded, shedding new light on the nature of the state and its underlying reasons for the prosecution of sexual crimes.

ENDNOTES
6. ibid., p. 391.
8. ibid., p. 150.
9. ibid., p. 119.
11. ibid., p. 106.
13. ibid., p. 122.
14. ibid.
15. ibid.
16. ibid., p. 127.
19. ibid., p. 126.
20. ibid., p. 123.
21. ibid.
22. ibid., p. 124.
27. ibid., p. 127.
28. ibid., p. 123.
30. ibid., 77.
CHERNOBYL LITERATURE

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Despite the silence of the Soviet government, the spread of radioactive contaminants from the Chernobyl reactor meltdown was eventually detected all over the world. On Friday, April 25, 1986, as a result of human error during experiments being performed by the staff at Chernobyl, the cooling system failed resulting in the melting of fuel and, of greater importance to the public, the ignition of the graphite moderator, which began the release of what has been approximated as 1900 PBq of radioactivity to the environment. The isotopes from the accident have half-lives sufficiently long to allow them to migrate into the body or, in the case of Iodine, have the tendency to accumulate in the thyroid gland. The plume from the burning graphite initially traveled in a northwest direction toward Sweden, Finland and eastern Europe, exposing the world public to levels up to 100 times the normal background radiation.

I. EPISTEMOLOGY, IRONY, AND INFORMATION VACUUM: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The effects of the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown is consistently described as a “silent killer” by those who experienced and are experiencing the tragedy firsthand. But the referent in this phrase is left ambiguous, since the silent killer could be either the sinister effects of invisible and noiseless radiation fallout, or the Soviet government’s response to the accident. The Soviet Union’s initial “wall of silence” and later disingenuous attitude to the catastrophe left an information vacuum that seemed at odds with Mikhail Gorbachev’s newly announced policy of glasnost, or openness (CCCR). Such a scarceness of information led to the popular conception that information was worth its weight in gold. But all information could not be taken at face value, as deep-seated suspicion arose amongst Russian civilians from the Soviets’ initial deadly silence. L. Kovalevska, a Pripyat evacuee recounts this informational absence in an interview: “The whole day we knew nothing, and no one said anything. Well, it was a fire. But as for radiation, nothing was said about that.”

The paucity of information, and the distrust or skepticism that accompanied the official and media reports that eventually were dis-
seminated, was reflected in later literature. The Chernobyl tragedy and the concomitant information vacuum created a type of epistemological uncertainty, since what anyone said was true could very well be unreliable, or was intentionally obfuscatory at the accident victims’ expense. The literature of the Chernobyl tragedy can be conceptualized as an attempt to fill the information vacuum and reconstruct the accident with respect to the sensitivities of literary expression. Chernobyl literature is particularly sensitive to the epistemological problematic created by the information vacuum and explores its dimension through various linguistic tropes, in particular, through a heavy use of irony.

Irony is essentially the use of language to convey a meaning that is opposite of its literal meaning (or it can be understood as an outcome of events or use of symbols that contradict one’s expectations). Irony then destabilizes facticity itself, since there is a difference between reality (as signified by the literal meaning) and the subversive unexpected meaning. In Chernobyl literature, irony can be seen as a trope that reflects the epistemological uncertainty that arises out of the information vacuum. Other literary devices, such as symbol inversion, paradox, or double meaning (see “silent killer” example above), serve a roughly analogous literary function by destabilizing certainty.

As a whole, Chernobyl fiction goes beyond an awareness of the epistemological uncertainty of the post-tragedy situation, and it actively engages in reconstituting the catastrophe through its own linguistic devices and strategies. In some ways, the literature tries to make sense of the tragedy, attempting to impute the meaningless of the accident with some type of meaning. Or Chernobyl fiction often openly criticizes the political abuses of Soviet bureaucracy, and thus serves as a didactic and moralizing function. In this sense, the Chernobyl fiction can be understood as a political speech act. This tension, between elucidating epistemological uncertainty from the information vacuum and creating stable meaning or value out of the tragic experience, reflects the literary project of Chernobyl fiction. In any case, Chernobyl fictions are self-conscious about the power of language as a chief constitutive mechanism of an unstable nuclear world.

II. CONTEXTUALIZATION, NUCLEAR WAR, AND THE CREATION OF MEANING

The term “accident” or “catastrophe” is usually associated with a violation of expectations, or at least a rupture from normal circumstances. It seems quite natural then to assume that the literature which emerges from the Chernobyl disaster is a new or distinct genre, since it is responding to a material event that was quite unanticipated, and that took place in a specific location in space and time. But Chernobyl fiction can be understood as an extension of, and reaction to the vast Nuclear Holocaust fiction that preceded it from roughly 1895 to one hundred years later. A close examination reveals that locating Chernobyl fiction within the context of Nuclear Holocaust fiction serves a distinct political function.

Nuclear Holocaust fiction can be broadly described as a genre of literature that dramatizes the circumstances of Atomic war. The literature is almost always apocalyptic, and describes an Armageddon-like conflict which leaves the Earth as a barren wasteland without hope. Human suffering and a sense of powerlessness from the inexorable and inevitable forces of nuclear destruction are typical of the fiction at large. Chernobyl fiction is similar in that it reconstitutes the nuclear accident as a nuclear conflict; the fiction uses the language and imagery of war, and similarly describes its subsequent effects in leaving a wasteland of despair. Lyubov Sirota, a Chernobyl victim and poet, orients time with Chernobyl as the touchstone in her words, things either happened “before the war” or are happening now during the war. In her lengthy poem, The Tree of Chernobyl, Lucila Velasquez frequently intermixes violent war images in her poetics -- she speaks of “[a] yard of fighter planes,” “rifled cannons,” “a theater of limited war,” “ballistic missiles,” “a lost single bullet,” “heat-resistant destruction,” etc. And Vladimir Gubaryev’s play Sarcophagus clearly means to lampoon the boorish, insensitive American doctor when he says “this tragedy at the nuclear power station is a minor accident compared with a nuclear war.” In fact, the central premise of the play is to depict the Chernobyl accident as if it were an unprovoked military act on civilians. First-hand accounts share this linguistic reconstruction of the Chernobyl disaster. In an interview, Anelia Pekovska narrates, “Every one of us has kept until now a sense of boundary: before the war and after the war. We simply say: that was before the war.” And the evacuation of the Pripyat reminded one of “Kiev in 1941 [during] the Great Fatherland War” against the Germans.

The resulting wasteland from war is the dominant imagery of Chernobyl fiction. Lyubov Sirota writes in Radiophobia:

> These glasses show us more clearly the shrinking rivers / Poisoned forests / Children born not to survive and later, The sea is an enormous waste dump/ Has day died? / Or is this the end of the world? / Morbid dew on pallid leaves/ The sky is boiling only with crows.

Such apocalyptic imagery can be found in abundance in the Chernobyl writings Velasquez’s The Tree of Chernobyl, Christa Wolf’s Acci-
dent, Frederick Pohl’s *Chernobyl*, and Gubaryev’s *Sarcophagus*. The political motivation of reconstructing the Chernobyl accident as a nuclear war is to create a type of Manichean battle between the evil purveyors of nuclear technology (namely, the Soviet bureaucratic government) and the innocent victims of that technology. So if the victims of the Chernobyl catastrophe are engaged in war - a war against a government which controls vital information, and one that virtually controls their destiny - they can attribute meaning and value to their suffering against such an oppressive, unjust government. The war values of heroism, courage, and sacrifice can now be allocated to Chernobyl victims. Moreover, like Nuclear Holocaust fiction, Chernobyl fiction can serve a didactic and admonitory function by elucidating the horrifying effects of war.

The search for meaning (as it is found in opposition to an unjust government) can be found in such poems as Lyubov Sirota’s *To Pripyat*. She writes, “[The government] wrote us off as lingering stress/ cunning genetic disorders/ But we--we are the payment for rapid progress/ It wouldn’t have been so annoying for us to die had we known our death would help us to avoid more fatal mistakes.” Sirota attempts to construe a didactic function from the senselessness of catastrophe when she writes, “Even after death/ from our graves/ we will appeal to your conscience.” For Sirota, the world will reawaken its conscience once it can vicariously experience the suffering of Chernobyl victims through fiction. Speaking in an interview about his Chernobyl drama, Vladimir Gubaryev similarly says, “I wanted to say: If humanity does not ponder the lessons of the tragedy, it will be in the Sarcophagus.” And Velasquez’s *Tree of Chernobyl* certainly has a cautionary tone which emerges from her understanding of the suffering of nuclear tragedy, when she warns of man as a “desecrated being” and of his apparent “synthesis of nothingness.” By constructing the victims suffering as a war against the purveyors of nuclear technology, Chernobyl fiction creates meaning out of that suffering—a meaning that is eventually supported by the premise that the victims’ suffering will be a lesson to the world about the horrifying effects of a nuclear culture.

Another way Chernobyl fiction allocates meaning from its construction of the tragedy as a war can be identified when traditional war values are attributed to accident victims. It is in this way that Chernobyl fiction departs sharply from the Nuclear Holocaust genre. Nuclear Holocaust fiction typically does not champion war values, but instead realizes that these values cannot be achieved in a nuclear world. Paul Briars writes, “Courage is of little use. No amount of loyalty, determination, self-sacrifice or heroism will deflect an incoming intercontinental ballistic missile one jot. And where traditional war fiction appeals to the notion that in combat human character is tested and the inner self revealed, nuclear war stories are dominated by machines, not human beings.” Chernobyl fiction, in contrast, attempts to glorify traditional war virtues, and in the process, emphasize the human dimension. Gubaryev chose the dramatic form because he believed it could most directly represent the human tragedy and best reflect the virtues of suffering and courage. In the dedication to his novel Chernobyl Frederick Pohl writes of typical war virtues: “This book is dedicated to the hundreds of men and women whose courage and sacrifice kept a terrible accident from becoming far more terrible still.” Lyubov Sirota’s poetry emphasizes perseverance as she continues to battle the injustice of the Soviet government “as if with my final strength/ as if my final days,” and Lucila Velasquez’s poetry of courage and perseverance sings, “a new joy of living / we’ll have to get used sooner / to wake up in the morning with radioactive dreams.” The traditional war virtues of courage and sacrifice, unlike Nuclear Holocaust fiction, are copious throughout the Chernobyl fiction genre. Clearly, by applying the language and values of war to the Chernobyl disaster, Chernobyl fiction villainizes the Soviet government as the enemy, and simultaneously attempts to construct a stable meaning and message from the experience.

III. "JANUS-FACE OF LANGUAGE"

There was general suspicion about official released Soviet reports regarding the Chernobyl disaster. Interviews reflect that many victims were aware that they were being manipulated or consciously ignored by the government, and that the chief means to this end was language itself, which could be cast in any manner that would in some sense determine the official reality of the disaster. Hryhorii Khmel, a fire engine driver of the Chernobyl regional fire brigade, recounts a specific instance of the bureaucratic manipulation of language: “In May, they would have praised [the firemen] and declared them heroes. In June, they punished them. The times changed so swiftly in the Zone, and the very attitude to this capacious concept ‘heroism’ changed.” Khmel underscores the anxiety of many victims who felt uncertain about the “swiftly” changing times, where one day’s understanding of the situation could be outdated the next. Another interviewee, Anton Vulchin, said, “Nobody would believe any of the promises made by the state. They will pass some laws, they will make promises, but the bureaucrats will destroy all these.” Such widespread mistrust of the state is similarly reflected by Aneliia Perkovska when she recounts a bitter scene she saw before the Pripyat evacuation: “Lads ran up from Ivana-Frankivsk. And they said:
we need a propagandist; the guys there are already exhausted." When the people were unable to work on the disaster from excessive fatigue or radiation exposure, a propagandist was needed to ensure civilians and the world that rapid progress was still being made towards making the fallout zone safe for habitation.

