

Clio's Scroll



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Editorial Board

EDITORS -IN-CHIEF

DAVID VILLANI is a third-year history major and Arabic minor. Originally from Pisa, Italy, he went to school in the DC area. He hopes to write a senior thesis on the history of the French colonial empire. At the moment, his research interests lie in the various ways in which different colonial subjects in sub-Saharan Africa expressed political and social agency in the constructive and destructive phases of the empire. He is also interested in Early Modern European history, cooking, development economics, Italian movies, and French novels.

PHIL HANNA is a senior from Southern California majoring in History and German, with an emphasis on the social history of 20th-century Germany, specifically the Weimar period. In his senior thesis, he hopes to explore this period through the lens of military youth groups across the political spectrum. Among his other interests are the history of fascism, ideological extremism, and youth history. After his time at Berkeley, he hopes to continue to complete a Ph.D. and work in the field of historical research.

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HANNAH PEARSON is a fourth-year transfer student from Concord, California. She is majoring in History, with her area of concentration being 20th-century conflicts. For her senior thesis, Hannah explored the Treaty of Versailles ratification debate in the United States through the perspective of the American press. During her senior year in high school, she found her calling in history thanks to her teacher and mentor, Dr. Andrew Hubbell. Outside of Clio's Scroll, Hannah is the Membership Chair of Phi Alpha Theta, Berkeley's History Honors Society. She is also the Director of Special Events for the University of California Rally Committee. After she graduates, Hannah hopes to earn her Ph.D. in history, eventually becoming a historian and work in the field of academia.

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KACIE COSGROVE is a third-year student from Valley Springs, California. She is majoring in History and French, and her emphasis in history is on the cultural history of the United States in the 20th century. She hopes to write her senior thesis on the topic of forced sterilization of Indigenous women in the United States in the late 20th century. Overall, she is interested in the power dynamics between oppressors and oppressed groups throughout world history. In her free time, she enjoys eating Thai food, writing letters to friends and family, and being in nature.

EMILY CURTIN is a 4th year student triple majoring in Anthropology, Ancient Greek and Roman Studies, and Integrative Biology. Emily is excited to be a part of a journal discussing important historical topics that contribute to the historical field.

SOPHIE DURYEE is a sophomore at Berkeley studying Political Economy and Chinese. Her planned concentration is global inequality. She has always been fascinated with history, especially ancient history and archeology. Outside of school she is a board member of Political Computer Science club and an avid weightlifter.

CAITLIN KALISKI is a first year from Foster City, California majoring in Global Studies with a focus in the Middle East and concentration in Peace and Conflict Studies. She has been learning Arabic for about a year now. She has always enjoyed learning history and is also considering a history minor. Outside of school, she enjoys playing board games, and enjoying the California sunshine.

ANTHONY LIN is a third-year history major from the Bay Area. His focus is American racialization, especially around immigrant communities. Outside of academics, his interests include chess and overdosing on coffee.

JADE LUMADA is a senior from Long Beach, California majoring in history and South & Southeast Asian studies. Her studies focus on marginalized groups in the United States, and her senior thesis will analyze Filipino immigrant history in 20th-century America. Outside of school, Jade works as a peer adviser for the College of Letters and Science. Jade likes to unwind by crocheting, embroidering, and making jewelry for her family and friends.

RONAN MORRILL is a third-year student from Redwood City studying History. He is interested in American political history and American foreign policy during the 20th century. Outside of Clio's Scroll, Ronan is a rower for the Cal Lightweight Crew. In his spare time you will find him watching soccer and movies, hiking and trail running, or reading a good book.

ROSA MURPHY is a third-year History major and Chemistry minor from San Francisco, California. She is interested in cultural and legal history, particularly in relation to books, media, and science. After graduation, she hopes to pursue a career in intellectual property law or history. Outside of school, she works at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. In her spare time, she enjoys reading novels, thrifting, and watching baseball.

ELLIOTT NERENBERG is a senior studying world history in the 20th century, with a focus on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He has also studied the Russian language and the history of Japan. Before deciding on the history major, he also spent some time studying political theory. This foundation has informed his other interest in political history. In his free time, when he's not glued to a screen reading for his history classes, he likes to draw, play video games, read manga, and write silly short stories for his friends.

JACLYN QUAN is a third-year history major and data science minor from Southern California. Her main research interests lie within the political and social history of 20th century Latin and Central America with a specific emphasis on American intervention in the region and left-wing social movements. She is also interested in Cold War history and immigration/diaspora studies. Outside of class, Jaclyn enjoys going on boba runs, listening to new hip hop music, and watching cringe-worthy TV shows.

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Clio's Scroll, the Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal, is published twice yearly by students of the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley. The journal aims to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to publish historical works and to train staff members in the editorial process of an academic journal.

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Note from the Editorial Staff

Dear Reader,

We thank you for picking up our latest issue of Clio's Scroll, UC Berkeley's undergraduate history journal. For this Spring issue of the journal, we expanded our editorial team and as such decided to take on more papers that answer, in different ways and with different methodologies, to the question of the individual human experience over time. Insofar as this edition of our journal has a theme, it's that of diversity, as in the rejection of easy answers and clean narratives. Our issue, which takes as its primary subject the individual, covers a wide range of time and locations.

In "Beloved Beardless Boys", Princeton graduate Travis York uses medieval Middle Eastern love poems to historicize understandings of homosexual relations and to place them within distinct cultural and social contexts. With abundant quotes throughout, this paper is a fresh and interesting read.

Our second paper, "I Do Not Want a Husband, but only to be the Bride of my God," by Ithaca College graduate Tristan Berlet, explores the lives of cloistered nuns, challenging the concept of patriarchy in the context of seclusion and religion.

The third paper, "Spain as Refuge and Residence for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade" by Princeton graduate Sam Bisno presents the previously unexamined letters of three American soldiers fighting for the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War. This remarkable paper shows how these three men created a personal understanding of Spain and their relation to it.

Vanderbilt graduate Davi Lennon offers a persuasive and nuanced description of conservative women's politics in the final paper of our issue, "Phyllis Schlafly's Performance of Womanhood in the STOP ERA Campaign, 1972-1982". It's a timely and exciting piece of historical writing.

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the dedicated team of new and returning associate editors who poured their time and energy into bringing this semester's edition to life. We also want to thank our readers, both at Berkeley and across the world, for their interest and support. We hope you enjoy this issue of Clio's Scroll.

Sincerely,
The Editor Staff

Contributors

TRAVIS YORK is currently completing their undergraduate degree at Princeton University studying History with certificates in Gender & Sexuality Studies and Values & Public Life before they attend the University of Toronto for a master's program in Women and Gender Studies. Their research revolves around global ideas of gender and sexuality within varying sociocultural contexts. Engaging both theoretical and historical lenses, Travis' work aims to grapple with historical and modern notions of social justice. While mainly focusing on the modern United States, they are also interested in the Middle East during the Medieval period. Originally from Michigan, Travis enjoys cycling, reading memoirs, and gardening.

G. TRISTAN BERLET graduated in May 2022 from Ithaca College with a Bachelor of Arts in History and Theatre Studies. While he has a wide variety of historical interests, one of his main focuses is on closed communities, such as monasteries and convents, and how they interacted with and shaped the worlds around them. At the moment, he is pursuing the theatre side of his life, acting in multiple shows in the Rochester, NY area, as well as writing scripts for all sorts of mediums, though he has a particular love for radio drama. Many of his stories take place in historic time periods, and for these he heavily relies upon the research skills he learned in college and his wide knowledge of scholarly sources. His current project is a dark comedy series depicting the Fourth Crusade.

SAM BISNO is a senior at Princeton University concentrating in history with certificates in African American Studies, Latin American Studies, and Humanistic Studies. His research interests include the history of slavery and capitalism in the nineteenth-century United States and Latin America. He is currently working on his thesis, which charts the manufacture, distribution, and implementation of cotton gins in the antebellum U.S. as well as the impact of industry and technology on the lives of enslaved people. He hopes to pursue a doctorate in history.

DAVI LENNON graduated magna cum laude from Vanderbilt University, earning a degree in Economics & History. She served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Vanderbilt Historical Review her senior year. Particularly fascinated by American History, Davi's research focuses on the American social-political climate of the 1970s and 80s. She believes the past is always relevant to the present, and that perhaps nothing is more beautiful than the art of history.

Beloved Beardless Boys:

Medieval Male Same-Sex Relations in the Middle Eastern and North African Regions, Eighth through Thirteenth Centuries

“For when the lover and the beloved come together, having each of them a law, and the lover thinks that he is right in doing any service that he can to his compliant beloved, and the other that he is right in submitting to any service that he can for him who is making him wise and good, the one capable of communicating intelligence and virtue, the other seeking to acquire them with a view to education and wisdom; when the two laws of love are fulfilled and meet in one—then, and then only, may the beloved yield with honor to the beloved.”¹

“Those who are inspired by this Love turn to the male, delighting in the more valiant and intelligent nature. Anyone may recognize the pure enthusiasts of this Love in the very nature of their pederasty. For they love not little boys but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, about the time at which their beards begin to grow.”²
 – Plato, *Symposium*

Love between men has been written about throughout history. Plato writes of the love between older men and the beardless youth. It is this point, the beardless youth, from which this paper launches itself. From Foucault to Butler, the theories of gender and sexuality that appear popular today come, for the most part, from modern, Western perspectives. Quite often there appears a reappraisal of these modes of understanding gender and sexuality within academic circles. Such reappraisals seek to alter society’s understanding of how gender and sexuality function within and outside of normative societal structures. These theorists have penned formulations of gender and sexuality as theoretical and practical categories. Placing a heavy focus on identity, these categories build social labels which are then applied to individuals. These views dominate how society perceives gender and sexuality and have created social systems which operate on a global scale. There also exists some pushback against these ideas of identity.

¹ Plato, Benjamin Jowett, and Hayden Pelliccia, *Symposium: the Benjamin Jowett Translation*, New York: Modern Library, 1996, 32-33.

² Plato, *Symposium*, 27.

The notion of identity as a socially constructed idea has emerged recently as a new approach to issues such as gender and sexuality. These social constructions, which are "given form and shape by the ways they are put into language," are most clearly accentuated within literature and prose. The conception of identity as inherent in human nature often contrasts with the idea that identity is entirely socially constructed. This paper does not aim to refute the most prevalent interpretations of gender and sexuality as inherent within personal identities. Rather, I aim to complicate these notions and question how applicable they may be to the lived realities of different individuals and societies at different time periods.

A reappraisal of the current view of gender and sexuality is needed to take an accurate account of the systems of male same-sex desire sketched out in this paper. Taking note of societal practices in the heart of the Middle East and North Africa in the eighth through thirteenth centuries through an analysis of several works of poetry and literature, this paper follows the lives of its authors, from 760 to 1253. This paper presents a complication of the current view of gender and sexuality in society at large. By taking stock of the practices of past societies, one can question the practices of current societies. From exploring differences in time and region, one can reconcile how society currently describes itself and the individuals within it. The past presents a mode of navigating the future. Through a look at an often-neglected history of sexuality within medieval North Africa and the Middle East, there appear new modes of understanding both practices and regulations of sexuality as they were at the time and as they are now.

In the late eighth and ninth centuries, two figures emerged in the field of poetry who would change the course of literature in the Middle East. Al Hasan B. Hānī al-Hakamī, commonly known as Abū Nuwās, (d. 814) and Abū Tammām Habīb Ibn Aws (d. 845) were not just popular figures during their lifetime but became celebrated figures within the history of literature and poetry.³ These men followed a trajectory common among men of the time in the field of poetry, with some distinctions. Their poems were celebrated for various aspects of their composition, but the most controversial is their writing on religiously condemned activities, abundant in its references to

³ Arthur Wormhoudt, *Diwan al Gazal: Love Poems by Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam*, trans. Arthur Wormhoudt, (Oskaloosa, Iowa: William Penn College, 1980), 1.

homosexuality. The complex controversy over homosexual behavior comes from a dual image of homosexuality as culturally prevalent and religiously immoral.⁴ Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām were pioneers in the field of erotic poetry. Their writings are still celebrated, and sometimes condemned, in today’s society.⁵ Abū Nuwās would go on to inspire an entire field of writers after his death in the *mujun* style of poetry and writing.⁶

In their influence, there came about another figure in literature who, while less well recognized in modern society, still carries a legacy of writing which is crucial to understanding the culture and society of the Middle East and North Africa in the following twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Ahmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī (d. 1253) explored similar themes to that of his predecessors while utilizing a new form: the erotic manual.⁷ The erotic manual became a staple in Arabic literature around this time, with several authors publishing pieces on social-sexual relationships.

Al-Tīfāshī is estimated to have been born in 1184 in Gafsa, in what is Tunisia today.⁸ After an education in Tunis, he moved across the Middle East, from Cairo to Damascus, until he settled once again in Egypt. A scholar and member of the powerful elite within the Abbasid government, al-Tīfāshī was positioned among the same men he wrote

⁴ For further information on the legal consequences of homosexual acts, deemed *zina* or *liwat*, which often resulted from religious doctrine and interpretation, see Omar, Sara. 2012. "From Semantics to Normative Law: Perceptions of Liwat (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism) in Islamic Jurisprudence (8th - 15th Century CE)." *Islamic Law and Society* (Brill) 19 (3): 222-56; Ze'evi, Dror. 2006. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press; and Semerdjian, Elyse. 2008. *"Off the Straight Path": Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

⁵ Views on homosexuality have changed drastically over time in the Middle East and North African regions. Today, violence against the LGBTQIA+ community within these regions has created controversy over the histories of these geographies, with some refuting and combatting the historical evidence of deeply rooted same-sex systems of attraction and sexual relations within the Middle East and North Africa.

⁶ Thomas Bauer, "Male-Male Love in Classical Arabic Poetry," In *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, by E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014), 109-110.

⁷ Ahmad al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, ed. Winston Leyland, trans. Edward Lacey, (San Francisco, California: Gay Sunshine Press, 1988), 38

⁸ al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 39.

about.⁹ North Africa and the Middle East during al-Tīfāshī’s time were simultaneously ruled by several groups vying for power throughout the regions, including the Almohads, Ayyubids, Hafids, and Mamluks.¹⁰ However, the Abbasid Caliphate held influence over the entire region throughout his time. The main piece of writing explored here by al-Tīfāshī is his *Nuzhat al-albāb fīmā lā yūjad fī kitāb*, or, *The Delight of Hearts or What you will not find in any book*. Al-Tīfāshī’s literature builds on the insights given by his predecessors in that his discussion of same-sex male desire is more descriptive of a cultural system at play within society. In this way, al-Tīfāshī’s writing highlights an important aspect of male same-sex relationships: the role of the submissive partner, or, the “beloved.” Al-Tīfāshī’s manual is vital in understanding further the notions of homosexuality first built out in Abū Nuwās’ and Abū Tammām’s poetry.

Writing several centuries after Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām, one can still see the influence they had on society in al-Tīfāshī’s writing. The common theme of same-sex sexual relations among these three accomplished writers and societal figures appears to bring about a statement on homosexuality in the medieval Middle East and North Africa. More specifically, these authors present differing perceptions of a similarly socially constructed notion of homosexuality that emphasize the cruciality of autonomous, purposeful actions in identifying behaviors within individuals. While specific aspects of homosexuality differ among these writers, they all highlight homosexuality as a common practice grounded in male ideals of power and autonomy. These authors’ works complicate current notions of gender and sexuality, yet they are representative of a conception of gender and sexuality common to the people of the medieval Middle East and North Africa.

Within this complication of gender and sexuality, there are multiple key questions worth explicating here. The search for queer history appears elusive given our current notions of gender and sexuality cannot be simply applied to other times and regions. Thus, this study does not aim to uncover a hidden homosexual figure, at least not one

⁹ al-Tifashi, 39.

¹⁰ Jean Dangler, “Expanding Our Scope: Nonmodern Love and Sex in Ibn Hazm al-Andalusī’s *Tawq al hamāma* and Ahmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī’s *Nuzhat al-albāb fīmā lā yūjad fī kitāb*,” *Africa Today*, vol. 61, no. 4, (Indiana University Press, 2015), 20.

who holds the same configuration of identities that defines homosexuality today. Rather, in looking to the past, I aim to uncover that the action of same-sex sociosexual relationships is not a new phenomenon. Foremost, I ask how ideas of sexuality appeared within lived realities of men within the eighth through thirteenth centuries. When looking at the lived experiences of men engaging in same-sex sexual relations, what can be told about the way society viewed these men? Through an analysis of primary sources, can a society in which male same-sex relationships are not thought of outside the normative be discovered? What roles do age and perceptions of maturity play in agency and identity relating to homosexuality in the middle ages? Most vital to this paper, however, is the question of the beloved. How did the beloved navigate same-sex relationships? What autonomy did both partners — but more specifically the submissive partner — have in their same-sex relationships? The final question worthy of note is one settled deeper within queer theory: what role did love and emotion play in these relationships?

This study analyzes themes of agency and power among men engaging in same-sex relationships of a sexual nature to uncover a lived reality of queer men's experiences in North Africa and the Middle East during the eighth through thirteenth centuries. The emphasis of this paper is on the role of beardless youth, colloquially named "beloveds," within male same-sex relationships. Through an analysis of multiple sources of poetry and prose from the eighth through thirteenth centuries within the Arab world of the Middle East and North Africa, I aim to show how pre-modern ideas of male sexuality complicate the current notions of queerness and homosexuality as identities. We may see through these sources that homosexuality was not an identity, but rather a set of practices people engaged in for various reasons. Queerness, as we know it today, did not exist in the time and region of this study. While men engaged in same-sex relationships, these were not considered queer in that they did not fall outside of the normative structures of love and sex in medieval North African and Middle Eastern regions. Within medieval discussions of homosexuality, there is a differentiation between young and old men and between active and passive partners. The older partner, the lover, pursues the younger partner, the beloved, in an act of male desire. These contradictions in identities create a social dichotomy between men based on physicality and social perceptions of maturity and power. The "beloved beardless

boy” is the center of this project. As a discursive figure, the beloved boy is a figure which has not been given autonomy within studies on this period. This study aims to return agency to the beloved as a figure who engaged in male same-sex desires for their own personal and autonomous reasons. As an autonomous being, the beloved was able to engage in male same-sex relationships as an active partner, even if they often took the passive position within sexual relations. Furthering this distinction is the social differentiation of identity and actions; vital to the point of this paper is the distinction made between homosexual identity and homosexual acts. This differentiation between identity and action is made based upon a perceived notion that homosexual identity functioned differently in different times and places. In the following exploration of homosexuality within the North African and Middle Eastern regions, this distinction between identity and action is repeatedly codified. The Westernized perception of homosexuality, and queerness as a totality, has been solidified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the work of many scholars, most famously within the ideas of Foucault. However, this perception of queerness, as with any perception of identity, can be complicated by the acknowledgment of other forms of codifying oneself within a broader institution.

In the Middle East and North Africa there existed a different mode of social and cultural differentiation than exists today in the West. Within these societies, the identification of different people relies on a different set of standards. There is a labeling of different men according to social and cultural factors beyond sexual identity. The differentiation between the active and passive partner is entrenched in ideas of age and maturity. Young, beardless youth are the passive partners while older, mature adult men are the active partners. In the distinction of active and passive, there are created two terms to describe these partners: the *beloved* and the *lover*. The beloved is the object of the lover’s affection. The balance between lover and beloved is precarious. Both entities hold power in their relationship, yet the inherent inequality within this power dynamic is apparent.

Among the scholarship on Medieval sexuality, the topic of male autonomy within same-sex relationships is underrepresented. Looking at the role of the passive partner is even rarer. Scholarship on sexuality within the Ottoman Empire is expanding at a fast pace in recent years. However, the history of sexuality among men before the Ottoman

Empire remains vastly understudied. The scholarly discussion on sexuality and gender remains focused on the male perspective, something that this paper furthers. The work on female sexuality, while existent, is brief in comparison to that of male sexuality.¹¹ Thus, the mode of finding a unique aspect of research relies on which particular aspects of male sexuality are explored. Several scholars who have explored male sexuality in the medieval Middle East are worth discussing at some length here.

One of the most significant studies of sexuality in the medieval Middle East is El-Rouayheb's *Before Homosexuality in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800*.¹² El-Rouayheb discusses the practice and idea of homosexuality in the Middle East as it existed outside of current notions of homosexuality. *Before Homosexuality* adeptly explores the social structures at play in the Ottoman Empire which informed views on homosexuality. El-Rouayheb makes several claims about male-male sexual relationships which are further explored here. Most importantly, makes a distinction in the acceptability of same-sex relationships for different types of men.¹³ The distinctions between active and passive partners and older and younger partners reinforce social and cultural systems, which were often the result of religious policy and jurisprudence handed down from the highest religious scholars of the time, at play in late medieval North Africa and the Middle East. His research has filled a large gap in scholarly discussion of male-male relations during the medieval period. This paper relies heavily on El-Rouayheb's description of legal structures at play in the medieval period. While the majority of the discussion presented here diverges from El-Rouayheb's work in that it focuses on an earlier time period, there is a continued legal structure in society that spans the medieval period in North Africa and the Middle East that is explored both here and in *Before Homosexuality*. Many of the cultural and social ideas El-Rouayheb explores in the Ottoman period are also applicable to the

¹¹ For further exploration of the role of women within the medieval Middle East and North Africa, see Pernilla Myrne, "Pleasing the Beloved: Sex and True Love in a Medieval Arabic Erotic Compendium," In *The Beloved in Middle Eastern Literatures: The Culture of Love and Languishing*, by Alireza Korangy, Hanadi Al-Samman and Michael Beard, (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited 2017), 215-236.

¹² Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹³ El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, 15.

time directly before the Ottoman conquests. El-Rouayheb's work stands out for its ability to construct a lived reality of men engaging in homosexual acts. Also important is his distinction between the identity label of homosexuality and the playing out of homosexual acts among men. This paper will build upon previous scholars such as El-Rouayheb in making this distinction between identity and actions.

al-Tifāshī's *The Delight of Hearts* is severely underserved in its analysis. Jean Dangler presents a comparative analysis of *Delight of Hearts* and a later text written on sexuality and sexual vice, *Tawq al-hamāma* or *The Ring of the Dove*, by Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, which serves as one basis upon which this paper is built. The analysis offered here is insightful in its exploration of how sexuality and gender are represented within the erotic manual. While *The Ring of the Dove* is not given significant analysis here, it is nonetheless an important work of the time period under study. In fact, there are several similar texts to *The Delight of Hearts* which one could explore in their uses and references to homosexuality. However, al-Tifāshī's manual, in conjunction with the poetry of scholars such as Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām, shows a clear delineation of the social and cultural ideas of sexuality and identity present in the eighth through the thirteenth century.

While many scholars have argued that, "for the Ottomans in early-modern times, explicit speech about sex was a private matter," this paper claims that, when extrapolated to several centuries earlier, the area that would become the Ottoman Empire was much more public in their explicit mentions of sex and desire.¹⁴ Homosexuality was simultaneously clear yet unclear, present yet absent, and open yet closed.

Navigating Queer Stories Through Different Lenses

In any analysis of queer existences, it is vital to understand from whom the source material is coming. Al-Tifāshī is writing from the perspective of a social elite. He held high positions near the rulers of Egypt during his time there.¹⁵ His position in reference to queer identity is one of complexity, as, even if he did engage in same-sex relationships, these experiences are not the ones recorded in available

¹⁴ Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli, *The Age of the Beloved*, 2005, 130.

¹⁵ al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 38-40.

histories. His writing, therefore, represents a societal view of homosexuality and queer identities. Al-Tīfāshī’s intention in writing *Delight of Hearts* may never truly be uncovered. In deciphering the potential intent of *Delight of Hearts*, knowledge of the social vices present in the Abbasid Caliphate is vital. Many sources on social vices were written satirically for a public audience. *The Delight of Hearts* has been considered by some scholars a work of *mujun*, works “intended as satires and critiques of moralizing social and religious practices and values.”¹⁶ Much of the literature on homosexuality that has been compiled and survived its journey from the Medieval Ages to now is written in a satirical tone utilizing irony as a literary tool. Many writers discuss male same-sex desire in the context of larger issues, using this same-sex desire as a tool to criticize institutions and practices at play in the Medieval Ages. This is vital to note as it signifies the need for a different approach to the analysis of these sources. What is written cannot be taken at face value to signify the lived experiences of men engaging in homosexual acts. Works such as *The Delight of Hearts* function as primary retellings of the larger society’s position toward homosexuality and queerness. One can gather a representation of how the wider social community viewed men engaging in same-sex relationships. It is important to have this view to understand the widespread notions of homosexuality and to realize what is considered homosexual compared to normative behavior.

To gather a clearer picture of how queer lived realities functioned within this society, it is also important to read the works of writers that contemporary scholars assume to have engaged in same-sex relationships firsthand. It is not impossible to gather an understanding of how queer people saw themselves in relation to the society around them. Through a comparison with the poetry of Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām, an idea of lived queer realities is formed. The people writing these texts were in positions that would not be endangered by constant reference to social taboos, as they held more elite positions in society. This gives a sense of reality to the lives of these poets and other men such as al-Tīfāshī. Al-Tīfāshī writes,

¹⁶ Jean Dangler, “Expanding Our Scope: Nonmodern Love and Sex in Ibn Hazm al-Andalusī’s *Tawq al hamāma* and Ahmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī’s *Nuzhat al-albāb fīmā lā yūjad fī kitāb*,” (2015), 16.

...dear reader, it should be borne in mind that a great many of the literati, as well as the majority of the members of the upper crust of society, belong to the ranks of homosexuals...quite a few of them indulge in these practices only out of a taste for elegance, impelled by a love much more intellectual than physical, finding in them principally an exercise for the mind, an enchantment propitious to the development of the intelligence, a method open to all for refining the faculties of understanding and discernment, as well as a manner of distancing themselves from the simplistic ideas about life held by the common people.¹⁷

Those writing about homosexuality often held relatively high positions of social and/or political power. Their positions of power in part enabled them to write such material without fear of serious repercussions. There exists in writings on homosexuality a consideration that homosexual activity is of a higher nature than that engaged by the "common people." In his *Delight of Hearts*, al-Tifāshī writes of the practice of homosexuality as most popular among the societal elites. There is a duality of praise and condemnation in his opening comments on homosexuality within his erotic manual. This discursive comment positions homosexuality as an activity used by the upper classes of society for intellectual and soulful gain. Thus, the characters represented in the poems and writings reviewed here most often encompassed a specific socioeconomic identity. The writing reviewed here carries implications for the men of this specific, elite social class. To extrapolate the analysis here to the lay population would be a bold assumption. The elite class is interesting to examine, for the ways they were able to navigate society vary greatly from the middle and lower classes. In examining how elites functioned within larger society, the poetry written by and about them is essential. It is through these manuals and poetic sources that an accurate picture can be drawn of the complex elite class of males from the eighth through thirteenth centuries in the Middle East and North Africa.

In Comparison to Other Vices

In the discussions of homosexuality, there are constant references to other forms of vice among the people in the Middle East and North

¹⁷ al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 55.

