

Reshaping Worlds: Rulers, Revolutions, and Religion



Clio's Scroll

The Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal
Volume 11, No. 1

Fall 2009

Reshaping Worlds: Rulers, Revolution and Religion

Clio's Scroll
The Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal
Volume 11, No. 1 Fall 2009

Editors in Chief

Ivy Ngo is a fourth year majoring in History and Political Economy. Her interests include Southeast Asian nationalism and the Vietnam War.

Rebecca Rosen is a third year History major with a concentration in the history of Jews in North Africa. She is particularly interested in the diplomatic relationships between North African Jews, the Muslim authorities of the Maghreb, and Christian European rulers.

Associate Editors

Danielle Bass is a third year majoring in History and Linguistics. Focusing on the modern United States, she is interested in periods of religious tensions and the development of tourism.

Tahitia Dean is a 3rd year History major. She enjoys studying international politics, particularly wars, economies and business affairs.

Donna Artusy is a senior, double majoring in History and Political Science, with a minor in Public Policy. Her focus is the evolution of legal institutions and policies, with an emphasis on modern European peacemaking.

Jiayi Zhou is a fourth year majoring in History, with an emphasis on Russian studies, as well as aspects of the Middle East. She anticipates writing her senior thesis on Soviet minority policies.

Sarah Stoller is a fourth year History major. Her primary interests lie in twentieth century German history and the global 1968 protest movements.

Eve Wolynes is a third year History major with a concentration Medieval era, with an interest the Black Death and the social and economic effects of pandemics, as well as gender in the Middle Ages.

Margaret Hatch is a 2nd year at Berkeley. She is double majoring in History and Legal Studies, and is looking at doing her emphasis on Colonial America and Constitutional law.

Josh Ephraim is a Junior History major with a focus on 19th century American intellectual history. He likes to study history through the literature of the time period, especially Herman Melville and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Erin Tanimura is fourth year with a double in Integrative Biology (emphasis plant and environmental biology). Her interests in history lie in Early Modern European religious history and British history.

John Dillon is a second year student and history major. His academic interests revolve around late modern European history, particularly its wars, revolutions, and the like.

Volume 11, No.1
Clio's Scroll © 2009 Phi Alpha Theta
Authors retain rights to individual essays
Printed by Mercurio Brothers Printing

Cover art:
Earthrise (1968)
Courtesy of NASA Images

Table Of Contents

Laboring for the Conversion of the Turks

By Joshua Vera

1

The Enigma of Asunción:

Contemporaneous Northern Opinions of Dr. José Gaspar
Rodríguez de Francia

By Christopher Haugh

15

Georg Büchner's Dantons Tod: A Dramatic Vision of
Revolutionary Possibility

By Michael Lu

31

Notes on Contributors

53

Clio's Scroll: The Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal is an ASUC-sponsored journal produced by UC Berkeley's chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, a national history honor society. It aims to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to publish historical works and to train staff members in the editorial process of an academic journal. It is published each semester with the generous support of the Associated Students of the University of California, the UC Berkeley Department of History, and the Office of Student Life. Clio's Scroll is not an official publication of the University of California, Berkeley. The views expressed herein are the views of the writers and not necessarily the views of the ASUC or the views of UC Berkeley.

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

We are immensely pleased to bring you the Fall 2009 edition of Clio's Scroll, Reshaping Worlds: Rulers, Revolutions and Religion. With a brand new editorial board, we faced a rough acclimation to the world of undergraduate journal publishing. We are extremely proud of - and grateful to - the excellent staff of Associate Editors this year, which provided crucial assistance and helpful feedback. In addition, we would like to thank those who submitted their articles. We were very impressed with the quality of the submissions this year, and had a difficult time in making the final selection.

This edition focuses on perspective, how certain groups and individuals challenged the common discourse and redefined their environments. Joshua Vera's "Laboring for the Conversion of Turks" chronicles the steadfast veracity of the first Jesuits in California, who fought for and eventually gained a foothold in San Franciscan society. Christopher Haugh's "The Enigma of Asunción: Contemporaneous Northern Opinions of Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia" uses the critiques of early South America leader Dr. Jose Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia to examine Western perspectives on South America at the time. Michael Lu's "Georg Büchner's Dantons Tod: A Dramatic Vision of Revolutionary Possibility" argued that the pessimism in playwright Georg Büchner's works was in itself a revolutionary association.

In reading this issue, we would like to encourage the reader to think of the ways in which individuals can impact their environment and challenge preexisting paradigms - reshaping their world!

We hope you enjoy,

Editors

cliostroll@gmail.com

Laboring for the Conversion of the Turks: The Founding of St. Ignatius Church in San Francisco

by Joshua Vera

From many vantage points throughout San Francisco, the twin baroque steeples of St. Ignatius Jesuit Church are visible along the skyline, piercing into the clouds from on top of its hill next to the University of San Francisco, a silent but powerful testimony to the prominence of the Society of Jesus in the city's religious and educational development. The current site of the church is actually its fifth location in San Francisco, following a history parallel to the city itself with its natural disasters and economic fluctuations, but the founding and establishment of the Jesuit institution is the monumental undertaking that I will address here. The advent and invasion of the Soldiers of Christ into San Francisco demonstrates the survival and persistence of the values and objectives set forth by Ignatius of Loyola three hundred years earlier, and the founding of St. Ignatius church mirrors the founding of the Order itself. Just as the Society of Jesus had a reviving effect on the Roman Catholic Church during the Catholic Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Jesuit movement in San Francisco in the mid-nineteenth century effectively renewed the spiritual ardor of the local Catholic Church in a city widely known for its immorality and corruption. Truly living out their vows of poverty and chastity, the founding Fathers of St. Ignatius Jesuit Church and College in San Francisco fulfilled the purpose of the society, "principally instituted to work for the advancement of souls in Christian life and doctrine, and for the propagation of the faith by public preaching and the ministry of God's word, by spiritual exercises and works of charity, more particularly by grounding in Christianity boys and unlettered persons, and by hearing the confessions of the faithful, aiming in all things at their spiritual consolation."¹ As the

¹ Pope Paul III. Regimini militantis ecclesiae, 1540, in The Catholic Reforma-

first Soldiers of Christ resolved to invade Jerusalem to labor for the conversion of the Turks, the first Jesuit Fathers in American California resolved to assault the debauchery of early San Francisco to labor for the revival of Christian belief, and in demonstrating the ideals of Ignatius of Loyola and his associates, these later priests experienced the achievement of their goal in the course of the first three decades of St. Ignatius Church.

The history of Jesuit presence in California begins in 1679 when the evangelization of western New Spain was entrusted by royal decree to the Society of Jesus, and the first two Jesuits landed at La Paz near the southernmost tip of Baja California. Thirteen Jesuit missions were founded up and down the peninsula until 1767, when the Spanish King Charles III suddenly and mysteriously decreed that all Jesuits be removed from their missions in order to suppress the Society of Jesus in America, stating only, “I shall always keep secret in my heart [the reasons]...for the safety of my life requires from me a profound silence on the matter.”²

After eighty-four years, the Jesuits were forced to abandon their missions, not to return until Fr. Peter John DeSmet journeyed into the Oregon Country in 1840. These missions in the lower half of California would serve only as a prelude to full-scale invasion of the “Church Militant” into the northern California of the United States. The story of San Francisco’s Jesuit advent begins with the discovery of gold in California in January 1848, which ushered in a mass immigration that shaped the new face of California, an ugly mask that the Jesuits were not prepared for and vocally condemned in their correspondences and literature. Fr. José Maria de Jesus Gonzalez Rubio, who was serving as administrator of the diocese during the Gold Rush, described the Jesuit feelings about the influx of treasure hunters:

“...God in his inscrutable judgments has, for the past few years, allowed that in this our country everything should be thrown into confusion; that the greater part of the missionaries should abandon the country, while I have no hope of

² by John C. Olin (Fordham University Press, 1992), 204.

² McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. “The Jesuit arrival in San Francisco in 1849,” California Historical Society Quarterly (1950): v. 29, p. 140.

replacing them; that religious education should day by day disappear; that, of the pueblos, some should be destroyed and others totally abandoned, deprived of the administration of the sacraments, of priests, of public worship; all lacking in good morals and hedged round with the most dangerous forms of seduction...nevertheless we most assuredly hold that if among the inhabitants of this State religious ignorance increases, if charity grows cold and faith weakens a little more, such persons will, at the first attack, plunge into spiritual blindness, either in the form of infidelity, or protestantism, or religious indifference and complete forgetfulness of God.”³

It was into this bleak San Francisco backdrop that two Italian Jesuits, Michael Accolti and John Nobili, decided to move their efforts from the fruitless Oregon country in December 1849, after struggling for several months with their apostolate superior for permission. These priests saw their Jerusalem laid out before them in the wild atmosphere of the new mining settlements, and were “filled with that zeal for the salvation of souls which our pastoral office lays upon us.”⁴ This hegira marked the permanent residence of Jesuit influence in San Francisco, as “Accolti and Nobili made their way into the city which was to incorporate them and the Society they represented into the very fabric of its being.”⁵ This process would take many years however, and for the two arriving Jesuits the fabric of the city seemed much more likely to smother them than to incorporate them into itself. Accolti corroborated Rubio’s despair over the state of the burgeoning city, and he was unsure “whether it should be called a mad house or Babylon...so great in those days was the disorder, the brawling, the open immorality, the reign of crime which, brazen faced, triumphed on a

³ Rubio, José M. Gonzales, S.J. “Circular Letter of Father Gonzalez, 1848,” in The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College, by Joseph W. Riordan, S.J. (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 12.

⁴ Pope Paul III. *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*, 1540, in The Catholic Reformation by John C. Olin (Fordham University Press, 1992), 203.

⁵ McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Eloquent Indian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), 21.

soil not yet brought under the sway of human laws.”⁶ In the midst of this rampant immorality the Jesuits ardently began their work, with Accolti’s battle cry, “there are all these evils to destroy!”⁷ They had initially been sent to California with three main objectives, as Accolti conveys: “1. To exercise the ministry, especially in assisting the sick, who are always numerous in this city; 2. To see if things are favorable to the establishment of the Society… 3. To make a collection in favor of the missions.”⁸ However, Accolti was only given a chance to work in San Francisco a few months before he was summoned back to Oregon to serve as Superior of the Jesuit missions there. Always looking towards California, he traveled to Rome shortly after his transfer to discuss the affairs of western America with Father General Peter Beckx, and Accolti persuaded his Superior that the Jesuits of the eastern United States were not sufficient for the population of the west. Beckx issued a decree in August 1854 stipulating that the Italian Province of the Order of Turin would take permanent responsibility for the missionary apostolate in both Oregon and California. Accolti was able to return to San Francisco and resume ministry in 1856, where a new Jesuit on the scene was beginning to make enormous advancements in the establishment of the Order in San Francisco.