This suspicion of language, and the recognition that language is a powerful constitutive mechanism of reality, is strongly reflected in the literature of Chernobyl. Christa Wolf's Accident, for example, ruminates at length about the nature of language. She asserts a fundamental irony in her reflections. Language is the marker, definer and advent of civilization: "Civilization is their product [of the brain]. Language, the medium of tradition, their prerequisite." But at the same time, language has a destructive capacity that is fundamentally tied to progress or technology or civilization. To express this point, Wolf modernizes the Biblical myth of the Tower of Babel, where man tries to reach God by building a tower, but God strikes them down by scrambling human languages. Wolf restructures the myth in the following way:

"How seriously THE LORD takes language. How he makes certain that it does not become an instrument which serves his subjects to join forces against him. We, on the other hand, all understand the basic language with which we build our towers...and we all recognize the technological voice coming out of the machine, the rocket-powered tower, into the sky...Only sometimes the towers come crashing down, with their bloody cargo." Here, the tower to God is a rocket, and language now is a "technological" product that "comes out of machine," and so God rebukes the rocket. This central irony (or paradox) --language as a redeemer and destroyer--allows us to understand her accusation, "the Janus face of language." Later, Wolf says it is a "suspicion, self-distrust" of language that is "nagging" her. Wolf's suspicion of language--its two-facedness--is manifested in her literature. Principally, she uses ironic or inverted symbols as a trope for the indeterminacy of language. This reflects an overall epistemological uncertainty or skepticism that arose out of the Chernobyl tragedy.

On the very first page, Wolf invokes the image of a cherry tree. She writes, "On a day about which I cannot write in the present tense, the cherry trees will have been in blossom. I will have avoided thinking, 'exploded,' although one year earlier I could not only think but also say it readily, if not entirely with conviction." Wolf is thinking about the future when she imagines she will be dead from radiation fallout, but the cherry trees will be in blossom. But Wolf interchanges the word "blossom" with "explode," and thus metonymically thinks of a cherry tree actually exploding. Wolf inverts the organic metaphor (a blossoming cherry tree is a typical symbol of spring, or rebirth) and replaces it with a nuclear metaphor--a portentous "exploding" tree that will follow her death. The usage of exploding cherry trees would have been innocuous one year ago before the Chernobyl disaster, but is now imbued with a different meaning altogether. (Such an ironic use of organic or natural metaphors can be traced in classic western writings such as T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land ["April is the cruellest month"] or Baudelaire's Flowers of Evil.) Wolf continues the ironic use of the metaphor ad nauseam, as most of the book chronicles the thoughts she has while gardening. The narrator is even conscious of the irony when she finds it "absurd" that a "tiny forsythia was preparing to blossom" or that her zucchini sprouts despite the nuclear fallout. And the most obviously of this inverted organic imagery is when she finds a "lucky" four leaf-clover, a discovery that becomes bitterly ironic given the recent nuclear accident. The organic metaphors and symbols are ironic in the Chernobyl fictions because they stand in sharp contrast to the bleak wasteland imagery typically associated with nuclear disasters.

The poem Tree of Chernobyl by Lucila Velasquez continues to use ironic organic symbols and metaphors. Velasquez uses the imagery of spring, which is typically associated with freshness and rebirth, as the chief ironic device in her poem. She brings particular attention to the irony of spring in a nuclear wasteland by ending the first sections of her poem with a type of refrain--"the April winds were fodder of the Ukrainian spring," "in the gardens and osemiums of that Ukrainian spring," or "curves and undulating lines of that Ukrainian spring." Out of Velasquez's spring emerges the tree of Chernobyl. She uses the metaphorical tree because it visually resembled the cloud plume that settled over the reactor. As the pressure broke forth from the reactor and blew the top off of Reactor four, Velasquez's metaphorical tree pulls from the Chernobyl spring and spreads its branches over the rest of the world:

"the tree of Chernobyl being transplanted and at one-and-twenty-three minutes a.m. when Kiev was asleep in the open/ calm Baltic cyclids/ sea black dreams become agitated/ the Tree of Chernobyl was in the open holding its heroic branches/ its holocaust leaves were falling/ another black hole opened in the sky/ a plume extended its lethal birds...the exodus to the wind." Clearly this tree is not a representation of freshness or rebirth. It extends "lethal birds," is "radioactive in its iodine roots," and "ferrous inside its yttrium foliage." Velasquez inverts the traditional organic symbol into something sinister. She plays with rebirth imagery,
twists its meaning to contradict our expectations. In essence, her poetry is self-conscious of the Janus-face of language.

Lyubov Sirota's poems are similarly self-conscious of the power and manipulability of language. Like Wolf and Velasquez, she continues to use inverted organic imagery--"In the suburbs, choke cherries came out with white flowers like gamma fluorescence." But more interestingly, Sirota's poetry expresses the widespread suspicion felt by many towards the Soviet government. Sirota highlights the ambiguity of language when she writes, "Nobody knew anything." Her statement is charged with a double meaning--it could refer to the fact that either the civilians knew nothing, or that literally nobody knew anything. The tenor of her poetry definitely favors the former interpretation: "We will not be resigned to falsified ciphers, base thoughts, however you [the government] brand us! We do not wish--and don't you suggest it--to view the world through bureaucratic glasses. We're too suspicious!" Sirota blames the government for misusing its power to help Chernobyl victims. Furthermore, her suspicion carries her poetry to identify official Soviet manipulation of language. This suspicion of language is best expressed in her poem, *Radiophobia*. She writes,

"Is this only--a fear of radiation? Perhaps rather--a fear of wars? Perhaps--the dread of betrayal, cowardice, stupidity, lawlessness? The time has come to sort out what is radiophobia/ It is--when those who've gone through the Chernobyl drama refuse to submit to the truth meted out by government ministers." 

Radiophobia was a word promoted by the Russian government to refer to civilians' unnecessary fears and concerns. This term served to give the impression that Pripyat inhabitants had not suffered any harm, but that they were simply imagining the harms of radiation. The term treats the impulse to self-protection, moral and physical suffering, and concern about the fate of others as a pathological psychological perversion. The term deprives Chernobyl victims of hope for a just treatment from the Soviet government since it dismisses as unfounded all their claims of physical and mental harm. And as expressed by Sirota, it inflicts a sense of abandonment, "kinlessness," and superfluity. Sirota realizes the term has a political function of calming public opinion, and more importantly, excusing the government from responsibility for the Chernobyl catastrophe. As Sirota is conscious of the sinister function of the term, she attempts to invert its meaning altogether to suggest that the new meaning of "radiophobia" is a refusal accept to the "truth meted out by the government." Sirota uses her poetry to suggest an awareness of terminological determinism, and then attempts to refashion the terminology to empower the Chernobyl victims. And she uses her poetry as an opportunity to create meaning out of the term, at least in terms of a didactic function. Sirota writes, "Radiophobia might cure the world of carelessness, satiety, greed, bureaucratism and lack of spirituality, so that we don't, through someone's good will mutate into non-humankind."

Vladimir Gubarev's *Sarcophagus* is also quite sensitive to the relationship between language and the government's role in the disaster. There is an extensive dialogue between the General (representing the government) and the Investigator (representing the media) as to whether the disaster was a "fire" or an "explosion." The General insists, "People keep talking about an explosion, but frankly I doubt there was one. A serious fire--that's another matter." By calling the accident a fire, the government official seeks to placate civilians as to the accident's severity, since the Investigator will eventually write a report to the public. In Gubarev's play, the Investigator does not buy the General's explanation. Bessmertny is a character in the play who is most sensitive to the Janus-face of language. After ingesting radioactive materials, Bessmertny ironically renames himself "Immortal." Later Bessmertny, when speaking about the plant operators, insists that they committed murder: "Not suicide," he says, "but murder!" Perhaps Gubarev's most striking attention to language is his awareness of contradictions in naming the concrete structure that covers the reactor a "sarcophagus." The image of a sarcophagus most obviously invokes death, but the Soviets construe it as a symbol of eternal protection from the dangers of radiation. Gubarev offers his own reconsideration of the term in an interview when he says, "If a man acts according to his convictions and views, if he avoids responsibility, then that man will live in a sarcophagus. If people do not draw conclusions from the tragedy, they will end up in the sarcophagus. If humanity does not ponder on the lessons of the tragedy, it will be in a sarcophagus." Like the Chernobyl fiction writers discussed above, Gubarev is fully conscious about the indeterminacy of language, but paradoxically attempts to recast a stable meaning from the semiotics of the Chernobyl accident, hopefully on behalf of the countless victims of the tragedy.
LENI RIEFENSTAHL: TALES OF A
GERMAN “ARCHITECT”

ERICA PEREZ

In the 1890s, a young Adolf Hitler aspired to become an architect in a
german technical academy. Years later, in the 1920s, German film
director Leni Riefenstahl described herself as an “architect” as well,
transforming her epic visions into rhythm and poetry through the med-
um of a camera lens. While Hitler constructed for himself the position
of the Führer, stirring the masses with dramatic speeches about peace,
work and an ideal Germany, Riefenstahl created valuable roles for her-
self in her films, with artistic technique as her sole building material. As
“architects” of fascist heroism, both desired to build “monuments” to
themselves — physical manifestations of their own heroic characters.
When the paths of the two architects crossed, their collaboration result-
ed in the production of the visual masterpiece Triumph of the Will, a
“documentary” of the Nazi party that is now considered by many to be the
most successful propaganda film ever created.

In The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl, director Ray
Müller’s cunning documentary of Hitler’s propaganda artist indicates the
parallel between Riefenstahl and Hitler by exploiting his own visual
medium. He masterfully manipulates Riefenstahl’s testimony, graphi-
ically contradicting here and underscoring there, portraying Riefenstahl
as Hitler’s counterpart in the construction of one of the most lasting
monuments to the power of fascism — Triumph of the Will. Müller leads
the audience to inspect Riefenstahl and her role in creating the film,
suggesting that with each camera angle, close-up, and panorama shot,
Riefenstahl crafts a masterfully engineered fairy-tale, capturing the
essence of Nazi ideology with her visual architecture.

Müller uses Riefenstahl’s film The Blue Light, which she wrote,
directed and starred in herself, as the first tool with which to draw a par-
allel between Riefenstahl and Hitler. By accentuating the striking sim-
ilarities, especially between Riefenstahl’s depiction of herself as the
film’s protagonist and her depiction of Hitler in Triumph of the Will,
Müller develops a sense of the bond that would later allow the two to
work together so effectively in the making of the propaganda film.
Müller solidifies the parallel for the audience at the end of the segment
on The Blue Light, as the camera focuses in on the mysterious eyes of
Riefenstahl, slowly morphing them into the sinister eyes of the Führer
himself.
The role of Junta, the heroine of The Blue Light, is a prototype of the role that Riefenstahl created for Hitler as the hero of Triumph of the Will. Junta, played by Riefenstahl herself, scales craggy mountains, fighting for the ideals embodied by the blue crystal that sits at its summit. She followed the same motif in each subsequent film, always playing a similarly heroic protagonist. In her propaganda film, however, Riefenstahl breaks the mold. The ultimate hero is not modeled after her own character; the hero is Adolf Hitler. His role as the Fascist Führer takes on fairy-tale dimensions in the opening scene as he soars through a veil of clouds in a plane that seems to come from the heavens. As he descends, Riefenstahl's musical score lifts in celebratory notes to denote the coming of a savior figure. Hitler's plane comes through the sky, penetrating the layer of clouds, and the camera's eye sweeps over the Nuremberg rooftops. Riefenstahl transforms the province with her lens into a provincial kingdom, over which Hitler is king. She cuts from the scenes of houses, steeples and romanticized German monuments to a scene depicting the anxious crowds below, awaiting the hero.