Africa. These references to other vices act to justify homosexuality with relation to other, potentially more serious social missteps. Most vividly portrayed in these sources is the indulgence in alcohol. Referenced concurrently, alcohol and homosexuality can be seen as two vices that were, at the least, not rare in elite Arab society and seem to suggest that vice encourages vice. In al-Tīfāshī’s guide, he discusses lust for beardless youth in the context of other sins in Islamic culture. In one selected poem accredited to Abū Nuwās, al-Tīfāshī recounts the pleasures of wine and sex, writing:

“I drink the cheering wine
with generous friends of mine.

If the cock rises, don’t be
too quick to cry ‘infamy!’
When the time arrives to screw.
They asked me ‘Why did you

jump on him just as soon
as he stretched out and lay down?

Didn’t you see how small
he is?’ I said: ‘Forget all

that idle talk of yours.
In this world of ours

the only coveted pleasure
is wine, sex and pleasure!”¹⁸

This lament for enjoying oneself in wine, sex, and pleasure symbolizes the constant conflation of vices with each other. In order to signify the wrongness of one action, there is a reliance on other clearer examples of vice being conflated to the subject matter. Alcohol consumption is a vice many could place within their lives due to the wide, public availability of alcohol. Male-male sexual relations appear, through this reliance on reference to alcohol, to be less solidified within the public

¹⁸ al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 91.

knowledge and awareness. This is not to say homosexuality was hidden within society—in fact, this paper shows the opposite point—but to show that, in comparison to other vices, homosexual behavior was further from the centrality of public awareness. Homosexuality teetered on a line of openness and closedness which was intricate in its social implications. In looking at another poem, this time written by Abū Tammām, one can see this intricacy of openness and closedness. He writes,

“I was drunk, who was it greeted?
I revealed to one I love what I had hid

I seemed to stagger as I stood
Was I happy in what I had or penitent?

O would I knew when I met him
If I met As’ad or Sa’id and knew it.”¹⁹

This poem presents a conflict of acceptability. The main subject of the poem is irresolute in his thoughts about his own feelings towards a beloved. The questioning of this poem represents the social conflict over homosexuality. While considered a social vice in legal circumstances, where acts of *zina* and *liwat* could be punished through physical pain and social ostracization, homosexuality was a common social and cultural practice.²⁰ The social conflict is also a personal conflict; it is pivotal to reconcile the conflict present within the larger society and within the individual person. Society, which is formed through the actions of individuals, exists in a state of ordeal over homosexuality.

Sexual Differentiation Across Social Definitions

The constant distinction made in the literature between active and passive partners gives rise to power dynamics within these sexual

¹⁹ Abu Tammam, “Poem 90,” in *Diwan al Gazal: Love Poems by Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam*, trans. Arthur Wormhoudt, (Oskaloosa, Iowa: William Penn College, 1980).

²⁰ In North Africa and the Middle East during the eighth through thirteenth centuries, common law was often based on the Mālikī school of jurisprudence. These school of law was notable for its severe rulings on male same-sex sexual relations. For further information, see Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, (2005), 118-128, especially 121.

relationships. This power dynamic comes with a sense of humiliation and pride bound within specific sexual roles.²¹ Noting this power dynamic, El-Rouayheb writes, "it is as if the aggressive, polarizing significance of phallic penetration, and therefore the humiliation of being the passive partner, is toned down in a situation in which the penetrated is already clearly a social inferior, whereas it is emphasized when the status of the partners is roughly equal, or when the penetrated is socially superior to the penetrator."²² There appears a repeated theme of sexual roles within male-male sexual encounters that implicates a broader conversation surrounding the distinction of socio-sexual roles in which the difference between active versus passive plays a formulating role in generating ideas of gender and sexuality with relation to certain structures of societal power. Group dynamics within male-male sexual liaisons play off of larger societal views of manhood which are worth exploring in their intricacies. There is a humiliation in being the passive partner under specific sexual and social circumstances. The social distinction between the active and passive partner in male-male sexual relations stems from a societal view that "true" men cannot be penetrated, an idea rooted in the hegemonic strength of the male figure. In this way, sexual roles are entrenched in ideas of class and power. Class cannot be separated from sexual dominance and submission in the centuries under study here.

The passive sexual role was often equated to the position of womanhood and its attributes defined as feminine. Physically, this distinction came in the form of hair. Definitions of maturity were based upon facial and bodily hair. Lacking facial hair signified to the outer society that a boy was not yet a man. There are various poems between both Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām which refer to the cheeks of beardless youth as "rosy" and compared to "pomegranates." These references to a rosy cheek bare of hair aimed to feminize the object of beauty, in this case the beardless youth himself.²³ This physical difference created between older men, who had facial hair, and youthful boys, who did not have facial hair, served to demarcate those

²¹ For an exploration of sex dynamics revolving around physical actions and the body, see Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004).

²² Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World*, (2005), 24.

²³ Christina Thérèse Rooijackers, "The Luscious Locks of Lust: Hair and the Construction of Gender in Egypt from Clement to the Fātimids." *Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 30 (1): 2018, 43.

in power from those deemed powerless. In this distinction, a socially upheld power dynamic between men of different ages—and between men and women in general—is created.

Society views active partners, often the older men in these relationships, as socially deviant. Their actions go against the normative structure of physical expression at play within the society at large. This distinction between active and passive partners is further complicated by al-Tifāshī’s labeling of only certain individuals as homosexual. Throughout his *Delight of Hearts*, al-Tifāshī labels older men engaging in male-male sexual relations or seeking out younger men as homosexual.²⁴ In doing so, al-Tifāshī actively proclaims the identity of these older men. He categorizes them within a social identity that is known and widely understood. In writing about the older male’s attraction to youthful boys, he quotes a poem by Abu-Nuwas, where Abu-Nuwas writes:

“A woman criticized me
because of the love I feel
for a boy who struts around
like a wild young bull.

But why should I sail the sea, when I
can live so well on land?
Why look for fish, when I can find
gazelles, free, on every hand?

Let me be, and don’t blame me
because I chose a path
in life that you’ve rejected
– and I’ll follow it to my death!

Don’t you know the Holy Book
speaks the decisive word:
‘Before the daughters
the sons shall be preferred?’”²⁵

²⁴ For examples of this labeling of older men (active sexual partners) as homosexual, see Ahmad al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, Chapter 2, especially 118.

²⁵ Ahmad al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 61.

However, his labeling of homosexuality is not universal. This identity label does not extend to the young, beardless youth who are the objects of older men's affection. The young men, who are almost always the passive partners in sexual relationships, are not labeled as homosexuals. Beardless youth are strictly referred to as youthful men and boys.²⁶ The lack of an identity label applied to the beardless youth is striking for its specificity. Rather than labeling both partners based on their seemingly conscious choice to engage in male-male relationships, al-Tifashi only labels men who have already matured physically and socially as homosexual. Personal identity is complicated by the social identification of a subset of men as homosexual. As has been shown in *The Delight of Hearts*, the labeling of only older men who take an active sexual role as homosexual is an intricate revelation of how non-normative sexuality is viewed as a socially constructed action within the society of the Abbasid Caliphate.

Entrenched in notions of social maturity, sexual identity becomes a factor by which society can distinguish people from each other. The system of distinction present in the medieval Middle East and North Africa rests upon a larger system of patriarchal power which was maintained at almost any cost. The patriarchal system at play in Medieval societies relied on various presuppositions. Firstly, the importance of heterosexuality, and especially heterosexual sex, to the continued survival of a male-dominated society. Secondly, the ultimate domination of men over women. This second point is crucial to the notions of homosexuality that emerged in contradiction to the first point of the patriarchal system.²⁷ In pursuit of the survival of men's domination over women, there existed a necessary contradiction of the first claim of patriarchy. It can be seen that even in male same-sex relationships there existed a transfer of power and capital among men that explicitly excluded women.²⁸ al-Tifashi writes of this equal

²⁶ For examples of this labeling of younger men as simply, "young men," see Ahmad al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, Chapter 3, especially 128, 131, and 132.

²⁷ Mervat Hatem, "The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems: The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Egypt," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, (Summer 1986), 253.

²⁸ Stephen O. Murray, "Male homosexuality, Inheritance Rules, and the Status of Women in Medieval Egypt: The Case of the Mamlūks." In *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History*,

exchange among older and younger men engaging in sexual relationships, quoting a poem that states

"I inserted my cock expertly
into his secret place;
then his tongue penetrated my mouth
in a long French kiss.

Fair exchange, no robbery;
Neither winner nor loser there:
the powerful and noble-hearted
are always fair."²⁹

This exclusion was purposeful both to ensure women did not gain capital in the ways men did and as a result of the homosexual tendencies of any population.³⁰ It is in this social domination of men over women that ideas of active and passive sexual roles are further entrenched in the social customs of the societies in question.

The passive sexual role was often equated to the position of womanhood and its attributes defined as feminine. Physically, this distinction came in the form of hair. Definitions of maturity were based on facial and bodily hair. Lacking facial hair signified to the outer society that a boy was not yet a man. There are various poems between both Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām which refer to the cheeks of beardless youth as "rosy" and compared to "pomegranates." These references to a rosy cheek bare of hair aimed to feminize the object of beauty, in this case the beardless youth himself.³¹ This physical difference created between older men, who had facial hair, and youthful boys, who did not have facial hair, served to demarcate those in power from those deemed powerless. In this distinction, a socially

and Literature, by Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 161.

²⁹ Ahmad al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 92.

³⁰ Mervat Hatem, "The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems: The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Egypt," (Summer 1986), 255.

³¹ Christina Thérèse Rooijackers, "The Luscious Locks of Lust: Hair and the Construction of Gender in Egypt from Clement to the Fātimids." *Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 30 (1): 2018, 43.

upheld power dynamic between men of different ages—and between men and women in general—is created.

The systematic insistence on men’s domination led to a fear of transgression against such a powerful and sustained system, and to transgress against this system was a common obligation for passive sexual partners. In assuming the apparent feminine role in a sexual relationship, the passive partner was diverging from both principles of the patriarchy in that he was actively engaging in sexual relationships outside the heteronormative scope and in that he was assuming a role other than that traditionally held by the male. In taking up the passive role, a man was positioning himself in submission to other men, simultaneously uplifting the systems of power for their sexual partner and denigrating these same systems for himself. This simultaneity of transgression and obedience caused conflict in the role of the passive partner. It can be explained, thus, why men, especially those in positions of power such as the wealthy, older man, were determined to receive acknowledgment as the active rather than passive partner. This is shown in al-Tifāshī’s account when he recollects that, for the older male, “It was as though his greatest fear was that people would think him capable of playing the role of passive partner with this handsome young man.”³² The older man’s fear of being mistaken for a passive partner comes from a structure of patriarchy in which older men felt the need to maintain their higher status in relation to not only women but younger men as well. This domination was oftentimes expressed socially through sexual acts. This further highlights the importance of physical actions performed by the body in creating social and cultural contexts. The system of patriarchy was thus not just about the domination of men over women but about the domination of some men over other men as well.

Youthful Agency

“...referred to in the texts as *amrad* (beardless boy); *ghulām* or *sabī* (boy); or *fatā*, *shābb*, or *hadith* (male youth)—though biologically male, was not completely a ‘man’ in the social and cultural sense...”³³

³² al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 80.

³³ Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World*, (2005), 26.

Visibly marked by their lack of facial hair, beardless youth traversed a unique social position in relation to other men. In this presentation of sexual differentiation, it may appear that the power dynamics within this relationship are clearly defined. The conclusion can be drawn that older men held power over the beloved due to the former's social and biological maturity. This conclusion, however, would forego the beardless youth's agency within this relationship. The beloved male often used their sexual relationships with men for gaining personal capital. Whether it be social, economic, political, or any other type of capital, the beloved was able to gain something from their relationships with older men, and these modes of personal gain represent a youthful agency on the part of the beloved which is often undercounted in scholarship.

There is a consistent reference to the ways in which older men are able to secure sexual relations with young men within al-Tīfāshī's *Delight of Hearts*. In almost every instance retold by al-Tīfāshī, there is money involved in intercourse with young, beardless youths. There exist several reasons — including economic — for the beloved to embrace the social practice of same-sex desire. This mode of mutual gain is exemplified often by al-Tīfāshī. Specifically in relation to establishing one's future, al-Tīfāshī writes that, "If a boy's legal guardian doesn't have the financial means to buy him a wife of a concubine at this juncture, he will inevitably fall into the sin of adultery, however little he may be temperamentally inclined toward women."³⁴ While al-Tīfāshī notes that this reasoning for the "fall" into adultery is mainly aimed at establishing one's self within the society as an active member upholding the social norms, there is at work here a mode of economic gain through homosexual activity. This has been expanded on by scholars who note that a beardless youth entering into sexual relations with an older man was at times a familial act, in that parents knew and encouraged their children to engage in these acts so as to bring about well fortune to the family as a whole.³⁵ Through both primary and secondary source analysis, it can be concluded that

³⁴ al-Tifashi, *The Delight of Hearts*, 104.

³⁵ Stephen O. Murray, "Homosexuality among Slave Elites in Ottoman Turkey," In *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature*, by Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 176.

passive partners were encouraged to partake in same-sex relationships with older men in order to profit personally and to provide for their larger families. This conclusion draws on an idea of economic strain on the part of the beloved and their family. It seems to place the beloved in a lower class than the elite, older male, which would correlate with other findings from these sources that the active partner was often of a higher socioeconomic background than the passive partner.

The beloved's recognition of their worth to older, oftentimes wealthier men stipulates a recognition of their social position vis-à-vis these older men. An expansive part of al-Tifashi's manual deals with the position of beardless youth in comparison to their lovers. Understanding the complexity of this social position is vital to gathering an image of the social and cultural landscape of the time. Beloveds were able to garner the attention of older men in ways that brought male-male competition among the older men trying to seek the acquittance of the beloved. When being courted by several men, a beloved was able to utilize their situation to amass the most competitive offer from their potential lover. Engaging in such an exchange placed the beloved at the center of a showcase of capital by their suitors. An older man's ability to exhibit their abundance of offerings made him fair better in the pursuit of a beloved. El-Rouayheb comments on this exchange, noting, "rather than desiring and having intercourse with each other, pederasts competed and sometimes fought amongst themselves for boys."³⁶ El-Rouayheb makes a point here that rather than engaging in homosexual sex with other older men, with whom they would potentially have nothing to gain or give other than pleasure, older men pursue younger men whom they have to woo and win over in order to engage in sex with. This calls back to the ideas set out in Plato's *Symposium*, in which the older man pursues a younger man in an effort to teach and mentor the young beloved boy.³⁷ This discursive comment on the lengths to which men will go to have sex with a beloved calls attention to the idea of pleasure within the pursuit. In navigating a social world of tribulation and failed attempts, men engage in the pursuit of a beloved to once again demonstrate their power in comparison to both other men and women.

³⁶ Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World*, (2005), 33.

³⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, 32-33.

Traversing this unique position of objectification for beauty while coming to understand the social impetus of being labeled beautiful created a complex social situation for the beloved. Their beauty benefited the beloved in gaining access to the best older male suitors, but, to some extent, this beauty prevented them from entering the male-dominant society as an adult. The connection between perceived beauty and physical, visible hair is apparent in al-Tifāshī’s account and poems by Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām. Beauty is inversely related to facial hair in that as boys grow new facial hair, their social value as a beautiful beloved boy diminishes. This is not an immediate change, however. There are several poems within *The Delight of Hearts* and among Abū Nuwās’ works that explore the lovers longing for their growing beloved. Even after the emergence of facial hair, it appears some lovers longed for the beloved they had grown an intimate relationship with. What was clear was that this relationship was temporary, ever-fleeting from the grasp of the seemingly all-powerful wealthy, older man. The temporality of relationships was a social construction of the limitations placed on sexuality, especially explicit sexuality.

True Love or True Ambition?

It has become clear that relationships between lovers and beloveds were useful tools for maintaining a patriarchal system of power and establishing new power on the part of the beloved. It is also crucial, however, to reconcile with the idea of queer love within the societies of medieval Middle Eastern and North African men in the eighth to thirteenth centuries. Queer romance is not, and has not been, solely a tool of social and cultural advancement. The love between men is just as important for its social implications as it is for its personal implications. The poems analyzed throughout this paper show deep emotions, often on the part of the lover towards the beloved. It is vital that these poems are understood both in their showing of an exchange of power and dominance between men and in their showing of true emotion and bonding between men. The ideas of love and longing between men becomes clear in Abū Tammām’s poem where he writes,

“A fawn proud of his roses on cheeks
Cheeks on which were roses as mail coats

I did not think I would enjoy for long
His nearness until I tried his distance

Nothing is finer than our night of
Embrace as I make a pillow of his cheek

My mouth on his mouth talks with his saliva
My hand diverts itself in his skin's garden"³⁸

There is a sense of longing clear in the poetry of this time period that shows a different side of elite male society in that the poetry clearly accentuates the fervent emotions of the lover and exemplifies an often-overlooked semblance of love between the lover and beloved. Men engaging in these same-sex relations are often represented in historical scholarship as being driven solely by power within patriarchal systems, and, while this reading is not invalid, it misses something crucial in the human experience: emotion. North African and Middle Eastern men of elite status held a love for their beloveds that becomes apparent in a queer reading of the poetry from the eighth through thirteenth centuries.

While the position of the beloved in this love relationship is more unclear, it would be a mistake to broadly assume these relationships were purely exchanges of resources and lust. Some lovers may have held love for some of their beloveds. This love may have been one-sided most often, but it represents a raw insight into the emotions of powerful men within this society. While beloveds used these relationships to gain power and conform to societal standards, especially in relation to beauty, lovers viewed these relationships as potential love. It is much harder to come to a conclusion on the behalf of the beloved as the writings by beloveds are often unkept in literary histories. The beloved's outlook on the same-sex relationships they engaged in, while often unclear, cannot be discounted for its power in emotion.

³⁸ Abu Tammam, "Poem 128," in *Diwan al Gazal: Love Poems by Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam*, trans. Arthur Wormhoudt, (Oskaloosa, Iowa: William Penn College, 1980).

Conclusion

This paper has examined several works that discuss homosexuality during the eighth through thirteenth centuries in the Middle East and North Africa. Through an analysis of al-Tifashi’s *The Delight of Hearts*, along with the various works of poetry by Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām, the ways in which homosexual actions arise within a larger social and cultural setting have been explored. The practice of homosexuality is shown to be a practice most acceptable along class and power lines. Thus, the conclusions presented here are limited in their application to the people described in the writings studied. The various identities held by individuals influenced new conceptions of homosexual identities, actions, and roles. Identity has been explored as a construct constantly under change. Rather than focusing solely on the creation of a homosexual identity, the people of the medieval period relied on a loose construction of homosexuality based on physical actions. These actions dictated social and cultural systems at play in the Middle East and North Africa. The notion of homosexuality in writing and prose is often compared to other social vices such as drinking to place homosexuality amidst a series of social vices on the periphery of social acceptability. While perceived identity appears to play a liminal role in the social and cultural distinctions of power, it is encountered in several of the texts under study in interesting ways. Al-Tifāshī’s suggestion that older men engaging in the active role of homosexual sex can justly be labeled as homosexuals presumes an ability to differentiate men based on dual categories of socioeconomic status and sexual role. Socioeconomic status plays an important role in distinguishing between men—an essential feature of the patriarchal system—and between men and women.

The sexual role acts to create a strict border between young and old, provider and provided for, and, most importantly, between powerful and powerless. It has been shown, however, that the beloved is far from powerless; the beloved carries an allure that allows them to engage in an exchange of capital for the physical body. Throughout this paper, it is highlighted that, as opposed to the conclusions of many analyses of medieval homosexuality, passive sexual partners were able to utilize their position vis-à-vis other men to gain capital and power. Sexual relationships between men were not one-sided. They were dynamic for all partners involved. The negotiations of the body highlight a system of capital growth that prospered in the Middle East and North Africa.

The physical body was traversed through unique modes of thinking. The beloved’s body, through love and sex with older men, was one mode of accumulating capital.

There are various methods of approaching queer histories. The current approach emphasizes the systems in place which dominated homosexual life in the eighth through thirteenth centuries. However, it is also focused on the individual in that the actions of individual people at the time mattered significantly to social and cultural performance. There is an emphasis on individual actions rather than cohesive societal frameworks for identity, which represents a different approach to identity politics than the one propagated by Western ideals. The stories of men engaging in same-sex relationships in the Middle East and North Africa between the eighth and thirteenth centuries represent a broader critique of modern, Western thinking around gender and sexuality. Namely, these stories reject an inherent identity argument. Rather than focusing on a constructed identity, which is temporally and geographically manipulative, this paper explores an alternative idea of an identity based on actions completed within a social context. The subjects covered in this paper cannot neatly be labeled as homosexual or queer, despite a current wave of queer historians aiming to uncover an explicitly queer past. It is vital to understand gender and sexuality as ever-changing and -evolving social and cultural notions.

The story of homosexuality during the eighth through thirteenth centuries is not one story but rather a convolution of multiple stories which rely on each other while also presenting contradictions within themselves. These stories of social homosexual identity represent a case study in which the current, Westernized notions of gender and sexuality are complicated. How can one apply the current views of gender and sexuality to men of the Middle East and North Africa? While these men’s methods of navigating the society around them do not negate the current field view of gender and sexuality, they do complicate how much a theory of gender and sexuality rests on ideas of personal identification and representation. One must ask what current notions of gender and sexuality can do for society and what they cannot do. While theory dictates what academics may consider queer or homosexual, the lived realities of queer people remain underexplored by scholarship. Yet, it is only through an exploration of these lived realities that one can truly craft a theory of gender and sexuality that uplifts the voices of marginalized communities.

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I Do Not Want a Husband, but Only to be the Bride of my God:

Agency and the Genevan Poor Clares

At five o'clock on the morning of August 29, 1535, the Poor Clares of Geneva solemnly marched out of their convent.³⁹ They barely had enough clothing to keep out what Jeanne de Jussie later described as a bitter cold, and their feet ached in the shoes they were not used to wearing. Several of them were so sick they were barely able to stand, much less walk through the city. And yet, filled with steely determination, they strode in pairs, holding each other up when necessary, their veils the last remaining separation between them and the outside world. They were surrounded by three hundred archers from the city garrison; orders had been given that any citizen who so much as talked to the nuns would be summarily beheaded.⁴⁰ This was the last resort of a community whose world had been systematically destroyed by the new Protestant order. The Genevan Poor Clares resisted the Reformation and the Genevan government, not to change their circumstances, but to preserve them. They were happy with the place they occupied in their community, a valued institution protected from the outside world. They feared more than anything else being dragged into Protestant marriage against the will of God.

This can be seen by the methods of resistance used by the nuns. They began by petitioning and otherwise appealing to the government of

³⁹ This article was first written as the final paper for Dr. Karin Breuer's senior seminar, *Gender, Place, and Belonging in Modern Europe*. The author cannot thank Prof. Breuer enough for the encouragement, mentorship, and support she provided over the course of this paper and throughout his entire college career. He would also like to thank the Clio's Scroll editorial staff for their insightful comments throughout the process of reediting this article for publication.

⁴⁰ Jeanne de Jussie, *The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva*, trans. Carrie F. Klaus, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 166–74, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ithaca-ebooks/detail.action?docID=408586>.

Geneva, reminding them of the special relationship they had enjoyed before the Reformation. Simultaneously they repeatedly insisted on maintaining the strict policy of enclosure and chastity that formed the backbone of the Rule of their community. And finally, when both of these protections were laid waste before them, they chose to leave the city and face an uncertain future together as a community in the open world rather than submit to the new circumstances offered them by the Genevan Protestants. After they had settled in their new location of Annecy, about twenty-five miles to the South, the nuns left one of their own to write down their struggles to teach future nuns how to defend their status as they did. This document, written by Sister Jeanne de Jussie, has become known as *The Short Chronicle*. By closely analyzing the events and language of that chronicle, this article will demonstrate how the Genevan Poor Clares can serve to refine a broad and overused notion in Gender Studies.

In a recent article, Martha Howell outlined the problems she saw with research into the “agency” of women in early modern European history. Looking at an extensive collection of studies on the topic, she identifies that almost all of them credit specifically women who challenged the patriarchal norms that surrounded them, by implication separating them from women who acted within those norms. Many of these studies also attempt to identify moments in which the “expectations surrounding gender roles and gender identities were challenged or changed.”⁴¹ Howell urges, however, that we need to place more “rigorous attention to just what powers we are claiming for women when we assign them ‘agency...’ [and] how any woman acquired what we are calling agency.”⁴² She concludes that, while major shifts in patriarchal hierarchies can occur, “such progressive outcomes

⁴¹ Martha Howell, “The Problem of Women’s Agency in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” in *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries, 1500-1750*, ed. Sarah Joan Moran and Amanda Pipkin, vol. 217, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions (Boston, MA: Brill, 2019), 22.

⁴² Howell, 22.

are not givens.”⁴³ This article builds on this argument by illustrating that the resistance of the Genevan Poor Clares to the Protestant Reformation was not an attempt to change the patriarchal hierarchy under which they operated. Instead, they displayed agency by struggling to maintain their place within that hierarchy from the threat posed to it by the Reformation.

The Poor Clares in Geneva, 1478-1535

The Genevan convent of Saint Clare existed within a strict patriarchal hierarchy, both within the Catholic church and within the city. However, they fulfilled a crucial function within that hierarchy given the demands of the time: praying for the souls of various departed and for the well-being of the city as a whole. In return for this, the city and private citizens within it would donate small sums of money to the convent, and generally otherwise leave them alone. This all changed when the Reformation swept through Geneva, and the nuns were forced to fight to prevent the patriarchy under which they operated from being replaced by a new patriarchy which directly jeopardized their status. As Elisabeth Wengler put it, “The sisters of Saint Clare were revered as brides of Christ in late medieval Geneva. But they left the city when the Protestants threatened to make them brides of men.”⁴⁴

The Order of Saint Clare was founded by Clare of Offreduzzi around 1215 CE, under the close supervision of Saint Francis of Assisi.⁴⁵ This was the first monastic order founded by a woman, and its nuns operated under a life of extreme austerity.⁴⁶ This stringent observance “seems to have provided a model for the papal bull *Periculoso* (1298)

⁴³ Howell, 31.

⁴⁴ Elisabeth Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva” (PhD diss., Boston, MA, Boston College, 1999), 79-80, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304494892?accountid=11644&parentSessionId=KOi2fYy119vkNyyNylw7Dgz0rGC8eV0y0%2BPaYjJdokw%3D&pq-origsite=primo>.

⁴⁵ Irena Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” in *Forgotten Women of Geneva*, ed. Anne-Marie Kappeli, trans. Rebecca Zorach (Geneva: Metropolis, 1993), 20.

⁴⁶ Backus, 20.

that made the strict enclosure of all nuns church law.”⁴⁷ This is also why the nuns of the order came to be known as the Poor Clares.⁴⁸ However, over the following centuries, the order began to drift away from the more exacting portions of the original Rule, notably the demands of absolute poverty and separation from the outside world.⁴⁹ In response to this, Saint Collette de Corbie began a reform of the order to bring it back to the strict policies of enclosure and asceticism in the fifteenth century.⁵⁰ She had the backing of Pope Benedict XIII, who “personally received Colette’s profession of faith and declared her mother and abbess of the reformed sisters.”⁵¹ The sisters of Geneva were part of this reformed sect of the order.

