Herodotus

*Herodotus* is a student-run publication founded in 1986 by the Stanford University Department of History and the History Undergraduate Student Association (HUGSA). It bears the name of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, the 5th century BCE historian of the Greco-Persian Wars. His Histories, which preserve the memory of the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae, were written so that “human achievements may not become forgotten in time, and great and marvelous deeds . . . may not be without their glory.” Likewise, this journal is dedicated to preserving and showcasing the best undergraduate work of Stanford University’s Department of History. Our published pieces are selected through a process of peer review. As a final note, *Herodotus’* volume numbering system erroneously begins at 1990 rather than at 1986. We have, however, chosen to retain the existing numbering system for the sake of continuity.

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“EVEN WHEN HER SHACKLES ARE VERY DIFFERENT FROM MY OWN:” DIVERGENT DEFINITIONS OF RAPE FOR BLACK AND WHITE WOMEN IN THE PRESS (1969-1989)¹

Audrey Wisch

“Do Women Provoke Sex Attack?” a 1960 *Cosmopolitan* article inquired. The author, journalist J.P. Edwards, asserted that women “consciously or subconsciously, actually invite attack.” To make his argument, Edwards focused on case studies of assault victims, such as that of a forty-five-year-old librarian whom the police found barely conscious and severely beaten in a small suburban park. Why, he asked, “had she instinctively run into the park instead of away from it?”² His article captures the early 1960s sentiment that women sought out rape. In 1969, an anonymous woman shared her rape story in *Cosmopolitan* and concluded that “most women have fantasies involving situations in which they’re taken by force, so if rape actually does

¹ Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism” 1981. This comes from the Audre Lorde quote: “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.“

occur they believe they have ‘wished’ it into existence.”³ Even this victim, raped violently by a man who broke into her apartment and threatened her with a gun, blamed herself for the encounter. Victims of rape consistently admitted feelings of guilt.⁴

Despite the persistent silence veiling personal accounts of sexual assault, historians have documented the evolving history of rape. Until the second-wave feminist movement, white men demarcated the boundaries of rape. Dominant legal and cultural definitions required the use of force and a male assailant not married to the victim.⁵ Women without physical evidence of an attack on their bodies were subject to skepticism. Black victims were also regularly disbelieved.⁶ Historians Estelle Freedman and Danielle McGuire document the historical racialization of rape, shedding light upon the injustices Black Americans have endured within the social and political history of rape.

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6  In this paper, I use the word victim to refer to someone who has been raped. The Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network (RAINN) uses “victim” when referring to someone who has recently been affected by sexual violence or when referring to aspects of the criminal justice system. RAINN use the word “survivors” as someone who has gone through the recovery process, or when talking about the short or long-term effects of sexual violence.
Due to myths about Black hypersexuality, Black women did not fit the archetype of a sexually pure rape victim whereas Black men exemplified the identity society constructed of a typical rapist.  

By the 1980s, feminist and Black Liberation movements had questioned these definitions of rape and helped redefine the term. This history of resistance challenged the notion that only a violent attack constitutes rape, that Black women cannot be raped, and the myth of the Black male rapist. The scholarship of Maria Bevacqua and Catherine Jacquet focuses on the emergence of anti-rape movements and their role in broadening the definition of rape to debunk these myths. In the recent history of rape, the definition has expanded to include forms of assault not previously accepted in law and practice. The vocabulary grew to incorporate non-violent, non-stranger forms of rape, such as “marital rape,” “social rape,” “acquaintance rape,” or “date rape.” The emergence of these categories and their evolution over time affected how women understood their own experiences of rape.

In this paper, I investigate personal testimonies of rape and commentary on rape published in the early fem-

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9 Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Random House, 1983), 101. Davis declared, “The fraudulent rape charge stands out as one of the most formidable artifices invented by racism.”
10 Maria Bevacqua, *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000).
I seek to understand how the definition of rape changed over time in these magazines. In particular, when, how, and why did “acquaintance rape” enter the lexicon and emerge as a new way of categorizing rape? I also explore how the treatment of rape differed (or concurred) across the three kinds of sources. How did these different magazines relate race and rape? While the paucity of personal accounts poses a challenge in my research, it also confirms the overwhelming silence that threatens to drown the subject of rape and its history, specifically from the victim’s perspective.

I located a total of 33 personal accounts of rape from 1969 to 1989, ten in white women’s magazines, 16 in the feminist press, and four in the Black press. For the same period, I located far more articles commenting on rape, particularly in the feminist press. Of these I sampled 30 from the feminist press and read all of the 25 articles I located in the mainstream women’s magazines as well as 16 articles in the Black press, nearly half of which discussed the rape allegations of Black men.

My research reveals that mainstream women's magazines, the feminist press, and Black press diverged in their redefinitions of rape, depending on the race and gender of victims. First, feminists sought to expose the pervasiveness of violent rape. These feminists also sought to challenge the idea that women wanted rape or that only a certain type

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11 Mainstream white women's publications include magazines such as *Cosmopolitan, Redbook, Ladies Home Journal,* and *Seventeen.* The feminist press consists of counterculture publications like *Big Mama Rag, Speckled Bird, Sinister Wisdom, Heresies,* and more. The Black press includes *Essence Magazine, Ebony,* and *Jet.*

12 Much of the literature on rape tracks the history from the institutional level because that remains more visible and accessible than personal accounts.
of woman could be raped. Black women feared naming Black men as their assailants since this would undermine Black male respectability in the eyes of white America. Furthermore, Black women struggled to obtain justice in the courts, even for the most violent rape cases. These legal barriers hindered them from advancing beyond the obstacle to defy the myth of the Black male rapist. Meanwhile, the feminist press and mainstream women’s magazines worked to reveal that rapists were not always strangers and violence did not necessarily characterize rape. Radical and liberal feminists redefined rape to include any situation in which a man stripped a woman of her choice to have consensual sex, naming acquaintance rape. Slightly later, Black women also wrote about acquaintance rape, but less frequently. Despite divergent priorities from the 1960s through the 1980s, by the end of this period acquaintance rape had entered the vocabulary that the Black press, mainstream women’s magazines, and the radical feminist press all used to discuss this type of violence against women. As demonstrated in these sources, reforming the way social and legal structures silenced women’s ability to speak out depended on intersectional activism among Black women, liberal feminists, and radical feminists.

This paper captures the personal accounts in which women first vocalized their rape stories in the press, illustrating how the focus and language evolved over time across liberal, radical, and Black women. First, I discuss the provenance of the anti-rape movement in the press, emanating from the second-wave feminist efforts to speak out in consciousness-raising groups, to defy archaic gender conventions, and to empower women to make their own decisions pertaining to their bodies. Then, I describe how Black Americans pursued their own crusade to redefine rape for both women and men. I conclude by pinpointing
the emergence of acquaintance rape and its uneven and delayed identification across the three types of publications. While by 1981 nonviolent cases of rape appeared in the mainstream women's magazines, the subject remained underrepresented in the Black press until 1988. The discordance in definitions among the magazines reflected the varying priorities of each group. While the fight against acquaintance rape signified a level of privilege within the mainstream feminist movement, it also denoted a heightened militancy against white male authority necessary to combat an indelible history of sexual violence against women.

Second Wave Feminism: Seedbed for the Anti-Rape Movement

By the late 1960s, second-wave feminists added rape to their agenda in the increasingly vociferous fight against sex discrimination. Women joined consciousness-raising groups to reevaluate the ways society indoctrinated them to adhere to certain social norms. These consciousness-raising groups provided a space for women to help each other identify roots of oppression and to empower one another. Feminists argued that “the personal is political,” imbuing the private sphere with unprecedented political significance. They acknowledged that the politics of the public sphere transcended the barriers between public and private life. In 1970, the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective published “Our Bodies, Our Selves,” which addressed women’s sexuality and reproductive health. Three years later, in

Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. Constitution protects women’s choice to have an abortion. At the same moment, women advocated for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, which would ensure that equality under the law would not be infringed on the basis of sex. This revolutionary era in the fight for gender equality set the stage for women to alter public notions of rape.

The idea that women wanted to be raped and could prevent its occurrence came under scrutiny in women’s magazines. Writing in Vogue in 1971, husband and wife team Sanche and Nancy De Gramont expressed their “shock at an American nightmare, real and metaphoric rape.”15 Speaking to an intergenerational change in thinking on rape, Sanche De Gramont wrote that “as part of my sexual education, my mother advised me that there was no such thing as rape. ‘All a girl has to do is cross her legs,’ she said. ‘And if she has to fight off a man, he will get so flustered that he won’t be able to do anything.’” De Gramont, however, later came to question this advice. “I have since discovered that she was wrong on both counts: the fear that makes women submit to force and that the rapist, far from being flustered, is sometimes a man who can only perform in a struggle.”16 Unlike her mother, De Gramont not only believed in rape but also recognized how fear impedes a woman’s ability to defend herself or stop a rapist.

Feminist writers fueled a growing discourse on rape, challenging the systemic legal and cultural forces that enabled rape to persist. In 1971, Susan Griffin began her article, “Rape: The All-American Crime,” by declaring “I have never been free of the fear of rape.”17 Equating rape

15 Gramont referred to the oppression women experienced in society as a “metaphoric rape.”
17 Susan Griffin, “Rape: The All-American Crime,” Ramparts Mag-
to “fire or lightning,” something inevitable and potentially fatal, Griffin remarked that she had always accepted rape’s ubiquity. She recounted a childhood during which adults indoctrinated her with a fear of men and rape. Griffin honed in on the fact that society teaches women how to fear and avoid rape but fails to teach men not to rape. Four years later, Susan Brownmiller published Against Our Will, the most extensive account of rape to date, proclaiming that her “purpose” was “to give rape its history” and thus “deny it a future.” Brownmiller had not considered rape a feminist issue until she acknowledged women speaking out about their own stories in feminist circles and conferences. Second-wave feminist testimonies altered her understanding. In Against Our Will, Brownmiller hoped to expose others to the history, psychology, racialization, and identity politics surrounding rape. She explained that the courts’ understanding of rape “hinges on whether or not the victim offered sufficient resistance to the attack” and “whether or not her will was truly overcome by the use of force or the threat of bodily harm.” Brownmiller and other feminists advocated for greater recognition of the omnipresence of rape and increased empathy towards the victim—rather than an interrogation of her character and the strength of her resistance.

In the early 1970s, feminists recognized the power of personal stories as a vehicle to expose the prevalence of rape. Along with speaking in consciousness-raising groups and participating in public demonstrations, women began to publish their personal accounts of rape within theazine, September 1971, 26.

18 Brownmiller, Against Our Will, 383.
19 Estrich, “Rape,” “Courts have required that victims demonstrate their “nonconsent by engaging in resistance that will leave no doubt as to nonconsent.”
feminist press. I located ten personal accounts of violent stranger rape in the feminist press from 1970 to 1974. In contrast, I found only one personal account of rape, published anonymously in 1969, in a mainstream women’s magazine and no other accounts in the white or the Black publications until 1977. Rape victims in the feminist press wrote unapologetically, declaring the urgency to end rape through the women’s liberation movement because “women are not free as long as they must dread or experience rape.” These women did more than just share their horrendous experiences of rape; they also spoke to the shameful and merciless way the police and other figures of public authority treated them following the attacks. An anonymous woman shared that if she were to be raped again, she would refrain from reporting to the police “because of all the hassle you have to go through, the degradation, the questioning.” She remarked that “the rape was probably the least traumatic incident of the whole evening.” Three of these articles in the feminist press referred to the situation a victim faces in a courtroom as “the second rape.” These victims lambasted their experiences of rape and the aftermath of their attacks, shedding light upon the way rape epitomizes female oppression socially, legally, and politically. The writers condemned not only the crime as a pervasive societal issue but also the system that mistreated rape victims.

20 Freedman, Redefining Rape, 279.
22 The four pieces (one each in Big Mama Rag and Women and two in Berkeley Tribe) all mentioned how poorly the police and other authority figures dealt with their rape.
Anti-rape activism surged in the 1970s as feminists established new systems of support for victims and heightened efforts to condemn rape. In 1973, the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed a Rape Task Force that petitioned states to reform rape laws. Rape victims who sought counseling, social services, and legal support for their experiences now had somewhere to go: the rape crisis center. With over four hundred centers nationwide by 1976, more victims could secure support. The anti-rape movement expanded its public presence as well, particularly with communal marches protesting rape. At the New York Women’s Walk Against Rape, which took place in Central Park in August 1976, women “shouted and marched their way through an area usually avoided like the plague by women during the day, as well as after dark.” In these marches, women reclaimed neighborhoods they generally refrained from visiting due to fear of sexual violence. The newsletter of the New York Radical Feminists noted that the metropolitan newspapers recounted the events from the march “usually in supportive terms,” demonstrating the national awareness the anti-rape movement had garnered. The movement also influenced courts. In 1977, feminists successfully fought to remove Judge Archie Simonson from his judicial position after he excused young rapists based on their victims’ clothing choices and, in turn, blamed these women.

While radical feminists fought to dismantle the pa-

26 In 1978, NOW helped pass a Rape Shield Law, protecting the privacy of rape survivors by preventing cross examination into the woman’s prior sexual history.
27 Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 278.
triarchal systems that normalized rape culture, liberal white women focused on changing pre-second wave feminism discourse that held that women brought rape on themselves. They wielded respectability as a tool to demonstrate that all women, not only promiscuous women, were susceptible to the threat of rape. To demonstrate that rape could happen anywhere without women’s incitement, victims shared their stories of violent stranger rape in mainstream women’s magazines, describing rapists who invaded their homes or parked cars with knives or guns. From 1977 to 1984, personal rape accounts written in white women’s magazines shared the same story line: women described the violent measures their rapists took to force them into submission while stressing their own respectability, anticipating a public stigma that only a certain type of woman was a rape victim. In a 1978 rape narrative published in Good Housekeeping, the author highlighted her virginity before explaining the violent way her rapist invaded her car and raped her. “They say that careless women invite rape, that loose women provoke rape, that women secretly want to be taken by force,” journalist Claudia Dreifus wrote in Redbook in 1979. “Experts and victims alike will tell you none of this is true.” After clarifying that “women of all ages, races and social and economic backgrounds suffer the trauma of rape,” Dreifus proceeded to identify the age, occupation, and marital status of victims before they shared their stories of rape. The emphasis these women placed

30 Rape culture refers to a society that normalizes sexual violence.
31 I found seven (1977 Cosmopolitan, 1978 Good Housekeeping, three in 1979 Redbook, 1982 People, 1984 Ladies Home Journal) personal accounts like this within this time frame in white women’s magazines.
on their identity illustrates the extent to which they both feared and fought the deeply entrenched myth that only an immoral woman could be raped. Even after the ground-breaking writing of Griffin and Brownmiller and nationwide anti-rape activism, women felt shame in publicizing their rape narratives, and many continued to blame themselves for these attacks.