Müller capitalizes on the fairy-tale nature of this scene and of Riefenstahl's entire film. As he discusses The Blue Light with her in his documentary, he sets her against the green hills of a pastoral landscape backdrop in rural Germany. When he asks her why she chose a fairy tale for her first film, she replies that German director Fanck, her mentor, had a technique which she had chosen not to repeat herself: "...fairy tale landscapes and realistic action didn't work together for me," she says. It seems Riefenstahl strayed from Fanck's guidance in the making of Triumph of the Will with both fairy tale landscapes and fairy tale action. Most of the film is dedicated to representing abstract notions of Nazi ideals. There is no fighting and very little dialogue -- instead, scenes depict pastoral Germany, visions of unity, patriotism, brotherhood, and order. Realistic action is nowhere to be found.

Riefenstahl claims, in reference to her first film, that the blue crystal Junta finds in the mountain is representative of the high ideals for which everyone strives. The notion of such universal ideals -- namely, Nazi ideals -- appears years later in. She chooses to include the segments of various Nazi leaders' speeches, in which they highlight the virtues that Hitler champions -- order, liberty, security, work, truth, pride, equality, and even racial purity. The segments are short; they are just long enough to impart the gist of the abstract Nazi values. More important than these soundbytes is the way that Riefenstahl visually idealizes Nazi paradigms throughout the film. She captures the rural beauty of Germany, imparting an old-country feel to the film. She depicts stout Nuremberg chimneys smoking with the bustle of the families within, a shot of a woman opening her window to a storybook view of the village below and the blooming flowers on the sill. Flags, perched on each house, blow proudly in the wind, their swastikas flickering gently in and out of sight. One angle shows a cat lounging by a waving flag, conveying the everyday, common quality of Nazi-Fascism. With these images, the swastika becomes a staple of every German home. Later shots of elaborate folk costumes, lively parades, and Fräuleins with long braids resting on their shoulders visually reinforce the idealized Nazi notion of recreating traditional roles in the face of failed liberalism and revolution in Germany during the interwar years.

Riefenstahl's close-ups of soldiers' boots, belts, swastika-stamped helmets, and glorified spades convey the idealized work ethic of the Nazi party. One particular scene blends together this ideal with the fairy-tale element: Riefenstahl shows the audience the Nazi camps, bustling with young boys and men working to unload wood into a furnace. As the men toss piles of wood back and forth and into the fire, the German folk song in the background -- perhaps a traditional working song -- rhythmically coincides with their actions. One imagines that instead of warming themselves for the next day's bloody battle, they are singing "Hi-ho, hi-ho," in a scene reminiscent of a Disney movie. The Great Depression and the resulting massive unemployment led Hitler's radical right to promise work for all, while simultaneously defending the value of manual labor in the face of industrialization and high-technology. Scenes like this one romanticized "a hard day's work," further glorifying the backbone of Nazi ideology -- a return to German values.

The Nazi ideals of unity and brotherhood also come across in this segment of Triumph of the Will. As Riefenstahl documents the environment of Nazi soldiers' camps, her camera observes the euphoric celebrations of shaving, washing one another, and barbecuing, among other things. The strapping young men laugh and smile, playing games and fraternizing to the sound of cheerful music. The happily masculine images capture the sense of an idealized army, meanwhile effectively recruiting new soldiers from her audience and rejuvenating the sense of a happy, united Germany.

How could Riefenstahl have portrayed these ideals so appropriately, in a manner so in tune with Hitler's desires, without understanding the logic behind them? Like Junta of The Blue Light, the only character in the village who can understand the mystical power of the mountain and the symbolic ideals held within it, Riefenstahl understood Hitler's thought processes and the ideals which he saw as necessary to save the German people. Müller uses various means in The Wonderful Horrible Life to highlight the parallel mind set of the "architects" and cause us as viewers to question Riefenstahl's claim of distance from the
Nazi ideology -- to question the nature of her relationship with Hitler himself.

The parallel that Müller draws between Riefenstahl and Hitler through the discussion of The Blue Light is not his only means of challenging Riefenstahl's claims and creating suspicion in the audience. It serves as a powerful introduction to the strange and mysterious partnership of the two figures. As the narrator in The Wonderful Horrible Life explains, Riefenstahl's adventurous heroines embodied an ideal that Hitler desired for himself. He admired the image she created of herself in each of her films -- she was an idol, a myth, something larger than life. Hitler, however, being an architect of words and ideas, lacked the artistic talent to create this image for himself in visual media. When he commissioned Riefenstahl to make an artistic monument to his "Will," he chose wisely.

Müller reveals in his documentary that Riefenstahl views Triumph of the Will as a physical monument to her talent and technique. He films her, standing on the steps of the stadium in Germany in which she filmed one of Hitler's most famous rallies nearly half a century ago. As she first approaches the camera, Müller sets her gait to the faint rhythm of a Nazi march, a technique that underscores again the parallel between Hitler and his artist. On these steps, Müller mentions to Riefenstahl the first film she produced for the Third Reich, called Victory of Faith. She adamantly refuses to discuss the piece, claiming, "It has nothing to do with my technique! You can only discuss technique in Triumph of the Will!" Müller most likely anticipated this reaction from her -- his narrator comments on "shoddy camera work" in Victory of Faith that is uncharacteristic of Riefenstahl, a stickler for precision. By placing this segment of the interview on the steps of the stadium, Müller emphasizes Riefenstahl's perfectionism and her self-absorbed obsession with her technique. In the course of the interview, she makes very little reference, if any at all, to the deadly implications of her film, that is, to the success of the Nazi party and the massacre of nearly six million people. Müller's clever juxtaposition -- Riefenstahl standing on the steps of the stadium where Hitler garnered support for his murderous theories of eugenics, while she complains about her artistic technique -- condemns her for her relentless dedication to art above humanity.

Müller continues to visually accuse Riefenstahl of corroborating with Hitler, accentuating the absurdity and implausibility of some of her comments and claims. As she watches her own film in the editing room, she observes her camera lift go between two huge swastika flags to create a scanning effect during one of Hitler's rallies. As Müller's lens closes in upon the chilling black and white swastika of the flag, Riefenstahl says of her technique, like an architect smiling upon her complet-
ed building, "the effect was very good." The irony of this situation is incredible -- is Riefenstahl unaware of the real "effect" of the camera lift, of her entire film? Does she have concern for the effects of the Nazi following that her brilliant propaganda helped to engender? Müller highlights Riefenstahl's apparent disregard for the true aftermath of her artistic masterpiece.

Müller continues in his strain of irony as he juxtaposes various pictures of Riefenstahl with Hitler at crucial times during the documentary. As the narrator repeats Riefenstahl's assertion that the film was "just a job which she performed to perfection," Müller accosts the viewer with a series of photos of her and Hitler and in front of swastika backdrops. His decision to place these images on top of the narration causes the viewer to question the validity of Riefenstahl's claim that she remained separate from Nazi politics. When she addresses this issue in The Wonderful Horrible Life, Riefenstahl contends that she guessed that Hitler was probably schizophrenic, "with good and bad sides," and that she could only see the "human side" of him. As she describes this, the "humanity" of Hitler, Müller flashes alternating pictures of her, now posed gaily with Hitler, now shaking German hands, now waving to the masses, and now pictures of beatings in various Jewish ghettos, and now the Nazi boycott of Jewish merchants. The narrator later asks rhetorically, "Did the brutal boycott of Jewish shops give her no cause to doubt? How could she have overlooked what she saw all around her?" Müller uses the narration to tie up his visual techniques of timing and juxtaposition to solidify the irony of Riefenstahl's alleged relationship to Hitler and Nazi ideology.

In The Wonderful Horrible Life, Riefenstahl admits herself that she can identify with the character Junta. What she does not say is that she and Hitler can also continue to identify with one another today. In The Blue Light, Junta is both loved and hated, a witch, an outcast. Riefenstahl claims that she too was loved at one time, but was reviled after the war for her contribution to Nazi propaganda. Hitler too was once loved -- his fervor and "charisma" capitalized on the greatest fears and hopes of many German people. But today, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Hitler is perceived by many to be the epitome of evil in the twentieth century. As Riefenstahl stands by the portrait of herself as Junta, she says, "I lost my ideals at the end of that terrible war." She does not say that she lost her ideals when she made Triumph of the Will. She lost them at the end, after censure by post-war, post-Hitler, post-Holocaust society. Müller ingeniously portrays Riefenstahl as a narcissistic and talented "architect" who creates in Triumph of the Will a visual representation of Nazi ideals, and a heroic depiction of Hitler. With his subtle irony and sequence, he incriminates her for her involvement, leaving
it to the viewer to wonder whether she was indeed a champion of Nazi ideology.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPECTACLE: BAUM’S EMERALD CITY AND FITZGERALD’S WEST EGG MANSION

ELIZABETH SCHEPS

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, consumerism moved from the small mom-and-pop store on Main Street to the bustling urban department store to the billboards of Times Square, drawing in the American public in large part through the use of spectacle. Historian William Leach asserts that “[i]n the late 1890s new visual media were invented, including the ‘cut’ or the ad picture, the artistic poster, the painted billboard, the electrical sign, and most enticing of all, the show window.” America became inundated by a mass of visual images that revolved around the glitz and showmanship which merchandisers used to entice the public into a new era of unprecedented consumerism and rationalized extravagance.

This use of spectacle--of light, color, glass, and exquisite materials--rapidly permeated every aspect of contemporary culture. Although in 1900 department store window dressers were still attempting to overcome the Victorian notion that it was “indiscreet and vulgar to stare into windows,” by the 1920s, the visible luxury of the store window had been reproduced in much greater light and color in Times Square, “the country’s most spectacular expression of the commercial aesthetic, a pictorial environment packed with giant images and signs designed to move goods, money, and people on a massive scale.” The increasingly strong appeals to the visual, which advertisers and merchandisers made through the first part of the twentieth century reverberated in the literature of the time, demonstrating the pervasiveness of the new aesthetic in American society. L. Frank Baum’s wizard of Oz and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Jay Gatsby are both characters of this consumer revolution, who actively create spectacular residences for themselves in the forms of the Emerald City and Gatsby’s mansion, which typify the consumerism of their respective decades and the influence of the commercial spectacle.

The Emerald City is the most beautiful place in Oz and is located exactly in the middle of the country. It is a fairyland that has been exclaimed over for its green glow, its sparkling emeralds set in every wall, and its evident opulence since Baum’s novel first appeared in 1900. Oz is clearly fundamentally different from any city in America at the turn of the twentieth century, because it is a flamboyant concentra-
Color is another key element of the new spectacle. Throughout his novel, Baum uses color to distinguish the different lands of the Oz empire. By 1910, “[d]isplaymen ‘drench’ their goods in color to increase their appeal” and the idea of the ensemble, in which complete outfits (or furniture sets, or dishes, etc.) are color-coordinated and displayed together, was taking hold.10 The importance of color, and particularly of coordinating color, is a key feature of the Emerald City’s visual appeal. The city is surrounded by a green wall, it emanates a green glow, and nearly every item in it is green, the color of money, emphasizing the extreme opulence found here. The people living in it are people of leisure who spend their time chatting and following the interactions between the visitors to the city and the wizard. Their dresses are glorious shades of green, as are the walls, the books, the furniture, and the carpeting. The room in which Dorothy stays on both of her visits to the city contains green sheets, green perfume, a green fountain, green flowers, green dresses, and green books.11 This is the ensemble taken to its extreme, and it absolutely delights Dorothy. But the color of the city is yet another aspect of spectacle; it is contrived to make the product (the Emerald City) more appealing to the consumer (anyone who sees it). The glasses which all people in the city wear cause everything to appear green; just as people of old were said to have seen the world through rose-tinted glasses, indicating optimism, the people of Oz see the Emerald City through green-tinted glasses, indicating consumerism. The Emerald City therefore is the ultimate realization of color in a spectacular sense because it creates an entire environment that forces the consumer to see everything as the creator (the wizard) wants it seen. The wizard explains to Dorothy at the end of the novel that “I thought, as the country was so green and beautiful, I would call it the Emerald City, and to make the name fit better I put green spectacles on all the people, so that everything they saw was green.”12 Not only was everything green, but it all sparkled. In addition to light and color, which Baum uses to create the spectacle of the Emerald City and make it truly representative of the contemporary rise in consumer culture, the city, which he has created also displays the third crucial element of turn-of-the-century spectacles, glass, in its extensive use of emerald stones.