The Poor Clares had a connection to the city of Geneva since their very founding, as one of their earliest patrons was Duchess Marguerite of Savoy (c. 1179-1257), the daughter of the Count of Geneva.⁵² Duchess Yolanda of Savoy (c. 1434-1478) founded the Genevan convent of Poor Clares in 1473.⁵³ She chose to place the convent in the very center of the city, steps away from both the Cathedral and foremost marketplace, as Carrie Klaus put it, because of “its visibility to the Genevans on whose

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Wengler, “‘That in Future Times They Will Know Our Suffering for the Love of God’: Jeanne de Jussie’s *Petite Chronique* and the Creation of Convent Identity,” in *The Cloister and the World: Early Modern Convent Voices*, ed. Thomas M Carr, Jr., vol. 11, Studies in Early Modern France (Charlottesville, Virginia: Rookwood Press, 2007), 30.

⁴⁸ For a history of the founding of the Order of Saint Clare, see Joan Mueller, *The Privilege of Poverty: Clare of Assisi, Agnes of Prague, and the Struggle for a Franciscan Rule for Women* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Lopez and Waller, Joanna, *Colette of Corbie: Learning and Holiness* (Akron, Ohio: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010), esp. Ch. 2 of part 3.

⁵⁰ Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” 22.

⁵¹ Backus, 22.

⁵² Richard P. Kinkade, “Beatrice ‘Contesson’ of Savoy (c. 1250-1290): The Mother of Juan Manuel,” *La Coronica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures* 32, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 164.; There appears to be some disagreement as to the name of this patron. Kinkade names her as “Marguerite of Geneva,” while Irena Backus, in her article cited above, calls her “Beatrice of Geneva” (20). As Kinkade’s is the more recent of the two articles and is specifically focused on genealogy, I follow his lead.

⁵³ Wengler, “‘That in Future Times They Will Know Our Suffering for the Love of God,’” 29.; The connection between Geneva and the House of Savoy is discussed below.

generosity the Poor Clares depended.”⁵⁴ The nuns who were chosen to fill this convent were generally from various echelons of the Savoyard nobility, as were the majority of the nuns who went through their profession ceremony there.⁵⁵ At first, the City Council of Geneva was openly hostile to the move, seeing it as having been forced upon them by the pope on behalf of the Savoyards, against whom they had been attempting to assert their independence for centuries.⁵⁶ After the convent’s contentious founding, however, the order appears to have quickly become an integral part of the city. The Council regularly gave alms to the convent, and the nuns were also exempt from a tax on wine, “a privilege they guarded jealously.”⁵⁷ The records even indicate that the Council stepped in to defend the nuns against accusations that they were “loose women,” protecting the women’s “honor.”⁵⁸ In return, the nuns were expected to pray for the safety and prosperity of the city, even against the House of Savoy, the nuns’ patrons.⁵⁹

As with other Early Modern convents, the nuns operated within a strict patriarchal hierarchy.⁶⁰ Within the Catholic hierarchy, the convent was closely related to the Franciscan monastery nearby.⁶¹ Above both were the Bishop of Geneva and the pope.⁶² They could not administer their own sacraments and had to rely on their male Franciscan

⁵⁴ Carrie F. Klaus, “Architecture and Sexual Identity: Jeanne de Jussie’s Narrative of the Reformation of Geneva,” *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 281.

⁵⁵ Wengler, ““That in Future Times They Will Know Our Suffering for the Love of God,”” 31.

⁵⁶ Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” 22; Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 19.; See the discussion of Genevan Politics below

⁵⁷ Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” 26.

⁵⁸ Backus, 26–28.

⁵⁹ Wengler, ““That in Future Times They Will Know Our Suffering for the Love of God,”” 29.

⁶⁰ Charlotte Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 2002), 2.

⁶¹ Woodford, 3; Klaus, “Architecture and Sexual Identity,” 287.

⁶² Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva” 10.

confessors to give them their spiritual rites.⁶³ Politically, they were officially subordinate to their patrons, the dukes of Savoy.⁶⁴ However, as mentioned above, it was the City Council that made sure the convent had the resources to operate from day to day, sometimes even forcing Genevan citizens to make donations, and the nuns were not afraid to favor them in return.⁶⁵ This is borne out explicitly at one point in *The Short Chronicle* when the nuns sent a petition to the Council begging for their protection, in which they referred to themselves as “*your* convent.”⁶⁶ Thus was their position in the Genevan hierarchy. However, this was a turbulent period in the political history of the city, and by holding loyalty to both the House of Savoy and the civic government of Geneva the nuns walked a fine line.

Ostensibly, Geneva had been ruled by a prince-bishop, who claimed his powers directly from the Holy Roman Emperor and the pope, for centuries.⁶⁷ However, the House of Savoy, also a vassal of the Empire, began to buy up lands and strongholds around the city and to exert influence over it in the late thirteenth century, sparking fears of a potential takeover of Geneva itself.⁶⁸ In response, the prince-bishops attempted to solidify their relationships with the citizenry by issuing a charter of liberties in 1387 and creating a General Council.⁶⁹ Among other duties, this council appointed four men known as syndics, whose original responsibilities were limited to representing the citizen’s before

⁶³ Carrie F. Klaus, “Introduction,” in *The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare’s Account of the Reformation of Geneva*, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 14, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ithaca-ebooks/detail.action?docID=408586>.

⁶⁴ Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” 22.

⁶⁵ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 90–91.

⁶⁶ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 46–47.; Emphasis added

⁶⁷ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 11.

⁶⁸ E. William Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva*, Reprint (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 31–32.; Although this was originally published in 1967, it to date contains the most thorough analysis of Pre-Calvinist Genevan politics.

⁶⁹ Monter, 32; Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 12.

the prince-bishop.⁷⁰ None of these measures could prevent the ascendancy of the House of Savoy, however, as in 1439 Duke Amadeus VIII was elected Pope Felix V by the Council of Basel.⁷¹ He appointed his family as “administrator[s] of the See of Geneva,” and from then on virtually every prince-bishop was Savoyard.⁷² Shortly after this, Geneva began to decline economically.

The city’s main source of income for well over a century had been four annual fairs which attracted merchants from the entirety of Christendom.⁷³ However, the king of neighboring France created major fairs in Lyons, purposefully on the same dates as the Genevan fairs, and with subsidies given to French merchants.⁷⁴ The Genevan merchants could not compete and were forced to find new trading partners. Eventually, they formed strong connections with the nearby Swiss cantons of Fribourg and Bern.⁷⁵ In 1519, these three cities formed a *combourgeoisie*, or political alliance, to protect themselves from outside encroachment.⁷⁶ This incensed Duke Charles III of Savoy (1504-1553), who began encouraging the nobles who lived around Geneva to attack the city and planning several military invasions himself.⁷⁷ The *combourgeoisie* responded with attacks of their own against Savoyard lands, and finally sent a force of 12,000 men from Fribourg and Bern to occupy Geneva for two weeks in October 1530.⁷⁸ This army forced the duke to sign a treaty acknowledging the alliance’s control of the city.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 12.

⁷¹ For more information of Felix V’s short but eventful papacy, see Ursula Giessmann, “Felix V, the Last Antipope,” in *A Companion to the Council of Basel*, ed. Michiel Decaluwe, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson (Leiden: Brill, 2016), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ithaca-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4731129>.

⁷² Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva*, 32.

⁷³ Monter, 30.

⁷⁴ Monter, 30.

⁷⁵ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 13.

⁷⁶ Wengler, 13.

⁷⁷ Wengler, 13–15.

⁷⁸ Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva*, 46.

⁷⁹ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 15–16.

More importantly for the Poor Clares, however, it also brought Reformed preachers to Geneva.

The Reformation started by Martin Luther arrived in Switzerland in 1518 in the form of theologian Ulrich Zwingli.⁸⁰ Over the next decade in Zurich, he crafted a version of reformation that would, according to Philip Benedict, form the basis of all reformations across Europe that wished to go farther in their rejection of Catholic doctrine than Luther had.⁸¹ The city of Bern officially accepted this reformation in January 1528.⁸² Almost immediately, the Bernese began sending preachers under diplomatic protection to try and convert their ally, Geneva.⁸³ While the first couple attempts ended with the preachers fleeing for their lives, by 1533 enough of the population were converted to the Reformation to begin acting openly.⁸⁴ Rioting and iconoclasm became rampant in the city, and the Reformers forced their way into the cathedral, where Guillaume Farel, one of the leading preachers sent by Bern, illegally gave a sermon.⁸⁵ The prince-bishop, whose hapless attempts to placate both the House of Savoy and the citizens of Geneva resulted in complete inaction during the religious revolution, fled the city in 1533.⁸⁶ The final blow to Genevan Catholicism came in 1535 when elections to the City Council yielded Reform-minded councilors.⁸⁷ From this body were elected a new set of Syndics, who from here on ruled the city as its

⁸⁰ Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*, 24.

⁸¹ Benedict, 29–32.; For more information on Zwingli and the Reformation as a whole in Switzerland, see chapters 1-3 of Benedict

⁸² Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, 47.

⁸³ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 16.

⁸⁴ Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*, 80–81.

⁸⁵ Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 129–51.

⁸⁶ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 19.

⁸⁷ Wengler, 22; For more information on the make-up of the Reformation Genevan government, see Robert M. Kingdon, “The Calvinist Reformation of Geneva,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion 1500-1660*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia, vol. 6, 9 vols. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

de facto executives.⁸⁸ These were the origins of the threats that the Poor Clares faced.

In her brief study of German convents during the Reformation, Merry Wiesner-Hanks found that more convents than monasteries survived partly because “religious and political authorities did not think the women’s institutions were as great a threat as the men’s.”⁸⁹ However, the central location of the Poor Clares’ convent in the city as well as the noble background of most of the nuns did make them both a threat to the Reformer’s goals and a last remaining symbol of the old order.⁹⁰ In April 1535, Farel preached a sermon next door to the convent in the Franciscan monastery. According to Jeanne de Jussie, he said of the Poor Clares, “they were poor blind women who had strayed in their religion and that for their salvation they should be set free from prison...they want people to think they maintain their virginity, which God has not commanded because it is not possible to maintain it,” and that the Council “should not allow it but should put them out of the convent and make them all marry according to God’s commandment.”⁹¹ This was an explicit threat to drag the nuns into the new patriarchy the Reformers were enacting in Geneva, whether or not they wished to be a part of it. They did not, and so were forced to enact a defense of the patriarchy they were already a part of. This resistance was laid out in the chronicle left behind by Sister Jeanne de Jussie for future nuns to study.

Leaving a Legacy of Resistance

While *The Short Chronicle* describes itself on multiple occasions as a simple retelling of the sufferings of the Poor Clares during the Genevan

⁸⁸ Kingdon, “The Calvinist Reformation of Geneva,” 94.; Although John Calvin and Calvinism are often mentioned in relation to the Protestant movement in Geneva, the Poor Clares left the city a year before John Calvin arrived, and so he is not a part of their story.

⁸⁹ Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Convents Confront the Reformation: Catholic and Protestant Nuns in Germany* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1996), 17, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ithaca-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3017038>.

⁹⁰ Wengler, ““That in Future Times They Will Know Our Suffering for the Love of God,”” 31.

⁹¹ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 118–19.

Reformation, a close analysis of its language reveals many more layers underneath the surface. In its depictions of both the Reformers and Catholics in Geneva, as well as the nuns themselves, it is itself a piece of resistance. The chronicle also seeks to prove that God was on the side of the nuns as they fought to maintain their position within Geneva. It is a testament left by the Poor Clares to give strength to their successors in their own times of hardship, and to show them how to resist those who wished to deprive the convent of its place within the Catholic hierarchy, should it come under threat once again.

The chronicle’s author, Jeanne de Jussie, was born in 1503 in a village near Geneva.⁹² Like many of her sisters in the convent, her family was a part of the Savoyard nobility.⁹³ Her family fell on hard times when they lost their castle in a court case, and they decided to send her to the convent at a very young age.⁹⁴ She professed in 1521 and by 1526 was the scribe of the convent.⁹⁵ *The Short Chronicle* is believed to have been written sometime between 1535 and 1547, and was almost certainly never intended to be published.⁹⁶ It appeared in print for the first time in 1611, long after Jussie’s death (though this edition contains several omissions and errors).⁹⁷ The first critical editions were published in 1853 and 1865, though these do not ascribe Jussie any “intentionality” to her work, one of the editor’s observing that ““She creates...simply by the naiveté of her narrative, picturesque effects that she *in no way intended*.””⁹⁸ It was not until 1996 that a critical edition of the original French manuscript to the standards of modern scholarship was published by Helmut Feld, which Carrie F. Klaus based her English

⁹² Klaus, “Architecture and Sexual Identity,” 281.

⁹³ Klaus, 281.

⁹⁴ Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” 28.

⁹⁵ Backus, 28; Klaus, “Architecture and Sexual Identity,” 281.

⁹⁶ Klaus, “Introduction,” 24-25

⁹⁷ Klaus, 25–27.

⁹⁸ Klaus, 27–28.; Emphasis added

translation on ten years later.⁹⁹ It is this translation on which this paper is based.

As a piece of convent historiography, *The Short Chronicle* stands as part of a rich tradition. Charlotte Woodford has analyzed the role of nuns as historians in German-speaking territories during the Early Modern period. One reason she finds that many nuns wrote down the history of their convents was to inspire future nuns with the works of their predecessors, and to make them “conscious of what [they owe] to earlier generations and hence increase [their] gratitude to them.”¹⁰⁰ This was often tied in with a desire to strengthen the identity of a convent, especially by highlighting unity during times of crisis.¹⁰¹ For instance, a chronicle of a convent in Memmingen describes an angelic visitation by St. Francis of Assisi during a plague in 1522.¹⁰² However, the abbess withheld the identity of this visitor from the other nuns until she was on her deathbed twenty years later, and saw a dire need to boost morale after the Reformation had taken five more of her nuns.¹⁰³ Woodford concludes that “this short Counter-Reformation text seems intended to increase the reader’s commitment to the community, by reminding her of how her predecessors fought...for the right to live and worship in [their] town.”¹⁰⁴ Caritas Pirckheimer, who wrote of her Nuremberg convent’s ultimately unsuccessful resistance to the Reformation, took great pains to emphasize the convent’s unity, despite the fact that hints abound both in the chronicle and elsewhere that the nuns were not necessarily so unified.¹⁰⁵ This did not matter to her, however, as her clearly polemical treatment of both Lutheranism and the collective action of the convent were not an attempt to “tell the story ‘as it really was,’” but to set “an example for others in a similar

⁹⁹ Klaus, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany*, 43.

¹⁰¹ Woodford, 48–49.

¹⁰² Woodford, 49.

¹⁰³ Woodford, 49.

¹⁰⁴ Woodford, 50.

¹⁰⁵ Woodford, 94–99.; See further discussion of this chronicle below

situation.”¹⁰⁶ Jeanne de Jussie shared the same goals when she wrote *The Short Chronicle*.

Jussie explains that her purpose in writing is so that “in the future those who suffer for the love of God in this world will know that our ancestors suffered as much as we do, and as people after us will, and always, to varying degrees, in the example of Our Lord and Redeemer, who suffered the first and the most.”¹⁰⁷ While it is almost certain that Jussie never intended to publish her text, the future nuns she wrote to would not necessarily have only resided in her convent. Charlotte Woodford has found that it was a common practice among reformed convents to exchange manuscripts with each other.¹⁰⁸ The existing manuscript that is believed to be in Jussie’s hand bears an inscription in another hand, stating “We must be very careful not to take this book out of the convent, but to take very special care of it and preserve it carefully for always.”¹⁰⁹ This inscription, plus the existence of another manuscript written years later, also from the convent in Annecy, shows how much value *The Short Chronicle* had to Jussie’s convent, but also hints at a possible wider interest.¹¹⁰ For this readership, Jussie created what she insists is a purely a work of narrative history, repeatedly stating explicitly that she did not write anything she did not “know to be true.”¹¹¹ However, similar to Pirckheimer’s text, the point was not to represent the events exactly as they occurred, but to warn future nuns about the dangers of Lutheranism. This can be seen most explicitly in her depictions of the Reformers.

¹⁰⁶ Woodford, 105.

¹⁰⁷ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 90.

¹⁰⁸ Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany*, 15.; Here, “reformed” refers to monastic reforms which began in the wake of the Council of Basel in the mid-fifteenth century. For more info, see Decaluwe, Izbicki, and Christianson (eds.), *A Companion to the Council of Basel*, especially chapter 10.

¹⁰⁹ Klaus, “Introduction,” 25.; Translation by Klaus

¹¹⁰ To date, no other manuscripts have been found, though, so this remains a speculation.

However, Klaus states in note 58 on page 24 of her introduction that this was also suggested by Edmond Ganter in his *Les Clarriesses de Genève: 1473-1535-1793*, published in 1949.

¹¹¹ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 90.

In her chronicle Jussie almost never refers to the "Lutherans," the title under which she amalgamates all parts of reformation theology, as humans.¹¹² The kindest term she seems to have for them are "poor infidels;" mostly they are "dogs," "goats," "beasts," and "enemies of God."¹¹³ She also calls them "Jews," "Mammelukes," or "Mohammedists," terms which, by the way she uses them, seem to be even worse insults than the animalistic ones cited above.¹¹⁴ The Protestants are also attributed with demonic powers a certain points, such as when the plague struck Geneva in 1530, supposedly because several "heretics had plotted to kill all the leaders of the town so that they would then be lords over the whole town, and they took the infection and rubbed it on the locks of doors and threw it in the street."¹¹⁵ This disassociation of Protestantism with any part of Christianity comes to a head in an episode that supposedly took place on Holy Thursday 1533, the veracity of which is doubtful, in which a "homicidal and murderous criminal pretending to be Jesus Christ washed [eighty Protestants'] feet" before they all ate "bread and cheese" in mockery of the Last Supper.¹¹⁶ As Irena Backus points out, this is an act that would have been extremely blasphemous to all Christians, both Catholic and Protestant.¹¹⁷ However, it functions as an explicit illustration of what the various terms Jussie uses for the reformers suggest: the Reformation was utterly depraved. As this was, despite repeated insistence to the contrary, an underlying goal of the

¹¹² While the direct followers of Martin Luther were a major part of the reformation, they were not the only sect to arise in the religious tumult of the period. The proto-Calvinists that Jussie is describing had severe theological disagreements with Luther and his followers, and indeed would probably have been insulted to be termed as "Lutherans." See chapter 3 of Benedict, as cited above, for more information on the Reformed branches fighting in Geneva at this time.

¹¹³ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 44, 47, 51, 85.

¹¹⁴ Jussie, 39, 53, 89.; For an overview of Medieval Christian constructions of Judaism and Islam, see Steven F. Kruger, "Medieval Christian (Dis)identifications: Muslims and Jews in Guibert of Nogent," *New Literary History* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 185-203.

¹¹⁵ Jussie, 56.

¹¹⁶ Jussie, 82.

¹¹⁷ Backus, "The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine," 32.

chronicle, in Backus’s words, “satire supersedes history.”¹¹⁸ In addition to her portrayals of the reformers, Jussie also attempted to prove that God was against them.

Jussie records several occasions on which Protestants were, in her eyes, punished by God for their actions. For instance, she reports the death of several reformers whom she held responsible for the plague of the 1530s, stating that one “priest who had agreed to that evil plot was drawn and quartered and met his rightful end.”¹¹⁹ When a Catholic canon from Fribourg was killed by a Protestant mob for tearing down their placards, she made sure to mark the execution of his killers. Indeed, she notes that “Even though he [one of the murderers] was a Lutheran, they preached to him until he returned and died in the faith. Praise be to God the Creator.”¹²⁰ In another case, a Protestant who was “mocking the holy church” was stabbed on the spot by a “true Christian.”¹²¹ While this murderer was executed for his crime, it is framed as a martyrdom, complete with assurances from a jailed Dominican friar that the man should “fear nothing because the kingdom of heaven is open and the angels await you.”¹²² These stories support Jussie’s argument that God was on the Catholics’ side. She makes this even more explicit, however, by depicting several miracles that supposedly showed God’s favor of the Catholics.

The most common of these miracles are holy items and places surviving the attacks of Reformed iconoclasts.¹²³ Swiss plunderers could not burn the Cistercian Abbey in Bellerive despite several attempts.¹²⁴ One Reformer tried to feed the sacred host to his horse, but it, “by God’s will, blew on it with its nostrils and drew back as if it were

¹¹⁸ Backus, 32.

¹¹⁹ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 57.

¹²⁰ Jussie, 87.

¹²¹ Jussie, 97.; Emphasis added

¹²² Jussie, 97.

¹²³ For more information on Protestant iconoclasm see Eire, *War Against the Idols* as cited above. See chapter 4 for Geneva specifically.

¹²⁴ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 46.

afraid. That wretched man ran to where he had seen it fall to pick it up. But it floated above the ground as if to show that there was no worthy place for it to land.”¹²⁵ This survival also applied to those who had, in Jussie’s eyes, martyred themselves for the Catholic cause. When the body of the executed “True Christian” mentioned above was placed on a gibbet, Jussie says that a white dove was “often seen on his head,” and that after three days it still looked “spotless and fresh...as if he were alive.”¹²⁶ Later on, a Lutheran was executed for theft and his body put up on a gibbet next to the body of a Catholic woman, the latter supposedly “turned...opened her mouth wide, and bit him on the chin...The Lutherans tried to separate them...but she kept turning back.”¹²⁷ All these examples serve to prove to future nuns that they were never alone in their resistance, because God would always take their side. He is not the only one on their side, however, as Jussie also shows that nuns have allies in the mortal world, as well.

The Short Chronicle, while focusing on the Poor Clares of Geneva, highlights the actions of resistance of nuns elsewhere, as well. One convent Jussie focused on in particular was the Poor Clares in Orbe. When their Father Confessor was replaced by a Reformed preacher, they supposedly “seized that wicked man by his hair and dragged him out of the church in contempt.”¹²⁸ The Confessor was subsequently imprisoned and then banished, which made the nuns “very sorry and upset.”¹²⁹ The city of Orbe then forced them to listen to Reformed sermons repeatedly, but according to Jussie it was in vain, for virtually none of the nuns converted. As Jussie put it, “the women bore it

¹²⁵ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 113.; For more information on the debate over the Eucharist during the Reformation, see Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cary, North Carolina: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1999), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ithaca-ebooks/detail.action?docID=430817>.

¹²⁶ Jussie, 98.

¹²⁷ Jussie, 99.

¹²⁸ Jussie, 63.

¹²⁹ Jussie, 63.

heroically.”¹³⁰ The Genevan Poor Clares showed their solidarity by sending their own Father Confessor to comfort the nuns in Orbe.¹³¹ She then relates how a large number of the Orbe nuns escaped to the countryside until the city overcame the Reformers, at which point they returned in triumph.¹³² By highlighting the struggles of another convent and especially their triumph over the Reformation, Jussie shows not only that her convent’s resistance to the Reformation was not unique, but that some other convents were even more successful at resisting. This success would give hope to her readership as well as another example to follow in how to resist Reformers. She also shows that nuns who fight to keep their place in their community are not alone. This episode demonstrates that convents can support each other, while other parts of the chronicle emphasize that the nuns also had allies within their own city.

In particular, Jussie is keen to highlight the resistance of secular women in the city, and to show how resolute they were in defending both their religion and the nuns themselves.¹³³ Indeed, she explicitly says that “women were always found to be much more steadfast and constant in the religion than men.”¹³⁴ During one of the many riots that took place in the early years of the Genevan Reformation, Jussie describes Catholic wives who rush to support their husbands, carrying rocks to “wage war on and kill the heretical wives [of Reformers], so that the whole race will be exterminated”¹³⁵ When a Christian merchant was attacked by a Protestant apothecary, the women chased after the latter’s wife, shouting “let’s throw this bitch into the Rhone.”¹³⁶ When

¹³⁰ Jussie, 64.

¹³¹ Jussie, 64.

¹³² Jussie, 64.

¹³³ Note that the term “secular” here refers to lay members of the Catholic church, i.e. believers who are not clergy or members of a holy order.

¹³⁴ Jussie, 116.

¹³⁵ Jussie, 78.; Notice the use of the term “race.”

¹³⁶ Jussie, 79.

they cannot do this, they ransack the apothecary's shop, instead.¹³⁷ Resistance is not limited to violence. When a father took his newborn child to be baptized by the Reformed preacher Guillaume Farel, his Catholic wife sprung from her childbed and ran after her husband.¹³⁸ The husband relented, and the child was baptized in the Catholic faith.¹³⁹ Another young woman was beaten repeatedly by her father because she would not renounce her faith, and was eventually banished into servitude.¹⁴⁰ The most direct depiction of secular Catholic women standing firm for their faith came when Reformers stormed the convent itself in August 1535.¹⁴¹ Two women, one of them heavily pregnant, ran into the convent to comfort the nuns as they stood in the ruins of the chapel of their convent.¹⁴² When the Reformers turned on the nuns themselves, hoping to drag them out of the convent, one of the women hid one of the youngest nuns under her dress, while the other argued with the Reformers on the nuns' behalf.¹⁴³ Jussie states that “Our Lord had done well to send them, for if it had not been for their good sense, there would have been much injury and death.”¹⁴⁴ By commemorating the women of the city who fought for the Catholic faith and to protect the nuns, Jussie showed that the convent had friends on the outside who revered them and the status they held, and were willing to resist alongside them. She also wished to highlight the solidarity of the nuns as a community. This can be seen in the very structure of the writing itself when it came to depicting the nuns themselves.

Unless a specific nun is responding to someone, often the mother vicaress of the convent, the nuns always talk in unison. In his study of a twelfth century chronicle from a monastery in Flanders, Jeff Rider

¹³⁷ Jussie, 79.

¹³⁸ Jussie, 117–18.

¹³⁹ Jussie, 118.

¹⁴⁰ Jussie, 116.

¹⁴¹ This event is discussed in more detail below.

¹⁴² Jussie, 141.

¹⁴³ Jussie, 142.

¹⁴⁴ Jussie, 144.

described the construction of corporate speeches by the author, Galbert of Bruges, to further his rhetorical aims.¹⁴⁵ At several points in Galbert’s chronicle, groups such as the “paupers of Bruges” have lengthy speeches in perfect unison in extremely eloquent language, begging for a “pity and mercy inspired by the saints.”¹⁴⁶ As Rider points out, these speeches are more than likely to have been fabrications on behalf of Galbert in order to evoke for the reader a mental image of the paupers as a single unit, helpless to the decisions of those in control of the town, and therefore deserving of pity.¹⁴⁷ Galbert’s work was crafted far away from Jeanne de Jussie’s convent and was not published until centuries after her death, so a suggestion of direct influence is not intended, but Rider’s analysis can be applied to *The Short Chronicle* nonetheless. It is highly unlikely, even for the learned nuns in the convent, that, as Jussie writes, they all said in exact unison to the Syndics: “We want nothing but to be away from here so that we can serve God in peace, and we beg you to put us safely out of the city, for we will follow [our abbess] as our mother wherever she goes, and we think everything she does is perfect.”¹⁴⁸ This is almost certainly a fabrication on Jussie’s behalf to evoke pity on behalf of the nuns, depicting them as a single unit, helpless to the decisions of the city government. This is also emphasized by the multiple points in the chronicle where the nuns “in a single, clear, loud voice, cried out for mercy without ceasing.”¹⁴⁹ While instances such as those are much more plausible, the way they are written creates the same effect as the passages of unison speech. These unified cries also emphasize one of the motives identified by Charlotte Woodford in her study, to highlight the convent’s unity in times of crisis.¹⁵⁰ Caritas Pirckheimer specifically used this language when she

¹⁴⁵ Jeff Rider, *God’s Scribe: The Historiographical Art of Galbert of Bruges* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 113–20.