Father Anthony Maraschi was a member of the Turin Province serving in the eastern United States when he received the dispatch to California. Fr. Joseph Riordan, who is cited by priests today as the authoritative source on the founding of St. Ignatius, tells us that Maraschi began working immediately and feverishly in the parish churches to which he was assigned, “for if anything was repugnant to the character of Father Maraschi, it was inactivity.”⁹ Joseph Sadoc Alemany, O.P. had been appointed the first arch-

⁶ Michael Accolti, S.J. “A Memorial of the Journey to California,” in *Jesuits by the Golden Gate: The Society of Jesus in San Francisco 1849-1969*, by John Bernard McGloin, S.J. (San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972), 1.

⁷ McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. “The Jesuit arrival in San Francisco in 1849,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* (1950): v. 29, p. 145.

⁸ Accolti, Michael, S.J. “Michael Accolti to John Roothaan, San Francisco, February 29, 1850,” in *Eloquent Indian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit*, by John Bernard McGloin, S.J. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), 22.

⁹ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 71.

bishop of San Francisco in 1853, and he saw Maraschi’s ambition as potential for founding a Jesuit school in the city, for which they both saw a great need. There had been a small college next to the Mission Dolores started in 1852 by Fr. Flavian Fontaine that had failed that same year, so it is only considered a prelude to the school that was to be constructed under the guidance of Maraschi and the Jesuits, according to their original resolution: “Above all things let them have at heart the instruction of boys and ignorant persons in the knowledge of Christian doctrine, of the Ten Commandments, and other such rudiments as shall be suitable, having regard to the circumstances of persons, places, and times.”¹⁰

Alemany was slightly hesitant to approve the building of a Jesuit church alongside the school, fearing that it would compete with the parish churches already in existence, but he eventually agreed to the construction of the campus in the western sand dunes of the city, famously indicating that Maraschi could claim a spot “any place over there.”¹¹ Alemany’s records reflect his ambivalence: “The Jesuit Fathers are freely permitted to begin a college in the southern part of this city of San Francisco, at a reasonable distance from St. Patrick’s Church, with permission to have a church or congregation, the limits of which will afterwards be designated.”¹² The priests soon afterward chose a plot of land on Market Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets, although the paved portion of Market Street ended at Third. Somewhat prophetically, Maraschi declared with his typical optimism, “this street is certain to be the main artery of a fine city. Time and energy are needed; but time will pass and the needed energy will be awakened; here build and wait.”¹³ The Jesuits purchased the lot for \$11,500 in May 1855 and within three months, after only \$4,000 in building expen-

¹⁰ Pope Paul III. *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*, 1540, in *The Catholic Reformation* by John C. Olin (Fordham University Press, 1992), 205.

¹¹ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 73.

¹² Alemany, Joseph S., O.P. “Liber ‘A’ Dioceses S. Francisci in California,” in *Eloquent Indian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit*, by John Bernard McGloin, S.J. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), 27.

¹³ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 73.

ditures, the first St. Ignatius Church was dedicated on Sunday, July 15, 1855. Alemany gave the opening sermon and praised the Jesuits for their diligence, as described in the *Baltimore Metropolitan* that week: “The Most Reverend Archbishop Alemany officiated and delivered an impressive discourse, during which he took occasion to speak in the highest eulogistic terms of the zeal and increasing energy of the Jesuit Fathers in propagating the truths of Catholicity throughout the world, but more especially in California.”¹⁴

The first church structure was anything but impressive and was appropriately plain, as described by a local newspaper: “It is a frame building about seventy-five feet long by thirty-five feet wide, and presents a neat and tasteful appearance. It is plastered on the inside and fitted up with pews which can accommodate nearly four hundred persons. There is also a small gallery.”¹⁵ The size of the congregation for the first few months was meager at best, but Maraschi remained hopeful and resolute in waiting for the Lord to provide. In the meantime, he was still determined to construct the Jesuit school, so he set to work building the first St. Ignatius College (or Academy, as Maraschi preferred) next to the church building in 1855. Enrollment and attendance of the little school were just about as consistent as that of the church, and at the beginning of 1856 there was recorded an average attendance of twenty to twenty-five. Few of the students could pay the tuition fees, but out of his compassion and generosity Maraschi was able to fund their instruction, despite the impoverished state of the already indebted church. As mentioned earlier, Accolti was able to return to San Francisco in 1856, and provided Maraschi with preaching assistance and moral encouragement. Brother Albert Weyringer, a member of the church who lived on the campus and performed outdoors work for the parish, provides his observations at the time: “On Sundays, Father Accolti was accustomed to say the first mass, and Father Maraschi the last, and preach. The ordinary Sunday attendance was rather poor; attendance, however, during Holy Week

¹⁴ McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Eloquent Indian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), 27.

¹⁵ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 75.

was striking, and I wondered where all the people came from. The college was not a success in those early days, and few pupils attended the classes...”¹⁶ Nevertheless the Soldiers of Christ continued their efforts with all enthusiasm imaginable, and after a few more years they had expanded their faculty and curriculum enough to earn a charter from the California state legislature, and so were empowered to confer degrees in April, 1859. Maraschi’s efforts were recognized in a very positive light by an article in the August 1, 1859 edition of the San Francisco newspaper *Alta California*: “The Reverend Anthony Maraschi, President of St. Ignatius College...has labored incessantly to advance the interests of those placed under his charge and the examination of the several classes exhibited the complete success which has attended his efforts.”¹⁷

As the St. Ignatius Church and College slowly continued to grow it became apparent that in order to support the local population the Jesuits truly needed a preacher who could speak fluent English and was completely familiar with the social practices of the western Americans. An Irish Jesuit named Michael O’Ferrall who visited San Francisco expressed this issue in an article published in the *San Francisco Monitor*: “[The Italians] brought with them libraries, scientific instruments and the education and habits which fit men for the life of teaching. The Fathers, however, labored under one defect—both in the pulpit and in the classroom. They spoke and taught in a language not altogether English, and their manners and ideas were too Italian to meet the tastes of the young Republicans of the West.”¹⁸ Maraschi was fluent in English, Spanish, French, Italian, and German, but his grasp of colloquial English in his sermons needed supplementation, an augmentation of the church that would come with the arrival of Fr. James C. Bouchard, known as the Eloquent Indian, who had been summoned to San Francisco from his teaching post in St. Louis and assigned as assistant pastor to St. Ignatius Church. He

¹⁶ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 79.

¹⁷ McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Jesuits by the Golden Gate: The Society of Jesus in San Francisco 1849-1969* (San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972), 14-15.

¹⁸ O’Ferrall, Michael, S.J. “Five Years at the Golden Gate,” *San Francisco Monitor*, March 29, 1872.

was already well known throughout the Catholic communities of the Midwest and Eastern United States for his captivating life story, having grown up among the Delaware Indians and converting to Christianity, being trained and ordained as a Jesuit Priest and preaching eloquently and powerfully throughout the United States. His sermons attracted enormous crowds into the tiny St. Ignatius Church, and Fr. Riordan tells us of his early popularity: "Father Bouchard had already begun to preach in the church, and presently the little edifice was taxed to its utmost, so that the crowds stood without, unable to gain admission. Still his voice, which was remarkably powerful, reached even to these; and they stood in rapt admiration, for never before had they heard a man speak like this man."¹⁹ It was at this point that the Jesuit presence in the city emerged as a prominent denomination, drawing Christians of all creeds to hear the Eloquent Indian speak; this was the first sign of the revival catalyzed by the Society of Jesus.

Although the prominence of St. Ignatius during the residence of Bouchard brought the church into tension with neighboring parishes overseen by Alemany who were losing their congregations²⁰, an article in April 7, 1862 edition of the *San Francisco Daily Herald and Mirror* described the benefits of Bouchard's guest preaching at the nearby St. Patrick's Church: "Seven clergymen were engaged from early morning until past midnight in hearing Confessions, and, during the week, between 2500 and 3000 approached the Sacrament of Penance and received Holy Communion. Last Sunday evening [March 30] St. Patrick's Church was, if possible, more crowded than on any other previous occasion. The stairways, corridor and front of the church were occupied, and hundreds unable to enter, had to go away."²¹ In addition to this widespread revival of Catholic belief, Bouchard ushered in a new period of rapid development in the establishment of the Society

19 Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 105-106.

20 Totah, Paul. "From the Gold Rush to the New Millennium: St. Ignatius College Prep Celebrates 150 Years Serving the Bay Area," *History of St. Ignatius College Preparatory*. http://www.siprep.org/about/si_history_brief.cfm.

21 McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Eloquent Indian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), 106.

of Jesus in San Francisco, and soon after his arrival the demand for a larger Jesuit church began to resound. The Fathers made the decision to build a larger, permanent brick sanctuary and college adjacent to the existing buildings on Market Street, committing to increase the debts of the church from about thirty thousand dollars to almost one hundred thousand dollars. Bouchard informed the congregation of this great endeavor in another of his famous speeches, recorded by the *San Francisco Herald and Mirror*, February 24, 1862: "We are only poor Jesuits, but, with the Divine help, we have no apprehensions of failure. Our work here is to promote the honor and glory of God by affording means of worshipping Him in a suitable temple."²² The new structure was erected in 1862, despite a series of floods that impeded construction, and was capable of holding about three thousand attendees for services. Needless to say, this new capacity brought the parish into further conflict with the other local parishes who were as heavily indebted as St. Ignatius, but were losing much of their tithing congregations to the Jesuits.

At this point, Archbishop Alemany began to set himself against the Jesuits for a few reasons: first, he needed to look out for the welfare of all Catholic parishes in the area, and his attempt to isolate St. Ignatius outside the city as a preventative measure for their drawing followers from the other parishes had ultimately failed²³; second, from a series of interactions with the celebrity preacher Bouchard which culminated in the Archbishop's demand that he even shave his beard because it was becoming a mark of his identity, it became apparent that Alemany resented the Eloquent Indian's success in drawing crowds²⁴; and third, a long-standing disagreement between Alemany and the Jesuit authorities on who should hold ownership of the church and college land resulted in his removal of St. Ignatius' status as a parish church in 1863.²⁵

22 Ibid., 108.

23 McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Jesuits by the Golden Gate: The Society of Jesus in San Francisco 1849-1969* (San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972), 26.

24 McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Eloquent Indian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), 121.

25 Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 128.

Alemany also took the final step of redrawing the districts of the city that were under the authority of each church, greatly decreasing the Jesuit zone and shifting it toward the largely unpopulated western sand dunes. Just as Ignatius of Loyola had encountered opposition in the Curia to the founding of his Order before obtaining the approval of the Pope²⁶, the San Francisco Fathers were experiencing suppression by their superiors within the Church hierarchy. The Jesuit constitution was based on unreserved submission to apostolic authority, so our Soldiers of Christ had no choice but to accept the detrimental mandates of the Archbishop, in obedience to Loyola's rules: "We should be more ready to approve and praise the orders, recommendations, and way of acting of our superiors than to find fault with them."²⁷ Bouchard decided to travel and speak in other states in order to remove himself from the tension, and never shaved his beard.