Crucial to the Ozians, and to American consumerism itself, is the attitude of the people. There do seem to be different classes of people in the Emerald City, for Dorothy passes storekeepers on her way to the palace, and then the “ladies and gentlemen of the court” once she is actually inside.13 But Baum reassures us that “[e]veryone seemed happy and contented and prosperous.”14 Part of the purpose of a spectacle in the early twentieth century was to create the illusion of universal wealth and leisure and to encourage people to purchase more luxu-
rious goods in order to participate in this leisure class; the Emerald City actually shows the reader the ideal of this consuming society. People live in awe of the wizard, but they also think quite highly of him, believing him to be a good and beneficent man. The city which he has created is full of light and color, and it also displays the third crucial element of turn-of-the-century spectacles, glass, in its extensive use of emerald stones.

The man making the inhabitants of the Emerald City believe in the spectacle is the wizard himself, who is perhaps the greatest merchandising man of all. Using the same techniques that advertisers used to create shop windows and billboard advertisements in American cities, the wizard creates a capital city which is a model environment to all of the Ozians and which, through visual display of materialism, serves as a symbol of the wizard’s great power. Though in the end, the wizard turns out to be a humbug who actually has no command of magic at all, it is clear that he is still an extremely powerful man. He has created the ultimate spectacle, and he is able to encourage his subjects to believe in things that they know cannot be true. For example, though the reader understands early on that the glasses which all residents of the Emerald City wear are what make the Emerald City green, Dorothy is still surprised to discover that her green dress from the wardrobe in her palace room has become white when she leaves the city, and she does not question this change. The wizard realizes that he is so successful because people want him to be successful—he asks himself how he can help being a Humbug...when all these people make me do things that everybody knows can’t be done? It was easy to make the Scarecrow and the Lion and the Woodman happy, because they imagined I could do anything.”

In his introduction, “The Clown of Syracuse,” Leach asserts that at the time when Baum wrote The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, “a shift was occurring [within American society] from commitment to building ‘character’ to acquiring the right ‘personality,’ getting along with others, and having the most winning smile.” Thus, the wizard succeeds because people want to believe in him and because he is a good man and a good trickster; he is hospitable to his guests, treating them like members of the highest social class, and lavish in the presentation of his home. In fact, the wizard even makes a spectacle of himself, which is arguably the most impressive illusion throughout the book, presenting himself as a giant head, a lovely lady, a beast, a ball of fire, and an invisible force through tricks of display, and when he is discovered as only a little balding man, Dorothy and her companions are noticeably upset to have their illusions shattered. Thus, the wizard has created a beautiful city governed by an awe-inspiring man in the style of the greatest display artists of the beginning of the twentieth century.

If the Emerald City reveals a great deal about the ideals which merchants attempted to portray through the use of spectacle at the turn of the century, Jay Gatsby’s mansion in West Egg demonstrates the evolution of the spectacle by the quarter-century mark. Like the Emerald City, the mansion in which Gatsby lives in West Egg is a spectacle which presents a carefully constructed view of reality to an audience; whereas the wizard appeals to his constituents in Oz, Gatsby appeals to Daisy Buchanan in a way that reveals the conventions of 1920s merchandising.

By this time, the staunch resistance to large-scale merchandising which society and government alike had exhibited in the early years of the century had largely broken down. In fact, consumer culture was widely accepted and the idea of luxury had not only lost most of its negative connotations, but had also become, in Seligman’s words, “a ‘necessity’ for America’s new mass market.” The distribution of wealth was becoming increasingly uneven, with two percent of the population commanding sixty percent of the money, but the economy was booming in the aftermath of World War I, and spirits were high. The Jazz Age was in full swing and the conspicuous consumption of the rising nouveau riche heralded widespread acceptance of consumerism. Merchandisers both responded to and encouraged this rise in purchasing by creating ever-greater spectacles to entice people to buy more material possessions. In this time period, consumption literally moved out of the store and into the streets, with gigantic billboards taking over public space, parades showing the joys of consumption on holidays, and increased emphasis on lighting and color. It is in this context that Gatsby created his own spectacle in the affluence and consumerism of Long Island, symbolized by the T.J. Eckleberger billboard.

Light remained a critical aspect of spectacle in 1925; in fact it was far more pervasive throughout America than it had been twenty years earlier, manipulating consumer desires not only in shop windows, but also in giant electric signs and displays. By the 1920s, colored light had become a significant part of the advertiser’s toolbox, thanks to the invention of neon light. Suddenly a world which had just recently been bathed in bright white light was transformed into a glowing rainbow, advertising everything imaginable in glorious color. Gatsby’s house echoes this development in spectacle, and Fitzgerald frequently describes the light pouring out of the windows of the mansion. In preparation for Gatsby’s tremendous parties, caterers and decorators descend on the grounds of his mansion, bringing with them “enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby’s garden.” As Nick walks home from one of Gatsby’s shindigs, he notices that “[a] wafer of a moon was shining over Gatsby’s house, making the night fine as
before and surviving the laughter and the sound of his still glowing garden;” the moon illuminates Gatsby’s spectacle in much the same way as the green glow illuminates the Emerald City, but Gatsby counters this natural light with his own colored lights in his glowing garden to draw the consumer’s eye to his own estate. But the glowing garden is only a small part of the light which emanates from Gatsby’s mansion; at one point Nick exclaims that “when I came home to West Egg that night I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o’clock and the whole corner of the peninsula was blazing with light which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner I saw that it was Gatsby’s house, lit from tower to cellar.” This particular instance is interesting because Gatsby was not having a party; he claims that his house is lit because he was looking in some of the rooms, which makes sense when the reader considers that the true spectacle of Gatsby’s house is not designed to entice the people who attend his parties, but rather to impress Daisy Buchanan. When he is “glancing into some of [his] rooms,” Gatsby is in fact inspecting his house as he waits for Nick to tell him whether Daisy will be coming over to West Egg. Thus, the light is really for Daisy; when she tours his house with Gatsby, he flips a switch, and the “house glowed with light.” In fact, even after he does this, he turns on a single lamp to light the part of the room in which she sits; it seems that he is illuminating Daisy as the ultimate product to be consumed, much as 1920s advertisers were bathing items they were trying to sell in bright light. And when Daisy is no longer available for consumption, the spectacle—and the light—dies. “It was when curiosity about Gatsby was at its highest that the lights in his house failed to go on one Saturday night—and, as obscurely as it had begun, his career as Trimalchio was over.” The light only turns off for Daisy, the ultimate product.

Color is also incredibly important in Gatsby’s spectacle, albeit in a very different way than in the Emerald City. The Emerald City is a single color; everything fits into a beautiful green ensemble. But Gatsby’s mansion and the things surrounding it are full of varying colors. His car is cream, his clothing is sometimes a pink suit, sometimes a silver shirt and gold tie, and when he dumps his shirts out of his wardrobe, the reader discovers that Gatsby owns “shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaid is coral and apple green and lavender and faint orange with monograms of Indian blue.” In the early 1920s, many “staples” of consumption became available in wide varieties of color, and suddenly the fashions of home decorating (and their advertisements) exploded with colors in previously unheard-of shades such as Venetian green, pistachio, and Oriental Red. Gatsby’s home, and the people who contribute to his spectacle, reflect this increasing emphasis on color. At his parties, “the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors...and...the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music.” The chauffeur who brings Gatsby’s invitation to Nick wears a “robin’s egg blue” uniform, and the twins whom Jordan Baker converses with are dressed in matching yellow outfits. Color is salient for the characters of The Great Gatsby; in fact, the first thing Jordan says to one of the twins is that she’s dyed her hair since the last time they saw each other, indicating the pervasiveness of color, but also its rapidly changing fashion. But while Gatsby is using all this color and light to create the ultimate spectacle, one which will bring Daisy to him, she is actually “appealed by West Egg, this unprecedented ‘place’ that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village.” Although she enjoys seeing Gatsby’s house when it is not blazing light and color for a party, when Daisy does come to Gatsby’s parties, she does not have a good time in the aura of his spectacle. Just as many of the wealthy members of society protested the enormous advertising buildup taking place in public realms such as Times Square, Daisy, who is of old money, protests the great spectacle of Gatsby’s new money attempt to win her over. In sharp contrast to Gatsby’s ostentation, Daisy is frequently described as dressed in white; she is bathed in a yellow mist, and the only important light at her mansion is the small green glow on the end of the dock. Old money does not require the consumer spectacle that new money does.

But Gatsby’s spectacle includes the house itself, not just the decoration of it. In contrast to Daisy’s simple but elegant Georgian or Nick’s little bungalow, Gatsby’s mansion “was a colossal affair by any standard—it was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanning new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool and more than forty acres of lawn and garden.” The house itself, then, is designed to be a show, an ostentatious display of luxury. Inside, Gatsby upholds this spectacle. Guests are free to come and go inside the house and they take advantage of his bedrooms and salons, rooms in which he doesn’t even live, since he inhabits a small apartment tucked away in the house. But he maintains these rooms in the most impeccable style, much like the model room, which became popular at the beginning of the 1920s in department stores and also in museums, thanks to the 1924 opening of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is clear from Gatsby’s bedroom, which is “the simplest room of all—except where the dresser was garnished with a toilet set of pure dull gold,” that the “period bedrooms swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers [as well as the] dressing rooms and poolrooms, and bathrooms with sunken baths are all part of his spectacle, designed to appeal to outsiders, not to satisfy Gatsby’s own desire for luxury.” In fact, Nick
remarks that “inside as we wandered through Marie Antoinette music rooms and Restoration salons I felt that there were guests concealed behind every couch and table, under orders to be breathlessly silent until we had passed through.” The rooms are for show, and are consequently bathed in light and color. In fact, the owl-eyed man expects that the entire house is part of the spectacle; he is impressed by Gatsby’s books because he expected them to be fake. Thus Gatsby’s spectacle pervades every aspect of life, much as the spectacular advance of consumption in the 1920s was beginning to invade hitherto private areas of society.

Gatsby’s great spectacle is completed by the people in it. Gatsby himself does not really take part in his own parties, except to play the generous but retreating host. It is the stars and the wealthy guests who make Gatsby’s spectacle come to life in a realistic way. They are always reluctant to leave and when the house is empty, it seems somehow wrong to Nick, though in reality it is the parties that are the facade. During the 1920s, the rise of professional models aided the presentation of advertising spectacles by placing people in the fantastic displays of merchandise that businessmen were creating. The guests at Gatsby’s parties often seem like models, showing off the wealth and fame that attend these bashes and thereby revealing Gatsby’s worth, or so he believes. Like the Emerald City, Gatsby’s house functions as a successful spectacle because people want to believe in it, and they are aided by the creator in doing so. Just as the wizard of Oz presents the residents of the Emerald City with green glasses to enhance their experience of the spectacle, Gatsby provides his guests with liquor; in addition to stock ing an impressive bar, he serves champagne in “glasses bigger than finger bowls,” and Nick informs the reader that after drinking two of these, “the scene had changed before [his] eyes into something significant, elemental and profound.” The spectacle is complete.

