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EDITORS' NOTE

Now in its twentieth volume, Herodotus celebrates its two-decade anniversary as Stanford University's student-run history journal. It highlights the scholastic achievement, intellectual passion, and broad range of academic interests represented among undergraduate students in the Department of History. While we received many outstanding submissions for this year's edition, the following five essays stood out in their creativity, attention to detail, originality, and insightful historical analysis.

We thank Margo Richardson and Monica Wheeler whose guidance and enthusiasm helped make this project a reality. We also acknowledge the Carl F. Brand Fund for its generous financial support, without which Herodotus would not be possible.

As always, we encourage feedback and questions about this year's volume and the journal in general. Please address comments to the Department of History staff.
FROM MODERATION TO CONFRONTATION: 
AFRICAN RESPONSES TO THE NATIVES LAND ACT OF 1913

STEPHEN HAYES

In 1913 the government of the Union of South Africa signed into existence a transformative piece of legislation called the Natives Land Act. With the stroke of a pen, African peasants lost the legal right to own land in the country of their birth. At the same time, the policies of the Act forced them into unequal relationships of servitude with neighboring white landowners. This paper traces the historical, economic, and social factors that converged in the passage of the Natives Land Act, before focusing specifically on African resistance to the legislation. African protests took place on two main levels. First, “elite” educated Africans responded by protesting through young political organizations. Second, African farmers, who faced the repercussions of the Act almost immediately, responded with more direct kinds of action. These forms of resistance held long-term implications, giving birth to new political movements and reinforcing the idea that collective African anger was a force to be reckoned with.

In November 1913, Johannes Pale’s way of life came to an abrupt end. After years of working as a sharecropper on the Vlaktkuil farm, the white owner of the property informed Johannes that under the terms of the recently passed Natives Land Act, he would not renew Pale’s contract to stay on the farm. And so with virtually no advanced notice Pale was forced to pack his belongings, abandon the home he had built, and set off in search of a new one, bringing only his family and prized collection of sheep and cattle. When he shared his story with an African writer weeks later, he was still homeless and had been forced to sell nearly all of his livestock at a loss.  

The dispossession and dislocation of Africans like Pale became an increasingly regular occurrence in the years after 1913. The passage of South Africa’s Natives Land Act on June 19, 1913 created the legal underpinnings for subsequent racist legislation and propelled the young Union of South Africa towards an increasingly segregated future. While racism was always an unabashedly obvious element of South Africa’s white government, the Natives Land Act began the process of codifying race relations that ultimately culminated in apartheid. Its passage represented a watershed moment in South African history, because in addition to hardening the

1. R.W. Maiming, “Native Land Act 1913: specific cases of evictions and hardships, etc.” (South Africa: Voices of Black South Africans), 21.
country's racial hierarchy, it also provoked widespread African resistance to the state policies.

Africans resisted the onerous policies of the Natives Land Act on two levels. First, educated, prominent blacks denounced the new legislation. These activists and their African-led organizations published editorials, wrote accounts of the hardships inflicted on African peasants, and issued proclamations and petitions to both the South African government and the British Crown. They placed trust in the politics of moderation, assuming that whites would be willing to reason with African grievances. African peasants, in contrast, felt the effects of the legislation immediately and responded to the Act in more direct ways. Instead of being reduced to wage laborers, some African peasants like Pale chose to leave white farms with their cattle and families in tow. Others relocated to more sparsely populated areas, and there is some evidence suggesting that still others left the Union of South Africa altogether, resettling in the British protectorate of Bechuanaland, where the Natives Land Act's policies did not yet apply.

Depending on one's perspective, such actions on the part of African farmers can be regarded either as a form of resistance to the white government's new policies or as a sign of submission. The thousands of African peasants who were confronted with these difficult decisions responded in different ways. For every African who resisted, there were others who accepted the new forms of labor tenancy emerging in South Africa. This paper, however, focuses on the Africans who made a conscious decision not to accept the new legislation. Their defiance of the Natives Land Act proved to be formative for South African resistance movements, and the increasingly rebellious protests against the Act proved a harbinger of mass action demonstrations that would later characterize the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

An Evolving South Africa

The Natives Land Act must be understood as a product of converging social forces and economic pressures that reshaped South Africa around the beginning of the twentieth century. Prior to union in 1910, South Africa consisted of four distinct units, including the British Cape and Natal colonies, and the Boer Republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 spurred rapid development and led to a profound transformation as rural, agrarian society came into increasingly close contact with expanding towns and markets. The changes brought about by South Africa's mineral discoveries were felt most directly in the Transvaal, where Boers emigrating from the British Cape Colony had established the Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State as a way to escape from what they saw as the increasing Anglo-cization of the Cape Colony.

As the mining industry expanded, it brought with it an influx of uitlanders (foreigners) to the burgeoning mining towns of the Transvaal, which threatened to undermine Boer control of the region. These fears continued to build as the English took hold of the mining industry. English mine owners chafed at the strict rules of the Afrikaner government, and in 1895 they orchestrated an attempted coup known as the Jameson Raid. The raid failed to topple the Boer government, but did succeed in pushing already strained relations between Afrikaner and English even closer to their breaking point. These tensions soon erupted in the bloody and divisive Anglo-Boer war. The war was hard-fought and brutal; it is remembered today primarily for the world's first use of concentration camps. The British set up detention facilities to hold the families of Boer guerrillas. Tens of thousands of Afrikaner women and children died in these camps, leading even British observers to admit, perhaps begrudgingly, that their camps were distinguished by "extraordinarily high death-rates." Finally, in 1902, the full onslaught of the British army overcame dogged Boer resistance, and the war ended in British victory. The Anglo-Boer War was an important stepping-stone in the process that led to the Natives Land Act because the conflict sharpened substantial rifts within the white community. The white population was strongly divided by language, culture, and politics, and in the aftermath of the war uniting the Boers and English necessitated a policy of cooperation.

South African leaders dressed the raw wounds from the Anglo-Boer War with the salve of reconciliation, but increased collaboration between English and Afrikaner led to legislation like the Natives Land Act, making it clear that unity had come at the expense of the interests of black Africans. Efforts to unite the two white races of South Africans culminated in the creation of the Union of South Africa on May 31, 1910, at which time the British Parliament passed a new South African Constitution written exclusively by white members of the Union's colonies. With its passage South Africa became a self-governing domain of the British Empire, though the British retained the right to veto pieces of legislation passed by South African Parliament. Before long, the African elite themselves would appeal to this reserved veto power when protesting the Land Act.

Black South Africans, who formed the majority of the country's population, were not idle spectators to the transformations gripping the country. Nonetheless, whites frequently misrepresented the native population as unaffected by white influence and completely backwards.

When a prominent African urged in testimony to the Select Committee on Native Affairs that Africans be given voting rights, the Chairman of the Committee displayed the paternalism that typified the era by asking "do you not think that would be going a little faster than the native people could keep pace with?" Even if they were relegated to second-class citizenship, the reality was that black South Africans had been actively involved in shaping the evolving nation. South Africa's history since European settlement had been marked by conflict between its white and black inhabitants, as continued white expansion came at the expense of Africans who were dispossessed of their land. Despite the entrenchment of white economic and political dominance, every aspect of South Africa's existence remained dependant on black South Africans, from tax revenue to labor supply to the cultivation of the nation's farmlands. Even the Anglo-Boer war, which English and Boers both proudly proclaimed to be a white man's war, had depended on African involvement. Many Africans served in the British army as auxiliary troops, and British Parliamentary correspondence referred to the thousands of blacks who were also held in separate concentration camps.3

Land Ownership in South Africa

The scorched earth policies of the Anglo-Boer war resulted in widespread rural impoverishment, which in turn had important effects on South Africa's agricultural production. Many Afrikaners returned home from the war to find their properties burned by British troops. Others found occupations traditionally filled by Boers no longer available; for example, the advent of railroads caused many Afrikaners to lose their jobs as wagon drivers. Even the traditional trekboer way of life, living off the land, was "increasingly difficult as a result of more intensive land settlement and land use." Some whites landowners tried commercial farming, while many more held land solely as absentee landlords. The end result was a shortfall of agricultural production in many areas of the country. Into this void stepped black farmers, who made the most of the opportunity to feed South Africa's rapidly growing population.

5. Timothy Keegan introduction to R.W. Maimang, "Native Land Act 1913: specific cases of evictions and hardships, etc.," vi.

Although land as a commodity had not existed prior to European settlement in South Africa, by 1913 many Africans had either bought their own land or entered into sharecropping agreements with white landlords. For those who lacked labor or capital, sharecropping agreements with black farmers provided a valuable source of food and income, while allotting the Africans significant freedom of operation. These agreements, according to historian Charles van Onselen, represented a "great historic meeting between landless blacks and property-owning whites." Despite the increased formalization of the country's racial hierarchy, blacks and whites often worked alongside each other in the fields, employing the same methods of production. A British Commissioner in the Orange Free State reported "the Natives almost invariably plough on 'half shares' with the white occupiers of the farms. The methods are identical with those of their white farmers, and ploughing with oxen is universal." Poor white landowners were not the only ones to benefit from black agricultural know-how; large land prospecting companies also made healthy profits from the rent payments of black farmers who tilled their vast swathes of land.

Africans' reputation for farming was well known. With a note of pride, an African newspaper reported in 1909 that the Free State, Transvaal, and Natal had enjoyed "limitless cultivation" in recent years. According to the author, the secret behind the prospering fields and national agricultural success was the "fact that farmers get the Native to plow on halves," some of whom "put in crops that will yield 600 bags the farmer receiving half and the Native the remainder." Not only were these Africans successful, they were also remarkably self-sufficient. The African farmer, according to the newspaper article, "provides his own seed, his own cattle, his own labour for the ploughing, the weeding and reaping." Considering the comparative amounts of effort put into this undertaking, it was almost surprising that the black farmer was still willing to "call in the landlord to receive his share, which was fifty percent of the entire crop." Even if they immediately had to part with half of their produce, these skilled black farmers were essential for supplying the crops needed in the expanding urban market.

While many whites, both poor and wealthy, benefited from black tenancy and land ownership, others looked at black farming success enviously. In particular, for the poor white Afrikaners who had been forced to move into developing towns at the end of the war in search of economic opportunities, the success of black farmers was seen as coming at the expense of the poor white population. Commenting on the plight of poor whites in...
the city, *The Labour World* noted in 1918 that unlike the landless white, "the native is in the happier position that he has a bit of land to go back to if his pay [in the city] is unattractive." Of course, this "bit of land" was located in hardscrabble, overcrowded reserves that accounted for less than 10% of the landmass of the country. Ignoring these realities, the newspaper continued, reporting, "farmers and traders are flourishing," while wages for both white and black in the city remained stagnant. These grudges would serve as an impetus for the creation of the Natives Land Act.

Other whites would support the policies of the Land Act as a matter of principle, welcoming the idea of stricter segregation among the races. Edward Dower, Secretary for Native Affairs in 1918, alluded to the importance of principle in the Act when he wrote a public statement to Africans telling them they must remember "that in carrying out fundamental principles it is inevitable that some hardships should arise in individual cases." In other areas, where white agriculture was becoming increasingly commercialized, independent black farming and pastoralism was regarded as an unwanted source of competition. The Chairman of the Natives Land Commission admitted as much when he reported that many blacks had been ejected from their lands, "especially in areas where farming is more intensive." The white population, then, was hardly monolithic, and it was for a variety of reasons that different parts of the population supported the Natives Land Act. But regardless of the motivations behind the Act, there could only be one result from the implementation of its policies: large-scale dispossession of native Africans.

**Natives Land Act: Policies and Implementation**

Under the terms of the Natives Land Act, Africans were no longer allowed to own, rent, or sharecrop on land outside a designated "Schedule of Reserve Areas." If Africans were to remain on white farms, it would have to be as tenants who provided their labor in exchange for wages, or in some rather austere cases, the privilege to reside on the farm itself. The land allotted for native reserves amounted to roughly 7% of South Africa's landmass. The rest of South Africa's land was designated for the exclusive use of South Africa's white population. At this time, South Africa's white population consisted of roughly one million people, while the African population included about 4.5 million persons. Moreover, the land provided to Africans was generally located in areas unsuitable for intensive agriculture. The Native National Congress said that in addition to being inadequate in size, the reserves had been "studiously selected on the barren, marshy and malarial districts more especially in the Provinces of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State." As more and more Africans were forced to move onto the reserves, they became desperately overcrowded. These reserves also had long-term implications for South Africa, as they were the predecessors to Bantustans later set up by the apartheid regime.

The Natives Land Act set up a Land Commission which was to conduct a study of the country and its people before delineating which areas should be set aside for the African population. Many Africans were hopeful that the Land Commission would right the injurious policies of the Act. In anticipation of the Land Commission's visit to the area, *The Native Opinion* wrote, "the natives in these parts are busily marshalling their facts for the commission, as they have great grievances respecting long continued encroachment on lands originally granted to them, and powers are given to the Commissioners to make recommendations regarding expropriation of land for Natives." No evictions were to take place until the Land Commission had delivered its report, but in reality this stipulation was only heeded when it served the interests of white landowners.

It soon became all too clear that Land Commissioners had no intention of supplying Africans with desirable land. It was only when a piece of land possessed little or no value to the white population that the Commission would designate it as a reserve. On one occasion, when Commissioner W.R. Collins was told by a local group of white farmers that an area with agricultural promise was "too good for Natives," and, therefore, "should be kept for the purposes of white settlement," he passed this recommendation along to the South African Parliament. The Commission also dealt with the fact that many Africans would be needed outside of the reserves to serve the white population. Their recommendations in this regard once again demonstrated the long-term implications of the Act. In order to assure that there was ample African labor for white populations, the Commission reported, "the evidence brought before the Commission tends to show that townships near towns and industrial centres serve a very useful purpose." Accordingly, the Commission decided on "the desirability of providing for the establishment of such townships within European

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areas," and recommended that the government give itself the right to create new townships. The implementation of these township policies continues to mark the country’s urban areas today – sixteen years after the advent of democracy in South Africa.

The Act had a number of provisions that were designed to placate different segments of the white population. In the Orange Free State, for example, where whites worried about the success of black sharecroppers, politicians inserted a clause that made any form of sharecropping illegal. In the Transvaal, where there was more large-scale commercial farming, a Commissioner expressed concern that “rapid demand of agriculture is causing a demand for farm laborers which is becoming serious, and which the district does not seem capable of supplying.” Responding to this need for more workers, the Natives Land Act removed a cap that had previously made it illegal to have more than five African families living on any Transvaal farm.

The Act was also applied to varying success in the various provinces of the country. In the relatively liberal Cape Colony, for example, Africans who met certain economic requirements were allowed to vote. Because the Natives Land Act would interfere with Africans’ ability to own property, “the Appellate Court decided the Natives Land Act [was] not applicable to that Province.” In the Transvaal, historically there was a trusteeship program in which Africans could purchase land under the name of a government official, who in turn was to hold the land on behalf of the purchasers. But a suit brought on by an African farmer, Edward Tsewu, established that Africans should be able to purchase the farms in their own name. The Supreme Court of the Transvaal ruled in his favor, and Africans in that province took advantage of the ruling to purchase 399 farms between 1905 and June 19, 1913. Unfortunately, the implementation of the Land Act would take away their title to the land. Clearly, then, the Natives Land Act was a complicated set of laws and policies that was applied unevenly throughout the country. The seemingly contradictory aspects of the Act led activist Sol Plaatje to describe it as “a legislative jumble.”

Because the Act entailed sweeping changes to South African land ownership policies, it was not immediately enforceable by the government. Initially, the Act was “a statement of ideals more than a practical legal

17. Ibid., 7.

African Responses

Africans from a variety of backgrounds refused to accept these changes without resistance. Elite, educated African activists were among the first to respond to the implementation of the Natives Land Act. This resistance was largely conducted through the South African Native National Congress – a precursor to the still-dominant African National Congress. The Land Act was deemed so harmful by black elites that it became one of the first rallying points for the young organization.

The South African Native National Congress’ early leaders were highly educated Christians who were more than willing to point out that British rule had brought civilizing benefits to the African population. These leaders strongly valued education and advancement – a number of them had attained higher degrees internationally – and they wanted to lend the

25. Keegan in Msimang, viii.
rest of the native population a helping hand as Africans "groped their way from barbarism to civilization." Indeed, some African leaders protested the Land Act in part because they feared that segregation from the white population would impede African progress. Joseph Hluhi, a member of the Native Congress, told the white members of the Eastern Transvaal Native's Land Committee, "The white man showed us the light. Now you wish to remove us from the light and make us stay apart by ourselves." Of course, these activists were not blind to the substantial downsides of white rule. The gradual entrenchment of racism and discrimination were making them second-class citizens in the land of their birth. They were also frustrated by Afrikaner political dominance in the years after Union, and believed that the British had betrayed the Natives through their reconciliation with the Afrikaners prior to the Union of South Africa.

Perhaps the most powerful example of African political moderation is the fact that some educated Africans initially supported the discriminatory Natives Land Act. One prominent African activist named John Tengo Jabavu trusted Colonel Stanford, a white Parliamentarian representing Natives, so much that he blindly threw his support behind the Act. One of his editorials stated that "when one found out a man like Col. Stanford considered that the Bill was a step in the right direction in keeping the European and Native more or less apart it was very difficult to oppose the measure." As it became clear that the Land Act would not supply the African with sufficient land and would severely curtail his liberties, most leaders began to condemn the Act. Those who continued to support it, like Jabavu, earned the enmity of the rest of black community, demonstrating that there were clear limits to acquiescence to the white government.

Elite Africans used the South African Native National Congress as a forum for airing criticisms of the white government’s policies. One such critique was a public resolution against the Natives Land Act. The authors of the resolution understood the underlying motives of the legislation, writing that its intention was to "reduce by gradual process and by artificial means the Bantu people as a race to a status of permanent labourers or subordinates..." At the end of the resolution, the authors resolved that "in spite of our previous promises to desist from agitation in connection with the Natives Land Act 1913," there was no choice but to raise funds to "educate the Bantu people by directing their attention towards this unjust law." Though certainly a form of resistance, the threat to raise money to educate fellow Africans about the Act probably did not overly concern white leaders. African elites also protested that the appointees of the Natives Land Commission consisted exclusively of white men. In particular, John Dube, the President of South African National Native Congress, protested this disenfranchisement, to which Edward Dower, the Secretary for Native Affairs responded, "the government is not prepared to change the personnel of the Commission or add to its number as would be necessary if the proposals put forward by you... were entertained." Because it was clear that the South African government would not accommodate African protests, educated Africans turned to the British government.

The South African Native National Congress made a number of appeals to the British government, demonstrating a hope that the British would intervene on their behalf. These appeals were framed submissively and obediently. In their 1914 Petition to the Imperial Parliament and the British public, the writers assured the British that "among the Natives of South Africa His Majesty is looked upon as their natural protector, and it is their faith in His Majesty’s sense of justice that has impelled them to send us here." Another petition to King George V warned that the Natives Land Act would result in conflict between the races, "which the natives do not desire, as they wish to live as friends of the white race, in peace with the white race, in co-operation with the white race, and in loyalty to the British Crown and Throne, from which they have received so many blessings." Nothing tangible came of these overtures.

Even though activists enjoyed little success in addressing the injustices associated with the Natives Land Act and other racist legislation, the South African Native National Congress’ 1919 Constitution strongly reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to protesting only through constitutional means. The document stated that the organization’s agenda would be “advanced by means of resolutions, protests and a constitutional and peaceful propaganda,” and through “deputations and other forms

29. Plaatje, 162.
30. South African Native National Congress, "Resolution...," in From Protest to Challenge, 86.
of representations." Although the elite-led African resistance may seem ineffective based on its inability to provide reform, it is important to remember the African elites as a product of their time. The mass demonstrations and public confrontations that are now associated with colonial resistance were virtually unheard of in 1913; instead, restraint and moderation were the watchwords of the day. These men wanted to effect change by working within the system, instead of challenging the racist hierarchy as a whole.