Despite these setbacks, which were compounded by a serious decline in school attendance in the mid-sixties, St. Ignatius continued to thrive, especially when the college received three very distinguished Jesuit scientists into its faculty in the early 1870s. The college buildings were expanded and became a renowned center for research, receiving this praise in the *Report of the Eleventh Industrial Exhibition of the Mechanics Institute of San Francisco, 1876*: "We may well congratulate ourselves for possessing within our midst, in this young city and state, such facilities for scientific education as St. Ignatius College affords to our rising generation, and such a cabinet of philosophical apparatus, second to none in the United States."²⁸ By 1875, the number of students attending the College was approaching seven hundred, and it became again apparent that the school, and the church connected to it, would need to begin searching for a larger and more suitable site. Maraschi's prophecy was beginning to manifest, and Market Street was

²⁶ Olin, John C. *The Catholic Reformation* (Fordham University Press, 1992), 201.

²⁷ de Loyola, Don Iñigo Lopez. "Rules for Thinking with the Church," from *Spiritual Exercises*, in *The Catholic Reformation* by John C. Olin (Fordham University Press, 1992), 210.

²⁸ McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Jesuits by the Golden Gate: The Society of Jesus in San Francisco 1849-1969* (San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972), 30.

quickly becoming very valuable and desirable land in the heart of San Francisco; as a result, property taxes on the plot of St. Ignatius had skyrocketed so that the poor church could barely sustain itself. Since Alemany remained resistant to the growth or transplantation of the Jesuits into another part of the city where they might threaten the neighboring parishes, it was decided that the luminary scientist Fr. Aloysius Varsi of St. Ignatius College would be sent to Rome to discuss the survival of the Society in San Francisco. Operating within Loyola's stipulation that if orders of the apostolic authorities are not praiseworthy, "it may be profitable to discuss their bad conduct with those who can apply a remedy,"²⁹ Varsi first presented the matter to Father General Beckx, who again aided the Jesuits by passing on the proposition to Alemany's superior, Cardinal Franchi. When Varsi indicated a new location for the Jesuit campus and asked permission to begin the project immediately, the Cardinal's response was enthusiastic and succinct: "Let them by all means."³⁰

Upon his return to the United States in October 1877, Varsi was appointed Superior of the California Jesuit missions, granting him authority to settle the matter with Alemany. Before even presenting the proposed move to the Archbishop, Varsi acted on the Curial approval and purchased a plot of land known as Block 74 of the Western Addition, near Hayes and Van Ness Streets. Just as Maraschi had been the firebrand behind the construction and establishment of the first St. Ignatius Church, Varsi now took the commanding role in leading the Soldiers of Christ into their new temple. After the purchase was made and plans for construction began, Varsi finally wrote to Alemany informing him of the fait accompli:

"I have received information from Very Rev. Father General Beckx that it has been decided in Rome by the proper authority, that we are at liberty to remove St. Ignatius Church and College to lot 74 of the Western Addition; and

²⁹ de Loyola, Don Iñigo Lopez. "Rules for Thinking with the Church," from *Spiritual Exercises*, in *The Catholic Reformation* by John C. Olin (Fordham University Press, 1992), 210.

³⁰ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 205.

Father General says that we should commence the building at once. This decision relieves me of a very great anxiety; but yet I should feel very much grieved if I were to proceed without first obtaining Your Grace's blessing on it. I therefore most humbly beg Your Grace...to grant us this favor; for which we shall ever feel most grateful.”³¹

Alemany's response was delayed as he waited for his own news from Rome; after finally receiving the same message, his letter back to Varsi was understandably terse: “The Cardinal prefect informed me that considering what has been done...you may be allowed to proceed: consequently, I can have no objection.”³²

Architectural plans were drawn up and the Fathers began hiring brick and construction companies; the cornerstone was blessed and laid on October 20, 1878 and construction was finished by the end of January 1880. Fr. McGloin asserts, “Pictures of what may be called the Hayes and Van Ness complex of the church, college and residence...amply testify that they were among the finest structures in all of San Francisco.”³³ George C. Perkins, Governor of California at the time of the dedication of the new church, appropriately described the effect of the new Jesuit institution on the city and state in an address to the Fathers:

“I greatly desired to add my humble voice in public praise of the glorious work which you have so nobly accomplished, work which is the result of life’s devotion in a holy and a noble cause. In thought and spirit I am with you, and my earnest prayers are for the success of your noble institution. The edifice which you have raised must redound to advantage of Christianity, and future years will consecrate the devotion you have so unfalteringly and unsparingly bestowed on this great work dedicated to science, learning, and morality.”³⁴

³¹ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 213.

³² *Ibid.*, 214.

³³ McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Jesuits by the Golden Gate: The Society of Jesus in San Francisco 1849-1969* (San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972), 39.

³⁴ Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905), 239.

This new campus at Hayes and Van Ness marked the culmination of Jesuit efforts in San Francisco, finally establishing a Church and College that would survive the years and truly become incorporated into the fabric of the city. By 1883, St. Ignatius College had become the largest Jesuit school in the nation³⁵, and the Church maintained one of the largest Roman Catholic congregations in San Francisco. Within 30 years of the arrival of the Society in American California, the founding Jesuit Fathers, Accolti, Maraschi, and Varsi, had fulfilled the objectives set forth for them by their predecessor Ignatius of Loyola, and had even succeeded where the original Soldiers of Christ had failed: these priests had effectively invaded Jerusalem and converted the Turks.

³⁵ Totah, Paul. “From the Gold Rush to the New Millennium: St. Ignatius College Prep Celebrates 150 Years Serving the Bay Area,” *History of St. Ignatius College Preparatory*. http://www.siprep.org/about/si_history_brief.cfm.

Works Cited

- Accolti, Michael, S.J. "A Memorial of the Journey to California." In *Jesuits by the Golden Gate: The Society of Jesus in San Francisco 1849-1969*, by John Bernard McGloin, S.J. San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972.
- Accolti, Michael, S.J. "Michael Accolti to John Roothaan, San Francisco, February 29, 1850." In *EloquentIndian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit*, by John Bernard McGloin, S.J. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949.
- Alemany, Joseph S., O.P. "Liber 'A' Dioceses S. Francisci in California." In *EloquentIndian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit*, by John Bernard McGloin, S.J. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949.
- de Loyola, Don Iñigo Lopez. "Rules for Thinking with the Church," from *Spiritual Exercises*. In *The Catholic Reformation* by John C. Olin. Fordham University Press, 1992.
- McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *EloquentIndian: the life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949.
- McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. *Jesuits by the Golden Gate: The Society of Jesus in San Francisco 1849-1969*. San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972.
- McGloin, John Bernard, S.J. "The Jesuit arrival in San Francisco in 1849." *California Historical Society Quarterly* (1950): v. 29, p. 139-147.
- O'Ferrall, Michael, S.J. "Five Years at the Golden Gate." *San Francisco Monitor*. March 29, 1872.
- Olin, John C. *The Catholic Reformation*. Fordham University Press, 1992.
- Pope Paul III. *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*, 1540. In *The Catholic Reformation* by John C. Olin. Fordham University Press, 1992.
- Riordan, Joseph W., S.J. *The First Half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College*. San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905.
- Rubio, José M. Gonzales, S.J. "Circular Letter of Father Gonzalez, 1848." In *The First half Century of St. Ignatius Church and College*, by Joseph W. Riordan, S.J. San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905.
- Totah, Paul. "From the Gold Rush to the New Millennium: St. Ignatius College Prep Celebrates 150 Years Serving the Bay Area." *History of St. Ignatius College Preparatory*. http://www.siprep.org/about/si_history_brief.cfm.

The Enigma of Asunción:
Contemporaneous Northern Opinions of Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia

by Christopher Ingalls Haugh

During the 19th century, Latin America writhed in the throes of turbulent political independence. A struggle for the future of the continent was in full effect as new governments began forging republics overwhelmingly devoted to the principles of liberalism. Influenced by the Enlightenment and a heavy emphasis on science, the liberal Positivists seized hold of the continent from the Spanish crown and developed nations reliant upon export economies, European immigration, and rhetorical equality. However, many citizens discovered the shortcomings of independence as deep racial and class cleavages developed and war continued to grip the continent. Latin America unceremoniously dealt with its growing pains. Throughout this time of upheaval few institutions had stability more pronounced than a small territory carved out of the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata known as Paraguay. The diminutive nation, under the dictatorship of José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, spurned the instability ubiquitous throughout the continent and developed a prosperous state. Nevertheless, with stability came scrutiny, as Francia's enigmatic political decisions such as acute protectionism and anachronistic land reform became a specific fascination of many English and American, also known as Northern, observers and travelers. By bucking the continental trend toward a democratic export economy controlled by the Creole elite, Dr. Francia – as he came to be known – exposed himself to the scorn and also the commendation of both Europeans and Americans. Therefore, Northern observers' elitist, racially charged depictions of Francia indicate their reluctance to accept an autonomous, unapologetically non-Eurocentric Latin America.

Francia earned his despotic nicknames such as “El Supremo” by consolidating political power and eliminating any and all political opposition. By May 1811, the landlocked nation of Paraguay had earned its independence.¹ By 1815, through a series of savvy political maneuvers, Francia was appointed “perpetual dictator” after displacing former co-dictator, and member of the Creole elite, Fulgenico Yegros.² Francia’s politics would be governed by principles culled from his extensive studying of Enlightenment thinkers during his years as a lawyer in Asuncion. Francia borrowed the concept of man’s natural right to life, liberty, and property from John Locke and the concept of popular sovereignty from Jean Jacques Rousseau.³ From this foundation, Francia embarked on ideologically motivated political initiatives. First of all, Francia believed in a form of pseudo-democracy. He would call assemblies for discussion where he would receive the will of the people which he alone would interpret and carry to fruition.⁴ Structurally, Francia revamped the administrative system to usurp power from former colonial structures and redistribute it amongst the indigenous majority. Francia’s overture of reform was removing all officials he deemed corrupt and strengthening the prison system as a deterrent for future venality.⁵ Francia also created a streamlined central government revolving around his supreme authority. Francia established twenty regional departments governed by three officials: a commander, tax collector, and judge, all of whom were appointed by Francia himself, while local municipal officials were elected. In a dramatic shift from colonial rule, Francia’s bureaucrats and officials were all indigenous or mestizo Paraguayans. One visitor noted the dramatic shift, writing that “under the government of the Spaniards, the judges were chosen from rich landed proprietors and merchants (whereas) under the present government, the judges are taken from the lower classes of society.”⁶ This new system was a

¹ Clayton, Lawrence A. and Michael L. Conniff, *A History of Modern Latin America* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2005), 34.

² Clayton, 34.

³ White, Richard Alan, *Paraguay’s Autonomous Revolution 1810-1840* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), 166.

⁴ White, 77.

⁵ White, 99.