Like the wizard, Gatsby is a trickster, and his background, like that of the wizard, is mysterious to the people taking part in his spectacle. He creates an illusion of the gaudy and unrestrained nouveau riche lifestyle in order to attain Daisy, just as the wizard of Oz creates an illusion of himself and the capital city over which he presides in order to obtain power. But whereas the wizard ultimately succeeds in his spectacle, leaving only Dorothy and her companions with the knowledge that he is in fact a humbug, Gatsby fails. The wizard leaves Oz with a terrific pageant as his balloon snaps free and carries him aloft; Gatsby is the victim of a tragic destiny, losing any hope of Daisy leaving Tom for him and then dying for a crime he didn’t commit. The wizard is remembered by the Ozians as a friend who “built for [them] this beautiful Emerald City,” but “Jay Gatsby’ had broken up like glass,” just like the shop windows which by the 1920s lined major streets in every city could have. The wizard is the product of a time in which consumer culture was just beginning, and he captures perfectly the American dream of being successful through the new consumer capitalism. In contrast, Gatsby is the product of a time in which consumer culture was a staple of western civilization, leading to a dependency which many found unsettling and insecure; Gatsby’s failure is in some ways also representative of an American dream: one in which the illusions of consumer capitalism are shattered, yielding a return to an earlier, and simpler, lifestyle. As symbols of the two very different time periods in which their authors created them, the wizard and Gatsby must necessarily have different fates. The wizard ultimately triumphed by tricking people who wanted to be tricked into believing in his powers. Gatsby fell victim to a spectacle that he created solely for someone who was not taken in by it.

Both L. Frank Baum and F. Scott Fitzgerald capture the consumer culture of their times in their novels. Baum’s Emerald City captures the wonders of light, color, glass, and the acceptance of luxury which were all becoming major components of the spectacle at the turn of the twentieth century. Twenty five years later, Fitzgerald puts forth a spectacular image in the form of Gatsby’s West Egg mansion, a display both inside and out which demonstrates how far the media of consumption had progressed. Both the wizard and Gatsby are tricksters of a sort, manufacturing their own spectacles to serve their own ends, but doing so in manners that are intimately tied to the development of consumerism in twentieth-century America.
ENDNOTES

2. ibid., pp. 61, 339.
5. ibid., p. 86.
7. ibid., p. 89.
8. ibid., p. 92.
10. ibid., p. 65.
12. ibid., p. 123
13. ibid., pp. 90, 92
14. ibid., p. 90
15. ibid., p. 100
16. ibid., p. 128
18. ibid., p. 295.
19. ibid., p. 271.
20. ibid., p. 340.
22. ibid., p. 22.
23. ibid., p. 86.
24. ibid., p. 86.
25. ibid., p. 100.
26. ibid., p. 119
27. ibid., pp. 97-98.
29. Fitzgerald 1925, p. 44.
30. ibid., p. 45.
31. ibid., pp. 111, 112.
32. ibid., p. 9.
34. Fitzgerald 1925, pp., 96-97.
35. ibid., p. 50.
38. Fitzgerald 1925, p. 51.
REFLECTIONS OF COLONIAL SOCIETY
AND IMPERIAL POLICY IN BABAR

REBECCA SAENGER

Many of us listened to the stories of Babar as young children and were enchanted by the seemingly innocent tales of the adventures of the small, cute elephant. Unfortunately, the children's books written by Jean de Brunhoff during the 1930s are far from innocent. Instead, the characters and plots mirror with astonishing accuracy the relationship between France and its colonies in Africa. Babar reflects the specific policies of the imperialists as well as the national sentiment towards the African natives. Babar was a product of its particular historical moment; only at that time could colonial relationships have been adapted successfully to the innocence of a children's book.

France acquired Algeria, its first African colony, in 1830 and continued to possess vast portions of the African continent until the aftermath of World War II led to the decolonization of the 1950s. During the 1930s France, among many other nations, was struggling to overcome the devastation of the global economic collapse. France began to rely on its colonies more for economic resurgence. During the inter-war period "the empire was a source of reassurance and pride" for the French. After its pyrrhic victory in the First World War, France had been in decline both militarily and economically. As explained by Maurice Larkin, the large areas of land and great population acquired by the empire allowed for a sense of pride. France itself may not have been exceedingly impressive in numbers, but citizens contented themselves that the population of the French Empire numbered 109 million, while that of the Germans amounted to a mere 76 million. Nearly a third of French imports in the late 1930s came from the colonies. Although this created a trade deficit to the colonies, the economic boost the resources supplied was undeniable. The movements of strong nationalism that swept through much of Europe during the 1930s added to the French pride in the colonies.

Babar reflects the French pride in its colonies through the cheerful manner in which it is written and the fortunate series of events. Other than the death of Babar's mother, which serves as a necessary step in getting Babar to the town, the stories are consistently light-hearted and pleasant. The outcomes are always positive and friendly. Basically, the stories reflect what many French thought or hoped life in the colonies
was like: the Europeans and Africans peacefully coexisting, both on the side of what is good and just. There is little suffering and if one were to rely upon the emotions of the characters, the Africa depicted in Babar could indeed be a source of pride to a non-critical reader. But we must be critical to see how Babar reflects colonial relationships in a positive and negative light.

The colonies allowed the French people more confidence in their nation, but they were in no way the focus of attention for the French mind. The political situation in France between the wars was chaotic and the extremes of fascism and communism were looming on the horizon. Rarely fewer than six parities were vying for political dominance. It was impossible to find a stable majority on which the French could rest an effective government. Surely this political chaos, and the developments in nearby European nations, was more prominent in the minds of French citizens. Thomas G. August explains: “as a program for the future, the new imperialism lacked the coherent and committed base of support characteristic of competing ideologies like laissez-faire liberalism and international socialism.” The French people found nothing to excite particular interest in the colonies and they settled into complacency, although the colonies were still perceived as a source of pride when France compared itself to competing nations. In this context Jean de Brunhoff created the stories of Babar the elephant.

It is this apathy which allowed for the creating and acceptance of the stories. The lack of concrete interest is what permits de Brunhoff to reduce colonial relationships to the innocence of children’s picture books. A typical Frenchman, de Brunhoff shared the national perception of the colonies: they were a great asset to France, but the events there were of no real significance. This mindset lets the relationships be simplified and glossed over.

The French pride created a desire to create an extension of France in its colonies that shaped imperial policy. To transform the colonies into extension of France required transporting to Africa civilization as defined by the French. Colonial relationships during the 1930s, when Babar was written, were modeled after the principle of a “mission to civilize.” The mission civilisatrice was the official ideology of the French empire under the Third Republic. The French considered themselves to be “materially and morally superior to the rest of the earth’s inhabitants.” This policy is similar to the concept of the “white man’s burden” an idea which held that it was the duty of Europeans to educate natives and to bring European society to whom they viewed as primitive African natives. The mission civilisatrice also revolved around a deep ethnocentrism. It assumed that the culture of Europe was superior to that of Africa. Many even perceived Africa as having a complete lack of culture. The mission civilisatrice was an indirect expression of assumed superiority.

This perception of European superiority created roles for Europeans and Africans in the colonies. As the “civilized superior” under the mission civilisatrice, the Europeans brought many elements of French society to Africa. They set up bureaucracies with administrative councils. They brought religion through missionaries and education. In Africa, the French were playing the role of parent to the role of child played by the Africans. Jean Suret-Canale explains that “the justification of the colonial system, which its creators presented to the world and even to themselves, was that it was applied to infant peoples, incapable and without personality.” He further illustrates that all aspects of African culture were regarded as “puerile and barbaric.” This perception played a large role in the development of specific policies created to define ways of bringing the mission civilisatrice to African colonies.

Robert Delavignette was a commandant in the French Colonial Service for twenty years and described his experiences in a book entitled Freedom and Authority in French West Africa. His description of colonial society demonstrates the parent-child mindset of the imperialists. He explains that the objectives of colonial society are “to free them [the Africans], educate them, care for them.” These same words could almost be used to describe the services of parents to their children. These goals clearly relate a parental role for the colonial. Delavignette goes on to illustrate that “what they [the French] loved in Africa was the possibility of applying their own civilization.” The French encountered the Africans and were eager to assume the superior role of a parent and impart French civilization to the Africans.

The relationship between Babar and the rich Old Lady clearly mirrors the perceived parent-child superiority of the French to the Africans. When Babar is lost and intimidated in the town, the rich Old Lady takes the elephant under her wing and treats him as her child. She is a kind, old woman who mothers Babar by clothing, feeding, educating and giving him whatever he wants. She achieves the imperial aims described by Delavignette. Her age clarifies that she is no girlfriend, but a parental figure on whom Babar remains dependent even after he “grows up” and leaves the house of the rich Old Lady.

The problem with Babar is that its depiction of the colonial relationship as that of a nurturing bond between a parent and a child is not always correct. The French did bring some good elements of French society, but they also refused to accept the original culture of the Africans as legitimate and equal. Suret-Canale explains that the negation of anything pre-colonial was inherent in the colonial system. The French were heavily biased on a cultural basis. They attempted to force
leads us to believe that the elephants have a very primitive society. The town is a complete opposite. The town is clearly a center for culture, and it is here where Babar is educated and assimilated.

After World War I the colonialists changed their official policy from assimilation to association. This method required that members of the African elite be consulted in all matters that directly affected them. This policy lead the Africans to believe they held some power, when, in fact, African councils were “purely administrative concerns and had no legislative functions.”11 One of the main goals of the new ideology was to create a place in French society for the educated African and to pave the way for future education.

Association was the policy towards Africa during the time that Babar was written and there are inescapable similarities between the official policy and the story. For example, Babar attains the position of chief of the elephants, but only after he has been civilized. He achieves power as the one who has lived with the Europeans and learned their way of life. Babar embodies the educated and civilized African who is given a modicum of power and is supposed to pass on his civilized nature to others. Babar has indeed been so taken in by human society that he now instinctively passes it on to other elephants. In the story, when Arthur and Celeste appear in the town, Babar immediately takes them to get clothes. Babar has been so successfully seduced by the life of humans, that they can now rely on him to proselytize for them, rather than “civilizing” any more elephants themselves.

As the product of the parent-child relationship, Babar has grown up. He has abandoned the barbaric tradition of living nakedly and is now educated and civilized enough to return to the elephants and lead them. Under the guidance of the rich Old Lady Babar has learned to act like a human, and therefore an adult. He has abandoned the practices that could be perceived as childlike, such as wearing no clothing, and adopted the manner of a civilized European or “adult” by dressing properly, attaining a liberal education, and bringing European civilization to the other elephants, just as the rich Old Lady brought it to him.

The French pride and the arrogance of the mission civilisatrice is distinctly visible a the end of the third Babar book by Jean de Brunhoff. The elephants have build Celesteville, a town with European buildings and European institutions such as a Bureau of Industry. Babar declares a holiday on an upcoming Sunday and the resulting ceremony is distressing. All the elephants march around in fashionable clothing in a garden that is unmistakably a replica of the palace at Versailles. The use of only French symbols further displays the French ethnocentrism. Down to the matching fountains Versailles and Celesteville, it is clear that the feelings of cultural superiority derive from notions of the
grandeur of French culture, not simply that of Europe. Babar is clearly exhibiting the national sentiments prevalent at the time it was written. Beyond the widespread assumption that European civilization is superior, Babar shows the French mentality that even within Europe, the French possessed the best of high culture.