¹⁴⁶ Rider, 115–16.

¹⁴⁷ Rider, 115.

¹⁴⁸ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 166.

¹⁴⁹ Jussie, 140.

¹⁵⁰ Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany*, 48–49.

wrote in her chronicle that “The sisters agreed unanimously that we should not wait for the Council to deprive us of the priests by force... We should submit a petition now.”¹⁵¹ Indeed, Woodford points out that Pirckheimer was so concerned with portraying the absolute unity of her convent that it appears she tried to suppress parts of the history that contradicted this, including the story of the one nun who converted openly to the Reformation.¹⁵² Just like Pirckheimer, Jeanne de Jussie wished to highlight the unity of her convent in the face of the Reformation.

With *The Short Chronicle*, Jussie created a document of resistance that could serve as a template for future struggles. As Charlotte Woodford pointed out about her German nuns, Jussie was in a position to do so because she had hours of time that she could devote to carefully collecting her sources and crafting her piece.¹⁵³ This was due to an aspect of the nuns’ lives that protected them from many of the dangers of life in early modern Europe, and which the nuns fought relentlessly to protect.

From Enclosure to Escape

One of the main guarantors of the nuns' status, as well as their physical safety, was their practice of separation from the outside world. By preventing the entrance of anyone who was not a nun into the cloistered portion of the convent without their explicit permission and supervision, the sisters were able to retain a certain degree of autonomy, even within the hierarchy in which they operated. It is this aspect of their status that the nuns fought hardest to keep, and it is the violation of this aspect that finally led the nuns to leave Geneva.

¹⁵¹ “Defending Women’s Communal Life (1524)” a document by Caritas Pirckheimer. In *From the Reformation to the Thirty Years’ War 1500-1648*, edited by Thomas A. Brady Jr., volume 1, German History in Documents and Images, German Historical Institute, Washington, DC (www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org).

¹⁵² Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany*, 94–101.

¹⁵³ Woodford, 187.

In 1983, Steven Ozment published a monograph entitled *When Father's Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe*. In it he argues that the suppression of convents was a “liberation of women from cloisters.”¹⁵⁴ He portrays convents as harsh, unforgiving places where young children worked themselves to the bone for superiors who regularly beat them and convinced them they would be sexually assaulted if they left.¹⁵⁵ He goes on to depict the writings of men who either were closely linked to convents or helped nuns escape them, which support, implicitly or explicitly, these notions of cloistered life.¹⁵⁶ However, as several reviewers have pointed out, most of his sources are “Reformation propaganda” openly hostile to convent life, virtually all written by men.¹⁵⁷ Ozment does provide at least one example of the writing of a former nun about her experiences, but this was published by Martin Luther himself, limiting the credibility of its depictions.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, as Marjorie Plummer has shown in a recent article, many former nuns changed their stories years afterwards when it was advantageous or necessary to their situation.¹⁵⁹ The Poor Clares of Geneva provide a particularly strong argument against Ozment’s views of cloistered life in the Early Modern period.

One aspect of this life that has especially led authors like Ozment to conclude that the Reformation was a liberating force for women is enclosure. When a novice took her solemn vows of chastity during her

¹⁵⁴ Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 9.

¹⁵⁵ Ozment, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Ozment, 9–25.

¹⁵⁷ Philip Benedict, “Review of ‘When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe’ by Steven Ozment and ‘La Maison Du Pere: Famille et Village En Haute-Provence Aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siecles’ by Alain Collomp,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 1984): 334. See also Lyndal Roper’s review in the March 1986 edition of *The Journal of Modern History*.

¹⁵⁸ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 19–20.

¹⁵⁹ Marjorie Elizabeth Plummer, “Protestant and Catholic Nuns Confronting the Reformation,” in *Embodiment, Identity, and Gender in the Early Modern Age*, ed. Amy E. Leonard and David M. Whitford (London: Routledge, 2021), 85–94.

profession to become a nun, she acknowledged that she was becoming a Bride of Christ. As Elizabeth Lehfeltdt has shown by comparing profession ceremonies to marriage ceremonies, as well as analyzing texts used in profession ceremonies, this was almost always taken literally. As such, if a nun violated this vow in any way, she was not merely committing the sin of fornication, but perpetrating a “direct offense against her Spouse, the King of Heaven.”¹⁶⁰ In order to protect the nuns from the outside world, convents were supposed to observe a strict policy of *clausura*, or enclosure.¹⁶¹ The women had to be cut off entirely from the outside world in order to protect them from its physical dangers as well as temptations that might lead them to break their vows. This went as far as requiring all contact to be conducted through a turning window that could not be seen through and meant that everything the nuns needed to sustain their communities had to be grown or made within.¹⁶² As followers of the reformed Rule of Colette de Corbie, the Poor Clares of Geneva were especially stringent about this.¹⁶³ This can be seen in the nuns’ vigorous defense of their space against threats from the outside world.

When the Swiss army came in 1530 to defend Geneva from Savoyard forces, the convent was asked to house a number of them.¹⁶⁴ Despite the fact that they were Catholics from Fribourg, Jussie still describes in detail the fear the nuns felt at the threat to their situation.¹⁶⁵ The soldiers were “good plunderers, and they injured the poor people just like the others,” and they supposedly tried multiple times to break into the

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth A. Lehfeltdt, “Uneven Conversions: How Did Laywomen Become Nuns in the Early Modern World?,” in *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 130–35.

¹⁶¹ Wengler, “That in Future Times They Will Know Our Suffering for the Love of God,” 30.

¹⁶² Lehfeltdt, “Uneven Conversions,” 135–37.

¹⁶³ Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” 22.

¹⁶⁴ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 48–49.

¹⁶⁵ Jussie, 49.

convent because they “could not believe that the sisters were so poor.”¹⁶⁶ These soldiers left after less than two weeks without doing much physical harm to the convent and none to the women, but an even larger threat to the convent came four years later. The government of the city wished to break into the cloister’s garden, which bordered the city walls, in order to better fortify them.¹⁶⁷ When the Bernese captain sent to make plans for the breakthrough arrived at the convent, the abbess began by describing their life to him, that they “were prisoners secluded for the love of God.”¹⁶⁸ This did not stop the captain from entering into the cloister, but Jussie describes that as soon as he came in and saw the nuns, “God allowed his heart to be wholly transformed by pity,” and he promised to make sure the Council did not break the nuns’ cloister.¹⁶⁹ This story highlights not only how important enclosure was to the Poor Clares, but how important Jussie believed it was to God. For in the end it was God, in a miracle similar to the others described above, that allowed the nuns to keep their enclosure. The importance of enclosure is also demonstrated by Jussie’s description of the physical dangers the nuns’ faced as their enclosure was broken.

Every time there is a threat to the nuns’ cloister, Jussie links it to a danger of sexual assault against the nuns. In a letter the nuns sent to the City Council at the first signs of the Reformation in the city, they begged the Council to “keep us in your safeguard and protection so that those enemies of God do not *violate* or disturb us.”¹⁷⁰ When the Reformers convince one of the nuns to leave the convent and marry, the vicaress cries out to the syndics that “you have violently ravished one of our sisters.”¹⁷¹ And even the Catholic soldiers from Fribourg mentioned above were supposedly driven by urges to “come in with

¹⁶⁶ Jussie, 49.

¹⁶⁷ Jussie, 111.

¹⁶⁸ Jussie, 111.

¹⁶⁹ Jussie, 111–12.

¹⁷⁰ Jussie, 47.; Emphasis added; As the scribe of the convent, this letter was most likely written by Jussie herself.

¹⁷¹ Jussie, 145.

the women and harm and violate them.”¹⁷² As Carrie Klaus put it, “Men from both sides of the Reformation, Jussie suggested, saw this time of religious and social upheaval as an opportunity to take advantage of the cloistered virgins.”¹⁷³ This danger was twofold, as not only would a breaking of their virginity constitute a sexual assault against their bodies, but adultery against their husband, Jesus Christ.

This, above all else, was the reason why the nuns saw the Protestant ideal of married life, which Steven Ozment described as a “Liberation” from a “inhumane and antisocial” life, as such a major menace to both their physical and spiritual selves.¹⁷⁴ When Guillaume Farel accused the nuns of fornicating with the Franciscan friars who gave them the holy rites, in their eyes he was also accusing them of betraying Jesus himself as their literal husband.¹⁷⁵ And when he preached that they should be dragged out of the convent and married, they saw it as a threat to both them and their savior.¹⁷⁶ This belief was also borne out when men who listened to Farel decided to throw stones at the nuns in their garden, punishing them for their supposed fornication as Jesus instructed in the Bible.¹⁷⁷ These assaults no doubt conjured up images as to what Jesus would do to them if they betrayed him by taking a mortal husband. Jussie used this herself as a defense of her claustration, when questioned individually, saying “I have renounced everything for God of my own accord, and I would not do it again because I do not want a husband, but only to be the bride of my God.”¹⁷⁸ When Farel and

¹⁷² Jussie, 49.

¹⁷³ Klaus, “Architecture and Sexual Identity,” 285.

¹⁷⁴ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 9, 25.

¹⁷⁵ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 118.

¹⁷⁶ Jussie, 118–19.

¹⁷⁷ Wengler, “That in Future Times They Will Know Our Suffering for the Love of God,” 36.; John 8:4-5, 7: “They say unto [Jesus], Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou... So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Of course, the Reformers here believe themselves to be without sin.

¹⁷⁸ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 153–54.

another Reformed preacher, Pierre Viret, attempted to convert the nuns personally, the two were eventually forced to flee the convent, Jussie writes, because “the devils that guided him could not endure the company of the true brides of Jesus.”¹⁷⁹ However, with the Reformation as strongly planted in Geneva as it was, nothing could save the nuns’ claustration forever.

On August 24th, 1535, a crowd of almost two hundred Genevans overwhelmed the nun’s lay brother at the door and ransacked the convent.¹⁸⁰ They hunted down and destroyed every saintly image and holy relic they could find, even forcing one of the lay brothers to show them hidden stores within the convent.¹⁸¹ When they had finished with the outer portions of the convent, they turned on the cloister. Jussie writes:

Those evil Satanists...went right to the sisters’ turning window, and...struck it with a great iron bar that they carried to break all locks and with a great axe that they used to break through doors, and they knocked down the turning window...When the portress saw the turning window collapse and break into pieces, she barred the door to them and braced it with her back to keep them from opening it. But one of them hit it so hard with his axe that the axe sank in and nearly went into the portress’s back. But God the Creator miraculously moved her away, and she left the room with the turning window and closed the door, which was double and strong, and another door that was after the first door...she ran to the church.¹⁸²

Thus, all the barriers that had protected the nuns from the outside world were destroyed, and the nuns were totally exposed. Carrie Klaus put it most succinctly when she wrote that the attack was a “rape of

¹⁷⁹ Jussie, 132.

¹⁸⁰ Jussie, 138–40.

¹⁸¹ Jussie, 139.

¹⁸² Jussie, 139–40.

sacred space.”¹⁸³ From this point, the nuns’ position in Geneva was untenable.

Jussie reports that the syndics were surprised when the nuns asked them for permission to leave. They could not imagine where the nuns could possibly go. The vicaress replied simply ““Wherever God leads us.””¹⁸⁴ The House of Savoy had sent word previously that they could have the use of an abandoned monastery in Annecy, but there was no guarantee they would be able to get there.¹⁸⁵ In return for safe passage out of Geneva, the nuns promised to leave the convent and everything inside it to the Council.¹⁸⁶ As Jussie no doubt hoped future nuns would do for them, they said one final prayer to their “holy departed mothers,” and prepared to leave.¹⁸⁷ They tried their best to keep what few remaining aspects of enclosure still remained, wearing their veils and vowing to not speak to anyone from the outside world.¹⁸⁸ When someone tried to remove one of the nuns from the procession, the vicaress screamed at the syndics, who immediately ordered that anyone who violated the nuns wishes to be separate would be beheaded on the spot.¹⁸⁹ And so the Genevan Poor Clares marched out of their city, never to return. Though they had been forced out of their convent, they had maintained their unity, and even to a small extent their claustration, and as such resisted the encroachments of the Reformation.

Conclusion and Epilogue

Ozment argued that Catholic parents “tend[ed] to view [convents] as a place for the weak, or in some way failed, child who needed special

¹⁸³ Klaus, “Architecture and Sexual Identity,” 292.

¹⁸⁴ Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, 166.

¹⁸⁵ Jussie, 137.

¹⁸⁶ Jussie, 166.

¹⁸⁷ Jussie, 168.

¹⁸⁸ Jussie, 166–71.

¹⁸⁹ Jussie, 171.

protection.”¹⁹⁰ This may very well have been the view of parents, and often children were placed in convents at an extremely early age. Jeanne de Jussie was placed in hers as a young teenager after her family lost a substantial amount of property.¹⁹¹ But regardless of whatever the parents or their children thought at the time of entering the cloister, as adults the Poor Clares of Geneva dearly valued their position in the Catholic hierarchy, and they chose to stay within it, no matter what suffering they had to go through to do so. Martha Howell asks us to “consider how any woman acquired what we are calling agency.”¹⁹² For the Genevan Poor Clares, it was this Catholic patriarchal hierarchy that gave them theirs. And they used it to resist any change to the structures within which they lived. By illustrating their resistance to change as agency, this article shines light on new paths of analysis for gender historians who wish to better understand how women in positions of some power or autonomy maintained those positions in rapidly changing societies.

As for the Genevan Poor Clares, they arrived in Annecy on September 5, 1535, a week after leaving Geneva, to a massive crowd of jubilant Catholics.¹⁹³ While they were grateful to these people, they wanted nothing more than to once again be cloistered.¹⁹⁴ However, there were several flaws with the Monastery they were given that prevented true enclosure. There were multiple doors that did not lock, and three which provided direct access to the outside.¹⁹⁵ There was no grille to divide the choir and the church, and no turning window.¹⁹⁶ The church itself had no glass in its windows, so that the wind blew out any

¹⁹⁰ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 4

¹⁹¹ Wengler, “Women, Religion, and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva,” 85.

¹⁹² Howell, “The Problem with Women’s Agency in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” 22.

¹⁹³ Jussie, 180-182.

¹⁹⁴ Jussie, 183.

¹⁹⁵ Klaus, “Architecture and Sexual Identity,” 295.

¹⁹⁶ Klaus, 295.

candles they tried to light inside.¹⁹⁷ However, it was still a space that they controlled, albeit within the Catholic patriarchal structure. Any problems with the physical structure could be remedied eventually. After completing *The Short Chronicle*, Jeanne de Jussie became abbess of the convent in 1548.¹⁹⁸ She would retain the post until her death in 1561.¹⁹⁹ The convent would survive for 258 years in Annecy, before being forcefully dissolved during the French Revolution in 1793.²⁰⁰ Despite residing in Annecy for five times as many years as they did in Geneva, the nuns always referred to themselves as the “Sisters of Saint Clare of Geneva in Refuge in Annecy.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Klaus, 295.

¹⁹⁸ Backus, “The Poor Clares of the Rue Verdaine,” 30.

¹⁹⁹ Backus, 30.

²⁰⁰ Backus, 36.

²⁰¹ Klaus, “Introduction,” 12.

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Olive Trees and Peasant Comrades:

Spain as Refuge and Residence for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

“The men in that fortress, the mere presence of them, was one of the greatest experiences of my life.” These were among the first words Paul Wendorf wrote home to his wife, Leona Grossman, upon arriving in Spain.²⁰² It was February 19, 1937, and the Spanish Civil War had been raging for more than half a year.²⁰³ The couple had just married when Wendorf packed his bags and set sail across the Atlantic to fight on behalf of Spain’s democratically elected Popular Front government. Wendorf was one of roughly 3,000 volunteers from the United States to do so, a group remembered as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The men whose presence constituted one of the “greatest experiences” of Wendorf’s life were fellow volunteers from countries across the globe, collectively known as the International Brigades (IB).²⁰⁴ And yet Wendorf’s note did not stop there. For him, “an even greater experience” was the sense of camaraderie he felt with the children who “ran up to the train when we got in and walked along shaking hands,” with “every peasant working in the fields” who saluted as the men

²⁰² Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, February 19, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University (hereafter cited as Paul Wendorf Papers); Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, March 12, 1938, box 1, folder 9, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf marriage certificate, February 3, 1937, in New York City Department of Records, *Index to New York City Marriages, 1866–1937* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry, 2014), certificate no. 445.

²⁰³ Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 73.

²⁰⁴ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, February 6, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, December 24, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Paul Wendorf Papers; Daniel Pastor García and Antonio R. Celada, “The Victors Write History, the Vanquished Literature: Myth, Distortion and Truth in the XV Brigade,” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 89, no. 7–8 (November 1, 2012): 311–312, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2012.731576>; Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 66. The exact number of volunteers from America is uncertain. I have opted for Pastor García and Celada’s figure because of their explicit attention to such questions, but as those authors have acknowledged, estimates range from 2,600 to 3,300.

passed, and with the “old, wrinkled peasant women” who “would walk down to the train when we stopped and raise their fists in greeting.”²⁰⁵ From his very first moments in Spain, then, Wendorf took note of his Spanish surroundings and his new “countrymen.”

Histories of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade have done little to develop the relationship between the “Lincolns” and the country they served in. This is perhaps unsurprising given the geopolitical significance of the Spanish Civil War, especially when considered retrospectively, as well as the heroic place in the story of anti-fascism that the volunteers came to occupy. When Nationalist general Francisco Franco helped launch a coup against the Second Spanish Republic in July 1936, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, hoping to install an ally in western Europe, independently decided to support the insurrection. German and Italian planes airlifted Franco’s army from its base in colonial Morocco onto the mainland, and the fascist leaders supplied tens of thousands of troops in addition to hundreds of planes, thousands of machine guns, and many more tons of materiel throughout the war.²⁰⁶ Thus from its earliest days, the Spanish Civil War had far-reaching implications. When Wendorf described his foe, as he did in his second letter from Spain, he wrote not of the Nationalists, but of “the fascists” more broadly.²⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the European democracies and the U.S. adopted a policy of non-intervention, disinclined to support the Popular Front coalition of Spanish communists, socialists, and other progressives who had campaigned on a platform of land reform and amnesty for persecuted leftist radicals.²⁰⁸ It was in response to the lack of aid the Republican Army received from the rest of the world that in September

²⁰⁵ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, February 19, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁰⁶ Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 82–83.

²⁰⁷ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, March 3, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁰⁸ Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), 90–92; Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 91–92, 131–148. Hitler and Mussolini signed the non-intervention pact but flouted it. The Spanish Popular Front was part of a broader effort by communists during the 1930s to build coalitions with leftists of other stripes.

1936 the Soviet-led Communist International (Comintern) organized the IB, which would grow to include 35,000 volunteers from more than fifty countries.²⁰⁹ Despite their efforts, the Republic fell to Franco and his fascist backers in April 1939, contributing to the outbreak of World War II and ushering in a thirty-six-year dictatorship under the *Generalissimo*.²¹⁰

Against the backdrop of these “titanic ideological conflicts,” historians have treated the Lincolns teleologically as both “premature anti-fascists” and, because they defied the wishes of the U.S. government to join a Soviet organization, early Cold Warriors.²¹¹ Peter N. Carroll, whose *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* is regarded by many as the best work on the subject, has helpfully identified three “generations” of scholarship. First-generation accounts were autobiographical, written by veterans immediately after their return; the second generation, emerging roughly in the 1960s, was academic but suffered from a limited source base and was inextricably entangled with the politics of the Cold War. Drawing on sources only available after the fall of the Soviet Union and assessing more fully the post-war lives of the Lincolns, the third generation, which Carroll inaugurated with *The Odyssey* in 1994, brought nuance to central questions in the scholarly debate on the Brigade, notably the extent to which volunteers, most of them communists, were ciphers of the Comintern and the Communist Party USA (CPUSA).²¹² Still, Carroll continued to view the

²⁰⁹ Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 152–154; Robert A. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 29. Here I have used Rosenstone’s moderate figure for the total number of IB enlistees, but again estimates diverge significantly, ranging from 32,000 to 41,000. The exact number of countries is also unclear. Pastor García and Celada, “The Victors Write History,” 311.

²¹⁰ Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 244–249.

²¹¹ Peter N. Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 12. “Premature anti-fascists” is a widely used term, including as the name of a major work of oral history on the Lincolns: John Gerassi, *The Premature Antifascists: North American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39: An Oral History* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

²¹² Carroll, *The Odyssey*, vii–x. To Carroll’s generational list one might add two recent strains: attempts to dispel “myths” surrounding the Brigade through statistical analyses and narrative

Brigade in the context of a grand “ideological struggle,” maintaining that “the Lincoln volunteers . . . had no doubts about their ideological motivations” and crediting “political persuasion” as their impetus not just for deciding to go but for staying in the fight.²¹³

Certainly, the Lincolns understood the stakes of their struggle. In one of his first letters from Spain, volunteer Harry Malofsky, whose experiences are considered in detail below, wrote that the country “deserves all the support it can get from us, in order to defeat the curse of bloody International Fascism.”²¹⁴ Ernest Hemingway, who covered the Brigade closely, famously predicted in February 1937 that “this is the dress rehearsal for the inevitable European war.”²¹⁵ And yet Wendorf’s assertion that interactions with Spaniards were an “even greater experience” than those among his IB comrades suggests that, in addition to their commitment to halting the spread of global fascism, the particularities of Spain influenced the volunteers.

Indeed, the country was not just an empty stage for the confrontation between democracy, communist anti-fascism, and fascism. Though Carroll and his interlocutors, interested in the Brigade as an expression of those broader dynamics, focused their narratives of the war on major battles and the political inner workings of the

histories intended for general audiences. For the former, see Michael Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1994); and Pastor García and Celada, “The Victors Write History.” For the latter, see Adam Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016). While each of these new historical approaches is illuminating in its own right, neither addresses head-on the role of Spain in the experiences of the volunteers.

²¹³ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 105, 111, 123.

²¹⁴ Harry Malofsky to Julius Blickstein, April 1, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University (hereafter cited as Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers).

²¹⁵ Ernest Hemingway to the Pfeiffer Family, February 9, 1937, in *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917-1961*, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1981), 458.

Brigade, the words of the soldiers point to something else.²¹⁶ As Michael Seidman observed in his *Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War*, “historians of the conflict—most of whom maintain a political perspective which searches for the ‘decisive,’ heroic, committed, and the militant—have ignored what constituted most of a soldier’s existence during wartime.”²¹⁷ Politics, heroism, and militarism featured relatively infrequently in Wendorf’s letters between February 1937 and August 1938, written primarily to his wife Grossman. Rather, if his Spanish surroundings began as an unexpected but meaningful aspect of his experience, they became a defining characteristic as he was exposed to the reality that war, beyond being a clash of ideologies, is characterized by brutal violence and attrition. A careful reading of Wendorf’s correspondence alongside that of Malofsky illuminates the turbulent emotional waters the Lincolns navigated. The war meant horror and frustration, loneliness and boredom, longing and desire. In light of this, Seidman has contended that “experience and outcome are, of course, related. The harshness of everyday life of the common soldier in the Popular Army, during a war that few expected to last nearly three years, had an immensely negative effect on its performance.”²¹⁸

The people, environment, and culture of Spain provided Wendorf and Malofsky a necessary contrast to the harsh battlefield. In the first half of this article, I argue that Spain was a source of imaginative refuge for the Lincolns, helping to sustain the volunteers’ commitment to the war effort when their ideologies were tested by prolonged distress. Wendorf’s story also transcends the battlefield: in his extended time away from the front, Spain and the Spanish became an even greater focus in his writing. Thus in the second half, I set his letters in conversation with those of a third volunteer, Paul Sigel, to show how

²¹⁶ For a sense of how these themes undergird the literature, see Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 124–153; Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War*, 297–312.

²¹⁷ Michael Seidman, *Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 9.

²¹⁸ Seidman, *Republic of Egos*, 9.

the Lincolns became genuine residents of their host nation. I argue that contacts with civilian life provided a sense of belonging, and, crucially, a reason to invest in the preservation of the Spanish Republic and its inhabitants beyond the defeat of international fascism. If the war meant suffering and despair, the country around the war came to mean hope, relief, joy, inspiration, and deep attachment. Spain, as refuge and residence, gave the Lincolns a reason to keep up the fight.

In its intense focus on the human, the emotional, and the local as opposed to the political or military, this study builds on Seidman’s approach, which began “from the foundation block of the individual” and sought to “de-emphasize the great collectivities of party, class, and gender that historians have favored to examine the more intimate social groups of family, friends, and village.”²¹⁹ While Seidman’s subjects were the Spaniards, mine are the foreigners, people whose defining moments lay an ocean away from the setting they had known their whole lives. Throughout this article I choose to refer to Wendorf, Malofsky, and Sigel as people “from America” rather than “Americans,” rejecting a static notion of identity in favor of a dynamic one able to accommodate the unexpected and transformative nature of their experiences in Spain. In doing so, I draw too on the recent work of historian Fraser Raeburn. Raeburn, himself influenced by the innovative scholar of anti-fascism Hugo García, has observed that “relations between the foreign volunteers and their Spanish hosts have received little attention, even though these relationships were fundamental to the everyday experience of volunteering” and has advocated a “transnational turn” in thinking about the Lincoln Brigade.²²⁰ For Raeburn, such a turn consisted of focusing on the relationships between soldiers from America and their Spanish counterparts. I broaden the lens to include

²¹⁹ Seidman, *Republic of Egos*, 6, 236.

²²⁰ Fraser Raeburn, “‘The Surest of All Morale Barometers’: Transnational Encounters in the XV International Brigade,” *Contemporary European History* 31, no. 1 (February 2022): 85, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777321000217>; Hugo García, “Transnational History: A New Paradigm for Anti-Fascist Studies?,” *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 4 (November 2016): 563, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777316000382>.

relationships with civilians as well as the environment, culture, and language of Spain.

A Brief Note on Method

Letters have their shortcomings. They are highly personal, reflecting intimate relationships between senders and recipients. In the context of war, there is no doubt that letters offer selective accounts. One measure of this is the overwhelmingly positive tone that Wendorf, Malofsky, and Sigel maintained regarding the Republican Army’s prospects and their own safety. In July 1937, following major casualties during the disappointing Battle of Brunete, Sigel downplayed the Nationalist threat while acknowledging that the conflict had already dragged on for longer than most had expected. “*Salud, Mus,*” he wrote, using his nickname for his mother Hannah, “exactly one year ago today, the fascist [sic] started their little game here in Spain. . . . In spite of the fascist coalition, in spite of their maneuvers, they will soon be defeated.”²²¹ Furthermore, the volunteers’ correspondence was monitored by agents of the IB to safeguard intelligence.²²² Sometimes, this meant that passages were redacted; more often, it meant that soldiers withheld details that could help to situate them historically, such as their precise location.²²³

The biases inherent in epistolary sources limit their usefulness in constructing generalizations. Still, the men whose letters guide this article are, at least in a demographic sense, representative of the Brigade as a whole. Wendorf, twenty-six years old when he left for Spain, was a recent graduate from Columbia University in New York

²²¹ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, July 18, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*: Population schedule, Bronx, New York, enumeration district 0150 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930), sheet 6A.