**Sideline the Rape of Black Women: “If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free”**

The conventions that dictated how to respond to or report on rape varied drastically for Black women. Although they shared rape stories narratively similar to white women, Black women contextualized their accounts within a legacy of rape specific to the Black experience. During the 1930s, the infamous Scottsboro interracial rape case epitomized the ease of convicting innocent Black men when accused by white women, even when one of these women recanted her accusation. In exposing white women’s false accusations, the case gave credence to the myth that women lied about rape. Scottsboro elucidated the conundrum within the evolving definition of rape concerning the attention given to the race of a victim or rapist. The focus on these factors exacerbated the mistreatment and neglect of Black women.

According to Catherine Jacquet, the schism between the Civil Rights Movement and the Women’s Liberation movement, “sometimes rooted in seemingly opposing

35 Before the 13th Amendment, the rape of enslaved African Americans was legally permitted.
understandings of histories of injustice,” particularly surrounding the subject of rape, often isolated Black women. Black male activists sometimes pressured women to support the cause primarily as mothers or wives. At times, white feminists neglected the unique experience of Black women or excluded them by subordinating race to gender in order to advance white women’s interests. Some Black women opted out of the feminist movement since racism was “so entrenched among white women, that black females have been reluctant to admit that anything affecting the white female could also affect them.” The title of the 1982 anthology All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave epitomized the alienation of Black women from both these movements. Black women formed their own movements to address the intersection of racial and sexual discrimination. Despite the strong coalitions formed by Black women, the media still relegated them to the periphery, particularly as it pertained to rape coverage.

38 Freedman, No Turning Back, 272-274.  
40 Freedman, No Turning Back, 275.  
41 Bevacqua also notes how the absence of Black women from white anti-rape circles did not signify their absence from the movement altogether. Essie Green Williams, an organizer of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), acknowledged that Black women needed space to discuss rape on their own before collaborating with mostly white feminist anti-rape groups.
The duality of rape’s history of oppressing both white women and black men, amplified by their movement’s clashing interests, dominated central headlines and activism and sidelined black women from the limelight. While liberal white women victimized by rape fought to reclaim their reputability and radical feminists strove for a victim-centered response to rape, Black men and many leftists fought to counter the myth of the Black rapist. The 1973 case of the Tarboro Three, in which the Edgecombe County Superior court sentenced three Black men to death for the rape of a white woman, mirrored the same tension posed in Scottsboro: the historically erroneous accusation of Black men as rapists and their heightened punishment versus the notorious questioning of a white woman’s rape testimony. The Tarboro Three case, Jacquet shows, sparked massive backlash. The president of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Julian Bond, wrote a public letter that aimed to undermine the victim’s rape allegation. Nancy Baker of the Eugene Rape Prevention Center also condemned the execution of these men, while at the same time criticizing Bond’s skepticism of the victim’s account, which Baker said perpetuated sexist views of rape. Baker concluded that “racism and sexism are a product of the same system of thought. . . we cannot use those tools against each other.” Baker imagined that both movements could recognize the ways race and gender influenced the narrative around rape and jointly fight against both rape and racism. Radical feminist activist Angela Davis believed it necessary to wed race and gender to each other in the fight against sexual violence. She argued for the necessity of alerting “white women about the urgency of combining a fierce challenge to racism with the necessary battle against sexism.”  

42 An intersectional anti-rape movement required shifting concern towards

Black women’s experiences as well. The clashing interests of these movements, which marginalized Black women, made their participation in the anti-rape crusade all the more necessary.

While the focus on rape skewed more towards men than to women in the Black press, the neglect of Black women did not go unnoticed. *Jet* featured more literature on the false accusations of rape and Black men’s rape trials than on Black victims of rape.43 The primary focus—to dismantle the myth of the Black male rapist—came before a concern to elicit empathy for Black female victims of rape, which led to a minimization of the rape of Black women, in both the media and the public eye.44 In an article about the violent rape of a Black woman on a New York City street, the author Bernette Golden remarked that “despite historical attitudes that condone sexual assaults on our bodies and our traditional skepticism about police effectiveness,” Black women report rape more frequently than white women.

Data from the National Opinion Research Center supported her point; Black women reported rape four times more frequently than white women.45 Nonetheless, I located only two personal rape accounts by Black women, both involving violence and weapons, from the Black press, one published in *Ebony* in 1978 and the second in *Essence* in 1979.

The discrepancy between the number of Black women reporting their rapes and the number of these stories

43 Six out of seven articles I located in *Jet* focused on the rape allegations of Black men.
44 Cassandra Wilson and Noreen Connell. *Rape: The First sourcebook for Women* (New York: Plume Books, 1974), 244. Essie Green Williams stated that “the black woman does not want to be another foot on the black man’s head, she is trying to point out that a lot of the interactions that go on between black men and black women are very oppressive.”
actually being published illustrated the minimized attention and empathy given to Black victims. This neglect also reinforced the plight that this group of women faced. “What do you do when you discover that most white policemen, prosecutors, judges and even media consider the rape of a Black woman a lesser offense than the rape of a white woman?” the author of the 1979 *Essence* article inquired.\(^{46,47}\) This statement reflects the systemic injustices Black women faced and had no mechanism to combat. The elaboration of each level of authority listed—policemen, prosecutors, judges, and the media—demonstrated the minimal value that the justice system placed on the lives of Black women. The lack of attention given to Black victims helps to explain the scarcity of personal rape accounts I found written by Black women. As Black feminist writer Alice Walker articulated in 1981, “Who knows what the black woman thinks of rape? Who has asked her? Who cares?”\(^{48}\)

The prevailing sentiment among Black women suggested that they would continue to face underrepresentation due to historical failures to address the racist legacy of rape prosecution. “If black women have been conspicuously absent from the ranks of the contemporary anti-rape movement,” Angela Davis explained, “it may be due, in part, to that movement’s indifferent posture toward the frame-up rape charge as an incitement to racist aggression.”\(^{49}\) Davis posited that combating the pervasive criminalization of

\(^{46}\) “What Must Be Done,” *Ebony*, August 1979, 144–45.
\(^{47}\) Wilson and Connell, *Rape: The First sourcebook*, 248. In an interview, Essie Green also declared “As for the police - why bother going to the police? […] You know if the police put down a white woman what happens when a black woman walks into the precinct… So black woman don’t report rape… the basic assumption is that if you’re black, you did something.”


black men accused of rape took priority over joining the predominantly white ranks of the anti-rape movement.\(^\text{50}\) A combination of the priorities on the Civil Rights agenda, the failure to ensure intersectionality in the feminist anti-rape movement, and the prejudice black women experienced with law enforcement, police, and the media all influenced the underrepresentation of Black women’s accounts. As historian Jacquet notes, Black feminists pursued an intersectional fight against rape, one that situated their own experiences at the center of this crusade.\(^\text{51}\) As the Combahee River Collective, a socialist and radical Black feminist organization, declared in 1977, “if Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression.”\(^\text{52}\)

By the end of the 1980s, anti-rape activism had begun to grapple with the patriarchal origins of rape, the identity of rapists as white and not primarily Black men, the mistreatment of victims, and continued neglect of Black women as victims. However, activists still dealt with victims and rapists as strangers, without exploring their relationship to one another. Many key questions persisted: could women know their rapists? If rapists were not just Black men, could anyone be a rapist? Did coercion with a gun or knife define rape? Were physical bruises or remnants of violence the only evidence that could substantiate a rape accusation?

\(^{50}\) Wilson and Connell, *Rape: The First sourcebook*, 248. Essie Green Williams also stated, “trying to deal with the rape issue when there are so many other issues of survival in the black community - it becomes a matter of priorities.”

\(^{51}\) Jacquet, *Injustices of Rape*, 188.

The Emergence of Acquaintance Rape

In the early 1980s, women began using various publications as forums to broaden the definition of rape to include social contexts. In 1982, an anonymous woman wrote “A Case for Social Rape,” the first rendition of rape in *Cosmopolitan* that did not include the use of a gun or knife. The woman described bringing a man back to her apartment, where he raped her despite her urging, “No, stop that!” The author later thought about how, under other circumstances, she might have willingly slept with him or “wanted him” had they gone on more dates. This was “confusing” to her. However, she continued, “he’d taken that choice away from me.” The writer feared that her previous fondness for the man undermined her disgust and repulsion of him after he raped her. She referred to the experience as “social rape” to indicate that it “occurs within the course of ordinary social interchange,” as opposed to the earlier accounts of unexpected attacks by strangers. The fact that she knew this man and welcomed him into her home pushed this woman to blame herself for the outcome of their encounter.\(^\text{53}\) Although the victim’s guilt remained consistent with earlier narratives, the context in which rape could occur altered entirely.

Beyond the prior relationship between victim and rapist, the absence of physical violence and weapons makes this story an anomaly among pre-1982 personal accounts. The new rape account sensationalized the narrative not through violence and shock but through individual storytelling and self-doubt. This woman acknowledged that

\(^{53}\) Katharine Merlin, “A Case of Social Rape,” *Cosmopolitan*, November 1982, 91. In 1984 in *Ladies Home Journal*, a victim did not report her experience of rape because she knew the man and could not believe he would have raped her.
“there’s the question of how much force is used” because “X [the rapist] didn’t hold a knife to my throat or even threaten me.”54 While the anonymous victim writing in *Cosmopolitan* expressed uncertainty in her own experience of rape, other articles reinforced her definition of “social rape.” Journalist Abe Pivowitz wrote in a 1982 *Good Housekeeping* article that the most likely rapist was a “man of the same race who may be known to her by sight and does not carry a weapon.”55 According to Pivowitz’s description, the “X” man in “Social Rape” epitomized the archetypal rapist.

The increasingly malleable definitions of rape—and widening perceptions of how victims could relate to their rapist—soon gained enough attention to warrant an extensive study to confirm women’s lived experiences and perspectives. Bolstered by evidence from psychologist Mary Koss’s scientific survey of sexual aggression and victimization at Kent State University, in 1982 *Ms.* magazine published an article on this largely unknown type of rape, calling it “date rape.” *Ms.* emerged as the first national magazine to cover this issue. In hopes of strengthening the data to represent the whole country, Koss partnered with *Ms.* to solicit a grant from the National Institute for Mental Health to conduct a national study of rape. Koss and a team of researchers administered surveys on 32 college campuses to over 6,100 undergraduate women and men. In 1985, *Ms.* unveiled the results that one in four female respondents had an experience that aligned with the legal definition of rape or attempted rape. Moreover, 84 percent of those raped knew their attacker.56 This astonishing find-

ing revealed not only the ubiquity of rape but also that most victims of rape knew their rapists.

The new data both amplified and legitimized women’s experiences of rape as not solely perpetrated by strangers. The growing consensus around rape’s expanding definition in turn empowered more women to share their stories of acquaintance rape. Between 1982 and 1985, I identified only three personal accounts of acquaintance rape in the women’s magazine but instead located many articles pertaining to “social,” “confidence,” or “acquaintance rape.” By 1988, media coverage on acquaintance rape surged across publications.

Two articles by actress Diane McBain illustrate how the media in the early 1980s redefined rape. McBain’s first account centered on a violent rape and the explicit physical evidence it left her with, while in her second account, she shared her experience of acquaintance rape and the vortex of silence and self-doubt that ensued. In 1983, McBain shared her story of rape in People, recounting how two Latino men violently raped her in her car. The rapists left her with torn lips, swollen eyes, and a battered body. There was no question whether or not she had been raped; it was obvious by looking at her that she had been violently attacked. This incident also fit the popular stereotype of men of color, strangers, violently assaulting a white woman. As such, the press covered her story with “outrage” and sympathy. Two years later, writing in Cosmopolitan, McBain recounted the stranger rape, but this time she shared that after extensive therapy, she had realized this had not been her first experience of rape. Back in the 1960s, during her rise to fame, I found eight of these in the women’s magazines, two of these in Time Magazine, two in the Black press, and many more in the feminist press.

McBain was courted by a Hollywood producer, Sam, who treated her to fancy dinners and sent her luxurious clothing. He invited her on a trip to Las Vegas, where she insisted that they were friends and nothing more. That night at the hotel, Sam raped her. Afterwards, McBain remained silent. She blamed herself for what happened. It was not until coming to terms with the later assault that she could articulate that she had previously been a victim of rape.

A microcosm for women's evolving understanding of rape in the early 1980s, McBain's testimony demonstrates how the dismissal of nonviolent acquaintance rape as a "real" type of rape resulted in silence. Women like McBain did not speak out about their experience because they did not believe it qualified as rape and blamed themselves. A decade earlier, a survivor illustrated this sentiment in the radical press sharing, "I'd been coerced psychologically (‘Prove you love me, or I’ll leave’) into going to bed with guys I really didn’t care that much about–but what girl hasn’t? Anyway, that’s not considered the same as out-and-out rape.” The growing acceptance of forceful rape sowed the seeds for understanding the force of psychological coercion. McBain stated that "now that I have exhumed this dreadful ghost from my past, I can see how we women have been the victims of our own thinking.” Once McBain confronted her experience, she understood that her thoughts had distorted her discernment of the rape, transforming her from victim to culprit:

“But if the evolution of my consciousness parallels that of most women, and I think it does, the different ways in which I handled these attacks mark a decided change in our thinking. It has taken a long time, but our definition

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of rape is clearer. We have come to understand that rape is any occasion when a man strips away the choice a woman has over matters that concern her body and mind.”

That she framed her change of mind as a coming to consciousness evokes the consciousness-raising groups that provided women with a space to validate their personal experiences during the second-wave feminist movement.

The growing literature on date rape also gave McBain the courage and the platform to share her story from many years before. Her former thinking, influenced by social norms and the sensationalism of the type of rape coverage that solicited public attention, blurred her understanding of what happened. Her use of “we” refers to all women, not just herself. McBain clarified that a victim did not require an experience with physical violence, visible scars, or no prior relationship to the rapist to validate the new definition of rape, but simply a theft of choice. McBain redefined rape from being dependent on the circumstance to which women are subjected to the space that women are given to make their own choices.