Even if the politics of moderation were unsuccessful, black leaders did make valuable contributions to the cause of African advancement. For example, elite African leaders were among the first to recognize that tribal affiliations could obscure the bonds of oppression that linked them all. In an article in *Imvo Zabantsundu*, an African activist named Pixley ka isaka Seme told his readers that "the demon of racialism...must be buried and forgotten; it has shed among us enough blood! We are one people." In later years another African newspaper echoed similar sentiments when it criticized divisive land policies as an "attempt to kill this spirit of African unity by demarcating different areas for Xosas, Basutos, Zulus, Bechuana, and so forth.

But perhaps the most significant contribution of African activists was the documentation they provided of the effects of the Land Act. In doing so, they gave agency to African peasants who otherwise would have been voiceless, and helped put a human face on the consequences of the government's policies. The experience of Zachariah Maya, a black farmer, serves as an example of how elite African activists recorded the effects of the Natives Land Act. Prior to 1913, Maya lived on a white farm in the Kroonstad District for many years. In return for use of the white farmer's land, Maya was compelled to pay rent and occasionally provide his services for labor. Nonetheless, over the years, he was able to attain a comfortable, stable life for his family. His impressive collection of livestock included 20 head of cattle, 50 sheep, and a horse. Maya's comfortable lifestyle came to a rapid end, however, when his landlord informed him that Maya's livestock were eating too much of his grass, and that he must either sell them or vacate the farm. The account captures a poignant moment when Zachariah Maya recalled asking the white farmer "how we shall live if we must sell our stock, because there is myself, my wife and two children..." The owner of the farm, it appears, did not provide an answer, and instead handed him a pass giving him permission "to look for a place to trek." Unwilling to dispose of his only property, he began "wandering about looking for a place to reside on or to place [his] stock." He kept his cattle, but he paid a heavy price in the loss of his land and home.

We learn of Maya's story through a pamphlet written by R.W. Msimang, entitled, "Native Land Act 1913: specific cases of evictions and hardships, etc." Unfortunately, we have no detailed account of Msimang's life, other than that he was an English-educated lawyer and a founding member of the South African Native National Congress. After the passage of the Natives Land Act, Msimang traveled around the countryside, collecting testimonies from Africans who had been dispossessed of land.

Msimang used the voices and statistics of African peasants as evidence of the hardship caused by the Natives Land Act. His account includes long lists of the families affected in specific districts and precincts. While we cannot be sure whether or not every single family was affected in the way Msimang claims, the long lists impart an appreciation for the scope of dislocation brought about by the Act. On other occasions, he editorialized on the injustices that Africans like Maya were forced to endure. Maya's only solution, it seemed, would be to return to his old 'master,' and forfeit his means of subsistence. In response, Msimang wrote, "why should [Natives] be forced to dispose of their property? Because the farmer knows they won't find another farm and therefore there is good opportunity to make them "serfs." If they did fail to find another farm, they often would return to their original farm and accept a position of complete servitude, beholden to the white farmer for every aspect of existence.

Another important African account of the events that unfolded after the signing of the Land Act can be found in Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*. Sol Plaatje was a prominent South African activist, and throughout his prolific career he served as a newspaper editor and as the first Secretary General of the South African Native National Congress. Like Msimang, Plaatje traveled around the South African countryside in the summer of 1913, and his experiences speaking to disenfranchised locals provided the impetus for *Native Life in South Africa*. He wrote the book for presentation to the British public, in the hopes that the British government would repeal the act. Accordingly, he portrayed the Natives as unfaithfully loyal to the British Empire, and portrayed the injustices perpetrated against the Africans as mostly the responsibility of South Africa's Afrikaner population.

The accounts of the effects of the Land Act provide evidence as to how African peasants responded to the new legislation. As the Land
Act's policies were implemented, more African peasants were faced with an ultimatum: abandon their livestock and continue on the farm as a labor tenant, or vacate the farm immediately. Farmers realized that dispossession of their livestock would take away a main source of economic independence, and were unwilling to part with their livelihood. Many Africans chose, rather, to vacate these farms in resistance. While white farmers had individual priorities and motivations, many of those who presented Africans with new terms would have been happy to see the black families stay on the land, minus their rights and property. These white farmers stood to acquire substantial amounts of livestock if the blacks agreed to stay on the farms under the new terms. But hundreds of black families refused to be degraded and to "make the landlord a present of all their livelihoods," and, thus, they took to the roads along with their livestock, in defiance of the intended purposes of the Act.40

While many wandered around the countryside looking for other white farms where they might be able to work, others may have left the Union of South Africa altogether and immigrated to Bechuanaland. Their journey was called a "Great Trek," in comparison to the Boers who had similarly abandoned what they saw as an unrighteous and meddlesome government in the Cape Colony. Msimang described the migration of these Africans: "groups of natives are to be seen in the different Provinces seeking for new land. They have crossed over from the Free State into Natal, from Natal to Transvaal, and from the Transvaal into British Bechuanaland to contest the Land Act."41 These were incredibly long distances to travel by wagon, especially when slowed down with family, cattle, and all the worldly possessions they could carry with them. If Msimang's account is true, it bears testament to the Africans' dogged determination. While there is little official evidence from the state that supports Msimang's depiction of a "Great Trek" to Bechuanaland, there are earlier examples of Africans moving to Bechuanaland to escape onerous government policies. In 1910 a report from the British Commissioner of Taung Province in Bechuanaland related that "there are several natives on the Reserve who have come from locations in which the Glen Grey Act is in force."42 The general report from Bechuanaland also included the fact that "only about one-third of the arable land on Native Reserves is cultivated."43 With plenty of arable land and a precedent already established by Africans relocating to Bechuanaland, Msimang's claims of Africans moving to Bechuanaland become more believable. Still other Africans relocated to "white areas" within the Union that were sparsely populated, often in southwestern Transvaal. Upon arriving, they entered into a new round of sharecropping agreements with poor whites. These actions clearly conflicted with the terms of the Land Act, but "well-off Ba-Sotbo, BaTswana or Xhosa sharecroppers could hardly be legislated out of existence."44 These agreements, in some cases, would continue for fifty years after the passing of the Natives Land Act.

One result of these stirrings of defiance was the dawning realization among Africans that they were a force to be reckoned with in South Africa. Despite the white community's constant attempts to degrade and marginalize Africans, statistics alone demonstrate the power of the African people. When organized, collective African anger could completely derail white society. This sense of power became a recurring theme in the rhetoric of protest. For example, a deputation of moderate, educated Africans warned the Imperial Parliament in their appeal that they would like to take all measures, "if possible, to avert the danger of our people being forced to commit acts of violence."45 Similarly, in a speech titled "Native Unrest," African activist and Professor D.D.T. Jabavu warned that Africans in 1920 were "in a state of positive discontentment" with their treatment from the white government. He went on to say, "unless something is done at once to mitigate the causes of present dissatisfaction, it will not be very long before the whole white community must deal with a situation overwhelmingly beyond their control."46 Dr. A. Abduraham reiterated this point in the annual opening conference of the APO, when he said that should blacks decide to walk off their jobs in the mines, "the economic foundation of South Africa would suddenly shake and tremble with such violence that the beautiful white South Africa superstructure which has built on it would come down with a crash."47

In the 1920's, a more virulent form of protest emerged with the rise to prominence of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union's (ICU). What began as a small, Cape Town-based colored and African dockworkers

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40. Plaatje, 64.
41. Msimang, 4.
42. Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, N.B.: The Glen Grey Act was applied in the Glen Grey reserve in 1893. The Act sought to solve 'the native problem' by granting land allotments ranging from four to nine morgen in size to individuals instead of to communal groups. It resulted in an increased flow of black farmers to white lands. Smuts euphemistically called it "an experiment in native self-government." (Jam Smuts, "White Man's Task").
43. Ibid., 131.
44. Onselen, 7.
47. Dr. A Abduraham, speech at Kimberly, qtd. in Sol Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa, 138.
union quickly grew into the largest protest organization in South Africa for much of the decade. The ICU displayed tendencies of both elite protest and grassroots resistance. The organization was divided into a National Council and branch levels, offering opportunities for both educated and farm laboring Africans to interact as they worked towards common goals. The ICU made clear that its focus would be on rural Africans as it sought to "regulate the condition of work in the farms and to promote the general and material welfare of the members engaged in agricultural pursuits."  

The ICU also adopted a much more confrontational tone than its predecessor. The newspaper of the ICU, The Worker's Herald, displayed this new militancy in its articles and editorials. On October 14, 1926, The Worker's Herald wrote an article about an upcoming amendment to the Natives Land Act. While ostensibly its purpose was to increase the acreage of native reserves, The Herald believed the white government had other intentions. "A cursory glance at the Native Lands Act 1913 Amendment Bill 27," wrote the author, "is enough to reveal the evil intentions of the government." According to the article, the government was attempting to maintain tribal divisions among the African people, and "it matters not a farthing to the government what becomes of the hundreds of thousands of deribalized Natives. They are not wanted in the Urban Areas unless they become CAPITALISTS' HELOTS." The author concluded by saying that it was a "wicked policy that stokes with race animosity and consummate stupidity." The days of moderation were over, replaced by a new sense of urgency and anger. 

African resistance to the Natives Land Act failed to change the policies of the white government, but the resistance efforts did plant the seeds of new forms of resistance that would eventually bear more productive fruit. Tempered by failure, African resistance evolved, first with the emergence of the ICU, and in later decades with new and more radical protests against apartheid. Similarly, although the South African Native National Congress initially failed to achieve its goals, the African National Congress has had a powerful and enduring influence on South Africa's history and political development.

For the white government, the Land Act represented an important first step towards codifying the policies that would eventually culminate in apartheid. For Africans, protests against the Act brought elite activists into contact with rural peasants, and served as a learning experience for those that unsuccessfully promoted the politics of moderation. Because it was the product of changing economic and social forces, The Natives Land Act and the new forms of resistance it inspired represented a defining moment in the history of South Africa.

Stephen Hayes in a senior from Arlington, Virginia. He is majoring in history with an emphasis on Africa.

48. It is important to note that in South Africa, "coloreds" are designated (and self-identify) as a distinct racial group that consists of the descendants of indentured servants from South Asia and others from relationships between early white settlers and black South Africans.
50. "Native Land Act 1913."
51. Ibid.
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Idem. August 16, 1918, via Cooperative Africana Microform Project.

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A PERFECT STORM: PINKERTONS, THE EVOLUTION OF VIOLENCE, AND THE HOMESTEAD STRIKE OF 1892

ALICE HU

This paper examines the involvement of the Pinkerton's National Detective Agency in pursuing gangs in the American West in the mid-19th century and argues that the extreme forms of violence, including vigilante violence, that the Pinkertons encountered there influenced the Pinkertons' tactics and conduct in their strike-breaking activities of the late 19th century. Focusing on the brutal Homestead Strike of 1892, this paper explores how the Pinkertons' increasing willingness to employ extreme violence converged with circumstantial factors at Homestead, ultimately making the strike one of the most notorious labor conflicts in the history of American labor.

The extent of violence accompanying labor disputes in the late 19th and early 20th century is typically viewed as a symptom of growing tension and unease produced by the rapid industrialization of American society. But this violence must also be viewed diachronically, as an outgrowth of an evolution of violence in the United States fomented by Western frontier society in the 1870s and 1880s. The Pinkerton's National Detective Agency and the changing nature of its activities exemplify this change. Very little in the Pinkertons' antebellum or Civil War espionage activities foreshadowed the violence that would characterize their later involvement in labor disputes. But the nature of the Agency's work in the West in the 1870s exposed the Pinkertons to violence more brutal than they had previously seen, not only from criminals but also from mobs of civilian vigilantes. Interaction with vigilantes in the West not only exposed and accustomed Pinkerton operatives to brutality, but, as Pinkerton records and agent correspondence show, it also encouraged the Agency to adopt extralegal methods of violence as part of their modus operandi, particularly in labor disputes in the late 19th century. Another trend developed alongside the evolution of this violence and its adoption by agents of law enforcement: the growing rejection of private policing agencies such as the Pinkerton's National Detective Agency and the growing demand for a more effective and powerful governmentally administered public police. In large part, the increasing violence of Pinkerton's Agency, especially in labor disputes, was responsible for this trend, shifting public opinion on the appropriate levels of violence and agents of law enforcement in labor strikes. All of these forces
united in July 1892, at Homestead, Pennsylvania, in one of the most notorious strikes in the history of the American labor movement. While Homestead itself isn’t necessarily emblematic of Pinkerton violence, it is a critical instance in which the Pinkertons’ violent tendencies, the reputation these methods garnered, and the growing aggravation at private policing came to a head.

Late in June of 1892, contract negotiations between the Carnegie Steel Company, Ltd., and the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (AAISW), ground to a halt. Most of the 3,800 workers at Carnegie Steel’s Homestead, Pennsylvania plant belonged to the union, and on the 29th of June, Henry Frick, the chairman of the Carnegie Steel Company, locked the workers out. The next day the striking workers gathered outside the plant and set up perimeters around the town of Homestead to prevent the other workers or foremen entering the town or plant. Up until this point, the events at Homestead largely resemble any of the other major strikes that had previously occurred in the US. But by the end of June, Frick had transformed the plant into an armed stronghold, with a mile-long fence topped with barbed-wire, searchlights, and a water cannon, which became known as “Fort Frick,” “the mill transformed into a fort.”

Early in July, rumors began to circulate among the strikers about the impending arrival of watchmen, whom Frick had contracted out from the Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency to guard the plant, the Carnegie Company’s property. Around 4 a.m. on July 6th, an alarm was sounded, with the news that barges were heading down the Monongahela River to the plant. Thousands of townspeople, armed with various firearms and clubs, converged on the banks of the river. At around 4:30 a.m., two barges containing about 300 Pinkerton watchmen came ashore in front of a mob of thousands of workers, who were shouting and throwing rocks at the barges and their passengers. As the Pinkertons attempted to disembark and head up the bank to the plant, a confrontation broke out between the strikers and the watchmen, and as the Pinkerton captain attempted to come down the gangplank, shots rang out. The Pinkertons armed themselves and began to fire on the workers, who returned fire. An all-out siege erupted; the violence continued throughout the day as the Pinkertons fired on the


At 5 p.m. the Pinkertons requested to surrender. As strikers took them into custody, the mob took another violent turn, forming a gauntlet through which the Pinkertons would have to pass. The strikers began to physically assault the Pinkertons with clubs, sticks, and stones as they marched up to the mill, to their makeshift prison. Witnesses reported that every Pinkerton was injured in some way. Two men died from their wounds and another was committed to an insane asylum as a result of his injuries. The rest of the Pinkertons struggled to the railroad station and hospital to escape from Homestead. By the end of the day, ten strikers and between three and seven Pinkertons were dead.

The “Battle for Homestead” became a legend in the folklore of American labor, largely because of the extremity and scale of its violence. But a number of factors combined to make the strike at Homestead a particularly violent one. The greatest factor was the growing perception of private law enforcement agencies – such as the Pinkertons – as illegitimate sources of authority, enforcement, and violence. This organic trend was part of an overarching transition in the 19th century away from mistrust of a strong, large, centralized government towards increased government involvement in Americans’ lives. On a smaller scale, it was also the product of the growing public revulsion at the Pinkertons’ violent nature, which came to the fore of public opinion during their involvement with labor disputes. Both of these factors combined to raise the stakes of the clash between the strikers and the Pinkertons.

The violence at Homestead is only one half of its significance. After all, Homestead was a turning point in the history of labor with broad repercussions for American law enforcement in the 19th century; indeed, public clamoring led to the eventual dismantling of the system of private law enforcement, as Americans warmed to idea of a government-administered public police. The Pinkertons’ end marked the last chapter in an era: what had begun as a madcap agency of undercover detectives chasing dishonest railroad employees was by 1892 reviled as a private army of violent mercenaries. Ultimately, the Pinkertons fell victim to the twin forces of an expanding central government and their own predilection for violence. These factors converged at Homestead to effect a major transformation in
American law enforcement.

To understand how the Pinkertons reached this stage, we need some grasp of the social and cultural milieu from which they emerged. “What the law will not do for men they must do for themselves,” Terence V. Powderly, the Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, wrote in the *North American Review* in the wake of the Homestead Strike of 1892. In light of his pedigree, the statement may seem a touch incendiary, encouraging laborers to engage in measures outside legal bounds to achieve their ends. And while the comment is unmistakably provocative, it is not as blatant or single-minded as it appears now. In the 19th century, mistrust of a strong central government and of its ability to wield large standing armies restricted the scope of the law and particularly the ability of law enforcement to effectively perform its duties. In addition to frequent charges of incompetence, the public police suffered from a major trust deficit. As most of these early public police departments existed in urban areas, they tended to be “closely intermeshed with local political machines and with the Catholic church” and its employees were “dependent on these institutions, especially the political machines, for their jobs.” This made the public police a partisan organization at best and a corrupt one at worst. In the few areas where public police did exist, they seemed unable to keep up with the rapid growth of urban and industrial institutions they were meant to protect. In rural areas, public law enforcement was sometimes incompetent, but more often nonexistent.

Without public police capable of maintaining order, the landscape of American law enforcement in the late 19th century looked considerably different than it does today. Private police organizations began to emerge around the same time as the urban public police departments did in the early 1800s. Generally speaking, these private agencies proved more competent and technologically savvy than the public police. Unlike the public police, they weren’t inhibited by jurisdictional boundaries and could be trusted to deliver results. The strong connection between the urban public police, the predominantly Irish political machines, and the Catholic Church meant that the public police tended to be comprised mostly of Irish and Italian immigrants. Stereotypes about the public police’s outsider status, fueled by overwhelming prejudice against Irish and Italian immigrants, meant that moneymed interests tended to shun the public police. Secondly, fear of government expansion deterred many from seeking out the public police. Private agencies were a preferable alternative since, “Historically, people protected their own property.”

The solution came in the mid-1850s when Allan Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency was born, at last filling the void “between the lack of rural law and the incompetence of corrupt urban law-enforcement organizations.” By 1854, most Midwestern railroads were contracting with Pinkerton and his small corps of detectives to protect passengers and stock from thieves and enemies of the railroad. Urban public police could only protect a train within the bounds of their jurisdiction: the lack of rural police meant that a train

lost all protections of urban society until it reached its destinations. If valuable cargoes and passengers were waylaid on the road, the railroad company had little redress from the official police... Occasionally, rowdies burned terminals. More frequently, irate farmers, ex-employees, or young hooligans derailed trains. Of greater concern was the lack of control over the growing number of employees.

While the Agency occasionally apprehended the alleged train wrecker, it was primarily concerned with “the honesty of railroad employees,” punishing “theft of time,” “delinquency of duty,” “allow[ing] friends free rides,” or “pocket[ing] money they collected.” It also worked with the Postal Service, detecting employee theft of envelopes containing money.

By and large, the early activities of the Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency consisted of espionage and undercover work. In the Agency’s first major case, the theft of $40,000 from an Adams Express Company train, Pinkerton devised a network of undercover spies so elaborate that it bordered on “ludicrous and melodramatic.” The Agency continued its record of nonviolent espionage in the Civil War, having hardly any connection with the violence that so vividly characterized the war. Pinkerton’s close personal friend General George B. McClellan arranged

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for Pinkerton to form a Secret Service for the army. Pinkerton and his operatives went undercover in the South and also worked to apprehend Confederate spies in Washington, D.C. Circumstances notwithstanding, they experienced very little violence. The most action Pinkerton saw was his chase of a turncoat Union army officer through the rainy streets of Baltimore in his socks.

The Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency first began to depart from its model of nonviolent espionage after the Civil War, particularly in the West. Once the Agency had withdrawn from the war, it occupied itself with embezzlement and robbery cases as before. But the environment in the postwar West was a dramatically different scene. It was here where Pinkerton’s men had their first real encounter with violence.

The Civil War forever changed the landscape of criminal activity in the United States, particularly in the West. Soldiers returned to broken communities haunted by the physical and emotional destruction of war. Shiftless and desperate for work, some of these men would resort to criminal activity to make ends meet. Many, particularly those from the former Confederate, were members of guerilla units during the war and had grown accustomed to a violent, transient kind of lifestyle; most were not granted amnesty and were still considered outlaws after the war. Primed by these experiences and driven by the dire economic strains Reconstruction had placed upon them, men like these found a welcome outlet in crime. This desperation — real or imagined — fueled an unprecedented level of violence that would plague the post-Civil War West for many decades to come. For instance, Joseph Whicher, a Pinkerton operative sent to infiltrate Jesse James’ family’s farm, was murdered by the James gang with shots fired from such close range that they burned his skin, clothes, and hair. When his body was found near Independence, Missouri, wild hogs had gnawed away part of his face — a shocking initiation for the Pinkertons into the violent culture of the Old West.