The stories of Babar are really a historical phenomenon. The books capture so much of what was going on in France, in the colonies in Africa, and in the French mentality and reflect it all very innocently in a child's story about elephants. Babar contains in the simple plot and colorful illustrations a manifestation of French prejudices towards Africans, as well as the French notions of France in the 1930s. Complicated imperial social policy is contained in a few twists in the plot. Babar is indeed a product of its historical moment when the French were complacent enough and proud enough to allow for its creation. Babar is a remarkable text, both for its appeal to children, and its ability to include so much history in such an unaffected story.

ENDNOTES


2. Larkin 1997, p. 32.

3. ibid., p. 34.


8. ibid., p. 21.


10. ibid., p. 247.

THE DEMONIZATION OF JEWS

ADAM MARSHAK

Christian clerical society, during the crusading years (1100-1400 c.e.), actively marginalized and demonized the Jews of Europe. To accomplish these tasks, clerics used several stock images of Jews such as blasphemers and sorcerers. Certain images, such as the Jewish usurer, appear in almost every type of clerical writing from letters to chronicles. Others, however, in which Jews are depicted as ritual murderers, exist in only a few limited writings. The stereotypes that occur almost universally are those that can trace their origins to the Bible. The others, however, rely more upon popular culture, and are thus limited in their use. Further, the presentation of Jewish stock images correlated with the motive of the writer. The three major goals that clerical writers hoped to achieve through demonizing Jews were to stop Jewish harm toward Christians, to halt blasphemy and to check intermingling between the two religions. All the writings vilifying Jews show examples of these three objectives and sometimes a combination of the three.

Before continuing it is useful to lay out a few underlying assumptions. First, this paper will discuss primarily clerical writings. Monarchs and nobles did write and think about the Jewish question a great deal. However, the majority of written material on the Jews is clerical. Second, I will be primarily discussing the experiences of the Ashkenazic Jews living in France and the Holy Roman Empire. Although Jews did live in other areas, there was an especially substantial Jewish population living in Spain. France and the Empire contain a relative wealth of translated evidence concerning the Jews. Thus, I have limited this paper to these geographic areas. Third, although I am not discussing England in depth, I will be using certain texts from English sources. This is because they are the only ones available in English translation.

Finally, I should stress that Christian clerics did not always concur with the negative Jewish stereotypes and what resulted from the propagation of these images. Most clerics did believe that Jews were usurers and blasphemers. However they did not generally believe the stories of ritual murder and host desecration. Indeed, the papacy quite rigorously attempted to clear the Jews of blood libel charges. Further, monks such as Bernard of Clairvaux and even Peter the Venerable argued that Christians were not to harm Jews because it was not God’s wish. These instances of clerical assistance, however, were quite rare and did not
outweigh the heavily anti-Jewish clerical propaganda circulating in Latin Christendom during the crusading years.

One of the most prevalent of Jewish stock images was that of the Jew as a pernicious usurer. When the Ashkenazic Jews moved into Western Europe during the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, some became farmers. Most, however, became merchants. These Jews were seeking to benefit from the recent economic boom in Northern Europe. Nevertheless, by the middle of the twelfth century, money-lending had replaced commerce as the primary Jewish occupation.

This shift to money-lending occurred for a variety of reasons. For example, money-lending in the high Middle Ages was a very lucrative profession. The rise in the money economy in Northern Europe that began after 1000 and dramatically increased in the twelfth century led to a greater need for money and capital by the aristocracy and burgeoning commercial class. These groups were launching larger economic endeavors, raising bigger armies and building more grand and expensive projects. In addition, the discovery of previously untapped silver deposits in Germany during the mid-12th century increased the circulation of coinage.

Simultaneously, the Church began to reform itself. The Papacy, concerned with the many abuses of Church doctrine, took measures to eliminate them. One of the many reforms the Church made was to strengthen its condemnation of Christians exacting usury from other Christians. The Biblical basis for this censure came from a passage in Deuteronomy 23:20 which states, “On loans to foreigners you may charge interest, but on loans to another Israelite you may not charge interest.” Because one could exact usury from a stranger, this law did not prohibit Jews from taking usury. Thus, Jews moved in to fill a void created by more stringent papal laws. A second reason why Jews became money-lenders is that social realities began to make it increasingly difficult for Jews to engage in other economic endeavors. Because Jews could not effectively secure land they owned from attack, it was not a viable economic option.

Jews relied on usury for economic survival, and this dependence engendered hostility from all levels of society, from the debtor who was the cleric. Because of this hostility, the Papacy wrote many letters emphasizing the evil of Jewish usury. One of the most powerful of popes was Innocent III who reigned from 1198 until 1217. Innocent was very concerned with usury in Latin Christendom, especially in France. Indeed, he wrote to the French King Philip Augustus saying that the Jews had become increasingly contemptuous of Christian authority mostly because of their “vicious usury through which they extort not only usury but even usury upon usury.” Innocent complained that, because of this awful practice, debtors were giving Church property to the Jews as collateral and interest, thus Jewish unbelievers came into possession of holy items.

Not only did Innocent see Jewish usury as a way for heretic Jews to gain possession of Christian holy items, but he also saw it as a way for Jews to oppress their Christian neighbors who theoretically were higher in the social hierarchy than them. According to the Pope, Jewish money-lenders subjected Christian debtors to awful payment conditions in which the Jews “after seizing the pledges and casting these Christians into prison, compel them to pay most exorbitant usury. Thus are widows and orphans robbed of their inheritance.” This situation was completely intolerable to Innocent, and therefore one of his major goals in the Fourth Lateran Council was to moderate Jewish usury. Indeed, Title LXVII stated that “The more the Christian religion is oppressed by the exaction of usury, the more grievously does the Jewish disbelief batten on it, in such wise [sic] that in a short time they exhaust Christian resources.” Therefore, the papal synod ruled, “If henceforth a Jew, under any pretext, extort heavy and immoderate usury from a Christian, all relationship with Christians shall be denied him until he shall have made sufficient amends for his exorbitant exactions.” The title further called on all Christian princes to comply with the ruling and rigorously enforce it.

Although the papacy had made exorbitant Jewish usury unlawful and strongly condemned collecting interest in general, its ruling was not always followed. First, the term “heavy and immoderate usury” was an ambiguous term that was not clearly defined. Furthermore, many European monarchs had a history of close association with Jewish moneylending and protecting the Jewish usury when it suited them. For example, Innocent III wrote to the Count of Nevers complaining of the close alliance that Jewish money-lenders had with local rulers. He decried the rulers’ practice of “receiving Jews into their villages and towns so that they [the princes] appoint them [the Jews] their agents for the collection of usury.”

The motive of protecting Christians from harm, either by indebtedness to Jews or by Jews financially ruining Christian debtors, largely fueled clerical and ultimately royal opposition to Jewish usury. Most clerics saw usury as a sin because the Bible prohibited it. Therefore the Jewish practice of it was further proof of Jewish perfidy. A Jewish polemic, by Rabbi Lippman, shows that some clerics used Psalm 15 that states that those who “lend money at interest” shall never enter heaven, to further condemn Jewish usury. Further, the clerics perceived real damage to Christian debtors who had to give all or much of their wealth
to Jewish money-lenders. Thus, it was the desire to protect Christians from the evil designs of Jewish usurers that led many clerics to write vehemently against Jewish usury and to declare it a sin. These writings and the beliefs behind them led to the Fourth Lateran Council rulings and finally the ultimate disassociation of the ruling elites such as the French monarchy from Jewish usury as the thirteenth century progressed. The majority of these clerical writing about usury, however, were limited to papal bulls and high ecclesiastical writings. It would seem, that clerics such as friars and priests had other more pressing concerns.

Usury was not the only Biblical stereotype common among all kinds of clerical writings. The association of Jews with blasphemy began in the canonical gospels, and continued spreading throughout Christendom until it became another fairly common archetype. Indeed, this trope is by far the most common of all the Jewish stereotypes that appear in the crusading years. The origin of this image is in the passion of Jesus. In the story, the Jews, denying the divinity of Jesus, plot with the Romans to kill him. The Jews thus denied the nature of Jesus’ divinity, and therefore forced to walk the earth in perpetual slavery until they came to their senses. For example, Peter the Venerable’s letter to King Louis VII describes the Jews as “wretched blasphemers far worse than the Saracens...[who] since they spilled the blood of Christ...are enslaved, afflicted, anxious, suffering and wanderers on the earth, until, according to the prophet, the miserable remnants of this people, when the fullness of the nations is realized will be converted to God.”

Further, as the Medievalist Jeremy Cohen observes, Peter states in his Adversus Judeorum, that because the Jews reject the logic of Jesus’ divinity, they are more like animals than human beings. Only infidel animals could not see the divinity of Jesus and the predictions of his coming in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, even dumb animals such as dogs could recognize the holiness of Jesus. For example, one of the friars’ exemples told of a Jew who tried to feed his dog a consecrated host. Host desecration is a subject that will be discussed in more detail later, but this story also serves to show the comparison Christian friars made between Jews and animals. The Jew starved his dog so that it would eat anything. However, when the Jew threw the consecrated host to the dog, the dog refused to eat it. The implication was clear to any medieval audience. Even a dumb animal “untaught by the holy church” understood what the Jew did not.

Not only were the Jews blasphemers who killed Jesus, but, according to many friars’ exemples, papal missals and monks’ letters, they also tried to actively convert Christians to their “heathen” faith. For example, Saint Raymond of Penaforde wrote in the Summa de Poenitentia et

Matrimonio, that Christians ought not to eat or converse with Jews socially because, “The Jews through abuse of Scriptures and their contempt for our food impugn more deeply our faith.”

Penaforde also organized papal decrees in his treatise, The Decretales. In this work, he wrote that the Pope prohibited Jews from owning Christians for two reasons. The first was because “it is abominable that a blasphemer of Christ hold in the chains of servitude one whom the Lord Christ has redeemed.” Slavery was not illegal, but any unredeemed person holding a redeemed soul in captivity would be a reversal of the “natural” social hierarchy, and thus papal decrees forbade it. The second reason for prohibiting Jews holding Christians in slavery was that they might try to convert their slaves. This concern applied equally to Christian servants. The Church did not want the Jews “to attract the simple to the Jewish superstition in any way.” For this reason, the Papacy prohibited Christians from serving as midwives or nurses for Jews and vice versa. The feeling was that if a Christian woman acted as a nurse for Jews, the Jews would attempt to convert her. Additionally, if a Jew acted as a nurse for a Christian family, she would somehow contaminate the child. Indeed, Pope Clement IV, in his bull Turbato corde, ordered that rulers should severely punish Jews caught converting Christians or attempting to do so.

This fear that Jews and Christians would intermingle led the Fourth Lateran Council to require Jews to wear distinctive garb. The council worried that because Jews had previously been able to wear non-distinctive clothing, Christians might not be able to distinguish a Jew, and thus would fall victim to Jewish cunning. The deceived Christian might, as a result of the Jews’ cunning, convert or, worse still, have sexual or other intimate relations with the Jews.