In the literature that followed, journalists continued to validate how rape could occur in a nonviolent context with an acquaintance. In a 1985 *Cosmopolitan* article “Social Rape: When Seduction Turns to Horror,” author Sue Browder explained how women tend to blame themselves in situations of social rape.61 They often dwelled on what they were wearing and questioned if their particular attire doomed them. Women expressed skepticism that the man who raped them “would never do that!”62 Women probed

60 McBain, “I WAS RAPED,” 94.
why they put themselves in that situation in the first place or wondered if they signaled too much generosity. The tendency to inculpate oneself engendered silence. Browder cited Peg Ziegler, a counseling psychologist, who said “on a date, you’re less likely to be confronted with a gun or knife, but you’re more psychologically crippled by the element of surprise.”

This rendition of social rape, in which harm done to the victim was understood as psychological manipulation, appeared more frequently in the press. The growing frequency with which women shared their stories made space for the inclusion of psychological rape as a legitimate form of rape in addition to violent rape.

Date rape had begun to gain societal recognition among all people, across race and gender, by the latter half of the 1980s. The New York Times, Washington Post, and Time all defined this new type of rape and contextualized it as occurring within a social setting. These publications all cited Mary Koss’s pioneering study, suggesting that articles on date rape could not have been published without the evidence to substantiate them. The new literature explained that “acquaintance rapes are not always reported because many victims do not define themselves as having been raped.” As found in Koss’s survey, 73 percent of the women forced into sex avoided using the term rape to describe their experience. The women lacked the vocabulary and

familiarity to label their assault “rape.” The new flood of literature on the subject marked a new era, one in which women could validate their experiences as a real form of rape.

By 1988, a few articles about date rape began to appear in Black periodicals, though never as prevalent as in white women’s magazines.\(^{67}\) Situating the myth “that all rapists are strangers” in the context of the black female experience, journalist Renee D. Turner stated that beyond the general skepticism faced by victims lacking physical bruises or scars, Black rape victims confronted various other obstacles, including the stereotype that black women are “promiscuous.” Whether “an acquaintance, family member or coworker” raped a victim, Black women did not report rape cases due to fearing a doubtful “community response.”\(^{68}\) Turner referred to an inclination in the Black community to defy the myth of the Black male rapist and acknowledged that historically, Black women distrusted law enforcement and the criminal justice system.\(^{69}\) Not only did Black women lack viable political and social paths to justice, but it was difficult for the Black press to prioritize advancing this more nuanced definition of rape, when justice was not being delivered for Black women even in the most explicit cases. When Black women reported incidents of violent stranger rape, they could not obtain justice within the criminal justice system. Black journalist Audrey Edwards attributed the

\(^{67}\) I found two articles in *Essence* and one article in *Ebony* between 1988 to 1989.


media sensationalism of a Black woman’s 1988 rape case to “the cheapness with which Black women are still viewed in this society, the pathology which we as a people still exhibit in betraying our own, and the insidiousness of an American system still racist at the root.”  

Even as acquaintance rape emerged in the headlines of the Black press, it never attained the same attention as it did in the feminist press and mainstream women’s magazines.

The “Date-Rape Debate”

I Never Called it Rape—the most comprehensive collection of personal accounts, interviews, and data compiled on acquaintance rape when it was published in 1988—symbolized the culmination of research, literature, and media that aimed to “define and demonstrate the prevalence of acquaintance rape.” Feminists and experts on the subject modified the term date rape or social rape to acquaintance rape, a “more accurate label” for people who know each other. The book covered all aspects of acquaintance rape from the silence shrouding acquaintance rape to the difficult aftermath that victims endured. The author, Robin Warshaw, centered the book on Koss’s Ms. Magazine Campus Project on Sexual Assault and complemented this data with


72 Warshaw and Koss, I Never Called It Rape, 87.
interviews with more than 150 victims. One critic described Warshaw’s book as “nonpolemical, lucid and speak[ing] eloquently.”\textsuperscript{73} Though the publication of this book represented a turning point in the academic acknowledgement of acquaintance rape, its publication did not mean that the public unanimously recognized acquaintance rape.

Despite the proliferation of literature, media attention, and even legislative change, opposition to expanding the definition of rape still persisted.\textsuperscript{74} The question “when is it rape?” merited a \textit{Time} magazine cover story in 1991. Journalist Nancy Gibbs wrote that “behind the search for labels is the central mythology about rape: that rapists are always strangers, and victims are women who ask for it.” She touched upon the lingering denial of nonviolent rape as a form of real rape. These lasting myths muddle “the search for the truth.” Gibbs commented on the way the stereotypes pigeonholed victims into certain categories and tainted the fairness of media coverage or a court trial. For Gibbs, women and men understood rape differently. Women identified date rape as a “hidden crime” that “isn’t taken seriously.” Men viewed date rape as something that could not be defined, or simply “a concept invented by women who like to tease but not take the consequences.” The only consensus men and women came to was that a “gray area” obscured what constituted sexual assault.\textsuperscript{75}

In the intensifying “Date-Rape Debate,” adamant deniers of acquaintance rape denounced feminist acknowl-
edgement of acquaintance rape. Warshaw’s *I Never Called it Rape* provoked harsh backlash. In the foreword to the 1994 edition, the author lamented that “I had no idea then how fiercely men and women” would attack “each element of that basic truth.” Even self-proclaimed feminists, like art critic Camille Paglia, conservative critic Christina Hoff Sommers, and journalist Katie Roiphe, undermined the basis for acquaintance rape and, in doing so, sought to demonize anti-rape feminists.

In *The Morning After* (1993), Roiphe described date rape as merely an excuse for regrettable sex. She argued that feminist support for date rape undermined feminist ideals that women have agency to make their own choices. According to Roiphe, posters displaying Marry Koss’s survey findings “were advertising a mood.” In her telling, Koss misinterpreted her data: women did not lack the vocabulary to describe their experience as rape; rather, women did not believe that what they endured was in fact rape.

The denial of acquaintance rape spread to college campuses, largely in response to heightened campus policies on sexual assault. “Comparing real rape to date rape is like comparing cancer to the common cold,” a UC

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79 The 1992 Higher Education Reauthorization Act gave colleges federal funding to establish written policy on sexual assault.
Berkeley professor told his students in 1991. A victim of acquaintance rape at Brown University reported her incident to the dean, to which he replied, “I think this can be all boiled down to a case of bad chemistry.” Other journalists lambasted emerging consent laws on college campuses, exclaiming that “it becomes” the responsibility of a man “to dispel any ambiguity.” Colleges would remain a forum for debate on rape culture for years to come.

Silence Begets Silence, Noise Begets an Uproar

Despite ongoing controversy over the definition of rape, victims have increasingly voiced their rape stories in public to remove the mantle of silence that has concealed rape throughout American history. Over time, women have reclaimed agency in speaking out against their experiences of sexual violence and have empowered other women to reveal their stories too. The women who first shared their accounts in mainstream women’s magazines, the feminist press, and the Black press as early as 1969 and the first women to share stories of acquaintance rape demonstrated tremendous bravery. These women revolutionized a previously hidden landscape, one veiled in silence, and made it possible for other women to speak out. The emergence of acquaintance rape signaled an augmented imperative, more militant in its approach to dismantling patriarchal power that persisted due to its normalization. Requiring verbal consent reinforced women’s sexual agency, for which

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they fought in the second-wave feminist movement. The women who shared their personal accounts early on set the stage for the women in later years to publicly denounce sexual violence.

Soon after the period of this study, in 1991, Anita Hill brought claims of sexual harassment against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. Hill's allegations at Thomas's confirmation hearings galvanized national attention to the issue of workplace harassment. The Senate's dismissal of Hill's testimony ignited a feminist firestorm, which shed light upon the power of one individual to inspire a movement that in turn stirred legislative and social change.\(^83\) Nearly three decades later, *Time* honored Anita Hill’s influence in the magazine’s list of “100 Women of the Year.” “As the chorus of the #MeToo movement reached a crescendo, with women everywhere speaking out about abuse they had endured at the hands of powerful men,” *Time* wrote of Hill, “one voice from the past seemed to echo into the present.”\(^84\)

The power of the individual still poses the greatest menace to the historical impunity of men who rape. From second-wave feminism until the present day, the press, along with other means of speaking out, has provided a key forum for women to share their stories. Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, the *New York Times* journalists who broke the Harvey Weinstein sexual assault story, acknowledged that “journalism had helped inspire a paradigm shift.”\(^85\)

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83 The month after Anita Hill’s testimony, Congress passed a law extending the rights of sexual-harassment victims. And a year later, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received a 50% increase in sexual-harassment complaints than it had the year before.


85 Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey. *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement* (CITY?, UK: Penguin
Too movement, begun in 2006 by Tarana Burke, exemplifies the power women possess in sharing their stories in an open media forum. The mobilization of victims to publicize their experiences together both legitimized their experience to themselves and confirmed the trustworthiness of women to the public. Me Too exposed the purview of sexual assault with acquaintances, underscoring how power manifests in silencing victims and enabling rapists.

As in the period I studied, the urgency for intersectionality in the contemporary anti-rape movement persists. Even though a Black woman, Tarana Burke, founded MeToo, the media largely attributed its inception to white celebrities. Underrepresentation of Black women in Me Too may emanate in part from an enduring problem—the reticence among Black women to “disclose that your perpetrator was indeed of your own race.” Due to lasting distrust in the criminal justice system and the insidious history of racist oppression, Black women have faced pressure to “protect” rather than “expose” members of their own community. In June 2020, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, nine out of ten Black Americans reported not having confidence in the criminal justice system. The crossover between these issues reinforces the importance in tackling racism alongside sexism. The failure to value the anti-racist and anti-sexist movements equally means that some women face exclusion. Seismic change, however,

Publisher Group, 2019), 3.
87 Gayle Pollard-Terry, “For African American rape victims, a culture of silence,” Los Angeles Times, September 14, 2015. Sharon Shelton, the senior program manager of the YWCA Greater Los Angeles Sexual Assault Crisis Program in Compton shared this quote.
requires the collaboration of the feminist and Black Lives Matter movement to publicly condemn rape and work together to dismantle the systems that normalize both rape and racism.
LOVE AT FIRST BRUSHSTROKE:
AN EXPLORATION OF RENAISSANCE ARTISTS’ EXPERIENCES OF LOVE

Odelia Lorch

Erato, Urania, Terpsichore, Thalia, Euterpe, Mel-pomene, Polyhymnia, Calliope, Clio. When Leonello d’Este, a nobleman of Ferrara, commissioned the Palazzo Belfiore, he called upon his tutor, Guarino Veronese, to design its studiolo. In the true spirit of the Italian Renaissance, Guarino turned to the classics, and in the layout he completed in 1447, he designated space for nine paintings, one of each of the Greek Muses. Guarino intended the inspirational goddesses of intellect, each one embodying a different field of knowledge, to stimulate the viewer, cultivating the optimal creative space for his pupil. Yet the nine paintings that ultimately hung in the studiolo introduced an unexpected significance; the goddesses appeared sensual and lascivious.¹ They aroused not only intellect, but romantic, even erotic, desire as well.

The “muse” of an artist is both his beloved and his source of creative inspiration. In the sixteenth century, several renowned works of art were born of revelations brought

about by the artist’s experience of love and the presence of a muse in his life. From the twelfth century through the Italian Renaissance, theories of love emerged that aimed to define standards for amorous experiences. This paper explores the muses and amorous experiences surrounding the work of the great artists Raphael, Titian, and Michelangelo in the framework of Renaissance standards of love, and questions the sufficiency of this love in providing the artists with physical, spiritual, and creative fulfillment.

I. What is the nature of the artists’ love?

Raphael’s La Fornarina

Raphael Sanzio da Urbino, a Renaissance artist whose work embodied the utmost grace, appreciated female beauty from up close. As Joanne Bernstein describes in her article “The Female Model and the Renaissance Nude: Dürer, Giorgione, and Raphael,” he painted live models, engaging with each one’s unique, immediate appearance, rather than drawing upon past or ancient impressions of beauty. He cared for women beyond their physical appearance as well; according to Giorgio Vasari, in Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects, he was “a very amorous person, delighting much in women, and ever ready to serve them.” Less than two years before his death, while living in Rome, Raphael painted La Fornarina (fig. 1), one of his most intimate portraits yet. In the book Raphael, Grace and Beauty, Lorenza Mochi Onori notes that reflec-


ography performed on the piece exposed sketch marks that indicate immediacy and intimacy with his subject, consistent with his artistic process and regard for women.\(^4\)

The particular woman who posed for *La Fornarina* was Margherita Luti, the daughter of a Sienese baker. She was Raphael’s beloved mistress, for whom he cared dearly until his death in 1520.\(^5\) He held on, not only to this romance, but to the portrait as well. The painting was in revision and unfinished at his death, and likely stayed in his studio until it was finished and sold by his students.\(^6\) Another portrait for which Margherita posed, *Veiled Woman*, was displayed in Palazzo Pitti and intended for public appreciation. In it, Margherita’s demeanor, according to Mochi Onori, embodied “sobriety and the composed consciousness of a high social position.”\(^7\) In contrast, *La Fornarina* was kept for private viewing in Raphael’s studio, and demonstrated a more lascivious, intimate representation of the model. The unique placement of Raphael’s signature, on the *armilia* (bracelet) adorning her upper left arm, Bernstein argues, suggests Raphael’s claim over the subject, and that the painting is for his own pleasure.\(^8\) Raphael knew her and loved her, personally and up close.

Art historians have also speculated that Margherita Luti was a courtesan. However, the nudity and sensuousness of the subject, her profession, and her relationship with Raphael were not necessarily improper in Renaissance Italy. In fact, Margherita Luti was a *cortigiana onesta* (honest courtesan), a member of the highest and wealthiest

\(^5\) Mochi Onori and Lorenza, 76.
\(^6\) Mochi Onori and Lorenza, 73.
\(^7\) Mochi Onori and Lorenza, 72.
class of courtesans, a higher social class than that of common women. These women were distinguished from common women for their openness, “looser morals,” and presence in elite and cultured circles. Mochi Onori makes clear, however, that this did not contradict their being “loved women”; honest courtesans “were often raised to the status of ‘official’ lover of a powerful man.”

Further, though the dark tones in the background of the portrait appear sensual, improper, and “inelegant,” the darkness likely came with the painting’s restoration, not any quality of the subject. Raphael’s portrayal of his beloved, though revealing, was honorable.