²²² Cary Nelson, introduction to *Madrid 1937: Letters of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks (London: Routledge, 1996), 14–15.

²²³ Nelson, introduction to *Madrid 1937*, 15. For an example of IB censor marks, see Paul Wendorf to Charley Nusser, February 24, 1938, box 1, folder 8, Paul Wendorf Papers.

City.²²⁴ Malofsky, twenty-one, was involved in a theater troupe affiliated with the International Workers Order in the city and was a former member of the Youth Communist League.²²⁵ Sigel, also twenty-one and a friend of Malofsky, hailed from Pittsburgh and was a CPUSA member and student at New York University.²²⁶ Thus they fit the description of historian Robert A. Rosenstone’s “average volunteer”: “a man between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-seven who lived in an industrial, urban center where labor unions and radical political parties were most active. . . . He might very well be a seaman, struggling to organize a union, or a college student.”²²⁷

These three volunteers captured one other common feature of the Brigade experience: each died in action.²²⁸ Used primarily as shock troops, somewhere between 22.5 and 30 percent of the soldiers from America perished on the battlefield, significantly higher than the

²²⁴ New York City Department of Health, *Births Reported in the Year 1911*, in New York City Department of Health, *New York, New York, U.S., Birth Index, 1910–1965*, (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry, 2017), certificate 58825; “53 Columbia Freshmen Receive Class Numerals: Athletes Are Honored for Their Work in Spring Sports,” *New York Herald Tribune*, November 19, 1930, 27.

²²⁵ New York City Department of Health, *Births Reported in 1915—Borough of Manhattan*, in New York City Department of Health, *New York, New York, U.S., Birth Index, 1910–1965*, (Lehi, Utah: Ancestry, 2017), certificate no. 31541; Elizabeth Compa and James D. Fernández, “Profiles of Loss,” ed. Peter N. Carroll, *The Volunteer: Journal of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* 27, no. 3 (September 2005), 15; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, June 19, 1937, in *Madrid 1937: Letters of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks (London: Routledge, 1996).

²²⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*, sheet 6A; Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, June 27, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Paul Sigel to family, September 19, 1937, box 1, folder 10, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, June 16, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²²⁷ Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 98.

²²⁸ Arthur H. Landis, *Death in the Olive Groves: American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 215; “Belchite 1937 Killed in Action: Harry Meloff,” broadside, box 1, folder 12, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Chris Brooks, “Commoners in Spain: Students, Faculty, and Alumni of Commonwealth College in the Spanish Civil War,” Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, November 12, 2018, <https://albavolunteer.org/2018/11/commoners-in-spain-students-faculty-and-alumni/>.

average rates for both Republican and Nationalist combatants.²²⁹ Most histories written in the second half of the twentieth century, *The Odyssey* chief among them, drew heavily on oral testimony from veterans, which was inevitably colored by hindsight and thus tended to magnify the military and political meanings of the war.²³⁰ As Seidman noted, “memory emphasizes dramatic moments of conflict instead of the commonly boring everyday existence in the trenches.”²³¹ Contemporaneous sources better reflect the quotidian priorities of the soldiers. This article operates on the assumption that it is historically meaningful—indeed, quite telling—if, for example, a soldier chose not to write about battle and instead spun rich depictions of the Spanish countryside. Finally, a happy consequence of the epistolary approach is the recovery of Wendorf’s, Malofsky’s, and Sigel’s stories from the ash heap of history: none of the three men has yet received more than a passing mention in any major scholarly work.²³²

Spain as Refuge

“The boys already are singing of Franco’s doom,” wrote Harry Malofsky in his first letter from Spain. “We know damn well that not a single bullet will be wasted, only death can put a stop to it. And that’s not even thought of.”²³³ He could not have known that his own death would come less than halfway through a war lasting nearly three years. But any quixotic visions of quickly obliterating fascism that the Lincolns carried with them across the Atlantic soon vanished. As Paul

²²⁹ Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows*, 3; Pastor García and Celada, “The Victors Write History,” 312; Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 157. Pastor García and Celada placed the Lincolns’ death rate at 22.5 percent, while Payne opted for the higher figure. The overall death rate for both the Republican and Nationalist armies was around 5 percent.

²³⁰ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, viii–xii.

²³¹ Seidman, *Republic of Egos*, 8.

²³² Wendorf and Malofsky appeared fleetingly in Carroll’s work, and Wendorf again in that of Arthur H. Landis. Historians have remained silent on Sigel. Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 144, 186–187; Landis, *Death in the Olive Groves*, 215.

²³³ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, March 22, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

Wendorf would write after months in the trenches, the war was anything but an “interesting game with a certainty of odds in our favor. For many of the Americans here there was a rude awakening. I count myself among that number, even though I had thought I knew what to expect.”²³⁴ The letters of Wendorf and Malofsky illuminate the range of emotions soldiers experienced at the front, including horror and shock and, with time, ennui and disillusionment. In response, the men latched onto aspects of their host country that appeared to exist outside of combat and even the confrontation with fascism. Paradoxically, Wendorf and Malofsky needed to take mental refuge in their Spanish surroundings if they were to continue their mortal project.

Paul Wendorf, Jarama, February–June 1937

Paul Wendorf was thrown into action practically as soon as he reached Spain on February 14, 1937. The Battle of Jarama had just begun outside of Madrid, and the earliest arrivals from America rushed to stave off the Nationalist onslaught.²³⁵ “Last night, I got my introduction to the enemy,” Wendorf wrote in his first letter as a member of the newly formed Lincoln Battalion, the outfit after which the collective identity of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade would later be named.²³⁶ “A number of bombers came over at night.”²³⁷ Unlike other IB

²³⁴ Paul Wendorf to Sherry, December 13, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²³⁵ Landis, *Death in the Olive Groves*, 8–13.

²³⁶ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, February 19, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Harold, March 6, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers; “On the Abraham Lincoln Battalion in the International Brigades,” Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive, accessed October 8, 2022, <https://alba-valb.org/who-we-are/faqs/>. Some historians such as Cecil Eby have insisted that “Abraham Lincoln Brigade” and “Lincolns,” referring to the volunteers from America as a collective, are misnomers. For my purposes, I will use these terms, specifying when I refer to the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. I am less interested in the soldiers’ military classifications, which anyway became increasingly muddled as the war progressed, than on how the soldiers interacted with their surroundings. Cecil D. Eby, *Comrades and Commissars: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), xi–xii.

²³⁷ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, February 19, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers.

members who had fought in World War I, most of the soldiers from the U.S., Wendorf included, had no prior military knowledge.²³⁸ In a disastrous showing, the green, poorly organized battalion sustained massive casualties: over the course of 120 days in the trenches, hundreds died or were injured.²³⁹ Wendorf, a machine gunner, survived unscathed, but the episode was nonetheless traumatic for him.²⁴⁰ He wrote to Grossman in April, after nearly two months in combat, that “I have found out that an army, among other things, is the loneliest place in the world. One does not wish to form close friendships here, because the loss of one who is a friend as well as comrade is more depressing.”²⁴¹ During this period, when Wendorf mentioned other volunteers, he did so only in general terms, writing of “some new Americans,” or, as commonly, the “untrained workers and peasants” who made up the Spanish units. He did not dwell on specific relationships.²⁴²

In the absence of substantive connections with his trench-mates, Wendorf found life increasingly tedious. In late February, the Madrid front shifted into a more static war of attrition, or what Michael Seidman has termed a “quiet front,” where “tranquility usually dominated.”²⁴³ On April 4, Wendorf described his daily routine: “I’m still in the same place as I have been since February 25th. Life has become rather routine. 4 hours watch in the trench, 8 hours off, 4 on, 8 off. . . . The steady daily grind is a bit wearing on the nerves.”²⁴⁴ In early

²³⁸ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 65; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, April 22, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²³⁹ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 91–106.

²⁴⁰ Paul Wendorf, “A Pair of Pants,” *The Volunteer for Liberty* (Barcelona, Spain), August 26, 1938, 3.

²⁴¹ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, April 22, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁴² Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, April 22, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, April 4, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁴³ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 105–106; Seidman, *Republic of Egos*, 9.

²⁴⁴ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, April 4, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

June, he recounted to Grossman a letter he had received from friends in New York calling him a “hero” and joked, “I wonder if I should let them in on the secret that I fire my gun only to find out if it’s still working.”²⁴⁵ The violent episodes of the war, the focus of many histories of the Brigade, certainly received their due in Wendorf’s telling. But his first combat assignment was as stultifying as it was sensational.

Lonely and bored, Wendorf sought refuge in Spain’s natural beauty. The Iberian countryside presented a dramatic contrast with the urban cityscapes he had known for most of his life, and nearly every letter featured lengthy commentaries on the landscapes that provided the setting for Wendorf’s deployment. “Back of us is a beautiful valley,” he wrote in one of his first dispatches from the front. “And behind that rise endless miles of rolling mountains, with olive groves on the slopes. The country is at the same time wild and carefully cultivated.”²⁴⁶ For Wendorf, the environment of Spain provided indispensable relief from the anxieties and tedium of battle. More than once he expressed his wish that his wife would join him in Spain. “Mug, dear,” he scribbled on May 12, using his favorite pet name for Grossman, “right now I wish you could be with me on top of this 1500 foot hill, to enjoy the view.” Remarkably, Wendorf penned this line directly after one of his most detailed accounts of combat at Jarama. The previous night the two armies had traded fire, and even as he wrote, shots rang out overhead.²⁴⁷ Notwithstanding the danger, Wendorf entertained the thought of his wife being there with him to take in the scenery. Of course, he understood that for Grossman to join him would be ludicrous. Months later, even though he was then safely away from the front, he would scold her for proposing such a visit.²⁴⁸ Yet the idea remained appealing,

²⁴⁵ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, June 7, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁴⁶ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, March 11, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁴⁷ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, May 12, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁴⁸ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, March 30, 1938, box 1, folder 9, Paul Wendorf Papers.

perhaps because “Mug” and the bucolic scenery of Spain alike represented departures—or refuge—from his simultaneously dreary and distressing reality. Wendorf’s association of Grossman and the countryside as refuge even became tactile when he began pressing roses into his letters before sending them to her.²⁴⁹ Without veering into psychoanalysis, it seems safe to suggest that Wendorf relied on his Spanish environs to soften the harshness of the front, and that he was capable of viewing them as removed from the war taking place within them. They helped mitigate his isolation and increasing detachment by supplying him with emotional grounding and even a sense of purpose during lulls in combat, when the fascists he had made it his mission to vanquish were nowhere to be seen.

Of course, the distinction between Spain as battlefield and Spain as arcadia was largely contrived. As historian Dorothee Brantz highlighted in her essay on the trenches of World War I, “the first characteristic of an environment of war is that it has ceased to be merely a landscape through which soldiers move but has turned into a space where soldiers engage in combat.”²⁵⁰ Wendorf often indicated his dismay at the destruction the fighting wrought on the Jarama Valley. For example, in March, he wrote to a correspondent named Harold, likely a friend in the CPUSA, while “sitting in an olive grove, which would be a beautiful place if there were not trenches dug through it in various directions.”²⁵¹ Similarly, in the letter in which he fantasized about sharing the view with Grossman, Wendorf lamented that “the olive trees in No-man’s Land are scarred and distorted by machine-gun fire.”²⁵² Observations such as these indicate a limit to the escape Spain offered to the volunteers. If the Spanish landscapes were Wendorf’s

²⁴⁹ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, May 14, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁵⁰ Dorothee Brantz, “Environments of Death: Trench Warfare on the Western Front, 1914–19,” in *War and the Environment: Military Destruction in the Modern Age*, ed. Charles E. Closmann (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 69.

²⁵¹ Paul Wendorf to Harold, March 6, 1937, box 1, folder 1, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁵² Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, May 12, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

chosen refuge, he was consistently reminded that those landscapes were as war-weathered as he was. Nonetheless, the dismay Wendorf felt at the ruin of the countryside underscores his attachment to his surroundings, which he perceived as novel and pristine, and the tension he felt between them and the unwelcome omnipresence of the war. His letters bemoaning the destruction of the olive groves, just as much as those inviting his wife to share in the views, point to an emotional need to find something in Spain beyond—and despite—deadly struggle. The natural scenes of Jarama, then, were more than just an attractive but insignificant backdrop for the battle that took place there. They empowered Wendorf to endure the fight.

Harry Malofsky, March–August 1937

Harry Malofsky, whose first letters were written amid Spanish civilian life as opposed to the slog of battle, recorded a vastly different set of first impressions than did Wendorf. Malofsky arrived in “Sunny Spain” in March 1937, roughly a month after Wendorf, and was assigned to a second outfit of volunteers from America, later named the George Washington Battalion.²⁵³ Following its poor showing at Jarama, the IB ensured that the Washingtons received adequate training: as Malofsky himself wrote, “the first comrades that came here didn’t even have a day’s drilling or uniforms. They went to the front in plain overalls. Now, of course, things are different.”²⁵⁴ Thus he spent the first two and a half months of his time in Spain in a number of unidentified towns—probably including Tarazona, located outside of the IB headquarters in Albacete—where he studied military maneuvers and weapon handling, conditioned his body, and attended lectures.²⁵⁵ For

²⁵³ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, March 22, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Julius Blickstein, April 1, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, June 8, 1938, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁵⁴ Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 146; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, April 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁵⁵ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, March 22, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 6, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam

him, then, there was no war yet to escape. Still, his time in training would shape his notions of what Spain was and, more importantly, what it could be—notions that would eventually provide their own sort of refuge.

Robert Rosenstone, unique in his extensive attention to the training of the Brigade, characterized Tarazona, the main training site for IB recruits, as “far from an exciting town in which to be stationed.” According to him, volunteers were eager to leave for the front: “The ones who went usually considered themselves lucky. They had come to fight a war and now they were going to do so.”²⁵⁶ Malofsky’s sentiments, reflected in letters addressed primarily to Miriam Sigel (the sister of Paul Sigel, discussed later), were more complicated than this. He found much to enjoy in the “little Spanish town,” spending his “plenty of money and plenty of free time” buying food, attempting to learn Spanish, putting on theatrical performances for the IB’s hosts, and even developing a friendship with a village goat whom he affectionately dubbed Esmeralda, or “Esmey.”²⁵⁷ Such interactions, made possible by Malofsky’s proximity to Spanish civilians, were pleasant enough for him to remark, “What a war! So far it has been more like a vacation at Kinderland!”²⁵⁸ Eventually, however, he grew anxious to put his training to use. Beginning in late April, his letters frequently conveyed his

Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, April 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, June 8, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. Malofsky’s earliest letters mentioned Albacete, but due to the IB censors, he quickly switched to signing his letters with the nebulous “in a little Spanish town” and indicated at least once that he had changed locations. Tarazona was the major training base developed during the first half of 1937, was nearby Albacete, and was where most of the Washingtons trained. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 146.

²⁵⁶ Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 141.

²⁵⁷ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 6, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, April 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 16, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. The IB disbursed a regular stipend to the volunteers. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 140.

²⁵⁸ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 16, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

expectation that he would depart soon.²⁵⁹ By early June, he was impatient. After receiving word that an acquaintance had died in a bombing, he wrote to Sigel, “It’s like almighty hell, when things like that pop up. You swear, and stomp your feet, and shout ‘When the hell are we gonna get outa here? Did we come here to eat and drink, or to fight?’”²⁶⁰ For Malofsky, the front remained the goal; the town could keep him only so long.

One reason for Malofsky’s dissatisfaction with town life was a lack of opportunities for sex. Whereas Wendorf, writing to his wife, avoided the topic of Spanish women except to assure Grossman that he was uninterested, the “beautiful señoritas” were a constant subject of Malofsky’s letters.²⁶¹ But the señoritas did not reciprocate. Within three weeks of arriving in Spain, Malofsky commented on their disinclination to enter into sexual relations with the foreigners, explaining that there were “many women, but we’re too disciplined—no, that’s wrong. Their slogan is ‘Hands off,’ and that’s that.”²⁶² Malofsky’s restraint perhaps indicates a desire among the Lincolns to project a respectable image to their Spanish hosts. By May 6, however, he had grown frustrated. He spent several paragraphs protesting the fact that in “small town ‘backward’ Spain . . . approaching a girl is like going near dynamite. Marriage is the only solution.”²⁶³ On May 26, punning on the anti-fascist mantra “*No pasarán*” (“They will not pass”), he suggested the slogan

²⁵⁹ Harry Malofsky to Julius Blickstein, April 27, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 2, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Julius Blickstein, May 26, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁶⁰ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, June 4, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁶¹ Harry Malofsky to Julius Blickstein, April 1, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. “Didn’t I tell you that I am sleeping alone until we are together again,” wrote Wendorf in June 1937. Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, October 13, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁶² Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, April 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁶³ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 6, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

“No Fuckaron.”²⁶⁴ Malofsky’s consistent complaints about his inability to “get the wrinkles out” evince genuine disappointment. Any expectation of sex he brought with him from home was thwarted in the cultural context of rural, Catholic Spain. He held out hope, however, that things might change “in a big city like Valencia or Barcelona,” where the volunteers could “find out if we still are men or not.”²⁶⁵ When Malofsky was finally deployed during the Battle of Brunete in July, the promise of the city would stick with him, ultimately providing him an imaginative alternative to war as the landscapes of Jarama had Wendorf.

The Brunete offensive, intended to divert Nationalist forces from their unrelenting siege of Madrid and stop their inroads in the north, proved even more of a failure for the IB than Jarama. Gone were the static trenches: Brunete was open warfare. The Washingtons, tasked with taking Villanueva de la Canada twenty miles outside of the capital city, “found themselves pinned down by machine-gun fire in stifling hundred-degree heat.”²⁶⁶ By the end of the three-week ordeal, 300 members of the Lincoln and Washington Battalions were dead, forcing the merger of the two contingents.²⁶⁷ Malofsky wrote just once while in action; as he put it, “you just can’t sit down in the face of a hail of machine gun bullets to answer mail.”²⁶⁸ His July 16 letter to Sigel represented a dramatic shift in his thinking about the war. The abstract and somewhat idealistic tone of his earlier correspondence—“It’s great!

²⁶⁴ Harry Malofsky to Julius Blickstein, May 26, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁶⁵ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 6, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. This letter also featured a striking implication of homosexual relationships between the volunteers, replicated nowhere else in the letters of Malofsky, Wendorf, or Sigel: “The major problem though is how to keep from going ‘fruit’ altogether. Already the boys are beginning to ogle eyes at each other.”

²⁶⁶ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 141.

²⁶⁷ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 142.

²⁶⁸ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, July 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

I’ve suddenly become greater than I had ever hoped to be”—melted away.²⁶⁹ Now Malofsky knew the concrete horror of war:

[Brunete] seems like nothing but a continuous nightmare. Only the fact that many of the familiar faces of the comrades, whom we loved, are not with us any more makes me realize the reality. . . . Remember those many war books we used to read, and how it used to turn our stomachs, due to the hand of a skilled craftsman? Well, multiply their descriptions a hundred fold, and you still can’t capture it. Who can describe that feeling, when you’re lying flat on your belly and black fascist planes drop eggs all around you; when artillery shells explode so close, that dirt and rocks fall all over your clothes, and you run but 10 yards before the next bomb explodes, because the gunner has an exact range on you. Oh, those shells! One would gladly run into a storm of explosive bullets any time, rather than face the fear of being blown to bits.²⁷⁰

Malofsky’s juxtaposition of narrative depictions of war with its still more horrific reality suggests a certain disillusionment. This was not, as he had indicated previously (albeit somewhat disingenuously), a simple matter of saying, “Bye, Bye, Franco!”²⁷¹ Though he remained committed to the project of the Brigade, insisting that “our victory means too much,” his appetite for the front had vanished, and he was eager to be done: “Nothing but dead muscles can get me out of this fight now.”²⁷² Nor was this dejection purely the product of the heat of battle. Two weeks later, finally resting, he would double down, writing

²⁶⁹ Harry Malofsky to Julius Blickstein, April 1, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁷⁰ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, July 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁷¹ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, April 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁷² Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, July 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

to his friends Julius and Rose Blickstein, “comrades, don’t for a minute think that this war is ‘glorious.’ Every inch of the way is blood and sweat.”²⁷³ This was Malofsky sobered, asserting even, despite the insouciant tone of much of his earlier correspondence, that “I never tried to be silly romantic about the heroic fight we were going into and I’m glad of that.” Indeed, the trials of combat altered his memory of his first months in Spain. For example, the “Sunny Spain” of his first correspondence became unwelcome, “the goddamn gosh awful Spanish sun that burns and burns for hours and hours, that pours the sweat into your eyes and burns them so that you can’t see but five feet in front of you.”²⁷⁴ No longer was life as a recruit in training akin to a “vacation at Kinderland”; in Malofsky’s mind it transformed into “four months of training under strict military obedience.”²⁷⁵ This shift in perspective substantiates Seidman’s claim that “soldiers’ experiences of hunger, cold, and disease on tranquil fronts undermined their desire to continue the war, and protecting their own bodies came to have the highest priority.”²⁷⁶ While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that Malofsky no longer wished to fight or lost sight of his reasons for joining the IB, it is clear that his confidence and dedication faltered as a result of ongoing bodily insecurity and dampened spirits.

As Malofsky’s first taste of battle exposed to him the terror of the war and recast his military experiences in an unfavorable light, he, like Wendorf, began to seek refuge. Malofsky ended his letter from Brunete with the hope that he would soon be granted leave to Madrid: “Boy, have I been waiting for that.”²⁷⁷ He reiterated this sentiment in each of his subsequent notes, once even detailing a dream he had of a Madrid

²⁷³ Harry Malofsky to Julius and Rose Blickstein, July 30, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁷⁴ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, July 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁷⁵ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 16, 1936, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁷⁶ Seidman, *Republic of Egos*, 237.

²⁷⁷ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, July 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

hotel.²⁷⁸ For him, Madrid offered material pleasures, a chance to spend his stipend and “to do it in royal fashion.”²⁷⁹ But more than that, it represented an emotional and psychological respite, a means to “put us again in the perfect frame of mind to go back to the lines.”²⁸⁰ Finally, in mid-August, Malofsky got his wish, a forty-eight-hour leave in the capital. “While I’m out of the lines, I’m not going to write about the lines,” he had promised Sigel a few days earlier. “Let’s get back into the swing of the old time jocular Meloffian letters and see if we can bring back the smiles again.”²⁸¹ He made good on his word. His letter to her on August 16 detailing the brief but eventful excursion was ecstatic. He was “pie eyed and dizzy with the sense of bawdiness, with the feeling of freedom, richness, relaxation and forgetfulness.”²⁸² This latter descriptor especially reveals the extent to which Malofsky used the city as a refuge. Madrid, though always under threat, remained well-defended and thus offered a physical and mental alternative, however fleeting, to the war. It was a piece of Spain that “Franco could never take.”²⁸³

While in the capital Malofsky took advantage of his renewed proximity to Spanish civilian life to do what he could not at the front. “Street cars, subways, theatres, Broadway, cafés, bars, whores, shops, life, gaiety,” he wrote. “Millions of people of all shapes and sizes; men, women, kids, soldiers and officers—too many officers.” Malofsky’s

²⁷⁸ Harry Malofsky to Julius and Rose Blickstein, July 30, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 4, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁷⁹ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 4, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁸⁰ Harry Malofsky to Julius and Rose Blickstein, July 30, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁸¹ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 4, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. “Meloffian” apparently refers to Malofsky’s last name.

²⁸² Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁸³ Harry Malofsky to Julius and Rose Blickstein, August 29, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

agitation at seeing officers underscores his perception of Madrid as an escape: their presence punctured the illusion. His reference to Broadway, too, is noteworthy for the linkage it drew between Spain and New York. Elsewhere Malofsky made this connection explicit: “I was in my Madrid. It was New York once more.” This comparison exemplifies how Malofsky assigned meaning to the city beyond that which was obvious. After just two days, he claimed ownership over “my Madrid”; as a lifelong New Yorker, he was comfortable in its urban craze. Madrid also delivered on his enduring expectation that “a big city” would mean sexual indulgence, and Malofsky was not shy about his “whoring around.” In fact, sex was seemingly his priority while on leave: according to the schedule he outlined for Sigel, he mostly occupied the daytime hours with shopping and drinking, “waiting for Dolores to complete her heavy morning’s business.” He spent his nights at a hotel separate from the rest of his company, for it was “the only place Dolores would consent to go.”²⁸⁴ Malofsky later confirmed that Dolores was a prostitute, and that one night he “got drunk and vicious, and beat up the whore. She deserved it, the bitch; charging me 150 pasetas!”²⁸⁵ The misogyny and violence of this outburst are startling, suggesting that even as Malofsky reveled in Madrid, he held a reductive view of its inhabitants. Certainly, for some volunteers more than others, relationships with Spaniards remained shallow and transactional; unlike the men explored later in this study, Malofsky was no “resident.” Nonetheless, it is notable that he committed, albeit begrudgingly, over a quarter of his 500-peseta budget to Dolores’s services.²⁸⁶ This fact reinforces the centrality of sexual relief to Malofsky’s conception of Madrid as the antithesis of military life.

²⁸⁴ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁸⁵ Harry Malofsky to Julius and Rose Blickstein, August 29, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. Malofsky meant pesetas, the currency of Spain.

²⁸⁶ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

The excitement for action that Malofsky had expressed less than two months prior was nowhere to be found when he was called back to duty from leave. Rather, he wanted only “to get the next battle over with” and was increasingly anxious to return home.²⁸⁷ He was deployed to the Aragon front in late August, helping the Republican Army to capture Quinto before dying during the unsuccessful Battle of Belchite in September.²⁸⁸ In his final letter, he presented himself as a seasoned, desensitized soldier. “What a difference this is from the first time under fire,” he wrote. “The planes no longer bother me, I don’t mind the sun so much . . . I’m a veteran.” Nonetheless, he clung to his impressions of Madrid. Even if Aragon was easier psychologically than Brunete, it was still a “difference from my two days in Madrid.” The end of the letter was yet another extended reflection on the city; Malofsky’s last sentence before signing off informed the Blicksteins that he was sending them a picture he took there.²⁸⁹ To highlight the profound imprint Madrid left on Malofsky is not to downplay the importance of his bravery on the battlefield or the strength of his ideology. On the contrary, he stressed that the anti-fascist spirit of the capital, “despite my drunkenness [sic], left its lasting impression on my heart.”²⁹⁰ But urban Spain, both in anticipation and actuality, was a fundamental part of Malofsky’s broader experience precisely because it stood in contrast to the front lines. His idealized notion of the city was first a tantalizing prospect and then a nostalgic anchor that enabled him to weather the war.