The shortcomings of the public police were also major factors in fostering an environment of lawlessness in the American West, specifically giving rise to a tradition of widespread vigilante violence. Law enforcement in the West was sparse and slow to respond. Many felt that the law was alien body imposed upon the community, complaining that its judgment was slow, ineffective, or insufficient or worse, that the system itself was corrupt. Together these factors encouraged townspeople to take policing into their own hands, often using vigilante or extralegal methods — not only because law enforcement was considered suspect, but because the community preferred to mete out retribution and take vengeance itself. Since the law was a force from outside the community, and townspeople wanted whatever form of justice they delivered to be local, organic, and from those the criminals had harmed, communities in the West frequently fostered vigilantism.

The Pinkertons’ first major experience with vigilantes was in their pursuit of the Reno gang — a more successful predecessor to the James gang. The Renos were unique in that they managed to stir up not one but two vigilante factions: an anti-Reno faction comprised of those whom the Renos had harmed or robbed, and a pro-Reno faction of those who stood to gain from their robberies and counterfeiting ring. When Pinkerton operatives apprehended three members of the Reno gang in July 1868 and attempted to transport them to Indianapolis, they were stranded en route. Hundreds of masked men overpowered the detectives and lynched the three Renos. When five more gang members were captured and held at New Albany, they became a virtual war zone pitting pro- and anti-Reno factions against each other. In December 1868, a mob attacked the county sheriff, secured the keys to the jail, and overwhelmed the handful of guards on duty. Frank, William, and Simeon Reno as well as Charlie Anderson were hanged. The token investigation of the lynching turned up nothing — in this case, as in others, vigilante violence rather than actual law enforcement held sway in the West.

It was in the West, then, where Pinkertons became acquainted with extreme and vigilante forms of violence. More importantly, it was here that they learned to return violence in kind. By 1874 it became clear that the James gang had declared war on the Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency. After the death of Joseph Whicher and at least two more operatives, Allan Pinkerton declared his own war on the James gang.

27. Ibid., 65.
28. Ibid., 66.
32. Ibid., 160.
33. Ibid., 167.
34. Ibid., 167.
35. Ibid., 178.
In a letter dated April 17, 1874, Pinkerton wrote to George Bangs, superintendent of the Pinkerton's New York Office:

I know that the Jameses [sic] and the Youngers are desperate men and that when we meet it must be the death of one or both of us, they wait, my blood was spilt and they must repay, there is no use talking, they must die.36

In January of 1875, the Pinkertons again decided to attack the farmhouse where the James' mother and stepfather, Dr. Reuben Samuels, lived and where the James gang was occasionally based.37 The operation resembled nothing less than all-out war, which is how Pinkerton himself framed the attack: in one letter, he writes of the imminent "battle."38 Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan, of Civil War fame, wrote a letter of introduction to the Rock Island Arsenal on behalf of Robert J. Linden, a Pinkerton, explaining that Linden wished "to obtain certain materials from Rock Island Arsenal, to aid him in arresting certain Railroad robbers."39 Pinkerton was clear about the goal of the attack: "Above everything destroy the house, blot it from the face of the earth. Here the logs will burn, let the men run no risk, but burn the house down. Robert [J. Linden] has charge of the ammunition in the shape of Greek fire."40

The night of January 25, 1875, when Frank and Jesse James were supposedly hiding out at the Samuels farmhouse, the Pinkertons finally made their raid. At the coroner's inquest the next day, the residents of the household, including Mr. and Mrs. Samuels and their black servants, described waking to noise between midnight and 1 a.m., then seeing men outside throw a "ball" or "bowl of fire" into the kitchen, which spread fire throughout the house.41 Mr. Samuels managed to fling the ball of fire into the fireplace, where it then exploded. Gunshots from outside the house followed. The explosion maimed Mrs. Samuels, shredding her arm, and killed her young son, Archie, but neither of the James brothers nor any of their gang was present at the time of the raid.42 The Agency insisted that the device the operatives had thrown had been a flare, intended to illuminate the room;43 given Pinkerton's description of his operatives' weapons and the plans for the raid, it seems likely that the device was meant to spread fire throughout the house, but a too-tight band on the device instead caused it to explode.44

The attack on the Samuels' farmhouse is notable because it is the first major instance in which the Pinkertons deliberately used violence against not only their targets, but also their targets' family. Up until this point the Pinkertons were merely passive observers, looking on as vigilantes lynched bandits such as the Renos, but in this incident they actively incorporated these tactics into their own strategy of pursuing the James gang. Their actions at the Samuels' farmhouse resembled the vigilante violence the Pinkertons had witnessed in pursuit of the Renos. Not only were they intent on meting out justice in their capacity as law enforcement agents but also as retribution for the murders of fellow operatives. When the Pinkertons' usual strategy of infiltrating the gang had failed, resulting in the deaths of at least three Pinkerton operatives, their environment primed them to resort to all-out violence typical of the Old West. The attack on the Samuels' farmhouse is the first indication of an increased willingness to employ extreme and vigilante-inspired violence.

The Pinkertons' use of extralegal, vigilante violence was not limited to interaction with criminals, however, nor was it isolated to the West, where law enforcement was sparse and often corrupt. The pivotal case of the Molly Maguires demonstrates that Pinkerton violence had been transmitted from the West back East, where law enforcement maintained a greater, more established presence. It also shows that this violence was creeping into the margins of more lawful society, while in the West it had been directed at known criminals or those affiliated with outlaws. In 1873, Benjamin Franklin Gowen, the president of the Reading Railroad, which owned tens of thousands of acres of coal land in Pennsylvania,45 contracted with Pinkerton's National Detective Agency. Growing labor unrest over low wages and the sinking price of coal had generated a wave of crime in the Pennsylvania coalfields.46 Allan Pinkerton reported that a secret society of Irish coal miners known as the Molly Maguires were linked to the beatings and murders of mine superintendents, the derailing of trains, and the burning of coal tipples.47 The Molly Maguires were part mafia, part terrorist cell— anyone who slighted or threatened the Mollyes was promptly murdered, including two members of the community police force48 and a

36. Allan Pinkerton to George Bangs, April 17, 1874., Pinkerton Papers, Library of Congress.
37. Horan, Desperate Men, 70.
38. Allan Pinkerton to Samuel Hardwicke, December 28, 1874, Pinkerton Papers
39. Entry #1152, December 30, 1874, Register of Letters Received, 1863-1906 6, Records of Rock Island Arsenal, National Archives-Great Lakes Region, Chicago, IL.
42. Ibid., 18.
44. Wybrow, 27.
46. Ibid., 213.
47. Ibid., 204.
48. Ibid., 220.
justice of the peace, shot in front of his young daughter."

Initially, Pinkerton employed his tried-and-true strategy of infiltrating the organization. Operative James McParland, an Ulster immigrant, was sent to join the Molly Maguires, where over the course of two and a half years he became head of their Shenandoah lodge and an accomplice to conspiracy, murder, arson, and train derailments in an effort to gain enough information to convict the Mollies. But by the summer of 1875, McParland’s evidence was still insufficient to secure felony convictions for the Mollies. Law enforcement proved ineffectual as ever. Once again, Pinkerton’s frustration with a stagnant case led him to resort to more extreme and violent measures. Pinkerton perceived that the residents of the Pennsylvania minefields were growing impatient with the Mollies’ violence and the inability or disinclination of local law enforcement to deal with it. He wrote to George Bangs in August of 1875: “The only way then to pursue [the Molly Maguires] is to treat them as the Renos were treated in Seymour.” Pinkerton suggested, “If [Robert J.] Linden [undercover as a member of the ‘coal and iron police’ in the region] can get up a vigilance committee that can be relied upon, do so. When M. M.’s meet, then surround and deal summarily with them. Get off quietly. All should be securely masked.” He also recommended, “Let him get those who are prepared to take fearful revenge on the M. M.’s. I think it would open the eye of all the people and then the M. M.’s would meet with their just desserts.”

With McParland’s list of Mollies in hand, Linden spent October touring the coal towns “with a view of giving necessary information to the leading citizens advising them as to who the parties are who have committed the recent assassinations.” On December 10th, masked men broke into the home of the O’Donnell family, a family connected to high-ranking Mollies and whose sons had participated in the Mollies’ murders. The men pistol-whipped Mrs. O’Donnell and murdered her daughter and son, whose head was crushed with fifteen bullets. The Pinkertons not only adopted the “vigilance committee”; they perfected it.

The breaking of the Molly Maguires was a pivotal moment in the evolution of Pinkerton violence. Pinkerton’s official sanction of vigilante violence in the Mollies case represented an increased willingness to resort to extralegal methods in his work. This incident, unlike the ones that preceded it, took place in Pennsylvania against targets that were not explicitly considered outlaws under the law. At this point, it became clear that the

agency was willing to direct their vigilante violence towards members of marginally lawful society.

The case of the Molly Maguires marked a major turning point for the Pinkertons in one other dimension. Beginning in the late 19th century, they began to shift their focus from settling local disputes to arbitrating on behalf of big business. Now under the control Allan Pinkerton’s sons William and Robert, the Agency eagerly expanded its scope to suit the changing demands of their employers, and in so doing entered one of the most fractious periods of conflict between labor and business in American history. While workers’ rights to organize and strike were recognized as legal, they remained contested by management and unpopular with the public at large. Plagued by strikes and labor disputes, American businesses required “watchmen for strikebound plants, mines, railroads, and corporations” to prevent strike violence against machinery and “scabs,” non-union workers used to break a strike. But in providing watchmen to private corporations, the Pinkertons entered an environment fraught with controversy. According to the legal theories of the late 19th century, “it was the duty of local law enforcement bodies or the government to protect the lives of nonunion employees and the company’s property; and if the law or the government failed to do this properly, the employer was justified in hiring a private police force to provide protection.” In reality, however, the government had written itself and local law enforcement out of the equation: during the mid-19th century, “Pennsylvania’s railroads and industrial corporations were adopting the Coal and Iron police commission as a device to build up what historian Robert P. Weiss dramatically but fairly accurately calls, “their own formidable private armies.” It was a contract that required “no investigation, no regulation, no supervision, [and] no responsibility.” It literally created ‘islands’ of police power which were free to float as the employers saw fit.” Corporations frequently had local law enforcement deputize hired Pinkertons, putting the force of law behind their actions and incorporating them into the “coal and iron police.” As the Agency made a name for itself, providing armed guards in seventy-seven strikes between 1869 and 1892, the practice of deputization made the Pinkertons one of these so-called “islands” of police power.

The Pinkertons’ entry into labor disputes proved troublesome from the get-go. Their escapades in the Old West and later with the Molly

49. Ibid., 222.
50. Ibid., 218.
51. Ibid., 222.
52. Allan Pinkerton to George Bangs, August 29, 1875, Pinkerton Papers.
54. Ibid., 225.
57. Ibid., 329.
58. Weiss, 92.
Maguires did much to normalize the use of disproportionate, extra-legal, and vigilante forms of violence. They also gained a reputation for being sympathetic to the interests of big business, which did not endear them to labor — indeed, even less so after their involvement in breaking some seventy-seven strikes, over the course of which three strikers, a bystander, and a young boy were killed. Pinkerton's National Detective Agency became a despised organization among labor organizations. The influential union, the Knights of Labor, argued that "violence was... a matter of Pinkerton policy," while the labor-oriented Populist Party agitated for national legislation to "prevent the conferring of police power on Pinkerton guards."

To be sure, the Pinkertons' reputation for brutality was not undeserved, but it doesn't explain the whole story. The late 19th century bore witness to a broader movement away from the mistrust of a strong centralized government that had previously characterized the country; part of this trend included a growing rejection of private law enforcement agencies and a demand for a nation-wide network of public police departments financed and controlled by the state. While the Pinkertons' increasingly negative press alienated the public and contributed to this trend, the shift was, therefore, also the product of the broader political sentiments of the time. By 1892, the Pinkertons had lost the public's faith, both because of changing perceptions about the legitimacy of private police organizations and because of their reputation for violence. What made Homestead such a particularly explosive situation was not merely the confluence of these diachronic factors, but the tensions specific to labor disputes.

The Homestead Strike of 1892 proved to be a watershed for the Pinkertons with major repercussions for the American labor movement. The most obvious change was the sudden uptick in violence: in the seventy-seven strikes where Pinkertons were involved prior to 1892, only three strikers suffered injuries resulting in death, while Homestead witnessed ten alone. The violence was not, however, limited to the strikebreakers — nor, indeed, had it been with previous incidents. Strikers themselves frequently used violence against Pinkerton watchmen: in 1886, during a strike at the Chicago stockyards, four Pinkertons were severely beaten. At Homestead, however, their violence reached a fever pitch (recall the gauntlet strikers forced surrendering Pinkertons to run). The strike also garnered widespread press coverage. The Homestead Local News reported that, in the week after the strike, around 135 journalists converged on Homestead. The ubiquity of coverage was due in part to the severity of violence, its proximity to major urban areas, and the public outcry it precipitated against "Pinkertonianism" and big business' employment of private agencies to protect property and non-union workers. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate conducted investigations to determine the sequence of events leading up to and during the strike, as well as the causes behind them and whether federal action ought to be taken. Ultimately, however, they deemed both the Pinkertons' actions at Homestead and the use of private police generally to be perfectly legal. But public opinion had turned decisively against the Pinkertons, prompting the Agency to avoid future labor disputes altogether.

A number of states subsequently enacted legislation that outlawed armed private watchmen — effectively ending the era of "Pinkertonianism" and private law enforcement.

Although Homestead represented a departure from past labor disputes, it wasn't an altogether unexpected event; indeed, the Pinkertons' actions in the lead up to 1892 helped set the stage for the violent confrontation. An increased willingness to employ aggressive measures ran up against labor's rejection of private police as a legitimate source of authority. This confluence of factors served to create a "perfect storm" where strikers and Pinkerton watchmen were poised to exacerbate every possible flashpoint. Henry Frick himself knowingly facilitated violence when he decided to bring in Pinkerton watchmen. Their reputation was by now well known; the Pinkertons' involvement in past labor disputes had on more than one occasion provoked violence from strikers. It is obvious that Frick was expecting violence, given that he fortified the plant in June. It is possible that Frick hired the Pinkertons to deliberately provoke workers to commit acts of violence, thereby allowing Frick to shift any blame for violence onto the notoriously violent Pinkerton Agency. Letters exchanged between Frick, the plant's legal counsel, Philander Knox, and the Pinkerton brothers support this reading. The Pinkertons requested that the sheriff be instructed to deputize the watchmen, and Knox assured Robert Pinkerton he would in a letter dated June 30th, 1892. But according to the subcommittee's report, the sheriff, "agreed that if... the property was attacked and there was liable to be destruction of the same, he would deputize them but the determination of the contingency must be left to his judgment." As James D. Horan suggests, and as a later letter from Robert Pinkerton reveals,

61. Ibid., 329.
62. Ibid., 100.
63. Ibid., 99.
64. Ibid., 101.
65. Ibid., 108.
66. Ibid., 100.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., 342.
70. Ibid., 337.
Frick – and the sheriff – had no intention of deputizing the Pinkertons and allowing them to proceed with the force of law behind their actions: Robert Pinkerton, in July of 1893, wrote to Frick requesting reimbursement for the financial losses the Agency sustained at Homestead:

No doubt you will recognize that our foresight in insisting that the sheriff should be made aware of the intention of Carnegie & Co. to bring our men to Homestead and to deputize them should there be an indication of trouble before we would send them there, placed your company in much more favorable light than they would have been placed had they been sent Homestead as originally requested without the sheriff being consulted as to their coming.73

Frick's reluctance to deputize the Pinkertons suggests that he intended to elicit violence from the workers while insulating himself from potential liability.

The Pinkertons' strategy in the lead-up to Homestead ensured that tensions would escalate rapidly. By now, the Pinkertons were expert practitioners of violence. We shouldn't be surprised, then, that they planned their operations at Homestead anticipating a violent confrontation: William Pinkerton arranged for boxes containing rifles, pistols, and ammunition to be loaded onto the barges as they prepared to depart for Homestead. While the brothers insisted that they had "positively instructed the men and our officers that the arms were not to be used except after they were sworn in by the sheriff and their lives were in danger,"72 they nevertheless made preparations not merely for the possibility of violence but for the certainty of it. In that same vein, the Pinkertons demanded that their men be deputized as they finalized the contract. The Pinkertons' insistence in all of these cases demonstrated a too-careful concern about the legality of their actions.

Given these facts, it seems that the extraordinary violence at Homestead arose from intentional policies on the part of Frick and the Pinkerton brothers. These policies created a situation fraught with tension. The violence it provoked is notable on two counts – both for its unprecedented scale and the media firestorm it created, marking the end of the Pinkerton era and of private law enforcement generally. Although Congress ultimately deemed the Pinkertons' role at Homestead legal, the Agency's legitimacy was completely compromised, and the Pinkertons' involvement as watchmen in strikebreaking came to an end.73 As Robert Pinkerton explained to Frick in his letter of 1893, the Agency's complete loss of the public favor more or less ruined the Pinkertons, "For the almost irreparable injury our business sustained, we make no claim whatever."74

The same forces that worked to curtail and eventually stop the Pinkertons also helped strengthen public resolve against private police in general. Although the subcommittee ruled that, "One may be lawfully employed to guard the property of his employer, even to the extent of shooting down an incendiary or another person who approaches the same with the intent of destruction, after warning such trespasser to desist,"75 the public at large took issue with what the Irish World and American Industrial Laborer called "the employment of armed mercenaries."76 The subcommittee minority report substantiates this rejection of "Pinkertoonism." While the subcommittee report and the minority report disagree on the legality of the employment of private organizations, they do agree on one point: "such use of private armed men is an assumption of the State's authority by private citizens."77 Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia subsequently passed laws forbidding armed watchmen from entering their borders.78

The American public, it seems, had grown weary of the Pinkertons and their reputation for extralegal violence. This, combined with the growing appeal of a public law enforcement system, worked to end an era of private policing that rendered the Pinkertons obsolete. Indeed, one might say the Pinkertons' role in bringing about their own end has a poetic or hubristic quality to it: after all, the Agency had actively worked to perfect its strategic deployment of violence, but at Homestead, it was this very strategy that led to ruin. After years of employing ever-escalating violence, the Pinkertons found themselves at an impasse; no longer able to sustain their position on the legal frontiers of society, they necessarily fell from favor, making way for a new era of law enforcement.

Alice Hu in a senior from Redmond, Washington. She is double majoring in classics (Latin and Greek) and history (war and revolution). Alice will begin her Ph.D. in classics at the University of Pennsylvania in Fall of 2011, after a year off.

74. qtd. Horan, The Pinkertons, 357.
75. qtd. Ibid., 356.
77. qtd. Weiss, 94.
78. Morn, 107.
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“DON'T FUSS, MOTHER, THIS ISN'T SO FAST” :
FLAPPERS AND THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN MODERNITY AND MODESTY

JENNIFER OCKELMANN

The 1920s flapper has become a symbol of female modernity in the early 20th century. Real women in the decade between World War I and the Great Depression dealt with a variety of images in the media, each of which told a different story about how they should approach the trends toward modern sexuality, socialization and fashion while still conforming to Victorian ideals of modest, private, passive womanhood. This paper will explore how images and ideas from early films, magazine advertisements and a popular short story reveal a deep tension between modernity and modesty and how women, both real and fictional, responded to these complicated and powerful forces.