Ecclesiastical authorities were also concerned with Jews openly insulting Christianity and Christ. Thus, as Penaforde’s Decretales stated, ecclesiastical authorities “must especially forbid anyone to break forth into insults against the Creator.” Therefore, as Pope Alexander III ruled, the Jews had to keep their doors and windows closed for the duration of Christian holidays. The Fourth Lateran Council further reinforced this decree when they ruled:

On the days of lamentation, however, and of the Passion of the Lord, let them [Jews] not appear at all in public, for this reason, that some among them (as we hear) on such days are not ashamed to step forth in more than their usual elegance and do not fear to make game of the Christians who exhibit their memory of the most sacred passion, and show forth signs of lamentation.
Moreover, Christian authorities not only feared blasphemy and possible conversion, but also actual violence against Christianity, its rituals and its images. According to Alexander of Hales’ Summa Theologica, the Jews “blaspheme against Christ and against the Blessed Virgin; they take revenge on the Catholic faith; they do injury to the sacraments and to ecclesiastics.” For example, Innocent III in his letter to the Bishop of Sens and the Bishop of Paris wrote that the “Jews make Christian women nurses for their children ... and whenever it happens that on the day of the Lord’s Resurrection they [the nurses] take in the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Jews make these women pour their milk into the latrine for three days before they again give suck to the children.”

The descriptions of Jews attacking Christian doctrine and its images varied with the narrators’ level in the Church hierarchy. The local clerics and mendicant friars often provided ordinary and local examples. On the other hand, the Pope and his Curia were more likely to be vague or general in their depictions. An example of a high ecclesiastic statement about Jews attacking Christian doctrine includes a belief that Jews claimed Jesus was a rustic not worthy of worship when Church doctrine believed quite the opposite.

In Innocent III’s January 16, 1205 letter to King Philip Augustus, he decries the Jewish claim that Jesus was an illiterate peasant hung by the Jews. Although Innocent does acknowledge that the Jews crucified Jesus, he claimed that Christ was not “a peasant either in manners or in race. Forsooth, they [the Jews] cannot deny that physically He was descended from priestly and royal stock and that His manners were distinguished and proper.” The papacy also faulted the Talmud for the same reason. For example, Pope Alexander IV, in a letter to the Duke of Burgundy on September 3, 1257, ordered the duke to confiscate and burn the Talmud because it contained “errors against the Catholic faith and horrible and intolerable blasphemies against our Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Virgin Mary.”

Mendicant friars also described Jewish attacks on Christian doctrine and its images. For example, in a tale called “A Jew in Church,” that appeared in Jacobus de Vorgagine’s The Golden Legend, a Jew found himself alone in a church. He saw a picture of Jesus and “cut the throat of the image with his sword,” to show the great resentment he felt towards Christianity. The image then started to bleed, and the blood covered the Jew (an allusion to the Jews’ blood guilt over killing Jesus). The Jew fled the church. When a Christian discovered him all covered with blood, the Jew confessed his deed and converted.

Another exemplum further illustrates this myth. In this tale, “Jews Attack a Christian’s Crucifix,” a Christian accidentally loses his crucifix when moving out of a house. The landlord finds it and brings it around town to show the other Jews. They beat him thinking he is a Christian and then turn their attention to the cross. The Jews then state, “Here is an image of that Jesus that our fathers killed.” They then took the image and beat it with scourges, stomped on it, crowned it with thorns and finally crucified it. As a last insult, one of the Jews took a spear and pierced the side of the image, whereupon it began to bleed. The Jews were so amazed that they took the image to the bishop, and he used it to perform many miracles. Although these exempla highlight the miracles that Christ and his image can perform, they also added to the growing belief among clergy and layman that Jews, as a group, desecrated images of Jesus.

During the early crusading years, the stereotype of Jews as blasphemers, although vicious, was relatively mild compared to the new trope that appeared in the 13th century. This new archetype took that role one step further. Instead of merely speaking out against Jesus, Jews actively attacked Christ through one of the most important aspects of Christianity: the sacrament of the Eucharist. These attacks were intended to reenact their ancestors’ deicide. Mendicant friars seemed to be much more concerned with this issue than high ecclesiastics. This difference might indicate, as Robert Chazin has asserted, the general populace’s belief and concern about host desecration. Further proofs of this hypothesis may be the numerous stories about host desecration that appeared in preachers’ sermons. Often in these stories, Jews, wishing to reenact the crucifixion and show their contempt for Christianity, stole a host and desecrated it. They often spat on it, urinated on, or, at worst, pierced it with sharp objects reminiscent of nails.

For example in the sermon story, “Parisian Jews Bloody the Host,” a Jew pretended to be a Christian to receive the host. “He received the body of Christ but kept it in his mouth until he got home.” He called his Jewish friends over, and, “one of the Jews present pierced the Host with his knife. At that the Host let out so much blood that the Jews were astounded.” The Jews tried to stop the bleeding by throwing the Host in boiling water, but it did not work. The Host only stopped bleeding after a priest, who came when he saw the blood running in the streets, consecrated it.

Christians also often claimed that Jewish desecration was intended to show the fallacy of the Christian religion, and one way to accomplish this was by attacking one of the holy sacraments. For example, in the English sermon story, “An Easter Miracle of the Host Converts the Jews,” the Jews accost a Christian clerk who has just taken communion. They ask him where he has been, and he replies that he has been at church and “received the Lord Jesus Christ, who made both you and me.” They then ask him, “Tell us in what part of your body you have
put him [Jesus]? When he replies that Jesus is in his soul they cut out his heart to find the host. The clerk's heart, however, leaps from their hands, splits open and reveals a little baby Jesus. When the Christians finish Mass and come into the square they see the heart and the baby who promptly becomes a boy. The boy rises from the heart and states, "I am the living Host who came from heaven. Who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him." The heart then goes back into the clerk's body, and he comes back to life. After seeing this, the Jews convert and receive baptism. In this story, the Jews tried to prove the fallacy of the Host and transubstantiation, but instead ended up believing in Christ.

The idea that Jews desecrated hosts was so pervasive in Christian society that city councils started passing laws forbidding Jews from being out at the same time as the Host procession. For example, in 1267 the Council of Vienna decreed that Jews must go into their homes when they heard the bell ring announcing the host's procession through the streets, so that "The murderers of Christ might not come near the 'body of the Lord.'"

A final rationale for host desecration was a simple malevolent attack on Christianity. This is shown in the exemplum titled, "A Jew Tests the Power of the Host with Pigs." In this tale, a Jew cunningly persuades his Christian friend to bring him a host so he can "adore it and believe in it." However, when his friend leaves, the Jew throws it into his pig trough. The pigs refuse to come near the host, and the Jew is so awed that he immediately pulls the host from the trough, washes it and adores it. He then converts.

Clerical spreading of the stereotype of Jewish blasphemy served all three motives. By officially portraying Jews as blasphemers and sinners in error, the papacy and other ecclesiastical authorities effectively limited the acceptance of Jewish ideas. Furthermore, mendicant friars and local clerics who associated Jewish ritual with a practice repugnant to Christians, host desecration, made Jewish doctrine just as repugnant. The motive of stopping Jewish harm to Christians was achieved in a similar way. The more ecclesiastical authorities distanced the Jews from the norm and from traditional society, the less likely Christians were to trust them, and thus be susceptible to Jewish trickery and cunning. Finally, if Christians all believed that Jewish rituals were disgusting, they would not interact with Jews. Additionally, the papacy effectively limited Jewish involvement and thus possible perversion of Christian host and passion rituals. The stereotype of Jews as host desecrators is an intriguing one because unlike the more general image of blasphemer, it had no biblical origin.

Akin to the image of Jews as blasphemers, the other popular image of Jews is as servants of the devil and as sorcerers. Christianity has often associated Jews with the devil and the Anti-Christ. Indeed, the myth of the Anti-Christ is closely linked to Jews. According to the popular legend, the Antichrist would be the son of a Jewish harlot and the devil. As Hildegard of Bingen wrote in the Scivias, "This worthless deceiver will be cast forth into the world from a mother who had been nourished from girlhood until young womanhood with the crafts of the devil." She added, "She will be full of faults and full of despair and live among the most abominable people." Common legend believed that these "abominable people" were the Jews. According to the legend, Satan would persuade the Antichrist's mother to enter a brothel where "she will secretly contrive the most wanton villainy of fornication, and she will pollute herself with several men of great baseness."

Because of their close association with Satan and Satan's close connection with magic, Christian society also saw Jews as sorcerers. According to Joshua Trachtenberg, the image of the Jewish sorcerer had its origins in the Hellenistic tradition that associated Hebrew and the mystical names commonly linked to Judaism with magic. Indeed, Judaism had many figures that Greeks associated with magic; for example, Joseph, the master of dream interpretation and even Moses who performed many miracles that one might consider magic. In this myth, Solomon was the king of magicians who had dominion over devil and demons whom he used for magical purposes. This myth was so widespread in the Middle Ages that an amulet's authenticity could be solely based on Solomon's having made it. Hebrew was also perceived as the language of magic. This perception occurred partially because of Jewish belief that it was the only language angels understood. According to Trachtenberg, medieval writers thought that the Hebrew was a language of sorcery because of its exotic and generally unintelligible qualities.

These myths were so popular that they found their way into friars' tales. For example, in the friar's tale often used in sermons, "Theophilus, a Jew and the Devil," Theophilus, a chancellor to a bishop seeks assistance from a Jewish sorcerer so that he can get his job back. The sorcerer uses the devil to cast a spell and restore Theophilus to his former position. Although Theophilus eventually forsakes the devil and his Jewish servant's sorcery, the exemplum reinforces the image of the demonic Jewish sorcerer. Indeed, city councils even started passing ordinances regulating Jewish wizardry. The Provincial Council of Béziers, for example, on May 6, 1255, ordered Jews to stop performing witchcraft.
Because of their association with magic, ecclesiastics and the populace often accused Jews of being malevolent witches or warlocks. For this reason, Jews often could not attend important events for fear that they would curse the occasion. For example, when the monk William of Newburgh described the events of Richard I of England’s coronation, he commented that Richard prohibited the Jews from attending because of his belief that their presence would curse the event. As servants of the devil, their “evil eyes” would cause harm and injury to those present.  

Another sign of the Jews malevolence was the idea that Jews actively sought to poison Christians. This belief first manifested itself as an accusation against Jewish doctors, especially physicians to Christian rulers. Although the Church and local councils frowned on and to some extent even prohibited the use of Jewish doctors, people still came to them. For example, although Edward I of England expelled the Jews in 1290, his son, Edward II granted a Jewish doctor the right to enter the country. Later, Henry IV brought two Jewish doctors from Italy to his court. The risk to these doctors was great, however. Because medicine in the Middle Ages was not the most exact of sciences, doctors often could not prevent their patients from dying. When this happened and the doctor was Jewish, court officials often accused him of poisoning the ruler. This happened to the doctors of the Holy Roman Emperors Caroloman and Charles the Bald and the doctor of Hugh Capet.

A related charge that was more serious, because it affected more Jews, was that Jews tried to poison their Christian neighbors. This charge became a critical problem during the Black Death that plagued Europe from 1347 until around 1400. The plague killed over one-third of Europe’s population. Christian society, faced with a disease they could not explain, attempted to find a scapegoat. The Jews were an obvious choice. Along with Saracens, lepers and other minorities, Jews found themselves charged with deliberately poisoning wells. The first charge of well poisoning occurred earlier in 1321 in Aquitaine. It began with an accusation against the lepers of Aquitaine. One of the lepers implicated a rich Jew while under torture, and King Philip V forced the rich Jews, who had not fled into exile, to pay a fine of 150,000 pounds.