Paul Wendorf, Ebro River, July–August 1938

²⁸⁷ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 16, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁸⁸ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 28, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; “Belchite 1937 Killed in Action: Harry Meloff,” broadside, box 1, folder 12, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

²⁸⁹ Harry Malofsky to Julius and Rose Blickstein, box 1, folder 3, August 29, 1937.

²⁹⁰ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, August 28, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

As Malofsky fired his last rounds at Belchite, Wendorf was recuperating from the front. His correspondence over the next six months, during which the war was a distant reality, is explored in the second half of this article for the light it sheds on how some Lincolns came to understand Spain as something beyond a source of refuge. But in the spring of 1938, the Nationalists reignited their campaign in Aragon. By mid-April, they had captured territory stretching westward all the way to the Mediterranean Sea, isolating the Republican positions in Catalonia from those to the south.²⁹¹ The situation increasingly dire, Wendorf reported to an unidentified artillery training base to receive, for the first time, proper military instruction.²⁹² Then, in May, he officially rejoined the Lincoln Battalion and was redeployed.²⁹³ One of the longest-tenured volunteers remaining in Spain, he commented on how circumstances had changed since his arrival over a year earlier. Most obviously, so many Lincolns had died, defected, or been sent home after their initial service that the battalion was now predominantly Spanish. Wendorf was not alarmed by this development; in fact, he was excited because “I read Spanish pretty well now, but am not yet accustomed to speaking it, so I now have an opportunity for really learning it.”²⁹⁴ Moreover, in his observations of Spain’s natural elements, Wendorf was now able to draw multi-year comparisons, writing on July 16 that “the sun is hot, but there is just enough breeze from off the Pyrenees to keep the weather bearable—it’s not the overwhelming furnace heat of last summer near Madrid.”²⁹⁵ Wendorf’s letters from this period recall Malofsky’s description of himself as a “veteran.” The front was nothing new to him. Yet Wendorf

²⁹¹ Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 519–521, 533.

²⁹² Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, March 28, 1938, box 1, folder 9, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁹³ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, May 5, 1938, box 1, folder 10, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁹⁴ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, May 12, 1938, box 1, folder 10, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁹⁵ Paul Wendorf to Sophie, July 16, 1938, box 1, folder 12, Paul Wendorf Papers.

could not have anticipated just what the coming weeks had in store, an ambitious military effort against which not “any of the previous campaigns of this war, or of any other, could compete.”²⁹⁶

Between July 24 and 25, the Lincolns, along with nearly 80,000 other Republican soldiers, crossed the Ebro River in Catalonia via rowboats and pontoon bridges.²⁹⁷ The Battle of the Ebro would spell the end of the Republic: by November, 7,150 Republican soldiers would die, 60,000 would suffer injury, and 20,000 would be taken prisoner, sealing the outcome of the war.²⁹⁸ Historians generally hold, however, that the crossing itself accomplished its objective of temporarily drawing Nationalist forces away from Valencia.²⁹⁹ Still, for the soldiers paddling and marching for their lives across the open water without artillery cover, effectively bait for Franco, the success of the maneuver seemed far from a guarantee.³⁰⁰ By now, Wendorf longed to return to his wife; he consented to risk dying in a river more than 3,000 miles away purely because “the critical situation at present overrules all individual problems.”³⁰¹ For him, the Ebro was the culmination of 18 months of service, the “strange combination of the epic and idiotic, the base and sublime, this exalting and horrible thing. . . . It cannot be characterized by any word, or phrase, or sentence, because it is a thing that has in it everything that has ever happened or can happen.”³⁰² Lacking an adequate word, phrase, or sentence, he authored a dozen pages. His

²⁹⁶ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 8, 1938, box 1, folder 13, Paul Wendorf Papers.

²⁹⁷ Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2007), 289.

²⁹⁸ Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 291; Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 201.

²⁹⁹ Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 287–292; Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, 199–202; Giles Tremlett, *The International Brigades: Fascism, Freedom and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 477.

³⁰⁰ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 198.

³⁰¹ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, July 1, 1938, box 1, folder 12, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³⁰² Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 8, 1938, box 1, folder 13, Paul Wendorf Papers.

August 8 letter to Grossman, his longest—and last—stands as the single strongest testament to Spain’s role as refuge to be found in his correspondence.

At the Ebro, Wendorf felt the violence of the war more directly than he ever had before. The letter, written in rapid, present-tense fragments, made palpable the immense stress of the crossing:

We still had about a kilometer to travel to the river. Fascist artillery from across the river pounded at us on the way—march, everybody drops at the swish of a shell, march and drop, march and drop. . . . Near the river, a huge, swift fascist bomber comes down low, drops its load, misses us, machine guns us, misses. More fascist bombers. In between bombers we move. Suddenly on the shore, bedlam. . . . A couple of rowboats were hit by machine gun bullets from the airplanes, full of water. We get in a boat; I grab the oars which are tied to the gunwales by rope. A rope comes untied and we drift in the river for a quarter of a minute while it is being retied, and we wonder if the next bomber will find us in the center of the river. A 100 yards of river [sic], and we are on the other bank.³⁰³

Wendorf continued by describing the days after the crossing, during which the army drove beyond the river in an attempt to take the provincial capital of Gandesa: “We ate canned food, had diarrhea; the smell of the dead was everywhere; no sleep for a week.”³⁰⁴ So arresting was this account that partial versions of it were published in *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Volunteer for Liberty*, the publication of the

³⁰³ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 8, 1938, box 1, folder 13, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³⁰⁴ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 8, 1938, box 1, folder 13, Paul Wendorf Papers; Tremlett, *The International Brigades*, 471.

IB.³⁰⁵ But after eight pages, Wendorf cut his narration short. “I can’t go on forever,” he wrote. “Just a couple of more things.” In the closing passages of his letter, he turned his attention away from the battle and toward the “Miracle of the Grape”:

Up to 2 or 3 days ago the grapes were green and sour—I would chew them when I had no water, or was sleepy, the acid was a temporary stimulant. But now the grapes are beginning to ripen—the “Miracle of the Grape”—I think I’ve heard the phrase before, but I thought it referred to wine. Now, I know what the miracle is. You see, grapes don’t [sic] ripen little by little. They ripen suddenly; overnight the acid turns into sugar. . . . You pick one blue, sweet grape out of the bunch; a few hours later there will be more ripe ones on the same bunch, the next day still more. . . . The “Miracle” is achieved—we swallow hundreds of the beautiful fruit, grateful for the sugar, which our worn-out bodies cry for, the new fresh life which has suddenly come to us.³⁰⁶

Amid the most dramatic episode of the war, Wendorf documented grapes. Initially surprising, this choice becomes understandable in the context of Spain as a refuge. During the Ebro offensive, Wendorf relied more than ever on small outlets for escape. The grapes provided obvious energy, hydration, and a change of pace from packaged food. But they also brought psychological relief. Indeed, he had written in anticipation of the ripening less than a week prior; when the “miracle” finally occurred, it was all the more remarkable in that it contrasted

³⁰⁵ “Letters to the Editor: The Fighting on the Ebro Front,” *The Manchester Guardian* (Manchester, United Kingdom), August 23, 1938, 18; Paul Wendorf, “A Pair of Pants,” 3.

³⁰⁶ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 8, 1938, box 1, folder 13, Paul Wendorf Papers.

starkly with the brutality and futility of a losing fight.³⁰⁷ As tensions mounted, so did the need for their release. The August 8 letter fits into a larger pattern of paying closest attention to Spain’s natural elements at moments of intensity or trauma, evident from Wendorf’s earliest correspondence. Spain could deliver joy at what would appear to be the unlikeliest of junctures.

Wendorf died shortly after sending his August 8 letter, likely while defending the so-called “Hill 666” in the Serra de Pàndols from Italian and German aerial bombardment.³⁰⁸ This was the final military action of the Brigade; as it took place, Spanish Prime Minister Juan Negrín, in an attempt to win favor from the non-interventionist governments, announced that the IB would be disbanded.³⁰⁹ Like that of Malofsky, Wendorf’s final correspondence illustrates the extent to which Spain provided vital mental shelter from its own civil war. Both men came to Spain expecting to rout the fascists; instead, they encountered a protracted, profoundly violent, and emotionally crushing war of attrition. Historians have noted the turmoil this turn of events caused the Lincolns. Carroll, for example, observed the puzzling “complexity of human responses to the hazards and opportunities of war. Heroes of one day might appear irresolute the next, in a curious cycle of emotional intensity.”³¹⁰ While he highlighted the desertion of many volunteers after each battle, he was at a loss to explain why some chose to stay even if their ideological resolve was thoroughly shaken.³¹¹ Attachments to Spanish landscapes and cities, of course, were not solely responsible for Wendorf’s and Malofsky’s decisions to keep up the fight as many of their comrades fled. But their letters, by documenting Spain’s role as a source of refuge, help clarify the

³⁰⁷ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 2, 1938, box 1, folder 13, Paul Wendorf Papers. It is possible that this letter was written on August 3; Wendorf himself was unsure of the exact date.

³⁰⁸ Landis, *Death in the Olive Groves*, 215; Tremlett, *The International Brigades*, 489–491.

³⁰⁹ Tremlett, *The International Brigades*, 502.

³¹⁰ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 164.

³¹¹ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 164–165.

“curious” nature of the soldiers’ psychological states while at the front, their ideological fuel dwindling. Though they were drawn to different elements of their host country, both men used Spain to alleviate their discomfort, boredom, and trauma. In this sense, Spain was more than just a battlefield; it was also a way to move beyond the battle. It is difficult to imagine the Lincolns retaining the necessary morale otherwise.

Spain as Residence

If historians have overlooked important dimensions of the Lincolns’ experiences at the front, they have largely forgotten that the Lincolns did more than just fight. As Seidman put it, “Spaniards often tell stories and anecdotes about nonaggressive situations during the civil war, but the subject has never acquired the dignity or weight to stimulate a scholarly written history.”³¹² The trenches did not define the foreign volunteers. As new international soldiers and Spanish conscripts filled out the ranks of the Republican Army, some of the original members of the Lincoln Battalion were granted leave.³¹³ Moreover, few IB soldiers participated in the pivotal Battle of Teruel between December 1937 and February 1938, which resulted in a decisive blow to the Republican Army.³¹⁴ During this period, many volunteers worked outside of military service.³¹⁵ Wendorf became a historian of the Brigade. He spent the autumn and winter of 1937–38 in Spanish towns, including in Albacete, where the IB was based. In these months, when the front was not his immediate reality, Wendorf could appreciate the richness of Spanish civilian life, even coming to view Spain as something of a second home. Meanwhile, not all of the volunteers who arrived to reinforce the Lincoln Battalion were as impatient for action as Malofsky. Paul Sigel, Malofsky’s friend, valued his time in training for

³¹² Seidman, *Republic of Egos*, 10.

³¹³ Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 126.

³¹⁴ Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 504–516; Tremlett, *The International Brigades*, 409.

³¹⁵ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, September 29, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers.

the connections it allowed him to build with the people of Tarazona. These connections ultimately upended the reductive preconceptions he held about Spaniards. For Wendorf and Sigel, Spain was a community, a legitimate residence. Consequently, the men developed a deep appreciation of the society, culture, and above all, human beings for which they fought—an appreciation that bolstered their ideological motives.

Paul Wendorf, Albares and Albacete, August 1937–March 1938

Paul Wendorf’s long-awaited relief in August 1937 brought a dramatic shift in his surroundings. Between then and March 1938, he traveled to several towns, some of which he named in his letters.³¹⁶ The bulk of his time was split between the village Albares outside of Madrid, where he rested for his first month away from battle, and Albacete.³¹⁷ Upon settling in the latter in September, he took a job with the newly founded IB Historical Commission interviewing returning soldiers, writing pamphlets on topics such as the “Life of the Americans in Spain,” and producing a radio show.³¹⁸ His knowledge of the fortunes of the Republican Army was no longer firsthand but instead was filtered through word of mouth and newspaper reports. His general impressions of the war stuck with him: he complained about the “childish” accounts of foreign correspondents covering the conflict, “as if it were a great big picnic with the fascists running as soon as we showed our noses” rather than “the hell and the dirt I’ve

³¹⁶ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, September 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, March 12, 1938, box 1, folder 9, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³¹⁷ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 5, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, September 29, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³¹⁸ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, September 29, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, October 13, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, December 5, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Paul Wendorf Papers.

lived through.”³¹⁹ This rebuke echoed an earlier letter in which Wendorf criticized Ernest Hemingway for drawing “too freely on his imagination” in his coverage of the front, hypothesizing that the author was “either cockeyed-drunk or deliberately gypping the ‘Times’ out of a fat salary.”³²⁰ Nonetheless, life as an inactive volunteer, as Wendorf assured Grossman, was mostly safe.³²¹ “I have been loafing around all this time taking life easy and eating the best food I’ve had so far in Spain,” he wrote on August 28 from a hospital in Albares where he was recovering from jaundice. “I have also become pretty soft from the month of inactivity . . . after those strenuous 3 weeks in July, when we could never get more than a few hours sleep at a time.”³²² Of course, the war engulfed the entire country, but neither Albares nor Albacete was the site of active hostilities. The front became distant both physically and psychologically.

As he began to enjoy relative peace, Wendorf in turn viewed Spain as more than a mere escape from war. He continued to write about nature, as when he traveled along a coastal highway and “saw really beautiful scenery—mountainous country, with the most fertile valleys of Spain in between.”³²³ But such observations were fewer and further between now that he was immersed in civilian life. It is unsurprising that Wendorf previously sought refuge primarily in the rich visuals of the environment: the trenches were characterized by periods of intense quiet and, especially as supply lines deteriorated late in the war, bland

³¹⁹ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, October 13, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²⁰ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, May 5, 1937, box 1, folder 2, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²¹ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, October 13, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²² Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 28, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²³ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, September 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers.

food.³²⁴ The towns, meanwhile, offered no shortage of sounds and tastes. Wendorf found flamenco music, for example, to be “a lot of fun.” While in Albacete, he frequented performances, reveling particularly in the “pauses every now and then for the audience to yell ‘Ola! Olé!’”³²⁵ Spanish cuisine, too, was the subject of many letters. On August 15, he described his encounter with the food of Albares: “Muggie, try this—an omelet containing fried onions and boiled potatoes cut into small pieces, the onions and potatoes being prepared beforehand. . . . It’s a TORTILLA, and I have one every few days in a private home in this little town, for a few pesetas.”³²⁶

In addition to the enthusiasm Wendorf acquired for Spanish dance and cuisine, these passages evince a sense of stability. At Jarama, Wendorf’s location was always subject to change. Resting in Albares, however, he expressed no urgency to leave, and when he agreed to the job as Brigade historian in September, he knew that it would mean staying in Albacete for a term of four months.³²⁷ For the first time, he felt rooted to his place. The flamenco shows and village meals were regular, dependable parts of Wendorf’s existence rather than momentary escapes from the brutality of war. And they were real rather than imaginative. Unlike the olive trees of no man’s land, the tortillas actually existed outside of the context of combat; they were not “scarred and distorted by machine-gun fire.” This return to the freedom of civilian life after harrowing months in action led Wendorf to remark that “I’ve learned that there’s a hell of a lot of fun in just being alive—the experiences out of which I’ve learned that of course

³²⁴ Paul Wendorf to Sherry, June 8, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, June 24, 1938, box 1, folder 11, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²⁵ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, November 25, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²⁶ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 15, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²⁷ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 28, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, September 29, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers.

weren't amazing while they lasted."³²⁸ Moreover, his exhortation that Grossman—"Muggie"—make a tortilla suggests that he to some extent had adopted Spanish culture as his own: he enjoyed the dish so much that he wanted his wife to learn it. The day after he mentioned the tortilla, he wrote excitedly that a woman in the village was going to cook him a Spanish "*chicken dinner*. It will be the first chicken since leaving New York."³²⁹ In September, some particularly good ice cream caused him to liken the seaside city of Alicante, where he was for a brief vacation, to "a refined Coney Island."³³⁰ Wendorf, then, viewed his new setting through the lens of home. Though Spain was not a perfect replacement for New York, it offered familiarity, permanency, and emotional fulfillment that the trenches could not.

Wendorf did not go so far as to disown his true home: as the months passed, Grossman increasingly agitated for him to return to the U.S., and he expressed his regret that he could not.³³¹ At the same time, he was invested in his project at Albacete, writing in December that "of course I've been here a long time now, but there must also be judged what I am doing here, and the availability of people to take my place. I have learned a great deal. . . . To step out before I have finished certain things would mean that what I have done in the last few months would have to be duplicated in large part."³³² Wendorf was clearly motivated by a sense of duty to the IB, but equally important were the relationships he had built with Spanish townspeople. Even if they were occasioned, for instance, by a craving for a home-cooked tortilla, such relationships were more than transactional. In his August 16 letter from

³²⁸ Paul Wendorf to Sherry, December 13, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³²⁹ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 16, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers. Wendorf underlined "chicken dinner," rendered here in italics.

³³⁰ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, September 11, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³³¹ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, November 25, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Paul Wendorf Papers; Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, February 7, 1938, box 1, folder 8, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³³² Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, December 5, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Paul Wendorf Papers.

Albares, Wendorf marveled at how “the whole village turned out to watch” a boxing match put on by the foreign volunteers and to donate to the Socorro Rojo, a communist aid agency that, incidentally, helped coordinate the IB’s mail system. He also described a parade consisting of “small boys and old men (most of the young men here are in the army) who carried olive branches and yelled ‘*Viva La Republica.*’”³³³ In January, he recounted giving a bar of soap Grossman had mailed him to a 15-year-old named Felix Navarro. “His father was killed on the front a year ago and his brother is an officer in the army,” Wendorf noted.³³⁴ These quotidian interactions with Spanish civilians impressed upon him the active role the Spanish populace played in the preservation of the Republic. Thus although they may have had no direct bearing on his ultimate aim of defeating fascism or even his shorter-term historical work, they shaped his understanding of the conflict. Whereas his letters from the front centered on the ever-present enemy, those from Albares and Albacete focused on the people resisting that enemy by every means short of picking up a gun.

More than a mere shift in emphasis, this growing appreciation for the contributions and struggles of the Spanish people engendered in Wendorf a sense that they were his equals. This was not immediate. On November 7, still early in his time in Albacete, he published a report for the Historical Commission, a copy of which he sent to Grossman. The purpose of the document, produced in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution and the first anniversary of the Nationalist siege of Madrid, was to highlight the importance of Comintern organizing to the Republican cause and to situate Spain within a global context of proletarian struggle. It painted a picture of a backward, helpless country “with its 50% illiteracy, its one-handed wooden plows, its mid-nineteenth century railroad equipment, the isolation from the civilized world in which the monarchy kept it.”

³³³ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, August 16, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Paul Wendorf Papers. The Socorro Rojo was listed in letters’ return addresses.

³³⁴ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, January 8, 1938, box 1, folder 7, Paul Wendorf Papers.

That Spain had become “proud and confident of its power” since the beginning of the war was due to “the help given by the Soviet Union.” The savior narrative betrayed a lack of consideration for the sacrifices of the Spanish citizenry; Wendorf even included an anecdote about a man he met on the train thanking him profusely for his help.³³⁵ This patronizing outlook was not confined to Wendorf’s public-facing writing. In one of the last letters he penned from the front, Wendorf described a Spanish woman as “simple” for asking after her husband, who was a member of a different brigade.³³⁶ Rather than empathize with her longing or her precarity, Wendorf picked out her lack of knowledge of military organization. His words conveyed a marked feeling of superiority. But over the course of the winter, as he talked, worked, and ate tortillas with Spaniards, his tone changed. From a training site on the cusp of redeployment in March 1938, he would articulate admiration rather than condescension. “In the face of a great demonstration of the power of the fascists, the people here are responding in a great surging wave,” he wrote. “The kind of thing that is arising is something that I thought almost crushed by the burdens of hardship the war has brought. . . . I would feel terrible if I were anywhere else but Spain at the time that these things were happening.”³³⁷

Embedded in the everyday life of Spaniards, then, Wendorf dropped his assumptions of them as a backward and listless people disconnected from their own civil war. He came to enjoy living in Spain, seeing himself as an ally and a member of a community, a resident among neighbors. And he discovered there a second inspiration to fight—one far more immediate than that which had wrested him from home over a year prior. His writings reflected a

³³⁵ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, November 7, 1937, box 1, folder 5, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³³⁶ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, July 16, 1937, box 1, folder 3, Paul Wendorf Papers.

³³⁷ Paul Wendorf to Leona Grossman Wendorf, March 28, 1938, box 1, folder 9, Paul Wendorf Papers.

subtle shift in his thinking: if when he left the U.S. he intended to participate in a war against international fascism that just so happened to take place in Spain, now he understood himself to be fighting a war for and alongside the people of Spain that had obvious implications for the broader anti-fascist agenda.

Paul Sigel, June–October 1937

Paul Sigel reached Spain in late June 1937. He was deployed during the Aragon offensive in September and served in the signal corps with the predominantly Canadian Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.³³⁸ His extant letters, however, mostly document his time in training. Superficially, Sigel’s story was similar to that of his friend Harry Malofsky. The two men, both twenty-one-year-old New Yorkers, went through rigorous instruction and drilling, Malofsky probably and Sigel definitely in Tarazona.³³⁹ Though they did not ever meet in Spain, they kept up with each other’s affairs through mutual acquaintances, and both corresponded with Miriam Sigel, Paul’s sister.³⁴⁰ Relative to Malofsky, however, Sigel expressed less of a desire to rush to the front, challenging Rosenstone’s claim that volunteers were desperate to escape Tarazona. Sigel’s letters written between June and September demonstrate that the Lincolns were capable of forging strong emotional bonds with the people and culture of Spain—of being “residents”—even before they were deployed, and even when their conditions were less stable than Wendorf’s were in Albacete.

Sigel’s earliest descriptions of life in training echoed Malofsky’s motif of a “vacation at Kinderland.” “Just had the usual siesta we have every day,” he wrote to his mother Hannah on June 26. “I’m afraid I’m

³³⁸ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, September 11, 1937, box 1, folder 8, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, July 3, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³³⁹ Brooks, “Commoners in Spain.”

³⁴⁰ Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, June 27, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers; Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, June 19, 1937, in *Madrid 1937*, 156.

going to get fat and slothful.”³⁴¹ Yet he seemed pleased with life in Tarazona. Unlike his friend, whenever Sigel conveyed a wish to head into combat, he tempered it, as on August 29: “We’re still here in town (and impatient as hell to get going, though we have every faith in our IB leadership and Spanish Republican Army generalship).”³⁴² Moreover, when he received word that a close friend had perished in battle, he grieved, but the tragedy was not the same galvanizing force that it had been for Malofsky; Sigel finished that letter with, “I really never felt better in my life.”³⁴³ He felt that he had “found the work I like” in Spain, as opposed to his life in the U.S. as a college student with two jobs, when he was “always so unsatisfied.”³⁴⁴ Indeed, while his early letters, like those of Malofsky and Wendorf, featured a number of comparisons to New York, they became scarcer as time went on.³⁴⁵ On September 11, he reacted with surprise to Miriam asking if he regretted leaving America: “What? Here I am visiting a swell country with a bunch of swell comrades good food, good smokes + chocolate (much too occasionally)—beautiful women (though it doesn’t do us any good)—why I’m having a swell time.”³⁴⁶ For the most part, then, Sigel was happily entrenched in Tarazona.

More than anything else, relationships with locals were the source of Sigel’s contentment. His daily routine, outlined in an August letter to Hannah, involved frequent exchanges:

³⁴¹ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, June 26, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁴² Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, August 29, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁴³ Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, July 24, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁴⁴ Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, August 19, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁴⁵ For an example of such a comparison, see Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, June 26, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁴⁶ Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, September 11, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

Right after dinner, we visit Maria at the doughnut shop, and Josephine at the cookie and candy shop—we can amply supply ourselves with the six pesetas a day that we receive here (This pay was even more of a surprise to us when we first came than it will probably be to you). Also, there are stalls laid out in the main square that have hundreds of useful knickknacks—a regular 5 + 10 ct. store. . . . The wine in this town is really good if it's gotten in the right place. For instance, I was in the house of one of the townspeople here, and we had some wine, red wine, and really delicious. . . . In the evening the whole town turns out and strolls up and down the main street and thru the town square, and we of course, now a real part of the town life stroll up and down with them.³⁴⁷

The intimate interactions Sigel described with Spaniards whom he knew by name are more reminiscent of Wendorf's letters from the autumn and winter than of Malofsky's restless ones from training. Sigel believed himself "a real part of the town," finishing the letter with, "I'll sure be sorry to leave our little Spanish town."³⁴⁸ Similar to Wendorf, Sigel's sense of belonging was founded on the fact that his relationships with the Spanish people went beyond simple transactions. For example, as he wrote on July 12, "it's been the custom for some time now, for the entire battalion to go out every Sunday morning and assist the local popular front committee and the farmers around here in the fields."³⁴⁹ Of course, the soldiers benefited from a robust crop, but this dynamic suggests that Wendorf saw himself as a participant in the community interests of Tarazona. Crucially, such informal interactions between the volunteers and the local populace were sites of cultural exchange. Like

³⁴⁷ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, August 13, 1937, box 1, folder 8, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. "Dinner" here referred to a midday meal.

³⁴⁸ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, August 13, 1937, box 1, folder 8, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁴⁹ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, July 14, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

Wendorf, Sigel often dined in the homes of the townspeople. His most consistent host was Maria, the owner of the doughnut shop, who lived nearby the barracks. “Her father, brother and sweetheart are all at the front, but the work is still continued by the rest of the family—as brave and courageous a family as there has ever been,” he wrote. “There’s where we learn most of our Spanish with our ‘*Como se llamo,*’ ‘How do you say,’ and then pointing to the thing.”³⁵⁰

Sigel prioritized learning the language of his Spanish compatriots more than Malofsky or even Wendorf. What began as something as a joke—“We roam thru the stores with our English-Spanish dictionaries, incoherently mumbling to the storekeeper for awhile, and then, of course, assist each other by pointing”—quickly turned into a passion.³⁵¹ A month after his arrival, Sigel wrote that “life goes on pretty much as normal—training hard, trying to study Spanish. Incidentally its [sic] more difficult to get into Spanish than I thought it would be, because we are with Americans practically all the time. But I can almost understand a Spanish newspaper now, so I’m getting along.”³⁵² Malofsky, too, had complained to Miriam that the presence of his fellow volunteers slowed the progression of his Spanish.³⁵³ But Sigel persisted, and by the end of August, he had interacted enough with some of the Spanish recruits to report that he was “really getting an excellent chance to learn the language, to understand Spain—to learn from and teach our Spanish comrades.”³⁵⁴ This account underscores the extent to which Sigel regarded language learning as more than just a pastime, but as a crucial means of building bridges between him and

³⁵⁰ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, August 13, 1937, box 1, folder 8, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. Sigel of course meant “*Como se llama.*”

³⁵¹ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, July 14, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁵² Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, July 28, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁵³ Harry Malofsky to Miriam Sigel, May 6, 1937, box 1, folder 4, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁵⁴ Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, August 29, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

his Spanish hosts. Speaking Spanish helped him shop, but it also helped him trade ideas and information. In one of his first and only surviving letters from the front, he wrote proudly that “with the aid of a dictionary, I can read the Spanish papers sufficiently well to understand what it’s all about. And we get the Spanish *periodicos cada dia* (newspapers every day).”³⁵⁵ That Sigel consistently endeavored to read Spanish papers was no doubt dictated in part by necessity, but it also reflected a desire to understand the events of the war from perspectives outside of those available in the English IB publications—literally, to be on the same page as the Spaniards.