⁶ White, 100.

watershed change for Paraguay, because it removed the oligarchy of 200 Creole individuals which had neglected the massive Amerindian population for centuries.⁷ Francia also took other progressive governmental steps such as balancing the budget and minimizing the majority of taxes.⁸

However, Francia’s reign was not without its political strongman tendencies. Following what became known as the Great Conspiracy in 1820, Francia went through a period of political repression. In response to Francia’s staunch refusal to join in a union with Buenos Aires in 1817, Juan Martin de Pueyrredon, the supreme dictator of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata sent Colonel Juan Balthazar Vargas to instigate a Creole revolution to oust Francia and bring Paraguay into the fold. The uprising was quelled in 1820 by Francia who ordered tortures, the imprisonment of 300 Spanish residents of Paraguay for over nineteen months, and the execution of fifteen dissidents including Yegros, the former dictator.⁹ However, these fifteen executions were the only political executions of Francia’s otherwise peaceful reign.¹⁰

Despite a zero tolerance policy for political dissidents, Francia established himself as a popular leader devoted to social justice and the welfare of the masses. Francia was fabled to have held nightly discussions with Amerindians at his residence and was fondly referred to as carai-guazu, or the “Great Señor,” by the peasantry.¹¹ One of Francia’s crowning achievements was his disassembly of the Spanish oligarchy’s economic and social privileges for the benefit of the greater population. By levying massive taxes and requiring “contributions” on the landed elite – appropriations which totaled over 825,794 pesos – he began to build a more equal and inclusive state. Secondly, Francia enacted a massive land reform. By nationalizing the land of the Creoles, the Spanish, Jesuits, and the church – including the sprawling Seminary of San Carlos

⁷ White, 100.

⁸ White, 101.

⁹ White, 91.

¹⁰ White, 92.

¹¹ White, 76.

– Francia was able to create over 6,000 agricultural homesteads. These homesteads were rented to landless peasants for two to twenty pesos and supported one in eight of all Paraguayans. Along with its redistribution campaign, the government subsidized new landowners with clothing, tools, and cattle.¹² In 1826, Francia also founded 75 state controlled estancias which raised cattle, sheep, milk cows, and manufactured equipment. The system became so successful that it produced a massive surplus that Francia redistributed to the lower classes.¹³

Along with sweeping land reform, Francia continued his progressive social policies through educational initiatives and broad regional emigration policies. In a continuation of his commitment to the greater populace, Francia established Paraguay's first public education system. Francia built schools, increased pay for teachers, and built a public library. By 1828 a primary education was mandatory throughout the nation.¹⁴ Paraguay became a regional beacon of opportunity due to such initiatives which attracted many immigrants. These initiatives for social change were legitimized by reports of increased immigration during Francia's reign.¹⁵

Francia was as visionary directing the Paraguayan economy by promoting domestic industry, avoiding the regional trend toward a monoculture economy, and reinvesting in infrastructure. By not agreeing to the demands of Buenos Aires, Paraguay was blockaded from the Paraná River upon which Paraguayan yerba and tobacco flowed to the Atlantic Ocean. Due to this blockade, Paraguayan exports dropped from 400,000 pesos in 1816 to 60,000 by 1820, and included a dramatic decline in imports.¹⁶ In response, Francia adopted an import-substitution model allowing Paraguay to sustain itself as a relatively isolated nation. Coupled with the land reform and heavy taxes on the elite, the state began to produce

machetes, knives, scissors, candles, soaps, ponchos, hats, crockery and other essentials for consumption.¹⁷ Rising state revenues earned through the sale of these items allowed Francia to reinvest in crop diversification projects and public works. By the 1830s Paraguay began raising cattle and developed prosperous overland trade with southern Brazil which coveted its beef products.¹⁸ Furthermore, Francia was able to create a burgeoning public works program which included the construction of 40 public buildings, paving the streets of Asunción, and a public lighting campaign.¹⁹

Despite Francia's progressive and popular accomplishments, British observers J.P. and W.P. Robertson portrayed him as a capricious despot. Originally published in 1839, the Robertsons' series of letters from Paraguay leave their readers with a distinctly savage and uncouth image of the dictator. With scathing prose, the brothers focus on magnifying Francia's moral foibles, describing him as a wolf amongst lambs and as a "blood-thirsty tyrant".²⁰ With "despotic caprice" the dictator of the Robertsons' account murders, imprisons, lies, and degrades the Paraguayan economy and greater civil society with debilitating ignorance. In an especially damning description of Francia, the Robertson brothers wrote:

The desolation of Paraguay was now complete. The ruin and prostration of its simple and good-hearted inhabitants was sealed with the seal of irrevocable despotism. With a crown of iron on his brow – and an iron scepter in his hand – the gloomy tyrant moved about, to the terror and dismay of his subjects – or issued his irreversible and cruel decrees for their extermination.²¹

The Robertson brothers cite the proliferation of prisons, the paralysis of the export trade – exaggerated to include the entire nation's economy – and fallacious accounts of political executions of Creoles and Europeans as defining Francia's leadership.²² In an

12 White, 120.

13 White, 110.

14 White, 118.

15 Ibid.

16 White, 83.

17 White, 102.

18 White, 121.

19 White, 114, 115.

20 Robertson, 17, 10.

21 Robertson, 333.

22 Robertson, 19, 275.

intentional act of omission, the Robertsons also neglect to mention any of Francia's social programs, successful economic initiatives, or dedication to the greater Paraguayan populace – namely, the long downtrodden indigenous population. Of particular salience in the Robertson brothers' text is a racially intolerant view of Francia and the Paraguayan people. To justify their distaste for Francia, the Robertson brothers wrote exhaustively of Francia and his government's ignoble treatment of the "poor old Spanish".²³ For example, the brothers wrote that the executions stemming from the Great Conspiracy of 1820 were arbitrary decisions by a ruthless indigenous government headed by Francia. The brothers framed these executions as random acts of brutal violence against the innocent and sophisticated Spanish at the hands of a corrupt and primitive government.²⁴

The Robertson brothers' account indicates their inability to accept Latin American autonomy. The fact that Francia's initiatives intended to pull native Paraguayans out of poverty through unconventional methods led the Robertson brothers to perceive a threat to European interests in the region as a market for imports and a source of raw materials. Their text, saturated not with objective critiques, but with unfounded assaults on Francia's character, allows one to infer their simple discomfort with a powerful Latin American leader not abiding by Northern standards of neo-colonialism. Francia was unwilling to conform to established norms of a model dominated by the colonial elite, leaving the Robertson brothers puzzled and angry, incapable of comprehending Francia's motives or simply disagreeing with the proper course of action within Latin America. The discontinuity between the European ideal for Latin America and Paraguay's reality led to the negative portrayal of Francia, the most prominent instigator of this disconnect.

The more objective text, *Lights and Shadows of American History* by an American, Samuel Griswold Goodrich, partially breaks from the Robertson tradition by portraying Francia as a bearer of light in a backwards country whose despotism was

²³ Robertson, 24
²⁴ Robertson, 19.

justified by his transcendent moral nature and intellect. However, Goodrich's account also draws from the Robertsons' superiority complex therefore attracting him to a leader able to control a continent which he perceived as otherwise unruly and primordial.

S.G. Goodrich, who wrote under the pseudonym Peter Parley, was a well known American author whose publications sold over 7,000,000 copies. Goodrich was also a political figure both as a senator in Massachusetts and as an American consul to Paris from 1851-53. Through his writing prowess and political savvy, Goodrich ascended the social ladder earning him clout in American politics along the way. Goodrich's social and political position can help one better understand his account in the context of American manifest destiny and a paternalistic view of the United States' relationship to their southern neighbors during the 19th century.²⁵

In direct contrast to that of the Robertson brothers, Goodrich's account of Francia's reign shows remarkable reverie for his inherent moral sense and shrewd intellect that justify Francia's dictatorship. Goodrich describes Francia as a young lawyer in colorful prose, creating an aura of heroism and morality around the man. Goodrich continues his praise for Francia's character by describing him as possessing an:

Uncommon reputation for integrity, a more than common acuteness and learning in his profession, profound knowledge of the foibles and peculiarities of his countrymen, together with his fame for a mysterious familiarity with the occult sciences [that] soon caused Dr. Francia to be regarded as a most remarkable personage.²⁶

Goodrich waxes poetic over Francia's virtues and casts him as a perfect politician to lead a continent seen by many in the USA and Europe as uncivilized and primordial, lacking in modernity, and in

²⁵ "Goodrich, Samuel Griswold," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online,

<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9037381> (accessed April 1, 2009), 1.

²⁶ Goodrich, Samuel Griswold, *Lights and Shadows of American History*, (Boston: Bradbury, Soden, & Company, 1844), 163.

desperate need of culture and science.

After firmly establishing Francia's qualifications for leadership, Goodrich argues that Paraguay would have been doomed without him. Goodrich calls Francia "indispensable on all occasions" during the turbulent years following independence.²⁷ With a national congress described as "entirely inexperienced in political matter and grossly illiterate," Goodrich lauds Francia for single-handedly resuscitating the country and leading it toward modernity. Even in moments of extreme despotism and tyranny, Goodrich defends Francia's leadership. When Francia usurps all legislative and executive power, Goodrich writes that Francia's knowledge of the character of the country justified his stranglehold on power.²⁸

Goodrich continues to contradict the powerful legacy of the Robertson brothers by providing examples of Francia's moral and prudent leadership upon ascending to the title of dictator. In one case, Goodrich commends Francia's foresight in ordering a universal second season of growing after a blight of locusts left Paraguayan land barren, an event the Robertson brothers deemed a failure.²⁹ Under severe penalty of law, farmers were ordered to plant a second round of crops which resulted in an unprecedented second successful growing season. Goodrich uses this as an example of the efficiency of authoritarian leadership when adeptly carried out, a point he articulates in earnest. Goodrich also uses an unsuccessful coup attempt to evoke Francia's "mercy" by providing a rebel lieutenant clemency.³⁰ Goodrich portrays the event in an entirely different manner from the Robertson brothers, choosing to battle the hegemonic view of Francia and evoke his more forgiving nature.³¹ Goodrich's portrayal of Francia's decisions as panaceas for Paraguayan problems is colorful and equally as excessively complimentary as the Robertsons were degrading.

27 Goodrich, 164.

28 Goodrich, 165.

29 Robertson, 390.

30 Goodrich, 173.

31 "Francia, José Gaspar Rodríguez de," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9035115> (accessed March 1, 2009), 1.

However, Goodrich's adulation comes at a price for Latin America as a society, because the American writer insinuates many ethnocentric inequalities further justifying paternalistic leadership from an intelligentsia like Francia. Goodrich describes Latin America as a continent "plunged into frightful anarchy, raging and ravaging like a huge dog-kennel gone mad."³² Goodrich also calls Latin American culture primitive and its people ignorant. Furthermore, Goodrich perceives a tendency in Francia toward both anxiety and despotism as "the result of native eccentricity."³³ Goodrich becomes an interceding opinion in the collective understanding of Francia, for he is unable to escape the derogatory and racial language of the Robertson brothers.