Clara Bow was the most unexpected sex symbol of the 1920s. She was a poor tenement dweller from Brooklyn whose childhood was marred by a mentally ill mother and a sexually abusive father, and she never could shake the accent and expressive slang that she picked up on the streets. She rose to the top of the box office several times over the course of the late 1920s and was widely noted for her stunning good looks, electrifying personality, and almost universally acknowledged sex appeal. In 1927 she starred in "IT," a film which would not only capture Bow forever as the quintessential flapper, but would also make her role the most pervasive and memorable image of the flapper, the woman who remains the central cultural memory of women in the 1920s. Yet Bow was also one of the most disliked women in Hollywood, both because of her lower class roots and her supposedly promiscuous lifestyle that included on-set romances, public affairs, and multiple broken engagements. Bow rarely appeared at elite Hollywood parties despite being one of the biggest stars of the decade, and she usually wasn’t even invited to the premieres of her own films. Hollywood expected Bow to follow a set of moral and sexual codes that she ignored – at least according to her fellow stars and gossip columnists – and even as she portrayed characters who increasingly pushed the boundaries of sexual propriety, she fought her own battle against the conservative forces of disapproving, malicious gossip.

The flapper was a “modern woman” who inspired cultural

assumptions about the dress, behavior, and attitude of young women of the decade. But even in media representations that seem to display the frank sexuality, increased social and business interaction, and independence associated with this "modern woman", there is evidence of tension with a more conservative appeal to modesty. Motion pictures, magazine advertisements, and short stories all portrayed the flapper or "modern woman" in different ways, in different contexts, and for different reasons. However, within each type of representation there is evidence of a conversation about the tension between modernity and modesty.

Though the internal discussion was different for each type of source, the visibility of this conversation across categories exposes the centrality of the idea in representations of women in popular culture. Although the flapper of popular memory may not embody a full or realistic picture of the style and behavior of actual women from the decade, the repeated appearance of this conversation about "modern women," and the contradicting attitudes toward so-called "modern" behaviors that many sources reveal indicates that the tension between modern sexuality and modest purity may well have been present in the lives of young women in the 1920s.

"Modern" and "modest" may seem like diametrically opposed adjectives in the context of the 1920s. Modesty in this context is more of a static term: it generally refers to a more conservative, traditional approach to womanhood associated with Victorian ideals of sexual chastity, social restraint, and a gender balance that keeps men in the workplace and women in the home. Female modernity in the 1920s was a much more fluid concept and may best be defined as a break with the past – the changing of styles to skin-baring dresses and short, boyish haircuts, the loosening of strict social codes to include some undefined degree of sexual openness and interaction with men, and a casting off of traditional gender roles to include women entering the public sphere as independent workers, consumers, and members of the social scene. It is important to avoid generalizations when defining these terms, however, and an exploration of the terms quickly shows that the concepts are actually not always on opposite ends of a single spectrum. Rather, both terms are constantly shifting and must be renegotiated with each new source.

To be sure, the flapper was only one type of "modern woman." Lesbians, suffragettes, and temperance advocates all contributed to the evolution of the concept of modern womanhood in the 1920s. However, this paper will focus on the flapper, whose presence in popular culture has lasted through the century, defining to a large extent what is we think about women from the Roaring Twenties. The flapper also best captures the tension between modernity and modesty inherent in 1920s representations of women. The sources explored in this paper engage with the flapper as a lens through which to understand this tension.

The Creation of the Modern Woman

The origins of the flapper trope are not entirely clear, but one of the first uses of the word in American popular culture is featured in the title of the 1920 Frances Marion film "The Flapper," even though the flapper character does not closely resemble modern imaginations of this figure and her role in the 1920s. F. Scott Fitzgerald is often credited with inventing the flapper, even though he never used the term in his first stories – in fact, his wife Zelda, is often considered the "first" flapper, and the two of them spent most of the decade drinking, partying, and making gossip newspaper headlines. In actuality, Fitzgerald's stories popularized a set of looks, attitudes, and behaviors that were associated with the flapper, and he capitalized on the idea's popularity by continuing to write about her. Fitzgerald's stories, popular films, and artist's drawings combined to leave behind a somewhat cohesive memory of the quintessential flapper: she was usually a young woman in her late teens or early twenties, visually remarkable with her short, body-fitting dress, short hair, and heavy make up. Flappers reputedly caroused with men, going out to dances and speakeasies, engaging in a casual kind of sexuality unimaginable to their mothers. They were reckless; they were brazen and brash; they represented freedom, youth, beauty, and wildness.

Media representations of these scandalous young women moved further away from Victorian propriety and began to show women in a variety of new situations and contexts. In films, short stories, and magazine advertisements, the young flapper was increasingly shown out of the house in social contexts, cigarette in hand, driving around in an automobile with a different man every night. Young women also entered the urban workforce in larger numbers than ever before, many of them holding jobs in department stores or office buildings, working to financially support themselves and possibly live on their own. These flappers were a "new" type of woman – the "modern woman." She appeared in magazines, on stage, in gossip columns, and in literature, and though representations may have varied, the modern woman was imitated, lusted after, and even glorified.

But amid the popularity of films that showed women drinking and dancing, magazine advertisements that encouraged the buying habits

of modern women, and Fitzgerald's sex-charged heroes and heroines, the
definite ideal of modesty and purity did not disappear from popular
culture. On the contrary, the very ads, films and stories that propagated the
curiously modern concept of the flapper also often simultaneously
reinforced a traditional expectation of modesty, creating an internal tension
or contradiction between the two forces. The casual sexuality of the "modern"
woman was acknowledged in popular culture, but it was rarely accepted as
the societal norm. Various representations of flappers attracted attention,
excitement, and popularity, but sometimes her sexuality and search for
independence was subjected to ridicule and contempt. Young women who
came of age in the 1920s faced a conflict between modernity and modesty
even as they appeared ready to embrace the future. Modesty, innocence, and
feminine virtue were still valued aspects of mainstream American culture,
but the degree to which they were promoted and represented in various
media images changed over the decade. Each representation held a different
theory of modesty and portrayed it in a different way. As such, this paper
will look at product placement as reflections on this tension — specifically,
magazine and newspaper advertisements for disposable sanitary pads that
promised freedom at a minimum sacrifice to modesty. The paper will also
explore two films, "The Flapper" from 1920, and "IT" from 1927, which
expressed conflicting standards of modernity as well as differing tensions on
the issue of modesty. Finally, this paper will examine a short story by F. Scott
Fitzgerald entitled "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," in which the main character
faces both internal and external pressures to modernize and simultaneously
stay within the appropriate bounds of modesty.

These sources are ideal for an exploration of this tension because
each contains relevant examples and represents types of media that gained
enormous popularity during this period, reaching wider audiences than ever
before as they experimented with new styles and modes of representation.
Advertisements for sanitary pads reached both male and female readers
in magazines such as Ladies' Home Journal and Harper's Weekly after the
 taboo against even speaking about feminine hygiene products was broken,
and this fact itself represents a shift toward a more modern conception
of womanhood as it reveals a new openness about women's issues. Films,
meanwhile, reached wider audiences than almost any other period in
history as the studio system produced dozens of silent films for mass
consumption each year, creating the first "movie stars" that would become
celebrities in the modern period. They also served as one of the mainstays
of visual representations for women in this time period, and since most
films followed the same basic facets of screenplays in their genre, many
of the women that appeared on screen fit a similar mold. Finally, F. Scott
Fitzgerald's short stories not only made up the bulk of his income, they also
reached much greater audiences than even his most famous novels. Their
easy-to-read, abbreviated representations of female modernity and modesty
would also help to define the modern flapper. As Joshua Zeitz points out, it
is sometimes difficult to tell if he "created the flapper or she created him."4

"What the World Expect Women To-day": Advertising Modesty and
Modernity in an Unmarked Box

In 1920, a product hit the market that probably changed the daily
life of the average woman much more than the fashionable shortening of
skirts or the growth of female drinking. That product was the disposable
sanitary pad, and though its advent is not widely remembered as a
milestone, a close analysis of the methods used to advertise it reveal the
tension between modernity and modesty. Advertising "sanitary products"
was forbidden until a few years into the 20th century, and most magazines
and newspapers still considered it taboo, despite the fact that two major
brands of super-absorbent cellulocotton had already hit store shelves in 1920.5
Even Ladies' Home Journal forbade sanitary pad advertisements until almost
four years later, but by the end of the decade, many women's magazines,
along with gender-neutral publications such as the Saturday Evening Post
and the New York Herald Tribune, carried such advertisements.

Though different advertisements sometimes alternated tactics
or phrasing to motivate women to purchase their products, there were a
number of themes that reappeared in many of these ads. Modess (Johnson
and Johnson) and Kotex (Cellucotton Products Company) were two of
the most common brands of disposable sanitary pads, and each had an
ad campaign that reappeared frequently throughout the decade. Almost
all advertisements carried a wordy description of what made this product
so exciting and distinctly modern — it is "softer, conforming and without
clumsiness... amazingly absorbent and truly disposable", according to one
1929 Modess ad.6 A Kotex ad from 1923 called on the oft-touted quality
of the sanitary pads as "easy to dispose of instantly and conveniently";
many advertisements also mentioned that disposal was simple and private,
allowing women to avoid publicly acknowledging the fact that they were
menstruating.7

Advertisements for sanitary pads showcased the tension between
modernity and modesty by advertising a modern product that could also

4. Zeitz, 41.
5. "Cotton substitute improves women's lives: Disposable feminine sanitary pads
6. Modess Sanitary Napkins, " Don't Fuss, Mother, This Isn't So Fast," Woman's
Home Companion, September 1929. Print advertisement.
7. Cellucotton Products Co., "Kotex completes Milday's toilette, ensuring perfect
assist women in maintaining high standards of modesty and privacy. “Ask for it by name,” several Kotex ads urge, telling women that they can approach a sales person and simply say “Kotex” with no further discussion required. Many of the advertisements for both Kotex and Modess featured a picture of the box, which was almost always unmarked except for the brand name, and several ads even specifically referred to this plain box as an added level of protection from embarrassment. This, combined with the reluctance of many magazines and newspapers to even advertise sanitary products for many years, reveals that even though modesty and privacy appeared to be less important parts of women’s lives in the speak easies and dance halls of the decade, they were still considered valued and highly promotable traits, at least when it came to sanitary products and their advertisement. Menstruation, which (as some ads pointed out) affected half of the world’s population, was something to be dealt with privately and was, by implication, shameful. One ad campaign even offered a “silent coupon” – a woman could merely hand the coupon to a sales person, and she would be handed a free trial of the product without ever having to speak of it. Even the name of Johnson and Johnson’s brand - “Modess” – is reminiscent of the word “modest.” These ads showed that sanitary pads allowed women to be modest as they handled their private problem of menstruation, and encouraged this modesty even as they purchased and discussed the product.

And yet, women were not being pressured to buy convenient sanitary products so that they could stay home to take care of their family and house, and in this way the advertisements appealed to women with more modern lifestyles that broke with traditional gender roles. Many of the advertisements touted the fact that the disposable sanitary pad allowed women to go out at any time of the month to socialize or work, and participate in the activities of a “modern” woman. One Kotex advertisement from 1926 declared in the opening paragraph of its short essay (which was supposedly written by a graduate nurse),

Sheerest, gayest gowns; your filmiest, daintiest things – wear them without a moment’s thought! Social activities, meet them in confidence. Dance, dine, motor for hours... unhindered, without a doubt or fear.

The rest of the short essay describes other basic details about Kotex sanitary pads, listing many of the commonly advertised reasons that women should buy them. But the tone of the ad was set by the first paragraph, as well as the large drawing at the top of the page, which depicts two women in fancy, frilly outfits. Advertisers acknowledged that women wanted to go out and socialize, and they sought to appeal to this desire. The phrase “dance, dine, motor for hours”, or a variation of it, appears in more than ten different Kotex advertisements from the 1920s. Out of a sample of 66 feminine hygiene ads from the 1920s as contained in the Duke University Library Ad Access Digital Collection, 18 mention social engagements, pleasure activities, or entertaining as the primary motivation for purchasing and using disposable sanitary pads. Several others, which do not explicitly refer to social engagements or leisure, show fashionably dressed young women in social situations. None of these ads depict families in the home or childcare and domestic responsibilities that many women dealt with daily. According to these ads, social activity is not only encouraged, it is expected, and though older women could possibly engage in “dancing, dining and motoring for hours,” younger women, unfettered by familial responsibilities, seem to be the intended audience. These women are depicted as engaging in social activities, having the independence and – with Kotex – the ability to do as they wished.

In what is perhaps a statement on how women and their priorities were represented in this era, of the 66 advertisements in the sample, only eight refer to work or business as a motivation for using the convenient new sanitary pads. One Kotex ad from 1928, titled “What the World Expects of Women to-day” explains, “In society – in business – the discarding of makeshift hygienic methods is demanded.” The title itself is strong evidence that advertisers perceived that women were working in new contexts, with new expectations. According to this advertiser’s view of their intended audience, women were newly “expected” to be a part of society and the business world every day, without any of the hindrances of feminine hygiene. The ad implies that previously – before “today” or, presumably, the early or mid-1920s – women were not expected to leave the house and work in the business world. The woman of “today”, however, could be part of the working world, and society expected her to be productive and useful without letting feminine issues get in the way. The language of the ad implies that women should be aware of these new expectations.

Another business-oriented ad, this one in the Boston Post in 1929, boasts the headline, “If only I could tell this to every business girl”, attributed to an office manager. The opening paragraph stresses how the protection of Kotex will allow a woman to be a full member of the business community, explaining, “In offices throughout the country – in offices all over the world – women are realizing the full value of every working day,

11. Kotex Company, “If only I could tell this to every business girl,” Boston Post, 1929. Print advertisement.
free from the problems which once retarded their progress.” According to this advertiser, menstruation was a major barrier to women’s progress in the office before the advent of convenient, disposable sanitary pads, and a modern “business girl” would need to use Kotex in order to become a fully useful member of the business world. With “the full value of every working day,” these women were not only more productive members of society; they were also getting rid of problems that women in business had faced in the past.

Almost all of the ads convey an unspoken appeal to modernity, and many explicitly refer to the connection between the “modern woman”, her new opportunities and responsibilities, and disposable sanitary pads. The phrase “new woman,” “modern woman,” or some allusion to the concept of modernity appears in 14 of the 66 advertisements in the sample. One 1925 Kotex ad in the New York Herald Tribune reminds women that, “Being fresh and charming every day has ever been the average woman’s problem. But today... the modern woman meets it with a smile.” Advertisements often compliment consumers who buy their products, and in this case, being “the modern woman” is a trait worth complimenting. Women can become more “modern” by purchasing Kotex. The appearance of the term “modern woman” shows that the concept emerged in the 1920s and was not something that was determined in retrospect.

Young women of this era sought to be modern – or, at least, advertisers believed they did. The idea of modernity – of women going out to socialize or work, or wearing flimsy clothes and sheer frocks – was a driving force in many advertisements. Yet preservation of modesty was one of the perks of these disposable pads, and many ads promoted their product’s unmarked box as a safeguard of discretion and privacy. The advertisements are in conversation about the importance of modesty within the context of the unstoppable force of modernization of women’s behaviors, fashion, and activities. Advertisers implied that women should seek to be modern and yet, perhaps paradoxically, still retain their traditional virtue and modesty.

The Flapper In Transition: Innocence and the Vamp

Modern women were emerging everywhere, and one of the most widespread and enduring images of the flapper came from motion pictures. Though the first motion pictures began appearing in the 1890s, the medium did not take off as a vehicle of popular culture until the late 1910s. Through the first decades of film production, most women in films were reminiscent of the Victorian era, with long hair, prudent morals, and generally chaste.

quiet personalities. But during the 1920s, women in films began to display different fashions and different ideas about sexuality. New female stars such as Clara Bow – whose real life was supposedly even more scandalous than the lives of her characters – portrayed women who flirted with open sexuality and used their good looks and short skirts to win attention and attraction. The move towards sexuality did not happen overnight; rather, female characters developed, through the decade, a greater awareness and propriety to display sexuality and participate in sexually charged situations. Yet even as these representations of women revealed a more blatant sexual appeal than earlier actresses such as Mary Pickford could have dreamed of, standards of morality and purity remained at the core of many flapper films, and many plots and characters were mired in contradictory lifestyles and decisions that expose a tension in these films. Filmmakers grabbed audience attention with their actresses’ short skirts and daring behavior, but they shied away from making a complete break with a moral message of modesty and propriety within their films.

Though actresses such as Clara Bow, Colleen Moore and Louise Brooks would dominate the public memory as the silent era’s famous flappers, the first character that could plausibly be categorized as a flapper was Olive Thomas’s character Genevieve King in Francis Marion’s 1920 film “The Flapper.” Genevieve is 16 years old and bored of life in Orange Springs, Florida, a town that “didn’t even have a saloon to close,” according to a title card. Her father sends her to boarding school in the Northeast and she gains a reputation for flirting with men – not only her wholesome boyfriend from back home, but also the dashing, mysterious, much older Richard Channing. But Genevieve, now called Ginger by school friends, isn’t blatantly sexual; she is pretty and sweet, and uses her theoretically innocent feminine wiles to win attention, including an invitation to a dance from Channing.

Ginger’s inner battle between modern sexuality and modest innocence plays out vividly on the silver screen. While she prepares for her dance at the Country Club with girls from her school, she realizes that she doesn’t have anything appropriate – or perhaps adult enough – to wear. Two of her friends pull out scissors and cut off the top portion of her dress, leaving her shoulders and upper chest bare. Ginger seems torn between appreciating the effect, and wondering if she has gone too far; she practices holding up a fan to cover herself, and when there is a knock at the door, she and her friends hurriedly hold up another shirt to cover her bare chest. Her

fitting dress, and applies dark eye make-up before she saunters back into her home, to the shock and horror of her family – and Richard Channing, who has recently arrived.

Yet Genevieve is not truly the debauched woman she appears to be; in fact, she doesn’t even realize the implications of her manner of dress and behavior. She is playing a part that she doesn’t understand, and her naïveté is obvious after a dismayed Channing asks, “What is his name?” Genevieve breaks the cinematic fourth wall to look at the camera, clearly confused, and a card reads, “This was a new angle.” She has absolutely no idea what Channing is referring to, and though it is never explicitly stated, it seems that he is asking about the man who has taken her innocence – and presumably her virginity – and turned her into the sexually-charged “vamp” she is dressed as. The vamp, then, was not merely a style of fashion – it was a statement about one’s impure sexual history.

Genevieve’s attempt at pantomime is cleared up in the end, however, in a somewhat slapstick appearance by the real thieves. Had she truly been a “vamp,” a depraved, modest woman, the scandal would have been unbearable, judging by the looks on the faces of her father and other relatives. But no matter – by the end of the film, her long curls and wholesome boyfriend have returned, and her brief foray into the world of modernity and sexuality (unrealistic and imitative as it may have been) is over. Genevieve spent the film internally and externally torn between modernity and modesty – her skin-exposing dress, her attraction to Channing, her involvement with the thieves at a class New York hotel, and her antics as an imitation vamp pulled her towards a more modern appearance of sexuality, but in the end, she has returned to the safety of the family, once again an innocent, modest child. The romantic love letters she reads, which indicate a sexuality that Genevieve isn’t even remotely familiar with, belong to the female thief, who is eventually apprehended by the police, along with her co-conspirator and lover. This connection of sexuality with criminality speaks to the type of moral that the filmmakers supposed would be popular with the audience. Genevieve herself grapples with joining the criminals and trying to snag Richard Channing, but her natural modesty and innocence save her from a life of crime and debauchery. The conversation between modernity and modesty is fairly clear: “modern” behaviors may be fun for a young girl to explore, but they will ultimately lead to ruin. Though the film is titled “The Flapper,” it is not similar to later flapper films in structure or characterization, and may be considered a representation of the flapper in transition and development, before she became the memorable and mesmerizing presence of the later 1920s. Clara Bow would pick up the torch of the modern flapper and turn the image into a different – and much more sexual – type of character.