Raphael and Margherita never married, though Raphael legitimized their love by including her in his will. As Vasari recorded, “first, like a good Christian, he sent his mistress out of the house, leaving her the means to live honorably.” For this reason, Mochi Onori referred to La Fornarina as a “portrait of a particularly desired lover for whom the role of bride was apparently not contemplated.” Raphael did once contemplate marriage, when he was briefly betrothed to Cardinal Medici Bibbiena’s niece, Maria Bibbiena. However, according to Vasari he was “very ill content with this entanglement,” and, in the end, he never married. Interestingly, during the process of restoration of La Fornarina, it was discovered that the subject wore a gold ring with a stone on her left hand, possibly a wedding ring, which was painted over with a layer of flesh-colored paint, as though, Mochi Onori points out, “the artist had had sec-

9 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, Raphael, Grace and Beauty, 70.
10 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, 78.
11 Vasari, Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects, 247.
12 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, Raphael, Grace and Beauty, 70.
13 Vasari, Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects, 246.
Perhaps it was the sourness of his previous betrothal that deterred him; or maybe he feared their marriage might have a negative outcome.

Two gripping, flirtatious elements of the subject’s pose are her sidelong gaze and the Venus pudica placement of her hands on her mostly-nude torso. One hand crosses her body to partially cover her breast and the other is held at her genitals. She is clearly naked, yet still attempts to cover herself, an ambiguous pose that both invites and rejects the viewer. Her gaze appears fleeting, as though she is turning away from the viewer, her attention verging on indifference. 19th-century philosopher Georg Simmel, in his essay titled “Flirtation,” defines flirtation as a fluctuation between, and simultaneous embrace of, the contradicting states of consent and dissent, affection and aversion; it is the act of playing with the other person’s states of “having and not having.” Simmel discusses the statue Medici Venus, whose hands assume the classical Venus pudica position, like the subject of La Fornarina, positioned in what Simmel calls “semi-concealment.” He claims the subject exhibits intentional “exposure, an alternation between submission and denial, as flirtation requires.” In La Fornarina, the intensity of the subject’s gaze, as well, indicates that she embodies these contradicting states in a way that controls her viewer. A woman who flirts is not swayed by the game she plays; in fact, she must have an internal quality that is strong and secure in order to withdraw and effectively manipulate opposite effects. In this way, the image of Margherita Luti, Raphael’s lover and muse, rejects his claim

14 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, Raphael, Grace and Beauty, 70.
16 Simmel, 136.
17 Simmel, 137.
18 Simmel, 141.
over her, and it is rendered unclear who wields power over whom in their relationship.

**Titian's *Venus of Urbino***

The physical space perhaps most intimate to an artist, above even his bedroom, is his studio. Sheila Hale, in her book *Titian*, describes Tiziano Vecellio’s studio: like Raphael’s, it was occupied by living models, posing according to his wish. In Venice, artists painted from living models instead of constructing an understanding of the ideal body “from Classical examples.” While it was also customary at the time in Italy to regard the artistic process as sophisticated and elegant, and writers and artists of the sixteenth century (such as Leonardo) “thought it inappropriate to describe the physical act of painting,” Titian publicly practiced a quite tactile artistic method. He had an “intensely physical way of painting” and a “messy habit of using his fingers.” The beautiful models who inhabited his studio were often “poor people” or “prostitutes,” yet he maintained respect and admiration for all women; Hale observes that “even if some of his models were common whores, their faces tell us that he wanted to explore their personalities as well as their bodies.”

He appreciated the beauty of many women; his close friend Pietro Aretino once wrote to Vasari that Titian “had never seen a lass who does not reveal some lasciviousness in her face.” Titian was not afraid to get his hands dirty, whether with paint or subject matter.

In 1522, Titian met Cecilia, the woman who would become his first wife, whose father was the son of a barber.

20 Hale, 128, 145.
in Veneto. She lived with Titian in Venice, and, because Titian was known to at times use members of his household as models, Hale speculates that she is the subject of his painting *Flora*.\(^{22}\) Cecilia birthed two sons, Pomponio and Orazio, before falling critically ill. Fearing losing her and the opportunity to legitimize their sons, Titian married her. She lived for five more years, giving birth to another child who died in infancy before she herself passed away in 1530. It is unclear to what extent Titian grieved her death, as “he was never a man to show his emotions,” but Benedetto Agnello, a Mantuan ambassador, recorded him displaying some sadness at the loss.\(^ {23}\) In the mid-1530s, Titian married again, this time to a woman who gave birth to his third child, Lavinia. Historians know little about this wife, and they assume that Titian “kept her strictly at home,” as was customary in Renaissance Italy.\(^ {24}\) Titian later had a fourth child, Emilia, who may have been born out of an affair with a housekeeper.\(^ {25}\)

Some have speculated that outside of his marriages, Titian interacted sexually with the courtesans he hired as models, who, according to Hale, “he often paints in different poses and who arouse his desires, which he then satisfies more than his limited strength permits, but he denies it.”\(^ {26}\) Two of Titian’s closest friends were Aretino and Jacopo Sansivino, the sculptor and architect, both of whom were public about their sexual behavior. Aretino entertained and slept with women of all classes, who he took to fondly calling “Aretines.”\(^ {27}\) Although he wrote that Titian was fond of and flirtatious with all women, Aretino made it clear that he never went further than flirtation. He “fondled and made a

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23 Hale, 214, 555.
24 Hale, 311.
26 Hale, 126.
27 Hale, 251.
great show of kissing the ladies, and entertained them with a thousand juvenile pranks, but remained faithful to his wife or current mistress.”

Titian denied sleeping with his models, and kept private his emotions and personal details. Titian’s privacy about his personal life makes it challenging to determine which women specifically inspired his artwork. In the book Titian’s “Venus of Urbino,” however, Rona Goffen notes that the facial features of many of the subjects of his paintings are nearly identical. Art historians have speculated that different combinations of Titian’s pieces share a model. Goffen, for example, speculates that Titian may have used the same model for La Bella and Woman with Fur, and may have used one “anonymous beauty” for Sacred and Profane Love, Flora, and Speaking Infant.

In “Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and the Art of Sculpture,” eighteenth-century art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann claimed that the best art came out of the classical artistic process, in which artists modeled their artwork after an ideal beauty. Ancient Greek artists would attend sporting events, performances, and public gymnasiuums to observe bodies of beautiful men and boys, from which “they began to develop certain general concepts of the beautiful aspects both of individual parts of the body and of the proportions of the whole, which would be superior to nature itself.”

This ideal image of beauty was not tied to a specific muse and was unattainable by any real human. Titian may have employed a similar method, in

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28 Hale, 148.
which he composed a concept of beauty from the various women he adored; he painted, as Goffen put it, “the very embodiment of beauty.”31 Once a model was incorporated into his idealized beauty, her “historical identity is taken away from her. Her own biography is irrelevant.”32

Therefore, when he painted the famous *Venus of Urbino*, the biography of the model who posed was inconsequential. Titian originally painted it for Ippolito de’ Medici as a souvenir of his visit to Venice, and it was the first nude he painted for what Hale calls the “princely, ecclesiastical, and aristocratic patrons.”33 The subject was Angela del Moro (Zaffetta), a renowned *cortigiana onesta* with whom Ippolito supposedly slept when he visited, as well as a friend of Titian and Aretino.34 According to Goffen, her pearls, servants, gown, dog, and the quality of her bedchamber furnishings indicate her high social status as a famous courtesan.35 Nevertheless, in the facial features of the subject, Titian clearly painted the ideal image of beauty he had been constructing, his composite muse.

Titian indicates both proximity to and distance from the beauty he paints in *Venus of Urbino*. The dog that lies sleeping at the edge of the bed might signal familiarity with the painter; he is a calming presence for the dog, who is given no reason to fret over an intruder, and he could even, as Goffen hypothesizes, be the master of the house.36 The nudity of the woman and the setting of a bedchamber further imply intimacy. Strangely, however, the perspectival composition of the painting is awry; there is disjunction between the foreground and background. The maid in the

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32 Goffen, 72.
34 Hale, 339.
35 Goffen, *Titian’s “Venus of Urbino*, 70.
36 Goffen, 68.
background is only one-third the size of the subject, and light enters from the left in the background, while in the foreground, the cushions are illuminated from the right. These unrealistic proportions and structure suggest excessive physical distance within the bedroom. Whatever presence calmed the dog was apparently not powerful enough to exert control over the entire scene.

Titian painted several other flirtatious hints into the scene. Similar to *La Fornarina*, the subject’s gaze is an unavoidable and dominating force in the painting. Viewers are drawn to witness her “assert[ion of] her character, her intellect, and her power to choose.” The petals falling from her bouquet and the maid rolling up her sleeve imply that the scene is a transitory, fleeting image, which is also characteristic of Simmel’s theory of flirtation. Titian later painted Angela Zaffetta in three other pieces, in which she was naked, half-clothed, and fully clothed. Envisioning the same woman in different stages of dress and undress demonstrated Simmel’s flirtatious “semi-concealment.” In clothing the naked subject of *Venus of Urbino*, Titian also demonstrated the “arousing paradox” that one woman can be, as Hale put it, both “a lady in the drawing room and a whore in bed.” One woman can be both decent and indecent, close and distant, attainable and unattainable.

**Michelangelo’s *The Rape of Ganymede***

When Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni was 57 years old, he met the young Tommaso de Cavalieri,

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37 Goffen, 83–84.
38 Goffen, 83–84.
39 Goffen, 85.
40 Hale, *Titian*, 342–43.
a 23-year-old nobleman born to a high-class Roman family, who was, as William E. Wallace writes in *Michelangelo: The Artist, the Man, and His Times*, “endowed with beautiful manners, physical grace, and a sensitive personality.”

Despite the disparity in age and in social class, he and Michelangelo experienced “instant attraction.”

Michelangelo began sending Tommaso letters, attaching original sonnets and drawings to express his adoration. Tommaso soon became the artist’s lifelong infatuation and muse.

In one such correspondence, Michelangelo sent three drawings depicting scenes from ancient Greek mythology. Each drawing can be viewed as an allegory illustrating their blossoming relationship and Michelangelo’s accompanying fantasies. *The Rape of Ganymede* displays a pivotal scene in the myth of Zeus’s abduction of a beautiful earthly boy. Zeus disguises himself as an eagle and soars down to Earth to swoop up Ganymede and bring him to Mt. Olympus. There he appoints Ganymede his cupbearer, and ultimately immortalizes his young lover as the constellation Aquarius.

In the drawing, the eagle and boy are joined together in the moment they ascend to the heavens.

The figures in the drawing are wrapped up as one, their bodies so intertwined that Ganymede’s head almost appears to be protruding from the eagle’s body, as Ann Haughton notices in “Mythology and Masculinity: A Study of Gender, Sexuality and Identity in the Art of the Italian Renaissance.”

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44 Wallace, 177.
translated by John Addington Symonds in 1878, one sonnet, entitled “Love’s Expostulation,” which is thought to have accompanied the drawing, illuminates this unity: “If fortune bind both lovers in one bond... If both be governed by one life, one will... If in two bodies one soul triumph still... If each the other love, himself forgoing... That both to one sole end their wills combine.” Michelangelo speaks in the hypothetical as he imagines the possibility of their being together. In the analogy between Michelangelo and Tommaso’s relationship and the scene depicted in the drawing, Michelangelo assumes the role of the eagle, and with it, Zeus’s features of “patriarchal paternity,” divine power, and dominance. Michelangelo claims power over Tommaso, and, in this work of art, draws closer to him than he ever would in real life.

The subjects embrace in the top half of the frame, and the viewer observes the scene from below. At the bottom of the frame, an earthly scene, in which a dog barks upward to the heavens, is barely visible. By placing the subjects in clouds and towards heaven, and de-emphasizing the physical world below them, Haughton claims, the artist communicates that this romance cannot manifest in the physical world; he renders the fantasy unattainable. And, in fact, Tommaso remained physically unattainable to Michelangelo until his death. The conflict of the “Christian condemnation of homosexuality clashed with Neoplatonic tolerance, even idealization, of it,” and this may have propelled Michelangelo’s constant attraction and repulsion into his old age. He never married, and Wallace notes that

49 Haughton, 109.
he maintained a friendship with Tommaso until the end of his life. In Michelangelo's final years, Tommaso, along with two other close friends, Daniele da Volterra and Diomede Leoni, visited and took care of him. In 1564, at age 88, he fell ill with fever, and died a few months later. Tommaso and the two others were present at his death. Michelangelo's longing for Tommaso and their mutual admiration were sustained and strengthened over decades, but never fully realized.

Raphael, Titian, and Michelangelo all reflect their paradoxical struggles with simultaneous proximity to and distance from their lovers in their art. In each of their works, they express the tension between the subjects’ attainability and unattainability. Though clearly aching to be closer to and to have their lovers, the artists were nonetheless disappointed.

Allusions to Ancient Greek Culture and Mythology

With the Italian Renaissance came a return to, and newfound appreciation for, ancient Greek culture and philosophy. Artists referenced the classics in many of their works, and artistic representations of gods and goddesses held different connotations from those of merely human models. Raphael, for example, alluded to the Greek goddess Venus with several iconographic features of La Fornarina. The foliage framing the subject’s figure includes myrtle, a plant considered “sacred to the goddess,” quince, a “symbol of carnal love,” laurel, and pomegranate, all species associated with Venus, according to Bernstein. Furthermore,

50 Wallace, The Artist, the Man, and His Times, 323–28.
51 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, Raphael, Grace and Beauty, 69.
Mochi Onori notices that the *armilia* (bracelet) that the subject wears is similar in appearance and placement to the ones on classical statues such as *Medici Venus* and *Capitoline Venus*. As discussed earlier, her *Venus pudica* pose is also reminiscent of classical sculpture. Lastly, her nudity plays a role in “conflating the two most basic prototypes of the female: woman as lover and the woman as nourisher,” which mirrors Venus’s role as both a mother to Cupid and a lover of men.

Titian also invokes Greek culture and the goddess Venus. His method of constructing an idealized sense of beauty resembles that of ancient Greek artists who synthesized many observations of natural beauty to compose a concept of ideal beauty. In addition, Hale notes that Titian’s studio contained several scattered models of the then-newly discovered ancient sculpture Laocoön, from which he must have drawn inspiration. As Winckelmann asserted, “one must have become as familiar with [the ancients] as with a friend, to be able to find the Laocoön as inimitable as Homer.” Those well-versed and in awe of the classics were familiar with the Laocoön.