Goodrich's nationality and subsequent biases are imposed upon his subject much like the Robertson brothers, because his American paternalism is attracted to Francia's ability to tame the wilds of the Americas. From Francia's political stewardship and treatment of his own people in a parallel manner to American foreign policy in the region, Goodrich gleans an innate wholesomeness in the despot's leadership. Goodrich sees "that simple and severe virtue, which is more characteristic of a stern republican than of a sanguinary tyrant" in Francia which thus justifies his despotism.³⁴ Goodrich's account is a series of romanticized and embellished annals which portray the dictator and his country in a decidedly subjective light more fitting for American sensibilities. Goodrich exhibits Francia's intelligence, yet he perpetuates racial norms conforming to the Robertson brothers' assertion of racial delinquencies as seen in Francia's politics. While decidedly more accepting of Francia, the Northern bias exhibited saliently in the Robertson brother's accounts cannot be ignored in Goodrich's analysis of Francia. Goodrich, like the Robertson brothers, cannot accept a new Latin America. While Goodrich comprehends Francia's intellect, his preconceived notions of Latin America leave him incapable of understanding the Paraguayan state Francia had built. A central tenet of the new regime in Paraguay was popular

32 Goodrich, 169.

33 Goodrich, 178.

34 Goodrich, 177.

participation in local politics intended to empower indigenous peoples and mestizos. In other words, Goodrich's acknowledgment of Francia's intellect went as far as Francia's European influences – including Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke – but he could not bring himself to accept Francia's adaptations intended to empower a race Goodrich believed inferior.

Sir Richard Burton, another Northern intellectual observer, in a similar fashion as Goodrich, adds another ambivalent reaction to the Northern perception of Francia. Burton perceived a universal intelligence in Francia which justifies his autocracy not as a despot, but as an enlightened leader lost amongst an exotic and ignorant population. Burton was a well-traveled British army officer educated at Trinity College in Oxford, England where he mastered twenty five languages including French, Italian, Greek, Latin, and Arabic.³⁵ Best known for his travels in the Middle East, Burton became infatuated with Francia following an expedition to the New World. In Burton's Letters from the Battlefields of Paraguay, he describes his impressions of the dictator to the English public. From the onset, Burton recognizes Francia's intellect and transnational citizenship within the community of Enlightenment thinking:

He devoted himself to the perusal of the few books on science and politics which were then procurable. He read greedily everything published about the French Republic, the Consulate and the Empire . . . he had mastered his Rollin, and dreamed in early days of becoming Consul, Dictator, and Imperator.³⁶

Burton creates numerous connections between Francia, European Enlightenment thinking, and a markedly Northern heritage. Furthermore, Burton, with a propensity for historically grand references, once compares Francia's rule to that of the Roman Republic.³⁷ However, Burton also recognizes Francia's tendency toward self-important leadership. Burton continues to portray Francia as

a worthy Eurocentric leader by lauding Francia's revolution for creating "the general idea of liberty in the new Republic (as) something consisting of Faith, Hope, and Charity under a new name."³⁸ Burton perceives Francia less as a despot and more as a leader possessing European intellectual concepts and tendencies, an image which would also appeal greatly to his upper-class English readership.

Similarly to Goodrich, Burton's portrayal of Francia as a progressive is coupled with a racially superior view toward Paraguay's greater population, adding to the exoticism of the Northern perception of the regime. Burton therefore has not progressed entirely past the Robertson brothers racially influenced demagoguery. Most poignantly, Burton writes disparagingly of Paraguayan citizens. Throughout Burton's account he compares the actions of the Paraguayans to loci such as Egypt, Yemen, and Darfur all considered foreign and exotic to the English explorer.³⁹ Furthermore, when describing the scene of Francia's election as supreme dictator in 1815, Burton writes that the representatives "appeared more like criminals than legislators, and voted all that was required of them in order to sooner return home."⁴⁰ Furthermore, Burton writes that the election was less of a democratic process and more resembled a "herd of 'Indians' choosing their cacique" or political boss.⁴¹ Burton writes derogatorily of the Paraguayan population as criminal, animalistic, and unsophisticated. However, as discussed earlier, this assembly would matriculate to the judgeships and other administrative positions that helped preserve order and stability for Francia's near half century of reign. Burton most certainly is motivated by a self-serving racial ideology due to the majority Amerindian population of Paraguay during the 19th century which he condemns so adamantly. Burton represents a similar evolution of Northern opinion as Goodrich, because both acknowledge Francia's intellect, yet both still prescribe to the Robertson brothers' racially biased style clouding their accounts and compounding the

³⁵ "Burton, Sir Richard," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-974> (accessed March 21, 2009), 2.

³⁶ Burton, Richard F., *Letters from the Battle-Fields of Paraguay*, (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1870), 39.

³⁷ Burton, 43.

³⁸ Burton, 41.

³⁹ Burton, 48.

⁴⁰ Burton, 41.

⁴¹ Ibid.

exotic nature of 19th century Paraguayan history in the Northern ethos.

Writing for a British and more imperial population than Goodrich, Burton is more conditioned by the Robertson brothers; nonetheless he represents a similar developmental stage in Northern opinion on Francia as his American contemporary. Obsessed with Francia's learned qualities, Burton perceives him as a "true man in a bewildered Gaucho world."⁴² Burton's writings perpetuate the imperial mindset of English observers of the New World by reiterating the overarching belief in the exoticism of the continent and its need for European educated leadership to tame and paternally direct it. However, Burton's 19th century readership would still be left with a skewed concept of Francia who, despite his European-centric studies, was a leader genuinely devoted to the well-being of the Amerindian population of Paraguay. Francia identified with the masses and incorporated them not simply as recipients of social mandates, but as active participants in cultivating a modern nation-state. Francia was without a doubt an autocrat, yet he was not a Northern cultural proxy leading in the paternalistic vein Burton describes to his readers. Burton's account is far less defined by the Robertson brothers' characteristic diatribes, but still possesses a quality of Northern superiority.

Burton's account is yet another example of a Northern inability to accept Francia's Paraguay. Francia genuinely built a state independent from Europe politically, economically, and socially. He set a dangerous precedent for colonial powers in Europe and the aspiring imperial power of the United States. Francia was a nationalist whose success created a disastrous paradigm for potential colonial revolutionaries around the world. In much the same way that the example of the Haitian revolution sparked reactionary and conservative denunciations, Francia was met with considerable resistance from the North. However, writers like Burton and Goodrich struggled to justify their Robertson-like response to Francia's political cunning due to their knowledge of his understanding the same driving principles sweeping Europe, namely the

⁴² Burton, 43.

Enlightenment. However, the Northern bias proved too great as each writer and observer succumbed to the hegemonic elitism levied against Latin America by Europe and the United States in the 19th century. Goodrich and Burton's struggle culminated in misunderstanding what Francia represented: a new autonomous Latin America.

During Francia's reign, Paraguay experienced a period of stability and prosperity. Despite an Argentinean blockade of its economic nervous system, the Paraná River, and constant pressure from larger militarized states, Francia created an autocratic but popularly directed state. He enacted many social welfare programs and economic realignments in an overall effort to preserve stability. Francia was condemned internationally for his radical restructuring of Paraguay's social fabric through heavy taxes on the Creole elite and his empowerment of the indigenous people through political appointments and public work initiatives. Similarly, Francia was portrayed as an intellectual ruthlessly and paternalistically governing a backwater and savage nation. As a character in the societies of Britain and the United States, Francia was defined by a handful of writers and explorers who entered Paraguay at the time. From the abject hatred of the Robertson brothers came Goodrich and Burton who synthesized a quasi-positive but racially informed and exotic vision of Francia as a Latin American anomaly. From all accounts, Francia was an anachronism. To the Anglo-Western world he was a primitive autocrat setting an occult paradigm of human authoritarian tendencies. In Paraguay, he was a popular politician enacting reforms sought for centuries by other Latin American nations. From these conflicting definitions came a binary persona developed between the true Francia and the Westernized tyrant. From the creation of this binary, one can better understand the effect that Paraguay's isolation from the North had on the greater opinions of the state, for accountability became negligible and accounts of the nation were monopolized by sensationalist writers. Isolation, in other words, can be used as a litmus test for accuracy. For example, nations such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, each open to international trade, foreign capital, and European immigration in the

19th century, are less subject to Northern fable and myth. Francia's legacy therefore is defined by his limited relations with Europe leading to a radicalized literary rapport between the North and the dictator, a relationship colored by the subjectivity of personal experience.

Works Cited

Burton, Richard F. Letters from the Battle-Fields of Paraguay. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1870.

“Burton, Sir Richard.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.
<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-974> (accessed March 21, 2009).

Clayton, Lawrence A. and Michael L. Conniff. *A History of Modern Latin America*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2005.

Cooney, Jerry W. “Paraguayan Independence and Doctor Francia.” *The Americas* 28, no. 4 (April, 1972): 407-428.

“Francia, José Gaspar Rodríguez de.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9035115> (accessed March 1, 2009).

“Goodrich, Samuel Griswold.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9037381> (accessed April 1, 2009).

Goodrich, Samuel Griswold. *Lights and Shadows of American History*. Boston: Bradbury, Soden, & Company, 1844.

J.P. Robertson, and W.P. Robertson. *Francia's Reign of Terror being the continuation of Letters on Paraguay*. London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1839.

Shepard, Clarence E. *Francia a Tale of the Revolution of Paraguay, from authentic sources*. London: New Burlington Street, 1851.

Szlajfer, Henryk. *Nineteenth Century Latin America: two models for capitalism*. Warsaw: Polish Academy of Sciences Center for Studies on Non-European Countries, 1984.

“The Regime of Francia” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9035115> (accessed March 1, 2009).

The Two Dictators Francia and Rosas: the System of the Former as Adopted and Openly Supported by the Dictator of Buenos-Aires. Montevideo: The Reform Club Library, 1846.

White, Richard Alan. Paraguay’s Autonomous Revolution 1810-1840. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978

Georg Büchner’s Dantons Tod: A Dramatic Vision of Revolutionary Possibility

by Michael Lu

I. Introduction

Written in 1835, Georg Büchner’s tragic drama, *Dantons Tod* (*Danton’s Death*), is a work startling for its construal of the individual’s fundamental relationship with the world and with history. Through the mouths of his principal characters, Danton and Robespierre, the playwright espouses a severely fatalistic account of history, one which asserts man’s inability to determine his destiny because he is himself determined. For Büchner, the course of humanity is wholeheartedly governed by an “*ehernes Gesetz*” – an “ironclad law” – of historical movement which human beings cannot control but can only accept and hopefully, comprehend.¹ Adopting such a fatalistic stance in a drama about revolution, about an activity that emphasizes and exalts the capacity of individuals to transform the world seems awkwardly out of place. Indeed, many critics have argued that this ostensible pessimism which Büchner assumes with respect to the subject of revolution indicates his disillusionment with his own revolutionary aspirations and with the possibility for a revolution in Germany during his lifetime.

In this paper, I intend to argue against such a critical conception of the political implications underlying Büchner’s work. I will contend that despite the rhetorical varnish of a fatalistic *Weltanschauung* in *Dantons Tod*, the subtleties residing within the drama’s rhetoric, scenarios, and characterizations betray a still-present and fiery revolutionary resolve in its author. My study will

¹ Georg Büchner, *Complete Works and Letters*, trans. Henry J. Schmidt, ed. Walter Hinderer and Henry J. Schmidt (New York: Continuum, 1986), 260.

analyze this political dimension of the drama principally within the context of Büchner's distinctive notion of history that is instilled in his work – the very notion that has convinced so many scholars of the work's anti-revolutionary bent. My analysis will concentrate particularly upon how Büchner's historical understanding is related to the fundamental conditions that he perceived as necessary for inspiring a triumphant German revolution. This intimate association between Büchner's historical perspective and his revolutionary thinking was a crucial factor propelling his political thought and strategy. Having substantiated these conclusions, I will progress to argue that *Dantons Tod* functioned as a positive response to radical left-wing revolutionary aspirations then emerging in France and Germany during the Vormärz ("Pre-March 1848" Era). Set against this historical backdrop, the exploration of man's place in the world that Büchner delved into in his drama can be seen as a literary rumination not only upon the causes of historical movement but also upon the ways in which those causes might be utilized to foment a successful popular insurrection in 1830s and 1840s Germany.