17. Zeitz, 231.
A Magnetic Force:
The Sexual Modernity and Modesty of the “IT” Girl

Clara Bow was, quite literally, the original “IT” girl. She captivated audiences with her alluring good looks, intriguing expressions, and sensual performances. She starred in many flapper films in the 1920s, but her most enduring film was her 1927 film “IT,” which defined not only Bow as an actress and a personality but also, in some ways, the entire generation of flappers. Film representations of flappers had come a long way from “The Flapper” in 1920, and other vehicles of popular culture—literature, fashion, and social commentators—had all added their voices to the mix. In an interesting intersection of literature and film, “IT” was based on a story written by Elinor Glyn and published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1926. Glyn was one of the first writers of erotic fiction meant for women, and much of her work was considered quite racy by her contemporaries. Use of the word “sex” was generally considered unacceptable in the 1920s, so Glyn coined the term “IT” as a euphemism for sex or sex appeal. Her story described the elusive quality of “IT” and inspired director Clarence Badger to define the term for audiences—by showing them Clara Bow. The film also refuses to place modesty and modernity on completely opposite sides of a single spectrum, and several of the characters, particularly Bow’s character Betty, engage in behaviors or situations that at times contradict each other. The conversation about modernity and modesty in “IT” is much more nuanced than in the flapper, and it is important to recognize that no single definition of either term appropriately sums up the film’s entire stance on the tension between them inherent in modern womanhood.

One of the first title cards of the film reads, “IT” is that peculiar quality which some persons possess, which attracts others of the opposite sex. The possessor of “IT” must be absolutely unselfconscious, and must have that magnetic “sex appeal” which is irresistible.” This definition and the very term “IT” speaks to the cultural tension between frank discussion of modern sexuality and modest, euphemistic references to a topic that many people felt shouldn’t be spoken of in polite company, if at all. Glyn may not have been the first to coin a euphemism for sex, but hers became the most well-known, perhaps because of its timing. Audiences in 1927 were interested enough in the modern woman’s sexuality to want to discuss it, but concerned enough about modesty to want to avoid speaking of it directly. Viewers recognized that Clara Bow was very attractive—modern audiences would unblushingly call her voluptuous body and dark eyes “sexy”—but in 1927 motion picture viewers couldn’t imagine using such obscene and immodest language. Thus, saying that she had “IT” was an appropriate way to describe a well-known, identifiable quality. It also created the premise of an entire film dedicated to explaining what “IT” was and proving, without a doubt, that Clara Bow had it.

Bow’s character, Betty Lou, begins the film as a shop girl who is attracted to her new boss, Cyrus Waltham. “Sweet Santa Claus, give me him!” she proclaims dreamily to her co-workers. Already the sexual tone of her attraction is clear—Betty has never met Waltham, but she “wants” him, and her desire is at least partially sexual. But Waltham doesn’t even notice Betty, so she concocts a scheme to get him to ask her out despite his presumed engagement to a blond socialite. Her plan works—Betty possesses so much “IT” that Waltham almost entirely forgets about any other plans he may have had and the two plan a date to the amusement park at Coney Island. That evening, Betty goes home to her small apartment and her roommate to gush about the date and select an outfit, but finds her small selection of dresses lacking. In a scene that almost perfectly mirrors young Genevieve King’s dress-cutting debacle, Betty chooses a dress, takes a pair of scissors, and hesitatingly slices down the front and around the top to create a low-cut, revealing new outfit. Her roommate Molly seems torn between amusement and disapproval at Betty’s rash decision to destroy the dress, but Betty is unabashedly pleased, modeling her new dress in the mirror and grinning without a hint of shame or fear about any perception of immodesty. Betty knows what she wants, and she knows that a revealing dress will help her get it. The idea of female sexuality in terms of fashion has evolved since “The Flapper” in 1920; while Genevieve was concerned about the immodesty of her low-cut dress, Betty seems happy to be displaying her sexuality.

Coney Island turns out to be the perfect place for Betty’s date with Waltham, and the perfect place for tensions between modernity and modesty to come into conversation during “IT.” A several-minute montage of Betty and Cyrus on the various rides and attractions takes the audience through a whirlwind account of new contexts of co-ed physicality and sexuality. A spinning ride called the “Social Mixer” sends Betty and Waltham sliding off the wooden platform and into each other and other riders; Waltham wraps his arms and legs around Betty as they slide down a giant slide; and Waltham struggles to pull Betty to her feet as she falls in a spinning cylinder on a fun house-type attraction. Her dress rides up to reveal her silky undergarments to Waltham—and the audience—as she laughs. Many actual Coney Island attractions were designed to put participants into physical contact with each other, and it seems that the young people involved—including Betty—were appreciative of the opportunity to engage in changing restrictions on

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18. *Discovering the “IT” Girl.*
The film’s internal conversation about the tension between modernity and modesty – and the outside forces acting on it – becomes even clearer when Waltham gives Betty a ride back to her apartment. As they pull up to the curb, he puts his arm around her, and after a moment, leans in to kiss her. But Betty pulls away and slaps Waltham, looking angry and insulted. “You’re one of those Minute Men,” she tells him, according to a title card, “You think that once you know a girl for a minute, you can kiss her?” She storms out of the car and up to her apartment, leaving Waltham bewildered. But as the camera follows Betty into her apartment, the audience sees her staring dreamily out the window, then laughing and playing with the stuffed dog Waltham won for her at the amusement park.

This scene is perhaps one of the most richly complicated appearances of the tension between the modern flapper movement and traditional modesty in “IT.” After a night of flirtatious glances and physical contact on amusement park rides, Betty’s reaction to Waltham’s attempted kiss is perhaps surprising to the audience. But in Betty’s mind, it is a calculated move to retain an appearance of modesty and propriety, and – based on the sly look on her face as she returns to her apartment – a trick to keep Waltham coming back for more. Though Betty’s sexual history is never explicitly discussed during the film, audiences could possibly infer that she partsakes in sexual activity, based her enjoyment of her low-cut, short dress and her easy flirtation with Waltham – she is not new at the game of dating and using sexuality to attract attention, and she is certainly aware of the effect she has on men. But this scene tells the audiences that Betty is not sexually promiscuous – or at least, she doesn’t want to appear so in front of Waltham.

Even within Betty’s contradictory behavior, the film reveals a more subtle internal conversation. Earlier scenes seemed to be leading the audience to view Betty as a flapper who openly flaunts her sexuality, but just as the action gets too close to revealing and implicitly promoting this type of behavior, it supplants any possible approval with an exaggerated slap in the face to Waltham. Sexuality turns comic as Betty storms away in triumph, but the film has spoken to the tension between modernity and modesty. The modern conception of “dating” might include flirting and physical contact, but it doesn’t necessarily extend to sex. The flapper – the “modern woman” – might go out with men to have a good time, but she should also resist his sexual advances and display an appropriate mix of modern behavior and modest purity. And yet Betty’s clear amusement with the end of the evening shows that she herself has been playing a game, a game in which she walks the line between modernity and modesty, being modern enough to go on a date with Waltham in a short dress, but modest enough to refuse to kiss him after that date.

The plot complicates after Betty and Cyrus’s date when Betty’s roommate Molly gets into trouble. Molly, who shares Betty’s small apartment, is an unwed mother, and perhaps the most morally questionable character in the film. Her neighbors – and, perhaps, the filmmakers – see her blatant pre-marital sexuality as something shameful, and this shame literally manifests itself as illness. Molly is so sick that she is unable to work or really provide for her child; any youth or beauty that she previously may have had has been stripped away, and she looks tired and haggard. She is a modern woman who has given away all of her modesty, and so she has fallen from grace and become an outcast. But Betty, the big-hearted heroine of “IT”, loves her friend and clearly uses part of her own meager paycheck to help support Molly and her baby, despite the stigma of the fatherless child and Molly’s own embarrassment at being not only an unwed mother, but also one who is incapable of supporting her own child. For audiences, this may call into question Betty’s own stance on pre-marital sex: if she is so supportive of her friend, is it really a stretch to imagine that she also engages in pre-marital sexual activity? Though the answer is unclear, this friendship itself adds to the tension between modernity and modesty, and what Betty does next mixes up the situation even more.

Betty arrives home one day, accompanied by Cyrus Waltham’s good friend Monty, to find two meddling neighbors trying to take away Molly’s baby, which sends Molly into hysterics. The women cite the welfare of the child, claiming that Molly should not be able to keep her baby if she is sick and unemployed, but it is not difficult to guess that their disapproval really stems from Molly’s lack of a husband. Betty races up to her apartment and takes the baby from Molly’s arms before boldly telling the neighbors that the baby is hers, and because she is healthy and employed, they have no right to take him away. The neighbors are suspicious of Betty’s claims, and she turns to Monty to assure the women that she is employed at Waltham’s Department Store. He does so haltingly, clearly nervous about being part of the shameful, public discussion, and shocked that Betty had kept a fatherless child a secret. Other neighbors and neighborhood children gather around to watch, but Betty unabashedly claims the child and tells the meddling neighbors to leave. Betty has supported her friend and saved her from losing her child, but the story makes the paper with Betty’s name and an interpretation of the scandal that emphasizes the fact that she identified herself as the baby’s mother without naming a father. The story finds its way to Cyrus Waltham, and Monty confirms it. Waltham, who had fallen in love with Betty and planned to marry her, is devastated by the news. The


fact that Betty has a child out of wedlock essentially ends his plans to be with her, and though it is unsaid, it seems clear that for a man of his social status to be involved with such a woman would be unacceptable.

Shortly after this upsetting revelation, Betty arrives in Waltham's office, with several other clerks, to receive her bonus. Waltham ignores her, but she sticks around after the other girls leave and begins to flirt. She jumps up onto his desk and arranges herself in a seductive pose, clearly set on using her sexuality to regain his attention. Waltham is at first cold, but apparently Betty's "IT" - or her sex appeal - is too strong for him to resist, and he admits that he loves her. But Betty's excitement at this pronouncement ends quickly as Waltham says that he will buy her anything she wants and wants to have her around - but he won't marry her. Betty, expecting a marriage proposal and unaware that Waltham believes her to be an unwed mother, is infuriated at Waltham's offer to essentially be his mistress and storms out of the office.

This scene further complicates the prospective viewpoint of the film regarding modernity and modesty. The filmmakers make it clear that Betty's status as an unwed would make her ineligible to marry someone like Cyrus Waltham; having a fatherless child does not make a woman more "modern," it just makes her immodest. Waltham would, apparently, find it acceptable to have a woman with a child as a mistress, but marriage is out of the question. Meanwhile, despite Betty's clear flirtation and enjoyment of her modern lifestyle of dates and short dresses, marriage is her end goal. The concepts of modesty and modernity do not lie on a simple spectrum in the film or in the minds of the characters. This crucial fact reveals that the tension between these two concepts, both in this film and in other sources, cannot be described by simply pitting them against each other.

The internal tension between female modernity and modesty in "IT" comes in many forms. Clara Bow's character is a walking contradiction - she possesses plenty of "IT" and flaunts it to gain attention, she comes to the aide of a disgraced friend and isn't afraid to destroy her own reputation when that friend is in need, and she partakes in sexualized physical contact when the situation calls for it. But at the same time, she wants to maintain an appearance of propriety and modesty by not kissing on the first date and, in the end, she wants Cyrus Waltham to marry her - and she gets what she wants by the end of the film. Betty couldn't have succeeded in snagging Waltham without one major thing: her irresistible "IT." But her behavior also exposes a critical point in the conversation between modernity and modesty - that they are not necessarily opposed to one another in every situation. She proves that balancing rules about traditional gender roles and sexual purity with more open sexuality and looser moral codes may be the key to being a truly "modern woman."

An Attempt to Modernize: Fitzgerald Weighs In

In 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald was 24 years old, hoping to find financial success through his writing and marry his girlfriend. He penned three novels and a few dozen short stories during the decade that he himself coined - the "Jazz Age." That being said, his general contribution to popular culture goes beyond these written works. According to some contemporaries, Fitzgerald modeled some of his female characters after his wife, Zelda, and it is clear that the couple led highly visible lives as one of America's first celebrity couples. Their drunken exploits, lavish lifestyle, and sometimes-absurd public appearances made them near constant fodder for gossip columns as they helped usher in the age of the modern celebrity.

Many of Fitzgerald's stories contained young women who might have fallen into the loosely defined category of the flapper, and though he did not often use the term or decisively define the type, his observations about the flapper stuck in the minds of his contemporaries. Whether or not his version of the modern woman was more realistic than other representations, his popularity and visibility in American culture elevated his interpretation of the flapper to a higher level; his version was imitated and emulated, and whether or not there was anyone in the world truly like her, his observations about the modern woman entered the cultural lexicon.

In one of his more famous short stories, "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," Fitzgerald not only discusses what makes a young girl "popular" in the modern era, he also tackles the issue of the more traditional, sometimes clueless girl who finds herself swept into the modern world. Fitzgerald sets the stage for "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" at a dance hall in a small town where the older ladies have noticed that "when the younger set dance in the summer-time it is with the very worst intentions in the world," and where popularity among girls is calculated in part by how often she is cut in on during a dance. By these standards, it appears that the title character, Bernice, is not up to par with many of the other girls there, as she has spent the last hour dancing with the same boy. Bernice is a visitor in town and has been staying with her cousin Marjorie for a month, and though she is reasonably pretty and from a wealthy family, she overheard Marjorie explaining that her lack of popularity comes from her being a "bum time." Here is a different but related interpretation of Elinor Glyn's "IT" - Bernice is pretty enough, but she is boring, and she doesn't know how to talk to boys about anything except the weather and cars. Fitzgerald describes what

22. "Zeit, 82.
Bernice is missing when he says, "No matter how beautiful or brilliant a girl may be, the reputation of not being frequently cut in on makes her position at a dance unfortunate. Perhaps boys prefer her company to that of the butterflies with whom they dance a dozen times an evening, but youth in this jazz-nourished generation is temperamentally restless." They are, in other words, modern, and looking for modern girls as well.

Bernice takes her cousin's words to heart, and Marjorie agrees to give Bernice advice on how to be more popular. She struggles at first to understand exactly what qualities Marjorie is trying to inspire her to imitate, and she begins to quote Louisa May Alcott's 1868 novel *Little Women*. Marjorie cuts her off violently and questions the relevance of the quote for today's women, saying,

"...What modern girl could live like those inane females?"

"They were the models for our mothers."

Marjorie laughed.

"Yes, they were--not! Besides, our mothers were all very well in their way, but they know very little about their daughters' problems."

Marjorie calls upon the concept of the "modern girl" to implore Bernice to forget the way she thinks and adopt a totally new style and attitude. She points out that their mothers know "very little" about the issues their daughters face, indicating that Marjorie herself sensed that she was living in a different, more modern time. Marjorie counsels Bernice that wearing one becoming dress three nights straight is better than wearing two unbecoming dresses, and teaches her several lines she can use in conversations with men, including the question, "Do you think I ought to bob my hair?" Bernice uses these lines and tactics at the next dance, and finds success comes quickly once she starts to show a little self-confidence and attention to popular topics of conversation. Boys start to cut in on her during dances, she gains a following of interested listeners whenever she speaks, and she even steals the attention of her cousin's sometimes-boyfriend Warren. She has become a "modern girl," defined in this case by her popularity, her confidence, and her successful interactions with men.

But Bernice's newfound popularity -- and especially the attention she receives from Warren -- angers her cousin Marjorie, who never had Bernice's best interests in mind in the first place. Marjorie has realized that Bernice's most popular and appealing line concerns the question of bobbing her hair, which Bernice doesn't really intend to do -- she figures that it's a great talking point, but in a few weeks she'll go back to her hometown and nobody will know the difference. Bernice gets so much attention with the line because, as she says, to have bobbed hair would make her a "society vampire" -- a type of modern girl that she herself doesn't really approve of, apparently, based on her reluctance to actually bob her hair. Marjorie publicly calls Bernice on her bobbing bluff on one of the last days of Bernice's visit and forces Bernice to the barbershop to follow through. Bernice is fiercely proud of her long hair; among Marjorie's friends, long hair seems to be the rule, and it seems that Bernice's hair in particular is very pretty -- but in front of a group of amazed onlookers, the barber cuts it all off.

It is "ugly as sin," Bernice thinks to herself, and despite what seems to be a heroic, brazen move, she instantly falls out of favor with Warren, Marjorie's friends, her aunt, and -- metaphorically, if not quite literally -- society in general. Bobbing her hair was certainly modern, but in her particular social group and her particular time and place, it was an indication of going too far and giving up all vestiges of female modesty and beauty. Like in "IT", the source of modernity is clear: confidence, interaction with men, and dressing stylishly. But also like in "IT", modesty is a more confusing topic. Bobbed hair, which seems as if it would fall under the same category as modernity, actually becomes an issue of lost modesty. The tension between modesty and modernity is apparent in Bernice's previous viewpoint about modesty and her hesitation to cut her hair but eventual decision to do so. Marjorie also represents an ongoing and unclear conversation between modernity and modesty; she prides herself on being attractive to many men and, according to the narrator, engages in "affairs with boys," but loves her long hair, maintains a prim attitude in public, and clearly finds Bernice's bob to be over the line.

These characters and their behaviors came out of a man's imagination and were intended for mass consumption. Whether or not there were girls in America like Bernice and Marjorie, and even if Fitzgerald meant his characters to be more satirical than realistic, this representation of modern women did not escape the conversation about modernity versus modesty. His story comments on the struggle that young girls may have felt between choosing a way of life that was more modern, or one that was more traditional or modest, and describes the tension even within these very definitions and the disagreement over their meanings.

Each of these characterizations or representations of young women has a slightly different conversation about the tension between modernity and modesty. In these cases, modernity is, for the most part, a fairly cohesive idea: the modern flapper dressed fashionably, interacted with men and society in general, and displayed an increased sexuality that would have been considered inappropriate by their mothers. Each representation adds something different to the concept: Clara Bow's character in "IT" adds a vivacity and self-confidence; advertisements for sanitary pads promote a freedom of activity in both social life and the business world; and F. Scott Fitzgerald focuses on the controversial trend of bobbed hair. The one
characteristic they share in common, however, is the concept of changing norms and the end of traditional female stereotypes and roles.

These ideas all relate to a developing, changing concept of the modern woman over the decade, proving that no single modern woman or flapper entered the scene in 1920 and left it in 1929 exactly as she had been 10 years earlier. The changes that occurred over the decade reveal that modern and modest ideas were often in flux, both within specific representations of women and over time. The blatant sexuality of Betty Lou in "IT" in 1927 would not have been tolerated by viewers of "The Flapper" in 1920; sanitary pad advertisements were essentially taboo until 1924, and even then carried the weight of leaving many things unsaid (the word "period" would remain unsaid in advertising until the 1980s); and though in 1922 Bernice was the lone girl in her town to bob her hair, by 1927 Betty Lou worked in a department store full of short-haired girls. Even as the concept of modernity changed, there were many constants, and one of the biggest was forward movement and a loosening of traditional ideals.

Less cohesive, in general, was the concept of modesty. The tension that plays out in each of these sources would not have been possible unless there was a more general cultural question about female modesty. There was no single, focused effort in 1920s media to introduce a conversation about the pull of modernity and modesty in representations of women. Instead, as is often the case during periods of change, the general mood of liberalization and modernization clashed with the traditional tug of conservatism to create a representation of the flapper as a modern woman who was neither shockingly modern nor consistently modest, but rather engaged with elements of both to fit the tone of the era. It would be a long time before the likes of Clara Bow, with her on-set affairs and multiple engagements, would be accepted in Hollywood and in American society in general. The characters Bow played, as well as the women represented in other forms of mass media, would help to shape not only the way observers of the 1920s—and future generations—viewed the flapper, but also the way those generations viewed "modern women" in their own time.

Jennifer Ockelmann in a junior from Redondo Beach, California. She is majoring in history with an emphasis on American history.
Our First Chinese: American-Chinese Interactions in 1890s Palo Alto

Christopher Lowman

Chinese servants were an integral part of the early Palo Alto community, working first on the Stanford Stock Farm, then for the university during the founding years of the 1890s, and finally in the new town. However, as the town developed, the Chinese were exposed to the anti-immigration sentiment rampant elsewhere across the state. Attitudes within Palo Alto changed according to the shifting demographics of the community. The example of Palo Alto serves as a temporal microcosm that reflected the longer progress of the anti-Chinese movement in California, and highlights the various attitudes toward the Chinese according to the socio-economic status of the Americans with whom they lived.