When the Black Death hit, in 1347, Christian society found the need to explain this awful pestilence. Jews instantly became a logical scapegoat for the suffering caused by the plague. Indeed, according to Gilles il Muisis, Abbot of St. Giles and Tournai in his Chronicle, in 1349, because of the plague, “Everywhere it was rumored that the Jews were trying to destroy Christians by putting poison in springs, wells and rivers.” The proofs for these accusations were bags of poison found near water supplies, Jewish confessions under torture, and testimony from Jews, lepers and Christian witnesses. For example, the chronicle of the Franciscan friar from Franconia, Herman Gigas stated, “Bags full of poison were found in many wells and springs.” Because of this, Gigas reported, “God, the lord of vengeance, has not suffered the malice of the Jews to go unpunished. Throughout Germany, in all but a few places, they were burnt ... [Christians] will never abandon until the whole Jewish race has been destroyed.”

When city officials arrested suspected Jews and tortured them, the Jews usually confessed to poisoning the wells. For example, according to the examination of Jews captured in Savoy, Balavigny, a Jewish surgeon who lived at Thonon was arrested and tortured. He soon confessed to receiving a bag of poison from a Rabbi Jacob of Toledo. In addition he received a note instructing him to place the poison in the large public well. Balavigny further confessed that the note reported similar orders and instances in various other towns across Europe. He also saw similar letters addressed to towns all over France. Balavigny further implicated the rabbis of the town by stating that they “had instructed him and other Jews not to drink water for nine days after poison had been put in it.” He also stated that “as soon as he had put poison in the spring he immediately warned other Jews.” Christian officials in Savoy arrested other Jews like Balavigny, tortured them and procured similar confessions. For instance, according to another confession from Mansos, a Jew of Villeneuve on September 15, 1348, “All the Jews round about Évian held a meeting before Pentecost to discuss the poisoning.” He added, “None of the Jews can acquit themselves of the charges, because they were all in it together and are guilty.” Situations such as the one in Savoy occurred all over Europe. Although Pope Clement VI (1342-1352) tried to exonerate the Jews by issuing a papal bull condemning the well poisoning accusations, many Christians did not listen.

Well poisoning was part of a larger malevolent image of the Jew that began to appear in the mid-twelfth century. This image was of the Jew as a sinister servant of the devil who killed Christians. No level of Christian society seemed immune to this belief as even Pope Innocent III believed it. For example, in his January 16, 1205 letter to King Philip Augustus, Innocent wrote, “The Jews, likewise abuse the royal patience and, when they remain living among Christians, they take advantage of every wicked opportunity to kill in secret their Christian hosts. Thus, it has recently been reported that a certain poor scholar had been found murdered in their latrine.” This was not an isolated incident. According to Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn, in the years from 1171-1196, in Germany alone, at least five other instances, occurred in which
Christians accused Jews of murdering innocent Christians. For example, Efrain reported that in Speyer in 1196, "A Gentile woman was found murdered about three miles from the city of Speyer. The Gentiles became excited... circulating a rumor that the Jews had murdered her." In response to the woman's murder, the Christians disinterred the body of the daughter of Rabbi Isaac ben Asher ha-Levi and hung it in the marketplace. The next day, the burghers killed the Rabbi and eight other Jews. In another instance, the Annals Heribolenses, the annals of Wurzburg, described an event in 1147 when citizens found a Christian man cut into many pieces. In response, crusaders and townspeople, "Seized by a frenzy, invaded the homes of the Jews and assaulted them, killing indiscriminately old men and young, women and children, without pause and without mercy." 

Although Christian society's belief that Jews murdered Christians really began spreading in the twelfth century, clerics added an even more sinister dimension in 1235, namely the notions of ritual murder and blood libel. In this image, Jews murdered innocent Christian youths and used their blood for various purposes such as curing their blood ailments. Many Christians in the Middle Ages believed that the Jewish males menstruated like women as punishment for their killing of Christ. For example, in the friar's sermon tale, "Jews Attempt to Rebuild Jerusalem," the Jews return to Jerusalem. On the first day they find many crosses on the ground and therefore leave. On the second day, "Their clothes became spotted full of crosses of red blood." This was an allusion to the murder of Christ on the cross, and the monthly menstruation they underwent as punishment. This relationship between blood and the Jews was also discussed by the monk Thomas of Monmouth. According to Thomas, the Jews murdered a Christian boy so that they might use his blood to free themselves from their perpetual servitude. Thomas supposedly heard this from a Jewish convert named Theobald whom he never actually met. The notion of ritual murder without specific mention of the Jews' use for the blood is first made by Philip Augustus' biographer, Rigord of St. Denis. He described the royal arrest of the Jews in 1180 as a punishment for the Jews' nefarious deeds on Easter when they "murdered a Christian in contempt of the Christian faith, seemingly as a sacrifice." The two most famous stories of ritual murder and blood libel, however, come from England; the Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich and the Historia Major.

William of Norwich was a skinner's apprentice who disappeared in 1144 after a Jew posing as a Christian allegedly took the boy to do work for him. William's mutilated body was found shortly afterwards in the forest. At first, only William's family accused the Jews. However, five years later, Thomas arrived in Norwich, became interested in the story and wrote William's life in an attempt to persuade the papacy to canonize William. Thomas' book is the first real indictment of the Jews of Norwich. According to Thomas, the Jews of Norwich decided to take William and use him for their evil purposes. The Jews hired a man to persuade William's mother to send William off with him. The man offered money "as the price of the innocent's service, or rather in truth as the price of his blood." The Jews eventually got William into their clutches and soon, on the first day of Passover, they seized the boy and tied him up. Then, "having shaved his head, they stabbed it with countless thorn-points, and made the blood come horribly from the wounds they made." According to Thomas, they were not finished:

And thus, while these enemies of the Christian name were rioting in the spirit of malignity around the boy, some of those present adjudged him to be fixed on the cross in mockery of the Lord's passion, as though they would say 'Even as we condemned the Christ to a shameful death, so let us also condemn this Christian, so that, uniting the Lord and his servant in a like punishment, we may retort upon themselves the pain of that reproach which they impute to us.'

The Jews then crucified William and "inflicted a frightful wound in his left side, reaching even to his inmost heart, and far as it was in their power. And since many streams of blood were running down from all parts of his body, then, to stop the blood and to wash and close the wounds, they poured boiling water over him." According to Thomas, the Jews reenacted the crucifixion and murdered the boy to show their contempt and hatred for Christianity and to free themselves from the slavery incurred for crucifying Jesus. The blood was thus symbolic of both the Passover and the crucifixion. Therefore, it played a central role in William's death.

William's death was not the only one blamed on the Jews. In 1255, an eight-year-old boy named Hugh died, although it was not clear at the time by what means. Matthew Paris, the chronicler of Hugh's life, however, decided that the Jews had killed him. In his chronicle, Historia Major, Paris wrote that the Jews of Lincoln kidnapped Hugh on the feast of Peter and Paul (July 27, 1255). After they kidnapped him, they shut him in a secret chamber where they fed him for a few days. Then they summoned a representative from each city in Europe and presented their "sacrifice." After which the Jews, according to Paris, tormented Hugh, calling him Jesus and reenacting the passion. They "scourged him till the blood flowed, they crowned him with thorns, mocked him
and spat upon him; each of them also pierced him with a knife, and they made him drink gall."84 After they had crucified and killed Hugh, the Jews disemboweled him and used his innards for magical purposes. After Hugh's mother and the town bailiff found the body, they immediately suspected the Jews because "We have heard sometimes that Jews have dared to attempt such things [murder of little boys] in insult to our crucified Lord Jesus Christ."85

When the town bailiff arrested the owner of the house, whose name was Copin, he confessed that, "Almost every year, the Jews crucify a boy in injury and insult to Jesus."86 Copin added, "Nearly all the Jews in England agreed to the death of this boy [Hugh], and from nearly every English city where Jews live some were chosen to be present at this sacrifice as a Paschal offering."87 The Jews thus killed Hugh as a Passover sacrifice, and the Jews used his blood and organs for magic. During the crusading period, many negative images of the Jews circulated throughout Latin Christendom, especially in France and Germany. Although some clerics such as Bernard of Clairvaux and even some of the popes tried to halt the violence that came out of the circulation of these archetypes, most clerics actively supported the demonization of Jews. The major stereotypes of the Jews were: Jews as atrocious usurers, Jews as blasphemers and host desecrators and Jews as demonic sorcerers who ritually slaughtered innocent Christian youths. The first two general portrayals, Jews as usurers and blasphemers, received more attention, and the clerical hierarchy at all levels more readily believed and propagated them. This may be because these two representations have Biblical roots as well as greater likelihood of accuracy. The other images, while more sinister were not as widely believed. Indeed, the papacy and often some clerics condemned many of these charges of host desecration, ritual murder and blood libel. All of these stereotypes, however, did advance three major motives of Medieval Christianity: stopping Jewish attacks on Christianity, both physical and religious, stopping Jewish blasphemy and avoiding religious intermingling. By effectively portraying the Jews as a demonic, malevolent other, Christian clerics effectively promoted their goals and helped create a society in which Jews often found themselves with nobody to help them.

ENDNOTES

1. Pope Innocent IV wrote, in an updated version of Constitutio pro Judaeis in 1247, "Nor shall anyone accuse them [Jews] of using Christian blood in their religious rites, since in the Old Testament they are instructed not to use blood of any kind, let alone human blood... We, by authority of these letters, strictly forbid the recurrence of such an occurrence in the future." Robert Chazin, Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 99

2. ibid., pp. 43-44 & 49.

3. ibid., p. 22.

4. ibid., p. 23.


19. ibid., p. 28.
20. ibid., p. 31.
22. ibid., p. 235.
23. ibid., p. 34.
24. ibid., p. 30.
27. ibid., p. 32.
28. ibid., p. 173.
29. ibid., p. 177.


31. ibid., pp. 221-222.


33. ibid., p. 213.
34. Chazin 1997, pp. 71-72
35. ibid., p. 82.

37. “Parisian Jews Bloody the Host” found in a preacher’s manual at Cambridge Trinity College Library in Gregg 1997, p. 222.

38. ibid.
39. ibid.


41. ibid.
42. ibid.
43. ibid., pp. 223-224.
44. Trachtenberg 1943, p. 113.

46. These stories are especially interesting considering that Jews consider pigs to be unclean.

47. ibid.

50. ibid.
51. Trachtenberg 1943, p. 35.
52. Hildegard of Bingen 1986, p. 353.
53. ibid., pp. 57-58.
54. ibid., p. 63.

56. Trachtenberg 1943, p. 68.

62. ibid.
63. “Strassburg Urkundenbuch” in ibid., p. 212.
64. ibid., p. 213.
65. ibid.
66. ibid., pp. 214-223.
67. ibid., p. 215.
68. ibid.

69. Clement responded to the massacre of the Jews by reissuing Sicut Judeis on July 5, 1348. It read, in part, “We have taken the Jews under the shield of our protection, ordering among the rest that no Christian presume in any wise to wound or to kill those same Jewish persons, or take their money or expel them from his service before the term of employment has expired... Anyone who, knowing of these commands, still dares to do the contrary, shall lose his title or office, or suffer the ultimate penalty of excommunication.” ibid., p. 221.

71. Chazin 1997, pp. 54-56.
73. ibid.
77. Thomas of Monmouth The Life and Miracles of Saint William of Norwich
Augustus Jessopp and Montague Rhodes James ed. (London: Cambridge
University Press, 1896) p. 93.
78 Chazin 1997, p. 53.
80. ibid., pp. 19-21.
81. ibid., p. 21.
82. ibid., pp. 21-22.
83. Joseph Jacobs “Little St. Hugh of Lincoln: Researches in History, Archae-
ology, and Legend” in Alan Dundes ed. Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in
43-44. This story originally appeared in Matthew Paris Historia Major ed.
Laurd (Rolls Series) 5:516-518, 522, 543.
84. ibid., p. 44
85. ibid.
86. ibid., pp. 44-45.
87. ibid., p. 45.