Ultimately, Sigel’s engagement with civilian Spain caused him to rethink many of the minimizing impressions he carried with him to the country. He was more self-aware in this respect than Wendorf, explicitly noting many instances in which his expectations were subverted for the better. Sigel had assumed, for example, that rural Spain would be squalid, but shortly after arriving in Tarazona he expressed surprise that the local children with whom he often played—“the cutest you ever saw”—were actually “very clean, as is practically everything about the town.”³⁵⁶ He also joined Wendorf in relinquishing his belief that the people of Spain lagged behind modernity, describing in his August 3 letter their old-fashioned method of “separating the chaff from the wheat by throwing them into the air and letting the wind blow away the chaff” and expressing with amazement that “they know what modern machinery is.” Not just that, but the locals valued and sacrificed for the good of the Republic: “When one first sees them they seem like very simple people, and the war and world conditions seem very far away. But as we talk to them we discover that they know what it’s all about. Every family has at least one member at the front—most

³⁵⁵ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, October 4, 1937, box 1, folder 8, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers. Translation added for clarity.

³⁵⁶ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, July 14, 1937, box 1, folder 7, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

of them more than one. The war is very close to them.”³⁵⁷ When in the towns of Spain, then, Sigel and Wendorf both felt at some remove from the war—and indeed from the broader “world conditions” that had motivated them to volunteer in the first place. This is what made them residents, whereas Malofsky, anxious for the front, was content only skimming the surface of civilian life, taking from what it what he needed, an ideal to return to later. But because that remove entailed living in intimate proximity to the Spanish, Sigel and Wendorf were forced to reckon with their presumptions of simplicity and backwardness. The absence of young men and women from their midst and the daily struggle of the families those men and women left behind proved to the volunteers the spuriousness of their assessments. As Sigel wrote to his sister on August 19:

Say, Mim, you’d love the kids here, a lively vivacious energetic bunch—also a serious + intelligent group that realizes very definitely what is going on, what part their families are playing in the struggle and what part they themselves play. For example, every morning at 5:30, these kids, ranging in age from 9–14 (also the older men), pile onto one of the Popular Front trucks and are off for the fields. They realize that the country must eat if the fascists are to be beaten. . . . Of course almost all of the older young fellows are at the front, and the older young women are teaching or nursing, or in some other way helping to win the war. The future will rest on all these young shoulders, + they are bravely taking up the burden now.³⁵⁸

While Sigel’s tone remained somewhat condescending, it is clear that the populace’s support of the war effort transformed his conception of the country. He realized that the Spanish were not passive recipients of

³⁵⁷ Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, August 3, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁵⁸ Paul Sigel to Miriam Sigel, August 19, 1937, box 1, folder 6, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

the Lincolns' aid. He even gestured to the future, revealing an investment in the country that extended beyond the Civil War, an understanding of Spain as more than just a "dress rehearsal for the inevitable European war." On the eve of his deployment, Sigel would reiterate the sentiment in striking terms: "Our Spanish comrades are . . . the youth of the new Spain that is already being built even with the war going on, and their enthusiasm and vitality augurs well for the results of the war and the future of our country (Spain)."³⁵⁹ Sigel's use of the word "comrades," typically reserved for fellow IB members, suggests that he, like Wendorf, had come to view the Spaniards as his equals. Indeed, Spain had become Sigel's country, a fact he clarified in the parenthetical addition at the end of the paragraph lest his mother be confused. This startling assertion confirms the deep emotional, almost patriotic attachment he developed to his host nation. He would never return to his original home, dying during the so-called "Great Retreats" from Franco's campaign in Aragon in April 1938.³⁶⁰ Along with Wendorf, Sigel in his final days was a resident of Spain with a firm understanding of the stakes of the war for those in his immediate proximity. He was committed to stopping fascism before it spread elsewhere, but also to the well-being of his adoptive country.

Conclusion

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade deserves all the original, incisive, and even laudatory historical treatment it has received. The Lincolns, presciently identifying Spain as the first theater of a much larger war against fascism, fought ably and valiantly. They did so as volunteers, in direct defiance of their government. They were remarkable in ways not discussed here, such as being the first American military unit to integrate Black and white soldiers.³⁶¹ But ideology alone could not sustain the Lincolns, and Spain was more than just a symbolic or even

³⁵⁹ Paul Sigel to Hannah Sigel, September 2, 1937, box 1, folder 8, Miriam Sigel Friedlander Papers.

³⁶⁰ Brooks, "Commoners in Spain."

³⁶¹ Graham, *The Spanish Civil War*, 45.

literal battlefield. Examining contemporaneous sources created by the Lincolns—as opposed to more formal journalistic accounts occasioned at least in part by political or commercial interests, or memoirs and oral retellings influenced by the course of history—reveals the centrality of the country itself to the volunteers’ perspectives. For Wendorf, Malofsky, and Sigel, Spain was not in the least abstract. It was an environment both bucolic and urban; it was a novel, vibrant culture worth preserving; it was flesh and blood.

Contacts with the Spanish countryside, cityscapes, foodways, music, language, and people were much more than ornamental details in a story of heroic military exploits and geopolitical machinations. Rather, they were the basis of historically consequential connections between the soldiers and their setting. Spain was a bulwark against the physical, emotional, and psychological devastation of the war. For the volunteers who became truly embedded there, it was also a space of belonging, a site of cultural and lingual exchange, and above all, a lesson in the strivings, sacrifices, and humanity of the Spaniards, those civilians of the civil war. The relative inattention to ideology and politics in the letters of the three men, especially as the war progressed, is meaningful. It is not that the Lincolns lost sight of the broad significance they correctly assigned to the conflict, or even that the ideological dimension of their project should be minimized in historiography. But when they dug their boots into the Spanish soil, the volunteers found they required more to interpret and indeed survive their circumstances. As refuge and residence, Spain provided them comfort and hope that mere belief in a cause could not, and it gave human substance to the ideologies that galvanized them to leave home and, all too frequently, lay down their lives.

Future work building on the foundation laid here could examine the letters of the many hundreds of Lincolns whose voices remain absent from the literature. It would also be fruitful to consider non-epistolary sources. The sketchbooks of Meredith Graham, a volunteer from New York who served from March 1937 until his death in action in July, contain many vivid drawings that depict in an entirely new way the

inseparability of the Lincolns’ Spanish surroundings from their military undertakings (see Appendix A).³⁶² Widening the lens, in all conflicts motivated by ideology—which is to say all conflicts—the quotidian motivations, local relationships, and unexpected meanings soldiers encounter are at risk of being subsumed by grander narratives. This is especially true in so-called “proxy wars” in which the venue is assumed to be less important than the international implications of the events that take place there. The Spanish Civil War may qualify as such; certainly, the brutal wars of the 1950s and 1960s that saw the interests of the “Western powers” and the Soviet Union once again pitted against each other do. These, then, could be the focus of analysis to come. Finally, the “transnational turn,” as Hugo García has termed it, would imply that any interaction between a foreign soldier and a civilian occurs on a two-way street. Probing Spanish sources to ascertain the impact the Lincolns had on the residents of Albacete, Tarazona, and Madrid would be a worthy endeavor.

In any of these cases, if our aim is to understand conflict, we would do well to heed engagements between people and their place.

³⁶² Albin Ragner, unpublished memoir, in “Albin Ragner: An Unpublished Memoir,” by Chris Brooks and Lisa Clemmer, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, February 27, 2013, <https://albavolunteer.org/2013/02/albin-ragner-an-unpublished-memoir/>. See Meredith Graham, sketchbook drawings, box 1, Meredith Sydnor (Syd) Graham Drawings, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University (hereafter referred to as Meredith Sydnor (Syd) Graham Drawings).

Appendix A: Photos and images
Sketchbooks of Meredith Sydnor “Syd” Graham³⁶³

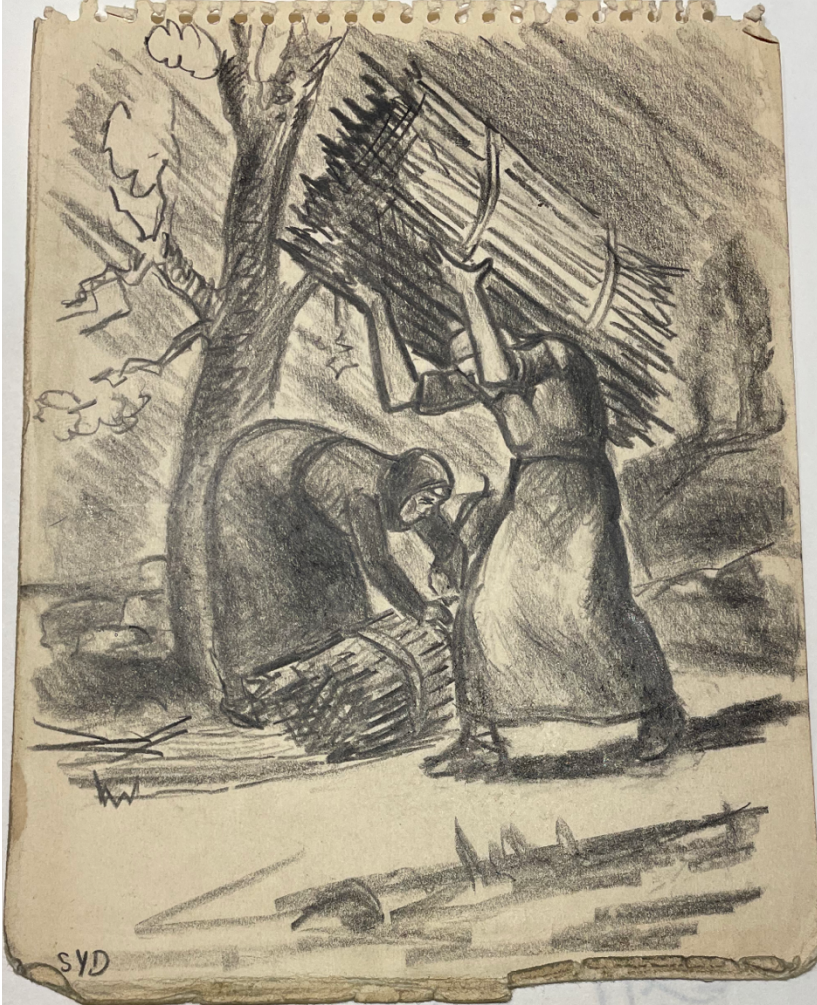


Image 1. Depiction of Spaniards in Catalonia handling hay bales.

³⁶³ Meredith Graham, sketchbook drawings, box 1, Meredith Sydnor (Syd) Graham Drawings.



Image 2. Various scenes of Spanish civilian life including an "I.B. Bathroom" with the caption "Feed Franco Here."

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Prim and Proper:

Phyllis Schlafly's Performance of Womanhood in the STOP ERA Campaign, 1972–1982

Behind the podium at the 1976 Republican Convention in Kansas City, Phyllis Schlafly spoke with graceful vigor. Her sharp shoulders pulled taught across a modest, white and polka dot silk blouse, while her golden hair reposed in a meticulously coiffed halo to frame her ever-smiling face. Schlafly's delicate hands pressed firmly into the wooden podium, as she preached to a sea of admiring women, whose necks cradled pearls, decorous garments flaunted red STOP ERA buttons, and whose equally delicate hands hoisted signs into the air. “ABORT ERA”³⁶⁴ some of the roaring crowd's signs declared, while others proclaimed, “CHILDREN NEED LOVE NOT DAYCARE.... STOP ERA.”³⁶⁵ STOP, here, did not just mean halt. It meant Stop Taking Our Privileges. These were Schlafly's women.

Phyllis Schlafly is one of the most infamous grassroots conservative agitators of the 1970s, as she has been credited with almost single-handedly halting the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Before Schlafly entered the political arena to take down the ERA, its eventual ratification seemed inevitable. On March 22nd, 1972, Congress passed the ERA, granting seven years for its ratification by three-fourths of the states. It was famously supported by the second wave feminist movement and Betty Ford, President Ford's wife. Together, these two forces catalyzed quick ratification of the ERA in

³⁶⁴ “FAQS - Equal Rights Amendment,” Equal Rights Amendment, <https://www.equalrightsamendment.org/faqs#:~:text=Section%201%3A%20Women%20shall%20have,State%20on%20account%20of%20sex.>

Provides full text of the Equal Rights Amendment:

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification."

³⁶⁵ *CAMPAIGN 1976 / REPUBLICAN CONVENTION / PLATFORM / ERA*, *Vanderbilt Television News Archive (ABC News Network, 1976)*, <https://tvnews-vbe.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/broadcasts/44749>.

most states.³⁶⁶ Within one year, thirty states had ratified the Amendment and only eight more needed to ratify it for the ERA to become a part of the United States’ Constitution.³⁶⁷

In September of 1972, Schlafly launched the Stop Taking Our Privileges Equal Rights Amendment (STOP ERA) campaign. Given how few states were needed to ratify the Amendment for it to pass, Schlafly and STOP ERA could have been doomed from the start.³⁶⁸ Schlafly had to mobilize a political militia out of thin air to achieve success. Using the anti-feminist group she founded in the early 1970s, the Eagle Forum as an initial support base, Schlafly began promoting her STOP ERA agenda biweekly in her self-published newsletter, *The Schlafly Report*.³⁶⁹ She was extraordinarily media savvy, taking advantage of a newly popular medium – political newsletters –, appearing on countless television and radio programs, and giving “endless newspaper interviews.”³⁷⁰ By 1982, the deadline for the ERA’s ratification had passed and the STOP ERA campaign had informally ended.³⁷¹ The ERA was never ratified, and it still has not been to this day.

From 1972 to 1982, Schlafly toured the nation, debating countless pro-ERA advocates, preaching to “any legislature she could get to listen to her,” and hosting events. Most notably, she staged a wildly successful “pro-family,” anti-ERA rally outside the International Women’s Year’s first women’s conference in Houston, which drew the support of 20,000 people.³⁷² Throughout this 10-year period, Schlafly

³⁶⁶ *CAMPAIGN 1976*, 1:00–1:41.

³⁶⁷ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 216.

³⁶⁸ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 216.

³⁶⁹ Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.

³⁷⁰ Lenore Wilson, “Anti-ERA: Phyllis Schlafly’s Battle Against Women Libbers and the ERA are Intellectual – on the Surface,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, July 02, 1974, 5B, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/anti-era/docview/1617341591/se-2>.

³⁷¹ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 214–216.

³⁷² Wilson, “Anti-ERA,” 5B; Chelsea A. Griffis, ““The Heart of the Battle Is Within:” Politically and Socially Rightist and Conservative Women and the Equal Rights Amendment,” (PhD diss., The University of Toledo, May 2014): 72, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/heart-battle-is-within-politically-socially/docview/1615376125/se-2>.

leveraged the forefront of the media frontier, projecting not only her politics, but also her personhood, which over time became one and the same. Phyllis Schlafly’s performance of traditional womanhood and her commitment to pro-family, anti-ERA politics allowed her to unite a consortium of conservative cohorts for her cause, and the conservative agenda at large, and eventually halt the ratification of the ERA forever.³⁷³

The conservative movement shifted radically around the time Schlafly crusaded against the ERA. In the 1950s and 60s, the conservative movement was considered relatively fringe, as the success of social movements – Black Civil Rights and second wave feminism in particular – dominated the social-political scene. This social-political tilt toward progressive politics and social movements indicated an inevitable march toward progress, greater liberation, and away from conservatism.

The unpopularity of conservatism in the 1960s is perhaps best exemplified by the 1964 Presidential election: Barry Goldwater versus Lyndon B. Johnson. Goldwater, an extremely conservative Senator from Arizona faced Lyndon B. Johnson, the incumbent President who took over for John F. Kennedy after the latter’s assassination, pledging to create the Great Society, an extension of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal, that would expand social welfare programs. The two candidates diametrically opposed one another. Goldwater was an unexpected candidate for the Republican nomination, as he tilted farther right than the Party. Schlafly actually played an instrumental role in securing Goldwater’s nomination. She wrote and self-published the novel, *A Choice Not an Echo*, supporting him and urging others to do the same. It sold over three million copies in 1964.³⁷⁴ Despite Goldwater’s initial success securing the nomination, he lost in a landslide to Johnson.³⁷⁵ His overwhelming loss only perpetuated the belief that the conservative movement was losing ground.³⁷⁶

By the 1970s, however, the conservative movement reared its head back stronger than ever. Later coined the Rise of the Right, the 1970s

³⁷³ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 214: “The ERA helped revive the GOP Right and the GOP generally.”

³⁷⁴ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 3.

³⁷⁵ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 3–5.

³⁷⁶ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 4–5.

bore witness to an enormous growth of grassroots conservative activism – including Schlafly’s – which eventually culminated in the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980. The conservative movement cemented itself as a strong, neither fringe nor dismissable force in American politics.³⁷⁷

Against this backdrop, feminists, particularly members of the political and intellectual Women’s Liberation Movement, fought not only for legislation that would guarantee women equal rights to men, but also for a broader agenda. They, and the larger second wave feminist movement sought access to legal and safe abortion and freedom of expression, including both image and sexuality.³⁷⁸ A crucial component of the second wave feminist movement was rejecting patriarchal beauty standards and “traditional womanhood,” most famously by boycotting shaving and burning their bras. Schlafly presented herself as the opposite: a 1950s-esque, traditionally feminine, happy woman, immensely content with the legal and status quo. Her dedication to opposing feminists, both in ideology and image, catalyzed her success.

Schlafly’s image and persona were distinct from her contemporaries – other women leading grassroots conservative movements in the 1970s – because of who she was fighting against: second wave feminists. She modeled herself in opposition to them. Anita Bryant, Schlafly’s contemporary, took on a maternal, aggressive disposition to carry out her anti-gay rights campaign. Bryant, who was a famed singer turned anti-gay rights activist, believed gay rights threatened the integrity of the traditional, heterosexual American family structure, which she and many other “pro-family” conservatives believed wove the fabric of American society. Bryant founded Save Our Children (SOC) in 1977, a campaign against the protection of homosexuality by anti-discrimination legislation in Dade County, Florida.³⁷⁹ Due in large part

³⁷⁷ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 2.

³⁷⁸ Chelsea A. Griffis, “The Heart of the Battle Is Within:” Politically and Socially Rightist and Conservative Women and the Equal Rights Amendment,” (PhD diss., The University of Toledo, May 2014): 2; 10, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/heart-battle-is-within-politically-socially/docview/1615376125/se-2>.

³⁷⁹ Bethany Moreton, “Why Is There So Much Sex in Christian Conservatism and Why Do So Few Historians Care Anything about It?,” *The Journal of Southern History* 75, No. 3 (August 2009): 723, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27779035>.

to her aggressive SOC activism, the term, “homosexuality,” was removed from Dade County’s anti-discrimination clause, and gay people were stripped of their protection. While Bryant benefited from the same traditionally feminine, attractive appeal that Schlafly weaponized, she did not share Schlafly’s smiling disposition. Instead, she inhabited a maternal, aggressive persona, vowing to protect the state’s children by quelling the threat she believed gay rights posed to the American family on an individual and societal level.³⁸⁰ Bryant’s presentation of maternal aggressiveness directly opposed that of the expected, docile, housewife mother; her maternity inspired her aggressiveness, the presence of which only existed because of her concern for the American family. Like Schlafly, her persona was formed based on who she was fighting against and what her mission was.

Another conservative, Louise Day Hicks’s disposition mirrored Bryant’s more than Schlafly’s. Hicks was angry and unsmiling. In Boston through the late 1960s and early 70s, Hicks served as a city council and school committee member, vehemently leading the opposition to school busing and public-school desegregation. As many middle- and upper-class white people fled to the suburbs following desegregation, the proposed desegregation of public schools in Boston primarily impacted its remaining white, working-class residents. This became her target audience. Running for mayor in 1967, Hicks said, “I have guarded your children well. I will continue to defend the neighborhood school as long as I have a breath left in my body.”³⁸¹ Similar to Bryant and drawing on the expected role of women as caregivers, Hicks’ anti-desegregation platform implicitly argued that desegregation would threaten the American family, and larger society, by threatening its children. The people she was fighting against, who were pushing for desegregation, had moved out to the suburbs. Opposed to their self-removal from the city and its politics, Hick’s aggressive disposition was understood as a last-ditch, necessary effort to save the nation’s children.

Schlafly, Bryant, and Hicks exemplified grassroots conservative activism in the 1970s. While they did not team up or interact with one

³⁸⁰ *HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS REFERENDUM #494392* (NBCUniversal Inc., 1977), 1:24–1:40, <https://tvnews-vbe.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/broadcasts/494392>.

³⁸¹ “Louise Day Hicks,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* No. 42 (Winter 2003–2004): 34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3592429>.

another impactfully, each of their platforms and personas illustrate how conservative women mobilized such enormous cohorts to support their agendas. Hicks implicitly tied family values to desegregation, while Bryant tied them to gay rights, and Schlafly tied them to the ERA. Connecting these hot-button political issues to the home, all three of these women were able to draw on the expected role of women as caregivers and build themselves political platforms, embodying a disposition, persona, and physical presentation perfectly tailored to who they were fighting against.

The success of conservative women's grassroots efforts, who argued for the correctness and continuation of 1950s traditional culture, depended on context and on each woman's ability to depict the issue they rallied against as both morally offensive and deeply threatening to traditional values; all three women depicted themselves as the defender of the American family. Bryant and Hicks were successful, despite their unsmiling nature, because they fought against different opponents than Schlafly.³⁸² Phyllis Schlafly presented the perfect embodiment of womanhood to speak against what might otherwise have appeared to be her own cause. Who would expect a woman, herself, to be the strongest voice against legislation aimed to grant women equality?

II. Political

Phyllis Schlafly did not publicly concern herself with feminism until 1971. Before then, Schlafly developed other areas of expertise and had vastly different goals. In 1952, most notably, Schlafly ran for Congress to represent Illinois' 21st district. Her campaign was quickly known across the nation, as news of an "Alton housewife" running for Congress shocked the public. Her platform was not for the expansion of liberal moral principles, as many expected, however. Schlafly claimed, "since women have always been the guardians of morality in the home, our country would benefit if women exercised their voting rights to restore morality to our federal government."³⁸³ Despite losing the eventual election, Schlafly won the Republican Primary against three men and impressed all with her energy; she wrote all her speeches, and

³⁸² *BOSTON BUSING / LEVI #48832*, *Vanderbilt Television News Archive*, (NBC Evening News, 1976), <https://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/broadcasts/488321>.

³⁸³ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 48.

spoke in front of schools, churches, and social clubs alike. Schlafly ran for Congress once more but was never elected to office.³⁸⁴

As Donald Critchlow, author of Schlafly’s biography, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade*, points out, however, “throughout the [first] primary campaign, Schlafly projected a persona as an average housewife who happened to have the political expertise and moral character to be in Congress...” Moreover, he highlights that her description in newspapers covering the primary race always mentioned that she was a housewife who did her own shopping, majority of the housework, and while knowledgeable, “had not ‘read a novel since college.’”³⁸⁵ Considering Schlafly was an expert on national defense at this time and was reported to have been cuttingly well-prepared for every Congressional debate, the last of these qualifiers is most likely untrue. Schlafly used her title as housewife to justify her extensive political involvement, in a proclaimed effort to protect the morality of the government and the American family. All the while, she amassed an interested, engaged support base who would define and enable her decade-long, STOP ERA campaign from 1972 to 1982.

Schlafly was neither interested in feminism, nor the ERA before she was called upon by a friend in the early 1970s. Her political trajectory, and life, completely changed when she was asked to debate the ERA with a “women’s libber,” in 1971. In a 1973 interview with Dale Wittner for the *Chicago Tribune*, Schlafly explains that she “wasn’t the least bit interested in the Women’s Liberation Movement or ERA,” and recounts the pivotal moment that brought both to the forefront of her agenda. A friend “invited [her] to come to Connecticut and debate some libber,” and it was after this moment that Schlafly plunged herself into researching the “libbers” and ERA and had a revelation: “how destructive these people are – destructive of the family, of values that [she] think[s] are important.” After telling her ERA-origin story, she quips, “all of them hate men and children, you know.”³⁸⁶ Schlafly’s anti-ERA origin story leveraged a perfect balance of motherhood, traditional womanhood, and an appeal to potential supporters. She was so offended by the “Women’s Libbers” and their pro-ERA platform that

³⁸⁴ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 3.

³⁸⁵ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 49–50.

³⁸⁶ Wittner, “All Women’s,” H12.

she felt forcefully called to action to protect the American family, the very underpinning of American society.

To attack the ERA, Schlafly had to reassure women that they already enjoyed all of, or perhaps more of, the freedoms and protections that the ERA supposedly promised them. Schlafly claimed that the ERA had abysmal consequences for women and that women were already protected by existing legislation, rendering the ERA unnecessary and solely harmful. Specifically, Schlafly cited two pieces of legislation to make the case that women were fully protected under existing legislation: state legislation that entitled women to financial support from their husbands and the Employment Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1972 which protected women from discrimination in the workplace. Regarding the first piece of legislation, Schlafly advocated for it because it upheld that there is a difference between men and women. A difference, she argued, should be compensated for financially: since women were the only people who could physically carry the baby, men should be responsible to provide for women financially.³⁸⁷ Schlafly expanded her position on male financial responsibility, arguing it protected women from financial abandonment. All of these protections, in Schlafly's interpretation, were protected by existing state legislation and would dissolve with the ratification of the ERA, as the word "men" would be changed and therefore men would no longer be financially responsible for women in these delineated ways.

Regarding the EOA, Schlafly claimed this legislation already granted women equal employment opportunities that pro-ERA advocates argued only the ERA could offer. The EOA, according to Schlafly, allowed women to work if they pleased and adequately protected women from facing discrimination in the workplace.³⁸⁸ She idyllically reiterated that with the EOA women were free to be housewives if they wanted to be, or work, if they wanted to, like she did. Under current legislation, women had all freedoms, therefore, it would be the ERA that stripped them of their rights. She explicitly exclaimed, the ERA would "not do anything at *all* for women" except take away "the right to exemption from the draft and combat duty, the right of a wife to be

³⁸⁷ Robert Cross, "DIALOG: PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY," *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996) (November 1975): H26,

<http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/dialog/docview/169439007/se-2>.

³⁸⁸ Cross, "DIALOG," H26.

supported by her husband and provided with a home by her husband, and the right of a woman who does manual labor to have the right kinds of protective labor legislation."³⁸⁹ It was a constant Schlafly refrain: the ERA would guarantee a flood of abysmal consequences, perhaps the most resonant of which after the Vietnam War was that women would be drafted.

Schlafly's description of how existing, narrow legislation effectively protected women was quite exaggerated. It did not protect all women. It only protected traditional women who ascribed to her presentation of womanhood. Pro-ERA supporters were advocating for the Amendment specifically because it was more comprehensive than existing legislation, and it would grant women equality and freedoms that they did not currently possess. The Women's Liberation Movement argued for the protection of a broader performance of womanhood, one in which abortion was legal to ensure everyone could exercise their reproductive rights, women were free to express their sexualities, and women could dress how they wanted to, not just in a traditionally feminine manner. It was partially due to the extensiveness of the Women's Liberation Movement's agenda, however, that Schlafly was able to terrify her followers and derail the ERA's ratification.