Palo Alto, the sprawling stock farm and estate of Leland and Jane Stanford, underwent a dramatic transformation during the 1890s. From a private residence set among empty fields and equally spacious estates, the Stanfords’ land was transformed into a university, drawing students from all over the United States. A new town bearing the stock farm’s name was established nearby, creating a middle class community servicing the needs of the school. Few other than the Stanfords themselves witnessed the full arc of the changes in Palo Alto. However, there was a contingent of servants and workers who became intimately involved in the formation of the community. They worked first for the Stanfords and then for the university, briefly becoming a part of the Palo Alto community. Within a few short years, however, these men were completely gone — their posts replaced and their homes demolished. By the early twentieth century there was little left to mark their presence. The lack of substantial records regarding these men was little wonder at the time, fraught as it was with racial prejudice: these men were Chinese.

The last decades of the nineteenth century were far from hospitable for the Chinese living in California. The Chinese Exclusion Acts of the 1880s effectively quashed the tide of immigration, stemming the tide of Chinese immigration begun following the Gold Rush. Public prejudice was at its peak, and immigrants faced deep hostility from many Americans, who blamed the Chinese for taking their jobs and soiling their cities. Chinese communities were often viewed as irritating eyesores or dens of iniquity. In spite of this prejudice, the racial relationship between Americans and the
Chinese was far from uniform. Chinese servants in particular represented a special case. Americans who lived or interacted with Chinese servants in the domestic sphere tended to be less xenophobic in their views. Conversely, those who experienced the Chinese as a subsection of a larger American community were more likely to target them as racial inferiors. Few locations in California offered a more telling portrait of the American-Chinese cultural interaction than the nascent Stanford and Palo Alto community of the early twentieth century.

The lives of the Stanfords' Chinese servants can be understood as a sequence of four time-periods, and four corresponding demographics with whom they interacted. The first is their interaction with Americans as new immigrants prior to the 1870s. This time period provides the historical context for American preconceptions, the resentment of Chinese profitable labor, and the praise of their private service. The second category is the employment of immigrants by Leland and Jane Stanford. It is this personal employment, and records of similar privately employed servants, that suggests the high regard held for the Chinese when they fell within the context of a social class — i.e. servants — rather than a racial group, as they did when they worked for themselves. The third category consists of those newcomers who arrived at Stanford University for the first time in 1891. Chinese servants began interacting with Americans other than their employers, but they were still very much minorities in the community; consequently, neither a private service nor a social threat. Because of this, students and faculty alike viewed the Chinese with alternating fascination and ridicule, tending to see them remotely as objects of interest or study rather than as members of the community. The fourth and final phase was the development of Palo Alto as a town, and the move of the Chinese into the town's community. The Chinese suddenly found themselves marginalized, segregated, and bullied. After the destruction of Palo Alto's Chinatown, they were all but forced to leave the city.

The Scum of the Population:
The American Response to Chinese Servants

The geographic and socio-economic origin of the Chinese in Palo Alto explains some of the misunderstandings and preconceptions that arose as Chinese stereotypes. Actually, it is misleading to call the Chinese servants in Palo Alto, or any of the Chinese inhabitants of the Bay Area, simply Chinese without a more specific qualifier. China's geographic size alone, aside from its varied dialects and traditions, warrants a narrowed definition of the Chinese who came to California and who made up the Palo Alto population. The vast majority of California's Chinese hailed from a relatively small region in southern China called the Pearl River Delta, just outside of the modern city of Guangdong, which in the nineteenth century was called Canton. Cantonese, not Mandarin, was the native language of the Chinese in California at this time. The names of many of the Chinese alone would be enough to determine their geographic origin: "Ah Wing," "Ah Sam," and "Ah Charley," three of the servants in the Stanford area, share the common prefix "Ah." This is not, as it is recorded in the Census of 1900 and other contemporary documents, a true part of their names, but rather a familiar, vocative prefix assigned to many names in southern China. Although no equivalent exists in English, recording it as part of a name would be the equivalent of recording "Dear John" rather than "John Smith." The misconceptions regarding the origins and the names of the Chinese in California are just two examples of missing information that led to increased cultural barriers.

The socio-economic status of the Chinese in America before the Gold Rush was far higher than in the proceeding years, and California's perception of the Chinese in general changed accordingly. Prior to 1849, the few Chinese who arrived in California were members of a highly-educated, prosperous merchant class with sufficient means to start their own businesses in the pioneer days of the state. In 1850, members of high society in San Francisco sent a special invitation to the heads of the Chinese community, numbering fewer than a thousand, to meet and receive a consignment of books in Portsmouth Square; the "China Boys," as San Franciscans called them then, were praised, "We have never seen a finer-looking body of men collected together in San Francisco . . . [they are] a pattern for sobriety, order and obedience to laws." At this early stage in California's reception of the Chinese, few of the disreputable stereotypes or accusations had formed regarding the immigrant community itself, although the pejorative name "boys" reveals the racial hierarchy prevalent in nineteenth-century America. The Chinese were a small community in proportion to the population, and drawn almost entirely from a rich merchant class. They were working independently, but due to minimal social or economic impact, they were not yet perceived as a threat.

The Gold Rush was responsible for the introduction of a far different socio-economic group, one that determined many of the prejudices that surrounded the Chinese for the rest of the century. Between 1849 and 1882, the Chinese population of California had grown from 325 to a staggering 110,000; of those, around 22,000 lived in San Francisco.
entire tenth of the city's population (nearby in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, the Chinese population totaled 2,695 and 596 respectively; the Stanford estate then fell on the border of these two counties). This staggering growth was due in large part to the promise of the gold, which had been found in the Sierra Nevadas, and the subsequent building of the Pacific Railroads. Called "Gum San," or "gold-mountain," in Chinese, California was a source of wealth that attracted many poor, young farmers from Canton. Desperate to earn money for impoverished families or clans at home, young men often resorted to taking cash advances to pay their way to California, on the condition that it be returned with significant interest. It was a gamble, to be sure—made that much more risky by the added difficulties of travel and the dangers of life in an unfamiliar land. Only those in desperate need attempted it, but there were others—many of whom merely wished to escape the Opium Wars, the internal unrest of the Taiping Rebellion, the droughts and the famines that swept southern China in the mid-nineteenth century. The uncertainties of being uprooted were preferable to the poverty and persecution they faced at home, spurring the journeys of thousands listed in the immigration records. These were the poor and the desperate, willing to risk their lives for the unlikely hope of living better ones abroad: "If you were rich, you didn't go to Gum San," recalled one Bay Area immigrant from Hepung, a district within Canton. This influx the Chinese in California evolved from being a predominantly wealthy merchant class to a mostly impoverished peasant class in the space of a few short years. Uneducated and willing to work for almost nothing, it was this population that caused Americans to form the negative opinions that would govern the future of American-Chinese interaction.

The criticisms leveled after the Gold Rush concentrated on the Chinese's inability to interact with American society. A Harper's Weekly article of 1857 observed that "it is urged that the Chinese are of no benefit, either by industry or trade, to the community, jealously hoarding every ounce of gold, and returning with it to China." This accusation was merely the product of jealousy and frustration. Chinese immigrants of the 1850s and 60s were in fact just as likely to stay in the United States as Europeans; 52% of Chinese immigrants stayed permanently, as opposed to only 45% of English immigrants, or 50% of Italians. As the Chinese continued to stay, other accusations began to abound. By 1880, another issue of Harper's Weekly printed a report against the Chinese in San Francisco complaining that the Chinese supplied "no bankers nor insurance agents; no commission merchants of European goods. They offer[ed] no competition to our lawyers, doctors, school-teachers, nor to any profession whatever." With the understanding that the majority of the Chinese in America were poor, uneducated peasants, who often had little experience with English, it is not surprising that job opportunities were limited. This was only the more tasteful ridicule: anything from accusations of rat eating to the frequent murders that took place in the mines revealed the frustration turned to malice felt against the Chinese.

In the 1870s, employment as a servant was a logical step for many Chinese: the decline of the gold mines, the completion of the railroads, and the release of soldiers at the end of the Civil War meant that there were fewer jobs for a greater number of available American men. On his journey to San Francisco and during his tenure with the paper The Call, Mark Twain would become one of the first Americans to write about servants as a distinct group within the Chinese population. In his book Roughing It, he commented, "[They] make good house servants, being quick, obedient, patient, quick to learn and tirelessly industrious." Twain defined the positive attributes of the servants through their ability to perform their jobs as servants. He may have generalized the Chinese as a race, but he based that generalization on the attributes he observed in their employment, rather than the popular stereotypes of his day. Twain went on to harshly criticize the many Americans who targeted the Chinese, claiming that no good Californian "ever abuses or oppresses a Chinaman... only the scum of the population do it... [and] the policemen and politicians, likewise, for they are dust-licking pimps and slaves of the sun." Twain found much to admire in the Chinese and much to disdain in their persecutors. However, since he was only a visitor to California, and interacted with the Chinese as servants rather than as competitors or a resource-drain, he had little economic motivation to dislike the Chinese immigrants. He, like the students and staff of Stanford to come, experienced the Chinese only in

11. Chinn, 22.
14. Ibid., Chapter 54.
passing rather than privately employing them or working by their side.

The discrimination that arose in the wake of the immigrant influx became a full-scale political movement by the following decade. Anti-Chinese sentiment was so high by the mid-1870s that a meeting of the Joint Committee of Congress took place in San Francisco to specifically address the growing Chinese population. Records of the meeting show that those who employed the Chinese were in favor of extending equal legal rights to the Chinese. Responding to the proposal, white workers and other discontented laborers spread propaganda targeting the Chinese, in what they dubbed the “Yellow Peril movement.” These posters portrayed Chinese immigrants as buck-toothed, slant-eyed caricatures, rising up and threatening white Americans with long-nailed fingers. This racism finally became institutionalized in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned the entrance of new immigrants and forbade the return of immigrants who left the country for their homeland after its passage. Protesters such as these would play an active role in the politics of the 1880s, and would affect the decisions of legislators such as Leland Stanford.

Faithful and Devoted Servants – Chinese Servants of the Bay Area Elite

Speaking to a crowd of protesters against the Chinese at Red Bluff, California, in 1886, Leland Stanford, conscious of his new office as California’s State Senator, chose his words carefully: “If my humanitarianism impels me [to employ] Chinese Labor . . . I hold that I have a perfect political right to do so . . . My race prejudice, however, inclines me to my own people, and I am desirous of giving them, on all suitable occasions, the preference.” These remarks were greeted approvingly by the crowd: he would subsequently dismiss many of the laborers who worked on his projects and vineyards throughout California. As a senator, he had to represent the popular voice, and that voice was decidedly against the Chinese. While he publicly expressed his prejudice for white workers over Chinese ones—a perfectly acceptable, even expected statement for a man of his time—the senator’s private life suggested a different story: a full third of his employees, and most of his household servants, were in fact Chinese. In the San Francisco Chronicle of the same year, Stanford elaborated his opinion: “By all ordinary rights [the United States] ought to be cultivating a trade with [China] that is eventually to grow to immense proportions . . . we need the Chinese here . . . I do not know what we would do without them.”

Although Stanford sought to appease the Californian voters he represented, it is clear that his private opinions were conflicted, and often in favor of the Chinese in the United States.

The Stanfords, members of the highest society in San Francisco and indeed California, were not alone in employing a great number of Chinese servants in their household. They and other “substantial citizens in the West had no unfriendly feeling toward the Chinese . . . It was chic to have a Chinese cook or gardener, and in these capacities the Chinese were much appreciated by their employers.” The popularity of the Chinese as servants was likely based on similar observations as those Twain drew upon during his visit to the West. It became so popular to keep Chinese servants in the home that a special room became a common feature of many San Francisco mansions of the time: these “Chinamen’s rooms” were often dark basements given to Chinese domestic help in which to live. While these accommodations were hardly glamorous, the incorporation of the Chinese as permanent fixtures in the American home was an important step towards defining the kind of relationships had with their employers.

The servants themselves were aware of the advantages awarded them through employment as domestics, even while harboring some mistrust of the Americans who so often mistreated them. Working in the homes of white Americans was a status symbol that separated a Chinese man from the oppressive world that besieged the Chinatowns. A complex mixture of pride and resentment characterized such trips, during which servants would frequently declare, “Well, I must return to the Kwai Lao.” “Kwai Lao, or ‘devil’s building’ was a play on the common name given to Americans: Fon Kwai, or ‘white devil.’ While this would seem to express merely bitterness, the compilers of A History of Chinese in California specifically note that the expression was used to convey the dignity of being able to leave Chinatown and work in another environment for a comparatively rich employer. While the racial connotations were explicit in this statement, implicit was the precedence of working for a wealthy employer, white or not. For both Chinese servants and their employers, the employer-employee relationship was more important, if not completely disconnected from, the American-Chinese relationship.

The Stanfords and other elite families who could employ Chinese servants tended to pay them well, another distinction between the attitudes

16. Ibid., 14.
20. Ibid., 59.
21. Ibid., 64.
of most Americans toward most Chinese. While day laborers in Chinatowns were frequently accused of driving down the price of labor, Chinese servants were paid more than average for their work. Cooks and servants of other racial backgrounds earned an average of $20-$30 every month, while a good Chinese cook averaged upwards of $40 or even $60 in the same time-span. Jane Stanford paid her servants on the high end of the statistical average of the time, recording in the payroll and allotment of $30 every two weeks. While the Senator may have come out publicly against the Chinese, his private employment of them and generous wages suggest that he was neither taking advantage of their supposed willingness to work for lower wages nor that his public opinions were the whole truth. Although he may well have believed that whites were superior as a race, his convictions regarding fair treatment and wages for his private servants took precedence over their racial background.

The Stanfords, like other wealthy employers of the Chinese, may well have considered them racial inferiors, but for the most part it did not interfere with the employer-employee relationship directly. In one instance, Jane Stanford's brother Ariel Lathrop cautioned her against trusting Chinese servants too readily. Regarding a close-call when the house boy Ah Charley nearly set the Stanford residence on fire, Lathrop wrote his sister: "Believe me ... as being fully convinced that this Residence is not properly nor securely guarded nor protected against fire while left in charge of Charley or any other Chinaman, and I believe you will agree with me." By Lathrop's reckoning, it was Charley's race—not his negligence as an individual—that almost led to the fire. This kind of prejudice, so popular in the wake of the Exclusion Acts, was not enough to prevent the Stanfords from employing the Chinese, but certainly colored their relationship.

There are very few instances where the words of Chinese servants were recorded directly. Despite being few and fleeting, they offer glimpses of how the servants themselves felt about their situation under American employers. Ellen Elliott, the wife of the first Stanford University registrar, recorded many of her observations regarding the President Jordan's house servant Ah Sam. Although the majority of her observations involved her fascination at seeing a Chinese servant for the first time, she paused in her narrative to reflect on a problem that Ah Sam experienced. She remembered, "He did not last long. He said he was not strong, and Mrs. Stanford told him there would not be much work to do; but 'plenty work—I go.' Afterward he went crazy. And what happened then is Mrs. Jordan's story, not mine." Mrs. Jordan's side of the story is unknown, leaving the exact circumstances of Ah Sam's departure a mystery, but Ah Sam's feelings about his work survived. Chinese servants were not always the perfect domestic automatons their employers praised them to be. Life as a servant was very taxing, requiring hard physical labor as well as a constant struggle against language and culture barriers. Ah Sam, and others like him, felt that he would rather leave his job and all the prestige it entailed, than to work as hard as his employers required. The life of a servant may have been alleviated of some of the racial tensions that surrounded work outside the home, but it was far from easy.

Possibly the best documented Chinese figure in early Palo Alto was the Stanfords' butler Ah Wing. He worked as the major domo of the Stanford estates in San Francisco and Palo Alto for over twenty years—he even traveled with Mrs. Stanford and was present in Hawaii when she died in 1905. He was remembered with gratitude in Jane's will: "To the following faithful and devoted servants ... to Ah Wing, servant for twenty years—to each and every one I give and bequeath the sum of one thousand ($1000) dollars." A gift of a thousand dollars was the equivalent of nearly seventeen-months' pay, a huge amount for a Chinese servant to possess. While Jane's position as a member of California high society may have enabled her to give such sums of money where others could not, a letter written by Ah Wing revealed that his relationship with the Stanfords was not merely monetary. Ah Wing's reaction offers a rare and eloquent insight into his relationship with the Stanfords. Before returning to China, he wrote, "As a token remembrance of [Jane Stanford], I brought to her tomb a bouquet of flowers ... Confucius said, 'Remember one dead as if living is a filial duty.' ... May the Stanfords find everlasting pleasures and gladness in Heaven." While it is difficult to critically evaluate a letter of such personal emotion, it is apparent that close bonds did form between employers and their Chinese servants.

Other employees appreciated the Stanfords just as deeply: archaeological evidence recovered during the excavation of the Stanford Mansion in the late 1990s suggests that offerings on Chinese dishes may have been made at the Stanford tomb. Other sources relate the loyalty and devotion shown by Chinese servants elsewhere: the memoirs of central

22. Ibid., 64.
23. Palo Alto Stock Farm, 1888-1891 Book of Employee Wages (Stanford Archives: Special Collections Department), #SC6, Box 33, p. 8.
24. Ibid., 1886 letter from Ariel Lathrop (Stanford Archives: Special Collections Department), #SC6, Box 5, 1886 Letterbook.
California resident Helen S. Gage portrayed a similar character in the Chinese servants that surrounded her in her youth. She recalled that a Chinese servant "was completely devoted to the family," as he called them. After a few years in the service of the family he became so much a part of them . . . He would have defended them with his life." While Gage's remarks could merely reflect the charmed employer of a good servant, rather than a genuine relationship, Ah Wing's point of view suggests that the Chinese servants of the time could come to consider themselves a true part of the family and demonstrate the fierce loyalty that Gage remembered.

Removed from the race-driven competition of cities, the Stanfords and other ranch owners of the Bay Area experienced a relationship with the Chinese that was defined far more personally than elsewhere. It was subject to class distinctions and race prejudices of its own, but the Chinese's role as servants outweighed their status as foreign immigrants. This relationship was recognized within the Chinese community: an urban legend of the time suggests that Jane Stanford wanted to adopt one of her own servants, possibly an exaggeration or a metaphor for her generosity of understanding. While the servants on the stock farm went on to become fixtures in the developing community, the founding of Stanford University accompanied the introduction of varied groups of Americans, with implications of major change for the Chinese.

Their Queer Shoes: The Objectification of the Far East in the Far West

Registrar Orrin Elliott and his wife Ellen arrived on the freshly hewn doorstep of Stanford University in the summer before the opening of the school. The first person to greet the two travelers was neither former Senator Stanford nor the university President David Starr Jordan, but rather his Chinese servant Ah Sam. He was clad in white, and eagerly bowed them in to the president's house, and within a moment he had captured Mrs. Elliott's intense interest. As an East Coast native, Ellen had never been to California before. She also had never seen a Chinese man before, and recalled excitedly that Ah Sam "was our first Chinaman, and furnished an early thrill when we spied him squatting by the door of the red barn eating rice out of a bowl with chopsticks." The exotic appeal felt by Ellen is apparent: even Ah Sam's eating was fascinating to her. The Chinese servants of Palo Alto became similar objects of interest to the newly arrived faculty and students. As they took up new positions as cooks and janitors at the university, the relationships that had been built up during their years on the stock farm lost significance, and the Chinese were increasingly seen as objects of interest—neither the private servants they were before, nor the dangerous threat they represented to American laborers.

One hundred and fifty Chinese servants—some from the Stanford estate, and others gathered from neighboring estates throughout the Bay Area—were transferred from their private households into the new roles of cooks, janitors and housekeepers on the university campus. No record of their payment survives, so it is difficult to judge how much of a change of circumstances this was, and whether working for the university was deemed desirable or not. Although Stanford's Chinese population had, by virtue of the new arrangement, more exposure to students and professors, their interactions were hardly on equal footing. In general, they were held up as objects of interest. After one of the first meals in Encina Hall, one girl of Stanford's Pioneer Class wrote her mother: "We have a Chinaman cook who has two assistants, but girls for waiters. The boys have young Chinamen waiters and they look so funny in their white coats, cues wound around their heads, and sliding over the polished floor in their queer shoes."