The subject of *Venus of Urbino* has been considered, on the one hand, “pornography for the elite,” yet on the other hand, a representation of the goddess herself. Vasari was Titian’s only contemporary who referred to her as a “young reclining Venus.” However, there is significant evidence for this characterization in the painting. The red ros-
es clutched in her left hand and pot of myrtle on the window-sill, Hale argues, evoke Venus. Goffen notes that her pose, as well, resembles that of the subject of Giorgione’s *Sleeping Venus*. It is a semi *Venus pudica* pose: one arm props her up on her pillow instead of covering her breast, and the other arm actively caresses her genitals. While the latter gesture might be considered evidence of her “immodesty, an implication of lasciviousness,” it could also be seen as an “acceptable and sometimes necessary” act for the sake of conception. Goffen argues that the subject is not merely a courtesan: if she were so, “her sexuality would be delimited by sixteenth-century Italian standards because its extramarital purpose is fornication, not gestation.” Instead, she represents a higher-level sexuality, suitable for the goddess Venus.

Like Raphael and Titian, Michelangelo was a student of, and moreover worshiped, Greek culture. The homoerotic pederastic pleasures of the ancient Greeks, which he represented in his drawing of the myth of Ganymede, appealed to his imagination. Furthermore, he was a wholehearted Platonist, as evident in the language and recurring concepts sprinkled throughout his sonnets. He believed in an ideal form of beauty, which he modeled after those constructed by the ancient Greeks. Unlike Titian, he did not construct his own idealized beauty from observations of models; rather, he imitated the existing Greek ideal beauty. Winckelmann argues that this method was better, for unfortunately, “the Greeks could obtain these images even when they were not taken from the more beautiful bodies, through the opportunity they had daily to observe beauty in nature, which,

59 Hale, 340.
60 Goffen, *Titian’s “Venus of Urbino*, 73.
61 Goffen, 78–79.
62 Goffen, 82.
however, does not reveal itself to us today.”63 For this reason, as Vasari recorded, Michelangelo criticized Titian for drawing from life instead of from existing art and concepts of beauty.64

The artists’ evocation of classical mythology provides further insight into their true proximity to their muses. Could the spiritualizing of the subjects be an act of psychological distancing? The background of La Fornarina, as revealed by radiography, was originally a landscape scene, only later painted over with symbolic foliage, at the same time Raphael painted flesh tones on the portrait. Thus, Mochi Onori argues that Raphael might not have originally intended for the painting to represent Venus.65 He may have changed it as an afterthought, or as a way to alleviate the intimacy of the portrait. More likely, though, the artists considered love to be closely related to the contemplative, spiritual realms. In connecting their lovers to the gods, they found a way to be closer to them.

II. Is this love fulfilling?

Spiritually Enlightened

As early as the twelfth century, theories of love emerged that encouraged artists to view love as a contemplative, intellectually elevating pursuit. In his treatise The Art of Courtly Love, medieval philosopher Andreas Capellanus argued that love raises one to a higher moral ground, “makes a man shine with so many virtues and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, so many good traits of char-

64 Hale, Titian, 484.
65 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, Raphael, Grace and Beauty, 69.
Love improves human character and values. Fables and fairytales communicated a similar narrative. Marina Warner, in her book *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*, describes the place to which lovers are taken in fairy tales as “the higher realm of imagination, the dimension of dream and fantasy.” The concept of this higher realm was refined in the Renaissance, resulting in the ideas present in Marsilio Ficino’s *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*. Ficino defines love as the pursuit of and desire for beauty, which emanates from the divine, and regards “the enjoyment of beauty as its end.” Love is therefore a religious pursuit; it allows one to approach a divine moral ground and gain intellectual inspiration.

These theories comforted lovers who were removed from their beloved; their pursuits could be fulfilled simply by contemplation. Michelangelo voiced this contemplation in the sonnets he sent Tommaso. He echoed the Platonic themes of the elevation of the soul, love as an external force, love as the pursuit of beauty, and beauty as a quality equivalent to grace and harmony. He even wrote that homoerotic, distant love achieved this enlightenment more than mere sexual intimacy. Love of boys soars and brings light, while love of women is physically sensual and has downward motion. In this way, Michelangelo transformed his beloved from an object of lust into a sublime meditation.

Raphael and Titian were not entirely physically separated from their muses, yet it is unlikely that the physical

satisfaction of their sex was sufficient to fulfill their amorous desire. Perhaps, though, in the combined experience of propriety and impropriety, profanity and sophistication, proximity and distance, they found satisfaction.

The twentieth-century philosopher G. Bataille, in his book *Eroticism in Inner Experience*, describes the erotic experience as the moment when one transgresses a taboo that he himself put in place, simultaneously prohibiting and transgressing. The dually profane and divine significance of these artists’ work makes it erotic by this definition. The nudity of the subjects of *La Fornarina* and *Venus of Urbino* can indicate both that they are goddesses and courtesans; their hand placement is both godlike and flirtatious. Titian’s subject displays additional pornographic significance in her self-pleasure. Haughton notes that Michelangelo’s depiction of *The Rape of Ganymede*, as well, was notably erotic compared to other depictions of the myth. The eagle carries Ganymede in a “figurative ascension to ecstasy,” seemingly penetrating the boy from behind, and Ganymede does not appear frightened or resistant, instead sexually submissive. Coupled with the divine significance of the myth it portrays, Michelangelo’s drawing epitomizes eroticism. The state of having and not-having in all three artists’ relationships with their muses, the flirtation, the vacillation of power between them and their lovers, can also be considered a contradiction of transgression and prohibition. Bataille describes the “anguish at the heart” that rises from eroticism as a transcendent, almost religious experience, which ultimately spurs spiritual development: “Man achieves his inner experience at the instant when bursting out of the chrysalis he feels that he is tearing himself, not

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tearing something outside that resists him.” 

Still, is this contemplative benefit fully satisfying?

**Tortured Lovers**

Beyond exalting the virtues brought about by love, Capellanus also defined love as “inborn suffering.” Regardless of intellectual enlightenment or even ephemeral physical satisfaction, the lover undergoes a constant emotional struggle of agonizing desire, of wanting something unattainable. The pain is incessant, as a lover in this state cannot control his “excessive” and “eager” thoughts. Capellanus observes that when it becomes unbearable, “when love cannot have its solaces, it increases beyond all measure and drives the lovers to lamenting their terrible torments, because ‘we strive for what is forbidden and always want what is denied us.’” This is what causes artists to externalize their desires, their internally kindled flames.

Michelangelo expressed this burning pain in a sonnet, in which he wrote:

> Why should I seek to ease intense desire  
> With still more tears and windy words of grief,  
> When heaven, or late or soon, sends no relief  
> To souls whom love hath robed around with fire?

The desire inflamed by his love was so intense that it caused him pure anguish and despair.

74 Cappellanus, 29.
75 Cappellanus, 34.
76 Symonds, *The Sonnets of Michel Angelo Buonarroti and Tommaso Campanella*, 62.
Michelangelo struggled even in the early stages of his infatuation with Tommaso. As Wallace recounts, he wrote many drafts of his first letter to him, and in the version he sent him, did not hide his awkwardness. Tommaso replied with a respectful, admiring response, and shortly afterwards they met at a church to spend time together face-to-face. Shortly after Michelangelo returned to Florence, and his separation from Tommaso only increased from there. Ultimately, neither Michelangelo nor Raphael married their muses, and one can imagine Raphael’s misery and indecisive struggle regarding whether to marry her. Titian did not share his emotions, so it is impossible to determine if he suffered at all. Yet it is clear that the love these artists experienced, their vacillation between having and not having their muses and their suspension in a permanent state of limbo, could hardly have been pleasant.

If, then, their misery did overwhelm their intellectual fulfillment, could their creation of artwork provide some relief? Could it make their suffering worthwhile?

Raphael’s infatuation with his mistress, unfortunately, hindered his creative productivity. Vasari recorded that when Agostino Chigi approached Raphael to commission him to paint the loggia in his palace, he was too distracted by his lover and did not want to leave her. Chigi had to arrange for her to live with Raphael in the house in order for him to work productively. When Raphael passed away, Mochi Onori relates, a rumor spread that he died from an “excess of carnal love,” specifically from “his woman.” Vasari propagated this gossip by recording that Raphael died from “divert[ing] himself beyond measure with the

77 Wallace, *The Artist, the Man, and His Times*, 177–78.
79 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, *Raphael, Grace and Beauty*, 76.
pleasures of love,” an indulgence that caused him to fall ill with fever. Medical studies eventually hypothesized pneumonia as a more likely cause of death, but the impression remains that his love for his muse precipitated his doom.

Michelangelo’s muse, on the other hand, was a well-spring for his creativity. Wallace explains that Tommaso “reawakened in Michelangelo those highly focused creative energies that the artist commonly experienced at the beginning of projects but that had lain mostly dormant during the last few years.” In one sonnet, Michelangelo wrote that the power to realize beauty and love in art was a dominating force: “beauteous art, which, brought with us from heaven, will conquer nature; --so divine a power.” His artistic gifts, when put towards capturing beauty, are transcendent.

Michelangelo also wrote, in a sonnet titled “The Artist and His Work,”

So I can give long life to both of us
In either way, by colour or by stone,
Making the semblance of thy face and mine.
Centuries hence when both are buried, thus
Thy beauty and my sadness shall be shown.

He recognized that he could immortalize his muse in works of art. The long romance which he could never have in reality could be realized in sculpture, so that his fantasies would outlive him. In this way, he acted as Zeus did, when

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81 Mochi Onori and Lorenza, *Raphael, Grace and Beauty*, 76.
82 Wallace, *The Artist, the Man, and His Times*, 177.
83 Symonds, *The Sonnets of Michel Angelo Buonarroti and Tommaso Campanella*, 49.
84 Symonds, 48.
he immortalized Ganymede in the constellation Aquarius. Titian may also have found solace in painting his muses. Hale notes that “powerfully creative artists usually have powerful libidos, and the act of tracing the contours of a desirable woman’s body with a brush laden with paint is a kind of sublimated love-making.” If his love alone provided neither contemplative nor physical fulfillment, the act of painting could fill that role for artists, who were considered, as Leon Battista Alberti in his fifteenth-century guide On Painting regards them, “god[s] among mortals.”

Conclusion

La Fornarina, Venus of Urbino, and The Rape of Ganymede each display immense complexity and ambiguity in their artists’ relationships to their subjects and muses. Desire and flirtation, proximity and distance, and a shifting balance of power between the artist and the subject characterized Raphael’s, Titian’s, and Michelangelo's pursuit of beauty and love. From these tumultuous emotional journeys, the sixteenth-century artists gained perhaps intellectual and spiritual elevation, yet fell victim to the torturous pains of unfulfilled desire. The artists’ craft may have alleviated some of their emotional pain, and even benefited from their love. Though Raphael lost productivity, Titian gained physical and spiritual satisfaction from his practice, and Michelangelo realized his fantasies in the art he created. This invites the question, could the tortured nature of these artists’ relationships to their muses be a precondition to producing sublime art? Are great artists destined to experience the agony of a love both fulfilled and unfulfilled?

85 Hale, Titian, 147.
Figure 1: Raphael, La Fornarina, 1518-1519. Rome: Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica.
Figure 2: Titian, Venus of Urbino, 1534. Florence: Uffizi.
Figure 3: Michelangelo, The Rape of Ganymede, 1532. Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum.
“THE LORD IS MY BANKER”: HERITAGE USA AND 1980s PROSPERITY THEOLOGY

Cameron Lange

*Newsweek* magazine declared in its October 1976 cover story that “it can be considered ‘the year of the evangelical.’”¹ Indeed, the late 1970s and 1980s witnessed an enormous revival of the American Religious Right. This rebirth was reflected both at the political level by the Presidential elections of born-again Christian Jimmy Carter and evangelical ally Ronald Reagan, and at the social level as evangelical belief flourished among the populace.² The *Newsweek* article cited a Gallup survey which claimed that one in three Americans at the time considered themselves to have been “born again.”³ Quickly, media and physical infrastructure were built to accommodate this boom in belief, including a proliferation of televised programs, Christian music, and churches of scale previously unimaginable. One such pious establishment was the Christian theme park Heritage USA, which opened in 1978 and flourished until the end of the 1980s. While the media and scholars have dismissed Heritage USA and its underlying ideology both during its lifetime and in more contemporary historical accounts, the theme park is vital in explaining how previ-

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³ Woodward, Barnes, and Lisle, “Born Again!”
ously fringe attitudes about piety, wealth, and consumption became widespread among Christian Americans during the late 1970s and 1980s.

Jim and Tammy Bakker, a married Pentecostal couple with a pre-existing televangelism empire, founded Heritage USA in Fort Mill, South Carolina in. The park, more than ten times larger than Disneyland and almost 20 times larger than Disney World's Magic Kingdom, boasted a variety of theme park attractions. Heritage USA contained the world's largest wave pool, a water slide, a roller rink, horseback riding, a plethora of shops and a mall, and models of Billy Graham's boyhood home and a Jerusalem marketplace. A replica of the Biblical Upper Room, the supposed site of both the Last Supper and the Pentecost, served as a functioning pilgrimage site for Christians, purportedly “sav[ing] people ‘from the brink of suicide’ and ‘deliver[ing] [a man] from the practice of witchcraft.’”

Heritage USA also served as a place of permanent residence for hundreds of Christians who sought refuge in this pious, picturesque haven. Many booked long stays at the Heritage Grand Hotel, which contained an indoor swimming pool that doubled bi-weekly as a baptismal pool, while others purchased apartments, time-shares, townhouses, or single-family homes in carefully constructed and meticulously landscaped mini-suburbias on the Heritage USA property like Mulberry Village.

As Jim Bakker explained in a televised Heritage USA promotional piece when pressed about the park's shaky balance between piety and recreation, Heritage USA was intended to cater to all components of the Christian lifestyle by intentionally

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merging religion and leisure. “Christians don’t go to monasteries to live,” he said. “They live in the real world. […] This is geared to the total family[, […] to the total people. The water park is for fun, and yet it’s a tool of evangelism. We have 100 young students preparing for the ministry who are lifeguards.”

Heritage USA was in no way an independent entity; rather, it existed as a tangible, publicly accessible outgrowth of Jim and Tammy Bakker’s ministry and televangelism network and, by extension, of the ideas of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel “emphasizes believers’ abilities to transcend poverty and/or illness through devotion and positive confession […] reinforcing a worldview in which financial success is an indicator of moral soundness.” Frequently, this involves asking followers for “seed donations,” investments for which its proponents say they will receive a divine monetary return. Prosperity theology had substantial precedents extending back to the Gilded Age, when the rise of industry and self-made giants like Andrew Carnegie and John Rockefeller coincided with growing belief in the individualistic ethos of self-help—the power of the human mind to will tangible successes into being. The New Thought movement of the 1880s combined self-help and religious ideals. Believers argued that God and humanity were essentially unified, that spiritualism—not the material world—ought to be considered true reality, and that humans, like God, could create and shape their own worlds with thought. In 1923, New Thought mystic Charles

Fillmore rewrote Psalm 23 to reflect this belief: “The Lord is my banker/ my credit is good/ He maketh me to lie down in the consciousness of omnipresent abundance/ He giveth me the key to his strongbox.”