Far from being anti-revolutionary in character, therefore, *Dantons Tod* is a composition that embraces a pro-revolutionary stance and whose drear construal of the French Revolution belies its author's intention to contemplate the ruins of one of history's great failed revolutionist ventures in order that a vision of a more auspicious one may emerge.

II. An Overview of the Critical Reception of *Dantons Tod*

The revolutionary and political import behind Büchner's drama has engendered substantial scholastic debate. Since that import constitutes the focus of this paper, I now aim to explain briefly the numerous competing opinions that have thus far been voiced on the topic. Such an exposition is necessary because my own assertions on the revolutionary significance of *Dantons Tod* draw upon these past contentions, especially upon the ways in which they conceive of Büchner's determinism.

The various contentions all base themselves upon interpretations of Büchner's conviction in "the terrible fatalism of history."² Most of the early critical examinations of *Dantons Tod* deemed it to be either an apolitical work or a work whose political meaning resonates with frustration towards revolutionary activity. Those scholars who claimed apoliticism contended that in the drama, Büchner avoids an "eventual resolution of anything, as little in philosophical as in political matters."³ *Dantons Tod*, then, is a play that is politically empty. For other critics, the portrayed impotence of the French revolutionary leaders (namely, those who side with Danton versus those who side with Robespierre – respectively referred to as Dantonists and Robespierrists) to direct the revolutionary fervor which they had themselves incited illustrates the fact that "all political action in the play is eventually shown up as predetermined and meaningless."⁴ The drama, from the perspective of these individuals, is, therefore, "less a revolutionary play or pamphlet than an anti-revolutionary one."⁵

The critics who denied *Dantons Tod* of either its political or revolutionary relevance did so because they interpreted Büchner's fatalism as conceiving of a world that "is certainly not ruled by the conscious efforts or visible motives of human beings."⁶ Rather, "in all the actions of all human beings the real motives are hidden and unknown to the actors and their entourage, though partly visible to the historian and historical dramatist."⁷ As these critics saw it, Büchner's fatalism espouses nothing short of a wholehearted repudiation of human control over world events. Such a comprehensive repudiation of human influence undoubtedly implies a repudiation

2 Ibid., 260.

3 Dorothy James, *Georg Büchner's Dantons Tod: A Reappraisal* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1982), 75.

4 Joseph Peter Stern, "A World of Suffering: Georg Büchner" in *Re-interpretations: Seven Studies in Nineteenth-Century German Literature* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 40.

5 A.H.J. Knight, "Some Considerations Relating to Georg Büchner's Opinions on History and the Drama and to his Play *Dantons Tod*," *The Modern Language Review*, 42, (1947), 80.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

of any activity that presupposes the ability of human beings to govern themselves and history. Politics and revolutions are such activities. Consequently, it must follow – according to this reading of Büchner’s drama – that *Dantons Tod* is either an apolitical or anti-revolutionary work.

Recently, however, there have emerged scholars on Büchner who have gone against their forebears by ardently maintaining the politically-minded and pro-insurrectionary thrust of Büchner’s tragedy. These commentators adopt a unique understanding of Büchner’s historical fatalism. For them, Büchner did not perceive the trajectories of history to be dictated by nebulous forces. As they argue, he believed that “the apparently autonomous processes at work in history and society are created not by ‘Fate’... but by men.”⁸ And not just by any men, but by all men. From the viewpoint of these new critics, the fatalistic message expressed in *Dantons Tod* centers upon the notion that the capacity to influence and guide history is distributed amongst all human beings; it is not vested solely in the hands of a select number of outstanding individuals. History, according to Büchner, is made by everyone, not by certain remarkable persons; it is fundamentally derived from and driven by the complex and massive totality of human actions and interactions.⁹ As Büchner himself declared, the “inescapable force” that he perceived as domineering over humanity is “granted to all and to no one.”¹⁰ What, in the end, makes history so disheartening and overpowering, both for Büchner and his dramatic characters, is the fact that despite its human foundations, history is a process whose creative source is so expansively dispersed and disseminated amongst the ranks of humanity. No single individual can exercise any proper measure of control over it, and consequently, everybody feels separate from and alienated towards it, even though – and chiefly because – they all had a hand in making it.

⁸ John Reddick, Georg Büchner: *The Shattered Whole* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994), 110.

⁹ Terence M. Holmes, *Rehearsal of Revolution: Georg Büchner’s Politics and his Drama Dantons Tod* (Berne, Germany: Peter Lang, 1995), 15.

¹⁰ Büchner, *Complete Works*, 260.

Issues of alienation and estrangement aside, the humanistic interpretation of Büchner’s fatalistic vision enables those commentators who perceive *Dantons Tod* as a revolution-inclined work to support their opinions. Even though history is, along this view, determined by the aggregate interaction of social forces, the notion that it is formed and moved by people, instead of cryptic otherworldly entities, does seem to allow for the capacity of lone individuals – or groups of individuals – to assert themselves in influential ways within the general march of events. These daring individuals may not be capable of dominating the historical momentum of their times, since they are immersed within it, but they still bear the potential to impact it at its grass roots and thus affect it from the bottom up.

I have yet to explain how the new scholars’ outlook on Büchner’s fatalism relates explicitly to their pro-revolutionary reading of *Dantons Tod*. Suffice it to say right now, given the principal argument of this paper I am firmly in consent with such a reading. For the rest of this study, I will take the humanistic apprehension of Büchner’s fatalism to be the one that most correctly captures Büchner’s actual historical understanding. Some of the loose ends inhering in this segment of my paper will be duly addressed later on in my own textual analysis of the literary work. Within that analysis, I will employ the recent revisionist views in substantiating my own assertions, and I will attempt to rebuke that mystical fatalism which critics who deny the play of its political activism endorse. But before I can embark upon those tasks, I must first provide a short explanation of Büchner’s political sentiments and beliefs.

III. Büchner’s Radicalism and Ideas for Revolution

In terms of political identification, Büchner was not a bourgeois liberal. He was undoubtedly a revolutionary during his lifetime, but he was not one of the middle class, constitutionalist mold. His political sentiments, rather, drew him into the company of the political Far Left of his time. It is still unclear what Büchner

ner's revolutionary and political temperament was precisely, but it is safe to claim that he was at least a radical republican, a left-winger who championed the cause of democratic egalitarianism. As a result of his extreme Leftist position, Büchner was adamantly opposed to the prospect of a revolution in Germany that would lead to the foundation of a liberal constitutionalist state and to the political ascendancy of the bourgeoisie. It was his great conviction that should the liberal constitutionalists "succeed in overthrowing the German governments and introducing a general monarchy, or even republic, [Germany] would get a Geldaristokratismus (plutocracy)."¹¹ Büchner's fears and formulations on the matter arose from developments that transpired in the wake of the July Revolution of 1830 in France, which had deposed the Restorationist regime and supplanted it with a bourgeois constitutionalist government. What was begotten through the upheaval was a liberal state in which the most affluent citizens dominated political life. France became an effectual plutocracy.

Büchner wanted to avoid the institution of a plutocratic regime in a post-revolutionary Germany at all costs. A German revolution could be truly beneficial only if it did not reenact the ramifications of 1830 in France. For Büchner was wholly convinced that the rule of a moneyed elite in Germany would simply lead to the formation of an indulgent capitalist's paradise, while the common people, already in economic despair in the current monarchical states, would continue to rot in destitution. Against the prospect of such a revolutionary outcome, he avowed that "it would be better if things were to remain as they were."¹²

The republican egalitarianism that underlay Büchner's political aspirations also defined his revolutionary theory. He was convinced that any rising against the autocratic governments in Germany would be successful only if the involvement of the common people was enlisted. A revolution could only be effectively carried through by the masses of the people, who by sheer weight

¹¹ Maurice B. Benn, *The Drama of Revolt: A Critical Study of Georg Büchner* (Cambridge UP, 1976), 25.

¹² Ibid.

of numbers would be able to overwhelm the military power of the German princes.¹³ Büchner believed that to foment the populace to insurrectionary activity, revolutionary propaganda had to address itself directly to the masses of the people and deal, first and foremost, with the latter's economic grievances and material interests.¹⁴ The competent and dynamic revolutionary, then, was the one who could persuade the populace to identify their material concerns with the revolutionary cause. From Büchner's viewpoint, the activation of the masses was the essential element for a triumphant upheaval against the contemporary German political order. And this activation could most expediently be effectuated by way of the common person's stomach and pocketbook, rather than his intellect or civic sensibilities.

IV. The Play Itself – Fatalism, the Bourgeoisie, the Masses, and the Exploration of Revolutionary Potential in Germany

Given what is known about Büchner's political convictions, *Dantons Tod* can be deemed a genuine affirmation of revolutionary intent only if it addresses the deficiencies inhering in bourgeois liberal politics and if it appreciates the insurrectionary potency of the ordinary people. In this portion of my paper, I will demonstrate that these two dominant features of Büchner's radical politics exist in his drama. Above all, though, I intend to show that their presence in the play is inherently linked to Büchner's sense of historical fatalism which prevails in his work.

The piercing fatalism that eventually overwhelmed Büchner was first revealed to him while he was studying the history of the French Revolution in preparation for *Dantons Tod*. The historians whom he referenced on the subject were French liberal intellectuals who had employed a fatalistic understanding of history in order to evince the inevitable supremacy of the bourgeoisie. For an ardent republican like Büchner, such a view to the final outcome of history was tremendously disheartening. The crisis of fatalism that he suffered prior to the writing of *Dantons Tod*, therefore, arose from an awareness of the presumably assured political victory of

¹³ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

the middle classes.¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite these prior realizations Büchner, in his drama, persisted in his hope for a radical revolution in Germany. The testament to that hope can be found in the drama's portrayals of the bourgeoisie, the masses, and the relation between those two groups.

In *Dantons Tod*, the constitutionalist liberals of Büchner's time find their historical counterparts amongst the moderate Dantonist faction of French revolutionary politics. The textual evidence in favor of this correlation is fairly obvious once it is recalled that Büchner perceived the moderate German political agitators of his day as latent proponents of a future plutocracy in Germany. The hedonism and self-interest that he was convinced any *Geldaristokratismus* would devote itself to are reflected in the conduct of Danton and his political allies in the play.