The cues, or queues—the long braided pigtails worn by Chinese men beginning under the Manchu-ruled Qing Dynasty—are worth special attention as they were one of the chief sources of interest for Westerners. They had been a focal point in photographs and cartoons of the Chinese throughout the nineteenth century. They were the subject of an entire series of cartoons in the same Harper's Weekly that had published the complaints against the Chinese in San Francisco in 1880. They were also a focus of many of Arnold Genthe's photographs of San Francisco's Chinatown of the 1890s, including one entitled "Pigtails Parade," which had been retouched to give Chinese children particularly long, and more exotic, cues. Being one of the most distinguishing marks of the Chinese servants, it is no surprise that it figures prominently in writings about them by students and faculty. In fact, Ellen wrote that she looked forward to seeing Ah Sam's cue, but that it "had been cut off; that, Dr. Jordan stated, was because he was a Christian. I thought it a pity, religion or no religion." The person

30. Chinn, 64.
32. E. Elliott, 182.
33. Ibid., 185.
35. Anonymous "Letter," September 30, 1891 in the Stanford Archives accessed through the Stanford Alumni Center. While a facsimile is on display in the Alumni Center, the University Archive is currently unable to identify the letter.
38. E. Elliott, 184.
behind the "queer shoes" and cue was not what Mrs. Elliott or the incoming students found interesting, but rather their sheer exotism. This remoteness and objectification may have been one of the first steps toward the abuse that Stanford's Chinese would face shortly after the opening of Stanford University.

No longer able to live on the grounds of the Stanford estate or in the residence, the Chinese who staffed the university found several alternatives. One was a camp built on the outskirts of the campus, which would later become the focus of serious anti-Chinese protests in Palo Alto. Another was called the "Camp," located where Old Union stands today, which was a small boarding house and a restaurant owned by a Chinese cook named Mock Chong, who was originally assigned to feed the University's janitors but eventually began to take in some of the students as boarders. These boarders, given their cheap lodging, would have been among the poorer students at the school. Since poorer Americans were more likely to compete with the Chinese for employment, it is likely that these boys had been exposed to anti-Chinese sentiment elsewhere. As the year progressed, some of Mock Chong's boarders grew agitated, showing their scorn by casting his food and cups on the ground. Several of the boarders were eventually thrown out because of this and other infractions — notably, stealing from one of the Chinese vegetable carts. Whether this latter offense was repeated or not is unknown, but it was considered serious enough for them to lose housing on campus. While this kind of behavior was common in urban areas where Chinese men interacted with lower income whites, it was the first time that such overt racism was displayed in Palo Alto. Although the socio-economic status of the perpetrators is important to remember, these outbursts of violence may well have been augmented by the sense of objectification surrounding the Chinese, which was due to their removal from private employment in the first place.

The rise of discrimination on the Stanford campus was not confined to students alone. A scandal erupted at the turn of the century that would bring conflicting views of the Chinese to a head. Tensions mounted after Stanford Professor Edward A. Ross delivered a speech on the advisability of excluding Asian immigrants. Mrs. Stanford was aghast; Ross had become associated with "men against whom Mr. Stanford in times past had struggled in his defense of the Chinese," and even though Dr. Ross had the support of the university staff, Jane moved to have him dismissed. Mrs. Stanford, who still employed Chinese servants in her home, reacted with the greatest vehemence, revealing her loyalty to the Chinese that had been founded through her and her husband's long involvement with them. The disapproval of the university staff was a testament to the shift that had taken place in the Palo Alto community with the arrival of the university; the Chinese were an object of curiosity, not people with whom one had intimate interaction.

This, however, is only part of the story. The town of Palo Alto itself also became involved. Opinion was divided: "many Palo Altans supported Jane Lathrop Stanford's dismissal of Professor Edward A. Ross partly because of his anti-Japanese stand [but] other Palo Altans took every opportunity to vent their prejudices." While Ross was eventually dismissed, the subject of his speech ignited divergent feelings in the greater community. Though the Chinese had no control over the situation, it was a turning point for the worse: their presence was becoming an issue beyond the confines of the campus, and the town of Palo Alto would not stay quiet for long.

"They Must Go!": Chinese Discrimination Hits Home

Public clamor against the Chinese didn't begin with the Ross Affair, however. Unrest grew starting as early as the mid-1890s just as the town began expanding. Due to the university's mounting financial difficulties, many of Stanford's Chinese employees were subsequently dismissed. At the beginning of the school year of 1893, The San Francisco Examiner reported, "There were one hundred and fifty Chinamen employed on the ranch and about the University — now reduced to nine, one overseer and nine helpers." Let go from the university, these one-time employees were suddenly left to fend for themselves as members of the greater Palo Alto community. Unfortunately, the Census of 1900 contains no more than the most basic information about the Chinese who lived on their own, as opposed to the small number employed as servants. Although where they worked is currently unknown, so much remains clear: working outside the relative insularity of the home and university made for a dangerous social dynamic. The Chinese were brought head to head with wage competitors for the first time — individuals who unsurprisingly viewed them as threats.

Despite having been laid off from the university, these one-time employees continued to live in the shanty village constructed at the far edges of campus between Stanford and College Avenues. The two rows of board buildings housed the vast majority of Chinese laborers who previously worked for the Stanfords, and later for the university, but who in 1893

39. O. Elliott, 256.
40. Ibid., 211.
41. Ibid., 350.
43. O. Elliott, 256.
found themselves unemployed.45 Palo Alto was itself undergoing major changes; the former estate had transformed in the space of a few short years, becoming a proper town with a settled (and growing) community. As it did, these same Palo Altans grew more vocal in their protests, lamenting the presence of “shanties” as signs of physical and moral decay. By November of 1893, a Palo Alto editorial decried, “We are solidly determined that the vile combination of bad odors, bad women and bad habits known as Chinatown shall not find a lodgment within our [Palo Alto] limits ...”46 To what bad habits the paper referred is unknown, and the “bad women” are certainly a mystery considering that the 1900 Census listed only one Chinese woman in the area.47 Regardless of whether or not the editorial had a valid argument, it was a line of reasoning that had purchase with many Palo Altans. Once the Chinese had entered the Palo Alto community to work for themselves rather than as servants, anti-Chinese sentiment increased dramatically.

When Palo Alto’s Chinese had to seek work for themselves as part of the community, they joined a great number of similar Chinese settlements across the state. Advertisements similar to those printed in Palo Alto ran concurrently in the San José Mercury, where a newly proposed Chinatown settlement was decried with the words “They Must Go!” emblazoned in the paper.48 This kind of naked discrimination was hardly limited to newspapers, manifesting in real acts of intolerance. Notably, in nearby Menlo Park, the “buildings and homes [of Chinese residents] were usually kept shuttered because of the town’s children’s practice of showering them with bricks and stones, ‘Irish confetti,’ as it was called.”49 This term could well have been a reference to the rivalry that had grown up between Chinese and Irish laborers as both competed for employment earlier in the century. While such actions were not condoned, they were not effectively discouraged: a news article published in Palo Alto shortly after the turn of the century recounted, “A party of Palo Alto young men . . . met a couple of quiet and inoffensive Chinamen on the road. The pent up exuberance of their natures . . . must have vent [and] three or four of the party jumped out and proceeded to beat and pummel the Chinamen.”50 The bullying and stone throwing was a casual but persistent reminder of the fall felt by many Palo Altan Chinese. Within the space of a decade, they went from cherished servants to scorned outsiders. They themselves had little to do with this dramatic change, and could have done little to prevent it. While Palo Alto’s nearby Chinatown continued to exist through 1900, it was demolished not long after and the Chinese were forced to move elsewhere.51 As servants they had been welcomed, and a few continued in that capacity, but as Chinese they were condemned.

A few years into the new century and the Chinese were gone, evicted from the very place they had lived and worked since its founding. Many stayed in the Bay Area, seeking out Chinatowns as refuges from a hostile American public. This shift from the Palo Alto of Leland and Jane Stanford to the city it would become is preserved in cultural memory; Bay Area historian Connie Young Yu, born in 1912, recalled hearing former Stanford employees — visitors to his family’s store in San José — who described how protective the Stanfords had been during the height of anti-Chinese sentiment.52 Institutionalized racism in the form of the Exclusion Acts guaranteed that the Stanfords’ views would remain in the minority for years to come. Though the Chinese went on to other cities, Palo Alto itself was stripped of the community that had helped in its development from a stock farm into a city.

Conclusion

The lives of the Chinese immigrants in Palo Alto were integrally tied to the development of the land as it changed from stock farm to town. The Chinese immigrant situation in Palo Alto is a useful model for trends that existed elsewhere because of the evolution that took place locally: as Palo Alto’s demographics changed, so did the attitudes toward the Chinese. Elsewhere, in larger cities such as San Francisco, Chinese servants coexisted with those who were self-employed, and so attitudes towards them at any given time varied greatly. Within Palo Alto, these attitudes can be marked along temporal lines as the town grew and the majority population shifted. Moreover, the experience of Chinese servants’ living in Palo Alto has had lasting cultural importance. The Chinese Historical Society of America, the largest Chinese heritage group in the country, has its headquarters in San Francisco, and continues to run permanent and special exhibits, including one within the past year entitled Remembering 1882 devoted to the repercussions of the Exclusion Acts. Archaeological work has taken place in San José and along the Monterey coast, recovering objects and material evidence of the Chinatowns that supported the Chinese community.

46. Gullard and Lund, 102.
47. U.S. Census Bureau (1900).
49. Michael Swenewich and Shirley Burgess, Menlo Park California Beyond the Gate (New York: Custom and Limited Editions, 2000), 75.
50. Gullard and Lund, 104.
52. Yu, personal communication with the author, May 12, 2010.
century ago. This work not only provides historical insight, but also strengthens the current community by providing a sense of common heritage. The Chinese population was bound up with the development of the Bay Area, their presence shaping the communities of which they were a part, and shaped by the environmental factors of population demographics and employment. A century ago, their status and opportunities were often determined by their competition with or service to the Western population. Today, their historical presence alone is enough to serve as a sense of heritage for the modern Chinese population in the Bay Area, but it is made all the more potent by the experiences of the Chinese in Palo Alto, a microcosm of the abilities of, and prejudices against, the Chinese immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century.

Christopher Lowman is a senior from Palo Alto, California. He is double majoring in anthropology and history. This summer he will be working on Chinese immigrants' archaeology for the San Francisco Planning Department.

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**THIRD GENERATION CONFLICT:**
**TURKISH-GERMAN YOUTH AND THE RESPONSE TO MULTICULTURALISM IN THE 1990S**

**RACHEL ANTONSEN**

In 1995, German author and social critic Feridun Zaimoglu published a work of investigative fiction titled Kanak Sprak. The book explored Turkish-German youth culture, and was received by a firestorm of political controversy for its vulgarity, portrayals of Turkish immigrants, the reclaiming of the racial slur "Kanak" as a marker of identity, and the harsh rejection of political correctness. The controversy offers a window into the issues of identity, immigration, and perceptions of the state in Germany. This paper treats Kanak Sprak as a critique of multiculturalism and explores to what degree Zaimoglu’s work reflects a broader backlash against multicultural discourse among Turkish-German youth. Zaimoglu’s work and some statements by Turkish-German youth reveal a curious paradox: while both reject sympathetic representations of themselves by Germans, they tend to define their predicament in similar terms of estrangement and cultural alienation.

On May 8, 1998, the young Turkish-German fiction writer Feridun Zaimoglu appeared on the Bremen television program Drei nach Neun – Germany’s oldest talk show to feature moderated discussions about current events. Zaimoglu spoke with politicians Heide Simonis (Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein, SPD) and Norbert Blüm (labor minister under Helmut Kohl, CDU). The program included a staged reading of Zaimoglu’s book Kanak Sprak (published in 1995) – a collection of monologues assembled from his tape-recorded conversations with third generation Turkish-German youth in a heavily immigrant neighborhood.

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2. Ibid., 93.
of Kiel.3 When introducing himself, Zaimoglu used the word Kanake, a racial slur for a Turkish immigrant co-opted by second and third generation Turkish-German youth as a self-identifier. Kanake figured prominently in his monologues as well.4 Zaimoglu's use of this slur, both in his remarks and in excerpts from his book, did much to rankle his fellow panelists: dispensing with pleasantry altogether, Simonis called him a "Schnapsnase" (idiot) and Blüm accused him of contempt for humanity.5 This incident embodies the greater cultural and social tensions between ethnic Turks and Germans. It also gives us some sense for the highly emotional and politically charged tone of the conversation, betraying cracks in the ostensibly harmonious discourse of multiculturalism.

Literary critic Tom Cheesman has argued that Zaimoglu’s confrontation with Simonis and Blüm was largely an attack on the concept of Leitkultur, or a normative, homogeneous German culture that would lead immigrants toward cultural assimilation of commonly held western values.6 However, when viewed against the discourse of politeness and multiculturalism that emerged in Germany during the 1990s as a response to right-wing violence, it makes sense to view Zaimoglu’s work as a backlash against multiculturalism rather than Leitkultur. This is particularly the case because, as Cheesman himself notes, the term Leitkultur was only first coined by political scientist Bassam Tibi in 1998 – the year of Zaimoglu’s Drei nach Neun appearance.7 CDU parliamentary chair Friedrich Merz applied it explicitly to German culture in a political speech in 2000.8 Zaimoglu’s work appeared in 1995, however, and it is unlikely that either Simonis or Blüm was sufficiently well versed in the concept of Leitkultur for it to have been an actual source of tension in their discussions. Because Leitkultur was itself a kind of backlash against multiculturalism, painting Zaimoglu as primarily opposed to Leitkultur misleadingly implies an allegiance with multiculturalism.

Delving into Zaimoglu’s criticisms of the multicultural discourse – particularly his depiction of Turkish-German youth in terms of Generationskonflikt (generational conflict) and Zwischen zwei Kulturen (between two cultures) – reveals a curious paradox: even while he and his literary subjects – and, to some extent, third-generation Turkish-Germans at large – reject sympathetic representations of themselves by Germans, they tend to define their predicament in similar terms of estrangement and cultural alienation. This suggests that Zaimoglu’s rejection of multicultural discourse is more an expression of resentment for its condescension and tendency to obscure the concrete social discontents of third-generation youth, rather than a wholesale rejection of the dynamics of generational conflict and identity crisis.

Zaimoglu’s work and the attitudes of 1990s Turkish-German youth must be situated in the context of the forty-year history of Turkish immigration to Germany. In the early 1960s, West Germany initiated a guest-worker program with several Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, to offset its labor shortage in rebuilding the country’s infrastructure.9 By 1973, a full ten percent of laborers in West Germany were foreigners.10 Turks became the largest minority in West Berlin, and made up nearly 50 percent of immigrant-heavy neighborhoods such as Kreuzberg.11 Although the government initially deemed them temporary workers who would return home after some years, in practice many brought their families and settled during the 1970s.12 The children of these guest workers were the second generation, and their children the third generation – the youth of the 1990s.

The 1990s saw a rise in extremist right-wing violence towards foreigners triggered by economic hardships that accompanied unification. The presence of large numbers of ethnic German immigrants from the former Soviet bloc, and refugees from the Yugoslav Wars, coupled with high unemployment spurred both right-wing political and individual acts of violence toward foreigners.13 In particular, 1992 witnessed four high-profile attacks that targeted the housing compounds of asylum seekers and the homes of Turkish-German immigrants who had been living in Germany for years and took place in both former East- and West-German towns.14 The acts of arson and lethal beatings horrified the newly unified German government and shocked the public, resulting in pressure for a conciliatory attitude toward immigrants. This incendiary climate and the pressure on German politicians to treat immigrants respectfully partly explain why Simonis and Blüm recoiled as they did.

In response to the extremist right-wing violence of the early 1990s, a discourse of multiculturalism and sympathy for the Turkish-German predicament emerged in the German public sphere. One aspect of this

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3. Ibid., 93.
4. Ibid., 94.
5. “Fear of a Kanak Planer.”
7. Ibid., 84, 95.
8. Ibid., 84.
11. Ibid., 180.
12. Kaya, 58.
discourse was the notion that German society should embrace toleration, peaceful coexistence, and the celebration of plurality, which was embodied in the term multikulturelle Gesellschaft (also multikulti, multicultural society). These sentiments were celebrated in the paradigmatic book Homeland Babylon (Heimat Babylon), written by Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Thomas Schmidt in 1992 and reviewed in Der Spiegel a year later, which argued for a definition of Germany as a nation of immigrants and for "multicultural democracy." The reviewer reflected on how he himself had used the term multikulturelle Gesellschaft in journalism: shortly before the attacks on Mölln and Solingen, he felt pressure not to use the term, in order to avoid angering a public ill-disposed toward foreigners due to the influx of asylum seekers from the Balkans. After 1992 he felt obliged to use it, because the attacks had discredited right-wing, exclusionary rhetoric. He also pointed to a positive review of Heimat Babylon in the otherwise right-leaning Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in 1993.

By the late nineties, multiculturalism had also appeared in the German state structure. Berlin in particular financed a litany of institutions meant to promote cultural diversity: the Commissioner for Foreigners' Affairs, the House of World Cultures, Radio Multikulti, and Workshop of Cultures, among others, were designed to facilitate ethnic associations, performances and exhibitions of ethnic art, and the organization of intercultural conferences and festivals to showcase folk traditions of different minorities in the city. An article in Frankfurter Rundschau noted in 1996 that the popularity of Radio Multikulti had been on the rise since its founding in 1994 as a station for world music and broadcasts in foreign languages. The station head Friedrich Voss boasted a sixty percent listenerhip whose native language was not German, and noted that the station had secured city funds for the purposes of expansion.

The report reflected Berlin Administrators' pride in showcasing and serving its heterogeneous population. The Workshop of Cultures in Berlin began organizing an annual Carnival of Cultures (Karneval der Kulturen) in 1996. A statement on the event website in 1998 promoted intercultural sharing as a way to revitalize the newly instated German capital, arguing that "the native [German] population does not take the burgeoning creative force of immigrant groups into consideration, nor does it succeed in understanding new cultural influences." It presented the Carnival as a "place of dialogue and encounter between different nationalities, cultures, and religions," and "a center of reciprocal cultural transfer," while it presented Berlin generally as the "workshop of integration," whose intercultural experiments would show the rest of Germany what integration without assimilation could look like.

Another aspect of multikulti is its sympathetic representation of third generation Turkish-Germans, as reflected by the popular expressions zwischen zwei Kulturen (between two cultures) and Generationskonflikte (generational conflict). Government-sponsored sociologists and social workers incorporated these two concepts into their jargon to describe the Turkish-German predicament. In a 1997 sociology study on "Islamic Fundamentalism" among second- and third-generation Turkish-Germans, Wilhelm Heitmeyer outlined the dominant theory used to describe the immigrant youth predicament: "The socialization of Turkish youth has until now been variously cloaked in the metaphors of cultural conflict and the 'life between two cultures.'... This conflict between society of origin and host society often played out as generational conflict (Generationskonflikte).

Although Heitmeyer went on to revise the theory to account for the phenomenon of third-generation return to cultural roots, studies published later continued to highlight the same two terms. A 1999 study by immigrant youth identity similarly discussed the "cultural conflict thesis" as the result of discrepancies between the norms of original and host societies, which carried "negative consequences for the personality and abilities of the youth." He also drew the link with generational conflict through a theory of assimilation in which cultural conflicts are posited to be most intense for the second-generation immigrant. Ilhami Atabay's 1998 study on identity and family in Turkish-German households placed great emphasis on cultural and generational clashes of various sorts: "Raising of children as a conflict point," "The theme of return as a source of conflict," and "The search for cultural identity in an in-between world" rank among these.
In this case, even a researcher of presumably Turkish descent incorporated these aspects of the multicultural model.

The discourse of "between cultures" and "generational conflict" even penetrated semi-private charitable organizations such as Caritas. The 1997 project description for the Immigrant Services division of Caritas Frankfurt listed problem areas for migrant families, migrant women, and youth. For the youth (who in this case were of Vietnamese background), the project described a kind of identity crisis in which "the Vietnamese children grow up in an environment (School, Media, German friends) that is the polar opposite of the culture, traditions, and child-rearing of their homeland." The list of problems for women included "identity crises" and "psychosomatic difficulties." The project mentioned conflict between youth and their traditional elders in the youth section, and listed Generationskonflikte under issues for general advice. It is both this particular set of multiculturalist abstractions, with their focus on culture and identity, and the broader vision of a tolerant, multicultural coexistence that Feridun Zaimoglu rejected in Kanak Sprak.