While the prosperity theologies of the 19th and early 20th centuries were often indistinct, peripheral themes within Christian teachings, prosperity theologists in the late 1970s began to flesh out the connection between their followers’ piety and wallets in more brazen terms. Preachers like Kenneth Copeland and Oral Roberts who specifically quantified the financial returns that believers would receive for each dollar donated to the church or each minute of prayer were inundated with support, speaking engagements, and bestselling book deals, amassing enormous personal fortunes in the process. Prosperity theology particularly resonated among Americans in the 1980s as the nation’s economic climate, and evangelicals’ positioning within it, shifted. First, Pentecostals largely climbed into the middle class in the 80s, enjoying the effects of a larger economic boom. These individuals, many of whom grew up during the Depression Era with preachers who disavowed wealth, now sought religious justification for their newly comfortable lifestyles and their desire to participate in the era’s burgeoning consumer culture, a function the prosperity gospel served well by equating wealth with sanctity. The neoliberal ethos of the decade, strategically disseminated by Reagan-funded corporate agencies with grassroots connections like Amway and through Reagan’s courtship of evangelical leaders, also predisposed evangelicals to adopt

10 Bowler, Blessed
11 Johnson, “A Theme Park.”
prosperity theology as they began to see parallels between the prosperity gospel’s prescribed microeconomic behavior and neoliberal principles. The two ideologies both relied upon economic optimism for those who do right (prosperity gospel: economic position improves with devotion, neoliberalism: economic position improves with hard work), a strong sense of individualism and self-reliance (prosperity gospel: individual’s relationship with God, neoliberalism: individual’s relationship with the market), and a repudiation of state control over the economy, which was said to upset natural economic forces (prosperity gospel: God’s distribution of wealth to the deserving, neoliberalism: the free market).

Further, corporations actively spread a pro-business strain of prosperity theology, desperate to accrue profit during a period rife with public suspicion of retail, new regulatory agencies, and consumer protection measures. By partnering with evangelical churches that preached the prosperity gospel as well as Christian colleges and universities, corporations saw the opportunity to gain access to a new consumer base previously afraid of over-spending. Corporate-religious relationships were economically symbiotic. Particularly in the Sunbelt, prosperity gospel churches recruited corporate financiers into their ministries, operating under the motto “more money, more ministry,” while Christian colleges and universities began to

partner with Wal-Mart to receive funding and host campus activities. In exchange, such religious institutions backed pro-corporate policy and provided a large, untapped bloc of consumers now convinced that corporate America was an ally of the church and that wealth and spending reflected piety. In addition, organizations like Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International brought together evangelical businessmen who spread a boldly pro-corporate brand of prosperity theology through magazines, music, film, and chapters on college campuses, a pursuit intended to help them save souls and accrue profit. By the mid-1980s, what was once a fringe strain of Christian belief had become mainstream.

Heritage USA had profound connections to prosperity theology through both its leadership and visitors’ experiences at the park. Jim and Tammy Bakker’s ministry, of which the park was an outgrowth, employed the slogan “You Can Make It,” reflective of their belief that positive thoughts, prayer, and monetary donations to the church would help their followers manifest wealth and happiness. The Bakkers often featured guests on their television programs whose faith had supposedly led to monetary reward in an attempt to encourage viewers to donate to their ministry. In his 1986 promotional book, Showers of Blessings, Jim Bakker wrote of those who donated large sums to Heritage USA:

As people began to send in their gifts to become Lifetime Partners, we started hearing about dramatic victories in their lives... families that had houses or

16 Dochuk, From Bible Belt; Moreton, To Serve.
17 Dochuk, From Bible Belt.
18 Ibid.
properties that wouldn’t sell for years suddenly sold after they gave. Others had their dream home provided . . . their businesses suddenly double, triple, and even increase tenfold. Others had unexpected checks arrive in the mail; people were given new cars, new homes.  

The Bakkers’ opulent lifestyles also served to reinforce their prosperity gospel messaging by serving as aspirational examples of the rewards that accompanied good faith. The couple often discussed their mansion home, donned designer apparel and gold and diamond jewelry, and drove twin Mercedes cars.  

Heritage USA itself was inextricably interconnected to its founders’ prosperity gospel preaching. First, the park enabled regular viewers of Bakker televangelism to witness the Bakkers’ glamorous lifestyles firsthand and get a personal taste of the opulence they saw on screen, particularly during larger events like the lavish annual Christmas gala. Further, Heritage USA served both as a source of the Bakkers’ funding—a visit to the park represented a monetary investment in the ministry that would supposedly be returned ten- or one-hundred-fold by God—and a sink into which this money disappeared to pay for the park’s upkeep and growth. On location at Heritage USA, television sets broadcasting “The Jim and Tammy Show” were placed in every room, further reinforcing the connection between the Bakkers’ ministry and the park. “You can go from store to store and never miss a word,” a Washington Post reporter marveled in 1986. “Employees, including executives, often

20 Jim Bakker, Showers of Blessings (PTL, 1986).
21 Bowler, Blessed.
learn Bakker’s latest plans only by watching the show.” Bakker televangelism also had more overt connections to the Heritage USA park. The PTL (Praise The Lord or People That Love) Club, one of the Bakkers’ most-watched programs, was filmed on a set located at Heritage USA and relied heavily upon a live studio audience composed of Heritage USA visitors. Consequently, by visiting the park, ordinary Americans could become a physical part of the broadcasting they tuned into at home.

Spending money was also a fundamental component of visitors’ experiences at the park. Much of Heritage USA was comprised of a mall and shops selling such trinkets as Scripture-reciting teddy bears, speaking dolls that encouraged children to pray, “Scripture suckers,” “heavenly hash,” Tammy Bakker’s gospel discography, and chocolate crosses. As a group of academics from the Journal for Consumer Research who visited the Heritage Village shopping center in 1987 reported, “Luxury and self-indulgence among Christians… [were] not only tolerated, they [were] encouraged explicitly.” Heritage Village thus reflected a novel approach to pious consumerism. While Wal-Mart was concurrently marketing consumerism to evangelicals by distancing themselves from the department store aura of extravagant self-indulgence with stripped-down interiors and a simple, frugal aesthetic, Heritage Village actively embraced such decadence, made acceptable by its context within an evangelical venue. As such, Heritage USA propagated prosperity theology through a positive feedback loop: visitors’ experiences at the park normalized the enmeshing of piety and capital while also directly funding the Bakkers, en-

23 Rosenfeld, “Heritage USA.”
25 O’Guinn and Belk, “Heaven on Earth.”
26 Moreton, To Serve.
abling them to magnify the reach of their prosperity gospel preaching, which then heightened Heritage USA attendance. Consequently, Heritage USA and the televangelist network with which it was intertwined represented both an expression of and a driving force behind prosperity gospel revivalism during this time period.

Heritage USA leaders did not mask the park’s hedonistic environment or celebration of commercialism. An infamous televised segment on the *PTL Club* exemplified their wholehearted embrace of capital with a quasi-religious facade. The segment showed Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell, who was awarded leadership of Heritage USA in the 1980s, chatting cordially with gospel singer Doug Oldham atop a Heritage USA waterslide before plummeting down and emerging from the pool below. The park promised this feat after a fundraiser raised $20 million in donations over the course of a single summer to keep the park afloat. The park promised this feat after a fundraiser raised $20 million in donations over the course of a single summer to keep the park afloat. Optically, Falwell’s tongue-in-cheek recitation of a singular short prayer (“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want”) to raucous laughter from onlookers, repeated direct requests for money from viewers, and decision to don a three-piece business suit to descend the park’s 60-foot water slide, itself the intended use of followers’ seed donations, make clear the extent to which love for money, rather than genuine religiosity, may have fueled Heritage USA and prosperity gospel revivalism in general. Nonetheless, the lavishness depicted in the clip was in no way shameful to *PTL*, and in fact a ministry network even broadcasted it to serve as *PTL* propaganda to solicit further donations. Similarly, another *PTL Club* segment featured Jim and Tammy Bakker luxuriating on an artificial beach on the park’s Heritage Island.

Over the course of the hour-long segment, Jim and Tammy sang, discussed the park’s construction process, and made repeated requests for donations via mail. Actual religiosity receives nary a mention, save for Jim's decision to hold up the Bible in one clip and conclude the segment after a final plea for money by reminding their audience that “God loves ya!”

While Heritage USA was open, the mainstream media adopted a predominantly dismissive, condescending attitude in its reporting on the park, targeting Jim Bakker and his followers in particular. The editor of the Charlotte Observer, considering Jim Bakker a fraud, wrote, “If a con man claims to talk to Jesus, it doesn’t make him less of a con man.” An academic presenting at the 1981 Southern Speech Communication Association’s Austin convention discredited the Bakkers’ televised talk shows as “amateurish” and took great pleasure in noting that the name PTL Club is “an ungrammatical acronym.” The New York Times, meanwhile, represented Heritage USA to its readership as a religious fanatic’s inconsequential pet project, “a kind of Christian fantasyland that became Mr. Bakker’s special obsession, and a constant drain on ministry funds.” In particular, the media reveled in Jim Bakker’s late-80s indictments of tax, mail, and wire fraud, as well as a sex scandal, his reputation's recovery after which was “viewed with disbelief here as the evangelistic equivalent of a many-lived

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29 “PTL Club: Jim and Tammy on Location from Heritage Island,” video, YouTube.
cat landing on its feet,” the Chicago Tribune wrote.\textsuperscript{33} Time magazine, in its tongue-in-cheek coverage of Bakker’s trials, concluded an article titled “Jim Bakker’s Crumbling World” by writing, “With such seasoned stars and a number of flamboyant lawyers on hand, it should be one of the livelier gospel spectacles since Jim and Tammy went off the air.”\textsuperscript{34} The South Florida Sun-Sentinel, alongside many other periodicals, described Heritage USA attendees as gullible, blind followers of a criminal: “Most supporters reject the possibility that Bakker is guilty. They heard him plead innocent. That’s enough for them.” That same piece noted that those outside the Bakkers’ ministry saw the couple as phony and superficial—an “over-made airhead and a chipmunk-cheeked man on a glitzy stage set, prattling religious happy talk.”\textsuperscript{35} In a particularly scathing piece, a Washington Post reporter depicted Jim Bakker as a shallow, ostentatious “master of make-up and glitter,” his glamorous presentation intended to disguise the “moral horror story” and “greed, mismanagement, and personal failures” that lay underneath. The article also derides Bakker’s followers as easily deceived, claiming that “Bakker isn’t all that different from thousands of other ‘scoundrels’ who take advantage of the little people of the world.”\textsuperscript{36} P.J. O’Rourke, a renowned political journalist and satirist, published a brutally callous account of his 1987 trip to Heritage USA. He quipped that he “came to scoff—but went away converted. Unfortunately, we were converted to Satanism… if it keeps us from

going to the Heritage USA part of heaven, it will be worth it.” O’Rourke first ridiculed the park’s architecture (“the architects… were definitely speaking the language of design in tongues when they did this”) before moving onto his primary target, park attendees. “I almost didn’t have the heart to make fun of these folks. It’s like hunting dairy cows with a high-powered rifle,” O’Rourke wrote before launching into an eight-page exercise in condescension wherein he describes his fellow-park goers as “white trash” from “poor, morose families” with “a dullness in their movements and expressions” and “huge bottoms, immense bottoms” who he joked “should join the Klan. They’d be better off.”

Despite its obviously satirical tone, O’Rourke’s piece seems to reflect a broader viewpoint among coastal, secular folks and mainstream Protestants—with Heritage USA, the Bakkers, and their unrefined followers from Southern and Middle America as the punchline of the joke. Outside of evangelical publications, it is difficult to find a single positive primary source account of Heritage USA or one that acknowledged the fantastic scope of its operation. The media found the Bakkers’ empire to be kitschy and fringe, generally underserving of legitimate, serious discussion.

Representations of Heritage USA in contemporary historical accounts are also limited in scope. Mention of Heritage USA goes entirely missing from Molly Worthen’s *Apostles of Reason* and Daniel Williams’s *God’s Own Party*, the former a history of American evangelicalism and the latter tracing the American Religious Right as a political force. In Kate Bowler’s *Blessed*, a historical account of American belief in the prosperity gospel, Heritage USA

receives a mere five paragraphs, primarily utilized as a case study to exemplify the excesses and extravagance that accompanied 80s televangelism. Just as contemporary pundits largely dismissed its significance outright, Heritage USA still goes largely overlooked or is treated as a sort of frivolous spectacle.