Throughout *Dantons Tod*, Danton and the rest of his moderate party are attacked by the Committee of Public Safety as traitors to the Revolution and to the cause of the impoverished people, due to their licentious, indulgent lifestyles. Robespierre accuses them of being false “‘tribunes of the people’ parading the vice and luxury of the old court,”¹⁶ who had “once lived in attics and now drive in carriages and fornicate with former marchionesses and baronesses” (I, 4). While these abuses are rhetorically demagogic and politically designed to incite public ire against the foes of the Robespierrist, there is an undeniable truth underlying their claims. Danton is characterized, with considerable detail and accentuation, as an individual having a titanic sexual appetite, “who [whores] with the daughters of the people” in his all too frequent visits to the local Parisian brothels (I, 2).¹⁷ Even Camille Desmoulins – one of the more sensitive and refined Dantonists in the play – voices his desire for a future republic in which “naked gods, Bacchanite women, Olympic games and from melodious lips, the songs of a cruel, limb-loosening love” will be permitted to run rampant and

¹⁵ Holmes, 69-71.

¹⁶ Georg Büchner, *Danton's Death*, trans. Jane Fry (London: Methuen, 1982), 12.

¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

freely (I, 1).¹⁸

In that statement, Camille does not once make note of the common people or of the creation of a socially just and fair order – his envisioned republic is ideal solely because it permits him and his cohorts to delight in their present recreations more blithely, not because it would distribute the gratification of those recreations equitably amongst the indigent populace. Indeed, in all of their expressed affinities for pleasurable delights, Danton and his companions never mention a wish to extend the comforts they enjoy to the deprived and wretched masses of France. Rather, they revel in their pleasures in spite of the misery of the rest of the population, as is evidenced in Lacroix's acknowledgment that “we [the Dantonists] are true libertines...but the people are virtuous...We get called scoundrels and between ourselves, there's a half-truth there. Robespierre and the people are virtuous” (I, 5).¹⁹ Danton and his friends, in the end, are depicted by Büchner as revolutionaries and politicians not much different in political temperament from the bourgeois agitators of his age: they are all men “for whom the Republic [is] a financial swindle and the Revolution a business”, whose revolutionary concerns are more dictated by their egocentric ambitions than by any authentic sympathy for the oppressed populace (I, 4).²⁰

Through his characterizations of the Dantonists, Büchner hoped to reveal the latent dangers resting within the moderate revolutionary demands of his time. The fact that his fatalism impressed upon him a cognizance of those demands' guaranteed triumph renders his hostile depiction of the bourgeoisie more comprehensible: for him, it was urgent and imperative that the German people know – prior to the eruption of a serious upheaval in Germany – what impairments to their overall welfare would arise if they were to revolt according to a political platform overrun by liberal provisions.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 19.

²⁰ Ibid., 12.

Nevertheless, it is one thing for Büchner to divulge and assail the potential shortcomings of a bourgeois revolution, but another thing to argue how a more democratic variation of that revolution can be successfully brought about, especially when he has already conceded the inexorability of a middle class victory. The solution to this conundrum is to be found in Danton's Tod's portrayal of the downfall of the Dantonists. Their defeat illustrates how liberal politics, even when triumphant, can eventually fail. This defeat is rooted in two things: the consciousness of fatalistic impotence that overwhelms Danton in the tragedy, and the impact of that fatalism upon the relation between Danton and the revolutionary populace in the play.

Büchner's Danton is persistently hesitant to act for the preservation of his life and the lives of his endangered associates, despite his enormous influence. His lethargy results from his awareness that he is politically impotent in the face of those external, uncontrollable forces which determine the course of history.²¹ Danton acknowledges that the eminence he has acquired up to this point in his life has been derived completely from the Revolution itself, something which he did not create. As far as the Revolution has granted him the opportunity to be the "great man," it now progresses ineluctably forward without his consent, threatening to turn him into a relic to be "thrown onto the street."²²

It is necessary to clarify that, although Danton's sensation of fatalism emotionally and psychologically stultifies his capacity to act, this sensation is not the essential cause of his death and the deaths of his political companions. The essential cause is, instead, his misunderstanding of the fundamental determinants of that fatalism. The sensation of fatalism that Danton experiences proceeds from this misunderstanding.

While Danton's fatalism is similar in spirit to that endorsed personally by Büchner, it is distinct from Büchner's by virtue of the fact that it neglects the human agency underlying history. For

²¹ Benn, 116.

²² Büchner, *Danton*, 25.

Danton, the irresistible pressure of events emanates not from the totality of human existence but from the activities of "unknown forces...invisible spirits" whose puppets we are (II, 1).²³ His fatalism, thus, resembles the supernatural view of fatalism embraced by those critics who reject a pro-revolutionary reading of *Dantons Tod*. Danton's belief in the absolute invisibility and unintelligibility of the powers controlling humanity implies that it would be useless to try to fathom or grapple with them. As such, he is wholeheartedly passive to the trajectories of his life and of broader events. However, in the play, Büchner points to the error of such a fatalistic conception. For instance, Danton's profession in the existence of "unknown forces...invisible spirits" results from a dream he had, which went as follows:

"The earth's globe was panting as it span, in space. My limbs were gigantic, I pounced on the globe and rode it bareback like a runaway horse, I gripped its flanks with my legs, I clutched its mane, my hair streamed above the abyss, I shouted in terror: and woke" (II, 5).²⁴

Danton's apocalyptic vision vents his fatalistic understanding of his revolutionary career. It opens with a sequence of him as a man subjugating the world under his weight and will, but concludes with the world spiraling out of his control and dragging him along as a helpless, terrified victim. Yet, the planet that eventually runs away from him is not portrayed by Büchner as the product of supernatural, incomprehensible spirits, for if that were indeed the case it would not have been possible for Danton to straddle the globe at all. In this symbolic dream, Büchner imparts to Danton a "subliminal awareness" that he is subject, not to cryptic metaphysical powers, but to that "ironclad law" of history which is "granted to all and to no one."²⁵ For the earth that he straddles is the real earth of human life and activity. However, this awareness is only subliminal, and Danton afterwards denies it of its truth by asserting the case for "invisible spirits." He never mentions it again for the rest of the play.

²³ Ibid., 26.

²⁴ Ibid., 36.

²⁵ Holmes, 77.

By failing to recognize the human factors shaping history, Danton consequently ignores the one class of revolutionary society that determines the course of any revolution and whose sentiments can be swayed: the common people. In the drama, it is the masses of Paris that constitute the chief revolutionary authority. Both the Dantonists and Robespierrists base their survival upon the favor they find with the people. The political significance of the people in *Dantons Tod* illustrates Büchner's conviction that history is determined by the massive constellation of interactions amongst human beings. More importantly, though, the authority of the masses in the play reveals Büchner's belief that the law of history is, at times, humanly intelligible and can even be influenced at the grass roots.

When the impulses of the multitude are in mutual conflict and opposition, the law becomes mysterious and unintelligible because the matrix of behaviors from which it results is a big, sprawling muddle. However, in *Dantons Tod*, the problem of apprehending the law is simplified considerably because the great social issue presented in the play does not involve diversity amongst people but the coalescence of the people in a common state of extreme deprivation.²⁶ Instead of numerous volitional vectors arrayed against one another, the inclinations of the people make up one single vector that emanates from the people's shared desperation and which points towards a powerful bloodlust for the lives of those who have economically benefited from the Revolution. Being comprehensible, the historical law, as articulated in the drama, is also capable of being manipulated: since it is easy to grasp, one can maneuver within it, and since its motivational base is founded upon interests mundane and crucial to life – namely, interests of material survival – one can maneuver within it well. Danton's misapprehension of the intrinsic nature of history prevents him from employing these advantageous conditions in his favor. However, his enemies are more astute and do utilize those advantages.

The Robespierrists are the individuals in *Dantons Tod* most acutely in touch with the spirit of their times and its motivating impulses. Their perspicacity arises from their sharp comprehension

26 Ibid., 81.

of history. For example, Saint-Just analogizes the Revolution to the inexorable motions of Nature: it is like “a flare-up of subterranean fires...a plague...a volcanic eruption” (II, 7).²⁷ By comparing the Revolution to fluctuations in nature, Saint-Just conveys his understanding that the Revolution is motivated by tangible, materialistic causes – namely, the people and their economic concerns. With their insight into the dynamics of historical causation, the Robespierrists are able to recognize that the drives of the people are arrayed in unanimous hatred for those whom they perceive as materially well-off. Robespierre and his colleagues, therefore, understand the law of history as it has constituted itself at the play's historical moment. Understanding it, they are able to maneuver themselves within its bounds so as to secure the most advantageous political position. They whip up the pervasive economic wretchedness and jealousy of the masses into a bastion of revolutionary fervor against the rich and hedonistic Dantonists. Although unable to command the “volcanic eruption” that is the Revolution, the Robespierrists nonetheless realize that they can still influence the general march of events if they first influence the agents of that march, i.e. the ordinary people. They apply their astute historical understanding of their times in order to steer the Revolution in their favor.

Danton, not realizing that the source of historical movement is located on the ground rather than above it, does not compete with the Robespierrists for the favor of the people and thereby draw the momentum of events to his side. Only towards the end of the drama does he realize his misreading of history, and thereafter appeals to the population for his defense. The argument he employs explicitly targets the most poignantly shared interest of the people: he tells them, “You want bread, [the Robespierrists] throw you heads” (III, 9).²⁸ His last-minute gambit almost works, except that he has used it too late and the damage done by the Jacobins is already too severe: one of the citizens in the street informs his fellow agitators that Danton enjoys a fine, comfortable life while Robespierre has “Nothing but virtue” – his fellow agitators, upon

27 Büchner, *Danton*, 40.

28 Ibid., 59.

hearing his remark, immediately begin chanting, “Long live Robespierre! Down with Danton” (III, 9).²⁹ Danton ultimately dies due to his misapprehension of the revolutionary sovereignty of the ordinary people and to the materialistic considerations that impel the people to act.

The message that Büchner wanted to convey to his contemporary audience – perhaps to his radical revolutionary peers – through his depictions of Danton’s fatalism and the insurrectionary demeanor of the masses was that a radical revolution in Germany was still possible. In spite of the unavoidability of a bourgeois political victory, that victory, once achieved, might not last very long. The radical revolution that Büchner dreamt of might not outrace the bourgeois revolution to the finish line, but even if it does finish behind, the potential for its final victory will not be entirely effaced. Just as those liberal historians whom Büchner had researched were convinced that the eventual ascendancy of the bourgeoisie was preordained, so members of that class, upon satisfying their “destiny,” might rest complacent with their newly acquired status as an outcome decreed and secured by Fate. As such, they will overlook the material factors and human forces that shape history. By ignoring those dynamics, however, the bourgeoisie would remain indifferent to the widespread hunger and poverty that were ravaging the German people during Büchner’s lifetime. With their triumph, the middle class will indulge in riches and corporeal pleasures, but do so without any real concern for the suffering populace.