Before launching into a detailed examination of Kanak Sprak, however, it is crucial to clarify what the book can and cannot accomplish as a historical source. Although Zaimoglu based his monologues on conversations, and claimed to be the mouthpiece for disaffected Turkish-German youth, it would be irresponsible to extrapolate directly the views expressed in the monologues to those of Turkish-German youth generally. Zaimoglu's work presents several complications to any such effort. Firstly, he is neither a historian nor sociologist, and as such leaves obscure many aspects of the interview process that led to his work. He mentions in his introduction that he developed a rapport with several Turkish-German youths in Kiel's immigrant quarter, conducting informal as well as recorded interviews with them, and that the monologues are an "adaptation" (Nachdichtung) of their responses to the question, "What's life like here in the 'hood?" This leaves plenty of room for Zaimoglu to have inserted an artistic agenda - cherry picking statements for maximum shock value or effect. Secondly, as we will soon see, Zaimoglu's own rejection of Multikulti, Generationskonflikte, and zwischen zwei Kulturen in his introduction is uncannily similar to the explicit mention and rejection of the same terms in the monologues. Whether Zaimoglu led his subjects by introducing the terms in his questions, or whether he simply introduced them at the "adaptation" stage, we can't be sure they actually meant to say what suggests

they did. Finally, Zaimoglu came from a middle-class, well-integrated Turkish-German family - not the hardscrabble youth he claimed to speak for.

What the book does offer is an articulate critique of German political correctness. Between 1995 and 1997, when Kanak Sprak and his second book, Abschaum - the adapted story of a single marginalized youth - were published, Zaimoglu gained rapid notoriety, with newspapers like die Tageszeitung referring to him and his new genre in over ten articles. As his second book gained momentum, he had reviews written up in die Zeit, Stern, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Welt, Süddeutsche Zeitung, der Spiegel, and others. His book Abschaum was adapted for film in 1998, Kanak Sprak dramatized for the radio in 2000, and Zaimoglu himself wrote numerous editorials for Die Zeit, appearing regularly on television programs like Drei Nach Neun. Cheesman also notes his influence on a number of later writers who chose to write in Turkish-German creole or in other dialects.

Zaimoglu's book expressed his determination to cut through the niceties of German multicultural discourse by portraying Turkish-German youth voices unadulterated by political correctness. Zaimoglu made clear in his introductory essay his wish only to represent the "Kanake" voice, as opposed to polite, first generation Turks or well-assimilated Turkish-Germans with university educations. Both the latter groups fit the multicultural picture because they maintained aspects of Turkish identity but did not challenge German social norms. As with the Drei nach Neun incident, Zaimoglu's insistence on using the word Kanake undermines multiculturalism's project of political correctness. More explicitly, Zaimoglu rejected the vision of multicultural society endorsed by German politicians, calling it a "fairy tale." He mocked multicultural institutions and their folk festivals: "Turkish speakers' make colorful guides through the Multikulti-Zoo, where the kebab enclosure is situated next to the Andes music

31. Sec for instance Nele-Marie Bruedgam, "Krisengeschopfe in Kanakistan," die Tageszeitung (February 13, 1996); Edith Kresta, "Das sind sie - ungeschminkt" die Tageszeitung (February 18, 1997).
33. Cheesman, 82-5.
34. Ibid., 82.
36. Ibid., 11.
pavilion." The zoo analogy underscores his critique that multiculturalism objectifies and belittles members of a socially disadvantaged group.

Zaimoglu's introduction also criticized the jargon of statistical studies and migrant research that represented Turkish-German youth in terms of "ambivalence," "life in two cultures," and "generational conflict." The essence of his critique is that "the Germans are seeking to get smart by way of their [the immigrants'] plight." Zaimoglu thereby dismissed German efforts to understand immigrant dilemmas, and the dynamics of their life and society. He considered investigations into immigrant psychology and sociology trivial when compared with more substantive issues such as voting rights and dual citizenship, which, he pointed out, were not openly discussed in the public sphere. Finally, Zaimoglu lambasted the Gastarbeiterliteratur (guest worker literature) of first generation Turks as a cheap appeal to exoticism, accusing it of perpetuating the stereotype of the pleasant, submissive "Turkish Ali." Moreover, he believed its widespread popularity was symptomatic of how Germans misunderstood the realities of Turkish-German life.

In their monologues, Zaimoglu's subjects attack the same buzzwords. The rapper Abdurrahman expresses disgust with the notion of multiculturalism: "a kaınake friend ranks way at the bottom of the multikulti list, better to have a Jamaic a nigger with a shaggy wig, or better yet a schmalzy latino." The use of racial slurs and stereotypes for his and other ethnic groups flouts political correctness. His hierarchy of who Germans want to be friends with mocks not only the egalitarian dream of multicultural society, but also the meticulous ethnic categorization that accompanies multiculturalism. In a similar vein, Hakan, who identified himself as an auto mechanic, paints a disparaging portrait of the German walking through different ethnic shops for amusement: "in their stupid homeland, they go into fine fetching locales, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Chinese, the Mulattos, and to us, and have a salad-soaked döner wrapped in foil. And where is their own folk chow? That would be the good-townsman's kitchen..." He equates the Germans' kitschy presentation of their own cuisine and folk traditions with the way they view Turkish döner and other ethnic establishments: this challenges the multicultural model that views the consumption of ethnic foods and the watching of folk-dance displays as sufficient forms of cultural exchange.

In addition to mocking multiculturalism, Zaimoglu's subjects also attack the terms zwischen zwei Kulturen and Generationskonflikt. In his monologue, the poet Mehmet denounces the notion that Turkish-German youth are in a crisis of two cultures: "One says to the bastard, he doesn't feel well because two souls or two cultures live in him. That is a lie." Although he does not point specifically to the German media or public discourse as the source of this notion, he gives the sense that it pervades German society. He also expresses discomfort with the term "generational conflict" after describing tensions with his father: "This sort of thing plays out in many Turkish families these days, here it is called generational conflict. It is more than that. It is metamorphosis." While he does not entirely reject the term, he tags it as part of public discourse and suggests that it is not adequate to represent the sort of conflict he has described. The student and drifter Hasan shares Mehmet's attitude toward the crisis of two cultures: "I've had it up to here with this shit about the two cultures, what's with that, what can some smart-ass do for me with two chairs where my ass has no place." Hasan seems to have heard about the "problem" of living in two cultures ad nauseam. He also objects that someone from outside his group - the "smart-ass" - would prescribe him as such.

Given the limitations of the monologues in Kanak Sprak as a source for the views of Turkish-German youth, as opposed to Zaimoglu's views, it is important to compare them with secondary accounts. Since so little time has elapsed since the 1990s, analysis of Turkish-Germans in that period tends to be dominated by sociological and anthropological studies rather than, say, historical monographs. As noted earlier, many of the studies conducted during the 1990s were government-sponsored and adopted without question the language and framework of multiculturalism for their analysis. A study of Berlin's Turkish-German hip-hop youth by sociologist Ayhan Kaya, based on fieldwork he conducted in the 1990s at

37. Ibid., 11.
38. Ibid., 10.
39. Ibid., 10.
40. Ibid., 10.
41. Ibid., 11-12.
42. Ibid., 11.
43. Ibid., 85.
44. Ibid., 110.
45. Ibid., 112.
46. Ibid., 96.
48. Wilhelm Heitmeyer et al., Verlockender Fundamentalismus (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997); Olaf Morgenroth, Identitätszusammen: Türkischer Jugendlicher (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 1999); Ilhami Atabay, Zwischen Tradition und Assimilation (Freiburg, Breslau: Lambertus-verlag, 1998).
immigrant youth centers, partly circumvents this problem.

As a second-generation Turkish immigrant from England, Kaya is conscious and even critical of German multicultural discourse in his work, and as such offers analysis with a transparent method, and one that does not adopt unquestioningly the multicultural model and depictions of immigrant youth that German studies of the nineties often took for granted. While Kaya does not provide extended quotes from his interviews with youths, nor discuss the use of multiculturalism per se, his work does reveal a generally oppositional attitude by working class Turkish-German youth toward German authority and institutions. While this does not necessarily entail a sweeping rejection of multiculturalism writ large, it suggests that Zaimoglu’s criticisms have some grounding. One of Kaya’s informants from the Naunyn Ritte youth center—a boy who had previously served time in prison—carried special social status. His peers in the youth center looked to him as a role model of resistance. More important for this analysis, however, Kaya describes tension between youths and German social workers in both of the working-class youth centers he observed in his fieldwork. At Naunyn Ritte, he notes “some tension between the German youth workers and the Turkish youngsters.” At Chop youth center, he observes that, “The controlling power resides in the hands of the male youngsters, especially of the Turks. There is always a tension between the youth workers and the youngsters.”

By contrast, the youth had more respect for youth workers of Turkish descent, as well as for Kaya himself. While Kaya does not describe these tensions in detail, their presence demonstrates that even well-meaning gestures by the German government like creating youth centers for Turkish-German and staffing them with youth workers were met with varying degrees of hostility.

Finally, the relatively low awareness and participation rates of Kreuzberg residents in state-sponsored multicultural initiatives confirms a combination of indifference and suspicion toward multicultural institutions. The report on Radio Multikulti mentioned earlier observed that, “the potential listenership of around 500,000 in the inner-city districts of Kreuzberg, Schöneberg, and Mitte has not been exhausted.” While phrased optimistically, this suggests that the Turkish-German residents of Kreuzberg were not making much use of the station. Indeed, Kaya confirms this, noting that in 1996, although 12 percent of Berlin’s Turkish population was aware of Radio Multikulti, only 4 percent listened to it regularly. The presence of other, competing radio stations may have diverted some of these listeners, but the numbers suggest that the explicit Turkish language and music programming offered on the station did not have as much appeal as previously estimated. An anonymous opinion piece in 1998 in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung reported on that year’s Carnival of Cultures, with the incisive observation that most of the carnival’s attendees were Germans, and that the Turkish-Germans of Kreuzberg—where the carnival took place—were hardly to be seen, either as participants in the showcase or in the audience. Finally, Kaya mentions that when he asked informants in Kreuzberg and Wedding about multicultural initiatives, most said they were not aware of them. Yet those who were aware expressed suspicion about the city’s multicultural policies, viewing them as “nothing but a ‘face-saving’ effort by the Berlin government.” While none of these instances outlines a specifically youth perspective on multiculturalism, they do reveal a context not unlike Zaimoglu’s critique.

These indifferent and suspicious attitudes toward multicultural institutions also contrast sharply with a group of middle class Turkish-German youth in Berlin. According to Kaya, the middle class youth populating the BTBIM youth center tended to come from more assimilated families, yet still wanted to cultivate a hybrid identity. They embraced multicultural discourse and participated in its institutions. The group organized a youth festival in May 1996 at the Werkstatt der Kulturen (Culture Workshop). It featured folklore performances typical of organized multiculturalism, including a Jewish music group, a German group called Multikulti, and Turkish and Kurdish folklore groups. Middle class youth adopted, rather than rejected, the multicultural model. This apparent class distinction regarding attitudes toward multiculturalism suggests that the hostility expressed by Zaimoglu’s subjects may have had as much to do with their social grievances such as under-employment, unequal educational opportunities, and discrimination in hiring, as well as the impossibility of acquiring dual citizenship, rather than from substantive criticisms of multicultural discourse.

Although Zaimoglu’s informants paradoxically reject the multiculturalist buzzwords zwischen zwei Kulturen and Generationenkonflikt, they use many of the same concepts to define their predicament. Mehmet describes the Kanake as a “bastard,” who defines as a “bundle of irrationalities, ... who wanders constantly on foreign ground.” Later he

49. Kaya, 130.
50. Ibid., 19.
51. Ibid., 20.
52. Ibid., 19. 23.
56. Kaya, 108.
57. Ibid., 144-5.
58. Zaimoglu, Kanak Sprak, 110.
says of the Kanake that, "he is not given the chance to build an even remotely solid existence." The images of instability and movement without direction describe a state similar to that evoked by the notion of being stranded between cultures. Mehmet rejects this very idea a few sentences later, yet his self-description is not unlike it. Although he dismisses the concept of "generational conflict," Mehmet's relationship with his father is rife with conflict. Mehmet resents his father's material goal of returning to Turkey to build a multi-story house, and feels for him "nothing but disgust and opposition." He resents his father's submissive attitude, and feels distant from him due to his own weak connection to Turkey. Conversely, his father resents him for not succeeding in school and for writing poems that he considers womanish and a waste of time. Mehmet sums up their impasse with the words, "we never talk." It is difficult to see how this father-son dynamic does not represent generational conflict, even if Mehmet prefers to call it "metamorphosis."

Similarly, in Kopstöff – the sequel to Kanak Sprak that presents female monologues – the vegetable seller Mihriban at once uses and criticizes the notion of "between two cultures." She describes having been born, raised, and married in Berlin, yet not feeling at home there, and at the same time, never wanting to live in Turkey. She notes the difference between herself and Turkish natives, "who can say, 'we belong here.'" She recognizes the Turkish-German state of not-belonging as a fact: "One can take it as one wants: we will never be a part of the German or the Turkish society." Yet she also criticizes a self-concept that bemoans an in-between state, and distances herself from it: "I do not need a homeland (Heimat) any more. I have freed myself of that." While she no longer sees homeland as relevant to her, she acknowledges its former appeal. "Who even has a homeland these days? It is an outdated word," she insists, although she seemed convinced a few paragraphs earlier that Turks born and raised in Turkey had one. Finally, she dismisses the notion of "between two cultures" as mere complaining: "I don't go around crying about how I don't have a homeland, like so many others do." It is significant that she attributes this "in-between" complaint to those around her – presumably her Turkish-German peers, as she mentions that "almost only Turks" live in her neighborhood. This suggests that although "between cultures" was a part of the nineties multikulti worldview, many Turkish-Germans may have appropriated the expression who would otherwise have viewed multiculturalism with hostility or suspicion.

The use of these two terms by Turkish-German youth does not appear limited to Zaimoglu's monologues. Kay's interlocutors also described themselves as between two cultures. Kay quotes one of his informants describing his experience during visits to Turkey: "[In Germany] we are called yahanci (foreigner), and there [in Turkey] they call us Almanci (German-like)." Kay adds that the youth he spoke with often cited marginalization in both Germany and Turkey. This situation of being labeled a foreigner in both countries is akin to feeling stranded between cultural identities.

The Turkish-German intellectual Deniz Gököztürk similarly observed Turkish-German youth complaining about their status between cultures. The subject arose in an opinion piece published in die Tageszeitung in 1994, where he discussed the efforts of the House of World Cultures to create multicultural programming. Gökotürk placed the term "between two cultures" in the mouths of disaffected youth, implying that they had adopted it from official multicultural discourse: "The condescendingly didactic imperative of foreigner-specific cultural activities is still prevalent; indeed, it has become doctrine.... Foreign youths avail themselves of this fashionable parlance and commit themselves to self-pity 'between the cultures.'" His characterization of the phrase as self-pitying echoes Mihriban's sentiment in Kopstöff.

Kay's study also outlines points of generational conflict. He observes a strict system of parental control within the Turkish-German family, which provides fodder for conflict. Parents represent a strong, disciplinary force within the home. Being more connected to the Turkish homeland and cultural traditions than their children, parents have very different expectations about what their kids ought to be doing. For instance, parents prefer their children to spend time at Turkish associations, community centers, and mosques as opposed to youth centers like Naumyn Rizze and Chip, where the youth prefer to spend time.
Zaimoglu’s monologues excoriate multiculturalism and its depiction of the immigrant youth plight, yet some subjects use multiculturalist terms when describing themselves. This pattern roughly correlates with outside accounts that reveal indifferent and suspicious attitudes toward multiculturalism in the form of Berlin’s initiatives, as well as a tendency to use its terms as self-descriptors. In addition, there is the interesting twist that a group of middle-class Turkish-German youth embraced rather than rejected the multicultural model of folk-festivals as tolerance. One explanation for this, as posited earlier, is that the social discontent of Turkish-German youth played a role in fuelling the attack on multiculturalism expressed by Zaimoglu and his subjects. Indeed, in 1996, Turkish-Germans below age 25 suffered from over 30 percent unemployment rates, and only 6 percent obtained the minimum school certificate necessary for vocational training. By the end of the decade, the general unemployment rate for Turkish-Germans was twice that of native Germans, at 20 percent relative to 10 percent. In the three-tracked school system in 1994, 44 percent of Turkish-Germans students completed the lowest track compared with 28 percent of Germans, and conversely, 28 percent of German students completed to only 6 percent of Turkish-Germans completed the highest, university-bound track. Finally, between 1990 and 1999, citizenship laws allowed foreign nationals born in Germany to become citizens at 18 on condition of relinquishing citizenship to any other nation and regular renewals.

Deniz Göktürk found multicultural policy condescending and silly, but ultimately harmless, whereas Zaimoglu and Kaya considered it more threatening. In die Tageszeitung, Göktürk criticized multicultural programming in Berlin for its didactic quality and bad taste – he lamented that, “Even graffiti and hip-hop, once expressions of American subculture, have become instrumentalized as workshop topics.” Subversive culture had gone mainstream. Yet even Göktürk viewed these workshops as essentially harmless, if ill informed. In his introduction, Zaimoglu likewise highlighted the uselessness of the German sociologists’ fixation on identity crisis and cultural conflict: “One speaks of the ambivalence brought on by the life between two cultures, of generational conflict in the Turkish family,

and lastly of failing will to integrate. Voting rights, dual citizenship etc., are not yet open for discussion.”

He made his concern more explicit in a conversation with the editors of Tageszeitung: “The multicultural society is a giant myth, since we all know that cultures only function within society’s hierarchical arrangements.” In other words, multiculturalism is a façade behind which to conceal social problems: “One must always see the social clamber and not cover up social relations with the term culture.” Kaya made a similar point, citing Bottomley: “[Carnival-type activities] can distract attention away from the central problem of structural inequalities in access to resources.” These statistics, along with the writings of Zaimoglu and Kaya, bring out the underclass experience of Turkish-German Youth in German society in addition to their experience of cultural conflict. Multikulti ideology gave undue focus to the latter, thus obscuring the former.

It is precisely this class element that Cheesman’s view obscures by viewing Zaimoglu’s confrontation on Drei nach Neun as one between Kanak culture and German Letzkultur. Indeed, such a view of the exchange and of Zaimoglu’s project more generally limits the frame of reference to one of cultural conflict – the idea of a German culture that demands conformity to core principles while allowing ethnic plurality clashes with a stubborn Turkish-German youth culture that refuses to be polite or conform. When carried to its conclusion, Cheesman’s reasoning perhaps unwittingly repeats the notion of “failed will to integrate”; integration is by nature anathema to Kanak culture, according to this understanding. By viewing Kanak Sprak as an attack on multiculturalism, it becomes clear that Zaimoglu intends to refute exactly this sort of emphasis on cultural conflict in order to expose larger issues of social unrest, including decreased access to university-track education, high unemployment, job discrimination, and an absence of dual citizenship laws. Many factors surely contributed to Zaimoglu’s confrontation with multiculturalism, not the least of which include artistic ambition and personal frustration. But the strongest concern he showed was for the social inequalities that multiculturalism disguised and which, unfortunately, continue to plague the majority of Turkish-German youth.

Rachel Antonsen is a junior from Berkeley, CA. She is majoring in history with an emphasis on the Middle East.

76. Andreas Goldberg et al., Die Deutschen Türkler (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 33.
77. Ecin Kürsat-Ahlers, 130.
78. Eva Kolinsky, “Non-German Minorities in German Society,” in Turkish Culture in German Society Today, 92.
79. Göktürk, 256.
80. Ibid., 256.
81. Zaimoglu, Kanak Sprak, 10.
83. Ibid., 16.
84. Kaya, 107.
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