In sharp contrast to its scanty treatment in the contemporary media, Heritage USA’s propagation of prosperity theology had a sizeable impact, as such ideas soon appeared in more mainstream settings where they had large scale social and political implications. If the Bakkers’ followers were gullible, so too was the rest of America. By the 1980s, the National Congregations Study found that 45 percent of American worshippers attended megachurches, which included the prosperity gospel in their preaching. Such churches harnessed incredible power and resources, with a combined annual income of seven billion dollars. Heritage USA undoubtedly played a role in this widespread conversion to prosperity theology. The Bakkers’ television programming reached a weekly viewership of 13 million households. Heritage USA itself received six million visitors per year in the mid-80s—placing it the third most popular theme park in the world, behind only Disneyland and Disney World. Far from being drawn solely by the promise of theme park hedonism, the Bakkers’ millions of followers were devout in their support not only for prosperity theology, but also for the Bakkers as religious leaders. During Jim Bakker’s trials, his supporters showed up in droves to picket outside and to testify within the courtroom about how Bakker and The PTL Club had transformed their lives for the better. Even when pressed in court about the re-

39 Bowler, Blessed.
40 Bowler, Blessed.
41 O’Guinn and Belk, “Heaven on Earth.”
relationship between Bakker’s apparent fraud and opulent lifestyle, followers expressed confusion, suggesting that Bakker’s prosperity could only be viewed as a direct result of his piety, just as prosperity theology dictated. The Bakkers had transformed the spiritual lives of millions. Consequently, once-fringe prosperity gospel beliefs began to seep into mainstream political discourse. Upon construction of their *PTL Club* studio on the Heritage USA campus, Jim and Tammy Bakker received a personal note from Ronald Reagan congratulating the couple on their work to help “many Americans endure and triumph.” Perhaps more significantly, in the wake of Jim Bakker’s scandals, leadership of Heritage USA fell to Jerry Falwell, who was himself a renowned figure of the Religious Right because of his powerful evangelical political action committee, the Moral Majority. Falwell’s fundraising efforts and voter registration drives encourage millions of evangelicals to enter the political sphere, where they found a home within the GOP and played an important role in Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980. This movement, its leadership directly tied to Heritage USA, united and energized a new Religious Right that would persist for decades to come.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact cause of the disconnect between the media and academics’ minimized perceptions of Heritage USA and the park’s powerful reality. One could feasibly ascribe this disconnect to a general tendency among coastal, secular elites to turn up their noses at movements in which the movers and shakers are, to use O’Rourke’s language, theme park-attending “white trash.” Historical accounts shaded by elite condescension may also be limited in their understanding of evangelicalism as

42 Weinberg, “Creating Heaven.”
43 Bowler, *Blessed*.
44 Williams, *God’s Own Party*.
a broader movement. One need only recall William Jennings Bryan’s fiery, rousing oratory style as he condemned Darwinian evolution in favor of a Creationist paradigm or the thousands of Los Angelenos who flocked to hear Billy Graham elucidate the word of God from a packed outdoor tent to understand that evangelicalism has a profoundly populist legacy, of which Heritage USA may be considered an outgrowth.\textsuperscript{45} Indeed, as Heritage USA’s prosperity gospel and Graham’s declension narratives demonstrate, ideas circulating around the ordinary evangelicals who the \textit{Washington Post} deemed the “little people of the world” have a peculiar tendency to trickle upwards to influence national political and cultural dialogues. Consequently, when discussing evangelicalism in particular, dismissing grassroots and bottom-up experiential developments in favor of historical focus on top-down ideologies, theological disputes, and big-name leaders omits much of the story and ignores the origins of many ideas that permeate into the mainstream.

The park, fitting within a larger narrative surrounding the import of evangelical grassroots movements, was both a powerful cause and outgrowth of the expansion of public belief in prosperity theology during the late 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, while the media and intellectual elite scoffed at Jim and Tammy Bakker, the masses were tuning into their shows and arriving in droves at their park. Years later, the Bakkers’ contributions to a proliferation of prosperity theology live on socially and politically. In 2014, a Pew Research Center study found that 49 percent of American Hispanics believed in prosperity theology—that “God will grant wealth and good health to believers with enough faith.”\textsuperscript{46} President Trump’s 2020 campaign strategy targeted

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{45} Dochuk, \textit{From Bible Belt}.
\footnotetext{46} Alan Cooperman, “The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in
evangelical prosperity gospel believers: he hosted events at prosperity gospel megachurches like King Jesus International Ministry to shore up support and made prosperity gospel leader Paula White an adviser in the executive Office of Public Liaison.\(^4^7\) Even after Jim Bakker attempted to distance himself from his former prosperity gospel teachings in an attempt to rebuild his televangelism empire when released from prison, his impact on American religious thought cannot be so easily erased.\(^4^8\)

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Matyas Kisiday

The Republic of Angola, like many southern-hemisphere countries, found itself at the center of a Cold War proxy conflict in the latter half of the 20th century. Angola’s post-independence, multi-factional, 27-year civil war involved the United States, South Africa, Cuba, China, and the Soviet Union. Contemporary Angolan politics, society, and economy exhibit how intricate geopolitical power dynamics impacted the southern African nation. Oxford political scientist Ricardo Soares de Oliveira authored perhaps the best and most comprehensive modern work on contemporary Angola, *Magnificent and Beggar Land*, which explores the nation’s development in the wake of the civil war. Oliveira characterizes Angola’s “post post-war” structure as a politico-oligarchical hierarchy in which the Portuguese-speaking urban population prospers solely from the land’s vast oil deposits while the inland rural population suffers in poverty, all supported by the political apparatchik of the governing single-party autocracy.1 Despite the striking similarities between the sociopolitical makeup of Angola and that of the Soviet Union, the now-defunct global superpower is

1 Oliveira, *Magnificent and Beggar Land*, 19.
startlingly absent from Oliveira’s account, reduced to a passing remark that the modern Angolan government runs “on Soviet hardware.” This vacancy becomes more perplexing when we consider that Angola was, by the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union’s primary focus of international policy on the African continent. How did a once-great global power and its vast efforts in the building of a nation become so thoroughly diluted, almost to the point of erasure, in the historiography of that nation?

The answer to this puzzling question lies in the very nature of the Soviet Union’s involvement in Angola, and on the African continent more broadly. The Soviet Union’s reluctant and clandestine execution of their outwardly boisterous and ideologically dogmatic international policy makes it difficult to trace their contemporary legacy in Angola. In addition, Angola’s urbanite pro-Soviet faction solicited aid from the communist superpower primarily to advance their own aims, not to extend Soviet influence, further compounding Soviet erasure. To more completely understand the reasons for this muffled Soviet legacy, we can turn to the ways in which Angolan and Soviet survivors of the war recall their interactions with one another. Examining the history of Soviet-Angolan relations through both geopolitical and personal lenses reveals the largely trepidatious and indecisive nature of Soviet-African policy, and with it, the largely forgettable legacy that it left behind. In the context of Angola, the so-called Soviet “specter of global communism” proved to be no more than a faint apparition.

I. Context of the Angolan Civil War

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2 Ibid., 101. This remark is in reference to the technology supplied to the MPLA by the Soviets, much of which remains today despite being largely obsolete at the time of its issue.

3 Hosmer and Wolfe, Soviet Policy and Practice, 67.
The Angolan civil war pitted the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) against each other in a struggle to control the country in the post-colonial era. The MPLA and UNITA both formed during the anti-colonial struggle against Portugal in the 1950s and 60s. Angola is a multi-ethnic nation, and each of the two groups appealed to a different ethnic base. The urbanite Mbundu, who were the second-largest Angolan ethnic group at the time, and the Mestiquos of multiracial descent largely supported the MPLA, while the vastly numbered and rurally concentrated Ovimbundu constituted UNITA. Ideologically, the groups did not differ greatly: they both explicitly espoused anti-colonial and left-leaning ideologies. These tenets held Angolans together in the struggle for independence from Portugal, despite the groups’ social and structural differences. However, after Angola had been formally liberated, the ethnic and urban-rural divides caused an almost-immediate splintering. The end of Portuguese colonialism came in 1975 with the signing of the Alvor Agreement, which granted Angola official independence from Portugal and established a power-sharing coalition government constituted by the MPLA, UNITA, and other factions. The agreement quickly broke down, however, when in July 1975, the MPLA repelled an attempt by the American-backed National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) to take the capital city of Luanda. This effectively removed the already insignificant FNLA from Civil War contention, and prompted a tactical withdrawal by UNITA in the south. Pure escalation soon followed. South Africa deployed troops into southern Angola from its militarized “protectorate” of Na-

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4 Uppsala Conflict Data Program, s.v. “Angola”
5 Meredith, The Fate of Africa, 316.
mibia in October of the same year, which prompted Cuba to deploy troops of their own and the Soviet Union to supply military advisors to aid them in defense of the MPLA-held capital. After the two factions came to somewhat of a stalemate, each solidifying control in separate regions of the country, the MPLA and UNITA simultaneously declared political control of the nation on the 11th of November, 1975. While the MPLA maintained control of Luanda, UNITA claimed that their opponents lacked legitimacy because they had not been democratically elected (though UNITA also claimed government authority without an electoral mandate). Moreover, UNITA assumed that the MPLA’s ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union meant that the more leftist group would impose communism on Angola. What ensued was the quarter-century long Angolan Civil War that continued beyond the end of the Cold War.

The Soviets initially became interested in Angola during the years of its independence struggle, a time in which their interest in global politics burgeoned. Despite some change due to external factors, from the October Revolution onwards, Soviet foreign policy aimed to establish global communism by way of international revolution. This broad ideal became more concrete in the post-Stalin era when diplomatic relations with African colonies opened. Nikita Khrushchev developed a two-phase approach in which African nations would first become “anti-imperialist” while they industrialized, with the “fulfillment” of industrialization being the necessary condition for the adoption of full socialism. However, decolonization movements swept

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6  Ibid., 317.
7  Alao, *Brothers at War*, 18.
8  Ibid., 18-19.
9  Stalin and Feinberg, *Marxism and the National Colonial Question*, 381.
across the continent in the 1960s and brought instability that, when combined with the more alluring concrete economic aid offered by the West, rendered the Soviet efforts of the Khrushchev-era fruitless. Beginning in the late 1970s, the Soviets focused on solidifying, rather than expanding, their influence abroad, which manifested in military aid to African nations (such as Angola) in their independence conflicts.\textsuperscript{11} Instead of supplying military troops along with weapons, the Soviet Union sent officers to train African revolutionary forces in both tactics and ideology.\textsuperscript{12} Additionally, the Soviets provided civilian “specialists” to train Angolan civilians and military personnel alike in fields ranging from fishing to bridge engineering.\textsuperscript{13} The tumultuous Angolan Civil War offered the Soviets a prime opportunity to build socialism abroad and bolster their global influence. Changing circumstances, however, forced the Soviets to continually reimagine the means they employed to achieve this goal.

\textbf{II. Top-Down Soviet Policy in Angola and Beyond}

Current historiography regarding Soviet African policy is divided largely into two camps: the political-ideological and the imperial-militaristic. The former takes the Soviets almost entirely at their word—an oft-repeated mistake in the field of Soviet history—in a way that approaches naïveté. The latter, meanwhile, is overbearingly cynical and discredits the moral value of Soviet international ideology, wrongly applying to it the brand of western imperialism. A comparison of the Soviets’ rhetoric to their categorical actions sheds light on both the advantages and disadvantages of current historiography and provides a foundation upon

\textsuperscript{11} Hosmer and Wolfe, \textit{Soviet Policy and Practice}, 18.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, 18.
\textsuperscript{13} Pikovskaya, “We Could Not Be There,” 3.
which to gauge the nature of Soviet involvement in Angola.

The political-ideological historiographical camp posits that the Soviet Union’s foreign policy was predicated entirely on their stated goal of spreading global socialism and ending Western imperialist capitalism. University of Maine political scientist Seth Singleton propounds this rather selfless version of Soviet internationalism, contending that the Soviet endeavors on the African continent were, “fundamentally political, not military.”\(^\text{14}\) This is to say that the Soviets sought to establish socialist governments in their image that would be loyal to Moscow, rather than invading. Russian historians Vladimir Shubin and Andrei Tokarev argue further that the Soviets did not regard their excursions into Africa as “simply waging ‘the Cold War,’” but instead as a “world ‘anti-imperialist struggle’, which was waged by ‘the national liberation movements, the ‘Socialist community’ and the ‘working class of capitalist countries.’”\(^\text{15}\) This vein of argument characterizes the Soviets as staunch anti-imperialists in their international endeavors, in stark contrast with the imperial-militarist camp’s contention that the Soviets were, themselves, imperialists. This camp’s idealistic views tend to stem, unsurprisingly, largely from Russian and Western-revisionist scholars. This is not to discredit them, but rather to highlight the personal contexts and implicit biases with which these historians form their arguments.

The imperial-militarist historiographical camp assumes a selfishness inherent in Soviet internationalism and conflates the Soviets’ actions with those of Western imperialist regimes. Historian Peter Vanneman argues that the Soviets’ global ideology, along with their good-natured relations with African governments, were a mere façade for an


\(^{15}\) Shubin and Tokarev, “War in Angola,” 609.
expansionist policy of “aggressive militancy.”  

Kurt Campbell, an American diplomat and the Asia-coordinator for the Biden Administration, further describes the Soviet presence on the African continent as “aggressive” and “bearing the burdens of a global empire.” These analyses, which depict Soviet African policy as “aggressive imperialism,” tend to do so by looking to the means of Soviet strategy; that is, the historians in this camp argue that the implementation of Soviet strategy, which manifested militarily, meant that their aims were themselves militaristic and even imperial. Scholars of this camp tend to be Western in origin and active during the years of the Cold War in which the Soviet Union was viewed as global enemy number one.

Both historiographical camps describe part of the story, but both also fall short of providing a holistic image of Soviet Cold War policy in Africa. They fail to consider the dynamism of this policy, which changed along with geopolitical and domestic movements, and with the vision of whomever led the Soviet Union at a given time. At the same time, a combination of internal economic struggles and external shortcomings in policy implementation curbed Soviet expectations abroad. Historians must consider all these dynamic factors to understand how the international presence of the Soviet Union in Angola became the timid wraith that it was by the 1980s.

The first important period of change in the course of Soviet-African policy was during the Khrushchev years spanning the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. When Nikita Khrushchev came to power in the wake of Joseph Stalin’s death, he heralded an ambitious vision of “bringing communism [to the Soviet Union] in our lifetime”—by 1980,

17 Campbell, Gorbachev’s Third World Dilemmas, 229-230.
in fact.\textsuperscript{18} He strove to move away from the brutal years of Stalin’s terror and to make the Soviet Union’s presence more apparent on the international stage in order to prove the superiority of socialism over capitalism. The liberation struggles taking place on the African continent appeared to be the perfect foundations on which to begin building global socialism, as they seemed to suggest that African nations were beginning to express their aversion to exploitative capitalist rule.\textsuperscript{19} Khrushchev soon found, however, that his “national democratic state” approach to building socialism abroad (which bypassed the prerequisite stage of capitalism and broke with Marxist-Leninist doctrine) was too aggressive; African nations that received socialist economic aid took the newfound industrialism provided by the Soviets and gravitated to more immediately lucrative Western investment.\textsuperscript{20} The Soviets’ initial attempts at an economic approach to African policy resoundingly failed. Khrushchev’s ambitious attempts to export socialism achieved the opposite of the intended results.

The international failures of the Khrushchev years combined with the stagnation of the Brezhnev era to generate conditions for a more conservative and piecemeal approach to building socialism abroad. Stanford historian Amir Weiner characterizes the Soviet Union in the Brezhnev years as an “ageing revolution and a leadership fighting to preserve their life achievements at home and abroad.”\textsuperscript{21} He further quotes journalist Harrison Salisbury, who remarked on the state of the “middle-aged” Soviet Union as being “a bit wheezy, inclined to sit back in an easy chair, turn on the TV [quite literally] and watch a good light programme. No

\textsuperscript{18} Taubman, \textit{Khrushchev}, 583.
\textsuperscript{20} Hosmer and Wolfe, \textit{Soviet Policy and Practice}, 21.
speeches, please. No party exhortations!” While not an entirely accurate description of the Soviet polity, Salisbury is not far off the mark. The Soviet Union under Brezhnev hardly looked towards “communism in our lifetime” as it had under Khrushchev. Beset by internal hardships and revolutionary stagnation, worn out from years of total mobilization and terror, the global power was instead settling into its compromise of developed socialism.