By emotionalizing her projected consequences of the ERA and appealing to the fears of a variety of disparate conservative cohorts, she was able to conjure a majority out of seemingly thin air and accomplish her mission: halt the ratification of the ERA.

Schlafly preyed on a newly established yet wide-sweeping, conservative paranoia, concerning the expansion of federal government, the threat of communism, and that of war that had been baked into various factions of the New Right by the 1970s. According to Schlafly, the ratification of the ERA would destroy the American family unit, and in turn, American morality. Congress, using the power granted to it by the Second Section of the Amendment to enforce the ERA, would change the word "men" to "person" in all relevant legislation and resultantly in Schlafly's dire prediction, the ERA would strip women of financial protection and stability, as the ERA would terminate the husband's obligation to financially support his wife. It would "wipe out laws that protect only women against sex crimes such as rape," subject women to the draft "and combat duty equally with

³⁸⁹ Cross, "DIALOG," H26.

men,” strip women of their right to keep a child in a divorce, “lower the age at which boys can marry,” and “wipe out the protection women now have from dangerous and unpleasant jobs; and wipe out a women’s right to privacy.”³⁹⁰ Schlafly does not specify that her predictions are hyperbolic or intensely hypothetical. She narrates her forecast as a prophecy.

Schlafly’s apocalyptic ERA prediction played directly into the conservative anxiety and frustration over the 1970s’ legislative and judicial chaos, including the continued legal fights over the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act of 1965, specifically regarding bussing. This chaos, she prophetically argued, together with the ERA would destroy the stability of the mother’s role in the nuclear family and leave the next generation with no maternal, moral guidance. Just as quickly, the family, the building block of American society, would disintegrate.

The frightening expansion of the federal government suggested by Schlafly’s interpretation played into the historically conservative value of anti-statism.³⁹¹ The ERA would greatly broaden the role of the federal government and grant it the ability to legislate private, at-home matters, like the fate of children in divorce, for example. Ironically, Schlafly and her supporters took no issue whatsoever encouraging the federal government to legislate against homosexuality, a distinctly at-home matter.³⁹²

Schlafly brought in the anti-Communist caucus of the conservative movement by connecting Communism to the collapse of the American family. She had always been staunch anti-Communist, and her STOP ERA argument evolved and expanded her motives for this position. She capitalized on fears lingering from the Cold War.³⁹³ She suggested that the ERA would catalyze a communist homogenization of society, in which women would start acting like men. As Chelsea Griffis, Associate Lecturer at the University of Toledo, highlights in her 2014 dissertation for the University of Toledo, “‘The Heart of the Battle Is Within:’ Politically and Socially Rightist and Conservative Women and the Equal Rights Amendment,” if communism were to proliferate “the nation’s Judeo-Christian worldview would be wiped away clean, taking

³⁹⁰ Wittner, “All Women’s,” H12.

³⁹¹ Griffis, “The Heart,” 37–38.

³⁹² Griffis, “The Heart,” 43.

³⁹³ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 40–42.

with its traditional ideas about the roles of wives and husbands and erasing the concept of the private nuclear family based on customary gender roles.”³⁹⁴ Communism was a threat to the American family, and therefore, a threat to Schlafly’s desired preservation of the 1950s status quo and her presentation of traditional womanhood. The defense of the American family unit and anti-communism were now inextricably linked and anti-Communists could join the anti-ERA campaign without hesitation.

Women and families, who lost loved ones in the Vietnam War, were instilled with horror when Schlafly told them that the ratification of the ERA would subject women to the draft. The spectacle of women being drafted was perhaps one of the greatest unifying forces of the STOP ERA movement. The emotional response that parents, particularly, had to the threat of their daughters being drafted, gave anti-ERA advocates a tool to squash almost any nuanced, pro-ERA argument, without much thought or effort.

Anti-ERA advocates were staunchly against even the slightest possibility of women being drafted. On March 7th, 1973, Sylvia Chase reported on an ERA debate being held before the Florida Senate Judiciary in Miami, Florida; it was clear from this segment how easily pro-ERA initiatives and philosophy were trampled by emotional, anti-ERA arguments. Despite this, supporters of the ERA in Florida, and later many other states, were so passionate about the cause, and so desperate to see the ERA ratified that they sold their blood for \$25 a pint to support national literature and letter writing campaigns.³⁹⁵ Burton Young, a pro-ERA advocate, pled for a new tomorrow, in which “the old world philosophy that women were born to serve men”³⁹⁶ no longer plagues society and pins women down. Their argument was characteristic of the march toward progress many considered inevitable before Schlafly’s STOP ERA campaign. In a matter of twelve seconds, however, anti-ERA advocate, Jeff Hill shut Young and other pro-ERA advocates’ arguments down. He proclaimed simply, yet emotionally, “I have a 16-year-old daughter sitting back here today. I don’t want her

³⁹⁴ Griffis, “The Heart,” 30.

³⁹⁵ *EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT #227956*, *Vanderbilt Television News Archive* (CBS Broadcasting Inc., 1973): 2:00–2:45, <https://tvnews-vbe.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/broadcasts/227956>.

³⁹⁶ *EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT #227956*, 3:30–3:33.

drafted.”³⁹⁷ He was met with thunderous applause from a sea of predominantly prim-and-proper looking white women. The dichotomy between pro-ERA supporters selling their blood and anti-ERA supporters saying one or two words about the draft is significant, as the latter proved significantly more impactful than the former.

Perhaps the most unified group that supported Schlafly’s anti-ERA platform were white, Christian women, who had not previously considered themselves political actors. Schlafly’s performance of womanhood, and opinions regarding what the duties of women should be, bears remarkable resemblance to those of Beverly LaHaye, a Christian activist, author, and the founder of Concerned Women for America. In the Evangelical Christian community, the controversy over the ERA divided people broadly into two groups, each of which interpreted the Bible differently. The first group liberally interpreted the Bible, asserting that women and men were “equal in all ways, including politically.” The second group, represented by LaHaye, interpreted the Bible’s definition of womanhood much more conservatively: “God made the two sexes different, and therefore inherently politically unequal, though not inferior or socially unequal...men were made to rule, and subsequently the ERA had no place within the United States’ rule of law.”³⁹⁸ LaHaye’s position greatly echoed Schlafly’s position – equal rights, but not equal roles, so no ERA. While Schlafly never formally recognized the parallel between her performance of womanhood and that of the conservative Evangelical Church, she relied heavily on the networks of Christian white women for her grassroots activism, many of whom had never felt called to politics before. If Schlafly could agitate politically, so could they. And of political significance, Schlafly was expanding the conservative tent.

Essentially, Schlafly created a myriad of “single-issues” – anti-Statism, anti-women-being-drafted, anti-Communism, pro-family – and wrapped them into the STOP ERA campaign to unite an enormous cohort for herself and the conservative party at large. Speaking at the 1976 Republican Convention in Kansas City, Schlafly recognized that

³⁹⁷ *EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT* #227956, 3:30–3:42.

³⁹⁸ Chelsea Griffis, “‘In the Beginning Was the Word’: Evangelical Christian Women, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Competing Definitions of Womanhood,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 38, no. 2 (2017): 148–172, <https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.38.2.0148>.

the anti-ERA movement provided a catchall for conservatives, who did not feel they belonged in the Republican or Democratic Party. She said, “the big question is, will the Republican party welcome all these voters who oppose ERA and abortion or will it, like the Democrats, make the mistake of turning them away?”³⁹⁹ Evidently, the Republican Party would welcome them with open arms.

III. Personal

Schlafly had an untraditional, difficult childhood; however, she sought out education and independence for herself and seemed to be on a more progressive track earlier in her life, until she married and began to embrace traditional womanhood. After the Depression displaced Schlafly’s father from his job, her mother worked full-time to support their family. She did not live a comfortable or stable life. As Schlafly recalls, “her family was ‘terribly poor.’”⁴⁰⁰ Although her family was not able to support Schlafly financially, they always encouraged her to pursue higher education. Working 48-hours a week at the St. Louis ordnance plant as an ammunition technician to support herself, Schlafly graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Washington University and earned a graduate scholarship to Harvard University.

Shortly thereafter, Phyllis Schlafly claims she was saved. It was neither her parents, who encouraged her to pursue higher education, nor the opportunities she was afforded because of her education that saved her, however. She says it was her husband, Fred Schlafly, a wealthy attorney from Illinois. In an interview with Marlene Cmons for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1977, Phyllis Schlafly recounts that after graduating from Harvard, she worked for a few years “... and then Fred Schlafly came along and saved [her].”⁴⁰¹ Fred rescued her from an eternity of remaining Phyllis McAlpin Stewart, an untraditional woman, shackled to a family in which the woman was the breadwinner

³⁹⁹ *CAMPAIGN 1976*, 1:00–1:41.

⁴⁰⁰ Dale Wittner, “‘All Women’s Liberationists Hate Men and Children’: Schlafly’s Views,” *Chicago Tribune (1963-1996)* (May 1973): H12, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/all-womens-liberationists-hate-men-children/docview/170387497/se-2>.

⁴⁰¹ Marlene Cmons, “Phyllis Schlafly Heads for Houston: Balks at Being Shut Out of Women’s Conference,” *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)* (November 1977): H1, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/phyllis-schlafly-heads-houston/docview/158489694/se-2>.

and to a future in which she would have to work to support herself. By giving her his name, and the life that went with it, Fred made Phyllis Schlafly a traditional woman. At least how she publicly performed it.

Phyllis Schlafly’s performance of womanhood was an embodiment of 1950s housewifery, in image and ideology. Schlafly stood firm that traditional womanhood was not only the keystone of the American family structure, but also the greatest privilege a woman could have. In an interview with Dale Wittner in May of 1973, titled, “All Women’s Liberationists Hate Men and Children,” Schlafly boasts that “marriage and the home is the greatest liberation for women,” as it provides “security, fulfillment, achievement, and emotional satisfaction.” This fulfillment stems from women’s innate difference from men. Marriage and domesticity is “what they want...Not only are women physically different from men, they are emotionally different,” and this difference makes women’s career aspirations dismissible. She confidently purports, “[women] may say they like their job and they want a career and all that. And oh – sure. I know – they say they like all kinds of intellectual things and all that. But there is something they will not do that men must do – make everything take second place to their career.” Without recognizing the irony of her statement, she concludes, “for women, home and family come first... They can’t help it. That’s the way they are.”⁴⁰²

According to Schlafly, this is how a marriage, and a family, should operate, to uphold the basic unit of American society, not because women are lesser than men but because the sexes are fundamentally different. But interestingly, while Schlafly asserted that each sex had different functions, within each group, she posited that all members of that group were the same. Her statement may not be shocking in retrospect, considering her traditional values, but it was shocking at the time, as such delineated, binary thinking was being called into question and, culturally, it seemed society was evolving to embrace a more expansive view of womanhood. Leveraging the shock factor of her argument, Schlafly took a strong stance that all women shared the same capabilities, priorities, and limitations, by nature. All women should aspire to marriage and all men should aspire to a hard-working career.

A great deal of Schlafly’s acceptance, popularity, and success has been attributed to her actual embodiment of the kind of womanhood

⁴⁰² Wittner, “All Women’s,” H12.

she vowed to protect – the archetypical, happy, 1950s housewife. She appeared feminine, sweet, polite, attractive, submissive, and prioritized – or at least claimed to prioritize – her family over all other matters.

Newspaper commentary on Schlafly often referred to her appearance to help the reader understand her influence, how her persona translated to the persuasiveness of her politics. In an interview with Lenore Wilson in 1974, for the *Atlanta Constitution*, Wilson remarked that “composure and poise [were] all-important to Mrs. Schlafly. Self-control [was] obviously one of her by-words, and she ke[pt] a smile brightly painted on her lips with shocking pink lipstick.”⁴⁰³ Schlafly’s smile was not natural. It was “painted on her lips,” but its permanence on Schlafly’s face upholds her position that a traditional woman was a happy woman. Wilson even noted that through an entire 90-minute television appearance, Schlafly did not stop smiling once. It is difficult to maintain a smile for this duration, particularly debating and discussing heavy, moral topics, like feminism, the consequences of the ERA, and the possibility of women being drafted. But her dedication to this image upheld her performance of traditional womanhood. She had to keep smiling. And she did.

The way Schlafly dressed throughout her anti-ERA campaign also bolstered her traditional, womanly image. Her necklines never exposed more than her collarbone. She wore soft hues – colors that were typically feminine, inviting, and unintrusive. It is no surprise that she received the nickname, “the Sweetheart of the Silent Majority.” Her image would suggest she spoke in a soft, pleasant tone, with gentle, non-abrasive forcefulness. Surprisingly, she spoke in no such manner. She often spoke loudly and used hostile, aggressive language. An iron will boiled underneath her smiley surface, Wilson explained:

Mrs. Schlafly is a walking contradiction, as they say. Her outward demeanor and dress is one of feminine, bridge-playing, affluent housewife. She smiles a lot, giggles, worries about her appearance and makes polite conversation. Yet on the podium, she comes on like a female George Wallace. She is tough and aggressive, totally unlike the role she espouses for most women. At one moment on the panel at the National Town Meeting she attacked Rep. Martha Griffiths for saying she had spoken an

⁴⁰³ Wilson, “Anti-ERA,” 5B.

untruth and demanded an apology. Later she would cover her mouth when she coughed with a lady-like gesture and with a wrinkle of her nose and ask where the ‘little girls’ room’ was.⁴⁰⁴

In a remarkable manipulation of image, Schlafly was able to speak like George Wallace, while preserving her performance of womanhood. Wallace, nicknamed the “fighting judge,” was notorious for his outspoken support for segregation, as a person and legislator. He embodied masculine, patriarchal, and racist aggression.⁴⁰⁵ While Wallace and Schlafly did align to some degree, as they both fought to preserve the racial and gender status quo, respectively, of the 1950s, their reputations could not have been more different. Schlafly, the Sweetheart of the Silent Majority, was able to insist upon her association with purity and morality, and avoid that of aggression, through her performance of womanhood. She countered her aggressive statements by infantilizing herself, using terms like the “little-girls room” and hiding impure actions, like coughing, with “lady-like gestures.” She was also able to garner support from the Silent Majority, a wide variety of conservative cohorts and a previously untapped political resource of white, middle-class housewives, leveraging her publicly acknowledged contradiction to achieve success.

One tactic Schlafly employed to distance her image from and get away with her use of aggressive language was putting her moralizing hostility in the mouths of feminists and pro-ERA supporters, as she did when condemning Representative Martha Griffiths. In one 1974 edition of the *Schlafly Report*, Schlafly wrote, “[feminists] hate men, marriage and children. They are out to destroy morality and the family. They look upon husbands as the exploiters, children as an evil to be avoided (by abortion if necessary) and the family as an institution which keeps women in ‘second class citizenship’ or even slavery.”⁴⁰⁶ The juxtaposition between the vulgar and abjectly hyperbolic language she uses to describe the feminist agenda and her self-presentation as a traditionally feminine, modest woman creates the mirage that although

⁴⁰⁴ Quinn, “No ‘Equality,’” 29.

⁴⁰⁵ “George Wallace,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed December 11, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-C-Wallace>.

⁴⁰⁶ Diane White, “Phyllis Schlafly: It’s a Trap,” *Boston Globe* (October 1973): 29, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/phyllis-schlafly-trap/docview/747768665/se-2>.

she is saying the words, they are not hers. Their vulgarity should not be associated with her image. She is pure. The shield of Schlafly’s image allowed her to retain her status as a symbol of traditional womanhood while preaching angry, aggressive, and accusatorial arguments about her opponents and the ERA.

Despite this representation that all women aspired to be in the home, Schlafly defended her enormous commitment outside of the home, to STOP ERA, by maintaining that she was fighting for her own traditional family, and for American families in general. In interviews, when Schlafly was asked about how little time she was able to spend with her family, she was quick to present that she has indeed performed her motherly duties – she breast-fed all her six children and then homeschooled each of them until the first grade, teaching them how to read. She then promptly explains that she did not pursue professional opportunities outside of the home without the explicit permission from her husband. Fred allowed her to go to law school, for example. When she initially received her acceptance from the Washington University School of Law, Fred did not want Schlafly to go. He did not want her out of the home. So, she declined her acceptance. Then, a few weeks later, Fred decided that a legal education would actually strengthen her anti-ERA platform and boost her credibility, so she promptly enrolled.⁴⁰⁷ This is the story she told. It is unclear, however, whether Schlafly’s story is a convenient truth or an honest one. Regardless, it bolstered her traditional image to be understood as an obedient woman who defaulted to her husband and always prioritized the family.

Even while on the road, away from Fred, she accredited her presence to him. Before most speeches, she would say, “I want to thank my husband Fred, for letting me come.” Once, she hyperbolized this introduction, presenting her book, *The Power of the Positive Woman* to a conservative, anti-feminist group, Daughters of the American Revolution in 1977, she was quick to add, “I like to say that because it irritates the Women’s libbers, more than anything I say.”⁴⁰⁸ Members of the Women’s Liberation Movement were frustrated because of the blatant disconnect between Schlafly’s reality and her presentation of

⁴⁰⁷ Griffis, “‘The Heart of the Battle Is Within.’”

⁴⁰⁸ YouTube, “Phyllis Schlafly Speech ‘Power of the Positive Woman’ | 1977,” Accessed October 21, 2022, 2:05-2:08, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMoE0QXPjp0>.

womanhood.⁴⁰⁹ Schlafly claimed that anything her husband did not want her to do, she did not – she complied how any traditionally submissive wife would–, yet she appeared to have the freedom to do anything: travel, grovel in front of courts around the nation, self-publish a national newsletter, appear on TV, and more. While Women’s Liberationist Movement member, Gloria Steinem founded the first American feminist magazine in 1972 called *Ms.*, named symbolically to protest women being referred to only by their husband’s names, Schlafly took no issue with her title: Mrs. Fred Schlafly.⁴¹⁰ In fact, she relished in it. She presented the image that she prioritized family, even while she was obviously away from the home, trying to minimize the perceived disconnect between her actual ability to perform wifely and motherly duties and her assertion that she was fulfilling them.

While consistently traveling, and therefore, not always able to look after her children or home, Schlafly hired a full-time housekeeper, who worked 40 hours per week, and had her mother stay at home with her children.⁴¹¹ Schlafly was not eager to share her reality with her followers, keeping up the illusion that it was possible to do it all: be on the road, be a staunch political activist, make sure the home is tidy, and be a doting wife and mother. In an interview with Sally Quinn for the *Boston Globe* in 1973, Schlafly explained that does not ask Fred to help with any housework because “most people are happier with their identifiable roles”⁴¹²; however, she neglected to mention that she had hired a housekeeper. Despite hiring help to facilitate her home life and changing her lifestyle completely for the anti-ERA campaign, Schlafly still fervently portrayed herself as a traditional woman.

III. Personal is Political

⁴⁰⁹ Gina Bellafante, “PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY: A FEMININE MYSTIQUE ALL HER OWN,” March 30, 2006, F1, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/phyllis-schlafly/docview/93162241/se-2>.

⁴¹⁰ “Gloria Steinem,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed December 11, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gloria-Steinem>.

⁴¹¹ Sally Quinn, “No ‘Equality’ for Phyllis Schlafly,” *Boston Globe* (July 1974): 29, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/no-equality-phyllis-schlafly/docview/655344365/se-2>.

⁴¹² Quinn, “No ‘Equality,’” 29.

Phyllis Schlafly’s behavior was particularly subversive, as it does not appear to be a commonly recognized phenomena that women can actively and passionately discriminate against other women. As pro-ERA advocate, Adele Weaver said at the forum hosted by Florida’s judiciary committee in Miami in 1973, “it is true that women have been discriminated against, but not only by men. Women are discriminated against by women also, you know. Women have been brought up to believe that they are inferior and secondary.”⁴¹³ Representative Maddox, a conservative member of Florida’s judiciary committee, scoffed while Weaver spoke. Weaver gave voice to what Schlafly embodied and tried to raise awareness for how conservative women, specifically in this political moment, could be the most capable oppressors of women.

This concept, that a woman could not, and would not, discriminate against other women seemed to make it easy for the male legislators at the time to use Schlafly’s position to justify their own defense of the status quo. As Missouri Senator Raymond Howard commented on the success of Schlafly’s STOP ERA campaign in his state in 1973, he pointed out that her argument worked on two levels: “you had a combination of emotional appeal by the opponents of this bill, and you have the satisfaction of the male ego. The entire Senate judiciary committee is composed of all men, and they need a very low justification to satisfy their male ego and chauvinistic attitude toward women.”⁴¹⁴ Not only did Schlafly’s emotional appeal in her anti-ERA platform convince the judiciary to reconsider, and eventually vote against, the ERA in Florida and Missouri, her happy performance of traditional womanhood also made them comfortable that the status quo was correct as it stood.

Implicit in Schlafly’s position is that women were not subjected to discrimination because, in fact, it was the woman’s own choice that set her on the correct path – that of the happy, married mother – or the incorrect path – walking away from the protected family unit. Schlafly herself chose the right path. She presented herself as a beacon of traditional happiness, always seen smiling, praising her family. Schlafly weaponized her happiness in her anti-ERA campaign by claiming that any woman who complained about feeling inferior, or like second-class

⁴¹³ *EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT* #227956, 3:47–4:00.

⁴¹⁴ *EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT* #24775, *Vanderbilt Television News Archive* (ABC News Network, 1973), 2:37–3:00, <https://tvnews-vbe.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/broadcasts/24775>.

citizens, were just bitter. Their anger or sadness was simply a product of their own negative disposition, not of patriarchal structures or embedded discrimination.

Reinforcing her argument that women were not subject to discrimination in the status quo of the 1970s, Schlafly infamously stated,

The real division between women doesn't have anything to do with whether they are educated or uneducated or black or white or rich or poor or old or young or married or single. The only thing it has to do with is whether they are happy or bitter...The liberationists are a bunch of bitter women seeking a Constitutional cure for their personal problems...To them children are a terrible nuisance. They are not planning on having any themselves and if by accident...well, they favor abortion.⁴¹⁵

Any negative experience of women in the workplace or otherwise was again solely due to something internal to the women themselves and not due to, or exacerbated by, society's structural oppression of women. Schlafly steadfastly believed, "the American woman is the luckiest person who ever lived. She can make her life any way she wants to."⁴¹⁶ It is of utmost importance that while campaigning on the platform that women's greatest happiness derives from the roles of wife and mother, Phyllis Schlafly herself was clearly enjoying and taking advantage of her role outside the home, on the public stage. While Schlafly seems to have acknowledged that she had the ability to take on this role due to her husband's largess, she does not seem to have acknowledged that others might not have had this privilege. She could, as she said, "make her life any way she want[ed] to,"⁴¹⁷ but that was not the case for most women.

Aside from claiming that the division between women had little to do with being "black or white or rich or poor," discussion of race and class is notably absent from Schlafly's STOP ERA campaign. She ignores the very real influence that race and class play on women's ability to access the traditional life of the housewife that Schlafly touts. Her privileged

⁴¹⁵ Wittner, "All Women's," H12.

⁴¹⁶ Cimons, "Heads for Houston."

⁴¹⁷ Cimons, "Heads for Houston."

perception of class became clear when Schlafly spoke about the duties she believed a traditional husband had to perform for his wife, for example. She said,

In America, a man's first significant purchase is a diamond for his bride, and the largest financial investment of his life is a home for her to live in. American husbands work hours of overtime to buy a fur piece or other finery to keep their wives in fashion, and to pay premiums on their life insurance policies to provide for her comfort when she is a widow. I don't want to give that up... I don't think most women do.⁴¹⁸

It almost goes without saying that such a recitation of the husband's responsibility, applied to a thin slice of the American public. It was certainly not inclusive of what so many American women were experiencing. Implicit in this prescription is that Schlafly is only speaking to women who are concerned with being kept “in fashion” and lavish themselves in “fur” and “finery.” It reflected a limited, privileged vision of who was being discussed and, in fact, who in Schlafly's world actually mattered. This becomes even more apparent, when Schlafly's supporters are analyzed. The women who attended her rallies were almost exclusively replicas of Phyllis Schlafly herself, adorned in pearls, modest attire, and permanent smiles as wide as their faces.

Schlafly does not appear to have acknowledged that there was a woman's reality beyond her own. She not only ignored the different conditions that affected women's access to and desire for traditional family structure, but also denied the reality of societal, economic and legal limitations on women simply because she herself had not been limited by them. As Fay Ruth wrote in response to Schlafly's interview, “All Women's Liberationists Hate Men and Children,”

Phyllis Schlafly is a most eloquent spokesperson for the middle-class, domestic white woman. The many prerogatives that she lists as the right of the American woman when she marries are unknown to the poor, the black, and the Chicano – many of

⁴¹⁸ Wittner, “All Women's,” H12.

whom expect to work after marriage and do not realistically, expect such an uxorious husband.⁴¹⁹

Schlafly's ability to ignore facts that did not bolster her argument also seems to have extended to herself. The almost irreconcilable contradiction between Schlafly's life and her performance of womanhood calls into question whether her performance of womanhood was authentic, or for political gain. Schlafly achieved a spectacularly high level of education, constantly traveled away from her home and children, and reaped the benefits of an indisputably successful career. Yet, despite this, she presented herself as a pious, poised, prim, and proper mother and wife, entirely fulfilled by familial duties. Schlafly never explained whether her performance of womanhood was authentic or was an act used to gather and organize political momentum, as the New Right formed in the 1970s and 80s. Her intentions, however, may not have mattered.

Schlafly's personhood became her political platform. Her dedication to upholding the image of traditional womanhood – constantly smiling, adorned in modest, feminine attire, never seen with a hair out of place – and her unwavering commitment to anti-ERA, pro-family politics made her a forceful, simple, and predictable political actor. She was a living time-capsule of a romanticized 1950s, the era of happy housewives and privileged, white suburban simplicity, that many conservatives craved would return after years of international war and domestic social upheaval. She was the perfect mouthpiece for a new conservative coalition.

Phyllis Schlafly, and other conservative women like her, rallied against the ERA, as they feared a change to their status quo, a status quo based firmly in their wealth and their whiteness. Schlafly and the growing conservative movement in general was incredibly successful in defeating the ERA and thereby preventing the furthering of legal protections for women. Schlafly shocked the nation in the decade between 1972 and 1982, throwing off course what feminists and the general populace alike took for granted: the eventual ratification of the ERA. To this day, the ERA has not been ratified.

⁴¹⁹ Ruth Fay et al., "Letters: Schlafly Pro and Con," *Chicago Tribune (1963-1996)* (June 1973): 17, <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/letters/docview/170442508/se-2>.

The Stop Taking Our Privileges ERA movement itself demonstrated the fervor and fear with which conservative, white, wealthy, women defended their racial, class, and religious privilege by euphemizing it as their womanly “Privilege.” Evaluating the long term consequences of Phyllis Schlafly’s activism and analyzing her as a political actor, it remains shocking just how effective a member of an oppressed group can be when rallying for their own oppression.

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