In all of this, the bourgeois outlook on history and humanity mirrors that of Büchner’s Danton. And like Danton, the bourgeoisie will ultimately suffer on account of their worldview. Through its ignorance of historical causation and its neglect of humanity, the victorious middle class will become oblivious to the formation of a united and embittered oppositional front amongst the masses. This front will have emerged from the public’s common misery and will be fueled by vivid enmity towards the bourgeoisie’s hedonism and selfishness. It is this collective animosity

²⁹ Ibid., 60.

amongst the people, organized around their economic desperation and frustration, which will provide the radicals with the social and historical conditions they need to strike out their revolution. Just as Danton and his associates fell in the drama due to their inability to grasp the character of history and appreciate the plight of the people, so the bourgeoisie may fall due to those same shortcomings, and thus, provide men of Büchner’s revolutionary stamp the opportunity to transform society in a truly fundamental manner. For Büchner, the bourgeoisie of his age may be great, but so was Danton, who was once a colossus of the revolution that he had galvanized; he failed, and so can they. The evidence of historical fatalism in Dantons Tod is therefore not evidence of political apostasy on the part of its author. Rather, it is a crucial ingredient for a dramatic exploration of the potential for a future German democratic upheaval.

V. Dantons Tod and Revolutionary Radicalism during the Vormärz

So far, I have striven to demonstrate the pro-revolutionary character of Dantons Tod, especially as it relates to Büchner’s fatalistic worldview. I now aim to show that Büchner’s drama functioned as a positive response to radical revolutionary thinking in France during the 1830s. In his response, Büchner was also articulating his personal vision of how a radical revolution in Germany could successfully be brought about. As was the case with the work’s stance on revolutionary action, it was Büchner’s characteristic comprehension of history that underlay and propelled those two intentions of his work.

It is important to understand the relevance of Dantons Tod to radical French politics during the Vormärz. Ever since 1789, France had served as the revolutionary thermometer and trendsetter for Europe – to paraphrase a young Karl Marx, “No revolution... was complete without France.”³⁰ For Büchner, personally, the struggle of the French republicans in the 1830s was the crucible of his political ideas and the frame of reference for his plans for a

³⁰ Theodore S. Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815-1871* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1958), 97.

German revolution.³¹ It is clear, then, that Dantons Tod can be firmly established as a revolutionary drama if it were shown to have been a positive reaction to progressive political thinking in France at the time.

Büchner's subject of dramatization – France in 1794, amidst the bloodiest days of the Reign of Terror and just a few months before the Thermidorian reaction – was a crucial historical moment from the perspective of French radicals in the 1830s. They conceived of themselves as the revolutionary successors to the original Jacobins. Like themselves, the Jacobins had labored to transform society and politics along egalitarian, democratic lines. Robespierre and his fellow republicans, however, were deposed from power at a critical moment when the potential for a complete social transformation still existed.³² The new generation of French republicans that emerged in the wake of the July 1830 upheaval aspired to continue and consummate the process of human emancipation which had begun in 1789 and whose conclusion had been stalled since the Thermidorean reaction. To ensure that they would be more successful than their Jacobin forbears, these radicals vigorously studied the events preceding the fall of the Robespierrist. By comprehending how the moderates, in that year, had achieved victory and had thwarted the possible foundation of an egalitarian order, they believed that they could attain a proper understanding of how a more triumphant and lasting radical revolution, centered upon overthrowing the current constitutionalist monarchy, could be carried out in France.

Through his dramatization of the incidences preceding Thermidor, Büchner was acting synergically with his fellow radicals, by providing his own, literary analysis of the pre-Thermidor days.³³ What he intended to create by virtue of his drama, though, was much more than a mere scholarly observation. In Dantons Tod, he wanted to formulate a lucid and promising strategy for a radical revolution in Germany, one that would take into consideration the

³¹ Holmes, 17.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 18.

contemporary political and social conditions in his native land. The motivating principles behind this strategy rest in the play's fatalistic conception of history.

As mentioned earlier, Büchner's fatalism allowed for the capacity of individuals to impact history from the bottom up. The success of the Robespierrists in Dantons Tod shows that this capacity derives from the human basis of historical causation. The behavior of the Parisian populace in the drama illustrates that this basis is, in turn, driven by materialistic interests. Robespierre and his associates manage to depose their Dantonist rivals because they appreciate these human and material determinants of history: they address their accusations to the people, and they do so in a manner that capitalizes on the latter's economic famishment. Büchner's dramatic exploration of the nature of historical progression therefore reveals that the means to revolutionize society lie with the people, and the means to revolutionize the people depend upon their collective material destitution. The revolutionary, according to this strategic scheme, must examine the economic condition of the masses, in order to discern at what moment it becomes insufferable. When that moment arrives, it is his task to demonstrate to the people how the roots of their poverty reside in the hedonistic corruption of the present society.

The Robespierrists in Dantons Tod devote themselves to these two tasks. Through their example, Büchner advised his contemporary radicals to do the same. From his viewpoint, the social and economic conditions that had benefited the Jacobins during the pre-Thermidor period were being rehearsed in the Germany of his lifetime. Indeed, the scenes of the populace's impoverishment in Dantons Tod had their flesh-and-blood analogues in the excessive indigence overrunning German society in the 1830s. This despondency is bespoken by the fact that as late as 1839, "a law was introduced in the Prussian Rhineland to prohibit the employment of children under ten years of age and to restrict the labour of other children to ten hours a day!"³⁴ Through his tragedy, Büchner was exhorting his revolutionary comrades to discern the parallels exist-

³⁴ Benn, 16.

ing between 1794 and their own era, so that they could respond to the present situation as the Robespierrist do to theirs. For, as in the drama, the paramount social issue of Büchner's day was the congregation of the masses in a common condition of material anguish and oppression. And just like the scenarios in his work, the coalescence of the population in this state of shared misery was transforming the historical law of that moment into a uniform force intelligible to those who would use it.

In Büchner's mind, the fact that the governing force of his lifetime was organized around "a single shared interest" amongst the public endowed his contemporary radicals with an opportunity to harness the momentum of this force and thereby, fulfill their political ideals. All they had to do was to convince the population that its suffering was an outcome of the current ordering of society and that this problem could be remedied by way of "common action to revolutionize society."³⁵ This is what the Jacobins in his play do, and through his depiction of them Büchner endeavored to show that this is what his peers must also do. By virtue of his subject of dramatization and the historical ruminations underlying that dramatization, Büchner was thus showing his fellow radicals how a victorious revolution could be prosecuted in the imminent future.

Just as the Robespierrist activate the immense revolutionary potential of the masses into a dynamic weapon against the bourgeois revolutionaries, so Büchner desired that his republican comrades would activate the tremendous revolutionary potential of the current state of affairs into a popular wave of resistance against the constitutionalist liberals' reformist demands. This advice was directed principally towards the prospect of revolution in Germany, for it was there that the ancien régimes were still intact and the revolutionary elements included both moderates and radicals. Büchner insisted, through his drama, that the German radicals had to incite the masses to both overthrow the present despotic governments and resist the middle class' bid for political suzerainty, as had happened in France.³⁶ Only by defeating these two bastions of

³⁵ Holmes, 81.

³⁶ Ibid., 83.

interest, either one of which would propagate the abjection of the populace if bestowed power, could a truly just revolution and new society emerge from the wreckage of the old.

Dantons Tod, in its most immediate political context, can be construed as Georg Büchner's personal contribution to the historical discussion that was raging amongst radical revolutionaries during the 1830s. Its emphasis, however, transcended considerations of the past, for it strove to link history with its author's present and with the promises of the future. Through its exposition on historical fatalism, Dantons Tod provided a political diagnosis of the era in which it was created, and illuminated a beacon of hope for all those struggling to inaugurate a more righteous vision of politics and humanity.

VII. Conclusion

In the course of this analysis of the revolutionary purport underlying Georg Büchner's Dantons Tod, I have concentrated upon Büchner's historical fatalism as the basis for a pro-revolutionary interpretation of the drama. It may have seemed preposterous of me to have placed Büchner's fatalism and his revolutionary convictions in the same boat, but as I have labored to illustrate, doing so is not nearly as ludicrous as it appears. While Büchner's deterministic conception of the world made it impossible for him to have been a myopically optimistic revolutionary, it did not turn him into an apathetic pessimist. Through his portrayals of the conflict between the Dantonists and the Robespierrist, Büchner evinces the fact that though we are not "strategically" free – that is, we cannot determine the constellation of wills and events external to us – we are nonetheless, "tactically" free: we can maneuver within the bounds of our respective times so as to work things to our best advantage.³⁷ This was the message on revolution that he wanted to convey to his contemporary radical revolutionaries through Dantons Tod. It was not a message of political defeatism but an admonition for them to be wise and perspicacious, so that they could act relentlessly when the "ironclad law" of history endowed them

³⁷ Reddick, 110.

with the greatest room to maneuver. In the end, Dantons Tod is not simply a drama about revolution but also one for revolution.

Works Cited

- Benn, Maurice B. *The Drama of Revolt: A Critical Study of Georg Büchner*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1976.
- Büchner, Georg. *Complete Works and Letters*. Trans. Henry J. Schmidt. Ed. Walter Hinderer and Henry J. Schmidt. New York: Continuum, 1986.
- Büchner, Georg. *Danton's Death*. Trans. Jane Fry. London: Methuen, 1982.
- Hamerow, Theodore S. *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815-1871*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1958.
- Holmes, Terence M. *The Rehearsal of Revolution: Georg Büchner's Politics and his Drama Dantons Tod*. Berne, Germany: Peter Lang, 1995.
- James, Dorothy. *Georg Büchner's Dantons Tod: A Reappraisal*. London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1982.
- Knight, A.H.J. "Some Considerations Relating to Georg Büchner's Opinions on History and the Drama and to his Play *Dantons Tod*." *The Modern Language Review* 42 (1947): 70-81.
- Reddick, John. *Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole*. New York: Oxford UP, 1994.
- Stern, Joseph Peter. "A World of Suffering: Georg Büchner", in *Re-interpretations: Seven Studies in Nineteenth-Century German Literature*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1964. 78-155.

Notes on Contributors

Joshua Vera is a senior double major in History and Classical Civilizations, with a special interest in the historical view of the classical Roman years of transition from Republic to Empire. He enjoys good food, good wine, and good movies, and spends a lot of time riding his bicycle. After graduation, he plans on spending a year in post baccalaureate study of ancient languages before applying for doctorate programs. He hopes to be a (tenured) professor of ancient history someday, and would really like to write a book that can explain to the average American why the study of dead cultures is still so important for our civilization.

Christopher Haugh is a sophomore History Major and intended Public Policy Minor. His historical interests reside in the political history and international relations of the world especially in Latin America and other regions dealing with a post-colonial legacy. Writing is his passion and he hope to do it professionally in some fashion in the future either as an academic, journalist, or in another discipline.

Michael Lu is a recent graduate, having received his Bachelor of Arts degree just this past May. While a student here at Berkeley, he majored in both history and philosophy, with his primary historical interests having been in the area of 19th-century German intellectual history. For two of his four undergraduate years, he served on the editorial staff of Clio's Scroll. As a newly minted graduate, he am still unsure as to exactly what kind of a career he will be pursuing in the future. He is strongly vacillating between the prospects of attending law school - and thereafter becoming an attorney - and pursuing graduate studies in history - and thereafter becoming a history professor. In his spare time - when he is not immersed in history textbooks or philosophy texts - he likes to listen to music, go cross country riding onhis mountain bike, and catch up on the latest news.