This reserved and uninspired domestic scene set the tone for the Soviets’ international strategy under Brezhnev, which would lead in part to both the focus on Angola as the “country [most] fit for socialism” and Soviet gravitation towards militarism. With a more conservative atmosphere at home and numerous African endeavors either lost to the West or to local instability, the Soviets adopted policies that would lead to a “less hasty, more comprehensive transition to socialism.” Ideologically, however, the Soviets encountered some difficulties in Angola. The leader of the MPLA in the 1970s, Agostino Neto, would not fully commit to the hardline binary Marxist ideology of the Soviets, despite being eager to receive their military and financial support. Because of this ideological disagreement and because of Neto’s frequent negotiations with the West, the Soviets did not trust the Angolan leader, but also did not resort to his forcible removal. Following Neto’s untimely death in 1979, the more ideologically eager José Eduardo dos Santos replaced him as the leader of the MPLA. In addition, the MPLA positioned itself explicitly against the regime of apartheid in South Africa (the benefactor of their UNITA rivals). Soviet support of the abolition of South African

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22 Ibid., 21.
23 Hosmer and Wolfe, Soviet Policy and Practice, 88.
24 “Soviet Ambassador to Angola Vorobiev, Conversation with Angolan President Neto,”
25 Pearce, Global Ideologies, Local Politics, 2.
apartheid thus garnered sympathy towards them within the MPLA.\textsuperscript{26} Moreover, other leftist liberation groups, such as South Africa’s ANC (African National Congress) and Namibia’s SWAPO (South-West Africa People’s Organization), used MPLA-controlled Angola as a base of operations; here the Soviets saw an opportunity to encourage socialism in other other parts of Southern Africa.\textsuperscript{27} These factors explain why Angola became the primary target of the Soviet Union’s African efforts. The Soviets of the late 1970s, who were less inclined to costly mobilization than they had been two decades prior, had seemingly found in Angola a catch-all solution to their problems on the African continent.

Regardless of the Soviets’ intentions for Angolan involvement, the MPLA proved more savvy in its relationship with the Soviet Union than academics often portray. Cambridge political scientist Justin Pearce argues that, “state building [was] at the core of the ideolog[y] propagated by the MPLA,” and that the quest for state-like legitimization drove the MPLA in its solicitation of foreign aid.\textsuperscript{28} Pearce draws on Philip Abrams’ notion that “‘the idea of the state’ may be of more significance than the state itself and that the state ‘is first and foremost an exercise in legitimation.’”\textsuperscript{29} Pearce provides a lens through which to view Soviet-Angolan relations, which affords the MPLA a degree of agency that most historians do not identify. Rather than portraying the Soviets as neo-imperialists or imposers of ideology, Pearce characterizes the MPLA as a crafty organization that deftly signaled socialist ideology to the Soviets in order to acquire the physical means to build and maintain state-like authority. This argument is extremely compel-

\textsuperscript{26} Alao, \textit{Brothers at War}, 32.
\textsuperscript{27} Singleton, \textit{Soviet Impact in Africa}, 113.
\textsuperscript{28} Pearce, \textit{Global Ideologies, local politics}, 5.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 5.
ling given the aftermath of Soviet involvement in Angola; both the MPLA and Angola have outlived the Soviet Union, shed their Marxist ideology, and still “run on Soviet hardware.” Though the MPLA sought tools of legitimacy from the Soviets, it is inaccurate to say that it was the Soviets who were being exploited or had “the wool pulled over their eyes.” The MPLA also fulfilled Soviet needs, many of which are aforementioned. A more accurate characterization of Soviet-Angolan relations is one of tacit symbiosis, in which many of the true aims of both parties were masked beneath a veneer of ideology and comradery.

Underlying economic difficulties within the borders of the Soviet Union largely explain the Soviets’ continued yet increasingly clandestine military support of the MPLA throughout the 1980s. Vanneman characterizes Soviet international policy in the Gorbachev era as “Janus-faced” because of the seeming duplicity of Gorbachev’s explicit talks of peace and ongoing yet increasingly secretive supply of military aid to the MPLA. Gorbachev did indeed approve dos Santos’ request for millions of dollars of military aid as late as 1989, recounted in a transcript of a Politburo meeting marked “completely secret.” This massive arms sale probably occurred amidst an otherwise relaxing Soviet posture because the Soviet Union needed money. Starting in 1983 and redoubling in 1986, the lucrative energy exports that had sustained the otherwise outdated Soviet economy crumbled. The money generated by the Soviets’ rich natural resources had gone to immense military buildup rather than to modernizing the once-great industrial economy that had supported the Union in days past.

30 Oliveira, Magnificent and Beggar Land, 101.
32 “Record from Protocol No. 147 of the Meeting of the Politburo of the CC CPSU, Supplying Arms to Angola,”
33 Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, 17-18.
sale of arms, of which the Soviets had no shortage, easily offset some of the damage done to the Soviets by the global oil collapse. In addition, Angola’s wealth of oil and other natural resources further solidified the Soviets’ intention of maintaining a foothold in the region.

The Soviets’ continued efforts in Angola became more secretive still because of an increasingly hostile international scene. The United States’ extremely anti-Soviet “Reagan Doctrine” placed immense pressure on Soviet interests in the region. These Reaganite policies intentionally intertwined various issues plaguing southern Africa. For example, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker promised Namibian independence in exchange for the removal of Soviet and Cuban forces from Angola. Despite these increasing pressures, complete withdrawal from Angola was out of the question for Gorbachev. Angola still represented an important diplomatic and economic foothold for the Soviet Union abroad. As a result, Soviet forces reluctantly remained in Angola with increasing secrecy and Moscow continued to send the MPLA weapons with the hope that the situation might stabilize in the near future and allow for the continued implementation of socialism. Hindsight reveals that the situation in Southern Africa would not improve for the Soviets, and neither would the situation within the Union, for it would collapse in monumental fashion only two years later.

Neither the rigor of Marxist-Leninist ideology nor the pressure of economic and international conditions can be ignored in a diplomatic evaluation of Soviet-Angolan relations from the late 1960s to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

35 This deal was offered as part of Crocker’s elaborate plan of “collective engagement,” in which concessions were made in some regions of Africa in exchange for gains from the Soviets in others.
in 1991. As with its domestic policies, Marxist-Leninist ideals undoubtedly drove Soviet international policy as well. The Soviets bent these Marxist-Leninist ideals, however, as international and economic conditions necessitated. In contrast, the opposite principle guided the MPLA; it adopted ideology when necessary, but always adjusted to the realities of circumstance in order to acquire authority and solidify its legitimacy. In many ways, the MPLA is reminiscent of a nascent Bolshevik movement in its circumstance, its cunning and, at times, its ruthlessness—only not in its unwavering adherence to ideology.

III. Soviet Policy in Angola from the Bottom-Up

This geopolitical analysis alone does not demonstrate why the legacy of the Soviet Union in Angola has faded so thoroughly. In addition, this top-down approach fails to fully explain the “phantom” and clandestine nature of Soviet presence in Angola. To address these lingering issues, one must look to the experiences of the people on the ground: the Soviet military advisors and “internationalists” along with the Angolan soldiers who fought the battles of the Angolan Civil War. After analyzing the many ways in which Soviet and Angolan veterans of the war remember each other against the backdrop of the diplomatic scene described, the Soviets’ international paradox of explicit ideological morality alongside indifference and condescension in execution becomes clear.

The deeply covert nature of Soviet involvement in Angola in the late 1970s and 1980s cannot be overemphasized. As historian Kristina Pikovskaya details in her oral history of Soviet soldiers and civilian internationalists in Angola, the Soviet Union officially denied that it was sending any personnel to the region in order to avoid any
potential conflict with the West. Soviet personnel were made very aware of the need for secrecy upon arriving in Angola, having personal items confiscated and receiving strict orders to deny their official role and connection to the Soviet Union if captured and interrogated. Some were “auto mechanics, accidentally in the war zone,” others were on “business trips,” but all of the Soviet agents were, officially, not in Angola. This covertness heavily influenced the way Soviet agents perceived themselves and their work, eventually shaping the manner in which they recalled their exploits.

The Soviet military advisors sent to Angola tended to be indifferent towards or even dismissive of the Angolans they were supposed to serve. Pikovskaya posits that these soldiers’ callousness stemmed from their tendency to be militaristic in their commitments, rationalizing their role as their duty to their motherland and their comrades. One such Soviet advisor, Igor “Zhdarkin” Anatolevich, displays these attitudes in his account of his service in Angola. In his rather harrowing recollection, Zhdarkin focuses on the struggles and sacrifices of his Soviet comrades, while minimizing and even condescending the Angolans he trained, characterizing them as cowards who would “lay down their arms and flee” at the sight of combat. Another officer, Vyacheslav “Aleksandrovich” Mityaev, recalls his Angolan comrades in a manner reminiscent of Joseph Conrad; he recollects that upon having his outpost bombarded by South Africans, his Angolan driver panicked and attempted to flee in a nearby tuck before an artillery blast tragically killed him. In both accounts, the Soviet officers only men-

37 Pikovskaya, “We Could Not Be There,” 3.
38 Ibid., 4, 7.
39 Ibid., 11-12.
40 Igor Zhdarkin, “Memoirs of a Participant of the Angolan War”
41 Vyacheslav Aleksandrovich Mityaev, “Memoirs of the War in
tion their Angolan comrades in these passing and unflattering contexts. Otherwise, they are missing from the accounts altogether. The Soviet officers’ tendency to speak highly of their Soviet comrades, meanwhile, supports Pikovskaya’s assertion that military personnel generally viewed their work as a duty to the motherland and to fellow soldiers, not to the foreign countries in which they were stationed.

The functional sense of duty held by Soviet military officers regarding their international service stemmed from the deeply militaristic nature of Soviet culture in the wake of “the Great Patriotic War.” Weiner propounds this argument in his work, *Making Sense of War*: “the war was universally perceived as the Armageddon of the Revolution…the event that would either vindicate or bring down the system.” He also argues that the war’s colossal scope “superseded other foundational myths” and became central to the Soviet mythos during—and even beyond—its collapse.42 This centrality of war to the Soviet psyche partially explains why veterans like Zhdarkin and Aleksandrovich center war and service in their accounts of Angolan involvement while relegating Angolans to a secondary role. Pikovskaya also mentions that military conscription was an important part of masculinity among young men, which further supports the notion that Soviet culture was deeply militaristic.43 Many young men (and, at times, women) enlisted with a sense of duty to honor the sacrifices of their forebears in the Great Patriotic War. Given this powerful Soviet cultural context, it is unfortunate but unsurprising that Soviet agents prioritized and respected each other, rather than the Angolans they were meant to serve. This lack of regard for Angolan soldiers on behalf of the Soviet military agents

Angola “

contributed to their removal from Angolan collective memory because the Soviet agents limited their interactions with Angolans and instead focused on carrying out their duty to their mother country.

Soviet civilian internationalists’ memory of their time in Angola is distinctly different from that of their military counterparts. Pikovskaya highlights that civilian personnel tended to be either extremely ideologically committed to their international work or highly indifferent, wanting either to escape the often-bleak conditions in Moscow or secure a larger paycheck. In historian Alexei Yurchak’s analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Soviet citizens of the late-Union period are divided into three groups: svoi, or “normal people,” ideological “activists,” and disillusioned dissidents. He stresses that the vast majority of the polity by the late Soviet period were svoi while dissidents and activists were equally anomalous. While Pikovskaya’s accounts make the majority of Soviet civilian internationalists appear purely ideologically and morally driven, Yurchak’s sharp analysis of the ideological makeup of the Soviet polity in its later years suggests that Pikovskaya’s picture is unrepresentative of the country at-large, and maybe even those that chose to work in Angola. While there were likely revolutionary-minded ideologues among the Soviet civilians sent to Angola, it is also likely that the majority of internationalists were svoi, looking for a change of scenery and a pay raise. This is not to say that svoi in Angola were “non-believers.” On the contrary, virtually all Soviet citizens by the 1980s (and earlier) had internalized the rhetoric and culture of Marxism-Leninism and “revolution.” Soviet citizens in the era of the “middle-aged revolution,” however, did not center

45 Yurchak, Everything was Forever, 108.
46 Weiner, “Robust Revolution.”
ideology in their everyday lives to the extent that a Soviet citizen might have in the days of Stalinism. Lenin had faded to the background, but was still ever-present.

IV. Conclusion: the Politics of Memory in Angola

In their article “A Memory of Concrete,” historians Vasco Martins and Miguel Cardina explore Angolan historical memory centered around the Memorial António Agostinho Neto (MAAN). Martins and Cardina analyze MAAN’s “main narratives, questioning its silences and unpacking its impact on public memory.”47 Martins and Cardina briefly acknowledge that a Soviet institution helped plan the monument, but otherwise omit the Soviets from their narrative.48 In “A Memory of Concrete” the Soviets’ years-long investment in Angola once again fades into the background of Angolan memory. The covert nature of operations carried out by Soviet agents in Angola, in which both the government and the agents themselves were forced to deny involvement, explains why the Soviets’ monumental influence over Angola appears so little in Angolan historiography. Both the accounts of Soviet veterans and Angolans reflect this secrecy.

The absence of the Soviet effort in contemporary Angolan memory does not, however, negate the Soviet legacy in Angola. Though Angola’s single-party authoritarianism is not the direct result of Soviet political influence, Soviet guns allowed the MPLA to implement this political system. Furthermore, the Soviet weapons with which the Angolan Civil War was fought ravaged the Angolan countryside, leaving large swaths of land untenable.49 Upwards of six million

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47 Martins and Cardina, “A Memory of Concrete,” 1.
48 Martins and Cardina, “A Memory of Concrete,” 7.
49 Alao, Brothers at War, 134-135.
Soviet-made landmines cover fifty percent of the Angolan countryside today, and it is not uncommon for those landmines to seriously injure or kill unsuspecting Angolans. While perhaps no longer the foreboding “specter of global communism,” the faint apparition of the Soviet Union still hangs over Angola.